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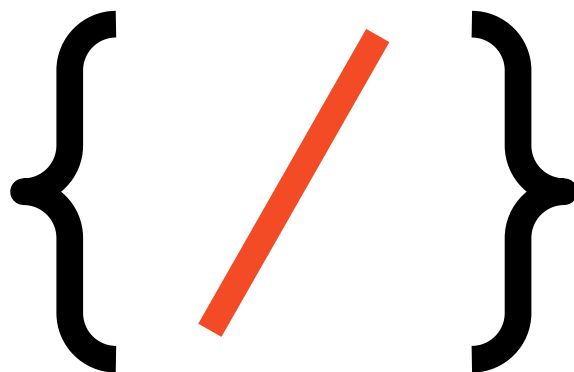
POSTCOLONIALISM
AND OR
FEMINISM

An issue of the
Postcolonial Studies Association newsletter
• Spring/Summer 2015

#15

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editors' introduction

WELCOME to the **Spring/Summer** issue of the biannual newsletter of the Postcolonial Studies Association. For this issue, we asked contributors to consider the ways in which postcolonialism and feminism continue to be regarded as either/or positions, as well as potential strategies for thinking them together. Recent developments, such as the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to girls' education campaigner Malala Yousafzai, Beyoncé's sampling of Chimamanda Adichie's "We Should all be Feminists" speech and the widespread protests in India following the rape and murder of a Delhi college student have brought the notion of multiple forms of oppression into mainstream consciousness. At the same time, the various backlashes to these events, including an Indian ban on the BBC film documenting the Delhi rape case, continue to remind us that the crossroad between postcolonial and feminist positions remains fraught territory. **Claire Chambers** takes *India's Daughter* as the starting point for her exploration of the historical push and pull between these two terms, and the emergence of intersectional frameworks as one way of moving beyond either/or constructions. Indian activist **Rishita Nandagiri** continues this theme in an article which asks us to consider the role that Western media played in producing international outrage to the Delhi murder, while systematic rapes of Muslim, Dalit and Adivasi women go unremarked. **Kinana Haman** then explores the application of postcolonial feminist approaches in a pedagogical context, in which the compound term stands as a critical discourse leading to plural forms of decolonisation. In conversation with **Dominic Davies**, celebrated postcolonial and feminist scholar **Elleke Boehmer** discusses her views on the either/or problem, reminding us of the persistent tendency for feminist concerns to be viewed as secondary to all others. Performance artist **Anna Sulan Masing** then explores these issues via creative work drawn from her "From the Jungle" project. Her poems, set against photographs by **Katherine Leedale**, traverse questions of indigeneity, migrancy and motherhood to ask open-ended questions about the relationship between gender and postcoloniality.

This issue also includes reviews of recent books by **Sara Ahmed** and **Christine Delphy**, both of which tie into our feminist theme, and **Katy P. Sian's** book of interviews with postcolonial scholars also includes many who have a foot in both approaches. In addition, we have reports on a number of recent postcolonial events, including the "Gender and the Colonial" conference at SOAS and the "Altered States" symposium at the University of Liège, which pick up on many questions relevant to our theme, as well as a report on the PSA's own Grant Application Workshop, run by **James Proctor** at the Newcastle University in February. We aim to build on the success of this event to run more workshops for postgraduate and early career researchers in the near future.

In PSA news, we are very happy to announce our first ever PSA Convention, which will take place this September at the University of Leicester. We do hope you will join us for what promises to be an exciting and intellectually stimulating event. Finally, we are delighted to announce the winners of the 2015 PSA/JPW essay prize and to showcase some of the research which has been supported by the latest round of PSA funding schemes. Many thanks to all our contributors for sharing their work.

Lucinda Newns (Design) and **Dominic Davies** (Editorial) are the editors of the Postcolonial Studies Association biannual newsletter. Lucinda's research focuses on the intersection between gender and other structural hierarchies, especially race and religion, in contemporary diasporic fiction. She will be taking up a lecturing post at Queen Mary University of London this autumn. • Dominic completed his PhD at the University of Oxford in March 2015 under the supervision of Professor Elleke Boehmer. He is about to begin a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Oxford researching the way urban infrastructures in post/colonial cities are represented by graphic novels and comics.

Who's Saving Whom? Postcolonialism and Feminism

Claire Chambers

International Women's Day takes place annually on 8th March. Rarely has the day seemed more necessary than in 2015, as debate rages about the ethics and timing of the BBC documentary on the Delhi rape case, *India's Daughter*. In this film, Mukesh Singh, one of the accused rapists, damns himself through his own mouth. Troublingly, his interview was broadcast before the case has gone to appeal.

Lest *India's Daughter* tempts us to think that violence and sexual abuse against women is a South Asian problem, a campaign was launched by the Salvation Army, capitalizing on the optical illusion dress that went viral recently. It shows a badly bruised white woman wearing the dress in white and gold (the colours that many of us saw in the badly lit original photograph), with the caption, "Why is it so hard to see black and blue". This indicates that violence against women cuts across all cultures.

Here I examine some of the key feminist essays of the last four decades in order to explore the productive overlap that exists between postcolonial studies and feminism.

Julia Kristeva's "About Chinese Women" (1977) is in some ways an example of a Western feminist making universalizing, even racist assumptions. The psychoanalytic critic wrote her essay in the context of leftist politics in France, wherein China was held up as a model society. However, the piece suffered when it was digested by a wider audience, many of whom felt Kristeva was homogenizing the Chinese women under study, and after the late 1970s it mostly disappeared from view.

Kristeva seems progressive on difference, warning against looking for answers in Chinese society to solve Western problems. She shows awareness of the symbiotic relationship between knowledge and power, claiming that she wants

to create "open-ended" research (1991, 75). This is praiseworthy, but in a sense she does both things she warns against, imposing a knowledge system on others and projecting Chinese culture as a blank screen on which to resolve Western women's dilemmas. She idealizes male-female relations in China, associating the Chinese woman stereotypically with "an inexhaustible yin essence" and portaying the man as "the delicate artisan" of the woman's jouissance, or sexual pleasure (1991, 80). Readers may wonder how Kristeva could have known this from a short visit and without speaking Mandarin or Cantonese.

Postcolonial feminism helps to identify and correct the blindspots of Western feminist theory which, according to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, often produces a "singular 'Third World woman'" (1984, 334) as a byword for "underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism and overpopulation" (1991, 5-6). Mohanty argues that such negative assumptions about the Third World woman do not capture the complexity and fluidity of the lives of these *women*, plural. A "Third World woman" isn't automatically oppressed. If she is from a powerful class or family, she may have more power and agency than a working-class woman or even man in "the West".

Following Mohanty's critique, Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford tried to unite postcolonialism and feminism through recognition of the overlap between colonialism and patriarchy in their idea of "double colonization" (1986). However, this suggests that racism and sexism function in the same way and only highlights two forms of oppression.

Gayatri Spivak extends double colonization through her reinterpretation of subalternity. She

"A 'Third World woman' isn't automatically oppressed. If she is from a powerful class or family, she may have more power and agency than a working-class woman or even man in 'the West'."

writes about the difficulty of non-elite people – tribals, peasants, women, low castes and the working class – having their voices heard in an undistorted way:

Clearly, if you are poor, black, and female you get it in three ways. [...] As a product of these considerations I have put together the sentence “White men are saving brown women from brown men.” (1988, 296)

Here Spivak, whose writing can be impenetrable, gives us two lovely phrases. Firstly, the idea that poor, black women “get it in

“...intersectionality provides the best psychological scaffolding for global twenty-first-century women.”

three ways” indicates that a person can experience more than singular or double oppressions. This anticipates the 1990s theory of intersectionality, to which I will return. Secondly, the famous slogan “White men are saving brown women from brown men” is heavily ironic and anticipates 2000s thinking about saviours, rescue, and assumptions of superiority.

Lila Abu-Lughod wrote her essay “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” in 2002 against the backdrop of the War in Afghanistan’s initial phase. She takes as her point of departure the toxic but hilarious George W. Bushism “women of cover”, which conflates the politically nuanced American term “women of colour” with the issue of modest Muslim dress (2002, 783). By contrast, Abu-Lughod provides a textured reading of the veiling debate. Rather than the universal symbol of oppression that many Americans assume it to be, the burqa is a Pashtun garment and there can be empowerment in it – one anthropologist describes it as “portable seclusion” (Papanek, quoted in Abu-Lughod, 2002, 785). Abu-Lughod disagrees with any enforcement of the wearing of burqas, but observes that many women wear these outfits voluntarily and have no wish to discard them.

Abu-Lughod next challenges George W. Bush’s wife Laura Bush’s November 2001 speech, in which she implicitly assumes that Afghan women will automatically be delighted to be rescued by American troops. Abu-Lughod writes:

It is deeply problematic to construct the Afghan woman as someone in need of saving. When you save someone, you imply that you are saving her from something. You are also saving her to something. What violences are entailed in this transformation, and what presumptions are being made about the superiority of that to which you are saving her? (2002, 788–89)

Without endorsing cultural relativism, Abu-Lughod encourages us to think about women who may or may not want rescue, but more importantly demand justice.

Finally, she advocates respect for difference while not endorsing cultural relativism, the idea that everything can be understood and justified in the context of its culture. She shows that it is no self-contradiction to dislike the Taliban, while simultaneously rejecting crude online petitions about “Muslim men oppressing Muslim women” (2002, 787). What we should say is: a plague on both their houses.

Whereas Rutherford and Petersen talk about “double colonization”, Spivak turns this into a triumvirate, saying if you are poor, black, and female you get it in three ways. From a postsecular perspective, Abu-Lughod and the Turkish-American scholar Esra Santesso show that if you are poor, black, Muslim and female you get it in four ways (2013, 5). The progression from single issue feminism or postcolonialism, to double, triple, and quadruple approaches shows there is a need for a theory which takes into account multiple oppressions.

Kimberlé Crenshaw’s 1993 concept of intersectionality fills this gap. It was further developed by Avtar Brah (1996, 10–16) in a South Asian diasporic context. Intersectionality is the idea that you can have multiple identity components and grounds for oppression at once. As well as race and gender, there is class (and caste), religious background, age, disability, sexual orientation, and so on. As Mohanty delineated in the 1980s, it is important not to see woman as an ahistoric, monolithic subject. Rather, we have to see women in context. Intersectionality assumes that sexism and racism, rather than being separate and aberrant phenomena, actually inform and support each other.

Perhaps intersectionality provides the best psychological scaffolding for global twenty-first-century women. We need to think about and resist different oppressions together without reducing differences between them or decanting one into the other.

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Claire Chambers is a Lecturer in Global Literatures at the University of York. Her research is in contemporary South Asian literature in English and literary representations of British Muslims. Her book *Britain Through Muslim Eyes* (Palgrave Macmillan) is due out this summer.



Photo: Ramesh Lalwani

In December 2012, Jyoti Singh Pandey (*Nirbhaya*²), a young student in Delhi, was brutally beaten and gang raped, dying from her injuries fifteen days later. India, and Delhi in particular, witnessed an unprecedented number of protests calling for justice and for serious reforms of the current systems. The Indian government's slow and ineffectual response was critiqued harshly. There were swift condemnations of the incident from across the world. Even the United Nations made a statement, calling on India to take immediate action and uphold its rights commitments (Burke 2012).

Much of the international reporting on the incident and the subsequent protests reverted to colonial imagery of a “backwards” culture steeped in misogyny and dominated by rapacious brown men. The enduring appeal of what Spivak (1998) frames, in a surprisingly succinct manner, as “white men saving brown women from brown men” was on full display. It was also interesting to note how Jyoti came to symbolise the “new”, or “modern” India, a subcontinent full of aspirations, while the perpetrators were depicted as “backward” and “traditional”. Poulami Roychowdhury (2013) argues that this juxtaposition reveals that violence is increasingly recognised internationally as a violation of “modern” rights-bearing subjects. In this discourse, a relatively “empowered” “Third World” woman's experience of violation serves as a site of international curiosity, scrutiny, and condemnation, while also justifying political and legal interventions.

International reactions to *Nirbhaya*, were not limited to questionable journalism and knee-jerk reactions, but attempts at legal and policy interventions as well. As debates and protests raged on in India, a group of Harvard professors set up a “Beyond Gender Equality” task force to advise the Indian government on its implementation of the Justice Verma Commis-

sion recommendations.³ The scathing response from Indian feminists reflects the imperialist overtones of the convening of the taskforce, the saviour narratives of a more “enlightened” culture stepping in to “save” a culture from itself (Menon 2013). Similarly, the documentary *India's Daughter*,⁴ released in March 2015, caused vociferous debate on every aspect of the film and the brouhaha surrounding it. Kavita Krishnan's (2015) critique of the title as itself patriarchal, and her rejection of a “civilising mission”, understands the depiction of Indian women as “other” and as “victims” as central to this narrative. Uma Narayan (1997) describes this as “Third World women” suffering “death by culture”, unlike their “Western” counterparts who, by virtue of their cultures, do not experience this.

As Indian feminists engaged internationally in conversations and debates around the framing and impact of *Nirbhaya*, the discussions at the national level also posed critical questions. Indian feminists are called upon to tackle one core question: why did *this* rape in particular cause such sustained public outrage?

The spontaneous mobilisation in December 2012 was mainly comprised of urban middle class youth, a traditionally “apolitical” section of Indian society. The narrative of Jyoti, a young student who'd just finished watching *Life of Pi* with her boyfriend and boarded a bus because they were refused service by auto rickshaw drivers, was something that they could identify with, whilst at the same time “othering” the identities of the perpetrators—migrant, and working class. It was also bereft of caste analyses even though this plays out in Delhi in powerful ways.

The same outrage, as pointed out by Muslim, Dalit, and Adivasi feminists, was missing around the rapes and assault of Muslim, Dalit and Adivasi women. State-sanctioned rapes against marginalised women also receive

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next to no public condemnation, as evidenced by the gang rape of Bilkis Bano, a pregnant Muslim woman, by Hindutva groups during the 2002 state-sponsored anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat. This lack of engagement around acts of violence perpetrated against “other”, “minority” communities was most glaring in the immediate aftermath of the Nirbhaya protests. In February 2014, three siblings—all minors—were raped and murdered, their bodies dumped into a well in Bhandara district in Maharashtra. There was little to no coverage in the media, and no protests outside of Bhandara itself (“Bhandra Rape-Murder Case”). To paraphrase Spivak, even within a renewed drive to tackle sexual violence and misogyny within the country, the subaltern woman continues to remain mute.

In unpacking these discourses and narratives—both international and national—around sexual violence in India, there is a desperate need to de-homogenise the “third world woman”, and to critically examine the approaches used to understand the contexts, herstories, and complexities inherent within these experiences. It continually returns to the question of what does genuine solidarity—intersectional, local, and transnational—look like? It certainly doesn’t look like the “other”.

Notes

1. Section 352 of the Indian Penal Code, a left over from the colonial era, covers “assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty”, sometimes used in cases of non-penetrative sexual assault and harassment.
2. India’s laws prohibited the press from divulging the victim’s name. At first, she was given several monikers including “Amanat” (translates to “valuable”) and “Damini” (“lightning”), until the feminist movements’ use of “Nirbhaya” (“fearless”) became common usage. The name is also significant for shifting the public discourse of victim blaming and silencing.
3. The Justice Verma Commission, a three-member panel, was tasked with reforming the anti-rape law. Calling for recommendations and inputs from civil society, it received an unprecedented number of inputs that were incorporated into a widely lauded, comprehensive set of recommendations. The recommendations were sweeping in their call for change, fundamentally altering the un-

derstanding and framing of rape and sexual violence by positioning it as a clear violation of agency and bodily integrity, and thus disassociating rape and sexual violence from cultural markers of “shame” and “honour”.

4. The documentary, by British filmmaker Leslee Udwin, interviewed Jyoti Singh Pandey’s parents and friends, as well as one of the perpetrators- Mukesh Singh, his lawyers, and family members. The documentary was banned in India.

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Rishita Nandagiri is a feminist researcher and writer based out of Bangalore, India. She focuses specifically on sexual and reproductive rights, and reproductive justice. She serves on the Board of the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, and volunteers with the Blank Noise Project.

Postcolonialism and Feminism: An Intersectional Discourse of Reconstruction

Kinana Hamam

The study of postcolonial women's writing as a metachronous discourse of literary mapping and transformation and of its writers as literary activists has alerted me to the possibility of establishing a dialectical link between the postcolonial and the feminist in socio-cultural, literary contexts.¹ By this I refer to the potential of linking postcolonialism with feminism as a critical tool or discourse for transforming the status of silenced, oppressed women across cultures. This article attempts to answer the following questions: "Why is it imperative to link postcolonialism with feminism?" "How can we create such a linkage?" It argues that it is productive to bring "postcolonialism" and "feminism" together as an intersectional discourse within a deconstructive framework of analysis, rather than approaching them as discrete, contested constructs. The connection has a pedagogical objective related to my position as a lecturer of English Literature from the Third World (Syria) in that it shows the importance of reassessing methodologies of teaching topics on feminism/women's studies and postcolonialism. Its objective is to reconceptualise the study of postcolonial feminism as an intersubjective, collective space where crossings and dialogues among women become possible. This space is structured by

"...postcolonial feminism has the potential to function as a critical discourse of female reconstruction which leads to plural, rather than double, forms of decolonisation."

active female voices which criticise, speak, and contest, thereby (re)writing against the (post)colonial experience and its discourse of domination from a postcolonial feminist perspective, as will be argued below.

Terminologically speaking, "postcolonial" was first used as a historical concept in the 1970s to refer to the period which followed decolonisation and "spoke no political desire or aspiration, looked forward to no particular social or political order" (Lazarus 2004, 2). While

politically charged terms such as imperialism, Third-World, and periphery existed; however, "postcoloniality" did not partake in these disputes. As such, the "postcolonial" was primarily used in the 1970s as a static, historical, and apolitical concept. However, the connotations of the term "postcolonial" have changed since the 1970s. According to Homi K. Bhabha, postcolonial theory challenges "holistic forms of social explanation" in order to "force . . . a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres" (1994, 173). Bhabha accentuates the point that the "postcolonial" is no longer a term which merely signifies a historical, static period or category. Rather, it denotes boundary crossing, ambivalence, cultural dialogue, and difference, all of which characterise postcolonial societies. Consequently, the term "postcolonial" does not always refer to what it connotes, that is, the time after colonialism, which the prefix "post" implies.

Following Bhabha, I am inclined to propose a reading strategy that creates a linkage between the term "postcolonialism" and another flexible concept, "feminism." This link constructs a dynamic, contextualised discourse in order to examine pre-, neo-, and post-colonial (female) cultures and relations from a postcolonial feminist perspective that is deconstructive. In light of this, it can be stated that postcolonial feminism has the potential to function as a critical discourse of female reconstruction which leads to plural, rather than double, forms of decolonisation. It seeks to negate one-dimensional theories which call for "a homogeneous, ahistorical construct of non-Western cultures and women, thereby underlining women's differences and specificities" (Hamam 2014, 15).

Locking the terms "postcolonialism" and "feminism" in separate, static categories creates a sense of monotony and erases the miscellaneous meanings of feminisms/women's identities in the postcolonial world, thus limiting the transformative potential that they ask scholars and critics to acknowledge when using them. Furthermore, these static theories do not problematise the partiality and exclusion inherent in acts of categorising women if they represent female homogeneity. It is therefore

important to integrate feminism(s) and postcolonialism as an intersectional, critical discourse which examines women's identities and narratives in more strategic and inclusive manners (Emecheta 1988, 173; Walker 1983, xi; Crenshaw 1991, 1244).

Within this context, "postcolonial feminism" becomes a more flexible term, much like the terms "Third World," "developing," and "women." Their flexibility is reflective of the heterogeneity and collectivity of women and of their voices across postcolonial cultures. Moreover, it signifies differences among women as well as the specificity of each woman's situation that is dependent on her surrounding and is structured by class, religion, gender, and colonialism, among other factors. Consequently, there cannot be a monolithic postcolonial feminist agenda that all women agree on because feminism is "as various as the women it represents. What weaves feminist movement[s] together is consciousness of inequities and a commitment to changing them" (Baumgardner and Richards 2000, 47–48). Women are varied and so are their interests and the brands of feminism represented by postcolonial women writers, critics, and activists in socio-literary, political, and cultural contexts.

Therefore, we should discard the analysis of feminism and postcolonialism as separate entities to move toward a broader account of both as a dialectical, critical discourse, a university curriculum on gender studies, and a human cause to engage with at present. This encourages us to teach topics about postcolonial feminism in a special way. The proposed teaching pedagogy focuses on "woman" as the subject and object of her postcolonial experience and on gender issues as situated in relation to politics, history, culture, and literature. What I emphasise at this point is the discourse of female diversity, intersectionality, common interests, and specificities, in ways reminiscent of Chandra Talpade Mohanty's "comparative feminist studies" model which stresses the significance of women's particularities in their connection to the universal (2003, 242).

For instance, I will not teach students a course on postcolonial feminism which privileges the presence of local women while ignoring or underestimating that of other women in different locations. This classroom pedagogy calls for formulating strategies of change and solidarity between and among women globally without prejudice. Much like Mohanty's feminist model, it depends on a comparative, critical

framework for understanding several types of feminisms (women) without overlooking their specificity. It also offers a better understanding of the kaleidoscopic experiential presence of women from varied backgrounds. This signals the possibility of designing gender studies curricula around socio-historical, literary, and cultural representations of women, thereby foregrounding not only tales of female colonisation but also those of postcolonial transformation and decolonisation. Hence, the meanings of women's narratives are "infinite and perpetually deferred, always subject to other interpretations in other socio-political contexts" (Dhamoon 2006, 26).

As a result, the presence of (non-Western) women creates a spectrum of realities and worldviews which are similar, different, and incompatible. Their prismatic spectrum signifies a "less 'pure' subject position than that offered in feminist discourses that simply oppose masculinity to femininity" (Blunt and Rose 7). Furthermore, it emphasises that women's experiences cannot be contained within a single narrative of oppression. In other words, it constructs women's identities and narratives as historically specific yet contestable and changing in interrelated ways. This shows that women in postcolonial cultures are interlocked within plural power axes such as race, class, and gender, all of which constitute their lives and responses, thereby avoiding reductionist approaches which negate the "intercategorical complexity" of women and instead confine them to one power variable such as gender (McCall 2005, 1773).

Assuming a globally shared oppression of women and hence a single feminist cause or feminism reduces women's prismatic standpoints and experiences to a daily struggle with men, irrespective of other variables shaping their lives. By contrast, a reading strategy which connects feminism to postcolonialism unfolds and acknowledges several types of local/contextualised feminisms and different groups of women situated within a complicated nexus of oppressing powers, globally, locally, and even within the same family. Taken together, "postcolonialism" and "feminism" construct a dialectical encounter of resistance and change. It develops a more nuanced conceptualisation of female experiences which emerge from confining/resistant spaces, thereby changing orthodoxies of theorising feminism by shifting agency toward the side of women to pave the route toward postcolonial transformation.

Notes

1. I refer here to my PhD dissertation, "Confining Spaces, Resistant Subjectivities: Toward a Metachronous Discourse of Literary Mapping and Transformation in Postcolonial Women's Writing" (The University of Nottingham, 2013), which examines a number of Third World women's narratives from a postcolonial feminist perspective that is deconstructive, reconstructive, and contextually situated.

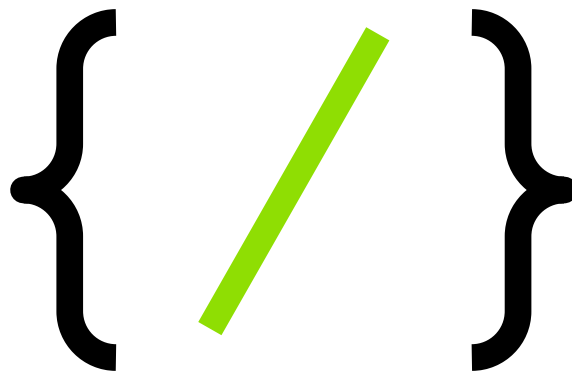
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Kinana Hamam is a researcher in postcolonial studies and English literature, with a focus on postcolonial women's writing in English. She is also a translator and interpreter of English–Arabic and has worked as a lecturer of English Language and Literature and a coordinator of the Department of English at Al-Furat University in Syria (2004–2007).



A Conversation with Elleke Boehmer

Dominic Davies

Elleke Boehmer is a novelist and critic. She is Professor of World Literature in English at the University of Oxford and well-known for her research in postcolonial writing and theory and the literature of empire. She is the author of, amongst many other academic books and novels, Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation (2005), which explore the influential intersections between nationalist, postcolonial and feminist thought. Her new novel The Shouting in the Dark (July 2015) is a Bildungsroman exploring the complicated tissues connecting political and private worlds in a girl's growing up.

Dominic Davies: This issue's theme is post-colonialism and/or feminism. Our abstract for the issue begins with a quotation from Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie, saying that "we should all be feminists", which has come under criticism for being "divisive" and "un-African". How would you situate yourself in relation to Adichie's comments and those of her critics?

Elleke Boehmer: What a laudable and praiseworthy comment from Adichie. I have two responses. First of all, I would line up in support of her words. That's probably the most important thing to say. I'm a feminist, and I stand in solidarity with rallying calls like this. Second, though, I have a qualification. One of the legacies of 1970s feminism, which tended to be a Western, or Anglo-American, and middle-class movement, was that women's groups, and their campaigns and concerns in other parts of the world, came to feel put upon and objectified by that particular brand of feminism. So when Adichie didn't clarify or qualify precisely where her comment was aimed geopolitically, she exposed herself to those criticisms. She's a very pithy writer and speaker, so I suppose she wanted to strip away those qualifications in order to generate a debate, give a provocation. But I think it is the case that post-war Western feminism, without quite realising what the consequences of its actions would be, drove a "gender-only agenda" too hard without thinking of the other differences that there are, such as sexuality, class and race.

DD: Naomi Wolf, who spoke at the Oxford Union recently, has made similar statements to Adichie's about how we should all be feminists. She was in dialogue with four other feminists, all of whom critiqued her quite aggressively for her tendency to universalise not only her own Western, middle-class, white identity, but even her own personal experience. What do you make of this?

EB: Naomi Wolf's brand of feminism came out of a "third-wave" which, to generalise, tended to focus on women speaking from their own particular position rather than first and foremost from that of a movement, like second wave feminism—where first wave feminism was the suffragette movement, which was also based on the idea of a collective. In the early 1990s, an individualist age, there was perhaps a sense that women hadn't spoken enough "in their own person" and Wolf addressed this need when she first began publishing. Of course, we must be cautious when making criticisms with the benefit of retrospect. Both 1990s feminism, and feminism's 1970s and 80s incarnation, involved activism, however individualist they were. Even so, in both cases, and especially that of the 1990s, more structural thinking could have taken place. The liberal and individualist intellectual legacy of feminism could have been complicated and embedded more in an analysis of social structures, rather than concepts of individual libido or upwards career trajectories, and so on. This certainly has led to feminism, or Western feminism, being driven into something of an individualist or ego-centred cul-de-sac. It's really important now to pull back from that, not so much to universalise the activist strain of feminism but rather to ground it back in forms of collective action and to collaborate with other forms of collective action that are also taking place.

DD: A word that comes up a lot in some of the other pieces included in this issue of the PSA Newsletter is the term "intersectionality". Do you find this term useful? Is it productive and does it have any limitations?

EB: I think intersectionality is very important as a political strategy to address precisely those one-issue concerns that were drawbacks to earlier feminism. But I also think it's important to keep notions of intersectionality in an ongoing tension with a feminism-only approach, because if a politics concentrates too much on the intersectional, then some of the urgent matters on the feminism-only agenda become diluted, or put on the back-burner, and in the end don't get followed through, or don't marshal sufficient support. I was recently involved in a discussion about the continuing lack of representation of women in media, and in book prizes and publishing, led by the British-Pakistani writer Kamila Shamsie. Of course, the discussion addresses only an elite level of society but I saw it as representative of so much more relating to gender discrimination. You would imagine that in 2015 there would be equal representation in these areas, precisely because they are predominantly elite formations, but no, it's not the case. The sense for me coming out of this discussion was that liberal feminism post-1990 or post-2000 to some extent lost a sense of its own agenda, of what needed to be campaigned for. It was making too many compromises with intersectional interests, to avoid a global or universalising hubris. It is an unfortunate outcome, yet it still remains the case that gender issues are nearly always placed secondary or tertiary to others. How did we get ourselves into this position, of reconfirming the "second sex" position? Historically, it has pretty much *always* been the case that gender has had to take a secondary position to a class- or race-based struggle and has come second in reaping the fruits of social justice. This is something that we need to discuss and argue about a lot more.

DD: As both an author and a literary critic, would you consider yourself a postcolonial feminist? Are you a postcolonialist first and a feminist second, or vice versa? Or is it impossible to put them in an order?

EB: I've always been frustrated by the answers of writers like Margaret Atwood to this sort of question, who dodge it because they don't like to be labelled. Yet, having said that, I wouldn't want to make a decision one way or another, or prioritise one approach over the other. At the end of the day, after all, I subscribe to both a feminist *and* a postcolonialist agenda, and I see these agendas as involved in related and

conjoined issues involving social justice, representation and so on. Yet, at the same time, for the purposes of this feminism v. postcolonial question today, perhaps I should put a stronger emphasis on my feminist agenda. The longer I'm involved in this life-long struggle for social justice for women worldwide, the more I realise that unless feminism asserts its objectives really forcefully, it is always going to come second to those other causes, a runner up at the rendezvous of history. So like Atwood, I am sort of dodging the question. Why is it that feminists so often dodge the question? I think it is because it remains impossible for a lot of both

“...unless feminism asserts its objectives really forcefully, it is always going to come second to those other causes, a runner up at the rendezvous of history.”

men and women around the world to see their position as universalisable. In this light, figures such as Naomi Wolf and other feminists of the 1990s, who are criticised for generalising from their own situation, are actually making quite important political and strategic moves. If Shakespeare, writing from Stratford-upon-Avon, England, is seen as being able to speak for the universal human condition, it should be equally possible for, say, a Toni Morrison to do that from her position as a late-twentieth century African American. But most people, I would say, aren't quite ready to make that move, universalising from a non-normative intersection, and that's the problem with intersectionality: right now it carves up much more than it links.

01.06.15

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Dominic Davies completed his PhD at the University of Oxford in March 2015 under the supervision of Professor Elleke Boehmer. He is about to begin a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Oxford researching the way urban infrastructures in post/colonial cities are represented by graphic novels and comics.

“The Washing” and Other Poems Anna Sulan Masing

From The Jungle

From the jungle we come, in the jungle we stay.
Carrying home with us in a handful of water; The river that takes
us, returns us and moves us.

My story, your story, our story, bound together from the same
beginning, changing as time and space moves us apart.

I'll tell you my story and you tell me yours.
And we'll sit together and talk of days I don't remember and you
can't forget...

You tell me how it all used to be and ask why it had to change.

Where did you go? And why did you leave?

You ask again and again.

At least you returned, no matter the time,
At least you returned, my child, my sister, my friend.



These photos are from a photographic essay by **Katherine Leedale**, depicting a journey that myself and performer **Vera Chok** took with a loom around East London. It investigates the idea of carrying home and building identity in different spaces and locations, as part of the [From The Jungle](#) project. The complete essay was originally exhibited at Dalston gallery *Maybe a Vole*.

Mother

My mother decided you were better for me
She decided I would *choose* you
You came into my life inconveniently
I had a different idea about my life

I had a man that loved me whole
A body that slipped through cracks and holes
Was lithe with a mind full of plans
And with a concept of love, wrapped up in someone who,
Believed in a different god
And then you,
You gave me another option

Or so others thought
You gave me another identity, another future
Another dance to dance
That was preferred to the one with that man,
My man,
The man.

And so I chose you
They chose you
My *mother* chose you

Could I have chosen both?
A daring thought...
Dare I think?
Dare I dream?
Dare I want?

She said she'd be there
She'd support
She'd care
She'd be the mother to all
But not,
If my godly allegiance changed

And so, I choose you.
And so, I choose not to live the life I
wanted

My life, a dancer dancing on a stage
A body in a space
A woman of grace
And now;
It's a different costume I wear
A different beaded yoke I bear,
Across my décolletage

I break my gaze from yours
Which looks at me pleading
Your needing,
Is complete
Makes me want to leave,
To leave you helpless

Because you see,
My child, my baby
I
Hate
You



The Washing*

Originally written to be performed by three women, in cyclical manner.

The washing is heavy, thick with water. The sun, light on her bare arms, but already full of heat.

Her body moves in the familiar movement - reach, bend, pull, reach, bend, pull... Arms, fingers, back.

Shuddering, shaking. Noise takes over the house. A machine that needs replacing. A rattle on the ear drums that reverberates through the body. As the second load of clothing whirls into watery knots.

Snap! Flick of sheets crisp in the air. Pegs pinch the clothes, clinging them to the line.

She remembers as a child. The cool run of the river tickling her feet, as they stood in the water, spine curved over the rock, sun on her back, fingers in soap and fabric. Scrubbing sarongs clean. Soap scratching cloth.

Dip into the water. Drape across the rock. The smooth one just past the bend of the river. Broad, it was, almost square, beside the three pointy ones. Her sister had showed her, before she left to go to school, three years prior. Dip soap, just half the bar, then quick, hard movements.

She breathed in. Amongst the layers of hanging cloth. Fresh, clean, wet, the smell is so good. The detergent fills the air. And the heat off the drying garments create a world, now so familiar.

Slipping one foot out of her shoe her toes dig into the grass and she closes her eyes. Sun shines through the sheets. Dapples of light. Lines of shadow. Change as the wind turns lazily around her.

With eyes closed she feels her childhood through her feet. She tastes her adulthood through her nostrils. Her body still, light amongst the moving pieces of material. She could be anywhere. Be anything. Be complicit in her present.

The machine has gone quiet. A child cries. Foot slips back into her shoe. Fluttering t-shirts already, almost dry, in the tropical sun, from round one.

Smiling. She walks back to the house. Another load of washing must go on. Another wet weight into her red plastic basket and out on the taut line.

She picks up her grandchild, soothes his cry, resting him on her hip as she switches the machine on again for another cycle. Before leaving for work.



Anna Sulan Masing (left) is a food writer, a playwright, a scribbler of performance poetry; and a producer of arts and culinary events. She has a doctorate in performance art and a preoccupation with food. She is interested in identity, home & belonging – the visceral ways we move through space and how that affects our identity, how we create home and build belonging. *From The Jungle* was a performance created as part of Anna's practice-based PhD about how identity changes when space and location change. This was investigated through the question of whether Iban (an indigenous people of Sarawak, Borneo) cultural and performance practices can be “migrated” to a contemporary Western performance context in order to explore experiences of women's migration. www.annamasing.com

* First published in the creative writing anthology “Just Met: 2013”, where it won first prize in the poetry category (judged by poet Catherine Smith).

Willful Subjects by Sara Ahmed Reviewed by Karen D'Souza

Willful Subjects
Sara Ahmed



Duke UP, 2014
Paperback £16.99
9780822357834

Initially distracted by Sara Ahmed's choice of spelling in the title of her recent publication *Willful Subjects*, I became fully enlightened on the usefulness of the American variant which more visibly invokes the notion of "will" in wilful.

The (dis)connections between "will", "willing" and "willful"—linguistically, conceptually, historically—form the basis of discussion here. In doing so, Ahmed adds to an impressive list of publications and expands her work at the intersection of feminism, queer theory and anti-racist politics. In particular, the book picks up her previous evocation of the "stranger" to explore how women are racialised by institutional cultures; she also calls up the figure of "the feminist killjoy", emergent in *The Promise of Happiness* (Duke University Press, 2010). Gendered and racialised, these figures can be seen to thwart or resist, indicating a certain validity within postcolonial feminism.

In locating her argument, Ahmed displays a concern with genealogies and archives that chimes well with postcolonial theory and practice. The early chapters map out a history of the will through an informative and well-researched discussion of continental heavy-weights: Augustine, Kant, Nietzsche, Arendt, to name just a few. Yet, rather than provide a definitive understanding, this tracing of an idea reminds us that the abstract is never neutral, and must exist within the conditionality of time and space. Once the will is established—and for Augustine it is a certainty—Ahmed's real focus is on the verb form "to will", moving debate on to considerations of intention and action, subject and agency. The linguistic gesture foregrounds not only the futurity of willing, individually and collectively, but also prepares the ground for Ahmed's exposition of willfulness as a style of politics and ultimately as "a call to arms" in the later chapters.

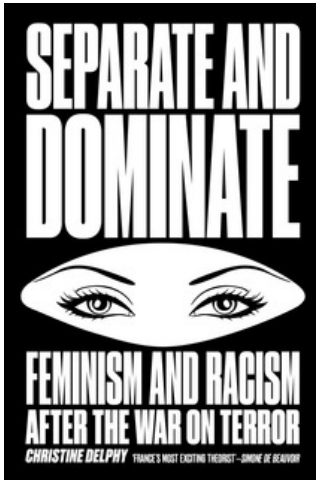
The book opens with an extract from the Grimm's "The Wilful Child", the story of a disobedient girl who, displeasing God and society, is allowed to die. Disturbingly, the child's wayward arm repeatedly reaches out from the grave until the mother is summoned and brutally strikes the arm with a rod. The tale functions as a trope which usefully illustrates "willfulness [as] a diagnosis of the failure to comply with those whose authority is given"; but it also points to Ahmed's methodology in assembling a "willfulness archive". This is curated through the interweaving of philosophy, political theory and literary history, and discussion moves illuminatingly from the cerebral to the everyday.

Some of the political examples may not seem fully worked through, and I am thinking here about how the discussion of Zionism as willfulness may appear partial. In defence, one might point to Ahmed's copious and rigorous footnoting throughout the book which reveal far more nuanced or contested understandings. In fact, a virtue of the book seems to be its capacity to generate questions, not all of which are answered within the text and are perhaps intended to stimulate further reflection by the reader. At this juncture Ahmed reminds me of Spivak who famously instructs us that impossibility should not deter us from the task at hand.

The Eurocentric framework could prove a little troubling for some given the political arena in which Ahmed is engaged; and we do encounter the term "willing" and its etymology very much in its Englishness. But Ahmed is the master of her material and as she navigates through the philosophical and the polemic it becomes evident that the attention to cultural and moral constructions of will and willing, and the claiming of willfulness as political possibility, addresses both the materialist and textual strands of postcolonialism. Thus, rather than celebrating this book for how it addresses a specific set of contexts, I would recommend it more for offering a model that can be usefully adapted to a range of conditions and perspectives that might interest the postcolonialist.

While *Willful Subjects* is an important contribution to queer theory and anti-racist politics, the book strikes me as a timely intervention as we experience a global resurgence of feminist activity, registering a significant milestone in Ahmed's aim to renew feminism as a mode of critique.

Separate and Dominate:
Feminism and Racism after the War on Terror
by Christine Delphy, trans. David Broder
Reviewed by Rachel Fox



Verso, 2015
Paperback £14.99
9781781688809

In her introduction to the English-language translated edition of *Separate and Dominate: Feminism and Racism After the War on Terror*, Christine Delphy locates the relevance of her theoretical work (written over the course of

twenty years, beginning in 1996) in current socio-political events, citing the French government's prohibition of protests "denouncing the bombing in Gaza in the summer of 2014" (x) and, even more recently, the shootings of the employees of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and then of shoppers at a Jewish supermarket by radicalised Muslims, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi. These events have not gone unnoticed in academic and literary circles, nor have they been lacking in controversy. For example, Queen's University Belfast's conference "Understanding Charlie: New perspectives on contemporary citizenship after *Charlie Hebdo*" was very nearly cancelled, before pressure and criticism from academics and writers pushed successfully for the conference to proceed on 4th and 5th June 2015. While not engaging with this specific event in the body of her text, Delphy offers a reading into the political and social (and to a lesser extent legislative) climate in which events such as these occur and from which they are, possibly, partly contrived. Her individual essays explore U.S. and European (predominantly French) dominant governing forces' interactions with the "Other", and she boldly – and controversially – claims that "the defence of French secularism (*laïcité*)" is a precursor to the declaration of a "civil war" (xi) against those perceived as "Other".

Delphy uses a materialist approach and draws from explicit examples of legislation and behaviour performed in France and the U.S. By locating her exploration of the mechanics of oppression and the fabrication of the "Other" in

exact examples in each of her essays, Delphy's work builds its analysis of these issues through a variety of complex contexts and benefits from this. Her consideration of the "Other" spans ethnic, class, and gender divides – the "Have and Have-nots" and the "Speak and Speak-not[s]" (xv) – and is influenced in part by the French feminist movement.

Each essay included in *Separate and Dominate* succeeds on its own merits, and what is most effective about Delphy's text are the ways in which each chapter is focused on a particular context or category of "Other". In the second essay, Delphy identifies the disparity of the gender system operating in the government in France and posits the "false universalism" (47) that constitutes the model of French nationalist identity as the reason for this. Her next essay problematises the liberalist stance towards Queer movements in France, suggesting that liberalism adopts a position of "omnipotence" (63) that both injures and heals those in need of solidarity: humanitarianism requires a handicapped subject. Later essays shift to consider U.S. military operations and legislative actions in Afghanistan (and also Franco-/Euro-centric opinions and support to these movements). Delphy argues that the U.S. "demands no less than a monopoly on legitimate international violence" (68), and critically examines situations in which she believes the U.S.'s position is proved unsubstantiated in a selection of her essays. Chapter Four, for instance, dismantles the concept of the "War on Terror". Subsequently, she explores the (il)legality of the detainment of foreign – Arab – individuals in Guántanamo Bay. She also takes note of the ways through which the liberation of Afghan women was used as an "alibi" for war (91), and poses the question that, in a fight in favour of human rights, "[a]t what moment does war become the preferable option?" (90). She then returns to her home-ground in France, where she addresses the ways through which exclusionary measures and suggestions of malignancy have been subjected towards (veiled) Muslims and (second- and third- generation) immigrants (*indigènes*) living in France, especially in light of historical-political contexts (the colonisation of Algeria by France).

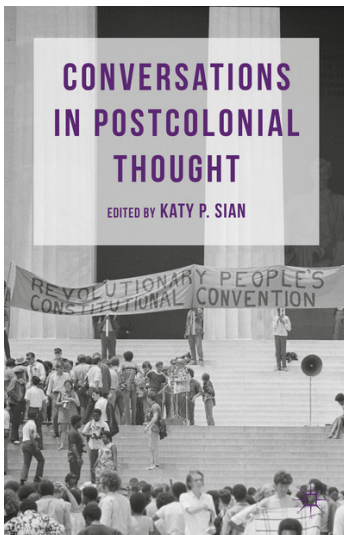
In her introduction and first chapter Delphy does risk conflating the identities of those whom she initially argues are defined as “Other” (women, non-whites, and homosexuals) and these opening pages might be read as being overtly reductive of these marginalised groups — not just in relation to one another, but also in her positing of the binary of Dominant/Dominated or, as she phrases it, the Ones/Others. The first chapter is problematic for this reason, and its main purpose, which is to connect the rest of the essays in this volume together, actually serves to undermine what later

develops into a nuanced exploration of the “Other” through its relationship to explicit examples of dominance, tolerance and exclusion.

The strength of *Separate and Dominate* is that the later essays link to one another implicitly and that, in fact, Delphy is anything but homogenising in the text’s concluding chapters. She explicitly acknowledges that the assessment of marginalised and oppressed categories should be located in specificity and notes that privilege not only exists outside of these categories, but also within them.

***Conversations in Postcolonial Thought* edited by Katy P. Sian**

Reviewed by Victor Merriman



**Palgrave
Macmillan, 2014
Hardcover £57.50
9781137465658**

Katy P. Sian’s interviews with contemporary thinkers are a rich and rewarding addition to critical debates in postcolonial studies. The book’s conversational tone draws scholars, students, and activists, into twelve over-

lapping worlds of scholarly agency. The location of each interviewee’s unique contribution among ideas formative to their work, will attract and inform a wide and general readership. Expert readers will find more here than the sum of the collection’s parts, as critical concerns are iterated across disciplines, places, and histories, personal and public. White scholars are in a minority among an alternating sequence of male and female thinkers, anticipating a plural academy, for which all contributors advocate. Paul Gilroy’s caution on “the uneven take on the idea of the postcolonial across the disciplines” notwithstanding (191), Ash Amin articulates its intellectual history and ongoing imperatives:

Postcolonial thinking liberated the periphery from the centre without reducing either to itself, and it has engaged in historical explanation without crude judgement or

generalisation, revealing the labour involved in sustaining the colonial and colonising project, the intersections and distances of hegemony and resistance or tradition and modernity, and the narration of counter-histories. (98)

This is at heart, a book about race, its diverse histories and evolving politics: “Today, there is no common humankind in my view because, in our modern world, there is no working humanity without some social groups being labelled as subhuman” (Boaventura De Sousa Santos, 80). It is, equally, a book about de-territorialised experiences and “unfinished histories” (Sara Ahmed, 17), both counterpointed and constructed by decolonisation postponed since the latter half of the twentieth-century. Engaged thinkers and deliberate witnesses ground their testimonies in perspectives informed by, and critical of, humanist thought and institutions. As neo-liberalism’s Austerity Project visits strategies of colonial domination on European peoples, Santos explores “epistemologies of the South” (70), looking at, as well as beyond, their histories “as resistances against victimisation — that is, it’s really about the presentation of alternatives, of new ways of thinking, of transforming society with new ways, new definitions, and new conceptions of dignity and respect” (75).

Under neo-liberalisation, the “‘rule of difference’ [...] between coloniser and colonised, and the efforts to maintain that rule of difference” (Catherine Hall, 53) re-emerges in “the punitive biopolitics of our time, feeding on rituals of aversion toward the imagined stranger” (Amin,

102). Heidi Mirza argues that postcolonial critique must therefore enable “a place where you can talk about things that just don’t exist in everyday language, social theory, or any of your traditional and cultural knowledge that has been passed on” (133). Vron Ware poses questions calculated to restore such content to public narratives: “Which parts of the world are being bombed? Who’s doing the bombing? Where is the money coming from? [...] Where are the complicities? And where is the ignorance being fostered?” (93). Here is a felt need to counter “a profound [...] depoliticisation of cultural formations” (S. Sayyid, 143), and Sian presses her interviewees on the problematic histories, constitution, and circumstances of academic work: “Many of the social science categories and tools were made at a time when the demarcation between the Western and non-Western was very clear, and part of those key tools were about policing that frontier” (Sayyid, 153).

This calls into question the efficacy of the community of scholarship addressed by this book:

There is a mismatch between what we are doing and saying as academics and post-colonial thinkers and the way in which the media, the press, and public perception are untouched by our work. So the question is, what are we doing as public intellectuals to

disrupt this hegemonic discourse? (Mirza, 135)

Amin acknowledges an absence of consensus in facing the problem (99), advocating critical attention to “the cultural practices of elites [that] explain how particular forms of exclusion are justified; how the poor and other marginalised groups are discursively framed; how the cultures of states, markets, and elites reward some and not others; and how the excluded come to see themselves” (Amin 99-100).

While readers may compile personal lists of thinkers not featured here – Clare Carroll, David Lloyd, Ella Shohat, Robert J.C. Young, for example – one of the many pleasures of the book lies in the remarkable diversity of sources cited. The wide distribution of postcolonial thought across projects which make sense of, and enable comparisons between, social histories and personal experiences produced under colonial conditions. The interviewees provoke thoughts of present and emergent struggles for better lives in common, from Gilroy’s curiosity about historical sites of “conviviality” (190-1) to Ahmed’s decolonial project (22). Speedy publication of e-book and paperback editions will enable remediation of residual textual errors, and facilitate wider distribution of the fruits of this impressive exercise in mapping intellectually the critical projects of postcolonial scholarship.



Centre for Gender Studies SOAS, University of London, 13-14 May 2015

In May 2015, the Centre for Gender Studies at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) organised a two-day conference entitled “Gender and the Colonial”. The interdisciplinary conference brought together feminist scholars and scholarship from political science, law, anthropology, history, media studies, cultural studies, sociology, and beyond to engage in critical conversations on the gendered legacies and continuities of colonialism and their intersections with postcolonial and/or feminist and queer theory. On one hand, the conference aimed to ask – How is gender, in all its constructions, embodiments, performances, histories, and deviations, present in the persistence of colonialism? On the other hand, it intended to bring together a variety of academic and activist voices that would complicate the very meanings of gender through the study of the colonial and the postcolonial.

Professor Oyeronke Oyewumi, who delivered the opening keynote address, encapsulated the underlying tensions and questions of the conference when she asserted that we needed to learn and unlearn the very category of gender in order to decolonise knowledge and un-silence forgotten [African] epistemologies. Professor Nadjie Al-Ali, in response to Professor Oyewumi, insisted that in such attempts to decolonise knowledge it was also crucial to re-think “Europe” and continue to problematise categories such as the “West.” Furthering these concerns, the day’s panels addressed themes of spatial and temporal ruptures in the study of gender and the colonial and the constructions of modernity and sexuality as they intersect with empire. Professor Diane Otto, who delivered a guest lecture on people’s tribunals that marked the end of the first day of the conference, reminded the participants that justice was a shared responsibility and decolonising knowledge depended on a politics of listening.

On the second day of the conference, Dr Gina Heathcote read out a guest lecture by Dr Fatou Kiné Camara that addressed the Senegalese Women’s struggles to topple the colonial legacies of institutional male dominance. Addressing the theme of colonial continuities

and neo-colonialism, the panel that followed Dr Camara’s lecture elaborated on surveillance, sexual violence, militarisation, embodiment, and migration as they intersect with liberal wars and postcolonial states. The final panel of the day elaborated on cultural production around the gendered de-colonial, highlighting the making and unmaking of the colonial, and linking these discussions to the morning’s roundtable on queer theory and what that might offer to the study of gender and the colonial. Professor Ratna Kapur delivered the closing keynote linking together the themes of the conference with ideas on human rights and postcolonial justice, furthering conversations on gender, colonialism, politics and law.

In addition to the panels and keynotes, the conference also aimed to create spaces for alternative methodologies and critical pedagogies. A screening of *The World Before Her*, a film by Nisha Pahuja, that presents gendered narratives of cultural nationalism and “modernity” and neoliberalism in postcolonial India generated a lively discussion on the first night. *Mardistan* (Macholand) a film by anthropologist Dr Harjant Gill (who was present at the conference) explored narratives of Punjabi masculinity, raising questions pertaining to sexuality, gender, and the sociocultural histories that comprise and complicate the two in postcolonial India. CGS and *Feminist Review* organised a series of panels titled “New Voices” that encouraged junior scholars and researchers to discuss their work a day before the conference. During the conference, an early career breakfast was organised as a “safe” space for discussions among junior scholars of gender studies as they navigate the increasingly neoliberal academy.

The conference was no doubt successful in providing a space for interdisciplinary feminist conversations on continuing colonialisms and their intersections with gender and queer theory. However, most crucially, it also reminded participants and feminist scholars of their own positionality as themselves implicated in the coloniality of knowledge, further asserting the need for decolonising epistemologies, methodologies, and pedagogies involved in the production and furthering of feminist learning

and unlearning. As Dr Rachel Harrison elaborated in her response to Professor Diane Otto's lecture – How do **we** in “Western” [and elite postcolonial] institutions engage with the locally embodied trauma, subversions, resistances, continuities, and remains of the colonial? How do we listen to testimonies and silences of the gendered colonial? And how do we connect the local to the academic so as to decolonise feminist knowledge production?

Akanksha Mehta is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Gender Studies at SOAS, University of London. Her PhD research examines the intersection of space and the politics of right-wing women in the Hindu Nationalist movement in India and the Zionist settler project in Israel-Palestine. She is also a photographer and can be reached at: www.twitter.com/SahibanInExile.

PSA Grant Application Workshop Leila Kamali Reports

Newcastle University, 6 Feb 2015

The PSA Grant Application Writing Workshop for Early Career Researchers, hosted by Dr James Procter at Newcastle University in early February, provided a great opportunity for discussion of my draft grant application in an informal environment, and for gaining valuable advice and feedback from a senior colleague on the process of securing research funding.

The business of designing a postdoctoral research project is proving, for me, to have its own unique rewards and challenges. I have spent a number of years absorbed in my doctoral work on the cultural memory of Africa in African American and black British fiction, and the book and articles which are emerging from it. It has therefore taken careful thought and planning to design a second major research project which is distinct from my earlier work and engages new methods and contexts, but that also takes forward some of the reading strategies and research questions which that work has stimulated. Given that I am currently in the midst of compiling applications for academic jobs and postdoctoral positions, I was able to come to this workshop with application material ready, and I was very keen to have the benefit of a professional training session designed specifically to help people at my career stage. I was also interested to work with Dr Procter, whose work in black British literature and diaspora I had read with interest.

I had sent in my draft grant application ahead of time, which concerns a new project on the subject of voice and voicelessness in African diaspora texts, and we had an extremely helpful and fruitful discussion. The session highlighted for me the particular distinction between posing a strong research question and the details that will turn that question into a rationale designed

to inspire the confidence of a sponsor. Dr Procter emphasised the importance of situating a narrative line in a description of research plans, whilst using precision as a guiding principle to allay any potential fears about a project's viability. It became clear to me through the course of our discussion that a successful project description would set down concrete details early—such as the chronological and textual boundaries of the literary research, as well as any resources or archives that would be employed—and would go on to develop more conceptual terrain later on.

Our discussion emphasised the drawing of a clear narrative line in a research statement which addresses the project methodology and materials selected, and suggested framing a timeline for completion of distinct research tasks, plans for publication and other outputs. We also discussed ways of formalising any relationships with interested scholarly or arts organisations in view of the research project, and in order to frame such a relationship as supportive to the funding application. The workshop enabled me to reflect upon the feasibility of my research project from an objective point of view, and has left me with a clear sense of the details I might clarify in order to form a research outline for the purpose of securing funding.

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Leila Kamali is Post-Doctoral Research Fellow with the Centre for Caribbean Studies at Goldsmiths University of London. Her book, *The Cultural Memory of Africa in African American and Black British Fiction, 1970-2000*, is forthcoming with Palgrave Macmillan.

Symposium // Altered States: Configuring Madness in Caribbean Literature

Katie Danaher Reports

University of Liège, 23-24 May 2015

Hosted by the University of Liège, in association with the Centre D'Enseignement et de Recherche en Etudes Postcoloniales, "Altered States – Configuring Madness in Caribbean Literature" took place between the 23rd and 24th April 2015. The symposium was held in a transcendental space overlooking the converted ancient basin of Cite Miroir exhibition centre, Liege. Seamlessly organised by Daria Tunca, Benedicte Ledent (University of Liege) and Evelyn O'Callaghan (University of the West Indies), the event gathered prominent international academics and writers, as well as students, to re-think literary representations of madness in the Caribbean and diaspora.

The presentations covered an extensive thematic spectrum, including Maria Cristina Fumagalli's (University of Essex) exploration of geographic and psychological borderlands in Junot Diaz's and Frank Baez's texts, Kelly Baker Josephs's (City University of New York) study of literary "madwomen" in alienating urban spaces and Carine Mardorossian's (University at Buffalo) eco-critical reading of nature's role in character psychology in Jean Rhys's and Shani Mootoo's work. These wide-ranging presentations shared an urge to forge new critical frameworks through which madness in Caribbean literature might be productively read. Regardless of whether the individual papers prioritised gender, race or other social factors, all queried hegemonic distinctions between "sane" and "insane". The tension between politics of categorisation and the reconfiguration of states of "sanity" emerged as a recurring theme.

Jamaican poet and writer Kei Miller (Royal Holloway University) opened with a brilliant keynote that questioned our diagnosis of madness: "What is normal? How far must we travel from "normal" before we are considered 'mad'?" Miller considered intersecting gendered and racial prejudices surrounding madness through "real life examples of Warner Women". The clips of "mad" outbursts by Caribbean women in diasporic urban spaces initiated debates concerning the ethics and risks of spectacularising personal psychological disturbance. Evelyn O'Callaghan's paper on

displaced "altered states" in Miller's fictional work challenged the distinction between "the world of reason and other aspects of human nature". Miller and O'Callaghan highlighted the precariousness of global judgments of "reason" that deny cultural or historical analysis. Exploring the implications of a Caribbean gaze versus a diasporic one, both speakers queried interpretations of madness in diverse social environments. Referring to one of Miller's most disturbing clips of "mad" women, O'Callaghan emphasised the different ways that expressions of "spirit possession" might be viewed and censored, depending on cultural location.

The symposium sought to resist the enshrined illogic of racial and gendered conventions associated with madness, suggesting alternative modes through which to read it. Denise deCaires Narain's (University of Sussex) paper argued the need to re-think interpretations of "madness" as applied in Jean Rhys and Jamaica Kincaid's work. By being more responsive to the recalibration of affect that deCaires identified in both writers, alternative repertoires of feeling could be mobilised to include, perhaps, the agentive possibilities of rage. Alison Donnell's (University of Reading) thought-provoking keynote, "Queer States of Mind", investigated the relationship between sanity and sexuality. She traced historical trajectories of sexual categorisation to challenge identity-bearing categories through which perceptions of madness are organised. Examining Shani Mootoo's *Moving Forwards Sideways Like a Crab* and Thomas Glave's "Jamaican Octopus", Donnell sought to re-root discourses of the "natural" by contesting connections between madness and non-heteronormativity.

Many speakers agreed that madness is symptomatic of social-injustice, a breakdown in the relationship between the personal and the political. Author and journalist Alecia McKenzie connected Caribbean madness in the diaspora with the trauma of migration. McKenzie's moving keynote highlighted cultural codes and masks adopted by Moses and his peers in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. The mask emerged as a powerful and poignant trope:

“Wear the mask long enough, you don’t possess it, it possesses you.”

The second morning’s session examined masking individual psychology in Caryl Phillips’ fiction. John McLeod’s (University of Leeds) paper, “Madness, Migration and Masculinity”, reaffirmed that “migration is a journey to neurosis.” McLeod recalled George Lamming’s and Lawrence Scott’s novels to read “mental disturbances” provoked by migration and compounded by racist and gendered practices in Phillips’ *In the Falling Snow*. Alongside McLeod, Giulia Mascoli (University of Liege) and Su Ping’s (Sun Yat-sen University) papers explored affects caused by isolation in Phillips’ novels. Ping’s paper on silence induced by solitude highlighted the tenuous distinction between silence as coping-mechanism and oppressive mental condition. Phillips’ powerful reading from his new novel, *The Lost Child*, delved deeper into psychological repercussions of loneliness, abandonment and familial displacement. Responding to questions, Phillips reflected on the fragility of human relationships subjected to different challenges in different social contexts.

Underpinning the symposium was a strong urge to retain a sense of “Caribbeanness”. The presentations were peppered with a distinctive Caribbean character personified by Desiree Reynold’s beautiful reading from her novel, *Seduce*. Reynold’s performance of the patois-speaking voice of *Seduce*, an elderly woman living on a fictional island in the Caribbean was hypnotic. Following two intensive days of circling around the irresolvable tension between identity politics and a desire to reconfigure societal and cultural conventions, *Seduce*’s voice reminded us of the lyrical and mythical dimensions of Caribbean culture that are richly present in the literature.

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Katie Danaher is a PhD candidate in the School of English at the University of Sussex. Her research focuses on contemporary black women writers' remapping of literary London.



Postcolonial Studies Association Convention 2015

Special Topic Diasporas

Keynote Speakers

Professor John McLeod (University of Leeds)
 Professor Paul Gilroy (King's College London)
 Dr Gayatri Gopinath (New York University)

The Postcolonial Studies Association is proud to announce the first ever PSA Convention, taking place this **September 7 to 9** at the **University of Leicester**. The Convention will bring together scholars working on postcolonial topics from around the world and across multiple disciplines, with a number of participants speaking to this year's theme: "diasporas".

Diaspora has been one of the key concepts of postcolonial studies. Within contemporary analysis, diasporas have tended to be explored in terms of ethnicity, race, nationality, and even religion. However, diaspora has sometimes been accused of perpetuating histories of colonial inequality by failing to differentiate between precarious

migration motivated by exploitation and the more economically privileged transnational movements of the global bourgeoisie. The study of human movement during colonial and postcolonial times has taken a number of shapes across the humanities and social sciences through the study of diaspora, migration, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and globalisation. This year's convention will explore these issues and a number of others of pressing importance for postcolonial scholars today.

Paul Gilroy's keynote lecture and drinks reception are sponsored by the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, in celebration of its **10th anniversary** and its ongoing partnership with the PSA.

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2015 PSA Funding Schemes

The PSA runs a number of annual funding schemes designed to assist Postcolonial scholars in carrying out their research. Here is a selection of the work that has been supported by the latest round of awards.

Michael Paye General Research Fund

Using a framework based on environmental historian Jason Moore's "world-ecology" theorisations, I follow literary critics such as Michael Niblett and Sharae Deckard in refining and exploring new methodologies of comparatist, postcolonial and world-systemic critique.¹ My overall PhD project traces the representation of environmental catastrophe at fishery frontiers in a variety of literary depictions of fishing communities. The respective novels in my project are set during specific periods of boom and bust at the Atlantic herring and cod frontiers. While each novel is based within a short timeframe, taken together, they cover a period from liberalism to neoliberalism. Conceiving of the Atlantic as a pivotal zone of accumulation and exploitation, my research considers the fisheries as just one frontier within a literary history that can be mapped and theorised by close-attention to a variety of regions and authors.

One of the principal authors of my research project is Irish novelist and playwright, Walter Macken. Born in Galway on 3 May 1915, Macken enjoyed a highly successful acting and literary career which was unfortunately cut short when he died of a heart attack at the age of 51 in Menlo, a Gaeltacht (predominately Irish-speaking) village in Galway. In the late 1970s, Macken's wife, Peggy, sold 6,000 pages worth of his work to the University of Wuppertal, Germany. This research trip enabled me to visit this archive, as well as interact with a number of academics, archival-library staff, and PhD students with interests in Irish and archival studies.

The Macken archive in Wuppertal is extensive. It features a variety of correspondence from journalists, publishers, and family members, and allows a comprehensive insight into the mind of the writer. As my research principally

focuses on fisheries, I found several notes and letters about the Claddagh fisheries that were especially useful. However, on a wider level, Macken's attitude towards the United States and England, his thoughts on general economic and ecological issues, and how he saw himself in the literary and cultural history of Ireland has been very useful to my overall understanding of the writer. Equally, his opinion on a variety of development projects in the modernising Ireland of his day is laid out in his personal correspondence, which remains unavailable outside of the archive.

Many of his short stories and plays remain unpublished or out of print, and having the chance to go through them revealed a multitalented writer whose absence from the academic landscape is becoming more conspicuous, especially considering the recent centenary celebrations in his honour.² Although he became a very popular writer in his own lifetime, Walter Macken is something of a peripheral figure in Anglophone academia. He is perhaps unfairly denigrated as simplistic and populist, despite the attention of two recent monographs: *Dreams on Paper* (2010) by Ultan Macken, and James Reid's theatre history, *Walter Macken (1915-1967): Playwright, Actor and Theatre Manager* (2012). Thanks in large part to the work of volunteers in his native Galway and a select number of academics, Macken's significance in the Irish literary landscape is beginning to be recognised.

I have been invited to present a paper at the Walter Macken symposium in Wuppertal, 10-11 December 2015, thanks to my work at the archive. In this paper, I plan on utilising much of the information I found in the archive in order to conceive a way of reading Macken as a postcolonial writer, someone who responds to Irish literary movements and whose work was

deeply imbricated in the contemporary concerns of Irish life during the nascent years of the Irish republic—the Republic of Ireland itself only left the British Commonwealth in 1949. Bello's recent decision to publish a number of his novels for the kindle format will work to generate a broader awareness of Macken's work and legacy and I hope also to contribute to this shift, so that other people will continue to enjoy, study, and formulate new approaches to his plays and novels.

Notes

1. Jason Moore's essays are freely available on his website: <http://www.jasonwmoore.com/Essays.html>; also, see Sharae Deckard's "Mapping the World Ecology"; Part IV of *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities* (Deloughrey, E., Didur, J., & Carrigan, A. 2015) also features a selection of literary approaches to "world-ecology."

2. See, for example, <http://thegalwayreview.com/2015/04/28/an-taibhdhearc-theatre-walter-macken-centenary-celebrations/>

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Michael Paye is a 3rd-year IRC-funded PhD candidate at the School of English, Drama and Film at University College Dublin.

Sadia Zulfiqar Conference Assistance Fund

I completed my PhD in English Literature at the University of Glasgow in 2014. My thesis researched the politics of identity and gender in the work of African women writers, focusing specifically on authors such as Mariama Bâ (Senegal), Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe), and Leila Aboulela (Sudan). I currently teach African Women's Writing and 20th Century Fiction and Non-Fiction at Lahore College for Women University, Pakistan. I have recently edited a collection of essays with Dr Sumita Mukherjee of Kings College London. This collection, entitled *Islam and the West: A Love Story?*, advances the discussion around the politics of Muslim authorial identity. However, rather than focusing purely on stereotypes, the critical writings in this volume attempt to locate hidden spaces and alternate frames in media, literature, and cinema which can help in building a dialogue between Islam and the West.

I have presented research papers at various conferences both in the UK and Pakistan, and I am grateful to the PSA for their financial support for a conference paper that I delivered last year at the University of Sussex. I presented a paper

entitled "I'm Not of Them But I'm Not One of You': Colonial Education and Tsitsi Dangarembga's Women" at the African Studies Association Biennial Conference 9th-11th September. My paper discussed the representations of colonial education in the work of African authors. In *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o condemns the alienating effects of colonial education. According to Ngũgĩ, this system of colonial education initiates cultural alienation, which further causes the divide within the self. This violence embedded in colonial education, according to Ngũgĩ, causes psychic disintegration and stupefaction on an individual and collective scale. This divide within the self is evident in Samba Diallo, the male protagonist in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's novel *Ambiguous Adventure* (1962). As Kane puts it in the novel, "[o]n the black continent it began to be understood that their true power lay not in the cannons of the first morning, but rather in what followed the cannons" (Kane 1972, 49). A European style of education, offered only to an African elite, satisfied African political ambitions for their economic and social advancement while simultaneously contributing to the establishment of a cultural and ideological

identity that replicated that of the imperial power, and which could be exploited and manipulated whenever the need should arise. However, the ignorance of gender and class as important categories inhibit the nuanced understanding of colonial education. My paper addressed this significant gap in the politics of colonial education in postcolonial scholarship, and investigated how gender and class dynamics complicate Ngũgĩ and Kane's argument. This conference provided me with a space and a place to exchange ideas and interact with the academics with whom I share my research interests. As I am located in Pakistan and attending conferences abroad is often very

costly, the financial support from the Postcolonial Studies Association UK was particularly crucial and very much appreciated.

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Other recipients of the 2015/16 competitions include:

Aurang Zeb Mughal (Conference/Symposium Organization)

Lara Atkin (General Research Fund Runner-Up)

For further information and to apply to this year's funding competitions, please go to:

<http://www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/funding/>

The deadline for applications is **31 August, 2015**.



2015 PSA/JPW Postgraduate Essay Prize

This is the 6th year of the postgraduate essay prize, which is awarded in collaboration with the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. This year's competition was judged by Anna Bernard (KCL), Lorna Burns (St Andrews), Claire Chambers (York), Corinne Fowler (Leicester), Dave Gunning (Birmingham) and Robert Spencer (Manchester).



Annaliese Hoehling
(University of Massachusetts, Amherst) was awarded first prize for her essay "The Productive 'Marvelous Real': Alejo Carpentier's En-Folding of Revolution in *The Kingdom of This World*".

Our first runner-up is **Mahruba Tasneem Mowtushi** (King's College London) with the essay "The 'Artful' Body and the Bengali Art Critic: Hemendrakumar Roy in Search of Beauty".

Our second runner-up is **Stefanie Rudig** (University of Innsbruck), for her essay "Lady Barker – Writing Colonial New Zealand".

The PSA would like to extend its congratulations to the winners, as well as its thanks to all those who submitted essays for this year's competition. The judges consistently praise the standard displayed by the entries, which stand as a testament to the exciting work that continues to be done in the field of postcolonial studies.

For updates on our next competition, please go to:
<http://www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/pg-essay-prize/>



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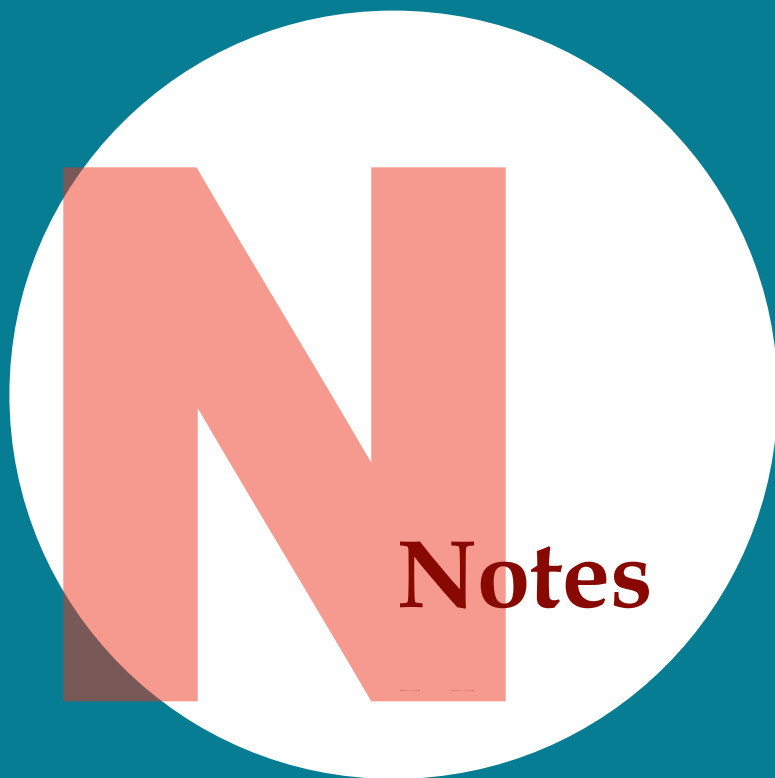
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PSA OFFICERS

Chair Anshuman Mondal
anshuman.mondal@brunel.ac.uk

Vice-Chair Nicola Abram
n.l.abram@reading.ac.uk

Membership Secretary Sarah Ilott
s.ilott@tees.ac.uk

Executive Secretary Humaira Saeed
humaira.saeed@ntu.ac.uk

Treasurer Jenni Ramone
jenni.ramone@ntu.ac.uk

Website Officer Kasia Mika
enkmm@leeds.ac.uk

Postgraduate/Early Career Officer
Alberto Fernandez Carbajal
afc9@leicester.ac.uk

Newsletter Editors Lucinda Newns & Dominic Davies
l.newns@qmul.ac.uk
dominic.davies@st-annes.ox.ac.uk

Bulletin Coordinator Rabaha Arshad
rabaha_arshad@yahoo.co.uk

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

psa@postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk
www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/

Postcolonial Studies Association
Armstrong House, First Avenue, Robin Hood Airport
Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN9 3GA, UK

CREDITS

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