



No. 1 (August 2008)

Postcolonial Studies Association Newsletter



A luncheon after the PSA inaugural meeting on 8 May, 2008, Oxford.

Welcome to the PSA !

Perhaps you have an exciting project you would like to discuss with like-minded colleagues. Maybe you need a third member for a conference panel, or are looking for feedback on a paper you have just written. You may urgently need someone to cover some lectures for a few weeks or lead one of your department's research seminars. If you are working within the broad field of postcolonial studies, the PSA will give you access to a multidisciplinary, friendly network that might be able to help with these and other matters.

Although the first planning meetings to set up the PSA took place less than six months ago, the Association has grown considerably in such a short amount of time, gathering around 150 scholars from the UK and abroad with a wide range of research interests. In order to develop further, however, we would actively welcome the contribution of anybody with a bit of time on their hands, new ideas and the will to make them happen. We are already working on various events and initiatives described in other sections of this newsletter, but would be delighted to establish collaborations with parallel organisations and research centres, consider proposals for other events and projects, receive suggestions for sponsorship and funding, and benefit from any other input that you can offer.

2008-2009 will be an exciting year for the PSA, and we hope that you will contribute to its development by participating in its committees, attending conferences and colloquia, or simply forwarding this and future newsletters to all those who might find them of interest. Should you need any further information about the PSA, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Marta Vizcaya (PSA External Relations Officer)

Dear colleagues,

Thanks to the efforts of the provisional committee, the Postcolonial Studies Association is now well on its way to becoming properly established as a professional organisation.

This initiative has arisen for a number of reasons. It is often the case that researchers on postcolonial topics work in relative isolation. Despite apparent gains in institutional recognition, many of us still find ourselves confronted by hostility to our field. Funding issues, such as the recent slashing of £12 million from the AHRC budget, are of significant concern. And it is all too painfully obvious that, in many cases, the topics we study are directly relevant to understanding the violence, expropriation, and exploitation that is the legacy of colonialism and its contemporary forms.

Given this context, it makes sense for us to work more closely together. The PSA aims to facilitate interaction between scholars working on topics related to postcolonial studies, broadly defined. This means, among other things, that we will be an information hub, organise and assist in organising conferences and research colloquia, create links with other research centres and between universities, run an online journal, and publish a newsletter. We are strongly committed to being interdisciplinary and international, to including scholars working in languages other than English and to upholding the principle that activism and scholarship should be complementary activities.

We are planning a full meeting of the PSA to take place in Cambridge on 25 October 2008. Please put this date in your diary and aim to come if you can.

Chris Warnes (PSA Chair)

*** ANNOUNCEMENT ***

**The PSA website is up and running.
Please visit [http://](http://www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/)**

www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/

Inside this issue:

From PSA Chair 2
*Postcolonialism:
A personal view*

From Vice-Chair 3
*Intersecting margins
or on being postcolonial*

Ranka Primorac 4
*News from Post-
colonial centres*
*Featuring the centre
in Leeds, and news
from Kent, Exeter,
Royal Holloway etc*

*Events & Current
research projects* 6
*The 2008 EACLALS
conference report;
Making of Britain etc*

*Recent Postcolonial
Publications* 8

PSA committees 9

Call for Papers 10
*The PSA Inaugural
Conference*

*PSA Membership
Fees & information* 11

Postcolonialism: A personal view

Chris Warnes

I was born in Zimbabwe when it was still named – in an act of mind-bending hubris – Rhodesia, in the city of Salisbury, now Harare. Reversing the direction of colonial settlement, my parents moved southwards, to Johannesburg, then southwards again to Port Elizabeth, then finally to Cape Town, from where it is no longer possible to move any further south without falling off the map of Africa. Growing up under apartheid, I was one of the few who lived a life of relative ease while tens of thousands of South Africans were being detained, tortured or killed by security police, and up to three million others were uprooted by forced removals. I lived in a whites-only neighbourhood, attended a whites-only school. It was a racist bubble, but it was impossible not to notice the realities that impinged from all sides. Growing up the 1980s, our teachers were young men fresh from combat in Angola. One day a week we wore military uniforms and drilled on the rugby fields. As teenagers we were taken on camps in the bush, made to carry loads and run in combat boots, taught to apply boot polish to our faces, and trained to shoot R4 rifles into sand-dunes. Bombs went off in bars, the townships were ablaze. *Swart gevaar* (the black threat) was the buzzword, there was a red under every bed. This was, PW Botha told us, the age of total onslaught.

And then, without knowing entirely what he was letting himself in for, FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC and allied anti-apartheid organisations, and the release of political prisoners. It was unexpected at the time, though retrospectively it is clear that the pressure from both inside and outside the country had pushed apartheid to breaking point. Four years of talks about talks, talks, and bloodshed later, on 27 April 1994, South Africa held its first democratic elections, with Nelson Mandela installed as president (the same Mandela Margaret Thatcher once described as “a terrorist who should be shot”). The foreign press had sent their toughest war correspondents to cover what they expected was to be a bloodbath, but the day turned out one of the most peaceful in recent memory.

South Africans are rightly proud of the transformation of their country. The great achievement of the post-apartheid period is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which saw victims and perpetrators of apartheid-era injustices brought together to induce, on behalf of the nation, a collective catharsis that might lead to healing.

But critics like Patrick Bond and Benita Parry point out that the ‘rainbow romanticism’ associated with the TRC and other nation-building endeavours occludes real historical engagement with the past, and with the conditions of possibility that made apartheid happen. In Bond’s terms, South Africa’s transformation can be understood as an *elite transition*, a handing over of power from one elite to another leaving much else unchanged. To put it bluntly, apartheid was a system of racialised capitalism, and South Africa is still, by and large, characterised by the same system, with the only change being that a small number of blacks have now joined the ranks of the rich and the super-rich.

So, while I am sensitive to the problems of the term postcolonialism (among others that it posits European colonialism as the defining moment in world history; and that it misleadingly suggests that colonialism is a thing of the past) the most compelling reason I stand by it is because it speaks to me on a personal level. White South Africans like me have a duty to learn how to be a minority, to embrace being African, to divest ourselves of racist, colonising mentalities and to understand why and how such a history was perpetrated in our name. J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* explores this process very powerfully: David Lurie may not like it, but history demands of him that he becomes postcolonial. It’s a moving lesson.

It is manifestly clear that lessons such as these are not at all limited to South Africa. As Patrick Bond has shown, globalised capitalism operates very similarly to apartheid. When I watch British television, or talk to friends and colleagues, or read the newspaper, or listen to the radio, I am often reminded of the bubble of ignorance in which I spent the first 17 years of my life. Most Europeans have not begun to consider the ways their prosperity, their systems of thought, their very cultural sense of selfhood are predicated upon histories of violence, appropriation and exploitation. The absence of this knowledge makes ethical action unlikely, and indeed is a prerequisite for atrocities such as the destabilisation of Iraq since 2003. Postcolonialism offers us some of the tools we need to understand why and how this situation has arisen, and what we need to do about it.



PSA Chair : Chris Warnes

Chris Warnes was born in Zimbabwe and grew up in South Africa. He studied at the Universities of Cape Town and KwaZulu-Natal before moving to the UK to do a PhD at Cambridge University where he was a Cambridge Commonwealth Trust scholar. He held a lectureship at Stellenbosch University in South Africa in 2004 and 2005 and then moved back to the UK to take up his current post as Lecturer in Postcolonial and Related Literatures in the Faculty of English, Cambridge University. He is a fellow of St John’s College, where he directs studies in English and in 2008 he served as Acting Director of the African Studies Centre. His book, *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence*, will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in late 2008. He is currently working on a study of South African literature in the post-apartheid period.

Intersecting margins or on being postcolonial

Ranka Primorac

"As a political discourse, the position from which [postcolonial theory] is enunciated (...) is located on the three continents of the South", writes Robert Young in a canon-making volume.¹ Statements such as this always unsettle me slightly. This is because I cannot straightforwardly locate myself, or the discourses I participate in enunciating, either in "the west" or in one of the three continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America that Young writes about. The political entity from which some of the writing and thinking that has helped shape my sense of self was articulated – former Yugoslavia – no longer exists. When it collapsed in the early 1990s I was far away, living in Southern Africa, and did not witness the bitter war which came to define the identity of Croatia, my "new" nation of origin. I left Southern Africa shortly after becoming eligible for a Zimbabwean passport, and just before this second home also underwent a major social crisis. Now, in London, I feel European and non-western simultaneously, and although I speak English fluently, most people find my hybrid accent impossible to place. Does all of this make my subject position "postcolonial"? Here are some intellectual snapshots from a personal history of inhabiting intersecting margins.

It is early 1989 and I am a newly-enrolled Masters student at the University of Zimbabwe. The Berlin wall is still standing; the class is discussing the evils of European colonisation. At the end of a particularly heated anti-colonial remark, a fellow student turns to me and says: "Sorry, Primorac, but that's how it was." I am aghast. Surely she must know that I am on her side, and that my ancestors had had nothing to do with any of *that*? Since my arrival in Zimbabwe, several new acquaintances have praised the leading role of my country in the Non-Aligned movement, and the help it gave to liberation struggles around the world. But for some members of this course on "African Literature and Ideological Thought", the words "white", "European" and "colonising" appear to be synonymous. I resolve to set the record straight, but soon I have other worries. On the course reading list is an author called Frantz Fanon, whom I have never heard of before. I find he writes brilliantly about global historical struggles and inequalities. I am engrossed, but soon realise with horror that Fanon is a Marxist. Compulsory Marxism in the Yugoslav state education system is what I have been running away from: there is no way I will ever be able to explain to my friends at the University of Zagreb that I am convinced by Fanon's arguments! We are made to read Lenin next. No-one knows of or uses the word "postcolonial".

It is 1999 and I am a PhD candidate in the UK. It has taken me a week to write it, but I have finally submitted to a journal my first-ever publication in English: a review of an edited volume on an avant-garde Zimbabwean writer. The volume attempts to rescue the writer's critical reputation from negative nationalist appraisals by divorcing his work entirely from the notion of national belonging. I argue that this does him a disservice. After I show the review to a senior colleague, he says it is well-written, but not "properly postcolonial". I am puzzled. What does he mean? The review has been commissioned by an "international journal of postcolonial studies".

It is 2008 and reviews of my own first monograph are trickling in. In a descriptive passage, a reader refers to the "Eastern European theories of narratology" the book deploys alongside M. M. Bakhtin, Henri Lefebvre and others. I think of Dipesh Chakrabarty's denunciation of the historicism inherent in European scholarship – the idea that "past European thinkers are never quite dead for us in the same way" as, say, South Asian ones,² and wonder if I am right in being vaguely dissatisfied that the Zagreb theorists my book makes central use of were not named by the reviewer. Is there a hidden hierarchy of historicity lurking *within* the notion of "European" theory? Are some theories *inherently* less useful or important than others? It seems to me that emancipatory discursive practice should strive to resist closure. I am still not sure I know how to be, live or write "properly". But I am committed to trying to understand contemporary literatures and cultures in a spirit of opposition to mastery and domination of all kinds, and I am prepared to do so by any (conceptual) means necessary.



PSA Vice-chair : Ranka Primorac

Ranka Primorac was born in 1963 in Zagreb, Croatia, and she has degrees from the universities of Zagreb, Zimbabwe and Nottingham Trent. She has taught courses on postcolonialism at a number of institutions of higher learning and is now a teaching fellow at the Department of English, University of Southampton. Ranka has written widely about Zimbabwean literature and culture: she is the author of *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* (2006) and co-editor of *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* (2005) and *Zimbabwe in Crisis: The International Response and the Space of Silence* (2007). She is currently preparing edited collections on Zimbabwe's new diasporas and on African city textualities (both forthcoming in 2009), and is about to embark on a BA-funded research project on contemporary Zambian writing. Ranka's research interests are centred on the social and political functioning of literary fictions. She joins PSA in the hope of promoting its agendas on multi-disciplinarity and comparativism, and helping to include non-UK members and organisations.

1. Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 4.

2. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton UP, 2000), p. 6.

Note: In each newsletter, we will feature Postcolonial centres / groups and prominent people in the PSA. If you'd like your group, event etc to be featured in this section, please write to Lucienne Loh luciennehloh@gmail.com

Institute for Colonial and Postcolonial Studies (ICPS) University of Leeds

By Will Jackson

Established in 2005, in just three years Leeds University's Institute for Colonial and Postcolonial Studies (ICPS) has become a leading international research centre for colonial and postcolonial research. The Institute was founded within the Faculty of Arts, bringing together the Schools of English, History, Modern Languages and Theology and Religious Studies. Since its inception, however, the Institute has continued to look outwards and it now attracts attention from students and staff across the university.

While the ICPS has been helping to realise connections across the university, it has also been reaching beyond the leafy confines of campus. Since its foundation, a major aim of the ICPS was to build research networks and collaborative relationships with institutions, groups and individuals around the world. Series of video seminars, run throughout each academic year, have brought together scholars from Europe, North America, Africa and Australia and through the World Universities Network (WUN) the ICPS has forged significant partnerships with various universities and research centres overseas.

Not least among these is our burgeoning relationship with the 'Nation, Empire, Globe' research cluster at the University of Sydney. For the past two summers, students from Leeds have attended Sydney's prestigious 'Nation, Empire, Globe Postgraduate Intensive' and in September 2008, students from Sydney will attend the first ICPS postgraduate conference to be held at Leeds. In collaboration with Sydney, in November 2008 the Institute will launch an on-line 'e-journal' dedicated to colonial and postcolonial studies.

As a platform for staging major public events and for developing collaborative research projects across interdisciplinary, institutional and geographical boundaries, the ICPS has been a major success. Since its inception, the institute has held several major international conferences: on 'Ireland and Empire', on 'Racism, Postcolonialism, Europe', on 'Colonial and Postcolonial Migrations' and on 'Atlantic Slavery in the Age of Revolution.' The institute has also provided the platform to host numerous smaller workshops and seminars, including a groundbreaking workshop on 'Indigenous Cinema' in 2005 and, in 2007, 'Parallel Lines, Parallel Lives?: Comparative Approaches and Dia-

logues in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies'. This latter event, bringing together scholars from around the world, made a pioneering contribution to postcolonial theory, challenging Homi Bhabha's theories concerning relations between the coloniser and the colonised by exploring the nature of lateral relations between colonised and / or postcolonial cultures. During the first three years of its life, the ICPS has attracted numerous leading figures from colonial and postcolonial studies to speak at Leeds, including Bhabha himself, John Darwin, Philomena Essed, Stephen Howe and Mary Louise Pratt.

In 2007, the ICPS launched its first 'in house' Masters programme. This innovative programme offers an interdisciplinary MA in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies and attracts students from a range of academic and cultural backgrounds. Encouraged to work across traditional disciplinary boundaries, students are able to group their option modules geographically, theoretically or linguistically. Alternatively, they can choose an eclectic method, taking options from various diverse fields and learning to become conversant in a wide range of subject matter and methodology. This approach, we hope, reflects the broader aims of the ICPS itself: to foster an interdisciplinary 'open-mindedness' among its affiliates and to continue to work both between and across academic boundaries. Engaging with ideas and approaches beyond one's disciplinary 'comfort zone' is not just desirable, but the necessary precursor to producing scholarship that is genuinely inventive. Providing the institutional space to do this - within and beyond the university - is how the ICPS perceives its role.

If you would like to get involved with the ICPS, or be placed on the institute's mailing list, please contact Ed Kirby, E.N.Kirby@leeds.ac.uk. Enquiries regarding the MA in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies should be made to Professor Graham Huggan, G.D.M.Huggan@leeds.ac.uk. Postgraduates who would like to be in touch with the institute should contact its postgraduate representative, Mr. Will Jackson, hiswj@leeds.ac.uk.

On September 26, 2008, the ICPS is holding its first postgraduate conference, entitled, 'End of Empire?'. The deadline for proposals for presentations is 1 July. Full details, for this and all other institute activities, can be found at www.leeds.ac.uk/icps.



Professor Graham Huggan



Professor Andrew Thompson



Dr Sean McLoughlin



Dr Manuel Barcia

News from Various Centres

The Royal Holloway Postcolonial Research Group runs a regular workshop and seminar programme and holds occasional conferences and symposia. Our 2007-08 programme involved workshops and seminars on Postcolonialism and the Environment; Genocide; Provincialising Europe; and Postcolonialism and the Public Intellectual. We invite distinguished experts from the United Kingdom and abroad to take part in workshops, and among our recent guests are Peter Hulme (Essex), Nigel Clark (Open University) and Simon Gikandi (Princeton). Our latest guest was Jane Taylor (Witwatersrand) on May 14, who led a Postgraduate and Early Career Researchers Workshop on 'The Artist as the Public Intellectual', which was attended by a dozen PhD and Masters students, plus staff and post-docs, from Drama and Theatre, English, Geography, History, Media Arts, Music, and Politics and International Relations. Later that day, Jane spoke on and presented film clips from her current work, The Witbooi Project. Our last event of last term (4 June) was a viewing of the Iranian film "Bashu, the Little Stranger", which was preceded by a presentation by Laudan Nooshin (City University). On July 29, we are hosting 'Postgraduate Research Day 2008: Interrogating the Postcolonial'. Full details of our activities can be found here: <http://www.cameronius.com/helen/RHPRG/>

The Postcolonial Research Group at the University of Kent: This year's sessions included discussions of articles by Ashis Nandy, on 18th century attitudes to the East, a discussion with Professor Lyn Innes of her recently published *Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, readings and discussions with the Charles Wallace visiting writers Namrata Bhawani and Anjum Hasan, which also included a very lively debate on the language issue surrounding Indian writing in English. Postgraduate presentations included Hindi cinema as a postcolonial cinema and the ambivalence of return in Caribbean and Maghribi migrant writing. Our guest speakers Pramod Nayar presented on the Postcolonial Atrocity Memoir on Dalit life writing, Krishna Ghose Sen compared the Black Panther movement and Dalit activism, and Mahmut Mutman spoke on Turkish Nationalism. Furthermore, the centre collaborated with the Centre for Gender and Sexuality's 'Travellers' Tales' series of talks. The sessions provided an interesting forum for our own debates, stimulated our thinking and provided great opportunities to create a community spirit for those interested in Postcolonial Studies in the department. Plans for next year's sessions are already underway and will lead up to a forthcoming conference at Kent on Global Youth Culture.

The University of Exeter houses the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, which held its annual Gulf Studies Conference from 1-4 July 2008. There are currently two members of staff in the Department of English who research and teach colonial and postcolonial literatures: Paul Young is a Victorianist whose research and teaching interests include Globalization in the Victorian period and the Great Exhibition and Jane Poyner specializes in South African apartheid and post-apartheid literatures, teaching postcolonial literatures and theory at both BA and MA levels. Will Higbee in the Department of Modern Languages has research and teaching interests in postcolonial, exilic, diasporic and transnational cinema. With Saër Bâ he organized the recent British Academy funded international conference, 'Re-Presenting Diasporas in Cinema and New (Digital) Media', at Exeter (July 2007). Poyner has recently joined the Leverhulme-funded Exeter Centre for Ethno-politics (EXCEPS) and she, Young and Higbee are part of Exeter's Migrations Research Network (MRN), directed by Professor Regenia Gagnier. Poyner is planning a 2010 international conference on contemporary Southern African literatures to be held at the University.

International Centres for Postcolonial Studies

In this section, we aim to introduce and showcase Postcolonial centres and groups outside the UK and Ireland. In this issue, we are delighted to feature **The Centre for Postcolonial Writing at Monash University, Australia.**



Information about the Centre is available at:

<http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/postcolonial-writing/index.php>

The Centre for Postcolonial Writing (CPW) is an international research base embedded in the School of English, Communications and Performance Studies at Monash University, Australia. It provides a stimulating forum for the exchange of creative and intellectual inquiry in postcolonial studies by organising visits, fellowships and writer's residencies for distinguished scholars and creative writers. It aims to promote excellence in teaching and research by offering innovative postgraduate courses, developing resources for undergraduate teaching, and undertaking a vigorous research and publications program.

Since its inception in 2002, the Centre has biennially hosted prominent postcolonial scholars. In 2004, collaborating with the State Library of Victoria and in celebration of its 150th anniversary, the Centre presented an international Literary Forum with Professors Homi Bhabha, Janette Turner Hospital, Kim Scott and Robert Drewe as keynote speakers. In 2006, CPW organised an international conference in Kolkata in collaboration with Calcutta University. In 2008, Professor Harish Trivedi from Delhi University presented the lecture, 'An Alternative Postcolonial: Language Location, and Culture' followed by a discussion with Profs Bill Ashcroft, Bruce Bennett, Lynette Russell and Paul Sharrad as Participating Chair.

In addition to these biennial events, the Centre has guest-edited high quality international research journals including *Meanjin* and *New Literatures Review*. The Centre extends its activities locally, domestically and internationally. Important international research exchanges have been formed including with the Universities of Oxford and Harvard. Furthermore, CPW is contracted to leading world publishers such as Routledge, on long term fully funded research projects.

Isabella Ofner

Report on EACLALS Conference 25-29 March 2008, Venice, Italy

By Francesca Giommi (University of Padua)

Janet Wilson (University of Northampton)

Elleke Boehmer (University of Oxford)

Set in the tranquil location of the Island of San Servolo, in the Venice Laguna, the 2008 EACLALS Triennial Conference was jointly hosted by the University of Padua, Ca' Foscari University and Venice International University, with Professor Annalisa Oboe (Università degli Studi di Padova) and Professor Shaul Bassi (Università Ca' Foscari) as conference organizers and conveners.

As the title of the conference suggested – *Try Freedom: Rewriting Rights in/through Postcolonial Cultures* – the conference aimed to explore and articulate the interests of the postcolonial in discourses of/on freedom and human, civil and cosmopolitical rights. Scholars, philosophers, writers, thinkers and students from academies and institutions throughout the world and across a range of academic disciplines gathered in Venice from 25th to 29th March 2008 to discuss the much needed rethinking of apparently universally accepted human values, such as freedom and democracy, in a global era increasingly threatened by the spread of different fundamentalisms and the deeper and deeper fracture between the Western world and 'its others'.

In the lively and convivial atmosphere of the conference, guests and participants developed a theoretical debate around issues as diverse as global citizenship and cosmopolitical rights, new geo-political models and eco-environmental questions. Achille Mbembe from South Africa opened the conference with the keynote address "*Reflections on Death and Freedom in Black Thought*". He was followed by a series of illustrious speakers and contributors: Berndt Ostendorf interrogated his audience on the "*Freedom of What Religion?*" while Gil Anidjar, Adriana Cavarero, Robert Young, and Patrick Williams in subsequent plenary sessions offered interesting and thought-provoking reflections titled respectively "*The Blood of Freedom*", "*Horrorism: Towards a Postcolonialism and Ethics*", "*The Right to Resist*", and "*Sartre's 'Morality and History': Ethics for Postcolonial Times*".

A dense schedule of panels and roundtables covered a range of topics, such as the transformation of postcolonial paradigms under the impact of diaspora studies and migration practice, globalization theory, biopolitics and contemporary ethics, war, imperial violence, slavery and resistance, sacred rights, animal and human rights, right to knowledge and information and academic and artistic freedom. All participants agreed on the need for an active inter-disciplinary dialogue as part of a creative response to threats to freedom of speech and creative expression which continue to affect the world of literature and the arts, and on the need to promote new theoretical approaches, to reflect upon how to practice postcolonial pedagogies, and to articulate culturally diversified responses.

Different generations of writers from the five continents at-

A view from the Island of San Servolo, where the EACLALS conference took place.

[Photo: Vera Alexander]



tended the conference, each contributing their unique human and artistic experience. Anita Desai was awarded the Ca' Foscari Prize by the Rector of the University of Venice, Pier Francesco Ghetti, while younger emerging voices, from Chris Abani and Kiran Desai to women writers from the African diaspora in Italy, such as Shirin Fazel, Cristina Uba Ali Farah, and Gabriella Ghermandi, illustrated new ways of w/righting across old and new colonialisms, borders, languages and cultures.

A Wasafiri delegation consisting of Abdulrazak Gurnah, Meena Alexander, Linton Kwesi Johnson, and Elleke Boehmer discussed the possibility of *Writing through Cultures of Terror* and gave suggestive readings from their own work on the same night. In "The Anna Rutherford Memorial Lecture", Alexis Wright questioned the literary imagination of *Carpentaria's* indigenous Australia, while Caryl Phillips concluded the conference with a discussion and reading from his work to an elated and appreciative audience.

Highlights of the conference for visitors to Italy were the beguiling romance of Venice itself with its vistas of land and sea, glittering waterways and looping canals, all experienced at first hand in ferry trips back and forth between San Servolo and the mainland. The mysteries and magic of Venice, situated as it is on the borders between land and sea, Italy and Europe, were beautifully captured in Anita Desai's reading of passages from her novel *Baumgartner's Bombay*. Other memorable moments apart from the scheduled papers and plenaries included the numerous book launches; the sumptuous conference feast, reminiscent of a Fellini movie-set, laid out in a wide corridor, with platters of food held aloft for delegates by waiters swooping in and out; the animated conversations held in the outdoor courtyard spaces and the late night discussions after returning on the ferry.

The incoming members of the EACLALS committee, Janet Wilson (Chair) and Elleke Boehmer (Secretary), congratulate the conference conveners, Annalisa Oboe and Shaul Bassi, for their magnificent organisation in bringing together and coordinating a formidable array of papers from so many institutions and countries. The level of involvement, the collegial networks and intellectual momentum that marked this convention show a flourishing of EACLALS which we hope will continue between triennials. The next EACLALS conference will be held in 2011, the venue to be announced.

Making Britain

South Asian Visions of
Home and Abroad 1870–1950



A photo from the Workshop of April 20 2008. From left to right: Elleke Boehmer, Susheila Nasta, Ruvani Ranasinha, Sumita Mukherjee, Rehana Ahmed.

This 3-year project (2007–10), funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, examines South Asian contributions to Britain's literary, cultural and political life in the period 1870–1950. Complicating the common perception that a homogeneous British culture only began to diversify after the Second World War, it explores how an early diasporic population impacted on British life and helped to form contemporary Britain's cultural-political identities. Extensive archival research and an interdisciplinary approach will illuminate the diverse ways in which South Asian writers, artists, activists and professionals in Britain formed affiliations, groupings and solidarities to create a dynamic 'contact zone' at the heart of empire.

Making Britain will be hosting a number of seminars and workshops during the course of the project, as well as a final conference and exhibition in September 2010 at the British Library. There they will launch a database housing visual tools to imagine South Asian interactions with British life and an annotated bibliography of selected materials relating to South Asian artists, writers, activists and organisations in Britain during the period 1870 to 1950. Past workshops include 'South Asian contact zones in the metropolis' held in London in April 2008 and 'Investigating Asian Bloomsbury' held in Oxford in July 2008 considering respectively South Asians and their varied interactions with the metropolis, and Bloomsbury, central London, as a site of cross-cultural interaction and exchange, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Keynote speakers in April were Antoinette Burton (Professor of Global and Transnational Studies, University of Illinois) addressing the methodology of transnationalism in relation to a migrant doctor, and Partha Mitter (Emeritus Professor of Art History, University of Sussex) addressing ideas of cosmopolitanism. The keynote speaker in July was Kristen Bleumel (Professor of English, Monmouth University) speaking on Mulk Raj Anand and 'intermodernism'.

Making Britain is led by Prof. Susheila Nasta (Open University), in collaboration with Prof. Elleke Boehmer (University of Oxford) and Dr Ruvani Ranasinha (King's College London), and research assistants Dr Sumita Mukherjee (Oxford), Dr Rehana Ahmed (Open), and Dr Florian Stadler (Open). The team is working in partnership with the British Library and SALIDAA, and in consultation with leading scholars Dr Rozina Visram, Prof. Lyn Innes, Prof. Partha Mitter and Dr Deborah Swallow.

For further information:

www.open.ac.uk/arts/south-asians-making-britain/

E-mail:

arts-making-britain@open.ac.uk

Sumita Mukherjee



Postgraduate Postcolonial Conference

**Postcolonial Methods:
Critical Approaches from Anglophone,
Francophone and Hispanic Studies**

The University of Westminster hosted its first Postgraduate conference on Postcolonial Studies on March 7 2008. The conference was an all day event and was divided into three sessions. The morning was devoted to the Anglophone Postcolonial field, whereas the afternoon hosted the French and Hispanic Postcolonial studies. The conference attracted key speakers belonging to each subject field. These speakers took part in interviews and question and answer sessions. Professor Janet Wilson, English and Postcolonial Studies, University of Northampton was in conversation with Bobby Flora-Bhambra; Professor Charles Forsdick, Francophone Postcolonial Studies, University of Liverpool was in conversation with Laurence Randall; and Dr. Claire Taylor, Hispanic Studies, University of Liverpool was in conversation with both interviewers. Postgraduate students presented papers on a range of topics under the theme of 'Methods in Postcolonial Studies'. In addition to providing an opportunity for doctoral students to share current research in the field, this conference met its aim to foster and promote a platform for students to gain experience and exposure in presenting papers. The number of those in attendance and the quality of presentations proved the event to be a great success.

Laurence Randall

Recent Publications

Decolonising Gender

Literature and a poetics of the real

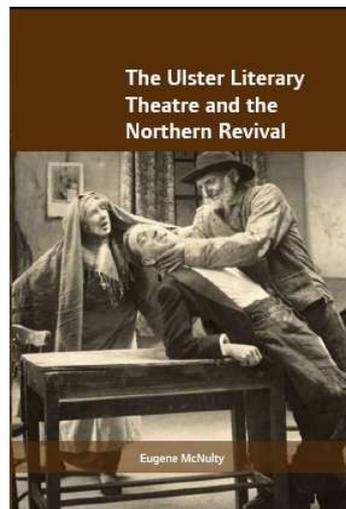
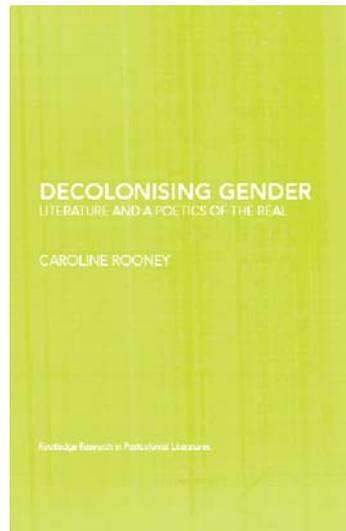
By Caroline Rooney

Routledge: Nov 2007, 246 pp ISBN: 978-0-415-42418-9 [hardback] / 978-0-203-93359-6 [electronic]

This innovative study challenges a possessive or colonising approach to questions of gender. Through an illuminating selection of cross-cultural readings from African and queer writing to a shamanistic Shakespeare, Rooney examines the Western universalisation of performativity, maintaining that performative techniques are often used to promote conformity. She suggests that language, particularly in its literary and poetic uses, is able to exhibit a consciousness of the reality of others that operates in excess of the much debated performative and self-referential modes of textuality.

Decolonising Gender offers a way out of some of the current deadlocks of feminist theory through an anti-essentialist approach to gender in which both male and female readers may address a consciousness of the feminine. It further offers a platform for postcolonial and postmodernist thinkers to engage in a dialogue around the status of the performative in regard to the other and a new theory of poetic realism in both canonical and postcolonial literatures.

Negotiating a path between feminist theory's common pitfalls of essentialism and constructivism, Caroline Rooney argues convincingly that by rethinking our understanding of gender we might also equip ourselves to resist racism and totalitarianism more effectively.



The Ulster Literary Theatre and the Northern Revival

By Eugene McNulty

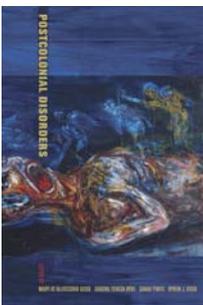
Cork University Press, 2008, 272 pp. ISBN: 978-185918-427-1, hardback

This book challenges many of the conventional views about the Irish Revival and argues that the Ulster Literary Theatre should be recognized as an alternative centre for the Irish Revival in the early twentieth century.

In the course of this study a number of key issues are re-examined: the Ulster Literary Theatre's relationship with the Abbey Theatre; Ulster's role in the Irish Literary Revival; the interaction between northern cultural nationalism and an evolving Ulster Unionist politics. In all of this McNulty argues for a reassessment of the politics of the Revival, and insists upon the importance of a 'northern revival' and its significance for a fuller understanding of this crucial period in Irish history.

The Ulster Literary Theatre was considered by many contemporaries to be the equal of the Abbey Theatre, certainly in terms of energy, output and nationalist commitment. In the first decade of its existence this Belfast company produced a number of significant and exciting works, including the early efforts of Rutherford Mayne and the extraordinary burlesques of Gerald MacNamara. In so doing, it provided a key forum in which Ulster's cultural politics could be explored and performed. Drawing particularly on the northern group's early history, Eugene McNulty explores this intriguing performance history of Belfast's own nationalist theatre.

Note : PSA members can post information about their recent postcolonial publications free in the Newsletter. Please send details of your book (up to 200 words) to Kaori Nagai K.Nagai@kent.ac.uk



Postcolonial Disorders

Edited by Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, Sandra Teresa Hyde, Sarah Pinto, and Byron J. Good (University of California Press, 2008)

The essays in this volume reflect on the nature of subjectivity in the diverse places where anthropologists work at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Contributors explore everyday modes of social and psychological experience, the constitution of the subject, and forms of subjection that shape the lives of Basque youth, Indonesian artists, members of nongovernmental HIV/AIDS programs in China and the Republic of Congo, psychiatrists and the mentally ill in Morocco and Ireland, and persons who have suffered trauma or been displaced by violence in the Middle East and in South and Southeast Asia.

The Postcolonial and the Global

Edited by Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley (University of Minnesota Press, Dec 2007)

This interdisciplinary work brings the humanities and social sciences into dialogue by examining issues such as globalized capital, discourses of antiterrorism, and identity politics. Essayists from the fields of postcolonial studies and globalization theory address the ethical and pragmatic ramifications of opposing interpretations of these issues and, for the first time, seek common ground. Contributors: Pal Ahluwalia, Arjun Appadurai, Geoffrey Bowker, Timothy Brennan, Ruth Buchanan, Verity Burgmann, Pheng Cheah, Inderpal Grewal, Ramón Grosfoguel, Barbara Harlow, Anouar Majid, John McMurtry, Walter D. Mignolo, Sundhya Pahuja, R. Radhakrishnan, Ileana Rodríguez, E. San Juan, Saskia Sassen, Ella Shohat, Leslie Sklair, Robert Stam, Madina Tlostanova, Harish Trivedi.



The PSA Committees

The PSA has appointed a number of committees with the aim of diversifying our activities. If you are interested in getting involved with any of the committees, please contact the spokesperson (indicated by * on the list)

Constitution Committee

Amrit Biswas
Amina Yaquin
Janet Wilson
* Charles Forsdick
C.Forsdick@liverpool.ac.uk

Publications Committee

Amrit Biswas
Michelle Keown
Patricia Krus
Christine O'Dowd-Smyth
Jayne Poyner
* Alex Tickell alex.tickell@port.ac.uk

PSA Conference Committee

Christine O'Dowd-Smyth on behalf of Waterford Institute of Technology (Ireland)
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Postcolonial Studies Database Committee

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Postgraduate Conference Committee

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Online Journal Committee

Michelle Keown
Bobby Flora-Bhambra
Kath Kerr-Koch
Laurence Randall
Asia Zgadza
*Nancy Roberts nancyr7@hotmail.com

Online journal committee

The online journal committee are looking into the possibility of setting up an online journal for PSA members, which would be peer-reviewed and would offer a forum for postgraduates and early career academics to get published. We would also hope to be able to publish conference proceedings linked to the annual PSA conference, as well as book reviews of publications by PSA members. More news will follow on this shortly.

Constitution Committee

Our aim is to draft a constitution for PSA, reflecting discussion at previous meetings and drawing on examples of best practice from analogous organisations. Our aim is to present this document to the next meeting of the Association in Cambridge on 25 October 2008. After approval of the constitution, it will be for the Executive to decide whether to disband the Committee, or to maintain its membership for ad hoc consultation should constitutional questions (or the need for amendments) arise.

Publication Committee

The PSA publication committee aims to promote the publication activities of PSA members. Amongst the committee's activities will be researching publishing outlets for postcolonial academics, providing a list of contacts, and giving advice on how to go about seeking publication, particularly to junior scholars.

PSA Conference Committee

The committee is preparing for the inaugural PSA conference: **RE-IMAGINING IDENTITY: NEW DIRECTIONS IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES** to be held in Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford, Republic of Ireland (6-8, May 2009). This multi-disciplinary (multi-textured) conference will provide a space, not only for postcolonial self-reflexivity – but also where 're-imagining identity' will include a re-questioning of perceived 'understandings' (and therefore 'directions') of post-colonialism as a field (see p.10 for the call for papers)

Database committee

The committee's main objective is to undertake a survey of postcolonial studies in the UK and Ireland. Our work will consist in gathering information about individuals, societies, research groups and graduate programmes involved in postcolonial studies in the broadest possible sense. Our first task will be to compile a list of contacts across various disciplines prior to sending out a questionnaire to researchers, departments, centres as well as organisations. The resulting database will help develop links with external organisations, gain an insight into the main areas of research and identify topics and groups for future development and collaboration. By making the information available on the PSA website we hope to facilitate exchanges and debates between members.

PSA Postgraduate Committee

The postgraduate committee aims to foster discussion and understanding of new research in postcolonial studies undertaken by postgraduate students at UK and Irish universities and to build upon networks between doctoral students. The committee's future plans include organising a conference in late 2008/early 2009, providing research training (in the form of workshops or symposiums) for students and establishing a peer-reviewed on-line journal run by postgraduate researchers working in the area of postcolonial studies. We welcome involvement from other doctoral students who are interested in joining the committee and taking part in future events. The current committee is made up of Bobby Flora-Bhambra and Laurence Randall of University of Westminister and Brian Rock of University of Stirling. Bobby and Laurence recently organised a postgraduate conference in Postcolonial Studies at University of Westminister and Brian is involved in the Centre of Commonwealth Studies at University of Stirling.

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE INAUGURAL CONFERENCE OF
THE POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

**RE-IMAGINING IDENTITY:
NEW DIRECTIONS IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES**

6 - 8 MAY 2009

WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, WATERFORD, REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Keynote speakers: TBA

This inaugural conference of the Postcolonial Studies Association will focus on a broad re-consideration of the cultural, political, theoretical and practical re-imaginings of the concept of 'identity' as it relates to the field of Postcolonialism and the wider Humanities and the Social Sciences.

The conference aims both to explore current understandings of 'identity' in a multicultural, globalised and conflicted world, and to encourage disciplinary self-reflexivity. We welcome papers that interrogate the conceptual category of identity itself, as well as those that relate to the ways specific identities are constructed, assigned or imagined. Questions to be asked will include: 'What is the future of Postcolonialism as a discipline?' and: 'What is the relationship between received understandings of "identity", specific formulations of key contemporary identities, and our understanding of "the postcolonial"?'

The PSA invites papers from academics working in the disciplines of Literature, History, Cultural Studies, Film, Human Geography, Linguistics, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Art, Music, Media & Communication and related fields. Our aim is to bring together a wide variety of scholarly interests and methodological approaches.

Paper or panel topics may focus on the following conceptual intersections:

- ◆ Identity, religion and spirituality (the secular & sacred, New Age & alternative spiritualities, the Enlightenment, sectarianism, religious symbolism, fundamentalism)
- ◆ Identity and time (history, memory, policy, repetition, development, modernity, eternity, death)
- ◆ Identity and language (language policy, seizing the pen, language as mission & calling, propaganda)
- ◆ Identity and politics (resistance, war, terror)
- ◆ Identity and space (regions, blocs, global flows, the EU & the wider world, the environment)
- ◆ Identity, theory and disciplinary boundaries (postcolonialism as a discipline, theoretical approaches, the policing of knowledge, multidisciplinary, comparative postcolonialisms)

Panels will normally comprise three 20-minute papers. Proposal acceptance is subject to organising committee approval.

To submit a paper or panel proposal, contact Dr Christine ODowd-Smyth on CODOWDSMYTH@wit.ie or email psa@postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk

Closing date for abstract submission: 1 December 2008

For more information, contact Dr Gerri Kimber at gerri@thekimbers.co.uk or Dr Marta Vizcaya at martavizcaya@hotmail.com

To join the Postcolonial Studies Association please email: psa@postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk



Postcolonial Studies Association

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Communications Officers (Newsletter)
Kaori Nagai & Lucienne Loh (e-mail: see above)

[For the list of the PSA committee members, see p. 9.]

Call for Contributions: PSA Newsletter

The Editors invite your contributions to the newsletter. We welcome any materials related to postcolonial studies, especially conference reviews, book reviews, recent activities and any announcements. We are hoping to have feature articles in each issue; if you would like your group, centre, or project featured in the newsletter, please let us know. We are also hoping that the PSA will become a vibrant forum for current debates on postcolonialism, so we'd like to have your letters or views on any issues in the field.

The PSA newsletter will be published three times a year, and the next issue will be in December. Please send in the materials by the beginning of November, if you would like them to be featured in the next issue.

We are grateful to those who so promptly responded to our requests for materials for this first issue of the PSA newsletter. We look forward to receiving your news.

PSA - Subscription

PSA Membership is open to students, academics and anyone with a scholarly interest in postcolonial topics from any part of the world. The annual membership fees of the Postcolonial Studies Association are **£25** for individual and **£15** for unwaged (this fee may be waived where a case can be made to do so). The benefits of joining the PSA are:

- Regular e-mail bulletins
- Newsletters, three times a year
- Invitations to all meetings and colloquia
- Your research interests listed on the PSA Website
- Access to PSA discussion forums (under construction)
- 30% discount on issues of *Postcolonialism Across the Disciplines* and *Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures*, <http://www.liverpool-unipress.co.uk>.
- Routledge (Taylor and Francis) offers PSA members a 25% discount on individual subscriptions to the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* £41 (STG) and \$67US and 56 Euros for 4 issues p.a. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/>
- 30% on all Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literatures publications until 1st October 2008, after which it will revert to 20%. *Oxford University Press*, <http://www.oup.co.uk>
- Opportunity to join any of the PSA committees

Details are on the membership form which will be put on the PSA website <http://www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk> and can be downloaded. Please contact the membership secretary, Melanie Murray (mel.psa@btinternet.com) for enquiries.