Inaugural PSA Conference

RE-IMAGINING IDENTITY: NEW DIRECTIONS IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES 6 - 8 MAY 2009
Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland

The inaugural PSA conference was a resounding success. The highly engaging key notes by Professors Bill Ashcroft, Neil Lazarus and Declan Kibard, along with the number of the delegates and attendants, the seamless organisation, the enthusiasm and lively discussion, all combined to make the first PSA conference an intellectually charged experience. It successfully brought together many disciplinary perspectives and paved the way for new and exciting directions in Postcolonial Studies. We are currently preparing for a special issue on the conference in collaboration with the Conference Team, with news, impressions, responses to the key notes and photos of the conference, which will be sent out to you shortly; it will also be downloadable from the PSA website. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Christine, Gerri and Asia for all the countless hours of hard work they have contributed to ensuring the success of the conference.

This issue features information from BRICUP (British Committee for the Universities of Palestine), an organisation which encourages British academics to remain conscious of the continuing conflict in the Middle East. Our aim is to offer information which situates postcolonial studies within contemporary political and social contexts, and initiate discussion. We encourage members to get in touch with us with responses to the piece, and also similar information that might broaden the political and intellectual commitments underpinning our collective work. This issue also features an Interview with Ayo Ojeniyi, the managing director of Heinemann Nigeria by our web-officer Asia Zgadzaj, and a detailed conference report from a conference held at SOAS, Others Within and Without: Muslims, Jews and European Identity. The featured postcolonial group for this issue is Manchester, and we have also received reports from Oxford and Kent. In the PSA committee section, we have a report from the Constitution Committee and also news from the PSA’s Working Group on Affiliations. It is our hope that these last two reports will offer members a greater sense of the increasing professional visibility of our organisation. In the recent publications section, we are also delighted to feature a book review of Elleke Boehmer’s latest novel Nile Baby, by Derek Attridge.

This is the last issue for the first year of the PSA. We are most grateful for those who so readily responded to our requests for materials, and also thank you very much to you all for reading our newsletters. We wish to make the newsletter more exciting and viable as a forum for Postcolonial Studies, and we welcome your suggestions and views on the newsletter, as well as any news you would like us to feature. The renewal of annual membership fees is due next September. We wish you all a nice summer vacation.

Kaori Nagai and Lucienne Loh
(Newsletter Editors)
Inspired by Robert Young’s definition of Postcolonial Studies as ‘developing the driving ideas of a political practice morally committed to transforming the conditions of exploitation and poverty in which large sections of the world’s population live out their daily lives’ [Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction (OUP, 2003), p. 6], ‘Postcolonialism Today’ aims to create a forum to situate postcolonial studies – both as intellectual and political endeavours – within contemporary contexts. In this issue, Mike Cushman offers information about BRICUP and the reasons for a boycott against Israeli universities given the continued persecution of the Palestinian people. The editors encourage views and opinions on this article; please direct your comments to the editors via email.

The British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP)

By Mike Cushman

The British Committee for the Universities of Palestine was established in 2004 to respond to the call from Palestine for an academic boycott of Israel.1 This call, issued by the Palestinian Academic Cultural Boycott Initiative (PACBI), has been endorsed by every major NGO and trade union federation in the occupied territories. The call followed the 2002 mobilisation calling for a moratorium on EU and European Science Foundation funding of research in Israel. The immediate stimulus to that call was Israel’s military reoccupation of the West Bank and the closure of West Bank Universities.

The BRICUP boycott call is specific: it is aimed at institutions not individuals.

1. Refusing research collaborations with Israeli institutions or to referee papers or grant applications issuing from such institutions
2. Refusing to attend academic conferences in Israel
3. Supporting Israeli academic colleagues working with Palestinian colleagues in their demand for self-determination and academic freedom
4. Work within our trades unions and professional organisations in support of such actions

Israel’s universities are deeply complicit in the occupation of Palestinian Territory, the settler project and the systemic racism of Israeli society. The complicity is through the support the universities give to the Israeli military, the research they do on arms and the technologies of occupation and on the ideological legitimation of the forms of Israeli society and governance.2

BRICUP also plays a major role in the organisation of the medical and cultural boycotts of Israel. The focus of the medical boycott is in exposing the links between the Israeli Medical Association and the army and the IMA’s condoning of unethical behaviour such as the use of torture and the prevention of many Palestinians from obtaining medical treatment, often in life threatening situations. A recent activity has been a letter signed by over 700 doctors from over 40 countries contesting the appointment of Yoram Blachar, longstanding President of the Israeli Medical Association.3

The cultural boycott is currently involved in trying to persuade Leonard Cohen not to conclude his current world tour with a concert in Tel Aviv. We have been told privately that Cohen believes his visit will support peace efforts and is not a repeat of his 1973 visit when he played for the Israeli Army during the Yom Kippur war and was an unashamed supporter of Israeli military adventurism. However not only does this not justify breaking the boycott, there is still nothing on the public record by Cohen distancing him from occupation and oppression.4

BRICUP organised a protest against Israeli Days of Science in London and Manchester Science Museums earlier this year.5 This campaign attracted wide interest by British newspaper and broadcast media and was reported round the world. The effect of this was so great that the director of AIPAC (the American Israel Political Action Committee, the immensely powerful pro-Israel lobbying group that exercises a dangerous level of influence over the US Congress) cited it as a leading example of the gathering worldwide storm of the condemnation of Israel’s actions.6

BRICUP is actively engaged in trying to halt the expan-
sion of EU research links with Israel through the European Research area. Along with other groups in the UK and across Europe we have been successful in halting the recent proposed expansion of research and trade links.

While this is a major focus of BRICUP’s work there are also efforts to support the work of Palestinian Universities, by fostering joint research with UK universities and supporting twinning arrangements between Palestinian and UK establishments. BRICUP wishes to support the sharing of UK teaching expertise and resources with Palestine through video linked teaching, particularly with universities in Gaza. Gaza universities have had their access to teaching resources strangled by the blockade and much of what little there is was destroyed by bombing and shelling during the invasion earlier this year.

While in its early years BRICUP was the only national organisation campaigning for an academic boycott its example is now being copied in many other countries. We have seen increasing powerful calls for academic boycott on both coasts of the USA, in Canada, France, Spain, Scandinavia, South Africa, Ireland, Australia and elsewhere. The minority of Israeli academics who support the boycott call are now becoming emboldened by the tide of International support and are becoming much more public in their calls for boycott.

Much of BRICUP’s activity has been within the Universities and Colleges Union and the UCU has been the object of a sustained legal campaign by Israel’s apologists to try to prevent debate on boycott. Despite this motions have been passed at the first two congresses of UCU in 2007 and 2008. At the time of writing the freedom to debate these issues at the 2009 congress is being sought. The legal threats by those who seek to defend UCU by bankrupting it have become labyrinthine. The focus the resolutions in 2008 was Ariel College (the College of Judea and Samaria). Ariel was set up in Ariel settlement, a settlement illegal under international law as part of an explicit programme to support expansionist settler activity. The college is controversial even in the context of Israel as it has been sponsored not by the Ministry of Higher Education but by the Ministry of Defence. The apologists have tried to use UK law to get non-violent civil society action against illegal activity declared illegal.

While the supporters of settlement and occupation have been concentrating their anger against UCU many other UK unions have been joining other unions worldwide declaring for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. Among others Unison, Unite, Fire Brigades unions and the Scottish and Irish TUCs have passed pro-BDS motions.

BRICUP identify with the wider BDS movement in Britain and have close links with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the BIG (Boycott Israeli Goods) campaign, J-BIG (Jews for Boycotting) Israeli Goods and the Architects and Planners campaign.

Notes

BRICUP Webpage: http://www.bricup.org.uk/
Interview with Ayo Ojeniyi, Heinemann Nigeria
By Asia Zgadzaj

Ayo, thank you so much for agreeing to participate in the interview. You have been working with HEBN Publishers Plc since 1976. Could you please tell us how did you decide to work at HEBN Publishers and why this company?

Re-joining Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd (now HEBN Publishers Plc) in 1976, was to me like a “second missionary journey”. I first joined Heinemann Nigeria in December 1969 as a clerk, immediately after leaving the grammar school. This gave me the opportunity to be surrounded by prominent African Writers Series (AWS) and science books, among other Heinemann UK books. And this aroused my keen interest in books generally. Indeed, I studied some Heinemann UK science revision books to pass the university entrance examination. After my university education followed by one-year national youth service, and brief stints at teaching in a grammar school and research in a forestry research institute, I re-joined Heinemann as Editor-in-Training in 1976 to further pursue my interest in, and to produce, educational and general books for others.

How much has the company changed in the course of 33 years?

There have been changes in name, ownership, scope of publishing with local books dominant, marketing focus, internal structure, etc. One can in fact consider the changes from two angles which are in tune with new technologies and publishing business strategies. For instance, our name was changed from Heinemann Educational Books to HEBN Publishers Plc in 2006. This was brought about by the divestment of Heinemann UK which was bought over by Harcourt Education which, in turn, has now been acquired by Pearson Education.

We have published an enviable collection of titles which span all levels of education-nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary. Some of our primary and secondary school textbooks are prominent on the recommended booklists of many States in the country. We also have books on contemporary socio-political and economic issues that supplement the examination oriented texts. Furthermore, we have developed a home-grown literary series, HEBN Frontline Series which complements African Writers Series and is designed mainly for new writings and new writers in Africa.

We have participated in many government-sponsored and World Bank-assisted book supplies, including the World Bank Primary Education Project II, in collaboration with the Universal Basic Education Commission, for the procurement of some 2 million local and foreign supplementary readers and library books from Nigeria, Ghana, Cote D’Ivoire, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Europe, the US, etc., and distribution to 1,110 focus primary schools in the country.

As a way of diversification, and to reinforce teaching and learning, we are agents of some British and South African manufacturers for the distribution of early learning kits and non-book instructional materials at primary and junior secondary school levels. In the area of technology, we have had no choice but to change so as to remain relevant. Our pre-press unit is equipped with modern facilities, and our production and accounting workflow is digital. We also have a vibrant website.

An accomplished publisher, he attended the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) and the University of Ibadan, both in Nigeria. Ayo joined Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd, now HEBN Publishers Plc, in July 1976 and has attended various courses in Publishing and Management locally and abroad, including internships with Heinemann UK. He rose through the ranks before his elevation to the position of Managing Director/Chief Executive in January 1995. He was a former Board member of both Obafemi Awolowo University Press Ltd and Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), a former President of the Nigerian Publishers Association and Vice-Chairman, African Publishers Network (APNET)- an umbrella organization of national publishers associations in 46 African countries. He is currently on the Council of Management of African Books Collective (ABC) based in Oxford, UK - an initiative which markets and distributes African publishers’ book to Europe and North America. A Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Publishers and an Honorary Fellow of the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN), he is also on the Board of Afro-Asian Book Council based in New Delhi, India.

He has written a number of papers on publishing, education, etc., and co-edited a book, Issues in Book Publishing in Nigeria.

Ayo Ojeniyi, BSc, MBA
Managing Director/ Chief Executive HEBN Publishers Plc, Nigeria.

In sum, our vision is – to be the leading publishing firm with innovation, and providing high quality books and other instructional materials and an excellent distribution system of global standards. Our goal has been and is still to produce books written, edited, designed, printed and packaged by mostly Nigerians and distributed in Nigeria and elsewhere.

What were the biggest challenges for HEBN Publishers at the beginning when it was established in 1969?
As a brief background information, Heinemann Educational Books was established in Nigeria as a sales outlet of Heinemann Educational Books, UK in 1962. The company has been built from the start and when it was incorporated in Nigeria in 1969 by an all-Nigerian staff.

In 1972 with the Indigenisation Decree, the company
became publicly owned with 40% shareholding by Nigerians while Heinemann Educational Books, UK had 60% of the equity. But this was reversed with the revised Indigenisation Decree of 1977. It became 60% to Nigerians and 40% to HEB, UK. The company became fully owned by Nigerians in 2006 and changed its name from Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc to HEBN Publishers Plc.

The challenges have varied since the company was incorporated in 1969. The capital base had to be enhanced while the Board was constituted with eminent educationists and seasoned entrepreneurs to give clear direction to the company. The company took off steadily and launched its local publishing programme to produce books relevant to the Nigerian situation and curriculum compliant. In this regard, editors, artists, marketers, accountants, etc., had to be recruited. Of course, it was difficult to get qualified and ready-made line and support staff as publishing was not considered as a professional occupation. There was no institutionalized training and what was learnt then was mostly on the job and from ad-hoc courses and internships in UK parent companies. The Nigerian Publishers Association which was formed in 1965 as the mouth-piece of publishers later became the rallying point, especially for training of young publishers, etc.

The African Publishers Network (APNET), the umbrella organization for national publishers associations in 46 African countries also played a prominent role in the training of publishing personnel, particularly with courses affiliated to selected universities in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa.

In spite of the odds, our company has been able to produce relevant educational books in Nigerian languages, English and French, and general books for leisure reading. One of our titles is the outstandingly successful Nigerian Integrated Science Project, a junior secondary school integrated science course, developed by the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN), a foremost curriculum and professional teachers association in Nigeria. The course is an offshoot of the famous Scottish Integrated Science Project, and a precursor of the Caribbean Integrated Science Project and Boleswa (Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland) Integrated Science Project. Our books with international appeal are distributed in Europe and America by African Books Collective (ABC), a cooperative initiative by African publishers based in Oxford, UK.

There are, of course, challenges that have beset the Nigerian publishing industry generally, i.e. inconsistent fiscal and educational policies, by government, piracy (which has worsened in the last decade), reliance on importation of printing paper and coverboard, etc. The National Book Policy which will make books affordable and available in the right quantity, quality and variety is yet to be passed into law.

How do you see the publishing market in Nigeria now for educational books and literature? Is the credit crunch affecting your business and how do you see the future in the light of the recent global economic events?

The publishing market is “thriving more” in the area of educational textbooks. The reform of the government in the education sector, and especially with the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme which makes it compulsory for children from age 6 to be in school for at least 9 years, the Federal, State and Local Governments are intervening in the education sector by building infrastructures, training teachers and providing books and other instructional materials for pupils in schools and colleges. This, coupled with some 25 million pupils in primary schools, 6 million in secondary schools and nearly 3 million in 95 universities, over 158 polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education and other tertiary institutions has had a positive impact on the publishing industry. While piracy and photocopying have not allowed publishers to reach the market they have hoped for, it is a good development that Reproduction Rights Society of Nigeria (REPRONIG) has been licensed to collect remunerations for authors, publishers, etc., from the exploitation of their works through photocopying.

However, the revision of the curriculum in line with the UBE programme and the recent revision of the senior secondary school curriculum have posed great challenges as textbooks at these levels have to be revised in line with the new syllabuses.

As far as literary books go, the story is different. With a low purchasing power, parents (who themselves hardly ever read) would rather buy school texts for their children than supplementary readers. Also, there is the poor reading culture which government is trying to reverse. Children would prefer to watch TV, or play a video game than read. Literary texts do not do so well, especially poetry and drama. However, prescribed literary books for examinations, etc., do reasonably well.

The credit crunch has not helped matters. We were operating in an economic environment that was not perfect but was at the least bearable. That is gone. In mid-1986, we started with the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) instituted to “return the economy to the path of growth”. The present credit crunch for us is a continuation of SAP. Our economy is over 90% based on crude oil. With the fall in global oil price, the government revenue has plummeted and there has been a consequent drop in the demand for education and book supply. The value of our local currency has also dropped heavily against the dollar and other foreign currencies, thus making importation of books, paper and coverboard, printing machinery, ink, etc., more expensive.

Nevertheless, the future can be bright if government’s efforts to diversify the economy and hope that Nigeria will be one of the world’s 20 leading economies by 2020 are pursued honestly and vigorously.

Could you tell us about some upcoming new writers in Nigeria writing in English? How difficult is it for new writers to get published in Nigeria at the moment and considering the cultural specificity of Nigeria how difficult is it for women writers to publish their work?

(Continued on page 6)
ture. We do all we can to encourage them and publish the good ones. I do not think that cultural specificity exists anymore. Nigeria and other countries in Africa have long campaigned on gender equality. Women as well as men get equally published. For example, women writers account for 30% of our HEBN Frontline Series. We hope to improve on this. However, the over-riding factor – is it a publishable material? – not the gender of the author. We have recently had a meeting with a State chapter of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) on how to get upcoming new writers published and work together to improve reading habits of children and adults.

You’ve got a big selection of books for children written in English as well as course books to learn Yoruba. I remember when I took a course in Igbo at SOAS in London we did not have any course books. Are you planning to publish course books to learn Igbo and Hausa as well?

When did you learn Igbo at SOAS? The Ogbalu course books in Igbo have been there for the past 30 years! As a matter of fact our Government is very interested in books in some of the over 200 Nigerian languages. Those languages with orthographies and metalanguages are now taught in schools and are examined by public examination bodies. We have produced books in Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and some of the minority languages like Igala and Ghouto at the primary, junior and secondary school levels, and for general readers. The next step is to produce L2 books for students and general readers learning them as second languages.

One of your education books series is devoted to HIV/AIDS. Are you getting any help from the Nigerian government to promote them in Nigeria and what is the public interest in this series, especially at schools?

The Junior African Writers Series (JAWS) HIV/AIDS Series is published by Heinemann UK, now acquired by Pearson Education. We distribute this series in Nigeria and in fact worked on and produced, in collaboration with Heinemann UK then, the “Nigerian edition” of five titles in the series. This is because the government has recently included a new subject in schools called Family Life Living which emphasizes education as the best defence against HIV/AIDS and other diseases such as malaria, etc. The public interest is not as enthusiastic as one would wish but we continue to promote books on HIV/AIDS, malaria, etc., in schools, through NGOs, and government para-statals because of the value and market potentials of the series.

How can we order books published by HEBN Publishers?

You can order our books directly through our address or through African Books Collective based in Oxford, UK. For further details, please visit our website: www.hebnpublishers.com.

Thank you.

Any comments or questions about this interview, please contact Asia Zgadzaj (tzagdzaj@hotmail.com).

Others Within and Without: Muslims, Jews and European Identity (SOAS, March 14th)

By Madeline Clements

A range of speakers and delegates, academic and professional, and from diverse fields, gathered at SOAS on Saturday 14th March to participate in the one-day workshop Others Within and Without: Muslims, Jews and European Identity. The aim of the day was to explore the mutual and intersecting analyses of the Arab/Muslim and Jew as framed in relation to each other, and to Europe. Organised by Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin as part of the AHRC-funded project, Framing Muslims: Representation in Culture and Society Post 9/11, which fosters research into the cultural, social and legal structures which ‘frame’ contemporary debates about Muslims in the west, the discussions which ensued were to prove (in the words of SOAS’s Annabelle Sreberney) both fascinating and necessary.

In her welcoming remarks, Sreberney briefly outlined the parameters of the Framing Muslims project in exploring the way Muslim subjects are positioned and represented or “spoken for” in contemporary multicultural society. Focusing on the considerations of the day, she acknowledged the workshop’s indebtedness to Gil Anidjar’s book The Jew, the Arab, which analyses how Europe has defined itself historically through the production of two “others” – the Jew ‘within’, and the Arab ‘without’. She went on to highlight the pressing need, at a time of rising European anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, heightened anxiety regarding religious extremism, and increased violence against Gaza, to interrogate the processes of stereotyping deployed by the media and civil society to ‘frame’ Jews as well as Muslims, and to examine how, ironically, modes of historic and contemporary ‘othering’ may unite Jew and Muslims, even as they compete on a world
stage for who is most persecuted, vilifying and stereotyping one another as they do so.

The first session, intended to present an overview of the ‘othering’ of the Arab/Muslim and Jew, heard contributions from Toronto University’s Ivan Kalmar on ‘Muslims with Jews: Orientalist Structures, Restructures, and Destructures’, and Goldsmiths’ historian Sarah Lambert, who spoke on ‘Aberrant decoding? Muslims and Jews in the visual and textual polemic of the crusades.’ Kalmar’s talk drew on ideas from Said’s Orientalism to trace the ‘joint imaginative construction’ of Muslims and Jews through 700 years of historical restructuring and ‘destructuring’ of the Orins, culminating in the invention post-1948 of a ‘Judaic-Christian’ tradition of alleged commonality between Jews and Christians, constructed in opposition to negative versions of Islam. He suggested that though we are far from a reciprocal recognition of seeing the self in the ‘other’, and the ‘other’ in the self today, the realisation of a commonality between contemporary misrecognitions of Muslim and Jew may provide a starting point for dialogue. Lambert then suggested that the two ‘othernesses’ of Muslim and Jew, located in a fantastical Orient, were deeply intertwined in the construction of medieval Europe, highlighted medieval Christianity’s inability to relate its self to the Orient, and described its attempts simultaneously to appropriate aspects of Judaism and Islam and position them as deviant or satanic in origin. Her explorations of medieval Europe’s attempts at the time of the crusades to control and contain a Jewish minority ring-fenced as ‘the other within’, and who – perhaps as a result of ‘aberrant decoding’ – increasingly proved targets for violent attacks, proved particularly stimulating.

In the second session, focused on current anti-Arab/Muslim and anti-Jewish racisms and the media, Adi Kuntsman of Manchester University reported her current research in ‘Framing war, figuring otherness, diasporising hatred: anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on the Russian-language Internet’. Rather than a site for the border-transcending resistance of dominant representations, she described the blogosphere as a discursive space saturated with surprising and disturbing Orientalist, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic language and imagery, in which racial, national and religious boundaries were reinforced and violent interactions encouraged as much as they are challenged. In ‘Critical Solidarity: regarding the overlapping of anti-Arab and anti-Jewish racisms in the Guardian and the Independent newspapers’, SOAS PhD student Hagai van der Horst likewise offered a richly illustrated account of recent research, demonstrating how the identities of ‘Jew’ and ‘Arab’ are produced in relation to one another in the British press.

In the afternoon session, ‘framing the Arab/Muslim and Jew in context’, Jerusalem-based lawyer and politician, Ziad AbuZayyad, offered a candid and personal insight into ‘The impact of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the Islamic-Jewish relations’. Of particular relevance were his comments regarding the need, at a time of ‘political Islam’, to identify and deal similarly with ‘political Judaism’ (drawing a parallel rather than a distinction between the nationalist policies of Israel and Iran); his highlighting of the importance of distinguishing in debates between articulations of anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic sentiment, and between Arab and Muslim; and his stressing of the responsibility incumbent upon the media to modify the polarised images of ‘enemy’ Jew and Muslim ‘others’ it projects respectively into Palestinian and Israeli homes. SOAS’s Tudor Parfitt went on to offer an explication of ‘The linkage of Jews and Muslims in European thought’, describing how, in Early Modern history, the figure of a Biblical, Hebrew-speaking Jew became the template of a ‘known other’, acting for the ‘unknown other’ of the Arabic-speaking Muslim or ‘Moor’; and how both provided a ‘prism of otherness’ through which the peoples of newly discovered worlds beyond the Mediterranean were viewed.

In the final session on localised Arab/Islamic-Jewish identities, Fiyaz Mughal from the organisation Faith Matters drew on professional experiences of working to promote inter-faith dialogue for his paper, ‘Looking back to look forward: Framing identities through crises within Europe; Bosnia and the Holocaust’. He described commonalities between the narratives of Jewish and Muslim survivors of genocide and their ensuing crises of self-identification, and drew attention to the systematic processes of ‘framing’ used to ‘badge’ communities from different faith elements as ‘other’, isolated within and then extracted from mainstream society. In his concluding remarks he returned the discussion to the concerns of the day, emphasising the vital need to look to the impact of similarly alienating practices in the context of Europe post 9/11.
Postcolonial Studies at Manchester

The MA in Postcolonial Literatures and Cultures has been running since 2005. Since then, a steady number of excellent students have taken it up, many of whom are now pursuing PhD work. Students are taught by specialists in colonial and postcolonial studies and are encouraged to take courses across disciplines such as English and American studies, history, film, art history and sociology and to study materials from a variety of perspectives. Ideological diversity and openness of debates is strongly encouraged! This broad programmatic scope appeals to students as it leaves plenty of leeway for individual specialisation and whilst profoundly historical in its overall stance, the programme never loses sight of the present as its most immediate point of reference.

Our many PhD students work in the areas of South African writing and Modernism, South Asian writing and historiography, Sri Lankan postcolonial writing and culture, Arab women’s writing and narratives of Diaspora, and Asian-American writing, among others. Current completed projects include theses on Raja Rao, contemporary Middle Eastern fiction and film, the flâneur in postcolonial fiction, Orientalism in nineteenth century writing and contemporary Turkish narratives. [http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/societypages/englishamericanstudies/research/postcolonial/]

Research culture We are fortunate to benefit from the many activities hosted by CIDRA (Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in the Arts: website http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/cidra/) and RICC (Research in Cosmopolitan Cultures: see [http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/ricc/index.html]). Speakers have included Judith Butler, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Gyan Prakash, Jaqueline Rose, Roy Foster, Elizabeth Grosz, and Paul Gilroy. Workshops are also held with guest speakers and students are encouraged to participate!

Students Letizia Alterno is one of our PhD students who has just completed a PhD on the work of Raja Rao, supervised by Howard Booth and Anastasia Valassopoulos with Robert Spencer as advisor. Letizia Alterno, Editor-in-Chief of the Raja Rao Publication Project (2006) recently completed her PhD at the University of Manchester, a vibrant cosmopolitan venue which has hosted significant encounters during the last four years with current post-colonial critics such as Gayatri Spivak, Gyan Prakash, Neil Lazarus and Homi Bhabha. During her research years at Manchester, she has benefited from the active organization of conferences, seminars and other cultural events sponsored by the Postcolonial and Irish Studies group at the department of English and American Studies. A significant university facility has been the John Rylands Library, Deansgate, which houses some major colonial collections including the East India Company Papers and the India Empire Collection.

Staff Robert Spencer robert.spencer@manchester.ac.uk At undergraduate level, I teach a course on postcolonial literature and theory. The course seeks to introduce students to the variety of genres and preoccupations in postcolonial writing; it also lays emphasis on this literature’s political dimensions. We read writers such as Derek Walcott, Assia Djebar, Aimé Césaire, Shahrnush Parsipur, Mahasweta Devi, JM Coetzee and Ayi Kwei Armah. My postgraduate teaching focuses on postcolonial theory as well as critical theory more generally. In addition, I teach an MA module called The Future of Modernism on which we examine the origin and possible longevity of modernist themes and forms in anti- and post-colonial writing.

Research: I’m writing a study of the ways in which encounters with postcolonial literature might further the political goals of cosmopolitanism. Writers studied include JM Coetzee, Timothy Mo and WB Yeats. I’m also interested in (and have published on) the work of Edward Said, African fiction and Irish writing, the discourse of imperial nostalgia (I’m hoping there’s a book in that), and am publishing an article on Raja Shehadeh.

Howard Booth howard.j.booth@manchester.ac.uk I work on post-1850 writing and have the following (related and interconnected) areas of research: DH Lawrence, modernism, empire and Englishness, male homosexuality and writing. I have written many articles on DH Lawrence, and I am on the editorial board of the Journal of D.H. Lawrence Studies. An edited collection, New D.H. Lawrence, appears in 2009 from MUP. It brings current approaches in English Studies to Lawrence, including work on publishing, reception, philosophy, ethics, myth, eco-criticism, gender studies, psychoanalysis, war and the postcolonial.

In the area of writing and colonialism in the 20th century, Modernism and Empire, edited with Nigel Rigby, appeared in 2000. I am currently editing the Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling. My work here also develops out of an interest in Englishness and the radical tradition. For example, an article on Claude McKay in Britain will appear in a volume of essays edited by Len Platt entitled Modernism and Race (CUP, forthcoming 2010).

Anastasia Valassopoulos A.Valassopoulos@manchester.ac.uk At undergraduate and postgraduate level I teach in the area of contemporary postcolonial fiction and film. Here, I am interested in extending the potential of postcolonial studies to embrace new work in the area of diaspora and transnational studies. I look in particular at contemporary Australian narratives, European post-colonialisms, apartheid literature and film, South Asian writing and the cultural production of Israel/Palestine.

My main area of research is in the postcolonial literature and culture of the Middle East and North Africa and my most recent project is a book that I completed for the ‘Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures’ series entitled Contemporary Arab Women Writers. I have published articles on Tunisian film, Egyptian music and popular culture and North African narratives. I am also currently editing a special issue on ‘Arab Feminisms’ for the journal Feminist Theory.

For more information on the MA or if you would like to know more about our research interests please e-mail A.Valassopoulos@manchester.ac.uk
News from Various Centres

Postcolonial Seminar Series at Oxford

The past (Hilary) term at Oxford saw an engaging array of papers presented in its postcolonial seminar series. Anshuman Mondal (Brunel) began the term’s papers by revisiting *The Satanic Verses* on its 20th anniversary. He examined some of the tensions between Rushdie’s liberal notions of ‘free speech’ and the political responses of the Muslims that he offended, putting forward the provocative argument that there was some ‘bad faith’ in Rushdie’s representation of Islam, in particular with regard to its representation of Islamic doubt. Nazneen Ahmed (Oxford) presented a paper on the experience of postcolonial literature and representation in Caribbean literature of the complexities of gay and transsexual identities. With such a term behind us, we look forward to an equally diverse and engaging term ahead, featuring appearances by, among others, J.M. Coetzee.

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Vincent van Bever Donker (Wadham) / Scott Teal (Wolfson)

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Journal of South Asian Popular Culture Conference at Manchester:

The University of Manchester is hosting the 4th International Conference on South Asian Popular Culture on July 6-7, 2009. This interdisciplinary conference features papers from across subjects in the arts, humanities and social sciences to engage with notions of popular culture. ‘South Asian popular culture’ is defined in a broad and inclusive way to incorporate lived and textual cultures, the mass and new media, different ways of life, and discursive modes of representation. The confirmed keynote speakers are Purnima Mankekar, UCLA (USA) and Rosie Thomas, University of Westminster (UK). For further information and enquiries, please contact Dr Rajinder Dudrah at raajinder.dudrah@manchester.ac.uk. The Booking form is available from its website: http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/sapcconference2009/.

The Postcolonial Research Seminar at Kent:

Our reading group focused on theory this term, with a francophone twist as we welcomed Professor Margaret Majumdar to talk about Francophonie and had a group discussion on Khatibi’s and Ngugi’s attitudes to bilingualism. Another discussion revisited Spivak’s writings on feminism. Student presentations included a paper on Andrew Salkey’s novels of immigration to Britain by Jany Joseph and a postcolonial reading of objects in *Jane Eyre* from the perspective of Thing theory by Kate Limond.

The Wasafiri New Writing Prize 2009

Renowned worldwide for featuring some of the best and brightest new talent, Wasafiri is launching a New Writing Prize as part of its 25th birthday celebrations. In the words of acclaimed author Jackie Kay, ‘Wasafiri holds it all together, the past and the future. It is vigorous, searching and stimulating’. Since Wasafiri was first published in 1984, it has consistently aimed to shift the contours of established literary canons and remapped the borders of international contemporary writing, creating new imaginative spaces and publishing some of the most promising new literary voices. The competition is open to anyone worldwide who has not published a complete book and we are looking for creative submissions in one of three categories: Poetry, Fiction or Life Writing. Simply incorporate the theme of ‘25’ somewhere in your piece, fill in the entry form available from the Wasafiri web-site: http://www.wasafiri.org/pages/News.htm and send it to the Wasafiri office with your entry fee of UK Sterling £5.00 (you can also pay using Paypal at www.wasafiri.org). The closing date is 30 June 2009. The judges for the prize are Mimi Khalvati (Poetry), Blake Morrison (Life Writing) and Margaret Busby (Fiction). Susheila Nasta will chair.
Enacting Englishness in the Victorian Period
Colonialism and Politics of Performance
By Angelia Poon

Angelia Poon examines how British colonial authority in the nineteenth century was predicated on its being rendered in ways that were recognizably 'English'. Reading a range of texts by authors that include Charlotte Brontë, Mary Seacole, Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, and H. Rider Haggard, Enacting Englishness in the Victorian Period focuses on the strategies - narrative, illustrative, and rhetorical - used to perform English subjectivity during the time of the British Empire. Characterising these performances, which ranged from the playful, ironic, and fantastical to the morally serious and determinedly didactic, was an emphasis on the corporeal body as not only gendered, racialised, and classed, but as (in)visible, desiring, bound in particular ways to space, and marked by certain physical stylizations and ways of thinking. As she shines a light on the English subject in the act of being and becoming, Poon casts new light on the changing historical circumstances and discontinuities in the performances of Englishness to disclose both the normative power of colonial authority as well as the possibilities for resistance.

J.M. Coetzee in Context and Theory
edited by Elleke Boehmer, Robert Eaglestone and Katy Iddiols

This work draws on a wide range of theoretical ideas and approaches to illuminate Coetzee’s texts including: deconstruction and the ‘school of singularity’, ethics and power, gender studies, queer theory, issues surrounding the body and animal rights. Nobel Laureate and the first author to win the Booker Prize twice, J.M. Coetzee is perhaps the world’s leading living novelist writing in English. Including an international roster of world leading critics and novelists, and drawing on new research, this innovative book analyses the whole range of Coetzee’s work, from his most recent novels through his memoirs and critical writing. It offers a range of perspectives on his relationship with the historical, political, cultural and social context of South Africa. It also contextualises Coetzee’s work in relation to his literary influences, colonial and post-colonial history, the Holocaust and colonial genocides, the ‘politics’ and meaning of the Nobel prize in South Africa and Coetzee’s very public move from South Africa to Australia. Including a major unpublished essay by leading South African novelist Andre Brink, this book offers the most up-to-date study of Coetzee’s work currently available.

Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas
Edited by Michelle Keown, David Murphy & James Procter

This edited collection breaks new ground within the field of postcolonial diaspora studies, moving beyond the predominantly Anglophone bias of much existing scholarship by investigating comparative links between a range of Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanic and Neerlandophone cultural contexts. Ranging across the disciplines of history, sociology, literary analysis, cultural studies and the visual arts, the collection examines both the contributions and limitations of existing postcolonial diaspora scholarship, as well as developing new cross-disciplinary theoretical paradigms. Exploring a variety of geographical locations including Europe, the Americas, the Pacific and the Middle East, the collection is divided into three main sections: ‘Discovering Europe’ (with essays by John McLeod, Elleke Boehmer and Frances Gouda, and Siobhán Shilton); ‘Nostalgia and the Longing for Home’ (featuring Patrick Williams, Patria Román-Velázquez and Janet Wilson); and ‘Comparative Diasporic Contexts’ (with contributions from Celia Britton, Mohit Prasad and Bill Marshall), concluding with a postscript by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden.
Elleke Boehmer, *Nile Baby*
(Banbury: Ayebia Clarke Publishing, 2008)

Reviewed by Derek Attridge

Elleke Boehmer’s fourth novel is a remarkable change of gear: after the complex weaving of South African historical narratives in *Blood Lines* she has given us a focused, mesmerising, and an occasionally stomach-turning, story of two twelve-year olds living in an unnamed town in south-east England who experience an intimation of the mystery and intensity of Africa through the unlikely medium of a ninety-year old human foetus. Alice Brass Khan and Arnie Binns, nonconforming pupils in their first year of secondary school, steal the specimen in a Kerr jar from their school’s laboratory storeroom; after performing minor surgery on it they face the dilemma of what to do with the object. Arnie’s bus journey to Leeds, nursing the foetus (which he has christened Fish) in its jar, his encounter with his father’s African partner Katrina and her dealings with Fish, and his return to meet up again with Alice for an enigmatic ending, unfold with something of the riveting quality of a dream. Boehmer tells the story from the perspectives of the two children, switching between a first-person past-tense narrative by Arnie and a third-person present-tense narrative focalised through Alice; the shifts are a little unsettling at times, but then the whole novel is unsettling. It opens by making a connection between the appearance of a human foetus and a stereotypical African face: Alice (whose absconded father, we will learn, was Sudanese) sees ‘her own high African cheekbones’ in it, and a few pages later we hear of its ‘flattish nose’. This connection is developed throughout the novel, and in the final chapter Arnie conceives a wholly impracticable plan to send the foetus ‘back’ to Africa with some travellers he encounters at Heathrow airport (one is reminded of Susan Barton’s equally implausible plan to despatch Friday on an Africa-bound ship in Coetzee’s *Foe*). Had they been relayed through an adult consciousness, these associations and impulses might have seemed simplistic and perhaps somewhat dubious; but presented through the perceptions and thoughts of the two twelve-year olds they come across as understandable, and captivating, attempts to grasp the enigmatic depths of human, and continental, relations.

Note: The PSA Newsletter would like to publicise the research publications of our members; please send details of your publication (up to 200 words) to the Editors. We also welcome short book reviews of postcolonial texts (novels, poems, movies etc), and academic publications (please keep your review under 500 words).

Land and Nationalism in Fictions from Southern Africa
By James Graham


In this volume, Graham investigates the relation between land and nationalism in South African and Zimbabwean fiction from the 1960s to the present. This comparative study, the first of its kind, discusses a wide range of writing against a backdrop of regional decolonization, including novels by the prize-winning authors J.M Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Bessie Head, Chenjerai Hove, and Yvonne Vera. By employing a range of critical perspectives—cultural materialist, feminist and ecocritical—this book offers new ways of thinking about the relationship between literature, politics and the environment in Southern Africa. The return of land has been central to the material and cultural struggles for decolonization in Southern Africa, yet between the advent of democracy in Zimbabwe (1980) and South Africa (1994) and Zimbabwe’s decision to fast-track land redistribution in 2000, it has been limited land reform rather than widespread land redistribution that has prevailed. During this period nationalist discourses of reconciliation and economic development replaced those of revolution and decolonization. This book develops a critique of both forms of nationalistic narrative by focusing on how different and often opposing idea of land and nation are reflected, refracted and even refused in the fictions.
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)

PSA Constitution Committee Report
The PSA Constitution Committee has been set up to draft a working constitution for the Postcolonial Studies Association. Its aims are to provide a definition for the Association explaining the purpose of its existence; to formulate its key objectives, activities; and to set out an agreed set of rules for all members to abide by. A constitution will help in the effective running of the Association as it provides a structure for meetings, membership, powers allotted to the Executive Committee and sub-committees including the Advisory Board, election of the Executive and so on. It ensures transparency of procedures, appropriate expenditure of income and accountability, and is designed to set up an equitable framework for the organisation.

The draft constitution was initially a very cumbersome and long document which was whittled down to a more manageable size. There have been some interesting discussions about which clauses should stay in, which should go out and others that need to be brought in. We have found it very helpful to air the document at Association meetings and get feedback from members and the executive. One of the outcomes from these discussions has been that there should be a separate space for a Policy document which is set out by the Executive in charge answering the immediate needs of the Association and its members.

PSA members should be aware that at this year’s AGM meeting, held during the inaugural conference of the Postcolonial Studies Association in early May, an interim version of the constitution was accepted – this will remain in action for another year in case any further changes or emendations are suggested. It will be circulated at the PSA’s AGM in a year’s time for final acceptance. Currently there is a degree of flexibility with the draft constitution and if there is an issue that members would like us to cover which is not represented we would urge you to get in touch. After the draft document has been finalised, the plan is to disband this committee. Therefore any amendments to the constitution should be made in consultation with the Constitution Committee while it is still live.

Janet Wilson (Chair) and Amina Yaquin

Inaugural Conference Organising Committee
The committee, chaired by Christine O'Dowd-Smyth, successfully completed the task of organising the inaugural PSA conference: Re-Imagining Identity: New Directions in Postcolonial Studies, which was held in Waterford, Republic of Ireland, 6-8 May 2009. The conference was a great success and the committee wishes to thank all those who attended the conference. A ‘conference special’ issue of the newsletter is currently being put together, with news, views and photos of the conference proceedings, and will be available to download from the website shortly.

PSA Publications Committee
The main activity of the publications committee continues to be the collation of contact details and contributor-information of academic journals and publishers. (Nancy Roberts is currently updating the existing list). Committee members have not been able to meet since the Cambridge meeting last October, but hope to have a subcommittee meeting in the near future.

*Alex Tickell has just resigned as spokesperson of the committee due to increased family and professional commitments. A new chair will be announced shortly.

A scene from the PSA conference with PSA executive/ committee members (from left to right: Christine O'Dowd Smyth, Ole Birk Laursen, Melanie Murray and Gerri Kimber [Photo: Asia Zgadzaj ]

Constitution Committee
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*Janet Wilson janet.wilson@northampton.ac.uk

Inaugural Conference Organising Committee
Gerri Kimber
Asia Zgadzaj
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Laurence Randall
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Online Journal Committee
Michelle Keown
Bobby Flora-Bhabra
Kath Kerr-Koch
Laurence Randall
Asia Zgadzaj
*Nancy Roberts nancyr7@hotmail.com

Publications Committee
Michelle Keown
Patricia Krus
Christine O’Dowd-Smyth
Jayne Poyner
* Alex Tickell (see the report)
News from the PSA’s Working Group on Affiliations

The PSA working group on affiliations was convened at the Annual General Meeting in Cambridge last October to discuss affiliations policy. It investigates possible affiliations with other related organisations so as to maximise member benefits and to foster exchange of information and opportunities that would be of interest to PSA members. The members of the Working group are Anshuman Mondal, Janet Wilson, Amina Yaqin and Ekua Agha.

The Working group has thus far established some principles and guidelines for affiliations so that later decisions on whether to affiliate to an organisation could refer to them. At present, these are working guidelines and principles, and PSA members are encouraged to contact the group with suggestions and comments. These include:

1. To foster academic exchanges across disciplines.
2. To distribute and disseminate the PSA, its work, and its members’ interests across as wide a network of national and international scholars as possible.
3. To increase opportunities for collaboration between PSA members and scholars in national and international arenas.

The Working group also felt that the PSA’s approach to affiliations should differ according to the organisations in question. To this end, it identified four possible parameters, largely based on geographical location.

Organisations in the US and Canada: Organisations in the US and Canada are large, professionally run and well-established. Formally affiliating to organisations such as the MLA would not necessarily add value to PSA members or, indeed, offer much in return to MLA members (for example). However, informal linkages to postcolonial networks already established within such organisations in order to share information across our respective distribution networks would be of advantage to both organisations. The same would apply to other large associations in the US in disciplines with a presence/relevance to/in postcolonial studies: the American Historical Association; the Association of American Geographers; Association of American Anthropologists etc. Members are welcome to suggest others.

Europe: Affiliations with European scholarly organisations may, by contrast, offer good potential to the PSA to achieve its aims. The two organisations that are perhaps the most appropriate are EACLALS (European Association for Commonwealth Language and Literature Studies) and ESSE (European Society for the Study of English). Again, members are invited to submit other suggestions.

Rest of the World: The group is looking into existing networks and associations that might already offer what the PSA does in Africa, Asia, Australasia and elsewhere. If such organisations exist, there is a strong case for affiliating with them, especially since these are in geographical locations that are of principal interest to scholars working in postcolonial studies. The regional ACLALS associations (e.g. IACLALS in India, for example) are particularly relevant and the group is exploring the opportunities available. Where such organisations do not exist, the opportunity is there for PSA itself to take the lead in offering scholars an association to which they might belong, thus expanding its international scope.

Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies: Whilst the PSA is not restricted to the Anglosphere, its centre of gravity falls within it and there will be great benefit in fostering exchanges and collaborations across the Franco- and Anglophones within postcolonial studies. The SFPS is the most obvious ‘sister’ organisation to the PSA, and there is considerable potential for affiliation to generate member benefits. A partnership along the informal lines outlined above with regard to US organisations may be the best way forward. Some formal mechanisms, such as membership discounts for each other’s members might also consolidate the partnership.

Once the Working group’s work is done, it is being proposed that the day-to-day management of affiliations will be undertaken by an External Relations Officer who would sit on the Executive Committee. All affiliations would have to be proposed to the AGM and approved by PSA members before being instituted.

These are the broad outlines thus far, and PSA members are invited to contribute to the Working group by emailing their suggestions and comments. Please contact Anshuman Mondal on anshuman.mondal@brunel.ac.uk
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. If you would like the details of your group, centre, or project included in the newsletter, please let us know. The next PSA newsletter will be out in October. The deadline for the next issue is September 30 (if you are submitting after Sep 15, please drop us a line to let us know that your text is coming). We look forward to receiving your news and any comments, or suggestions for new sections or topics which you would like us to feature in the newsletter.

JOURNAL DISCOUNTS FOR PSA MEMBERS

From Melanie Murray
(Membership Secretary)

Since September the membership has grown to 180 and although, to date, the interest has been predominantly from Europe we now also have members from Canada, USA, Australia, Japan, Zimbabwe, Singapore and Iran. Hopefully this will expand further. The membership fees remain at £25 (waged individual) and £15 for unwaged with a discount for EACLALS members - subscription renewals are in September! Please see the PSA web-site for payment details.

http://www.postcolonialstudiesassociation.co.uk/id61.html

PSA members are entitled to the following journal discounts:

30% discount for 'Postcolonialism Across the Disciplines' and 'Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures'. See http://www.liverpool-unipress.co.uk/

Members should state PSA when ordering and contact lup@liv.ac.uk or (0) +151 794 2149

A 20% discount on all Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literatures publications. This offer is available exclusively online. http://www.oup.co.uk/sale/websocpost/

25% discount when taking out a personal subscription to the Journal of Postcolonial Writing for 2009, Routledge /Taylor and Francis. See http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/offer/rjpw-so.asp (code XB02601W)

Special rates for PSA members for subscription to Wa-safiri are GBP 22, USD 44, Euro 35. See http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/offer/rwas-so.asp (code XB02701W)


List of the PSA officers

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

[For the current list of the PSA committee members, see p. 12]