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Abstracts, Notes of Contributors, Editorial Board

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Abstract

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ABSTRACTS

BRENDA COOPER

‘Returning the Jinns to the Jar: Material Culture, Stories and Migration in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *By the Sea*’

This essay traces the relationship between migrant identities, material culture, stories and the language in which they are told, in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s novel, *By the Sea*. It demonstrates that Gurnah has structured his narrative around travelling and metamorphosing objects within the context of the history of trade and cultural contact, which pre-dates colonialism and post-dates independence in Africa. Within the particular history of Zanzibar, Gurnah demonstrates how men like his protagonist, Omar — perhaps like himself — play out their painful in-between roles of being neither one thing nor another, neither Asian nor African. Within these fluid shape shifting boundaries, nothing is pure. England is both the coloniser and the new family; Zanzibar is both home and prison; *The Thousand and One Nights* is both Arabian and mongrel, appropriated, butchered, stolen, adapted and available for boundless manipulation. Caught between the African new nation, where dictators flourish in the fetid soil of postcolonial grabbing, and the cold English ocean, the essay describes how Gurnah’s protagonists struggle with their stories in order to make flesh, bone and marrow out of crushing allegories.

SARA E. COOPER

‘Humorismo en Cuba: *Bohemia* Comics from The Year of the Revolution’

One of the tenets of the new political and social agenda of the 1959 Cuban Revolution was gender equality, based on a respect for the valuable contributions made by women to the insurrection itself and to the building of a new society. With such a background, one expects to encounter a decidedly new approach to the portrayal of masculinity and femininity in the revolutionary press, something that would contrast with the sexist, racist, and classist images from Batista’s era. Even in the ‘low-brow’ cultural milieu of cartoons and caricatures, one might see a filtering through of the revolution’s high ideals. Nevertheless, cartoons from the first year of the Revolution show a still ubiquitous misogynist and patriarchal representation of gender and relations between the sexes. This essay describes and analyses how men and women are depicted in the cartoons of the time, and shows how this reflects some of the existing tensions and incongruities of the early revolutionary period.

LIZ MONDEL

‘V.S. Naipual: The Melancholy Mandarin’

V.S. Naipual is often appreciated for his artistic sophistication and insight but criticised for perpetuating colonialist discourse. His complex literary persona

invites an analysis that sheds light on his puzzling colonialist textual responses to India and England, which are evident in a broad range of his writings, but which have particular problematic focus in the 'Indian trilogy' of his travel writing. In an analysis grounded in psychoanalysis and in Julia Kristeva's idea of the abject I argue that Naipaul shows evidence of melancholia born out of the specific nature of his experiences as a diasporic Indian, in the belief that we have not yet understood the full impact of empire.

PAULINE T. NEWTON

'From *Chempaka*, the Muslim Tree of Death, to Scarf-Wrapped Banana Plants: Postcolonial Representations of Gardening Images in Tash Aw's *The Harmony Silk Factory*'

Tash Aw's *The Harmony Silk Factory* employs gardening references to reveal the complex and shifting heritage to which an individual may belong in a (post) colonial society. Aw's theme of transplantation underscores the impact of (post) imperialism on southeast Asia. Since none of Aw's critics offer an essay-length discussion of the gardening themes, this work explores how *The Harmony Silk Factory*, winner of the Whitbread Book Award for First Novel, becomes a test of what qualities the (post)colonial survivor must exhibit — as demonstrated through gardening images — in order to endure the aftermath of (post)colonialism.

MOHAMMAD A. QUAYUM

'Interrogating Malaysian Literature in English: Its Glories, Sorrows and Thematic Trends'

The objectives of this essay are three-fold: first, to examine the socio-political circumstances surrounding Malaysian literature in English and the successes and failures of the literature arising from that circumstance; second, to enumerate and interrogate the various themes and ideas preoccupying the writers of this literature; and finally, to suggest ways to read Malaysian literature in English as part of the national formation or national enterprise, integrally related to the political and social history of the country. The questions that the essay addresses are: Why has Malaysian literature in English failed to keep pace with the growth of literary activity in other post-colonial centres? What are the future possibilities of this literature, and how have the writers, in spite of their marginalisation in the national culture, contributed to the formation of a post-colonial national identity in the Malaysian plural society? What are some of the abiding postulations/moorings in this body of literature and why/how have they found their anchorage in the sensibility of the writers? How can we see the literature as an offshoot of the 'parent tree' of Malaysian literature rather than as an isolated stream, or 'Aimless Literature' (as suggested by Ismail Hussein), having little to do with the indigenous tradition of the country? The essay focuses on the works of some of the major writers of the tradition, especially short fiction.

ORNA RAZ

“From Greenland’s Icy Mountains”: The West Indians and the Church in *An Unsuitable Attachment* by Barbara Pym

An Unsuitable Attachment, by the British novelist Barbara Pym (1913–80) realistically depicts a 1960s North London parish which included a growing population of West Indians. Yet, in spite of their not insignificant number, the immigrants remain strangers in their new environment. Pym subtly documents the confusion, anxiety and ignorance in the attitude of the Church and the parishioners towards the newcomers. Pym wrote the novel two years after the Notting Hill racial riots of 1958, which are specifically mentioned in the novel. Having already witnessed some of the consequences of that rift, *An Unsuitable Attachment* reveals an overall pessimistic assessment of the commitment of the Church and British society toward improving race relations and criticism of the way they were received in Britain in the early 1960s.

TONY SIMOES DA SILVA

‘Paper(less) Selves: The Refugee in Contemporary Textual Culture’

This essay focuses on representations of refugee selfhood in contemporary print and visual culture, drawing on selected novels by Kiran Desai (2006), Patricia Schonstein Pinnock (1999) and Simão Kikamba (2005), and Stephen Frears’ film, *Dirty Pretty Things* (2006). It explores the often conflicting range of refugee subject positions these authors rehearse in their treatment of refugee experiences, notably through the creation of ‘refugee’ characters, and proposes a reading of ‘refugeeness’ as a continuum that encompasses ‘asylum seeker’, ‘illegal migrant’, ‘economic migrant’ and ‘refugee’ proper. Specifically, it considers how refugees, broadly defined, negotiate their paradoxical desire for, and fear of, anonymity and recognition, ‘unbeing’ and ‘being’ within and without the confines of the nation-state. The essay borrows from sociologist Zygmunt Bauman’s work on a ‘liquid’ and ‘wasteful’ modernity as well as on Bauman’s use of Giorgio Agamben’s writing on nationalism, identity and ethics.

OUYANG YU

‘Against Autobiography’

For years, the author has dreaded the very idea of autobiography, the need to expose oneself till one becomes completely transparent, like a landscape without mist, a sky without clouds. ‘Against Autobiography’ is both an expose of that fear as well as a declaration of freedom from information, gratuitous information as raw material for the prying eye, the Gaze, the exotically bent, in a market trend that sweeps everything else aside: the subtleties of self whose infinite fictionalisabilities remain to be explored.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ANTHONY (ACE) BOURKE is an independent curator, specialising in colonial and Aboriginal art. He is completing his MA (Research) at the Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, examining the evolution of a curatorial style, especially in relation to his own colonial ancestors and their various encounters or relationships with Aboriginal peoples. A component and illustration of this is the exhibition *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770*, staged at the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Sydney, Australia (28th March–11th May 2008).

ANNE COLLETT lectures in the English Literatures Program at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Her research interests lie predominantly in the areas of postcolonialism, women's writing and poetry. She has published critical work on the poetry of Judith Wright, Kate Llewellyn, Kath Walker, Antigone Kefala, Ouyang Yu, Margaret Atwood, Joan Crate, Olive Senior, Pauline Johnson Tekahionwake, and most recently Alec Hope and Kamau Brathwaite (forthcoming).

BRENDA COOPER is the Director of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town, with a joint appointment as Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature. Her books include: *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* (Routledge 1998); and *Weary Sons of Conrad: White Fiction Against the Grain of Africa's Dark Heart* (Peter Lang 2002). Her latest book is *A New Generation of African Writers: Migration, Material Culture and Language*, forthcoming (James Currey 2008).

SARA E. COOPER is Associate Professor of Spanish and Multicultural & Gender Studies at California State University, Chico. Her research interests centre on contemporary Latin America, Cuba in particular, especially issues of gender, sexuality, humour, family, and graphic narrative. She is the founder and current Executive Committee Chair of the Cuban and Cuban Diaspora Cultural Expression Discussion Group of the Modern Language Association. Cooper is editor of the essay collection, *The Ties That Bind: Questioning Family Dynamics and Family Discourse in Hispanic Literature and Film* (UP of America 2004); she has published articles in *Cuban Studies*, *Chasqui*, *Confluencia*, *Ciberletras*, *Letras Femenina*, and several critical anthologies. Her special issue of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, on Lesbian Images in International Popular Culture, is forthcoming. Cooper also is a translator of literary fiction, especially works by Mirta Yáñez. Her current research explores the trajectory of humour in literature, film, and popular culture in post-revolutionary Cuba.

LIZ MONDEL is currently completing her PhD at the University of Wollongong. Her thesis explores the legacy of Hegel's master-servant idea in current postcolonial literary theory and proposes a model for the reading of unequal power relationships in postcolonial fiction. The model emphasises the emancipatory potential for the servant inherent in Hegel's own thesis, and it is applied to several readings of contemporary Indian fiction in English.

PAULINE T. NEWTON, a lecturer in rhetoric at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, spent the summer of 2005 in Malaysia and Singapore courtesy of the Fulbright-Hays summer seminar abroad program, and is developing a narrative on her discoveries pertaining to Southeast Asian writers and their cultures. In 2005, she published *Transcultural Women of Late-Twentieth-Century U.S. American Literature: First-Generation Migrants from Islands and Peninsulas* (Ashgate Publishing) and 'Collecting Seeds of Destiny in Li-Young Lee's *The Winged Seed: A Remembrance*' (*Southeast Asian Review in English*).

MOHAMMAD A. QUAYUM is professor of English at the International Islamic University Malaysia. He is the author or editor of seventeen books, including: *One Sky, Many Horizons: Studies in Malaysian Literature in English* (Marshall Cavendish 2007); *Peninsular Muse: Interviews with Modern Malaysian and Singaporean Poets, Novelists and Dramatists* (Peter Lang 2007); and *Saul Bellow and American Transcendentalism* (Peter Lang 2004). Quayum's scholarly articles on American literature and Post-colonial literatures have appeared in journals in the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Singapore, India, Taiwan and Malaysia.

ORNA RAZ is a Lecturer in English at the College of Management, Israel. She holds graduate degrees from the University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of Iowa, and received her Ph.D. in English Literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her book, *Social Dimensions in the Novels of Barbara Pym, 1949–1963: The Writer as Hidden Observer*, was published by Mellen Press in April 2007. Her current field of interest is culture and society and the literary manifestations of social changes in England during the 1950's.

OLIVE SENIOR is the author of ten books of poetry, fiction and non-fiction. She is a recipient of the Gold Medal of the Institute of Jamaica among other awards. Her poetry book, *Over the Roofs of the World*, (Insomniac Press 2005) was shortlisted for Canada's Governor-General's Award for Literature and *Gardening in the Tropics* (1994) is a textbook in Caribbean schools. Her short story collection, *Summer Lightning* (1986), won the Commonwealth Writers Prize and was followed by *Arrival of the Snake-Woman* (1989) and *Discerner of Hearts* (1995). She is also the author of *The Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* (2004) and the poetry book *Shell* (Insomniac Press 2007), her latest. She lives in Toronto, Canada and Montego Bay, Jamaica.

TONY SIMOES DA SILVA teaches in the School of English Literatures, Philosophy and Languages, at the University of Wollongong. Recent or forthcoming publications include essays in *Third World Quarterly* (2005), *Connecting Cultures* (Routledge 2008), *ARIEL* (2008) and *Transnational Whiteness Matters* (Lexington Books 2008).

ROBERT SULLIVAN belongs to the same Northland Maori tribe (Nga Pahi) as Hone Tuwhare. He has written six collections of poetry, including *Star Waka, Voice Carried My Family* (both Auckland UP), and *Shout Ha! to the Sky* (forthcoming from Salt Publishing, UK). He has won several literary awards for his multi-genre work and editing. He co-edited *Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English* (Auckland UP 2003) with Albert Wendt and Reina Whaitiri, the first such anthology to be edited entirely by Polynesians. He is currently Director of Creative Writing at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

To date, OUYANG YU has published forty-three books in the field of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, literary criticism and literary translation. His latest publication of non-fiction is *on the smell of an oily rag: speaking english, thinking chinese and living australian* (Wakefield Press 2008).

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