



Postcolonial Studies Association

**Exploring/ Expanding/ Challenging the
Postcolonial Canon**



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Newsletter #31

#31 – October 2024

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Welcome to the PSA Newsletter #31. Francesca and Jennifer are excited to share the new issue “Exploring/ Expanding/ Challenging the Postcolonial Canon”, which will invite readers to ask crucial questions about both the limits of the label “postcolonial” and the criteria that determine a literary work as part of the “canon” of postcolonial literature. What postcolonial fiction and fiction that cannot be properly considered post-colonial but explores ongoing colonialism do we see as classic or so new that it has the potential to become a classic? What qualities do we seek in determining works that have the making of classic postcolonial/decolonial literature? Have those criteria changed, or should they? As always, we hope to foster informed, wide-ranging, and respectful debates on the topic on focus, and more in general in the field of postcolonial studies, by sharing original contributions, conference reports, and funding reports by colleagues from across the world.

The newsletter opens with a new section offering updates about the Association from the PSA’s Executive Committee. This is followed by a series of original contributions. **Aminat Emma Badmus** explores Akwaeke Emezi’s *Dear Senthurán: A Black Spirit Memoir* to decolonise and “Africanise” Western gender conceptions and the queer literary genre, while simultaneously re-centring Non-Western queer subjectivities. **Yeisil Peña Contreras** draws attention to Abya Yala and African contemporary literatures written by women and plays emphasis on how the “post” in postcolonial insufficiently addresses the tension between the past and present, arguing instead for multiplicity and a non-linear conception of time. **Ramisha Rafique** turns her attention to the Palestinian context and engages with Mohammed El-Kurd’s poetry collection *Rifqa*, in order to show how the poetic medium can become a productive site for creative activism, self-representation and resistance to ongoing colonialism. **Duane Long** focuses on the colonial history of Ireland and explores a series of editorials of the Irish-language journal *An tUltach*, which were published after the 1921 partition, in order to engage with the complexities of Irish identity in Northern Ireland. **Paolo D’Indinosante** engages with Daljit Nagra’s poetry to assess the relevance of Nagra’s verse to postcolonial studies, while also reflecting on the poet’s generally overlooked relationship with Rudyard Kipling’s oeuvre. **Luis García-Vela** and **Jesse Bair** argue for the expansion of the postcolonial canon in order to include, respectively, marginalised literary works such as Hispano-Maghrebi poetry and cinematic products such as the quintology *Planet of Apes* the colonial/postcolonial lesson of which needs further critical exploration. Continuing this conversation, the section on original contributions concludes with **Esti Sugiharti**’s suggestion that Kevin Kwan’s novel *Sex and Vanity* would be a rich addition to the postcolonial canon as the author appropriates a canonical text of the Western tradition to expose and critique ongoing racist and colonial attitudes.

Next, readers can find **Amira Farhani**’s book review of *Women and Resistance in the Maghreb: Remembering Kahina* (2022), a recent volume on women’s creative voices across the Maghreb

during the period of post-independence edited by Nabil Boudraa and Joseph Ohmann Krause. This issue also features two reports: a report by **Farzana Qureshi** on the “Decolonising the Discipline” event hosted by the English Association and the Institute of English Studies, University of East Anglia, which took place on the 18th of December 2023, and **Annemarie Schunke**’s report on her research visit to the University of the West Indies in Barbados to support her doctoral research on the reception of classical antiquity in Anglophone postcolonial Caribbean literature of the twenty-first century. This research activity was supported by the Postcolonial Studies Association through the General Research Fund scheme.

The final section of the newsletter includes information about the call for the next issue and useful contacts.

Happy reading!

Francesca and Jennifer

DR FRANCESCA MUSSI has recently joined the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the Sapienza University of Rome as Adjunct Professor in English Literature and is also “Cultore della Materia” in English Literature in the Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics at the University of Pisa. She completed a Leverhulme ERC fellowship in the Department of Humanities at Northumbria University in 2021. Her research interests include postcolonial/decolonial theory, gender studies, trauma studies, ecocriticism, North American Indigenous literatures, and South African literature. In May 2020 her first book *Literary Legacies of the South African TRC: Fictional Journeys into Trauma, Truth and Reconciliation* was published by Palgrave Macmillan and demonstrated the value of the TRC as a literary subject in contemporary South African fiction.

DR JENNIFER GRAY teaches Modern British and Contemporary Anglophone literature as a tenured Assistant Professor at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA. From 1999-2018, she taught Composition and Sophomore Literature courses at TTU. In 2018, she received her PhD from Middle Tennessee State University and continued her career at TTU. In April 2021 her first book, *Culinary Diplomacy’s Role in the Immigrant Experience: Fiction and Memoirs of Middle Eastern Women*, was published by Rowman & Littlefield. Dr. Gray’s research interests include immigration, postcolonial theory, British literature 1900-1950, and Contemporary Black British, Asian, and Minority Ethnic literatures.



Exec Updates



Dear PSA members,

We hope this message finds you well. We would like to extend our sincerest apologies for delays and disruptions to our activities over the past academic year. We encountered a series of unexpected systems issues that significantly impacted our operations, including problems with our website, payment processes, and email system. These difficulties also prevented us from processing new and renewing memberships.

While we have managed to resolve some of these issues, we are actively working to fix others. The Executive Committee is fully committed to getting everything back on track. Led by our Executive Secretary, David Firth, and our Newsletter Editors, Francesca Mussi and Jennifer Gray, the team has met in September and early October to assess the situation. We will keep you updated on our progress. Our immediate focus is on fixing the systems issues, after which we plan to call an AGM for members to join us in discussing the future of the association, including a future convention, conference events, and an election to fill vacant positions on the committee. We will send out further communications about these in due course.

In relation to membership, specifically, we want to reassure you that all memberships remain active and no charges have been taken since August 2023. Where a member has been unable to renew an expired membership, they have been kept on our membership list.

Additionally, the Executive Committee has decided to offer free membership to all existing members for the entirety of 2025. Free membership will also be offered to any new staff, students, or researchers who left the association in the past year or wish to join. More details about this will be sent out in due course.

In the meantime, feel free to get in touch with us if you have any immediate questions or concerns.

For any general enquiries, please feel free to get in touch with our Executive Secretary, Dr David Firth (University of Manchester): d.h.firth@manchester.ac.uk

For any membership-related enquiries, please feel free to get in touch with our Membership Secretary, Dr Paola Prieto Lopez (University of Oviedo): prietopaola@uniovi.es

Thank you for being a continued member of the PSA.

Best wishes,
PSA Executive Committee



News

Call for Contributions and Book Reviews for PSA Newsletter #32: Reinventing the Western Literary Canon

This new issue takes as its starting point Joy Harjo (Creek Muscogee)'s observation that “‘reinventing’ in the colonizer’s tongue and turning those images around to mirror an image of the colonized to the colonizers as a process of decolonization indicates that something is happening, something is emerging and coming into focus that will politicize as well as transform literary expression” (Harjo et al. 1998, 22). Postcolonial and Indigenous authors often appropriate the Western Literary canon, both in terms of form, language, and cultural elements in order to foreground their epistemologies and histories. The list of postcolonial and indigenous rewritings is long and ever growing, ranging from rewritings of Western myths such as Homer’s *Odyssey* (Njabulo Ndebele’s *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*) and canonical texts such as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe*), to reinventions of canonised literary genres such as speculative and science fiction (Indigenous Futurism, Afrofuturism, and Africanfuturism).

We are thus seeking contributions that explore and reflect on the ways in which postcolonial and Indigenous authors “reinvent the enemy’s language” by appropriating Western literary traditions – whether in format or in content – in order to challenge Western mainstream perspectives, expose colonial legacies, and bring to the fore their ontologies and cultural practices.

Original contributions should be between 700 and 1,200 words and should be fully referenced using Harvard Referencing Style. Please also send a 100-word biographical statement.

We are also looking for **book reviews** in relation to any books in the field of postcolonial studies which were published within the last 5 years. **Reviews should be between 500 and 1,000 words and should be fully referenced using Harvard Referencing Style.**

The deadline for submissions is **31th January 2025**. Please submit your contribution via email to the PSA Newsletter editorial team: Francesca Mussi franci.mussi86@gmail.com and Jennifer Gray jgray@tntech.edu.

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