



## ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

### **S40. The Role of Female Voices in Constructing Fictional Maps of Multicultural Britain**

**Friday 1 September: 9.30-11.30am**

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The success of writing by black and Asian women in Britain (Monica Ali, Bernardine Evaristo, Andrea Levy, Meera Syal, Preethi Nair, to name but a few) testifies to the increasingly central role of women writers in imagining multicultural Britain. The seminar wishes to both acknowledge the presence and explore the influence of black and Asian women writers in contemporary British literature, engaging with a wide range of themes such as culture clash, home vs. Motherland, geographies of un/belonging, discrimination, hybridity, alienation and identity crisis.

#### **Visualizing Identity(ies) in the Work of Meera Syal**

Giovanna Buonanno (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia)

By discussing the work of Meera Syal which spans various art forms from fiction to script-writing, to acting for the theatre, film and television, this paper seeks to explore ways in which the construction of self and identity and particularly of those hyphenated identities that contribute to shaping multicultural Britain is achieved through a long and often complex process of visualization and representation. Syal's work will be discussed primarily for its ability to challenge traditional views of South-Asians in Britain and ultimately re-image the British-Asian experience in literature and the media.

#### **Translation as a Means of Affirming Identity**

Adele D'Arcangelo (University of Bologna)

This paper will focus on the Italian translation of three novels, namely Preethi Nair's *One Hundred Shades of White* (*Cento sfumature di bianco*), Bernardine Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* (*La pupa dell'Imperatore*), and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (*Un'Isola di Stranieri*), which have all been published in Italian translation recently by Polillo Editore, Fandango and Bompiani respectively. It will be argued that the translation of these fictional works contributes to the construction and representation of a new British multicultural identity in Italian cultural imagery. The process of cultural transposition will also be discussed with reference to Lawrence Venuti's concept of the in/visibility of the translator and to Homi Bhabha's metaphor of translation/negotiation as a space of "hybridity", whose

value “lies in the rearticulation, [...], of elements that are neither the One [...] nor the Other [...] but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both.”

### **Between Aesthetics and Politics: where to Place Ethnic Writers, or De-essentializing Canonicity**

Sylvia Schiltermandl (Karl-Franzens-University, Graz)

This paper focuses on the “Asian American canon” and looks for cues about how we read, receive and label Asian American literature in a local/global context. The main question it pursues is whether we canonize the authors rather than their texts. By discussing who defines the Asian American canon, that is who decides when a book becomes indicative of trends in Asian American literature and which authors may serve as representatives of those trends, this paper ultimately invokes how contemporary non-white writers confront characteristics that scholarship has attributed to an already established canon of ethnic literature both in Great Britain and in the US.

### **Conceptions of Identity through Difference**

Şebnem Toplu (Ege University)

This paper focuses on the conceptions of identity in multicultural Britain constructed through the fiction of women writers. As the sociologist Gerard Delanty argues in *Community*, whereas “modern” multiculturalism sought to further the equality of all groups in society, recent developments suggest a move towards difference as itself a goal to be achieved (2003:104). Accordingly, the formation of fictional cultural identities will be analysed in the works of various bicultural writers such as Andrea Levy, Preethi Nair, Leila Aboulela, Jackie Kay and Zadie Smith, with the aim of exploring the strategies their characters employ to retain their difference.

### **Telling your Story: Individual and Collective Memory in Leone Ross’s *Orange Laughter***

Petra Tournay-Theodotou (Cyprus College, Nicosia)

By locating *Orange Laughter* in the United States of the 1960’s – the days of the Civil Rights Movement - Leone Ross as a black British writer of mixed heritage (British and Jamaican) establishes a clear transnational and intertextual link to the (female) African-American literary tradition. In its depiction of the return of the unaccounted for or the forgotten in history and in private life, the novel constitutes a testimony to black cultural and historical memory through the representation of a subjective experience of memory dysfunction, amnesia, trauma and denial. Through its literary testimony to history, memory and trauma, the novel imaginatively resurrects obfuscated aspects of black history and simultaneously illustrates the painful process of an individual’s struggle to recuperate traumatic memory and unresolved loss. With its alternative historicity *Orange Laughter* is a further contribution to the project of imaginatively reconstructing an important chapter of Black/African-American history.