Papers on Performing Culture in Literature


This qualitative study examined cultural performance in children’s books that feature Chinese daughters adopted by US families. Adoption has created a unique diaspora for Chinese-born girls who (a) are adopted into families that are geographically disperse, (b) can lack memories or opportunities to return to birth country, and (c) don’t always live in/near Chinese-immigrant communities (see, Miller-Loessi & Kilic 2001; Ponte, Fan & Wang 2010). In this context, adoptive families can utilize books as a means of creating bicultural identities (Jue-Steuck 2011; Satz 2007). Given the potential relevance of books, it seems worthwhile to examine literary portrayals of performing culture (engaging in rituals/practices, defining selfhood – Alexander 1999). Initial analysis has revealed attempts by US family members to gain some cultural knowledge (learning words/phrases before traveling to China, visiting cultural landmarks/local communities during the adoption process). When books featured girls living in the US, there were multiple examples of engagement with Chinese culture (such as, language/dance classes). Books also displayed events (such as, attending Dragon Boat Festivals, learning to cook dumplings) that were shared among family members (adoptees, parents, siblings, grandparents). Overall, the books provide meaningful exemplars of adoptive families’ validation/support of adoptees’ birth culture and emerging bicultural identity.

**Jacki Fitzpatrick, Texas Tech University, United States of America**

Dr Jacki Fitzpatrick is an Associate Professor in the Human Development and Family Studies Department at Texas Tech University (Lubbock, Texas, USA). She teaches courses on social theories/policies and family dynamics. Her research interests focus on media representations of family identities, parasocialism (individuals’ connectedness to celebrities/fictional characters) and romantic/marital relationships.

**Erin Kostina-Ritchey, Texas Tech University, United States of America**

Erin Kostina-Ritchey, PhD, is researcher at the Texas Tech Center for Adolescent Resiliency (Lubbock Texas, USA). She has master degrees in Bilingual Education and Diversity Studies, plus Interdisciplinary Studies (International Development & Public Policy). Her research interests include: identity development; family/individual narratives; public and educational policy; resiliency and under-served populations.

**Race, Politics and Chick Lit: The Literature of Anita Heiss**

Anita Heiss is an Aboriginal Australian academic, activist and best-selling author. She publishes racially progressive and subversive chick lit, otherwise identified as ‘choc lit.’ Her novels feature successful, ambitious and determined Aboriginal women navigating the pressures of modern-day life, work and
romance. Contrary to conceptions of chick lit as politically conservative and embedded in the politics of consumerism, Heiss stretches the limits of the genre to encompass issues pertaining to race, identity and equality, within both an Australian and international context.

Heiss employs this genre not only to educate on racial affairs, but also as a platform upon which to raise the profile of Australian Indigenous artists, authors and musicians. In her literature, Heiss emphasizes the significance of art as a vehicle for social change, an understanding that surely does not preclude her own work. In this presentation I consider the significance of Heiss’ literature; acknowledging her absence in literary scholarship and presenting an argument for a renewed consideration of her work.

Fiannuala Morgan, The University of Melbourne, Australia

Fiannuala Morgan is a Masters Candidate in Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne. She has presented at the ‘Past Matters’ Indigenous Literature Festival (2013), and at conferences: ‘The Books that Subverted and Shaped the British Empire’ (2015); and the Australian New Zealand American Studies conference (2015). Her research interests include the late travel writing of Mark Twain in which she interrogates his critique of the colonial project in light of American expansionism.

Jhumpa Lahiri and the Grammar of a Multi-layered Identity

Recipient of the most prestigious awards, including the 2000’s Pulitzer Prize for the collection of short stories Interpreter of maladies, Jhumpa Lahiri chose a few years ago to leave the US, moving with her family to Rome. This voluntary exile has led to another, just as voluntary, namely a linguistic exile. In 2015 Jhumpa Lahiri published her first book written entirely in Italian (In altre parole, Guanda). This paper demonstrates how the choice to abandon the English language, has represented, this the American writer of Indian descent, the unavoidable culmination of an identitarian journey. A journey so deep and complex that it has had to go inescapably through language and fiction, if it is true to say that language is for her the only means to express the inner speech, while fiction represents “the foreign land of my choosing, the place where I strive to convey and preserve the meaningful”. The linguistic exile therefore doesn’t constitute a kind of alienation, nor an estrangement. Rather, it becomes a sort of existential state, a form of multi-layered identity.

Silvia Lutzoni, University of Sassari, Italy

Silvia Lutzoni is a researcher of Literary Criticism and Comparative Literature at the University of Sassari, Italy. She focuses on colonial and post-colonial literatures, literary criticism and travel writing. She worked extensively on Edward Said, studying the reception of his books in the Arab world and, in particular, the reception of Said’s Orientalism within contemporary Arab literature. Among her books: La critica come critica della vita (Donzelli: forthcoming), Una Sardegna tutta per sé (Settecittà: 2012), L’oriente allo specchio (Settecittà: 2012).

Globalisation, Migration, and the Paradox of Existence: Postcolonising Samuel Selvon’s The Lonely Londoners and Nadine Gordimer’s The Pickup
The displacement and settlement of people in other areas of the world is a universal phenomenon in both ancient and modern history. In postcolonial societies, this migration has attained phenomenal proportions especially in the context of Globalisation and New Information Technology which have helped to drastically reduce the barriers to movement and the flow of information. Postcolonial writers like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and V.S. Naipaul have critically handled these concepts of place and displacement in their writings by showing the intricacies which are involved in moving from the periphery to the centre. This paper gives a postcolonial reading of Samuel Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* and Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup* by uncovering the paradox that lies underneath the politics and rhetoric involved in transnational crossings. These novelists, though from different socio-historical backgrounds, share a similar authorial vision regarding the movement of the postcolonial citizen. They affirm that the geographical displacement of the postcolonial man has not really helped him to realize his ambitions. In most cases, his ambitions are unfulfilled because as he moves from his original environment to a different socio-political milieu or setting, new problems crop up that he has to grapple with in order to survive in this new dispensation.

**Eric Nsuh Zuhmboshi, The University of Yaounde, Republic of Cameroon**

Eric Nsuh Zuhmboshi is a senior lecturer in the Department of African Literature and Civilisations of the University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon. He holds a PhD in African Literature from the same university where he has been teaching for ten years. He has also taught on part-time bases in the Pan-African Institute for Development, West Africa and Bishop Rogan Minor Seminary – all in Buea and the Advanced School of Posts and Telecommunication Yaounde, Cameroon. He is a member of Frontiers Research Group (F.R.G.) – an interdisciplinary research group based in Yaounde. He has published numerous scholarly articles in national and international journals and participated in many conferences in Cameroon. Being a strong supporter of interdisciplinarity, his areas of specialization include Political Discourse/Ideology, English Language/Communication, Postcolonial/Cultural Studies, and Critical/Cultural Theory.

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**All Things To Everyone: Andy Lau’s Performance of A Hybridised National Celebrity Identity**

This paper presents a case study of Hong Kong superstar Andy Lau Tak-wah’s performance of a shifting transnational celebrity identity. The Hong Kong-born actor and singer has successfully developed a transmedia career that he has been able to sustain for more than three decades. This success, I would suggest, is largely attributable to the Lau’s keen awareness of the intertwined – though, at times, competing – cultural demands of local, regional, and diasporic fans. More significant than his individual film and recording performances, I would argue that it is Lau’s performance of this shifting cultural identity that resonates most strongly with his Asian (specifically Sinophone) fans across the world. With media statements indicating that he is both disappointed with the poor reception of Asian stars by English-speaking audiences and is somewhat reconciled to the explicitly discriminatory practices of the Hollywood film industry, this paper will examine how Lau has increasingly focused on rebranding his celebrity to be more in line with local and regional socio-cultural expectations.
Journal of Intercultural Studies Conference

The first annual conference of the Journal of Intercultural Studies
19-20 November 2015, CUNY, New York

Joyleen Christensen, University of Newcastle, Australia

Joyleen Christensen is a lecturer in film and literature at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her key area of research interest is popular culture, specifically celebrity and fan cultures. As a Visiting Scholar with the Centre for Cinema Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, Dr Christensen is currently researching the reception of Asian popular culture across national borders with a project on the diasporic fandom of Hong Kong film and recording star, Andy Lau Tak-wah.

Doing (and not doing) Indian Identities: Performing Culture in Different Spaces

This conference paper explores the embodied cultural performativities of young Indian women living in the diaspora following recent research conducted in Brisbane, Australia. This research responds to Somerville’s (2008) suggestion that research on emotional transnationalism and transnational identities should focus more heavily on the processes through which one negotiates his/her identity, such as through emotional attachments and the ways these attachments are felt and expressed. Research to date has focused more on the outcomes of identity formation, such as one’s national identity (i.e. South-Asian, Indian-Australian). This research will focus on how each of these young people are doing their identities in different spaces, how this influences feeling an identity, and how this shapes an overall understanding of cultural identities. In order to zoom in on these processes, the young Indian women engaged in participatory methodologies where they took photographs of themselves in different spaces and came together to discuss these processes. This conference paper discusses the findings of this research and the emotions felt, such as senses of belonging, in the everyday performances of culture and how space is a significant factor to consider in these processes.

Cat Johnston, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia

Cat Johnston is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts and Business, School of Social Science, at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Her current research explores the embodied cultural performativities of Indian young women in Australia, where she uses child-centred participatory methodologies to give young people the opportunity to speak about their own lives from their own perspectives.


Both New York and My Name is Khan concern the rise of US Islamophobia in the wake of 9/11. India is home to 100 million Muslims; however, as a recent New York Times article elucidates, no radical Islamist movement has arisen on the subcontinent. My paper explores some possible answers to the question: why release two Bollywood films focused on US persecution of Muslim Indians nearly a decade after the events of 9/11? How do these films treat American Islamophobia in contrast with Indian Islamophobia particularly during the rise of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party on the subcontinent? This paper analyzes Muslim characters in Bollywood films set in western diasporic metropolises as opposed to Bollywood films set on the subcontinent. This juxtaposition illustrates one of the many Bollywood paradoxes that arise in terms of the discordant political
ideologies perpetuated in India versus films targeting diasporic non-resident Indians. A rash of terror themed films set on the subcontinent imply that India harbors “home grown” Muslim Indian terrorists working in cooperation with Pakistan and/or Kashmiri militants. *NY* and *MNik* explicitly critique similar assumptions made about US-based Muslim Indians by both the American government and its citizens. Contrasting Bollywood films set in the diaspora against subcontinent-based narratives demonstrates how western Islamophobia is deemed reprehensible; however, its Indian counterpart appears pragmatic due to the proximity of Pakistan and the ISI’s support of terrorist groups such as *Lashkar-e-Taiba*.

**Dinah Holtzman, Indiana University, United States of America**

Dinah Holtzman is a Visiting Lecturer in the department of Gender Studies at Indiana University Bloomington. She teaches courses focused on LGBTQ visual culture, Bollywood cinema, cultural studies as well as critical race and queer theory.