

The Book in Africa: A Day Symposium

Saturday 20 October 2012

Institute of English Studies,
Senate House, Malet Street, London



A forum for the discussion of new research and critical debates about print culture in Africa.

Contributions from leading scholars in African literature, book history and postcolonial studies, together with African publishers.

Collaborative venture between:

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BRITISH ACADEMY
for the humanities and social sciences

INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH STUDIES
University of London

Welcome to 'The Book in Africa' one-day symposium

The aim of this event is to provide a forum for the discussion of new research and critical debates about print culture in Africa, and to bring together leading scholars in African literature with interests in literary and cultural history, publishing studies and the history of the book. With contributions from scholars of book history and postcolonial studies, together with African literary publishers, the papers and panel discussion focus on:

- The production, dissemination and reception of the book in colonial and postcolonial Africa
- The development of print culture and its implications for larger questions of nationality and colonial politics in Africa
- The impact of print production on literary cultures and linguistic identities in Africa
- The emergence and constitution of reading publics in Africa
- The legal, social, political and economic forces that have affected print culture in Africa
- The current state of and immediate prospects for publishing and print culture in Africa

This symposium has been organised as a collaborative event by:

- the Department of English at the Open University,
- the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies (OICPS) at Oxford Brookes University and
- the Institute for English Studies at London University.

This symposium reflects the interests of the two research groups in the Department of English at the Open University, in Book History and Postcolonial Literatures, and it continues a long-standing research interest in African publishing studies at OICPS. Details of these research activities in this field are given at the back of this programme.

We would like to thank Oxford Brookes University and the Open University for their generous financial support of this event, which has covered all the conference administrative costs, funded travel for UK-based speakers, and made it possible to offer free registration for delegates.

We are grateful also for British Academy funding, which has enabled us to extend invitations to Archie Dick and Elizabeth le Roux from Pretoria University. This funding has been made available through the *International Mobility and Partnership Scheme* between Oxford Brookes University and Pretoria University 2012-13. In addition, the British Academy has also funded places for PhD students to attend this symposium.

Thank you for attending, and contributing to, this symposium

Organisers:

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Programme

9.30-10.00 Registration and Coffee

10.00 Introduction
Caroline Davis (Oxford Brookes University)

10.10-11.15 Early 20th Century Print Culture in Africa
Chair: Shafquat Towheed (Open University)
Karin Barber (Birmingham University), 'The Book in Colonial Yorubaland'
David Johnson (Open University), 'Publishing Houses and Imagining the Union of South Africa in 1910'

11.15-11.45 Coffee/Tea

11.45-1.15 Books and Literary Culture in Africa
Chair: Dennis Walder (Open University)
Robert Fraser (Open University), 'Locating Africa, Defining the Book'
Ranka Primorac (Southampton University), 'Some Thoughts on Books, Literariness and Crisis'
Jeff Opland (SOAS), 'Where Can you Find Xhosa Literature?'

1.15-2.30 Lunch

2.30-3.30 Publishers and Readers in South Africa
Chair: David Johnson (Open University)
Archie Dick (Pretoria University), 'Copying and Circulation in South Africa's Reading Cultures, and their Consequences'
Elizabeth le Roux (Pretoria University), 'South Africa's University Presses and the Pursuit of Academic Freedom under Apartheid'

3.30-4.00 Coffee/Tea

4.00-5.00 Publishing and African Literary Networks
Chair: Alex Tickell (Open University)
Ruth Bush (Oxford University), 'Prizing Francophone African literature: Colonial Nostalgia and the "Goncourt Africain"'
Kate Haines (Sussex University), 'Dialogue, Text and Memory: The Production and Circulation of Literary Responses to the Post-Election Violence in Kenya'

5.00-6.00 Panel Discussion The Book in Africa
Chair: Caroline Davis (Oxford Brookes University)
James Currey (James Currey Publishers)
Becky Nana Ayebia Clarke (Clarke-Ayebia Publishers)
Peter McDonald (Oxford University)

Abstracts and Biographies

Karin Barber

'The Book in Colonial Yorubaland'

Abstract: In early 20th-century Yoruba print culture in southwestern Nigeria, newspaper editors and contributors frequently called on leading figures of the day to write books, so that their accumulated knowledge and wisdom would be preserved for the benefit of future generations. Books were regarded as monuments, repositories of culture and tradition, and platforms from which progress to a more enlightened future could be launched. Yet in practice, the boundaries between books and the mass of smaller and more ephemeral publications – newspaper serials, tracts, pamphlets, and printed texts of sermons and public lectures – were porous. Material moved across the boundaries in both directions; texts circulated through different formats and genres and were often revised and reprinted many times. Among the most significant early books in Yoruba were town histories. Several of these – histories of Lagos, Ibadan and Abeokuta – were revised, updated and expanded by their authors in successive editions over a period of 30-40 years, making it clear that they were regarded as works in progress rather than finished products. Thus, to understand the role and impact of the book in colonial Yorubaland we need to trace its mutability and openness to transformation into and out of adjacent genres. What we are looking at is a culture of energetic and innovative textual experimentation.

Biography: Karin Barber is Professor of African Cultural Anthropology at the Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham. Her research has focused on Yoruba culture, and she is the author of books on praise poetry, popular theatre, print culture and the anthropology of texts. Her most recent book is *Print Culture and the First Yoruba Novel: I.B.Thomas's 'Life Story of Me, Segilola' and other Texts* (Brill 2012).

Ruth Bush (Oxford University)

'Prizing Francophone African literature: Colonial Nostalgia and the "Goncourt Africain"'

Abstract: This paper will present recent research on the *Grand Prix d'Afrique Noire*, considering the ways in which its historical links to structures and rhetoric of political power have informed the prize's ongoing symbolic prestige. Known colloquially today as the 'Goncourt Africain', this prize is awarded by the *Association des Écrivains de Langue Française* (ADELF), an association whose history dates to 1926, when it was first launched as the *Association des Romanciers Coloniaux*. Laureates of the prize include Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Birago Diop, Amadou Hampâté Bâ and Léopold Sédar Senghor. The prize's history, particularly during the turbulent post-war years leading to the independences of 1960, will here be situated against an understanding of the changing position of writing of and on sub-Saharan Africa in the literary marketplace during this period. Research based on ADELFF's regular publications and the association's archives track the changing constitution of its membership, including the membership of several prominent anti-colonial writers. Its prizes present an important example of the positioning of francophone African books and their publishers within the structures of recognition in the metropolitan literary field. Similarly, the gradual masking of colonial overtones in the association's manifesto is allied to a continued appeal to the 'universality' of the French language. Such tensions illustrate a post/colonial 'economics of cultural prestige' (J. English) characterised by a problematic appeal to aesthetic autonomy and a limited reflection on France's colonial past.

Biography: Ruth Bush is a third year DPhil student at Wolfson College, Oxford. She previously studied at Wadham College, Oxford, Edinburgh University, and the EHESS in Paris. Her thesis explores the theoretical implications of a revised history of publishing 'African' literature in the period 1945 – 70. She has published an article in the *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, and has papers forthcoming in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* and in a book entitled *Intimate Enemies: Translating Francophone Texts* (Liverpool UP 2013).

Becky Nana Ayebia Clarke

Panel Discussion: The Book in Africa

Biography: Becky Nana Ayebia Clarke is a Ghanaian-born award-winning publisher specializing in African & Caribbean writing. She was the last Submissions Editor of the highly regarded Heinemann African & Caribbean Writers Series at Oxford where she worked for 12 years promoting prominent and award-winning African & Caribbean writers. She founded Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited with her husband David in 2003 as a way of looking to new directions in African & Caribbean writing and publishing. Ayebia is based in Oxfordshire and has established itself as a leading international publisher of quality African and Caribbean literature from both established and new authors. Ayebia's mission is to bring talented fresh voices from Africa and the African Diaspora to reach wider world audiences by targeting schools, colleges and universities with a view to getting Ayebia publications onto international reading lists. Ayebia's books are used on African History and Cultural Studies courses as well as colonial and postcolonial courses internationally. Becky Nana Ayebia Clarke was awarded an Honorary MBE by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2011 for services to the British publishing industry. For more information about Ayebia books please visit the website: www.ayebia.co.uk

Archie L Dick (University of Pretoria)

'Copying and Circulation in South Africa's Reading Cultures, and their Consequences'

Abstract: In June 1800, Lady Anne Barnard complained that J.C. Ritter's Almanac only sold one copy in each of the Cape's four districts because all the inhabitants read or copied out of that one. In doing so, she pinpointed the established traditions of copying and circulation that constituted the Cape's reading publics and that characterized their reading cultures. This paper traces earlier and later examples that shaped the production, distribution, and reception of the book in South Africa. It also speculates on their consequences for reading cultures and for publishers today. Lady Ann Barnard visited the Cape at the time when the Dutch East India Company's oppressive control of printing and publishing was waning, and when the influence of an entrepreneurial class of publishers was spreading. While heralding greater intellectual freedom and other Enlightenment-age virtues, this transition hardened class divisions in the Cape's growing reading publics. These and other contradictions bequeathed a small number of book-buyers on the one hand, and a diffuse but larger number of common readers on the other hand that used informal and resourceful methods of copying and circulating books. This book and reading legacy endured through the colonial, segregation and apartheid eras, and persists in a democratic South Africa. The paper concludes with a review of its use by government authorities to justify a tax on books, and discusses some of the consequences for South Africa's reading cultures and for publishers.

Biography: Archie Dick is Professor in the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria. His interest is the history of reading, and his most recent book is *The Hidden History of South Africa's Book and Reading Cultures* (University of Toronto Press, 2012).

Robert Fraser (Open University)

Locating Africa; Defining the Book

Abstract: African Book History is such a new subject that at the outset we have to take our bearings, avoiding as we do the mistakes of both generic Book History and generic African studies. First, we have to avoid stereotyping Africa, home to so many different communicative histories. Second, we have to lay to rest the myth that the African book is a product of the twentieth century: there are plenty of local examples that go back a lot further. Third, we must avail ourselves of the opportunity of redefining what is meant by books, and entertain a more lively sense of how such artefacts relate to other communicative forms. I shall illustrate these themes with reference to models proposed in my own book *Book History Through Postcolonial Eyes: Re-writing the Script* (2008).

Biography: Robert Fraser has written books on Ayi Kwei Armah, West African poetry, Caribbean poetry, Ben Okri, postcolonial book history, postcolonial aesthetics, Sir James Frazer and Marcel Proust, together with full-length biographies of the British poets George Barker and David Gascoyne, and plays on the lives of Carlo Gesualdo, Samuel Johnson, Byron, D.H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield. Professor of English at the Open University, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in May, 2007.

Kate Haines (University of Sussex)

Dialogue, Text and Memory: The Production and Circulation of Literary Responses to the Post-Election Violence in Kenya

Abstract: As the violent aftermath of Kenya's 2007 elections unfolded a group of writers came together to form 'Concerned Kenyan Writers', a coalition that aimed to document and respond to the events taking place 'using our writing skills to help save Kenya in this polarized time'. This paper will examine the circulation and production of the literary responses to the post-election violence the group produced. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from across memory studies, book history and African literature, it will explore the interaction between social media, literary networks and publishers in the creation and mediation of cultural memory.

The paper will focus on:

- the setting up of the Google group 'Kenyan Writers' in January 2008 to discuss, share and shape the writing and publication of literary responses to the post-election violence
- the online production and circulation of literary responses to the post-election violence
- the performance and publication of Sitawa Namwalie's 'Cut Off My Tongue' by Storymoja
- the publication of literary journal *Kwani? 5* in 2009, bringing together fiction and creative non-fiction texts with the explicit aim of providing a 'collective narrative on what we were before, and what we became during the epochal first 100 days of 2008'.

Tracing the complex relationship between the 'Kenyan Writers' Google group and the publications emerging from it, the paper will ask: What role did literary networks and publishers play in the creation and mediation of cultural memory? What is the relationship between 'electronic' and 'print' publication in the circulation and production of creative writing emerging from post-election violence? How might James Young's idea of

the ‘fundamentally interactive, dialogical quality of every memorial space’ have a particular resonance for contemporary Kenyan writing?

Biography: Kate Haines is a DPhil student in the School of English at the University of Sussex. Her research explores the ways in which writing by African authors published since 2000 has intervened in the creation of cultural memory. In 2011 she presented on ‘Marketing Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*: Cultural Memory and the Making of Contemporary Writing’ at ‘Spectres of World Literature’, University of London and in 2012 on ‘Literary Responses to the Post-Election Violence in Kenya: Creating Cultural Memory through Writing, Production and Circulation’ at ‘Conflict, Memory and Reconciliation’, SIT Symposium, Kigali. She was previously Publisher, Humanities at Palgrave Macmillan and is currently Associate Editor for the Kwani? Manuscript Project. She has recently launched Material Books, a literary publishing house based in Kigali.

David Johnson (Open University)

‘Publishing Houses and Imagining the Union of South Africa in 1910’

Abstract: The paper focuses upon how publishing houses produced literary and historical texts that imagined a new national community in the aftermath of the South African War (1899-1902). Noting the economic and political pressures defining the publishers’ choices, the limits of such textual constructions of political community in (South) Africa are outlined. Focusing upon the history of one particular publisher, Nasionale Pers, the role of publishers in the constitution of the Union of South Africa in 1910 is in conclusion contrasted briefly with how publishers have adapted to the political economy of the post-apartheid era.

Biography: David Johnson of Professor of Literature in the Department of English at The Open University. He is the author of *Imagining the Cape Colony* (2012) and *Shakespeare and South Africa* (1996), the principal author of *Jurisprudence. A South African Perspective* (2001), and the co-editor of *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (2005).

Elizabeth le Roux (University of Pretoria)

‘Tracing University Press histories: From Myth and Perception to an Evidence-based Understanding’

Abstract: University press publishing, while often associated with the promotion of academic freedom, may be situated between the poles of resistance and complicity when considering intellectual responses to apartheid. Yet the history of this form of scholarly publishing has largely been ignored thus far, perhaps due to a perception that it had little to tell us about either apartheid or the struggle against it. As a result, a number of myths and (mis)perceptions have emerged concerning the university presses in South Africa, at Wits, Natal and Unisa, in particular. Using a hybrid methodology including archival research, historical bibliography, and political sociology, this paper aims to assess the perceptions against the concrete evidence of the actual publishing lists and philosophies of the university presses. Results show that, over time, the positions and publishing strategies adopted by the South African university presses shifted, becoming more liberal. It is argued, however, that the university presses cannot be considered oppositional or anti-apartheid publishers, in part because they did not resist the censorship regime of the government, and in part because they operated within the constraints of publicly funded, bureaucratic institutions of higher education. They nonetheless produced an important, if under-valued, body of work and provided a platform for a variety of academic opinions.

Biography: Elizabeth le Roux is a lecturer in Publishing Studies at the University of Pretoria. She previously worked in the scholarly publishing industry for 12 years, and is currently completing a PhD on the social history of the university presses in South Africa. Her research interests include the publishing history of the African continent, archival practice, and intellectual history.

Peter McDonald (Oxford University)

Panel Discussion: The Book in Africa

Biography: Peter D. McDonald is a Fellow of St Hugh’s College and Professor of English and Related Literatures at the University of Oxford. He teaches literatures in English from the nineteenth century to the present day and critical theory. His research focuses on literature as a specific mode of thinking, the socio-political space of literary production, publishing history and questions of the book, ideas of the intercultural, and literary institutions and the law since 1800. His principal publications include *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice, 1880-1914* (Cambridge, 1997), *Making Meaning: ‘Printers of the Mind’ and Other Essays* by D.F. McKenzie, co-edited with Michael Suarez (University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), and *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and its Cultural Consequences* (Oxford, 2009).

Jeff Opland (SOAS, University of London)
'Where Can You Find Xhosa Literature?'

Abstract: Xhosa literature is principally transmitted through oral and print media. Oral traditions are currently subject to varying degrees of change but have by and large remained stable since precolonial times. Apart from a few isolated examples from the 19th century, works of original creative literature were published in books as from the first decade of the 20th century, but these books are nowhere to be found on sale except through specialist dealers catering to the educational market. There is minimal readership of Xhosa books outside educational institutions; published books are principally designed for academic prescription. However, a considerable body of Xhosa literature, written for adult readers, relatively free of censorship, bowdlerisation and standardisation, can be found in newspapers published for about 70 years as from 1884. A proper assessment of the development and achievements of Xhosa literature will be facilitated by the collection, edition, translation and republication of this literary output.

Biography: Jeff Opland is Visiting Professor of African Language Literatures at SOAS, University of London and Visiting Professor, School of Languages, Rhodes University, Grahamstown. He is the author of publications on Medieval English and Xhosa literature, including *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry* (1980), *Xhosa Oral Poetry* (1983), *Xhosa Poets and Poetry* (1998) and *The Dassie and the Hunter* (2005). He is currently engaged in editing and translating early Xhosa literary texts in his collection, and has to date produced volumes on Nontsizi Mqgqwetho (2007), Isaac Williams Wauchope (2008) and S.E.K. Mqhayi (2009).

Ranka Primorac (University of Southampton)
'Some Thoughts on Books, Literariness and Crisis'

Abstract: Zambia's literature in English has been described as 'unpretentious', 'journalistic' and 'city-wise'. The subtly patronising tone of these descriptors captures the dominant perception of Zambia's status as a nation lacking a 'true' (complex and valuable) 'African' literary tradition. In counter-distinction to such views, this paper will offer some preliminary remarks about the production and social functioning of books in a national literary tradition marked by a protracted state of social and political crisis. I will argue that in Zambia there exists a local tradition of literariness which came into being in the 1960s as a deviation from the African canon-in-the-making (represented by the African Writers Series), and continued in the following decades alongside the near-collapse of the state publishing and the rise of entrepreneurial and church-sponsored modes of publication. The paper will be built around case studies outlining publishing histories of select local publications, and will be in keeping with Pascale Casanova's insistence that 'the simple idea that dominates the literary world still today, of literature as something pure and harmonious, works to eliminate all traces of the invisible violence that reigns over it and denies the power relations that are specific to this world and the battles that are fought in it'.

Biography: Ranka Primorac lectures in the English department of the University of Southampton. She has written widely about Zimbabwe's literatures and cultures (most notably in *The Place of Tears*, 2006) and is currently engaged in a project to do with Southern African literatures and local cosmopolitanisms. She is author of *African City Textualities* (Routledge, 2010) and her latest book-length publication is *Zimbabwe Since the Unity Government*, co-edited with Stephen Chan (Routledge 2012).

The Book History Research Group,
Department of English (Open University)
Director: Dr Shafquat Towheed

Active for over a decade, the Book History Research Group is a central part of the research narrative in the English Department and the Arts Faculty at the Open University. During this time it has made a number of major contributions to the development of the subject both nationally and internationally, and has attracted substantial amounts of both internal and external research funding, including three major AHRC grants. Central to the group's activities is the *Reading Experience Database* (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/>), which examines the evidence of readers in Britain (and British subjects abroad) from 1450-1945.

Members of the group have a wide range of interests, including seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature (especially John Bunyan and Daniel Defoe); the Bible in English; the history of reading between 1600 and the present day; author/publisher relations and the history of copyright; publishers' archives, especially Macmillan and Oxford University Press; Shakespeare text and performance; editing Modernist writing (especially Ford Madox Ford); literacy and print culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the colonial and postcolonial history of the book; reading during the First World War; and the relationship between book history and the digital humanities. Working with the Postcolonial Literatures Research Group, the Book History Research Group ran the AHRC funded *Colonial and Postcolonial History of the Book* project (2004-2007) and members of the group have been instrumental in a number of major publications on book history, publishing history and the history of reading in the colonial and postcolonial world.

The Postcolonial Literatures Research Group,
Department of English (Open University)
Director: Dr Alex Tickell

Founded in 1992, the Postcolonial Literatures Research Group represents an active community of scholars who work on a wide range of individual and collaborative projects, both within the Open University and in partnership with other academics and organisations. The group is organised as a research collective, and its activities are co-ordinated by its current director, Alex Tickell. The predominant focus of the group is on Anglophone literatures from South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and forms of colonial and neo-colonial experience represented in these literary traditions, but group members' interests also encompass the writing of the Caribbean and South-Asian diasporas; colonial cultural and literary history; anti-colonial political thought, and wider global literary systems. Members of the group also work on poetry, film and drama, anthropology, postcolonial theory, and the publishing and reception of literature in the post-colony.

In the past five years members of the group have directed and participated in several externally-funded AHRC projects, organised numerous conferences and seminar series and disseminated its research through the international journal *Wasafiri*. In the past two decades the group has published extensively and has shaped and informed the field of postcolonial studies.

The next event planned by the Postcolonial Literatures Research Group is a symposium on recent South-Asian Fiction titled: 'South-Asian Fiction: Contemporary Transformations' which will take place on Saturday 3rd November at the Institute of English Studies, Senate House, London. Organised as a follow-on event to the successful seminar series held at Senate House over the last eight months, this one-day symposium will allow key critics in the field of South-Asian literature in English, postcolonial studies and cultures of globalisation to discuss developments in the recent South-Asian Fiction. The symposium will re-address some of the defining themes of the seminar series, including changes in the commercial production and reception of South-Asian literature; new formal and generic developments and emerging political and economic contexts, and will question the continuing relevance of postcolonial critical frameworks in engaging with contemporary writing from South Asia. The keynote speaker is Priyamvada Gopal. Confirmed plenary-session speakers include Elleke Boehmer, Suman Gupta and Susheila Nasta.

The Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies
(Oxford Brookes University)

The Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies (OICPS) is one of the leading international organisations in publishing studies, and has the longest history of publishing education in British higher education. Staff research interests focus on contemporary and historical publishing issues, including colonial and postcolonial literary publishing in Africa, publishing in World War One, museum publishing and digital publishing. OICPS has been closely connected with institutions involved in both African publishing and African publishing education for many years. It carried out an exchange programme with the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana from 1998-2001. The University was the venue for several conferences on African Publishing, for example the Southern African Book Development Educational Trust (SABDET) Conference at Oxford Brookes University, October 2004. 'Publishing in Africa' was also a dominant theme at the Third International Conference on the Book, held at Oxford Brookes University in September 2005. Oxford Brookes University Library also houses a Special Collection on African Publishing.

Print, Publishing and Cultural Production in South Africa, 1948-2012

This research partnership between the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies and the Publishing Studies programme at the University of Pretoria has been funded by the British Academy International Partnership and Mobility Scheme from October 2012-13. The project seeks to examine the production, dissemination and reception of the book in South Africa. Drawing on the disciplines of book history and publishing studies, it aims to interrogate the institutions and processes informing textual production and consumption, and to address the role of print culture in constituting national identities during the apartheid and post-apartheid periods. The project is led by Caroline Davis at Oxford Brookes University and Archie Dick at Pretoria University, while Elizabeth le Roux (Pretoria) and Sally Hughes (Oxford Brookes) are also participants, and it builds upon shared research interests in the production, dissemination and reception of the book in the apartheid and post-apartheid periods. A series of events is planned in both the UK and South Africa, to bring together book historians in both regions, and to support early-career scholars and PhD students. The longer-term aim is to provide a basis from which to extend research collaboration relating to publishing and print culture research to other regions of Africa.