

Dr James Procter

Devolving Diasporas: Migration and Reception in Central Scotland, 1980 – present

End of year report for 2008

Progress and highlights:

- Project conference attended by some of the world's leading diaspora intellectuals (including Arjun Appadurai, Kobena Mercer and Paul Gilroy), and one of the founding figures of audience studies (David Morley), as well as reading group members from Scotland, Nigeria, Trinidad, Morocco and Delhi. Feedback on the conference was extremely positive.
- A spin-off conference on *Caribbean-Scottish Passages* in June 2008 brought together writers, researchers and artists to discuss these specific transatlantic diasporic relationships. Some of the papers appear in a special issue of the *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, an online journal with open access to all (<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/index.htm>).
- The production of Jackie Kay's *The Adoption Papers* which premiered for our reading groups in 2007 (and sold out for the 3 nights) was taken to the Edinburgh Festival in August 2008.

(<http://www.edfringe.com/shows/detail.php?action=shows&id=1702>
<http://www.stirlingobserver.co.uk/lifestyle/arts-stirling/2008/07/23/fringe-benefits-for-playwright-51226-21384473/>)

- The project was invited to take part in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of *Things Fall Apart* in 2008. This involved setting up a book group discussion between readers in London, Nigeria and Scotland in collaboration with the British Council and the Achebe Foundation. We delivered a paper on the book group chat at a conference attended by Achebe in London in October.
- The project was selected for inclusion on 'Intute: Best of the Web' (<http://www.intute.ac.uk/artsandhumanities/cgi-bin/fullrecord.pl?handle=20070812-034646>)

The main event in 2008 was the international three-day conference, 'Reading After Empire' hosted by Stirling University (3-5 September). Focusing on the neglected role of audiences (readers, viewers, listeners) in colonial, postcolonial and diasporic contexts, it was attended by over 80 delegates from around the world. We were particularly pleased to have attracted such high profile keynotes. For details see: <http://www.devolvingdiasporas.com/conferences.htm>

The conference participants included both professional (academic) and lay readers (librarians and book group organizers). The presentations of this latter group are currently being housed on the project site and represent part of an ongoing dialogue between the project team and audiences outside the academy. We have selected 16 papers from the conference and produced a draft proposal for a book of conference proceedings to be submitted early next year. This co-edited volume (Benwell, Procter, Robinson) will be in addition to the stated outputs in our original application.

In all other respects the project has progressed well this year. The recordings that were lost through technical failures in 2007 have been supplemented in 2008 with 10 additional 'one-off read' recordings across England and Scotland. We have now completed the data collection process of the project and have more material than originally estimated in our original application. Specifically, we have recorded 18 additional book groups in the UK, extending our research beyond Scotland to include England. We have also done a one-off recording in Morocco and a final one is taking place in Jamaica over the Christmas vacation. The transcription work has also progressed well. There are now only 9 of the 2007 recordings outstanding, plus the 10 groups from 2008 that have just been added

to the database. This means we have ample material to continue the analysis and writing up our research findings in 2009.

In addition to the forthcoming publications mentioned below ('Publications'), we began collaborative drafts of our co-written book (Benwell, Procter, Robinson), and decided on the overall structure and chapter breakdown. We will be submitting a proposal to publishers in early 2009. We have also produced a proposal for the journal Special Issue mentioned in our original application. This is currently with *Cultural Critique* (Duke UP). The issue will include the interview hosted at the 'Reading After Empire' conference between Arjun Appadurai and David Morley. Finally, between September and December, Kay, Procter and Robinson started making selections for the Bloodaxe poetry anthology currently titled *Out of Bounds*. This selection will be scanned over the Christmas vacation for further editing in 2009.

During 2008 we delivered five projected-related papers. Four of these were invited papers:

'Evidence of Reading, Reading as Evidence' London
(<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/conference-report.html>); 'On Whose Terms?'
London <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/onwhoseterms/conference-schedule.pdf>;
'Encounters and Intersections', St. Catherine's College,
Oxford <http://www.diasporas.ac.uk/assets/Encounters%20and%20Intersections%20Flyer%20P2Ex.pdf>; 'Things Fall Apart at 50' (Contemporary Reader Responses to Things Fall Apart), SOAS,
London: <http://ies.sas.ac.uk/events/conferences/2008/Achebe/programme.htm>
'Identities: Relations and Horizons, Roskilde University,
Denmark: http://www.ruc.dk/upload/application/pdf/dba1f526/symposium_programme.pdf

The projected is currently showcased on a number of sites, including:

Encompassculture (British Council):

<http://www.encompassculture.com/readinggroups/diasporaandreading/>

SABDET:

<http://www.sabdet.com/ASAUK2006Procter.htm>

Small Island Read 2007:

<http://www.smallislandread.com/>

Netskills:

<http://www.netskills.ac.uk/content/projects/diasporas-database/index.html>