

## [CFP - Postcolonial Literary Panel, SAES \(French Society for English Studies\) Conference, Tours \(France\), 4-6th June 2020](#)

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Conference

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France

Subject Fields:

Colonial and Post-Colonial History / Studies, Literature

Postcolonial Literary Panel, SAES (French Society for English Studies) Conference, Tours (France), 4-6th June 2020

Call for papers

“Renaissance(s) / Rebirth(s)”, the theme chosen for the 2020 SAES conference, is particularly relevant in the context of postcolonial literatures in English. Often called “new literatures” in the early years of their emergence, postcolonial works were – and are – frequently characterised by their attempts to renew literary forms, genres and language. These innovative practices sought, and often still seek, emancipation from European norms and canons, with the risk of creating new orthodoxies, like the primacy of the novel in the Indian postcolonial literary scene. Some writers are challenging these new norms from within by promoting an aesthetics of the mundane or reworking form and genre (Mohsin Hamid mixing the European tale tradition with the *Arabian Nights* in *Exit West* (2017), Chimamande Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and other female Nigerian authors’ take on the *Bildungsroman*, ...) Considering these practices through the notion of renewal begs the question of point of view: who are these practices new to? The renaissance, rebirth or renewal operated through literature cannot but strike us with its problematic undertones.

Behind these ideas of renewal and rebirth lie complex dynamics that this panel seeks to explore: from the colonizers’ point of view, colonies could be seen as being born again under colonial rule which rests on the problematic assumption that the pre-colonisation past of these territories was obscure, uncivilised or in decay; yet, if one thinks of early Orientalism, some Orientalists helped Europeans re-“discover”

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ancient languages (Sanskrit) or art forms (the ghazal), all of which were to some extent thus reborn. The issue is largely one of perspective: while these cultures might have been seen as reborn from a European point of view, they were always already there for colonised peoples, which brings us to the problematic notion of origin.

Postcolonial literatures have also often played a role in the birth, or rebirth, of a nation, with many literary works engaging with, or sometimes questioning, the idea of nation, national literature and national borders. If some kinds of “rebirth” may have to do with an essentialist and/or nationalist conception of culture which would have to be born again or retrieved (this idea itself being a mere ideological construct, sometimes to push a political agenda), for instance after colonisation or in more recent times with Hindutva in India, others may be thought of more as gradual co-construction, involving processes of imitation, creation, innovation and hybridisation. 1960s literary works often included reflections on national identity, while recent developments in indigenous literatures have rather tended to stress the connections that exist between indigenous peoples and literatures beyond national borders.

“Rebirth” may also imply looking back at past historical moments with a new perspective, which for instance led Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* to be associated with Neo-Victorianism, and more precisely the “Neo-Victorian at sea” and a “global memory of the Victorian” (Elizabeth Ho).

This panel will also discuss “renaissance” movements: can we consider that an indigenous literary renaissance has taken place in Canada, Australia or New Zealand? Has an increasing awareness of the need to protect the environment led to new literary practices and movements? The Renaissance involved the development of vernacular languages in literature; what has been the place of vernacular languages and oral literary practices in postcolonial literatures? Theory also evolves constantly: has postcolonial theory been renewed since the 1980s? In what ways?

Finally, the Renaissance era appears in postcolonial literatures: plots may take place during the Renaissance, use well-known historical figures associated with the period (William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, Dante, ...), reflect on the importance of ancient Greece and Rome in European ideals and epistemologies, or draw from or adapt Renaissance works (adaptations of Shakespeare plays in postcolonial contexts, ...). How is the appearance of figures and motifs linked to the Renaissance in postcolonial works to be accounted for?

Submissions may address, but need not be limited to, the following themes:

- The renewal of literary forms, genres and language in postcolonial literatures;
- Works that challenge the postcolonial canon and orthodoxies in content or form;
- The role of postcolonial literatures in the birth/rebirth/redefinition of national identity;
- “Renaissance” movements (indigenous literatures, environmental awareness);
- The emergence - rather than renaissance - of “new” literatures: Dalit literature, Asian Australian literature, ...;
- The place of vernacular languages in postcolonial literatures, including the importance of orality and oral literary practices (for example in Aboriginal and Caribbean literatures);
- Renewals in postcolonial theory; traveling concepts and theories in the field;
- Representations of the Renaissance or Renaissance historical figures in postcolonial literatures (eg adaptations of Shakespeare in postcolonial contexts, ...);
- References to and/or reappropriations of ancient Greek or Roman ideals/figures/motifs;
- Rebirth as a trope in postcolonial literatures (characters who are literally or metaphorically reborn, images/metaphors of rebirth (eg the phoenix), the central place of water in rebirth narratives, ...).

Papers should be given in English and not exceed 20 minutes in length. Selected revised papers will be published in the Autumn 2021 issue of the international peer-reviewed journal *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* (<http://www.univ-paris3.fr/commonwealth-essays-and-studies-16669.kjsp>).

Participants are also welcome to propose round tables.

Proposals of 300 words (in English only, .doc or .docx format), accompanied by a brief bio-bibliographical note, should be sent to Marilyne Brun and Jaine Chemmachery before 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019 at: [jaine.chemmachery@dauphine.psl.eu](mailto:jaine.chemmachery@dauphine.psl.eu) and [marilyne.brun@univ-lorraine.fr](mailto:marilyne.brun@univ-lorraine.fr). Participants will be

notified of acceptance by 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019.