

Institution: University of Kent
Unit of Assessment: 29 – English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Radical Distrust: Rethinking Radicalisation for Policy Formation and Public Debate
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Caroline Rooney's 'Radical Distrust' research has generated policy advice for government officials, stimulated and informed public debate through international cultural activism and media channels of international reach, and launched trust-building initiatives to counter the effects of sectarian conflict in the Middle East. 'Radical Distrust' anticipated the Arab Spring, serving to enhance the visibility and significance of the pro-democracy momentum linked to the arts in the period just prior to the uprisings. The programme generated data of historical importance for this key moment, and brought the cultural self-analyses of regional intellectuals to new audiences. It has been and continues to be a catalyst for multiple audiences in coming to terms with a new Middle East in the making.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Rooney's research has long engaged with anti-colonial liberation struggles and their postcolonial aftermaths in both sub-Saharan and North Africa. Appointed at Kent in 1992 (Professor 2010-), Rooney published in 2007 a second monograph, <i>Decolonising Gender: Literature and a Poetics of the Real</i>, which explicates a poetics of the real in terms of eclipsed enlightenments, ongoing liberation struggles, and revolutionary momentum.[3.1] This deliberately prospective book informs the Radical Distrust project. Her earlier monograph, <i>African Literature, Animism and Politics</i> [3.2] served to connect her in 2008 with Egyptian academics interested in the animist aspects of popular Sufism, and her research has gone on to explore the impact of Sufi culture on the Egyptian revolution.</p> <p>The Radical Distrust programme was strategically underpinned by an innovative critical-creative design, conceived in 2008 and implemented by the following projects: Global Youth Cultures conference and performance day, in association with the Canterbury Festival (2009); hosting of youth from the Middle East to produce a travelogue blog (UK 2010); hip hop performance and training workshop at El Sawy Culturewheel (Cairo 2010); fieldwork with Egyptian writers and intellectuals culminating in a workshop at and with Cairo University (2009-2010); exploration of cross-sectarian and transnational literature on civil war and states of siege in Beirut, towards a conference (2010); workshops on separatism, extremism, and settler cultures, including collaboration with Kent Refugee Help on 'visa stories' (2011), and the October Gallery on an exhibition of terrorism images by Leila Sharwa (2012).</p> <p>Rooney's essays challenge dominant paradigms informing foreign policy. 'The Disappointed of the Earth' [3.3] argues that radicalisation is not necessarily a form of anti-modern resistance but often a response to 'chronic disappointment' and lack of dignity at being shut out from modernity. 'Utopian Cosmopolitanism and the Conscious Pariah' [3.4] argues that there are lateral connections between anti-elitist liberation movements that share similar utopian horizons, with Cairo as a particular case study. 'Arab Hip Hop in an International Frame' [3.5] shows how Arab youth make use of hip hop to critique both capitalist globalisation and local authoritarianism: this article appeared in <i>Orient</i>, the remit of which is to connect academia with decision-makers, 100 copies of each issue going to the European Parliament.</p> <p>Jacqueline Rose has found Rooney's original formulation of chronic disappointment 'evocative' (<i>Psychoanalysis and History</i>, 11:2 [July 2009]: 268); Gabriel Piterberg (History, UCLA) has drawn on Rooney's ongoing work on settler cultures (<i>Settler Colonial Studies</i>, 2:1 [2011]: 47); and Joseph Massad (Politics, Columbia) is drawing on Rooney's research in his critique of Western liberalism in his forthcoming monograph. Rooney's work is considered seminal for Arab cultural studies, as explored in the <i>Journal for Cultural Research</i>, and as representative of the strands of postcolonial theory that are most relevant to the Arab Spring (<i>Countertext</i>). Her work has been taken up in disciplines other than her own: as already indicated, those of politics, history, and psychoanalysis; it has also appeared in a sociology issue of the <i>Journal for Cultural Research</i> on the UK riots [3.6],</p>

while its usefulness for security policies has been recognised by two successive RCUK Global Uncertainties fellowships, the second of which is a leadership fellowship, the awards totalling £743,187.

3. References to the research

1. **Caroline Rooney**, *Decolonising Gender: Literature and a Poetics of the Real* (London: Routledge, 2007). Pp. 246. ISBN 0-415-42418-9. RAE 2007.
2. **Caroline Rooney**, *African Literature, Animism and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000). Pp. 246. ISBN 0-415-23751-3. RAE 2000.
3. **Caroline Rooney**, 'The Disappointed of the Earth', *Psychoanalysis and History*, Special double issue on Psychoanalysis, Fascism and Fundamentalism, 11:2 (July 2009): 159-74. ISSN 1460-8235. DOI: 10.3366/E1460823509000385. **REF2 output 1.**
4. **Caroline Rooney**, 'Utopian Cosmopolitanism and the Conscious Pariah: Harare, Ramallah, Cairo', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Special issue on Debating Local Cosmopolitanism, 46:1 (March 2011): 139-55. DOI: 10.1177/0021989410396038.
5. **Caroline Rooney**, 'Arab Hip Hop in an International Frame', *Orient: German Journal for Politics, Economics and Culture of the Middle East*, III (July 2010): <http://www.orient-online.com/Issues/ORIENT-III-2010/> [No ISSN, no DOI].
6. **Caroline Rooney**, 'From Cairo to Tottenham: Big Societies, Neoliberal States, Colonial Utopias', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 17:2 (2013): 144-63. DOI: 10.1080/1497585.2012.756244 **REF2 output 3.**

Key research grants: 1) RCUK Global Uncertainties Fellowship Award No: RES-071-27-0071; amount: £270,474 <http://www.kent.ac.uk/english/radicaldistrust/>; 2) RCUK Global Uncertainties Leadership Fellowship Award No: ES/K00349/1; amount: £422,713 + uplift £50,000.

4. Details of the impact

Rooney's programme, in its combination of arts-based activism and public engagement, has provided significant guidance and inspiration in tackling socio-political fractures in the contemporary Middle East, reaching audiences not only in Europe and the Arab world but also in the USA and Russia. The programme was designed to have impact simultaneously on five fronts:

Shaping policy

Because of the horizon-scanning capacity of her research, Rooney was invited to address the All Party Parliamentary Group at its inaugural Global Uncertainties meeting at the House of Commons (October 2011) towards the White Paper on national security. Her presentation was followed by questions from MPs and representatives from Royal United Services Institute and Chatham House. As a result of this briefing, Rooney's research on the build-up to the Egyptian revolution was read by a member of the Ministry of Defence, who praised its insights and consulted Rooney on the use of human resources to further security policies based on trust and cultural awareness.[5.1]

Learning of the distinctiveness of Rooney's research through Ghada Karmi, Roger Higginson, Head of the International Division, Department of Culture, Media and Sport, contacted her to discuss the Israel/Palestine conflict in relation to the Arab Spring. She then submitted evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on British Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring, Higginson describing the evidence as 'first rate'. [5.2] Her recommendation that attention be paid to the cultural self-analyses of regional intellectuals is cited in the committee's final report, July 2012. [5.3] In addition, her argument that it would be hypocritical not to support Palestinian aspirations for democracy while supporting the Arab Spring is echoed by David Cameron in his speech to the United Jewish Israel Appeal on 15/10/2012. [5.4] Her insights into urban unrest led to Rooney being invited to address a further public sector audience at RUSI on the August riots (01/10/2012).

Shaping and documenting cultural activism

In March 2010, 'Radical Distrust' mounted a hip hop play, *The Rebel Cell* (by and with Dizraeli and Baba Brinkman) at the premier arts venue El Sawy Culturewheel, Cairo. The play is about terrorism, youth rebellion, and civil rights, and the performance climaxed with a public discussion between the performers and the audience on change of government, rights, and democracy. The performance was filmed by government-owned Nile TV, with an audience of 80m in Egypt and

350m in the Arab world, and a recording broadcast by El Sawy Culturewheel's Al Sakia online radio. A hip hop workshop mounted by Radical Distrust in tandem with the event coached Farah Medhat, who went on to become a prominent beat boxer of the revolution as documented in the film *Lyrics Revolt* (2011). The Global Youth Cultures special issue of *Wasafiri* collates the work of other prominent cultural activists with whom Rooney and hip hop artist Blake Brandes collaborated; it was launched through a performance to a full house (100+) at the Institute for Contemporary Arts.[5.5]

In addition to stimulating pre-revolutionary public debate and artistic expression in Cairo on political resistance, Rooney conducted filmed interviews with five Egyptian writers (early 2010) which provide evidence of Rooney's and her interviewees' awareness of the then-evident revolutionary mood, serving as a corrective to the narrative that insists no one foresaw the uprisings. The interviews therefore constitute historically significant data and have been archived in a documentary short, 'The Road to Midan Tahrir', directed by Rooney.[5.6]

As a recognised spokesperson on the revolution, Rooney was invited to deliver the opening keynote at the 'Women and Revolution' workshop (Ain Shams University, 2013), and accordingly interviewed by Nile TV and by Marwa Gadallah, Radio Cairo, Local European Service (FM 95.4).

Informing public debate

Rooney has contributed political analyses to *Counterpunch* of both the Breivik killings and the London Riots. Their influence can be seen in that her Riots article was a Top Link on the online *Huffington Post* and her Breivik/Hamlet article blogged about by Margaret Litvin (author of *Hamlet's Arab Journey*), who judges it 'praiseworthy' and 'highly salutary'.[5.7]

Rooney was invited to take part in a half hour debate on Russia Today TV's CrossTalk on 03/07/2013 to provide breaking news commentary on the events leading to the ousting of President Morsi as they unfolded. CrossTalk is the flagship programme of RT TV, reaching a global audience of over 6m (higher than audience figures for comparable Al Jazeera programmes). The debate was also posted on YouTube (7,000 hits in the first 4 days).[5.8] On 13/06/2013, Rooney took part with Baroness Tonge in a Cambridge Union debate on the Two State Solution, which also features on YouTube (412 views in the first 6 weeks).

Building trust

The 2010 conference on 'The Siege of Beirut and the Ethics of Representation' entailed the participation of foreign correspondents who had originally covered the siege, and it was attended by the first secretary of the Lebanese Embassy, members of Lebanese societies and by journalists from the World Service and ITV. The gathering constituted an unprecedented occasion to discuss the experience of the siege across communities previously divided by sectarianism, proving in itself to be a trust-building occasion. It led to an interview with Robert Fisk by Rooney and Rita Sakr on the ethics of reportage and Lebanese 'amnesia', and to an invitation for Rooney to present a paper, with Julia Borossa, at a conference of mental health professionals entitled *Guerre finie, guerre infinie* held at Hôpital Mont Lebanon, attended by embassy officials, and reported on in *L'Orient-Le Jour* (28/10/2011). Elisabeth Roudinesco, President of the International Society for Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis, commends the constructive effects of the research in creating confidence amongst the Lebanese to forge a truly national memory.[5.9]

Contributing to human rights creative outreach

Rooney was invited to read her poetry at Exiled Ink's Hospitality Poetica event (2012), and her poems were selected by Keats House Poets (05/2013) for the new anthology *In Protest: 150 Poems for Human Rights*. Her ongoing work on *Hamlet* and radicalisation towards a new play on Palestinian prisoners and their rights (in tandem with the FCO backed report on such) was so seminal as to be brought to the attention of the Park Theatre by the Moving Theatre and by the writer Omar El Khairy in July 2013, with the result that Rooney was invited to pitch for, and succeeded in obtaining, a four week run. This result evidences significant impact extending beyond the census period, with Rooney acting since July as both executive producer and contributor to the creative team for *The Keepers of Infinite Space*, written by El Khairy with contributions by Rooney, world premiere 22/01/2014. The research on Beirut led to dialogue with multi-award-winning filmmaker Mai Masri from July 2011 onwards regarding how it may be used to inform future art works, Masri affirming its importance for her vision.[5.10] Beyond the census period, Masri and Rooney

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are collaborating on the filming of a Global Uncertainties documentary. The uptake of the research by creative beneficiaries concerned with human rights in the public domain demonstrates the enabling momentum that the programme has served to generate, establishing productive new partnerships so as to perpetuate the outreach already achieved.

Since 2009 Rooney's research has radiated out to have significant impacts on five fronts internationally: shaping policy, shaping and documenting cultural activism, informing public debate, building trust, and contributing to human rights creative outreach, all of which evidence how impact can be achieved and made intrinsic to research of the highest excellence in postcolonial studies.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. **Corroborating impact on security debates:** Director of Strategy, Defence, Science, Technology Laboratory, Ministry of Defence: email letters: 19/10/2011; 25/11/2011. **RSS Source 1.**
2. **Corroborating impact on foreign policy review:** Dr Ghada Karmi, writer and activist. **RSS Source 2.** Roger Higginson: email letter: 15/12/2011. **RSS Source 3.**
3. **Corroborating impact on foreign policy review:**
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/british-foreign-policy-and-the-arab-spring/> See Publications: '2nd Report': section '2. The Arab Spring uprisings' and section '4. Support for democratic transitions'; see also Rooney's evidence:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmfa/80/80awe02.htm>
4. **Corroborating impact through foreign policy advice:** Evidence (AS02), British Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring: The Transition to Democracy',
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmfa/writev/arab/as02.htm>
 Rooney: 'Strengthening the pro-democracy movements will reduce the extremist alternatives, and if the UK is to be considered sincere in the promotion of global justice it needs to ally itself with civil societies in the Middle East, including Palestinian movements, that seek reform.'
 David Cameron, speech, United Jewish Israel Appeal,
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/speech-at-annual-dinner-of-united-jewish-israel-appeal>
 Cameron: 'We can't advocate democracy and open societies in one breath and then cite the need for stability as an excuse for why the Palestinians shouldn't renew their democracy too.'
5. **Corroborating impact through shaping and documenting cultural activism:** Original Arab Spring writing and art are collected in *Wasafiri*, Global Youth Cultures, 72 (2012), ed. Caroline Rooney and Blake Brandes, with the following filmed interviews and performances from its launch event at the ICA (Jan 2013): <http://www.wasafiri.org/Video.asp>
6. **Corroborating impact through shaping and documenting cultural activism:** *The Road to Midan Tahrir*, Cairo Interviews, Media Trust (2013):
<http://www.kent.ac.uk/english/research/commonground/Cairo.html>
7. **Corroborating impact of political journalism:** Margaret Litvin, Shakespeare in the Arab World Blog, 'Jihadist Hamlet: Western Commentators Catch Up to Hamlet's Political Dimensions', 07/08/2011, <http://arabshakespeare.blogspot.co.uk/>; *Huffington Post* top links: 07/08/2012 and 28/11/2012.
8. **Corroborating impact through shaping public debate on Egypt:** CrossTalk:
<http://rt.com/shows/crosstalk/egypt-revolution-morsi-society-590/>; YouTube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJRuyOjOTk&>
9. **Corroborating impact through trust-building in Beirut:** Elisabeth Roudinesco: email letter: 04/02/2012. **RSS Source 4.** An example of trust-building work with journalists and psychoanalysts in Beirut can be seen in the film clips on this website:
<http://www.kent.ac.uk/english/research/commonground/seminars.html>
10. **Corroborating impact through trust-building and human rights creative outreach:** Mai Masri: email letter: 03/02/2012. **RSS Source 5.**