

**RESEARCHING SOUTHERN AFRICA:  
A POSTGRADUATE WORKSHOP  
2 JUNE 2014**

**ABSTRACTS**

**Lara Atkin (Queen Mary): 'As Children in his Hands': The San 'Bushman' Child in Children's Literature: 1830-1845**

Capt. Marryat - hero of the Napoleonic wars - and Rev. John Campbell - London Missionary Society agent - would appear to have little in common. Yet both were the product of an early-nineteenth century Britain in which Evangelical religious ideology had affected what Nancy Cutt has termed 'a quiet domestic revolution', informing both the spiritual and family values of middle-class Britons. Marryat and Campbell also wrote children's literature about South Africa that was informed by both Evangelical ideology and the many works of popular ethnology and ethnography available during this time.

This paper will trace the emergence of the figure of the San 'Bushman' child out of this heterogeneous textual field. On the one hand, Evangelical ideology and ethnology were utilised in order to contain the San within Eurocentric narratives that emphasised their mental, moral and material inferiority. On the other, the San child was frequently figured as both a guide and saviour to European travellers due to his ability to hunt, gather and navigate. This indigenous knowledge indicated a mastery over the land and its resources that imbued him with an authority over Europeans for whom the southern African veld was a site of struggle - with its ungovernability continually foregrounded by ongoing border disputes. Through this case study, I shall demonstrate how popular fiction became a site through which emerging ideas about race, religion and the relationship between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of South Africa, were debated and interrogated.

**Roger Blanton (Queen Mary): Masculinity and the Nation in the novels of Kgebetli Moele**

This paper examines competing forms of masculinity and constructs of the nation in two novels by Kgebetli Moele. In these works, the groups of men espouse an insular, Andersonian view of post-apartheid South Africa: what is important in my community is what is important in the nation. Both, however, consider this act of definition as strictly a male prerogative. In *The Book of the Dead*, the black bourgeois characters delimit the nation (and its concomitant fortunes) along socio-economic lines mimetic of their own class. In *Room 207*, a different but equally solipsistic approach is undertaken. The idea of the nation is not constructed along such strict social binaries but instead is based on individual and collective identities found through measures of existential self-questioning. In Moele's books, these concepts of nationhood demonstrate the diverse yet circumscribed constituents of the country. While social, educational and political lines are now capable of being traversed, there is still liminal space to be negotiated; the

specter of patriarchy allows such perceived entitlements to continue. Regardless of the divisions between the homosocial communities of these works, they can be seen, not as remnants of apartheid society, but as metonyms for the “new” South Africa.

**Jessica Chu (SOAS): ‘We have the land, they have the money’: Smallholder farmers and ‘land grabs’ in a Zambian case study**

This paper focuses on the interactions in a small rural community in Kafue district, Zambia. Chanyanya is the host of the Chiansi Irrigation Project (CIP), jointly managed by the Chanyanya Smallholders Cooperative Society and InfraCo, a British infrastructure development company. CIP involves the exchange of farmland from smallholder farmers to a large-scale commercial agriculture project, for the construction of an irrigation system for the community. I came across the project through my fieldwork with the Zambia Land Alliance, in the context of concerns over the recent wave of ‘land grabs’ that have swept through much of sub-Saharan Africa.

This paper explores several of the narratives expressed in the CIP project that interact with the idea of ‘land grabs’. Chanyanya becomes a site of interest in ‘land grabs’ debates, not because of conflict over land, but because of the question of labour and *who* farms? This is not a new questions to ask in Zambia, which can be traced to Richards’ (1939) study of land, labour and diet, and have been continually taken up by anthropologists studying Zambia (Moore and Vaughan, 1994; Ferguson, 1999), who have explored the role of agriculture and rural livelihoods in Zambia’s boom and bust economy. What can the attitudes of those involved in the Chanyanya project about being a farmer reveal about their engagement with Zambia’s rapid economic changes? Under contention in ‘land grabs’ debates is not just land, but the role of everyday Zambians engaged in trying to take part in Zambia’s development.

**Alexandra Effe (Queen Mary): Ethics of (Co-)Authorship in J. M. Coetzee’s *Summertime*: Constructing Identity in Dialogue**

J. M. Coetzee’s novels have explored authorship in several contexts, among them 18th century England, 19th century Russia, and present-day Australia. *Summertime* reflects on authorship in a contemporary South African setting. This geographical and temporal trajectory seems to be a movement closer towards the historical author. *Summertime* narrates the life story of a protagonist by the name of John Coetzee through a fictional biographer’s interviews with acquaintances of John. They narrate their own life and identity in relation to his and construct him in terms of his representativeness or lack of representativeness of a contested notion of South African identity.

I will argue that by narrating John’s life story in an act of co-authorship *Summertime* constructs identity in dialogue. The entities in dialogue are refractions of the self, which find expression in the intratextual voices of John as the writer of notebooks, Mr Vincent, and the interviewees. What is more, *Summertime* opens up the dialogue to the

extratextual level by encouraging participatory reading. Intra- and extratextual levels are furthermore rendered porous through *Summertime's* metaleptic structure. The author is both creator of and created by the text and its readers. As I will argue, this blurring of ontological boundaries is crucial for *Summertime's* ethics of authorship. It means that the author cedes authority over his writing and identity and that, in consequence, both the protagonist and the historical author are dialogically negotiated. This notion of ethical dialogue may have particular relevance in the context of postapartheid South Africa.

**Emma Lundin (Birkbeck): 'Now is the time!' The importance of international spaces for women's activism within the ANC, 1960-1976**

Based on a chapter from my PhD thesis, this paper will chart ANC's women's history from the Sharpeville massacre to the Soweto uprising by discussing how the events of this era impacted the position of ANC women, and how international spaces helped shape the voice of their activism within the movement.

The paper will argue that although women in the ANC were making progress under the influence of strong leaders in exile – notably Ruth Mompati and Florence Mophosho – the situation on the ground in South Africa and the ANC's rigid patriarchal culture meant that women's fight for political equality proved impossible both within the apartheid state and within the liberation movement itself. It concludes that although the ANC women's movement was too weak to reach its goals in this era, the international connections women in exile made at this time – within Africa, across continents and on the international diplomatic scene – and their exposure to second-wave feminism and black pride, had a direct impact on ANC women's organisation, language and work. The experiences of the late 1960s and early 1970s dramatically opened the eyes of a generation of women who would not be easily silenced in the future; their politicisation and mobilisation would prove vital for both the anti-apartheid struggle and for women's liberation in South Africa over the coming decades. I am a final-year PhD student at Birkbeck, University of London, where my AHRC-funded thesis explores the impact of connections between Swedish Social Democratic women and women in the ANC 1960-1994.

**Lennon Mhishi (SOAS): Consuming (in) Exile: Young Zimbabweans Negotiating Agency and Identity in Johannesburg, South Africa**

With the importance that issues of migration and human movements have taken, in relation to issues such as legality/illegality, centrifugal/centripetal forces and other attendant aspects that cause or come with migration to/in South Africa, it is important to try and understand the socio-cultural elements that accompany transnational movements, and the attendant “dislocation” of cross-border migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa. This discussion, based on field research conducted in Johannesburg, South Africa, between 2010 and 2012, explores the conditions, situations, experiences,

practices of Zimbabwean migrants. It explores these conditions particularly through the lens of consumption and identity construction or negotiation. Through open-ended interviews and limited (auto) ethnography (participant observation) with several young Zimbabweans, narratives of migration, consumption and identity are revealed, as well as the complexities of writing and theorising the multivocality and heterogeneity of a somewhat often conceptually homogenised migrant population. Processes of “having” and relationships of “being” are as useful to understanding the experiences of migrants, as are macro-economic and policy-centred issues around Zimbabwean migration to South Africa. Discussing the narratives of migration, consumption and being through a variety of theoretical arguments constitutes an effort to provide or contribute to a methodologically and theoretically nuanced approach to the exploration of Zimbabwean migration in particular, and also migration in general. This discussion explores different (participant) narratives of Zimbabwean migration through the analytical lenses of consumption, mediated by, and through factors such as gender, space, place and commodity. It similarly confronts the unexpected for what I set out to explore in the research study, by engaging with such issues as religion, which reveal the complexity of processes consuming space and place, of self-identification and belonging in which migrants engage.

**Langton Miriyoga (Royal Holloway): Where Do Migrants Belong?: The Making of Cross-Border Political Membership of Zimbabwean Migrants in South Africa since 2000**

Acute socio economic and political problems have resulted in the flight of an estimated four million Zimbabweans over the past decade to different destinations within the Southern African region (mainly South Africa) and beyond. It is often reported that they face growing hostility and rejection based on their nationality in the countries they are hosted; while being unable to return to their home country due to persistent crises. One of the questions arising relates to the political community to which these migrants belong while living outside their country. Have they completely detached from their homeland political community and its ‘parochial’ political processes in a globalising world as claimed by some scholars, and how do we explain these dynamics? This paper addresses these questions by exploring the subjective/intersubjective senses of belonging and political imaginaries of Zimbabweans living in South Africa. I will tentatively argue that, although identities of Zimbabwean migrants are thought to be fragmented, the majority maintain attachment to their home country and continue to follow its politics, owing to historical, socio-spatial and political dynamics among other factors emanating from home and host countries. I will use a set of theoretical lenses to sustain this position including the idea of *long distance nationalism* expressed through complex processes of political imagination. In so doing, I will demonstrate the inadequacies of liberal universalist thinking on transnational citizenship, which seem to have gained currency in the global north in the context of globalisation.

### **Seamus Murphy (SOAS): Agrarian Change in Southern Malawi; Transformation of the Chilwa Commons**

The following paper brings together theoretical discussions of several key ethnographic vignettes from an ongoing PhD project. It presents four case studies from Kachulu town that portray a number of livelihoods in fishing, farming and trading as they experience an expanding market economy. Rapid commercialisation of agriculture is resulting in increasing dependency on waged labour and a redistribution of household resources away from traditional spheres of subsistence production. Enclosure of the Chilwa fishery in form of the community-based management is resulting in increased conflicts between fishers of varying methods. Increasing marketization and commoditisation in fish markets is leading to the erosion of traditional relations between fishers and traders, and the monopolising of urban traders who attempt to shift trade along vertical rather than horizontal lines. These examples indicate several significant developments; a shift from matriliney to patriliney, a widening economic differentiation between classes, increasing vulnerabilities among certain migrant groups, and an emergence of a capitalist, Kachulu 'state'. This paper suggests that these developments are not only a result of change in the marketplace but also in market principle that is increasingly persuaded by 'marginal gains' (Guyer, 2004). Therefore, this paper proposes an investigation of Kachulu's changing economic relations, shifting spheres of exchange, and the role of state in a transformation of the Chilwa Commons.

### **Helena Perez Nino (SOAS): Title TBC**

This paper is based on 11 months of field-work in the Mozambique-Malawi borderline. The paper examines the case of tobacco contract farmers in order to revisit debates about the changing relations of property and production in contemporary agrarian formations in Southern Africa. Commercial tobacco agriculture was introduced to Mozambique in the post-war decade and has grown to become the country's main agricultural export; one of the largest employers and the sector that uses most of the agricultural finance, extension services and modern inputs available in Mozambique. However, the rise of tobacco agriculture with geographic concessions and out-grower schemes was also the direct effect of agricultural liberalization and despite its dynamism questions arise about the contribution of the tobacco boom to productive linkages and poverty reduction. Farmers under contract in Mozambique have an ambiguous class position: households own the land they farm but agribusiness capital finds other ways to extract value from their production. Some hire labourers and some complement their tobacco income with agricultural wages. These farmers are far from a homogeneous group and their production and reproduction is predicated upon forms of exploitation between and within households. The paper interrogates critically contemporary narratives about dispossession and agricultural labour markets. It situates contract farming historically and links it with longer trajectories of market interaction, particularly with the Southern African labour migration system. The Mozambican example speaks to current debates about the role of contract farming in the globalized agriculture.

**Ayala Prager (University College London): 'In Transit with the Ghosts': Violent Memory and Vicarious Mourning in Literary Depictions of Post-Apartheid South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

Established in terms of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 34 of 1995, the founding aim of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was to create restorative justice through testimony. Through nuanced readings of selected passages of Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull*, Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* and selected critical accompaniments, this paper will examine the possibility that the very framework of the TRC – predicated on the concept of testimony as national catharsis – undermines its potential as a facilitator of South Africa's future by demanding testimony to its past. This paper asks: since the testimonial foundation of the TRC's proceedings, built upon the European, Freudian-based concept of "working through" violence through oratory repetition, clashes with traditional South African modes of mourning and memory, does the TRC itself enact a certain violence in insisting upon the reproduction of violent memory? Consequently, how do these potentially compromised acts of bearing witness – posited as so crucial to the post-apartheid South African future – hamper or promote post-violence progress? How are rituals of mourning reconfigured after the limit experience?

In addition to evaluating how the TRC's adoption of a European model of memory clashes with non-European modes of commemoration, this paper's examination of Krog's depiction of amnesty will demonstrate how the violence of the past forms an inescapable ghostly accompaniment to the present. Representing a complex entanglement between the urgent need for collective memory as embodied by the TRC and the national amnesia denoted by the concept of amnesty, the paper will examine how – and, indeed, if – this seemingly antithetically purposed process coheres with the TRC's objectives.

**Kate Reid (University of Sussex): 'Part of the rigmarole of handing on the secret' (Ivan Vladislavić): writing 'Dead Letters' and post-apartheid South Africa**

This paper examines the ways in which South African author and editor Ivan Vladislavić uses the letter-form in his fictions to refocus and interrogate the post-apartheid space. With primary attention paid to Vladislavić's latest novel *Double Negative* (Umuzi 2010), it will illustrate how letters – the envelope and its enclosures – are mobilised in Vladislavić's writing to negotiate and de/construct South African cartographies, situating the local, in this case Johannesburg, as an intimate and intersubjective construction, 'from me to you'.

Letters, as they appear in Vladislavić's work, call on the South African postal system to indicate the systemic socio-political conditions under apartheid, and to query their continued presence post-1994; they both reveal the historical complexities of complicity

with apartheid for white English speaking characters, and provide potential spaces for alternative.

The mid-section of *Double Negative* is entitled 'Dead Letters': the paper will allude to archival spaces in post-apartheid South Africa and the places where stories are lost and 'die', as well as the ethical responsibilities around their re-telling, drawing on the peculiar and particular temporality of the letter to indicate how the post-apartheid 'moment' is figured in Vladislavić's novel. In turn, the stubborn geographical 'placing' that stamps, franking marks, and addresses register via the letters sent in *Double Negative* allows South Africa to be explored 'destinally', written 'for and from' particular locations (Barnard, 2007) in acts of identification and transfer.

### **Rodney H Reznik (Queen Mary): Cosmopolitanism in the 1930's discourse on German Jewish immigration into South Africa**

In January 1937, the South African Parliament passed the Alien's Act, stopping German Jewish Immigration. The Key word in the Act was a requirement for "assimilability", a criterion that all considered the Jew unable to satisfy. The introduction of the Act was prompted by a period of intense anti-Jewish agitation led by Afrikaner academics, press and politicians of the recently formed ultranationalist Purified Nationalist Party destined to form the government in 1948. This research shows that throughout the discourse relating to Jewish immigration, the Jew was pejoratively referred to as "Cosmopolitan", or similarly "International" or "Fatherlandless", creating an additional facet to a very negative Jewish stereotype. This presentation will look at the ideology that underpinned the attitudes to cosmopolitanism in South Africa in the 1930s; its interreaction with a surging new form of Afrikaner nationalism, and its application to the South African Jew. The study looks also at the relationship between this "bad cosmopolitan internationalism" and attitudes to capitalism and communism as embodied in caricatures of the mythical Jewish cosmopolitan capitalist Hoggenheimer and the subversive, ubiquitous cosmopolitan Jewish trade-union secretary. Embittered ultranationalists in interwar Europe considered cosmopolitanism a supreme anathema but in South Africa it took on its own very specific imagery with the metamorphosis of the bundle-carrying itinerant trader wandering across the landscape, an avatar of the "Wandering Jew", to a reviled cosmopolitan middleman. This presentation will show not only how this imagery of the cosmopolitan Jew was used in the immigration discourse to portray the Jew as "unassimilable", to deny him entry to the country, but also how it became a lever of ethnic mobilization.

### **Andrea Thorpe (Queen Mary): 'Hai! London is a great place': Freedom, disillusionment and jazz in Todd Matshikiza's writings about London**

South African jazz musician, composer and Drum journalist Todd Matshikiza lived in London between 1960 and 1964, and represented the city in two forms: a series of monthly columns he wrote for Drum magazine, called "Todd in London"; and a 1961

memoir, *Chocolates for my Wife*. In this paper, I carry out a critical analysis of these texts and argue that Matshikiza's characteristic writing style, known as 'Matshikeze', owes a great deal to the global imaginary of jazz music. Through his writing, he engages with a Black Atlantic cultural identity, which, as Michael Titlestad argues, results in a "relational interpolation" of place. Jazz-infused 'Matshikeze' enabled Matshikiza to disrupt the identity imposed upon him by the apartheid system, and his writing style furthermore takes on a charged significance in 'cosmopolitan' London. Matshikiza's South African experiences colour his reactions to London life in unique ways. Unlike many other immigrant writers, he focuses on the freedom which London represents, which are in stark contrast to the restrictions he endures in apartheid South Africa. At the same time, Matshikiza's experiences of London are not entirely idealistic, and I will discuss how he represents racism within London in the early 1960s. I will structure my paper around the different spaces of London in which Matshikiza moves – from Kensington, to Trafalgar Square and Soho - and will emphasise the significance of these places in terms of both Matshikiza's imagination, and the social context of early 1960s London. This paper represents a section – in progress – of my PhD on South African representations of London.

**Pamela Zigomo (Goldsmiths): Designing events to effect social change: The economic empowerment of creative practitioners in Zimbabwe**

The potential for festival events to create transformational experiences has been debated by scholars such as Falassi (1987), Berridge (2006), Getz (2007) and Andrews and Leopold (2013). Discussions have focused on the possibilities that lie within what Van Gennep (1908) and Turner (1982) identified as the 'liminal zone' - where conventional beliefs and the day to day constructs of society are suspended and a new 'space' with many possibilities is revealed. However, discussion has been limited to the temporary transformation of the individual during the event with little focus on the potential for using the event to significantly transform an entire community. This paper discusses the issues to be considered in designing an event that might trigger the sustainable transformation of a community of creatives in Zimbabwe by equipping them with the entrepreneurial skills to bring about their economic empowerment. The cultural industries in Zimbabwe have the potential to make a significant contribution to the nation's economy. Unfortunately, cultural and political legacies have had an adverse impact on the development of the sector and practitioners working in the sector who are not able to earn sustainable livelihoods. I argue that there is an opportunity to develop an event intervention, which would draw on the transferable elements of successful social change programmes that have used experiential elements similar to that in the field of events. If we can explore how this could be applied to the design of events, the opportunities for applying a more diverse and relevant range of solutions would be available when working with specific community segments in low income countries.