

WISER (The Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research)
The "World Literatures: Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Dynamics"
Research Programme at Stockholm University

The European Research Council Project "APARTHEID-STOPS"



Call for Papers
Interdisciplinary Workshop
"Cultural Solidarities: Colonial Modernity, Anti-Apartheid
and World-Making Networks"

Dates: April 4-5 2017

Location: WISER (The Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research)
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Throughout the twentieth century, the conflictual experiences of colonial modernity were to an exceptional degree addressed within a transnational cultural domain. The global resonance of anti-apartheid is a paradigmatic example: the exile of political activists, intellectuals, writers, artists, photographer and musicians, together with the world-wide circulation of genres of expressive culture helped to propel the political signifier "apartheid" into the global public sphere where it framed struggles over racism and social inequality for constituencies beyond South Africa's borders. Texts depicting racial oppression circulated within transnational discursive networks, under the generic contracts of poetry, fiction, drama, autobiography and journalism. Films, works of art, and photographic images were disseminated. Sounds travelled, whether as radio broadcasts of displaced writers or as the jazz performances of a coterie of exiled musicians. Anti-apartheid resistance adjoined black nationalisms and internationalisms,

African nationalism and pan-Africanism, tricontinentalism, cosmopolitanism and communism. Its tropes and rhetoric became entangled in the utopian and dystopian visions emerging from Cold War rivalries and responded to the ongoing ferment of decolonization.

The anti-apartheid movement's *transnational itineraries*, refracted through the prism of expressive culture, exemplify the broad parameters of the first set of research questions we would like this workshop to address. At their multiple points of diffusion, South African texts, images and cultural agents were enfolded within situated local narratives. Once the deterritorialization of such formations is brought into play, they may be investigated more fully at their formerly *eclipsed* destinations. What implications does this enfolding have for literary production? What role do the exchanges between South African literary production and other so-called minor literatures play in the consolidation of global modernism?

We invite however other, comparative investigations of networked cultural responses to colonial modernity, broadly understood. Be it within the ambit of global modernist studies or contemporary textual cultures, it is our contention that apartheid merely provides one of the more extreme instances of a more general production of cultural solidarities in the modern era.

In a complementary, "reterritorialising" move, the workshop will also explore how cultural forms have enabled modes of *world-making* that operate in resistance to and in excess of the deprivations of colonial modernity. By looking at how an artwork, a song, a poem, a journal or a novel "gathers" or "opens" the world on terms not exclusively determined by racism, colonialism or capitalism, the exilic dispersal of existence may, if only symbolically, be halted. Or, remaining with the focus on networks, such an optic can demonstrate how transnational connectedness contributes to the constructive production of locality. This section of the workshop is no less transnationally oriented, but the emphasis here is on an inward, rather than an outward, trajectory. If – referring again to anti-apartheid – a distinction has often been made between the exiles and those who remained, a focus on localised world-making may provide an alternative conception of how "here" and "there", "inside" and "outside" relate to each other.

Papers might cover but would not be limited to:

- Theoretical imaginaries: How adequate are constructs like "the black Atlantic" (Paul Gilroy 1993), "minor transnationalism" (Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih 2005), "theory from the South" (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff 2011) or "decoloniality" (Walter D. Mignolo 2011) for the analysis of cultural solidarities. How might the circulation of South African and other "global South" cultural formations unsettle these theoretical paradigms?
- Decolonization and anti-apartheid resistance. Utopian and dystopian visions of liberation.
- Anti-apartheid expressive culture in the context of the Civil Rights struggle in the US, but equally in the context of developments taking place in the Soviet Union, India, China or within the Non-Aligned Movement.

- Anti-apartheid cultural resistance and pan-Africanism in its continental or diasporic variants. What is the legacy of anti-apartheid cultural resistance for contemporary invocations of pan-Africanism, for constructs of the “global South” or for decolonial thought more generally? How do contemporary transnational alliances invoke the memory of the anti-apartheid movements?
- European imaginaries of anti-apartheid and anticolonialism.
- The circulation of “apartheid” to other sites of political contestation: histories of the circulation of apartheid as trope or mode of analysis in various national settings, and its associated epistemological gains and/or losses. Is the lexicon of resistance to apartheid truly shared by international interlocutors, or do its terms splinter so that social actors use an ostensibly common vocabulary to disparate ends? What force does the term “apartheid” continue to accrue after the transition to democracy in South Africa?
- The role of exile in generating circuits of affiliation and of cultural production for activists, writers, filmmakers, artists, intellectuals and performers. In a related vein, how do individual biographies illuminate nodes of intersection as given cultural or political figures traverse a range of national settings or as they help to fashion transnational ideologies and institutions?
- How is the local literary text imprinted with transnational flows given that apartheid-era literary production can be seen simultaneously to accommodate and in turn, to generate such flows? What is the role of the vernacular in this?
- Forms and genres of cultural traffic: the role of jazz, film, poetry, resistance art, documentary photography, and the novel in the circulation of cultural solidarities.

The workshop seeks to provide an arena for experimentation and intellectual dialogue. A limited number of travel grants will be available for early career researchers located at African universities.

Submit a maximum 400 word abstract to: culturalsolidarities@gmail.com

Date of submission of abstracts: 16 December 2016

Contact Information:

Louise Bethlehem, APARTHEID-STOPS,

2loubeth@gmail.com

Stefan Helgesson, The “World Literatures: Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Dynamics” Research Programme at Stockholm University,

stefan.helgesson@english.su.se