

## ABSTRACTS IN ORDER OF INTERVENTION

### Panel 1: Amitav Ghosh – Thursday 11.30 – 13.00 Auditori

#### **Routes Beyond Roots: Alternative Ecological Histories in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*** **Maria-Sabina Draga, University of Bucharest**

This paper will attempt to read Amitav Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies* as an account of “world histories from below” (to use Antoinette Burton's term, 2012) and take the debate further through positioning the idea of writing alternative histories of the colonial times within an ecocritical context. While the need for such rewritings has always been a central preoccupation of postcolonial literature, the recent tendency (shared by Ghosh) has been to look at history from increasingly local, individualised perspectives. I will examine Ghosh's tracing of routes and connectivities across the Indian Ocean at the time immediately preceding the opium wars, focusing on the consequent reconsideration of human relationships and hierarchies in a post-human perspective. This perspective cuts across boundaries established by caste, social class, biology and geography, as well as by the colonial system, which Ghosh has long been interested in reimagining. While on board the *Ibis* identities become deterritorialised and fluid, they are disconnected from their various roots and paths established by rigid culturally conditioned frameworks. Connections are established between the human and other forms of life, forming a continuum across the trade routes of the Indian Ocean, which becomes a fluid space of rebuilding identities. I will position my discussion within a theoretical framework informed by Bruno Latour's concept of a politics of nature, Donna Haraway's nature-culture negotiations and Sangeeta Ray's studies of ecological intimacies.

#### **Facets of Freedom in the Indian Ocean World: The Case of Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*** **Sneharika Roy, American University of Paris**

This paper explores the configuration of freedom specific to the Indian Ocean in *Sea of Poppies* from three perspectives: social (i.e., freedom from social determinisms of caste and karmic rebirth); judicial (i.e., the untrammelled mobility offered by the Freedom of the Seas); and economic (i.e., the credo of Free Trade attributed to Adam Smith). It will demonstrate that on the surface, each approach highlights trajectories of liberation—from caste, from territorial jurisdiction, and from national economic protectionism. However, on further analysis, each proves to be double-edged. Moreover, these approaches intersect in sometimes disturbing ways: it is precisely the discourse of Free Trade that has created the conditions for the emergence of transnational labour forces that characterises early capitalism. From this tension between emancipation and oppression is born a dialectics of ambivalence—of being “free” to choose indentured labour over other forms of servitude, but also of being enslaved anew to discourses of human and capital mobility. The distinction between “slave and free,” therefore, is not only “not always clear” (Hofmeyr 2007), but also insidiously and indissolubly intertwined.

#### **The Indian Ocean in Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis* Trilogy: British Colonisation, Diaspora and Migration, Gendered and Transnational Identities** **Arunima Dey, Universidad de Salamanca**

The paper discusses the first two novels of Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis* Trilogy which consists of *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), and soon to be released *Flood of Fire* (2015). The novels for majority of the storyline is set on a ship called *Ibis* sailing across the Indian Ocean. Ghosh presents us with a motley set of characters aboard the ship. The novels allow us to explore the question of gendered roles through sati rituals and domestic violence, and transnational identities by introducing characters from different countries who have been subjected to varied styles of upbringing and cultures. Ghosh also brings forth the topic of British colonisation and its cultural and economic impact on the Indian Subcontinent. Though the novels are essentially about opium trade in the first half of the nineteenth century, through the medium of land and sea and ship's voyage across Indian Ocean, Ghosh highlights the complexity of cultural and national diaspora bought about by colonisation, migration and trade which leads to a unique retelling of history. Finally, this paper is an attempt to demonstrate how the author uses the Indian Ocean as a way to bring together various significant issues ranging from cultural identities to colonisation.

## **Panel 2: South African Indians (1) – Thursday 11.30 – 13.00 - Sala de Juntas**

### **Changing identities and mechanisms for survival: The Indian Community and Apartheid “Beyond the *Kala Pani*: the Indian Ocean and “coolitude” in recent Indian, South African and Caribbean Fiction”**

**Modhumita Roy, Tufts University**

16 November 2012 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of SS Truro carrying the first group of indentured Indian labourers to Durban, South Africa. In Trinidad, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “arrival day” was celebrated on 30 May 1995. These celebrations of arrivals have also been the occasion for taking stock of the history of dispersal of “girmityas” (a word derived from the agreements the indentured labourers had to sign), and their traumatic journeys across oceans to new and unknown worlds. Recent works such as Amitava Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, Peggy Mohan’s *Jahajin*, Neelam Govender’s *Girmit Tales* have begun the work of recuperating the cultural memory of crossing. Focussing on these texts and building on the critical work of Ashwin Desai, Isobel Hofmeyr, Lindy Stiebel, among others, this paper is a preliminary mapping of literary representation of the voyages across the “kala pani.” The aim of the paper is to chart the different moments of “arrival”—at Durban and Port of Spain-- as linked experience of “coolitude”—that is, “the project of reclamation and re-imagining of the coolie odyssey worldwide.” (Stiebel)

### **Changing Identities and the South African Indian Community**

**Neville Choonoo, SUNY-Oneonta**

Indian South Africans have often adopted and created various cultural norms (dialect) of survival, in order to endure the horrors of racism. While segregated, Indians were able as ‘non-whites’ to form political alliances (Natal Indian Congress, BC Movement) with the larger majority of Black resistance fighters within the ANC and PAC. In that regard, Indian South Africans adapted themselves very readily to an international Asian diaspora, one that embraced BOTH East Indian elements as well as European and especially American political philosophies. This paper considers the formation of a South African Indian identity as it reflects influences from a larger Black international community and not just an East Indian one. Much of my work has examined the Transatlantic Connection between Black South Africans and Black America as it reflected in the autobiography. In my paper for this conference, I would like to examine the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa (1970-1985) and the extent to which Indian South Africans resisted efforts by the Apartheid Govt to ‘retribalize’ the SA Indian community. Thus, East Indian culture was often held suspect by younger activist like myself.

### **South African ‘sugar stories’, with some reference to Mauritius**

**Lindy Stiebel, University of KwaZulu-Natal**

This paper will focus on the theme of what can be called plantation literature in South African and Mauritian literature; that is, writing which has as its spatial focus sugar farms or plantations. The term ‘plantation’ is more commonly used in the Atlantic world but, in common with the sugar plantations in South Africa linked to the Indian Ocean, the communities of such farms in the nineteenth century were characterised by the existence of two sets of people: a wealthy elite of plantation owners and a large, poor population of plantation workers. The descendants of such labourers – in both South Africa and Mauritius comprising Indian indentured workers from the subcontinent – have survived to tell the tales of their forefathers and, by extension, their own. The literature that has emerged from this theme, ‘plantation literature’, engages with issues of memory, identity and suffering.

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first indentured Indian labourers in South Africa in 2010, saw a spike in the number of works written by South African Indian writers with the ‘sugar stories’ prominent among them. Was there also a spike in the number of ‘sugar texts’ in Mauritius which had an earlier start to indenture with labourers from the subcontinent arriving in the 1830s? This paper seeks to explore this question while focusing primarily on South African ‘sugar texts’ as a start.

### **Panel 3: South African Futures – Thursday, 14.30 – 16 - Auditori**

#### **Imagining the Other - the Representation of the African Migrant in Contemporary South African Literature**

**Sandra Saayman, Université de La Réunion**

Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has experienced increased migration from African countries. The fact that migrants are subject to xenophobic violence comes as a surprise in the light of the country's Rainbow Nation image, and its Pan-African ideals embodied in the ANC's rallying cry of the struggle years, *Mayibuye iAfrika* ("Africa return"). These incidents reached notorious peaks in 2008 and April 2015. The complex and sensitive topic of migration manifests itself in interesting ways in contemporary South African literature. The aim of this paper is to determine whether literature depicts the migrant as a three-dimensional character rather than a problem or a statistic. Is contemporary South African fiction able to allow the reader to imagine the migrant as someone with an identity rooted in a specific culture, someone with complex reasons for being in South Africa? After a brief introduction of the myths surrounding the African migrants, the way in which contemporary authors – ranging from Breyten Breytenbach to Angelina Sithabe – approach these questions in their novels published since 2004, will be explored. This paper will also briefly refer to the film *District 9*, which is set in Johannesburg and portrays the "illegal alien" as an extra-terrestrial.

#### **Bodies and Boundaries: Monstrous Masculinities in *District 9*** **Josephine Swarbrick, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona**

*District 9* (2009) is the Academy award winning first feature length film of South African director Neill Blomkamp. This science fiction action thriller portrays the attempts to deal with the unannounced arrival of around 1 million aliens in Johannesburg. The aliens, or "Prawns", as residents and the authorities pejoratively name them, are forced to reside in internment camps, living in terrible conditions as second-class citizens. *District 9*'s portrayal of the strained relations between the 'immigrant' aliens and 'native' human populations can be read as an allegory for apartheid. It is important to underline that Wikus is white, and that the fear generated by his transformation is in part attributable to the fear of unstable racial boundaries that at any moment could be broken down as the result of a seemingly insignificant event. I will focus on the portrayal of masculinity in this context, particularly via the protagonist Wikus and his physical mutations. In this film Wikus's fluid and unstable masculinity is juxtaposed with typical hegemonic masculinities, which serves to underline the constructed nature of gender. The aliens are a-sexual, although they seem to assume 'masculine' behaviours; a fact that is present in the film but interestingly is not addressed directly.

#### **Re-imagining Apartheid: Making Guilt Visible in Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010)** **Sara Martín, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona**

Lauren Beukes' acclaimed second novel *Zoo City* (2010) is an accomplished urban fantasy, based on the premise that the guilty conscience of criminals can materialize into familiars, provided they accept their guilt. These familiars, animals that accompany the repentant criminal for life, also grant their host a magical power as a sort of reward for their processing of guilt. This externalization of guilt, however, results in the discrimination and ghettoisation of the individuals dubbed 'animalled zoos' in a way that inevitably recalls Apartheid. Beukes is herself a white writer whereas her protagonist, Zinzi December, is a black ex-journalist and ex-addict, 'animalled' for indirectly causing the death of her brother. Yet, comments on race are missing in the novel, in which characters are described with no reference at all to their skin colour and in which 'racist' is used meaning 'anti-animalled.' This absence of comment is even stranger if we consider that the neighbourhood nicknamed 'Zoo City' in the novel is actually inner-city Hillbrow. I consider here Beukes' use of the city of Johannesburg as a background for her fantasy novel, exploring the extent to which she successfully transforms actual class and race issues into proper material for fantasy.

#### **Panel 4: Indian Ocean Relations - Thursday, 14.30 – 16 - Sala de Juntas**

##### **Religious Intolerance and Cinematic Representations: A study of selected documentaries and films on the 1984 anti-Sikh massacres in India**

**Ishmeet Kaur, Central University of Gujarat, India**

The conference invites contributions on the relations and networks binding the communities around Indian Ocean and those exploring notions of “fragmentation”. Concentrating on “fragmentation”, the Sikh massacre of 1984 that followed the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has been studied. The Indian sub-continent enfolds a bewildering complex of religious, social and cultural identities. Any attempt to over-simplify the forces of division and conflict runs the risk of gross misrepresentation. More recently, the deliberated muting of the issues of justice relating anti-Sikh massacre are evident in the banning of the two latest films. Several short films appeared before the release of the major full length film, “Hawayein” (2003). Three short films “Injustice 1984,” directed by Jarnail Singh; “Jagjeet” (2010), directed by Kavanjit Singh and “Kush” (2013), directed by Subhashish Bhutiani will be analysed in the paper. These films depict real-life stories that explore the impact of religious intolerance. Questions of identity, legal silences and deliberated muting and the need for a complex critical evaluation of the responsibility of the state and its socio-institutional bodies towards its citizens will be addressed.

##### **Raden Saleh and Hadhrami Migration and Diaspora in Java**

**Anissa Rahadiningtyas, Cornell University**

In 1841, Johann Karl Ulrich Bähr, a German painter and writer who lived and worked in Dresden, painted a portrait of Raden Saleh, a Javanese painter and a pioneering figure in the development of modern art in Indonesia who journeyed from Java to Europe. Saleh belonged to the fourth generation of Hadhrami diaspora that had assimilated into the local Javanese elite for centuries. In this paper, I will examine the ways in which Saleh presented himself as a prince of Java in European courts. This painting offers a space for exploring Saleh’s composite identities as well as the history of migration and diaspora of the “Sherif” or “the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad” across the Indian Ocean and their integration into the world of the Javanese elite prior to the nineteenth century. In addition to capturing the imagination of the West towards the East in the nineteenth century, Saleh’s figure and appearance in the painting also demonstrate the maintenance of his cultural identity as a Hadhrami while at the same time displaying his adaptation of Javanese culture as well as his desire to be European.

##### **Towards a Braver History of the Indian Ocean**

**John Njenga Karugia, Goethe University Frankfurt**

In the past two decades, various ongoing transcultural and transnational memory projects have been undertaken in the Indian Ocean world with the support of local, state and transnational actors. In the course of these efforts, we have witnessed the travelling of memory practices, a gradual shift from competitive memory towards multidirectional memory. Additionally, negotiation of various transnational and transregional Indian Ocean imaginaries continue to take place. This paper conceptualizes the Indian Ocean as a memory space. It analyses these ongoing processes that are aimed at a braver history that connects South(ern) and East(ern) Africa, Mauritius, Indonesia, China and India. It attempts an understanding of identity and heritage politics tied to individuals and groups connected to the Indian Ocean. It debates concepts related to remembering and forgetting and how these interact within the Indian Ocean as a memory space. It dissects the political economy of “connective Indian Ocean memories” in light of contemporary Africa-Asia relations in a transregional and transafroasian perspective. After attempting an understanding of the aforementioned, a couple of policy recommendations regarding “doing memory studies” in the Indian Ocean world are proposed.

**The Indian Ocean From Admiral Zheng He. To Hub And Spoke Container Maritime Commerce  
Jacques Coulardeau & Ivan Eve, CEGID University, Boulogne-Billancourt**

We will consider the emergence of the Indian Ocean as the center of 21st century maritime container commerce with Sri Lanka as the hub and Africa becoming an essential vector: circum navigation for container ships oversized for the Suez Canal; cross-continental links from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. This will lead to the question of maritime security and who is going to lead that transformation: the Chinese, the Indians or the Sri Lankans in an open bilateral or trilateral alliance. This security problem is central due to piracy and trafficking. Digitalized satellite surveillance will have to be set up for the whole Indian Ocean. What role will the USA and Europe play now the New Silk Road with the Silk Railway from China to Germany reached Spain on December 9, 2014. The Chinese are taking contacts in Afghanistan to open, after the departure of the Americans, the link between Kazakhstan and Gwadar harbor, Pakistan. China Harbor Engineering Company Ltd and other Chinese companies are involved in harbor equipment and railroad development all around the Indian Ocean.

**Panel 5: South African Indians (2) – Thursday, 9.00 – 10.30 - Sala de Juntas**

***Khalil's Journey* (2012) by Ashraf Kagee (1965- ), or the Uneventful Life Odyssey of a South African Indian Man?**

**Juan Zarandona, Universidad de Valladolid**

The European Union Literary Award is a South African literary prize supported by various EU embassies and commissions operating in South Africa. In 2012 the seventh winner was Ashraf Kagee, first time South African Indian novelist. South Africa Indian literature has always suffered from a poor local reception and a non-existent international one. Consequently, a prize sponsored by the EU is no minor achievement when a South African writer with Indians roots is involved. This paper will try to confront this persistent fate, and make people aware of the outstanding merits of an *opera prima* such as *Khalil's Journey*: the ironic application of the ancient literary motif of life as a travel to a minority, diasporic, marginal community who happened to have crossed the Indian Ocean and settled down in Africa in search of a better life; the subversion of the concept of ordinary life under the too special political and social conditions of apartheid South Africa; the extraordinary developments of the English language in order to make it a meaningful means of expression of the daily small tragedies and joys of the Cape Town Indian community; and the challenges posed by such a hybrid work of literary art.

**Reconfiguring the Racial Imagination in Ronnie Govender's *Black Chin, White Chin*.  
Maurice O'Connor, Universidad de Cádiz**

In this paper I shall set out to clarify the questions of belonging that Ronnie Govender explores in his novel *Black Chin, White Chin*. The historical context of my discussion shall be focused on two legislative events that profoundly marked race relations within South Africa: (a) the 1913 Native Act which marks the first segregation legislation passed by the Union Parliament Group, and (b) the 1950 Group Areas Act which ushered in the segregation of urban areas into 'racial zones'. As a second-generation descendent of indentured labourers, Govender focuses his attention on African- Indian identity through the voice of Chin Govender (the real-life uncle of the author). Through Chin's story, the reader gains a privileged insight into the racial complexities of a country that is trying to define itself as a nation, and it is these complexities which I shall elucidate upon. In this light, I shall explore questions of miscegenation, hybridity and cultural affiliation in relation to the themes of racial diversity that the novel brings forth. Furthermore, I shall expound on the complexities of forging a public identity outside of the strictures of the 'Indian family'.

**Culture Crossing the Ocean: Food and Language in Imraan Coovadia's *The Wedding* (2001)**  
**Margaret J. Daymond, University of KwaZulu-Natal**

When Coovadia has his protagonists migrate from India to South Africa he uses a comic mode to represent their taking their home-grown linguistic habits with them. In their new abode, their verbal warfare is conducted on the surface over culinary matters and underpinned by their sexual conflict. Its resolution, involving the transportability of culture, is plotted by comedy's means but the novel's conclusion has to be shifted to the larger story of diasporic migration.

**Panel 6: Indian Ocean Networks: Crossings – Thursday, 9.00 – 10.30 - Room 101**

**The Tsunami and After: The Tales of Sorrow**  
**Kiran S.N. Tumkur University, India**

Two Thousand Fourteen marks the decennial year of the Boxing Day *Tsunami*, which destroyed towns and villages along the coasts of the Indian Ocean on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2004. The impact of the *Tsunami* has caught the attention of the creative writers and the tragedy remains forever. Thus, these narratives are obituaries to the departed souls. These creative responses have added new themes for literary representation and critical appreciation. Amitav Ghosh's essay *A Town by the Sea* (2007) dwells on the impact of *Tsunami* on the lives of the people in Andaman and Nicobar islands. Jhumpa Lahiri concludes a short story *Going Ashore* (2008) with the death of a protagonist who becomes a victim of the *Tsunami* on the shores of Thailand. In Damodar Mauzo *Tsunami Simon* (2013) a boy comes face to face with the Hot Waves on the fateful day while enjoying his holidays in Chennai. The objective of the paper is to explore creative responses to the disaster. Such an analysis contributes to the debates about plurality and variety in Indian Ocean Writing. These and other related issues will be focus of attention.

**Merchants' Networks in the Indian Ocean: the Gulf-India Route**  
**Eran Segal, University of Haifa**

Merchants' trading networks, an informal socio-economic structure of 'Diaspora' merchants, have yet to achieve their well-deserved place in studies of the Arabian/Persian Gulf as well as their place as part of the Indian Ocean literature. These networks were the economic base for the wealth of the most influential merchants in the Gulf region and the lack of knowledge about them is a lacuna in understanding the nature of economic relations in this region. The merchants' community was based on trade, especially between India and the interior of the Peninsula, and on the pearl industry. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century they gradually expanded their activities, sending agents to different ports and establishing branches of their businesses. Their networks extended far and wide, and the success was dependent upon the trust among its various elements. The merchants quickly learned the local languages and integrated into the trade. Moreover, the success of those networks provided the merchants with political power and influence on decision-making. These networks were not connected to governments or nations but operated above them. Nevertheless, the process of forming nation states, coupled with the beginning of oil production, eventually led to their decline.

**Double Dealing and Counterfeiting: Indian Ocean Piracy and the Failed State in Farah's *Crossbones***  
**Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo. Independent Scholar**

*Crossbones* is the third novel in Nuruddin Farah's *Past Imperfect* trilogy. It is centred on the quests of two brothers, Malik and Ahl, born in Yemen of Somali and Malay-Chinese parentage but now based in the United States. The novel also re-introduces characters of an older Somali generation who feature in the two previous novels. Their conversations provide a wider context to Malik and Ahl's embryonic involvement in a country they have not previously visited and that they can only negotiate with insider help. The action ostensibly takes place in late 2006, shortly before the US-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia although it projects forward to include later events. Set in Mogadiscio and the semi-autonomous

region of Puntland (believed by the West to be the capital of Somali piracy), it draws on interviews Farah conducted in Somalia. Farah has spoken and written of the way the rest of the world sees Somalia, particularly in relation to piracy and terrorism. In this paper I analyse the ways in which Farah's own views on internal conflict in Somalia and on international media representations of piracy, terrorism, and the 'failed state' are incorporated into the novel through combining multiple contexts and inter-texts.

### **Panel 7: Sri Lanka – Friday, 12.30 – 14.00 - Sala de Juntas**

#### **“One Anthem, One Language”: Linguistic Choices as the Tool that Unveils Latent Ethnic Conflicts Carmen Aguilera, Universidad de Granada & Abdul Halik Azeez, Independent Scholar**

On January 8th 2015, Sri Lanka elected a new president, Maithripala Sirisena. One of the first decisions made by his new government on March, 18th was to re-allow the national anthem to be sung in Tamil, one of the official languages of the island together with Sinhala, in public events since it was not actually performed *de facto* during the presidential term of the former president, Mahinda Rajapaksa.

This paper focuses on the analysis of the comments of different posts on Facebook on the day the news was made public. Following the principles of Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday 1985, Martin & White 2005), we analysed relevant linguistic aspects such as the use of pronouns such as “us” or “they” as well as the transitive frames and lexical choices which allowed us to interpret the citizens' stances on the current ethnic coexistence in the island. In this sense, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995, Van Dijk 1991, Van Leeuwen 2009) was the theoretical framework which suited better our research aims and Corpus Linguistics methodology (McEnery & Wilson 2001, Sinclair 1991) the best tool to achieve our aims.

#### **A Corpus-Based Study of Virtual Communities in Post-Rajapaksa Sri Lanka Carmen Aguilera, Universidad de Granada & Abdul Halik Azeez, Independent Scholar**

In the past few years, Sri Lanka seems to ostensibly be enjoying peaceful and quiet times. The bloody civil war that lashed the country for 25 years, came to an end in 2009. During the government of the first post-war president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, the country had to start learning how to manage a reality new to many, especially to those generations born during the conflict. The peace building process Sri Lanka has undertaken has been consolidated from many different sides, with mainstream media playing a central role within it. However, the recent advent of social media offers the perfect landscape for 'netizens' to express their opinions through personal evaluation (Zappavigna 2011). Taking as our point of departure a corpus of Facebook comments both in Sinhala and in English on some controversial decisions taken by the new President, this paper aims to explore a threefold target: a) to identify the religious and socio-political values around which virtual communities affiliate in Sri Lanka; 2) to establish correlations and the potential implications between them and the ethnic group they belong to 3) to show the global communicative impact of those opinions.

#### **Unaccounted and Uncounted in Sri Lanka: Insiders and Outsiders' Stories Jorge Diego Sánchez, Universidad de Alfonso X El Sabio**

This paper explores the stories told by insiders and outsiders from Sri Lanka before and after the violent outrage that took place in 2009 in the country. Departing from the documentaries by Norwegian filmmaker Beate Arnestad *My Daughter the Terrorist* (2007) and *Silent Voices* (2012), it is my intention to give visibility to the current outcomes of the Sinhalese and Tamil conflict taking into account contemporary cinematographic and literary sources that have portrayed the political and military struggle. The analysis of Arnestad's two documentaries will be the point of departure to assess the outsider and the insider's representation of the conflict and its sociocultural consequences. Furthermore, I will analyse how the conflict is portrayed (or ignored) in contemporary Sri Lankan arts and its diaspora because I believe this is the only way to subvert the unaccounted and uncounted stories that still blur the history and development of the country.

## **Panel 8: Indian Ocean Narratives – Friday, 12.30 -14.00 - Room 101**

### **Shirley Geok-Lin Lim's *Literary Travelling across the Indian Ocean* Juan Ignacio Oliva, Universidad de La Laguna**

Shirley Geok-Lin Lim being a native of Malaysia and a US citizen, she has travelled widely across the Indian Ocean and overseas, showing in her poetry an interest for tracing metaphoric meanings of what flying can provoke in the human body and soul. Starting from mere trivial anecdotes, such as jet lag problems, international air shuttles or airport overstays, the writer turns into more inquisitive looks at life on the move, by describing the (in)consistencies of the water that divides and unites countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, and both of them with the US (in the long distance) for polysemous transglobal authors like herself. The oceanic journey becomes so to say the enigma of arrivals and farewells, the epitome of living in transit and the puzzling of identity and uprooting. A selection of travel poems will be analyzed, thus, following the aforementioned criteria and using environmental and material criticism to show the importance of objects in the definition of abstractions and feelings.

### **Molecularising the Nation: Mrs. Bhave's Homeless Diaspora Dolors Ortega, Universitat de Barcelona**

Many minority communities are beginning to contest exclusionary narratives of national belonging based on binary oppositions. This is a sign that dominant narratives of the nation have to be revisited and deterritorialised. These minoritarian cultural locations are problematising majoritarian national discourses that underpin the centre/margin pattern of the colonial appropriation. Constitutive particularities and specificities of the nation will be the focus of new on-going national constructs. The following paper aims to analyse Bharati Mukherjee's short story "The Management of Grief" and focuses on the main character, Shaila Bhave. The main goal of the paper is to show how Mukherjee problematises fixed dominant and majoritarian narratives of the nation and suggests new hybrid and productive cultural spaces from which to generate alternative and minoritarian signifiers in Deleuzian terms. Deleuze and Guattari seem especially relevant here in their redefinition of the concept of difference and in their proposal of a new mode of individuation that is disperse, unlimited, multiple and 'nomadic'. By moving away from fixed and stable signs, they seem to provide a wide range of theoretical elements to explore the postcolonial ground.

### **Sheherazade Writing Slavery: Emily Ruete's *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar* Gabriele Dau, Stellenbosch University**

The human imagination of Zanzibar as a place as sprung from the *Arabian Nights* seems not to have been damaged through its central role in the Indian Ocean slave trade but rather seems to have added to it in some ways. This paper aims to examine how literary storytelling imagines Zanzibar as a site of enchantment, how literature writes the island as a place both fascinating and unsettling as represented in the *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar* written by Emily Ruete, born a Princess of Zanzibar and Oman. Portraying 19th century life in the Sultan's palace, the princess opens a kaleidoscope of a feudal world full of wonders. The memoirs illuminate the multicultural as well as strictly hierarchical structures in pre-colonial Zanzibari society dominated by the Arab leading class. One of the most striking aspects is Emily's understanding of Zanzibar's slave system. Within the framework of storytelling, which ranges from fabulous festivities to everyday court and plantation life to Zanzibar's economy, the narrative reflects the slave system as an integral part of the feudal Zanzibari world.

## **Plenary Panel: Indian Ocean Crime Fiction – Friday, 15.30 – 17 - Room 101**

### **Detective Fiction against the Grain: *Anil's Ghost* and the Spectre of Universal Truth and Justice Martin Renes, Universitat de Barcelona**

In claiming that crime can and must be solved by the strict application of reason according to a common Enlightenment notion of truth and justice, the genre contributes to maintaining a European epistemology of linear human progress. Postcolonial crime fiction re-interprets this conservative model by defying single, essentialising readings of truth. Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000) can be read as an atypical postcolonial detective novel, as it deals with the UN investigation of crimes against humanity committed during the Sri Lankan civil war of the 1980s and 1990s and therefore establishes an apt scenario to question the universality of Western values. This paper looks at how Ondaatje's novel complicates monolithic readings of truth and justice precisely by putting the limitations and shortcomings of strict forensic logic at the centre of attention, and ultimately deconstructs the discourses that uphold national, communal and individual identity in favour of cultural diversity.

### **Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. Bill Phillips, Universitat de Barcelona**

Crime fiction as a genre enables its authors to realistically explore all sectors of society: rich and poor, marginalised and powerful. It is also a genre which, by its very nature, exposes and analyses injustice, poverty and corruption. Both of these novels are works of crime fiction, written by authors born but no longer permanently resident in India. Both novels take a close look at the poverty, corruption, inequality and criminality of contemporary India. They have also been criticised for negatively depicting a country in which the authors no longer live.

### **Nury Vittachi's *Feng Shui Detective*. Sue Ballyn, Universitat de Barcelona**

Nury Vittachi was born in Ceylon (he makes a point of putting Ceylon and not Sri Lanka). His crime fiction centres on the figure of C.D.Wong, a Chinese Feng Shui master and detective, and Joyce his gauche 17 year old American-Australian intern. His first two novels are set in Singapore, Malacca (Malaysia), and Australia. Vittachi uses his protagonists and the various crimes they investigate to dismantle the discourse of a prosperous, multicultural, and supposedly class equal Singaporean society. The commerce brought by the Indian Ocean trade routes and colonialism to both Singapore and Malacca have given way to the overpowering neo-colonial drive of global commerce to which both Singapore and Malaysia bow. Beneath the glowing facade of modern prosperous postcolonial nations, racism, social inequality, intolerance of the other, crime and corruption are more than evident. Vittachi uses his crime fiction to reveal how the hegemony of power, race and class is further empowered in the (post)colonial world of globalisation.