

INTERNATIONAL
POINT SUD SYMPOSIUM

DECOLONISING KNOWLEDGE IN THE HUMANITIES

STUDYING MINOR FORMS IN AFRICAN
CULTURES OF KNOWLEDGE, LITERATURE
AND THE ARTS



12-16 December 2023

Institute of
African Studies
University of Ghana Legon



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Symposium description | 3 |
| Keynote speakers | 6 |
| Other lecture formats | 10 |
| Programme | 13 |
| Panel speakers and abstracts | 18 |
| Panelists and organisers | 35 |
| We thank | 43 |

COVER ART:
Efua Osei

DECOLONISING KNOWLEDGE IN THE HUMANITIES

STUDYING MINOR FORMS IN AFRICAN
CULTURES OF KNOWLEDGE, LITERATURE
AND THE ARTS

International Symposium,
Accra, 12-16 December 2023

Calls for decolonising knowledge have become vociferous in academia through such recent movements as #RhodesMustFall. Such calls are also reflected in scholarly work in the humanities that draws attention to the ‘implicatedness’ of the academic subject in reiterations of epistemic violence (Rothberg 2019; Robbins 2017; Spivak 1999; Quayson/Mukherjee 2022) and are impacting the field in new and profound ways. But whereas awareness of unjust structures is growing and increasing attention is being paid to their operational modes, the question of how to conceptualise academic knowledge production and creative practices otherwise, and how to engender collaborative spaces beyond a Western-oriented, neoliberal approach to knowledge production and dissemination remains abstract. While acknowledging the need for further academic exchange on the level of cross-disciplinary theorization, we propose to contribute to efforts of decolonizing knowledge by embracing a practice-oriented approach that engages with minor forms of creative and communal articulation as alternative spaces of knowledge production, preservation, transfer. In keeping with Lionnet and Shi’s claim that “minor formations” should “become method and theory” (2011), our symposium brings together scholars from disciplines across the humanities who engage with the *modi operandi*, functions, as well as the local and transcultural impact of minor forms in African, African-diasporic, and African-influenced contexts.

The expression “minor form” plays itself out as a relational category in ways that inevitably involve hierarchisation: As the “great unwritten”/the “great unread” in the world literary field (Levine 2013) **orature** continues to be perceived as minor form, although it persists in African contexts as vital and vibrant practice and influence in a wide array of sociocultural fields, resisting and challenging Western conceptualisations not only of world literature (Phalafala 2020) but of cultural archives in a wider sense. And yet, minor oral forms require specific practices to persist over time, facing erasure when discontinued or neglected. The study of orature, and oral repositories requires specific approaches (Quayson 2014), and the promises of digitisation appear to loom large, but the apparent benefits have to be critically appraised with the ethical implications and pitfalls that come with the creation of new archives (cf. Diawara/Röschenthaler 2016). Another aspect that is often associated with minor forms is the **ephemeral**. We encounter minor forms in visual and material cultural practices and artefacts that assume crucial roles in the field of communication, politics and criticism, as well as in advertising (products, news) and instances of self-fashioning (e.g. obituary posters, Instagram profiles), and in cognitive processes of worldmaking. Studying the ways minor forms in visual, as well as material culture impact knowledge formation, collective identification and a sense of belonging in African contexts remains a crucial undertaking (Oduro-Frimpong 2020). In the digital interface, minor forms (embedded) in tweets, posts and snaps can upset habitual ways of seeing. Studying the implications of ephemeral African visual and material forms both in local settings and in (re-)medialised, travelling forms is of equal importance. A third aspect of framing “minor forms” is interlinked with the other two: Categorizations of forms of expression as “minor” tend to go hand in hand with a framing of entire cultures as ‘minor’ or **marginal** in a binary logic. As a consequence, their principal forms of articulation are framed as lesser in relation to dominant formal currents. History may always be bound up with attempts to obtain domination, and there may well be “no history but of the majority, or as minorities as defined in relation to majorities.” (Deleuze/Guattari 2004: 322). And yet, the reliance on supposedly major forms – e.g., the national archive, the novel – has a tendency to deflect our attention from complexity and to falsify our understanding of the multifariousness of past and present cultural production (Macamo 2005).

We see minor forms as significant resources that “urban scholars of Africa are obliged to acknowledge and incorporate” (Quayson 2014). This insight arguably extends beyond urban studies and African contexts. The latter, however, have been particularly impacted by the grand narratives and expansive forms accompanying processes of imperialism that tend to come with claims of exhaustiveness, completeness, and closure. Centring minor forms that often coincide with the transmission of local or situational knowledge can thus become a contribution to efforts of disrupting ‘majoritarian’, hegemonic traditions of thought and to efforts of decolonizing knowledge. It is in this spirit that we wish to come together and learn from each other across disciplinary, national, cultural and continental boundaries.

Kwabena Opoku Agyemang, University of Ghana, Legon

Eva Ulrike Pirker, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Stefanie Michels, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf

A NOTE ON THE FORMAT:

To facilitate interaction among as many participants as possible and enable fruitful plenary discussions, panelists will be asked to briefly summarize the questions and comments they have received during the break (= break & debate format) at the beginning of each plenary session.

KEYNOTE LECTURES

Wednesday, 13 Dec 2023, 16:00
Institute of African Studies, Nketia Hall

TROTRO MULTILINGUALISM IN ACCRA: ORALITY, POLYSEMY, AND DETERRITORIALIZATION

ATO QUAYSON

The approach to city streets that appeals to me the most is the one that holds that they can be interpreted as archives of social imaginaries. In the case of Accra this implies in part a focus on vehicle slogans, sign writings, and various other expressions written, sprayed, or simply scrawled on various surfaces. Here is a sample of these I have gathered over the years that formed the core of the chapter on such slogans in *Oxford Street, Accra*: "Fear Woman and Take Snake"; "It Pains You, Why?"; "You Too Can Try"; "Shoes are Repairing Here"; "Sentino". My interest since then, however, has been not simply to settle for a typology of such slogans but to eke out a model for understanding features of their expressiveness within a specifically multilingual context. My main thesis is that there is always a jostling for linguistic dominance across multilingual sites of expression, and that they thus give us a lively sense of what has been elaborated by various commentators, following the lead of the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari, as "deterritorialization," namely, the ways in which minority languages interrupt and surreptitiously emplace their own subversive meanings inside the dominant languages with which they are obliged to interact. But the concept requires some radical qualifications for our uses, given that most discussions of deterritorialization have been narrowly European in all their examples and predominantly focused on literary writing. Apart from deterritorialization, the other keywords in my lecture will be those of orality and polysemy, both of which I will be exploring from the perspective of studies of African literature, music, dance, and popular culture. In this way I hope to provide a fresh way of thinking of Accra's urban context from a humanistic perspective.



Ato Quayson is the Jean G. and Morris M. Doyle Professor in Interdisciplinary Studies and Professor of English at Stanford. He is the author of numerous books, among them the award-winning *Oxford Street, Accra: City Life and the itineraries of Transnationalism* (2014), and, recently, *Tragedy and Postcolonial Literature* which deploys postcolonial literature to explore the links between suffering and ethics in its examination of tragic philosophy from the Greeks through Shakespeare to the present era. Ato Quayson has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Thursday, 14 Dec 2023, 16:00
Nketia Hall, Institute of African Studies

**(RE)CONSTRUCTING "AFRICA" IN THE
PRE-INDEPENDENCE CARIBBEAN IMAGINARY:
FRAGILE, VANISHING FORMS**

SUZANNE SCAFE

My talk focuses on the cultural climate of the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica, during the period 1938-1960. I examine representations of African cultural practices and forms of representation in the creative writing and social commentary included in newspapers such as Jamaica's *Daily Gleaner* and *Public Opinion*, BBC Caribbean Voices, and the small, literary magazines newly established in Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica.

Following the political turmoil of the 1930s and the establishment of organised labour movements and local political parties, the region's writers, artists and cultural commentators recognised the urgency of valuing the everyday culture of its majority African population and highlighting and celebrating the African origins of those cultural practices. This process of reimagining and reconstructing what had been – and continued to be in the colonial period – hidden, derided and publicly disgraced cultural forms was not, as I demonstrate, uncontested. Focussing on representations of religious practices such as Kumina, Myal and Obi (obeah), on the figures of 'Quasheba' and 'Quashie' (Kwesi/Kwasi), and on agricultural rituals and practices, I analyse the often contradictory contexts and subject positions that emerged in the process of reimagining and reconstructing "Africa". I argue that the ambivalence governing representations of an African aesthetic in the pre-independence Caribbean foreshadowed the struggles and contestations that have characterised a post-independence politics of representation.



Suzanne Scafe is a Visiting Professor in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Brighton. Her recent work includes essays and book chapters on Caribbean literary history, affect, empathy and ethics in contemporary Caribbean prose fiction, and Caribbean diasporic literature. She has written extensively on Black British drama, literary fiction, life writing, and poetry. She is the co-editor of a collection of essays, *I Am Black/White/Yellow: The Black Body in Europe* (2007) and several Special Issues of peer reviewed journals including two Special issues of *Feminist Review* entitled Creolization and Affect (2013) and Black British Feminisms (2014); a Special Issue on Caribbean Women's short fiction for the journal *Short Fiction in Theory and Practice* (2016), and special issues of the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* (2019) and *Africa and Black Diaspora: an international journal* (June 2020). She was the Principal Investigator for an Arts and Humanities Council (UK) Research Network grant entitled *African-Caribbean Women's Mobility and Self-Fashioning in Post-Diaspora Contexts* (2016-18). Her monograph entitled, *Reading to Resist: Contemporary Fiction by Black British Women Writers* will be published by Routledge in 2025.

OTHER LECTURE- FORMATS

Tuesday, 12 Dec 2023, 16:00
Great Hall, University of Ghana

ANTON WILHELM AMO LECTURE (MIASA)

BUILDING AFRICAN ECOLOGIES OF KNOWLEDGE

FELWINE SARR

The Anton Wilhelm Amo Lecture is organized annually by MIASA, the Maria Sybilla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa, at the University of Ghana. It is named after the eighteenth-century philosopher from present-day Ghana who taught at the universities of Halle and Jena. The format aims at strengthening the visibility of MIASA on campus and beyond by facilitating high-level annual lectures delivered by African scholars in the social sciences and humanities.

Felwine Sarr is a Senegalese philosopher, economist, writer and musician. Before he was appointed Anne-Marie Bryan Chair in French and Francophone Studies at Duke University in 2020, he taught at the University of Gaston-Berger in Saint Louis, Senegal, where he was previously dean of its Economics and Management department. He is author of *Afrotopia* (2016) and was listed by the Time magazine among the 100 Most Influential People together with Bénédicte Savoy after they published the report on “The restitution of African cultural heritage” (2018). In addition to several novels and cultural essays, he has published widely on economic policies, the development economy, econometrics, epistemology, and the history of religious ideas. In 2016, he co-created with Achille Mbembe the Ateliers de la pensée, which sought to stimulate a “non-colonial” school of thought.

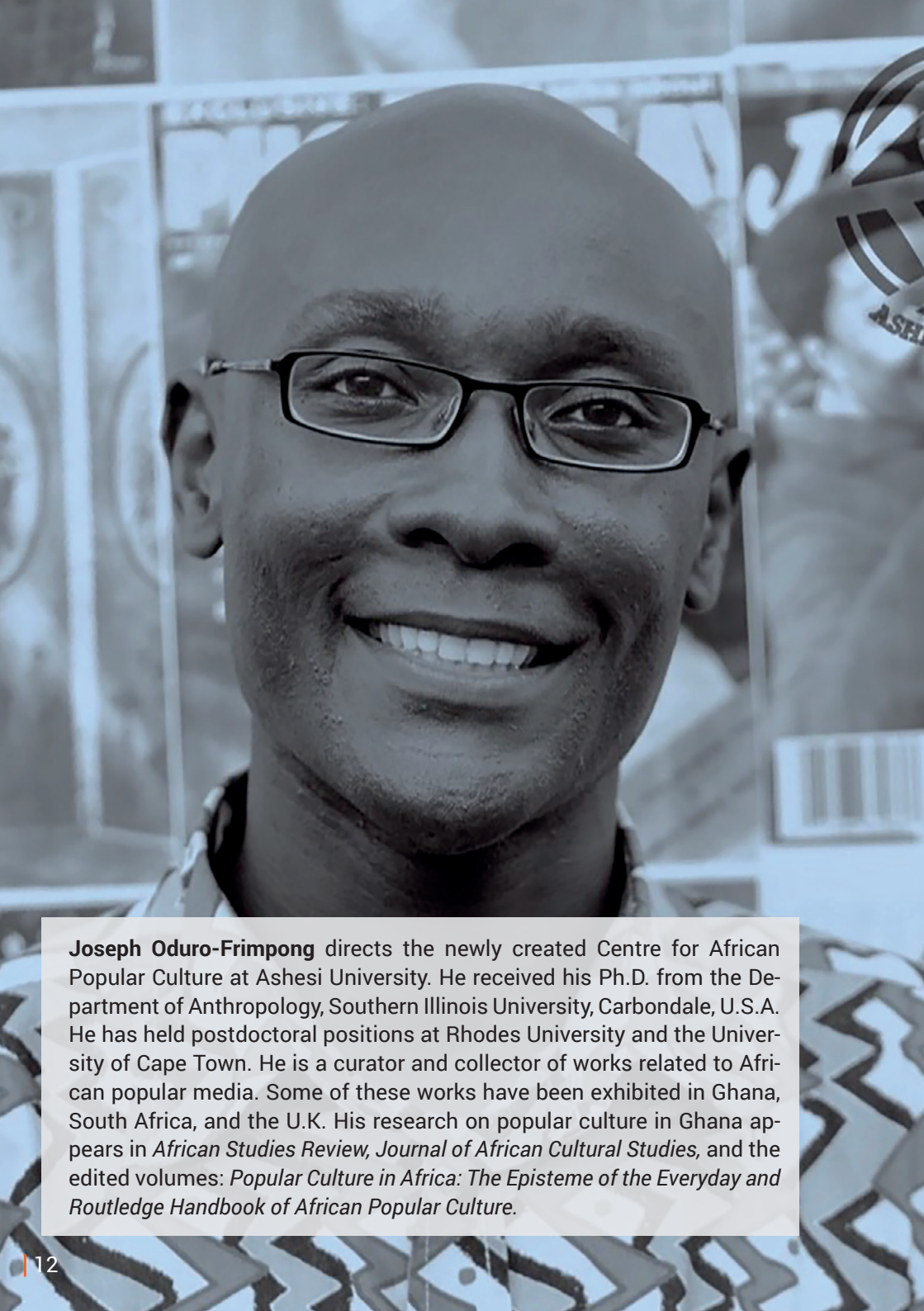
Saturday, 16 Dec 2023, 16:00
Ashesi University

**DIRECTOR'S CUT: ENCOUNTERS WITH AFRICAN
POPULAR CULTURAL ARTIFACTS IN THE ACADEMY**

JOSEPH ODURO-FRIMPONG

The Centre for African Popular Culture (CAPC) at Ashesi University aims to spotlight the intellectual significance of African popular cultural genres. With support from a dedicated community of scholars in the African popular culture community, the Centre seeks: to lead and develop African popular culture scholarship; to highlight, through exhibitions, popular art forms and artists; mentor the next generation of African popular culture scholars and to produce cutting edge theory to help us grasp the 'emergent present' of African popular culture lifeworld.

Within the spirit of this conference on minor forms, this exhibition spotlights popular cultural artifacts from Ghana and Kenya. The display is in two key parts. The first section of the event is set within a modest space that houses the Centre for African Popular Culture at Ashesi University. The second occurs within an open arena where participants interact with exhibited works in an informal manner, different from a typical gallery space. In all, the exhibition features popular media formats such as wooden sculptures reflecting facets of everyday professions in Ghana, mixed-media scrap art, painted satirical works on canvas from Kenya, barber- and beauty shop signages on wood, as well as roadside hand-painted works on themes such as COVID-19 and Mami-Wata.



Joseph Oduro-Frimpong directs the newly created Centre for African Popular Culture at Ashesi University. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Anthropology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, U.S.A. He has held postdoctoral positions at Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town. He is a curator and collector of works related to African popular media. Some of these works have been exhibited in Ghana, South Africa, and the U.K. His research on popular culture in Ghana appears in *African Studies Review*, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, and the edited volumes: *Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday* and *Routledge Handbook of African Popular Culture*.

PROGRAMME

Main venue: Institute of African Studies,
University of Ghana, Nketia Hall

DAY 1: TUESDAY, 12 DEC 2023

- 8:30 Welcomes**
Samuel Aniegye Ntewusu (IAS)
Issa Fofana (Point Sud)
Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang, Eva Ulrike Pirker and Stefanie Michels (Conveners)
- 9:00 Panel 1**
Left Behind: The Story of 'German Minorities' in North-Eastern Ghana
Samuel Aniegye Ntewusu (University of Ghana)
When Enlightenment Falls Silent: Contradictions and Doubts in Israel Aksensfeld's "The First Jewish Recruit"
Marc Caplan (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)
- 10:00 Break & Debate: Coffee**
- 10:30 Plenary 1**
- 11:00 Panel 2**
Minor Formations and the Creolization of Major Representation
Manuela Boatcă (Universität Freiburg)
Minor Form, Major Impact: Queer Ecology in/through Social Media in Contemporary Africa
Gibson Ncube (Stellenbosch University)
- 12:00 Break & Debate: Lunch**
- 13:00 Plenary 2**

- 13:30 Panel 3**
“You dare not!”
The Royal Togo Consulate of “Prince Dagadu” in Koforidua of 1913
Stefanie Michels (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)
Contributing to the clarification of the colonial past in the restitution debate: The case of communities in the Volta region of Ghana
Kokou Azamede (Université de Lomé)
- 14:30 Break & Debate: Coffee**
- 15:00 Plenary 3**
- 15:30 Bus ride to Legon Hill**
- 16:00 Anton Wilhelm Amo Lecture (MIASA)**
Building African Ecologies of Knowledge
Felwine Sarr (Duke University)
- 19:00 Welcome dinner**

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, 13 DEC 2023

- 9:00 Welcome, housekeeping**
- 9:30 Panel 4**
Looking Down on Africa through the Automated Gaze of Google Lens
Tolulope Adelabu (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
Material culture, Ethnographic Collections and Museums: Questions of knowledge and identity beyond the museums’ database
Hans Peter Hahn (University of Frankfurt)
- 10:30 Break & debate: coffee**
- 11:00 Plenary 4**
- 11:30 Panel 5**
Minor Forms, Ecological Knowledge and More than Human Agency in Colonial Central Africa

Benoît Henriët (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Decolonial Ecocriticism in Serge Attukwei Clottey's Afrogallonism
Kwame Edwin Otu (Georgetown University)

12:30 Break & debate: lunch

13:30 Plenary 5

14:00 Panel 6

To Exist Is to be Seen: Cultural Marginalisation and the Validity of Aesthetic Representation

Victoria A. A. Osei-Bonsu (University of Ghana, Legon)

Social Media and the Aesthetics of the Quotidian in New Writing from Nigeria and Kenya

Shola Adenekan (University of Ghent)

15:00 Break & debate: coffee

15:30 Plenary 6

16:00 KEYNOTE

Trotro Multilingualism in Accra: Orality, Polysemy, and Deterritorialization

Ato Quayson (Stanford University)

DAY 3: THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER

9:00 Intro conveners, housekeeping

9:30 Panel 7

Digital Humor and Decolonization

Adwoa Opoku -Agyemang (Johns Hopkins University)

LongStorySHORT: "Imagining something new, something not informed by a colonial framework"

Birgit Neumann (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)

10:30 Break & debate: coffee

- 11:00 Plenary 7**
- 11:30 Panel 8**
Histories from Minor Forms? Afrofuturism and Acts of Remembrance in Rivers Solomon's *The Deep* and Akwaeke Emezi's *Pet*
Elizabeth Abena Osei (University of Maryland)
Decolonising Genres and Modes: Nigerian Diaspora Science Fiction as a Marginal(ised) Form
Oluwole Coker (Universität Potsdam)
- 12:30 Break & debate: lunch**
- 13:30 Plenary 8**
- 14:00 Panel 9**
Imagining the excess of power in proverbial constructions by university students
Asante Lucy Mtenje (University of Malawi)
Knowledge, Literature and the Arts: The Life and Dea(r)th of Ghanaian Popular Fiction
Theresah Patrine Ennin (University of Cape Coast)
- 15:00 Break & debate: coffee**
- 15:30 Plenary 9**
- 16:00 KEYNOTE**
(Re)constructing "Africa" in the Pre-Independence Caribbean Imaginary: Fragile, Vanishing Forms
Suzanne Scafe (University of Brighton)

DAY 4: FRIDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2023

Excursion to Cape Coast, Java Museum and Elmina Castle

DAY 5: SATURDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2023

- 8:30** Bus ride to Ashesi University
Welcome: Joseph Oduro-Frimpong
- 9:30** Panel 10
Decolonizing and Detextualizing the Formal Theory: An Engagement with Form through Indigenous Orature
E. Tasun Tidorchibe (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)
Mourning a Country: Elegy, Orality and the Postcolony in Ghanaian Contemporary Poetry
Nikitta Dede Adjirakor (University of Ghana)
- 10:30** Break & debate: Coffee
- 11:00** Plenary 10
- 11:30** Director's Cut: Lecture Tour of the Centre for African Popular Culture's Collection
Joseph Oduro Frimpong (Ashesi University)
- 12:30** Packed picnic lunch
more time to see the collection
- 13:30** Bus ride back to town
- 14:30** Guided tour with author of *Oxford Street, Accra*, Ato Quayson
- 19:00** Farewell dinner

PANEL SPEAKERS & ABSTRACTS

LOOKING DOWN ON AFRICA THROUGH THE AUTOMATED GAZE OF GOOGLE LENS

TOLUPE ADELABU

(University of Wisconsin-Madison)

European colonialism perpetuated the “idea of Africa” as a continent stuck in the dark and needing to be saved by western benevolence. Even (neo)liberalist discourse operates in ideological and material hierarchization which continues the othering and minoritization of Africa. Digital technologies, powered by the Internet, have been touted as the leveler of racialized, and even gendered and class divides. A significant outcome of this techno-optimism is the global proliferation of the Internet and users’ reliance on search engines for accessing “any” and “quality” information on the internet about the world, including Africa, almost replacing traditional forms of knowledge dissemination and production. In answering the call for decolonizing knowledge, attending to this emergent information behavior against the backdrop of the monopoly of western platforms who capitalize on this need, cannot be overstated.

One of the major platforms, Google, has been centered in critical information discourse due to its relevance among users across different geopolitical technoscapes, and its perceived synonymy with the web through market domination and commoditized legitimization of information objects and users. Critical race and information studies scholars like Safia Noble (2018) have exposed how Google mediates access to information on racialized and gendered identities in biased ways through keyword searching. My paper will progress the work on denaturalizing western hegemonic episteme by visualizing the organization of knowledge about information artifacts in an African area studies collection in the US, specifically through Google Lens which uses image recognition instead of user generated text for information search and retrieval. I will employ library science and critical information theories to interrogate what the minoritization of Africa on non-programmer accessible web looks like and what this means for decolonizing knowledge.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE AESTHETICS OF THE QUOTIDIAN IN NEW WRITING FROM NIGERIA AND KENYA

SHOLA ADENEKAN

(University of Ghent)

Since the turn of the current millennium, a renewed scholarly interest in the aesthetic of the quotidian has emerged, in which researchers build on the works of modernist thinkers such as Henry Lefebvre and Erving Goffman. While the everyday has for a while been the site of analysis in Western literary studies, the quotidian is a relatively new area of interest in African literary studies. In the twenty-first century, the emerging aesthetic seeks to move literature away from the topical issues and the big ideas that characterised much of the portrayal in the first wave of post-independent writing from Africa, into making the ordinary the basis for understanding African societies. Drawing examples from Nigeria and Kenya, my paper will argue that creative works on social media platforms show that writers are not fixated on trying to disabuse the outside world of a Conradian perception of Africa. Instead, a mode of writing that is grounded in the ordinary and the everyday is emerging on social media. The quotidian disrupts past distortions and simplifications, by placing ordinary Africans doing ordinary things at the very core of creative writing.

MOURNING A COUNTRY: ELEGY, ORALITY AND THE POST COLONY IN GHANAIAN CONTEMPORARY POETRY

NIKITTA DEDE ADJIRAKOR

(University of Ghana)

Recent contemporary Ghanaian poetry appears to lean into the elegiac mode to explore the relationship between the self and nation-state through the idea of mourning. Rather than a person, it is the nation that is dying or dead, and grief is presented in a public form producing rage, crisis and anxiety. The elegy strains to console the grieving, rather pro-

ducing a moment of crisis and questioning. Elegies pervade Ghanaian poetic traditions with forms like lamentations and dirges that tend to idealize and praise the deceased through unified forms and conventional language. Yet, in recent poetry collections, the elegy questions the normative grammar and voice of death. Drawing on poetry from contemporary Ghanaian poets in English and Ga, the paper examines the literary tensions of mourning the nation-state within the particularities of the postcolony, self and language. By taking up atypical poetic forms such as prose poetry, the poems, through form, style, theme and language, seem to undermine the idea of a unified nation while going beyond the postcolonial sense of disillusion. Grieving not to memorialise but to question produces a new direction within Ghanaian poetic traditions of the elegy and opens up alternative knowledge of oral and ephemeral archiving of the state. It explores the extraliterary role of mourning within political and social awareness.

**CONTRIBUTING TO THE CLARIFICATION OF THE COLONIAL
PAST IN THE RESTITUTION DEBATE: THE CASE OF COMMUNITIES
IN THE VOLTA REGION OF GHANA**

KOKOU AZAMEDE
(Université de Lomé)

Since the issue of the restitution of cultural goods looted by the European colonial powers in Africa has been driving the restitution debate on the African stage, documentary sources are no longer sufficient to tell the story of a complex past of colonial domination.

It is a fact that archival sources recorded by the colonisers do not always reflect the realities of the research field in formerly colonised societies, because of the problematic and ideological views or assessments influenced by the colonialist context. On the other hand, the oral sources considered as 'minor sources' provide either complementary or even contradictory assessments of the documentary information. By combining these two sources, the deconstruction of historical facts contribute to look at history from different perspectives and, above all, in the historical and socio-cultural contexts of the colonised.

Surveys into how communities perceive cultural property have shown the importance of oral sources in enlightening parts of the past that are

still unknown. Based on investigations and interviews with communities from the traditional background of the Akpini of Kpando and the religious heritage of the former mission stations in the Volta region of Ghana, a region of the former German Togo colony, the present contribution aims to analyse the points of view of each of them in relation to their contribution to the clarification of German colonial history.

MINOR FORMATIONS AND THE CREOLIZATION OF MAJOR REPRESENTATION

MANUELA BOATCĂ
(Universität Freiburg)

From the 1980s onwards, creolization as a relation of entanglement, the outcome of the mass movement of people and goods from Europe and Africa to the Americas and the new languages, cultures and peoples created in the plantation economies became the central reference in literary, historical, sociological, and anthropological analyses of the Caribbean. The social scientific approaches to creolization emphasize that the process did not entail a mixing of equal elements, such as the European and African languages that gave rise to creole tongues, but that systematically unequal power relations and hierarchies played a decisive role. The coloniality of unequal power relations has not only resulted in an African diaspora in the Americas and Europe, but has made it necessary to think through minor formations such as Black Europe, African Europeans, and Afrodiasporic Europeans in the Caribbean. As a way of thinking through minor formations, or thinking from coloniality, the creolization of theory therefore reverses the direction of theory-building by proceeding 'from the bottom up and from the inside out' (Lionnet and Shih, 2011: 21) and foregrounding the experience of such minor formations (rather than that of core locations) in order to generate concepts. In the case of the Caribbean territories of current EU members, it is the African (and Asian) heritage of their populations and their predominantly syncretic religions that, together with their remote geographical location, decisively unsettle Europe's prevailing self-definition as continental, white, and Christian. The paper proposes to rethink the representation of Europe today from the geopolitical realities and the lived experiences of the still colonized Afrodiasporic Caribbean.

WHEN ENLIGHTENMENT FALLS SILENT: CONTRADICTIONS AND DOUBTS IN ISRAEL AKSENFELD'S "THE FIRST JEWISH RECRUIT"

MARC CAPLAN

(Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)

Israel Aksentfeld (1787-1866) was one of the pioneering figures of the "Jewish Enlightenment" (haskole) movement in Eastern Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century. Although much of his prodigious output has been lost to history, one novel—the first modern novel written in Yiddish, "The Headband" (1861)—as well as four plays constitute his literary legacy and provide ample evidence of his ideological and aesthetic worldview. For the most part, his writing consists of satirical parodies intended to ridicule traditional Jewish culture, in particular the traditionalist ideology of hasidism then establishing hegemony over religious life among East European Jews, and championing modernity as a consequence of and justification for the Russian Empire's political dominance over Jewish culture. His drama "The First Jewish Recruit," however, provides an unexpected and underappreciated exception to this straightforward ideological agenda. Its first half offers a conventional depiction of the "enlightened" Jewish perspective championing the efforts of the Czarist regime to draft Jewish soldiers for its army, a program otherwise reviled in Jewish history and undertaken with the explicit intention of assimilating Jews coercively to Russian culture. In the second half, Aksentfeld reverses course by depicting the consequences of army service and ending his conventionally farcical performance with an unexpectedly tragic ending.

"The First Jewish Recruit" exemplifies several features of "minor form" and its significance for peripheral cultures. Written in dramatic form at a time when no professional theatre for Yiddish performance existed, it draws upon the polemical uses of drama as an extra-literary means of social agitation in ways that anticipate Ngugi wa Thiong'o's revolutionary plays such as "I Will Marry When I Want" or "The Trail of Dedan Kimathi." In these contexts, theatre functions as a form of modern orature, since the means of representation are modern, even if the audience addressed lacks complete access to literacy as a function of modernity. In cultural and linguistic terms, modern Yiddish is a doubly "minor," diasporic vernacular reserved for a marginal minority within the Russian empire and also for the marginalia of that culture's everyday life, complementing and

competing with the cultural hegemony of Hebrew as the traditional locus and logos of Jewish tradition. In ideological terms, most significantly, it offers an unprecedented instance in which the masses being recruited as literal foot soldiers in the war of modernity against tradition are given voice to speak back against their own exploitation. In each of these respects, Aksenfeld's most experimental surviving work offers an opportunity to historicize an understanding of the "minor" as well as the perhaps counterintuitive connections between nineteenth-century Yiddish culture and post-colonial (even neo-colonial) Africa.

DECOLONISING GENRES AND MODES: NIGERIAN DIASPORA SCIENCE FICTION AS A MARGINAL(ISED) FORM

OLUWOLE COKER
(Universität Potsdam)

The politics of canonization in literary discourse speaks to a conscious attempt at privileged texts and modes as exemplars of aesthetic models. This then presupposes the existence of hierarchies among literary genres in this respect. For these, genres are generally pigeon-holed into three categories of drama poetry and prose fiction. However, what follows is the canonizing politics which downplays minority forms and foregrounds the canonized category. As an example, this study interrogates the privileged of science fiction as a form whose ancestry as a Western aesthetic is mainly apprehended as such. However, such notions only succeed in marginalising other sub-categories. Nigerian diaspora science fiction which is a corpus of writings located in the Western context but with embellishments of African consciousness and cultural images represent an example in this regard. Even though there is a renewed interest in African science fiction generally, the critical enterprise has not given it adequate attention. As part of a larger project which proposes a theory of Nigerian diaspora science fiction, my objective in this paper is therefore to read two purposively selected novels as Nigerian Diaspora Science fiction texts. I argue that, though they still represent a minor subcategory of science fiction, they are nonetheless distinct with peculiar traits derived from a precursor African tradition and worldview. Nnedi Okorafor's *Sunny and the Mysteries of Osisi* and Emezi Akweke's *Freshwater* are thus used as textual exemplification through close and comparative readings from the theoretical lenses of Afropolitanism and Africafuturism. I suggest in the final analysis that, canonization undermines minor forms inhibiting

their potentials as forms with rich aesthetic values that ultimately opens up the literary enterprise.

KNOWLEDGE, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF GHANAIAN POPULAR FICTION

THERESAH PATRINE ENNIN
(University of Cape Coast)

Ghanaian popular fiction is a genre that is dying. 'Popular' as used here is in the sense used by Stephanie Newell (154: 2000) to demarcate a field of African creativity which is non-elite, unofficial and urban, appealing to a wide local readership with themes that are common and current, often overloaded with moral assessments by the narrator. Ghanaian popular fiction was first produced in bulk in the 1940s and 1950s by people who had received some formal secondary school education and were working as journalists for the various newspapers. The texts were produced in response to prevailing issues in the country at the time as the genre was mostly audience driven. The texts had a limited readership as they could only be distributed within the publisher's marketing networks. Some of the earliest writers were Mabel Dove –Danquah who was the only woman in the Gold Coast to publish newspaper articles on a regular basis throughout the 1930s; and J. Benibengor Blay whose seminal work, *Emelia's Promise* in 1944 is seen as representative of the kind of fiction being written at the time. In this paper, I discuss the relegation of this genre to a substandard dimension and argue that a return to the study and writing of Ghanaian popular fiction will greatly improve literary production in Ghana.

MATERIAL CULTURE, ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS AND MUSEUMS: QUESTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY BEYOND THE MUSEUMS' DATABASE

HANS PETER HAHN
(University of Frankfurt)

Museum collections are often described as repositories of knowledge. Behind this is the idea that the long duration of the existence of the collected objects makes these objects ambassadors of cultural conditions

of the past in the time horizon of their creation. According to this narrative, things are witnesses of the past, they are points of crystallisation of cultural identity, or also articulations of social values of the society of origin.

However, this picture neglects the finding of constant change in the material. Objects that have spent over 100 years in a depot are no longer the same as they were when they were made and acquired by the museum. A close look at the museum's effects on the properties of objects in collections must also take into account phenomena of fragmentation and destruction. This is not only about the material loss or the change in materiality through the natural decomposition of organic materials, it is also about the ever-increasing oblivion with regard to meanings that were self-evident and obvious at the time of acquisition.

In recent years, research in museums has taken more and more account of such processes. Museum experts are admitting their ignorance and asking renewed questions about materiality and object meanings. Restitution in particular is linked to the hope of gaining a holistic knowledge of the objects collected. This concerns not only those objects that are specifically remobilised, but also the collections as a whole: only through the exchange of knowledge from different sources can fragmentation and oblivion be overcome.

In West Africa in particular, experts for culture express the firm expectation of gathering new knowledge about cultural artefacts that has not been explicitly formulated so far after restitution.

In terms of the concept of small tradition as in explicit knowledge about the production, use and meaning of local material culture, my plea is not for a sharp distinction between small tradition and the larger tradition based on the scientific description of the West African cultures. Rather, the idea is that by remobilising the objects, the different traditions of knowledge reconnect with each other, thus producing a holistic knowledge of these material objects.

MINOR FORMS, ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND MORE THAN HUMAN AGENCY IN COLONIAL CENTRAL AFRICA

BENOÎT HENRIET

(Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Calls for 'decolonizing knowledge' often include encouragements to move beyond the nature/culture divide inherited from modern, Western episteme. For instance, a growing number of anthropologists weave indigenous ontologies into their research findings (see: Kohn 2013, Chao 2022, Radcliffe 2019). By doing so, they challenge the assumption that ethnography only concerns human subjects, as their interlocutors consider themselves to be entangled in complex interspecies networks.

Accordingly, studying colonial situations 'from the bottom-up' - as many historians have done in the last thirty years - offers similar possibilities to expand our understandings of agency *beyond* the human. Lived experiences of colonialism did consist in protean ecological interactions with a whole web of non-human agents such as plants, animals and invisible forces. These multispecies relationships could serve as a new vantage point to consider how individuals and communities could escape, circumvent or alleviate their encroachment by imperialism and capitalism.

As such, vernacular practices of hunting, fishing and foraging can be used as prime examples of more than human agency. They entail manifold relationships with living creatures and ecosystems, while being able to sustain a form of economic autonomy and self-sufficiency outside of capitalist wage labour. Furthermore, these practices rely on the passing of ecological knowledge within social and cultural units which remain elusive to colonial control and co-optation, such as initiation societies.

They thus shed light on how agency could be perceived as an heteronomous rather than autonomous process, for it can only operate through human reliance on a given biome (Latour & Muecke, 2019).

This paper understands minor forms as the written, memorial, material and embodied fragments of such ecological agency, and proposes to discuss their epistemic possibilities for studying the history of colonial Central Africa. This being a new research project, there are few results

to be presented as of yet. I nevertheless aim to offer an overview of research methodologies and preliminary findings as to foster an enriching interdisciplinary dialogue.

"YOU DARE NOT!"

**THE ROYAL TOGO CONSULATE OF "PRINCE DAGADU" IN
KOFORIDUA OF 1913**

STEFANIE MICHELS

(Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)

In September this year I was part of the MIASA Fellow Group on Restitution that was received in the Palace of Kpando in the context of a restitution claim from regalia taken away during the German colonial era in Kpando (then Togo). The Chiefs and Elders in Kpando wanted us – an international fellow group with three of us being Germans – to listen to their stories about the powerful Dagadu. They were also very clear that they wanted the objects of the King, the regalia, returned. The oral testimonies about the power of the Dagadu in the past can be brought into a dialogue with written historical material found in the German national archives – and a powerful historical narrative can be constructed about West African intellectual dissident networks in which the Dagadu and the Togo Consulate of Koforidua where part.

However, what is major (the national archives?) and what is minor (the oral testimonies in Kpando?) is inconclusive and might even be a misleading perspective.

**IMAGINING THE EXCESS OF POWER IN PROVERBIAL
CONSTRUCTIONS BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

ASANTE LUCY MTENJE

(University of Malawi)

Since the attainment of independence in 1964, Malawi has undergone different regimes, from a one-party dictatorship which instilled fear and control on the ruled to "democracies" often marred by greed and corruption. In all these regimes, state power has often exceeded its normal limits as the state is able to exert influence, direct and indirect, on

both mundane and politically consequential matters. In such semi-permanent states of political 'excess', the postcolonial commandment as Achille Mbembe calls it, routinises itself through "daily rituals that ratify it" (Mbembe 10). The postcolony as Mbembe argues is characterized by a distinctive style of political improvisation, by a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion as well as by distinctive ways in which identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation. The ruled in Malawi have always resisted such excesses of power through a range of cultural productions. Conventionally, scholars on/in Malawi have often turned to poetry, theatre and the novel to understand artistic interrogations of postcolonial excesses of power in Malawi, neglecting other forms of cultural productions such as songs, anecdotes and proverbial sayings. In this paper, I focus on proverbs and proverbial sayings by university students as sites through which to understand youth's disillusionment and their critique of the excess of power and failure of leadership.

MINOR FORM, MAJOR IMPACT: QUEER ECOLOGY IN/ THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

GIBSON NCUBE

(Stellenbosch University)

Queer ecology is a burgeoning body of scholarship focusing on how queer experiences can help make sense of the ecological challenges that the world faces. This paper is interested in how short-form video hosting and sharing platforms like TikTok and Instagram make it possible to think through queer ecological concerns in contemporary Africa. Short-form video platforms have not gained prominence as important sites of knowledge creation. In the context of Africa, where the intersection of queer identities and ecology remains underexplored, social media presents a minor yet powerful form of knowledge creation that advances our understanding of human-environment connections, while fostering the building of inclusive communities celebrating difference at the human and inter-species levels. The study focuses on the connections between human and more-than-human and the relationship between queer people and more-than-human entities, by examining literary texts and films from different contexts in Africa. Although social media remains a minor form, this paper highlights its importance as an alternative space for the exchange of ideas and lived experiences, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the intersection between queer identities and ecological issues in Africa.

LONGSTORYSHORT: "IMAGINING SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING NOT INFORMED BY A COLONIAL FRAMEWORK"¹

BIRGIT NEUMANN

(Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)

In March 2015, Kgauhelo Dube launched the literature initiative LongStorySHORT at the Olievenhoutbosch Library in Centurion near Pretoria. The format is simple: Literary events, typically a reading of a short story by an African writer followed by a discussion, are filmed and then posted online (in the form of podcasts or YouTube videos). To enhance visibility, readings are performed by local TV and theatre celebrities. The format's simplicity notwithstanding, LongStorySHORT's goals are far-reaching: According to Kgauhelo Dube, it seeks to overcome the colonial or apartheid logics still shaping (South) African literary cultures, to disrupt Euro-centric framings of literary discourses and to initiate a process of healing.²

My talk seeks to come to a deeper understanding of LongStorySHORT as a minor literary formation, focussing on two interrelated concerns relevant to the study of minor literatures: Firstly, it is interested in the community-building function attributed to literature, showing how LongStorySHORT responds to histories of colonization and the marginalization of African literary cultures. Secondly, my talk centres on aesthetic and medial configurations, exploring some of the specificities of the (printed) short story, the performance and the digital format. LongStorySHORT, it is argued, establishes aesthetically innovative and socio-politically relevant connections between the printed page, oral performance, visuality and the digital sphere. In this way, LongStorySHORT not only changes conventional, Western-centric genre classifications but also publication strategies (related to the 'Western Publishing Industrial Complex') and reading practices. My talk is interested in the ways in which these changes make a step towards decolonizing the literary sphere and invite us to think, read and do literature differently.

Literature:

Sandwith, Corinne, Khulukazi Soldati-Kahimbaara, and Rebecca Fasselt. "Decolonizing the reading landscape: A conversation with Kgauhelo Dube." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* vol. 55, no. 1, 2020, pp. 121-135.

1 Niq Mhlongo, quoted in Sandwith (2020)

2 See <https://sheleadsafrica.org/kgauhelo-dube/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WBZigbUOLY>

LEFT BEHIND: THE STORY OF 'GERMAN MINORITIES' IN NORTH-EASTERN GHANA

SAMUEL ANIEGYE NTEWUSU

(University of Ghana)

The history of German colonialism has been a subject of interest for several decades. Academics and practitioners have dealt with this subject from different perspectives. However, the local content of German colonialism still remains in-exhaustive. The interest of this paper is on the live histories of descendants of German administrators and soldiers- mostly children and now grandchildren who were left behind in Ghana after the First and Second World War. The descendants form an important 'minority ethnic group' that are constantly in pain and in search of their real roots. As children that were born to German fathers and Ghanaian or Togolose mothers they have remained a group without inheritance. Their mothers were largely from Krachi, Konkomba, Dagomba, Bassari and Grushi ethnic groups. These groups inherit both property and identity through the patrilineal line. By such arrangement or custom, descendants from Germans lack the social and political space to operate within the traditional system in Ghana and some parts of Togo. The paper aims to increase visibility and deepen discussions on this group (especially those in Kete Krachi, Yendi and Sansanne Mango). Their history seems to be forgotten by historians. It is my hope that in the end scholarly contributions and public discussions arising out of the paper will help reshape ideas and knowledge about the descendants of Germans and make what was considered peripheral in North-Eastern Ghana central in Ghana and German history.

DIGITAL HUMOR AND DECOLONIZATION

ADWOA OPOKU-AGYEMANG

(Johns Hopkins University)

The last decade has witnessed a proliferation of online digital texts from African content creators; this material has been welcomed by a healthy amount of scholarship. Nevertheless, print forms continue to dominate the criticism and appreciation of African literatures. For various reasons, including concerns of quality and authenticity, digital texts are still considered minor compared to other literary forms; the novel, for instance,

has been the main standard for scholarship (Quayson). My paper will observe a similar hierarchy in the appreciation of “serious” vs. humorous or comic texts: Considering the importance of print literature and given that African literature as a whole is usually assumed to carry a serious message, comic digital texts risk being assigned a doubly minor status.

And yet, even a cursory look at the sheer wealth and diversity of what Yékú calls “Instagram comedy” reveals unique opportunities for expanding and decolonizing knowledge. Indeed, it seems that to African content producers, no subject, “big” or “small,” is immune to comedy. What options may these platforms, coupled with this clear propensity to laugh, offer us for experiencing African content and communities? Based on a number of comedy skits produced by the Nigerian comedian Mark Angel, this paper will explore ways in which digital humor may show us how to democratize knowledge, an important aim of the decolonizing exercise (Mbembe).

**HISTORIES FROM MINOR FORMS? AFROFUTURISM AND ACTS
OF REMEMBRANCE IN RIVERS SOLOMON'S *THE DEEP* AND
AKWAEKE EMEZI'S *PET***

ELIZABETH ABENA OSEI

(University of Maryland)

The world of black speculative writing presents history as we know it in a decidedly decolonial way. It oscillates between the past and the future to create spaces that destabilize conventional modes of temporality. Therefore, I suggest that afrofuturism affords authors the opportunity to negotiate what the remembrance of the past entails in order to create a viable future.

The aim of this proposed presentation is to show how the Akan philosophy of Sankofa is relevant in Afrofuturism since it emphasises the importance of history not only for growth but for creating new spaces for future black expressions. For Sankofa to be fully realised, there must be a return (to the past), a going (to a place), and a taking (of an element), as its literal translation “San-ko-fa” suggests. However, in this presentation, the focus will be on the “ko” in Sankofa as the place of reclamation of memory and remembrance. This “place” contains not only the cus-

todians of memory but also a place where the gesture of remembrance is realised through various acts, including oral tradition and textuality/archival forms. To achieve this, I will examine two afrofuturist texts: *The Deep* by Rivers Solomon and *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi, where the various forms of remembrance (both oral and textual) and their aftermath are exhibited. They present not only various forms of remembrance for black people and how they inform future activities but also who/what the custodians of our cultural memory are and especially what this means in a futuristic setting. The comparison will bring to the fore how the principle of Sankofa plays a key role in Afrofuturist world building and history making vis-a-vis the relationship between the past and the future.

TO EXIST IS TO BE SEEN: CULTURAL MARGINALISATION AND THE VALIDITY OF AESTHETIC REPRESENTATION

VICTORIA A. A. OSEI-BONSU

(University of Ghana, Legon)

'I don't want to see pictures from Africa,' [...] 'I've been looking at them my entire career. It's too much poverty and propaganda.' At first I was too embarrassed to speak, but then I grew angry. Were all African stories the same to her? Did they not have value? Because those were the stories I wanted to tell.

(Humans of New York, September 1, 2021)

In a Facebook post under the Humans of New York page, a young Ghanaian photographer tells his story about how his collection of photographs about Africa/ns was dismissed as boring and redundant after a cursory glance because, according to the 'expert' at this event, such depictions always showcased "too much poverty and propaganda". However, the collection included many rich and vibrant recollections from the young man's life and cultural background, and from his adventures across other African geographical spaces. After such a rejection of the work of this African photographer, the Western 'expert' proceeded to display a collection of photos from her own life and family, staged within a very Eurocentric cultural setting. In effect, this exhibition of the life of *one* Western subject served as an example of 'good' photography, and as a counterpoint to any depiction of Africa/ns. Such a tendency to cancel or negate the validity of

representation of Africa/ns continues to engender academic discussions about the ethics of representation, be it in photography, film, or literature (writing). Besides, it provokes a dialectic comparison between pictorial representations of diverse cultures depicted through binary notions of minor versus major, or acceptable versus despicable, with their attendant nuanced considerations of the value, ethics, and legitimacy of representation. This study aims to explore cultural photography as a visual form of aesthetic representation that upsets ways of seeing, defies marginal categorisations, and forces the validation of an African cultural representation against a perceived hegemonic culture of visual representation.

DECOLONIAL ECOCRITICISM IN SERGE ATTUKWEI CLOTTEY'S AFROGALLONISM

KWAME EDWIN OTU

(Georgetown University)

In this paper, I maintain that the artwork produced by the Ghanaian ecological artist, activist, and thinker, Serge Attukwei Clottey embodies an ecocritical aesthetic reminiscent of African perceptions and awareness of the Anthropocene. In particular, I focus on Clottey's theorization of "afrogallonism" to underscore how African ecological artists harness indigenous and vernacular knowledges to make sense of global climate change. Arguably, Clottey's ecocritical art constitutes a decolonial praxis that decenters the eurocentrism all too prominent in works of art and studies that attempt to address anthropogenic-induced environmental change. As an intellectual project, afrogallonism "moves the center," to use Ngūgī wa Thiong'o's felicitous statement by magnifying how local epistemologies and cosmologies long anticipated the consequences of environmental and climatic destruction. For Clottey, afrogallonism signals African consciousness and awareness of this crisis and what they are doing to salvage this ongoing global conundrum. The thrust of this paper then is three-fold. First, I highlight the ways in which Clottey's environmental art performs a decoloniality that puts the environment at the heart of African futurism. Second, I suggest that his oeuvre also performs a critique of decoloniality by highlighting the ruptures between decolonial and environmental practice. Finally, I will discuss how Clottey's Afrogallonism is useful to my work on the complex intersections between e-waste and blue ecologies in neoliberal Ghana, and how e-waste workers engage in worldmaking projects that are radically decolonial.

**DECOLONIZING AND DETEXTUALIZING THE FORMAL THEORY:
AN ENGAGEMENT WITH FORM THROUGH INDIGENOUS
ORATURE**

E. TASUN TIDORCHIBE

(Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Germany)

Studies in form abound in relation to canonical literary genres such as the novel, the short story, drama, poetry, and film among others. As Liz Gunner observes, there prevails “a Western centre of literary influence and one dominated by the genre of the novel” (117) in particular. Sibylle Baumbach and Birgit Neumann authenticate this when they note that over the years the novel has consumed other art forms due to its “vampiric and protean qualities” (2). This “vampiric” tendency equally holds true for the other normative genres, as together with the novel, they have and continue to dominate literary scholarship and practice at the expense of minor forms such as primary orature. There exist “boundless ... forms of oral works that ... are [still] relegated to the temporal zone of ‘tradition’, ... a fixed positionality in a precolonial, premodern time” (Phalafala 194) in our literary canon, practice and scholarship. As form enthusiasts, our scholarship on the nature and workings of form continues to favor written texts over orature, thereby giving rise to a formalism of literacy. In this paper I argue for decolonizing and detextualizing studies in form by exploring the interactions between form and orality and form and performance. Employing four oral tales of the Konkomba people of Ghana, I discuss the nature and workings of form in such indigenous orature in order to decolonize, detextualize, and decentralize formal knowledge and gesture to the endless formal conceptual dynamisms that can emerge from such minor oral contexts.

PANELISTS AND ORGANISERS

Tolulope O. **Adelabu** is a second-year graduate student in the Library and Information Studies (MA) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, US. She works at the African Studies Program (ASP) in the same university as a specialassistant for web and collections management. Her work entails researching, organizing, and further developing information about the center's academic programs, community events, research and cultural artifacts, publication archive, and children's books collection. She hopes to build expertise in informatics on marginalized, low resourced, and developing contexts, especially African media cultures. Before joining the graduate program, Tolulope was the 2021/2022 Fulbright Foreign Language (Yoruba) Teaching Assistant at the Department of African Cultural Studies (ACS) in the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She received a joint honours bachelor's degree in English and Education and a joint honours master's degree in English Literature and Education, both at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. She has a decade long experience in teaching language, cultural, and information literacy across primary, undergraduate, and adult education programs.

Shola **Adenekan** is an Associate Professor of African literature at Ghent University, Belgium. A recipient of an ERC Starting Grant, he is the author of *African Literature in the Digital Age* (2021), and the publishing-editor of TheNewBlackMagazine.com.

Dr. Nikitta Dede **Adjirakor** is a Feodor Lynen Fellow with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana. Her research and teaching practices are in the aesthetics of African popular cultural practices, poetry, hip-hop, digital literature, literary and reading networks. She works through texts in multiple languages across West and East Africa, with a focus on Ghana, Tanzania and Kenya. Her current postdoctoral project examines the interplay between language, literary form and digitality in African language literature. She is also a creative writer across genres with works including the poetry chapbook *Learning to Say My Name* (2023, APBF) and the children's

book *Black and Bold Queens: Women in Ghana's History* (2023). She is the co-editor of the poetry anthology *H m w : Ga Lalawiem i* (2022).

Dr Kokou **Azamede** is Associate Professor in the Department of German Studies of the University of Lomé. His research focuses on transcultural studies, German missions and colonialism, and German colonial photography in West Africa. He has received postdoctoral fellowships from the Hanns Seidel, Volkswagen, and Fritz Thyssen Foundations, as well as from the German Academic Exchange Service and the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa. He is the 2022 laureate of the Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm Award.

Manuela **Boatcă** is Professor of Sociology and Head of School of the Global Studies Programme at the University of Freiburg, Germany. She has published widely on world-systems analysis, decolonial perspectives on global inequalities, gender and citizenship in modernity/coloniality, and the geopolitics of knowledge in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Together with Anca Parvulescu (Washington University, USA), she has recently co-authored *Creolizing the Modern. Transylvania Across Empires* (Cornell UP 2022), which has received the René Wellek Prize for best monograph from the American Comparative Literature Association and the Barrington Moore Award for Best Book in Comparative and Historical Sociology from the American Sociological Association in 2023.

Marc **Caplan** is a native of Louisiana and a graduate of Yale University. In 2003 he received his PhD in comparative literature from New York University. His publications include "How Strange the Change: Language, Temporality, and Narrative Form in Peripheral Modernism"—a comparison of modern Yiddish and Anglophone and Francophone African literatures—and "Yiddish Literature in Weimar Germany: A Fugitive Modernism." He is currently at work on a study of modern Yiddish drama and is a professor at the Heinrich-Heine-Universität in Düsseldorf.

Dr. Oluwole **Coker** is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, and currently a Georg Forster Experienced Researcher Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt

Foundation based at Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Potsdam, Germany. His interests lie in postcolonial African literature, orature and interdisciplinary studies. He is co-editor of *Texts and Contexts of Migration in Africa and Beyond*. Austin, Texas: Pan African University Press, 2021; *Emerging Perspectives on the Twenty-first Century Nigerian Novel*. (Venda Verlag, 2017) and *Existentialism, Literature and the Humanities in Africa: Essays in Honour of Professor Benedict Mobayode Ibitokun* (Cuvillier Verlag, 2013). He was, between 2019-2020, a Carnegie Future Africa Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of English, University of Pretoria, South Africa; Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies/African Humanities Program (ACLS/AHP.2014); Laureate of Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) Child and Youth Institute, (2015); Fellow of the Summer Program in Social Sciences, Institute of Advanced Studies, Princeton, New Jersey, USA. (2015-2017) and Fellow of the Brown International Advanced Research Institute, Brown University, Rhode Island, USA. (BIARI, 2017).

Theresah Patrine **Ennin** is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, College of Humanities and Legal Studies at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, where she teaches and engages in research. I am also a research affiliate at the University of South Africa, UNISA. Her teaching and research areas are: African literature, Literary theory, Masculinities, Gender and Writing, Queer theory, Gender Identity and Sexuality Studies, and Literary and artistic constructions of gender and sex.

Hans P. **Hahn** is Professor for Anthropology with regional focus on Africa at Goethe University (Frankfurt/M., Germany). His research interests are oriented towards material culture, consumption, migration and mobility. He initiated several exhibitions on culture, society and materiality. His current research is oriented towards postcolonial perspectives on museums in West Africa. HP Hahn's recent publications include an edited volume entitled *Things as a Challenge* (transcript 2018) and *The New Home. Households and Everyday Life After Migration* (Campus 2019) and *Values in Things* (Oxbow 2022).

Benoît **Henriet** obtained his PhD in Contemporary History in 2016 from the Université Saint-Louis in Brussels. In 2017, he was appointed as

short-term postdoctoral fellow at the Centre Marc Bloch- Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and, in 2017-2018, as Associate researcher in the 'Comparing the Copperbelt' project the University of Oxford. In October 2018, he became assistant professor at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). Henriët specializes in the history from below, and in the microhistories of (post)colonial Central Africa. He focuses more specifically on vernacular experiences of and responses to state power and to capitalism. He is the principal investigator of the project 'FORAGENCY. Foraging, Fishing and Hunting as Agency in Colonial Central Africa', funded by an ERC starting grant (2023-2028).

Stefanie **Michels** researches and teaches on global historical topics with a focus on African and German colonial history. She studied in London and Cologne, taught and researched at the universities of Cologne, Hanover, Frankfurt, Vienna, Heidelberg, Düsseldorf and Hamburg.

Dr. Asante Lucy **Mtenje** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Literary Studies at University of Malawi. She holds a PhD in English Studies from Stellenbosch University in South Africa obtained in 2016. Her research interests are gender and sexualities in Africa, Malawian popular culture, postcolonial literatures, oral literature, dress studies, Life writing by Malawian women. She has published her research in book chapters and in academic journals such as *African Studies Review*, *Journal of the African Literature Association*, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Hecate: International Journal of Women's Liberation*, *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, *Matatu Journal for African Culture and Society*, *Nordic Journal of African Studies* and *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*. She is a receipt of a number of fellowships including the STIAS Iso Lomso Fellowship (2022-2025), JIAS Creative Writing Fellowship (2021), the Africa-Oxford (AfOx) Visiting Fellowship (2020) and the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS)- African Humanities Program (AHP) postdoctoral fellowship (2017).

Dr Gibson **Ncube** holds a PhD from Stellenbosch University where he currently lectures in the Department of Modern Foreign Languages. He has held several research fellowships that include a Freestanding Postdoctoral Fellowship funded by the NRF, the African Humanities Program by the American Council for Learned Societies, the Stellenbosch Institute

for Advanced Study Iso Lomso Fellowship as well as a Virtual Fellowship at the Leeds University Centre for African Studies. He sits on a number of Editorial Boards that include the *Journal of Literary Studies*, *Imbizo: International Journal of African Literary and Comparative Studies*, the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, the *Nordic Journal of African Studies* and also the Governing Intimacies in the Global South book series at Manchester University Press. He is the current French Book Review Editor of the *Canadian Journal of African Studies* and the Assistant Editor of the *South African Journal of African Languages*. From 2020 to 2022, he served as co-convenor of the Queer African Studies Association. He was the 2021 Mary Kingsley Zochonis Distinguished Lecturer of the Royal African Society and African Studies Association (UK). He holds a C1 NRF rating and is a current fellow of the DHET Future Professors Programme.

Birgit **Neumann** is Chair of Anglophone Literatures and Translation Studies at Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf; she is founder and director of the Centre for Translation Studies. She previously held positions at the universities of Giessen, Münster and Passau; she was Visiting Professor at the Universities of Cornell, Madison-Wisconsin, Anglia Ruskin, Cambridge and KU Leuven and will be Visiting Professor at the University of North Bengal in 2024. She is an elected member of the Academy of Europe, the Coordinating Committee for the Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages and the Expert Panel (Humanities) of FWO. She is co-editor of book series on cultural memory (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), on literary and cultural translation (Transfer, Narr) and on English and American literatures (Brill). Her research focuses on the poetics and politics of Anglophone literatures, on world literatures, postcolonial studies, intermediality and memory studies. She is the author of books on Canadian fictions of memory (2004), on nationalism in 18th-century British literature (2009), as well as on verbal-visual configurations in postcolonial literatures (Routledge, 2020; with G. Rippl). She has edited and co-edited multiple volumes and special issues, including collections on *The Presence of Things in the 18th Century* (2015), *Cultures of Emotion in 18th-century Britain* (2015), *Anglophone World Literatures* (2017), *Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Anglophone Literatures* (2017), *Global Literary Histories* (2018), *New Approaches to the Twenty-First-Century Anglophone Novel* (2019), *Handbook of Anglophone World Literatures* (2020) and *Temporalities of /in Crises in Anglophone Literature* (2023). She is currently completing a book manuscript on the multilingual local in Anglophone novels.

Samuel **Ntewusu** is the Director of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. He had his first and second degrees from the University of Ghana and trained as a social historian from Leiden University in the Netherlands. He has promoted historical studies at the graduate level through teaching (in the field of Historiography and Methodology, Africa's Colonial and post-independence history, The Slave Trade and Africa, Pan-Africanism among others) and research. He has produced several articles and book chapters, a monograph on Urban and Transport History and Co-edited a book on aspects of History, Gender and Culture in Africa and Europe and has collaborated with several scholars, practitioners, and institutions in Ghana and abroad.

Eva Ulrike **Pirker** is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at VUB Brussels, where she is also a member of the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings. She has previously taught at the Universities of Freiburg and Düsseldorf and continues to be an associated member of the Düsseldorf Centre for Translation Studies. In her research she explores the relationship between social narratives and literary forms, most recently in her EU-funded project "Meritocracy and Literature" (MERLIT).

Adwoa **Opoku-Agyemang** is a SSHRC postcolonial researcher at Johns Hopkins University. Her research is on humor and laughter in anglophone and francophone African literatures. Her monograph will be out in 2024.

Kwabena **Opoku-Agyemang** is a senior lecturer at the English Department of the University of Ghana and the academic director for School for International Training Ghana. His scholarship has appeared in several edited volumes and journals, and revolves around African digital literature. He is the West African Anglophone editor of *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, the oldest literary journal in South Africa, and serves on the boards of journals that include *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds*, *Hyperhiz: New Media Cultures*, and *Critical Global Issues*.

Kwame Edwin **Otu** is an Associate Professor in the African Studies Program at the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Otu is a cultural anthropologist with interests ranging from the politics of sexual, environmental, and technological citizenships, public

health, to their intersections with shifting racial formations in neocolonial and neoliberal Africa and the African Diaspora. Otu's first monograph, *Amphibious Subjects: Sasso and the Contested Politics of Queer Self-Making in Neoliberal Ghana*, is part of the New Sexual Worlds Series edited by Marlon Bailey and Jeffrey McCune and is published by the University of California Press. Otu's current/ongoing project investigates the global politics of e-waste in particular, and the undulations of global environmental transitions, in general, and their impacts on African and African-descended bodies. Entitled *The Salvage Slot: Technology and the Ecologies of the After-Afterlife*, it is an ethnography on waste workers on an e-waste dump in Agbogboshie, Ghana, that investigates Africa's paradoxical location as a site of extraction and deposition.

Elizabeth Abena **Osei** is a PhD student at the University of Maryland, College Park, with a focus on Black Speculative Fiction, specifically Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism. She has an MA in Comparative English Studies, Literature, and American Culture from Heinrich-Heine Universität, Düsseldorf, an MPhil in English Literature from the University of Ghana. Abena has won the African Literature Association's Best Graduate Student Essay Award for 2022. She is a talented scholar with a strong research background and a passion for Black Speculative Fiction.

Dr. Victoria **Osei-Bonsu** is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English of the University of Ghana, Legon where she teaches courses in literature and theory at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels. She completed her PhD in Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Basel, Switzerland in 2018. Her research interests lie mainly in postcolonial literary studies and literary theory, and, more recently, also in the medical humanities where she explores intersections of medicine and literature in postcolonial texts, especially in relation to Africa. She has currently developed and is working on a self-directed research project on the interfaces between literature and health with a focus on Ghanaian Literature. Her recent article which examines the ambiguity of health communication within the context of the COVID-19 outbreak in Ghana is published under the title "Thirdsight and the Disambiguation of Health Communication: A Dialectics of Ghana's COVID-19 Situation and Ama Ata Aidoo's 'The Message'." She is currently also collaborating on a study on language use and wellbeing among 'head porters' or 'kayayie' in Accra.

Kwame Edwin **Otu** is an Associate Professor in the African Studies Program at the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Otu is a cultural anthropologist with interests ranging from the politics of sexual, environmental, and technological citizenships, public health, to their intersections with shifting racial formations in neocolonial and neoliberal Africa and the African Diaspora. Otu's first monograph, *Amphibious Subjects: Sasso and the Contested Politics of Queer Self-Making in Neoliberal Ghana*, is part of the New Sexual Worlds Series edited by Marlon Bailey and Jeffrey McCune and is published by the University of California Press. Otu's current/ongoing project investigates the global politics of e-waste in particular, and the undulations of global environmental transitions, in general, and their impacts on African and African-descended bodies. Entitled *The Salvage Slot: Technology and the Ecologies of the After-Afterlife*, it is an ethnography on waste workers on an e-waste dump in Agbogbloshie, Ghana, that investigates Africa's paradoxical location as a site of extraction and deposition.

E. Tasun **Tidorchibe** is a PhD student at Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf. His PhD research examines the operations of form from a situated African oral context using folktales of the Konkomba people of Ghana. Among other things, the research seeks to expand the frontiers of New Formalism to account for the oral and performance domains of indigenous oral art forms. In addition to his PhD project, he is currently engaged at his university as a research assistant in a project titled "Demarginalising Orature: Translating Minor Forms into the Digital Age." The project promotes and preserves indigenous knowledge (IK) through the documentation, translation, and digitization of indigenous orature. His research interests include literary theory and criticism (with a special focus on formalism), English literatures of the Renaissance and Romantic periods, folklore studies, and metaphysical poetry. The documentation, translation, and archiving of indigenous oral forms are some of his newfound passions. E. Tasun Tidorchibe is a KAAD scholarship holder.

WE THANK



Centre for Research
on Local Knowledge

