

The 2nd Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies Conference
Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda

20th-22nd August, 2015

Theme: Textualities of Space: Connections, Intricacies, and Intimacies

Call for papers

The 2nd Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies Conference comes as a follow-up of the East Africa at 50: A Celebration of Histories and Futures, held at the University of Nairobi in September 2013. The initiative targets and invites literary and other cultural studies researchers and scholars, artists, journalists, and other cultural producers, who are interested in the greater Eastern Africa to reflect on the forces of nationalism, transnationalism, regionalism, transculturalism, globalism, geo-politics, mobility and other cultural processes that have been evolving in the region over the last millennium. In the last three decades, in particular, the greater Eastern Africa, including Southern Sudan, the Somali landmass, Ethiopia and Eritrea, has globally been the leading hotspot of ethnic nationalism, state-formation and the quest for self-determination, often galvanising violent eruptions, dispossessions, displacements, socio-political realignments and the resultant cultural imaginations as strategies for coping with unfolding tensions.

These realities invite us to reflect on how literary, and other artistic, engagements with the tensions and crises above reveal underlying struggles for scarce resources and the desire for self-determination and self-assertion. Understanding the origins of these conflicts and struggles enjoins us to take a longer view of the history of maritime commerce, conquests, empire-building, capitalist expansion, anti-colonial nationalism, and the resultant modes of space-making and socio-cultural and political engagements among the disparate peoples, who have often found themselves yoked together in various forms of relationships. Of particular importance is the question of how different – or if one prefers – successive dispensations have fostered distinct modes of engagement between, for instance, the coast and the interior, colonial empires and their colonies, the nation-state and its citizens or anomalous groups within its borders.

The conflicts and tensions generated serve as springboards for reflecting on literary, and other cultural, engagements with spatial politics, conceived both literally and metaphorically in terms of the very idea of Eastern Africanness itself, the interface between literatures in competing languages notably English and Kiswahili, debates on hetero/homosexual desire in the region, and the ambivalence surrounding the desire to dismantle national boundaries while simultaneously splitting the nation at various sites of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality. From the foregoing, the conference provides a platform for reflecting on how literary and other cultural imaginations grapple with the question of the demarcation – or determination – of social spaces such as the coast and the interior, the city and the country, home and exile, as well as relationships such as those between colonialists and subjects, hosts/national peoples and migrants, and dominant and marginal groups. Given the reality of conflict in the region, the conference further encourages reflections on the experiences of women, children and people with disability. In fostering the debates above, the conference seeks to challenge state-led cartographies of the region and provoke discourses that render borders more porous.

Other topics to consider include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Eastern Africa in the global arena
- Transculturalism, transnationalism, regionalism
- Identity and hybridity

- Miscegenation and the mixed-race
- Anomalous groups: diaspora, migrants, refugees or exiles
- Nationalism, autochthony, city, cultural productions
- Travel: sea, rail, land and air
- Life or self-narrative
- The language question
- Citizenship, belonging, legitimacy
- Print culture: magazines, literary journalism and cartooning
- Popular imaginaries: music, film and orature
- Experiences of war

We invite abstracts (of no longer than 250 words) for papers that engage with the topics and issues above and related concerns. Preference will be given to those with strong Eastern African themes. Email your abstract to litconf@chuss.mak.ac.ug by **28 February, 2015**.

Conference conveners:

Dr. Susan N. Kiguli
Dr. Danson S. Kahyana
Prof. Grace Musila

The 2nd Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies Conference is an initiative of the Department of Literature, Makerere University and the Department of English, Stellenbosch University.