**Print Culture and Publishing in Africa**

A One-Day Colloquium

Headington Hill Hall

Oxford Brookes University

13th September 2016 9am - 6pm

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<http://www.printculturesouthafrica.org/>

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Programme

9.00 Registration and Coffee

9.15 Welcome, Caroline Davis

**Session 1:** *Chaired by Beth Le Roux*

9.30 Brian Willan, **‘Sol Plaatje's** Native Life in South Africa **(1916): Writing, Publication, Impact’**

10.00 Janet Remmington, ‘Navigating Routes to Publication in Early 20th-Century South Africa: Black Authors and Overseas Opportunities’

10.30 Jane Potter, ‘*The War Illustrated:*Depicting Africa in a Global War 1914-1918 through Text and Image’

11.00 Tea/Coffee Break

**Session 2:** *Chaired by Jane Potter*

11.30 Corinne Sandwith, ‘Mutable Mofolo: The History of a Multilingual Book’

**12.00 Caroline Davis, ‘From Colonial to Postcolonial Publishing:**

**Macmillan in Africa 1945-1975’**

**12.30 David Johnson, ‘Postcolonial Theory v Book History in the Reading of African Literature: The Case of Tayeb Salih’s** ***Season of Migration to the North*.’**

1.00 LUNCH



Afternoon Session

**Session 3: *Chaired by Jonathan Roscoe, Oxford Brookes University***

**2.00** Alistair McCleery, ‘Minding Their Own Business: Penguin in Southern Africa’

**2.30** Bishop MT Makobe, ‘The Publishing of Literature in African Languages during Apartheid in South Africa.’

3.00 Elizabeth Le Roux , ‘‘The Black Interpreters’: Representing Blackness in Publisher Paratext’

3.30 Tea/Coffee Break

**Session 4:** *Chaired by Bettina Sabatini, Oxford Brookes University*

4.00 Ranka Primorac, ‘Chibamba Kanyama: Zambian Books and the Values for our Time’

4.30 Anna-Katherina Krüger, ‘How to Write about Africa? Writing and Publishing Testimonial Narration in the 21st Century’

**5.00 Panel Discussion: Ruth Bush, Peter McDonald, Elizabeth Le Roux**

***Chaired by Caroline Davis***

**5.45 Close and Drinks Reception**



Abstracts and Biographies

**Ruth Bush** is Lecturer in French at the University of Bristol. Her research interests include African literature, material cultures of the book, and cultural studies. Her monograph *Publishing Africa in French: Literary Institutions and Decolonization* was published by Liverpool University Press in 2015. She has also published a web history of New Beacon Books, the UK’s first radical black bookshop and publishing house.

**Caroline Davis**

**From Colonial to Postcolonial Publishing: Macmillan in Africa 1925-1975**

Macmillan was the dominant publisher in Sub-Saharan Africa for much of the 20th century; it published educational books initially from London and later from subsidiary companies across the continent. This paper reflects on the alliances and networks with colonial and postcolonial governments that underpinned Macmillan’s Africa business. Although few records of its publishing operation in Africa are currently available in the Macmillan Archive, this research is based on correspondence and financial records in other colonial, state and personal archives. The paper compares two key episodes in its publishing history: firstly its partnerships with the colonial literature bureaux in Eastern and Southern Africa in the post-war period 1948-1960; and secondly its partnership with several new African governments in the creation of monopolistic, semi-state publishing corporations from 1965. This paper analyses Macmillan’s successful transition from colonial to postcolonial publishing and reflects on various contemporary responses to this strategy, with the aim to uncover some of the circuits of power, knowledge and economics that shaped African print and publishing culture in the 20th century.

*Caroline Davis* is a Senior Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University, UK, in the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies, where she teaches courses in book history, print culture and publishing studies. Her research has focused on British publishing in Africa, and she is the author of *Creating Postcolonial Literature: African Writers and British Publishers* (Palgrave, 2013) and the co-editor of *The Book in Africa: Critical Debates* (Palgrave, 2015).

**David Johnson**

**Postcolonial Theory v Book History in the Reading of African Literature: The Case of Tayeb Salih’s** ***Season of Migration to the North***

The reception history of Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* is traced, from the first Arabic version in the Beirut journal *Hiwar* in 1966, to the Heinemann African Writers Series (AWS) English translation in 1969, to the Heinemann Arab Authors Series edition in 1976, to the Penguin ‘Modern Classics’ edition in 2003. The competing literary-critical frameworks for reading the novel – as African Literature, Arab Literature, Commonwealth Literature, Postcolonial Literature, World Literature – are surveyed briefly, and then the hitherto unexamined Heinemann African Writers Series archive on the novel is introduced. The archive reveals how the AWS edition of the novel was translated, packaged, marketed and distributed, and includes details of the novel’s sales, details that confound widely held assumptions about book ‘consumption’ in Britain/ North America v Africa. The novel’s publication history, it is argued, is therefore substantially more than an adjunct to formal/ theoretical interpretations of the novel; rather, it suggests certain the limits to formalist interpretations of the novel expressed in the idiom of postcolonial theory. More substantially, attention to the publication history of *Season of Migration to the North*discloses the power relations structuring (neo-) colonial cultural economies in Africa more broadly, power relations problematized and critiqued in Salih’s novel.

*David Johnson* is Professor of Literature in the Department of English at The Open University. He is the author of *Imagining the Cape Colony* (2012) and *Shakespeare and South Africa* (1996), the principal author of *Jurisprudence. A South African Perspective* (2001), and the co-editor of *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (2005).

**Anna-Katherina Krüger**

**How to Write about Africa? Writing and Publishing Testimonial Narration in the 21. Century**

The 21st Century is the time of the testimonial narration. Books like Ishmael Beah’s *A long Way Gone*, Dave Eggers’ *What is the What,* Yvette Christiansë’s *Unconfessed* and Daoud Hari’s *The Translator* are occupying the bestseller lists and are hitting the headlines. My paper examines how testimonial narrations like these represent Africa’s history and present. How specific tropes and motives, such as ‘Writing’, ‘The Book’, and ‘Voice’ are used to establish a certain narrative that is marked as ‘authentic’, ‘humane’, ‘personal’ and above all, ‘African’. Even though post-apartheid as much as post-colonial publishing praises itself for having overcome the stereotyping and exotisation of this immense and multifarious continent, it is plain to see that most books present Africa as a place of hunger, poverty, trauma, war, and genocide. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century produced a multiplicity of slave narratives, marking the time when Africa was exploited by European nations and North America via transatlantic trade routes for its seemingly ‘free to use commodities’. These texts were written by former slaves like Olaudah Equiano and Frederick Douglass, to name the most famous writers of that genre. Is it since that time that ‘African literature’ seems haunted by the idea that disaster and violence are unalterably inscribed into their (hi)story? In his famous article *How to Write about Africa*, published in the Granta volume *The View from Africa Essays and Memoir* in 2006, Binyavanga Wainaina spells out the difficult undertaking of creating African literature, respectively representing Africa in literature, because the market expects writers to meet its specific demands. Recently published books like Daoud Hari’s *The Translator* (2008) and David Eggers’ *What is the What* (2006) illustrate that Wainaina’s ironic observations are more than accurate. Looking at cover designs, front matter, introductions and the cooperation between eyewitnesses and professional authors, I will show how recently published books still draw on stereotypical representations of Africa – but will also look at what is different and what has changed. I will look at books and writers to explore the significance of authorship in contemporary literary culture, pointing at the dependence between eyewitness and professional authors. Thus, the testimonial narrative cannot be simply understood as an opportunity for the eyewitness to engage in the empowering act of self-construction, but has to be read as a place where power-relations and dependencies are displayed. For testimonial narrations authorship is not simply connected to the artistic act of originating a story, it is the interaction of editorial craftsmanship, the control over available material, and finally economic power,- all of this complicates the representational gesture of the text.

***Anna-Katharina Krüger*** is working towards her PhD in Munich, Germany in the research group ‘Globalization and Literature’. Her Master’s dissertation contributed to postcolonial debates about the representation of subaltern voices by particularly concentrating on the creation and marketing of “indigenous authorship” and “marginality” as goods on the global book market.

**Elizabeth Le Roux**

**‘The Black Interpreters’: Representing blackness in publisher paratext**

What does the language of the book tell us about the publishing, dissemination and reception of books in South Africa in the 20th century? Since so few books were produced in actual languages other than English or Afrikaans, this paper will consider the “language of the book” produced by anti-apartheid publishers. The development of print culture in South Africa is closely tied to larger questions of nationality and politics, and it would be interesting to see to what extent these are reflected in the paratext and epitext of books from the apartheid period. What messages were encoded in their books by anti-apartheid publishers, and how did these serve to position their authors? And what does this suggest about their intended readership? These publishers – such as Ravan Press, David Philip, and Skotaville – are known for the political thrust of their content, rather than their design, but they in fact paid attention to book design and deliberately used local artists and layout artists. Particular attention will be paid to the selection of titles (often a contentious issue), the cover designs, the interplay between text and image within the text, and how authors – especially black authors – are presented through blurbs and advertisements.

*Elizabeth le Roux* is a Senior Lecturer and the coordinator of Publishing Studies in the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria. She is co-editor of the journal Book History, and her research focuses on the history of books and publishing in South Africa and in Africa more broadly. Her most recent publications include a book, *A social history of the university presses in South Africa* (Brill, 2015), and a wide variety of articles and chapters. Before becoming a full-time academic, she worked in the scholarly publishing industry in South Africa.

**Peter D. McDonald** is Professor of English and Related Literature at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of St Hugh’s College. He writes on literature, the modern state and the freedom of expression; the history of writing systems, cultural institutions and publishing; multilingualism, translation and interculturality; and on the limits of literary criticism. His main publications include *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice, 1888-1914* (CUP, 1997), *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and its Cultural Consequences* (OUP, 2009), and *Artefacts of Writing: Ideas of the State and Communities of Letters from Matthew Arnold to Xu Bing* (OUP, forthcoming 2017).

**Bishop MT Makobe**

**The Publishing of Literature in African Languages during Apartheid in South Africa**

The publishing of African Literature was very biased during apartheid in South Africa; instead of works undergoing normal publishing processes and procedures, they were to be scrutinised before publication and even censored after publication. The paper argues that publishers were only allowed to publish what is palatable to the state. This form of cohesive compliance turned publishing houses into ideological state apparatuses. The different kinds of literary works allowed were those only meant to glorify the state and the maintenance of the status quo. Almost all works were destined for the educational market. The paper therefore asserts that publishers contributed enormously to the maintenance and sustenance of apartheid, whether intentionally or not. Publishing in indigenous languages was even worse and this explains today’s lack of interest in the publication of manuscripts in the the nine African languages. Publishers did not and still do not publish any piece of work which is not meant to compete at the school level; this lack of interest and reluctance is nowadays reasoned in business terms.

*Bishop MT Makobe* is a post-graduate fellow at the University of Venda, Limpopo province, Republic of South Africa. He has published extensively in N. Sotho and English, including *Voices from the Motherland* and *Journey of my Heart*. He is the winner of three South African Literary Awards (SALA) AWARDS.

**Alistair McCleery**

**Minding Their Own Business: Penguin in Southern Africa**

The primary title of this paper is taken from that of the 1975 Penguin African Library revised edition of Antony Martin’s exposé of (as its subtitle read) *Zambia’s struggle against Western control.*  The essay exploits original archival and interview-based evidence to highlight Penguin’s distinctive attitudes to and practices within the Southern African market, particularly, but not exclusively, the major market of South Africa. The Penguin African Library itself contained not only many volumes on South Africa and *The Struggle for a Birthright* (subtitle of a 1966 volume by Mary Benson), but also pioneering works on Portuguese decolonisation, on the Rhodesian question, and on South-West Africa (by Ruth First). These mass-market paperbacks had a double intent: to inform Western readers about a region that from the early 1960s dominated international headlines; and to reflect back to increasing numbers of self-aware and educated Africans aspects of the region hidden from them or about which they wished to know more. The degree of opposition to and compromise with colonial and apartheid regimes forms the subject of analysis in the paper as do the reactions in the UK to continuing operations in the region, particularly after the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961, the adoption of UN Resolution 1761 in 1962, and the growth of the Anti-Apartheid Movement throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Penguin faced not just the commercial challenge of possibly losing a important export market but also the ethical dilemma posed by a belief in the transformational power of knowledge through the availability of good books at reasonable prices. The paper concludes with a discussion of the resolution of that challenge and dilemma subsequent to the takeover of Penguin by Longmans in 1970.

*Alistair McCleery* is Director of the Scottish Centre for the Book and Professor of Literature and Culture at Edinburgh Napier University. He is co-author of the two standard textbooks in his field, *An Introduction to Book History* (Routledge second edition 2012) and *The Book History Reader* (second edition, Routledge 2006). He has recently contributed the chapter on ‘Publishing’ to *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book* (CUP 2015) and co-authored ‘Publishing 1914-2000’ for *The Cambridge History of the Book in Great Britain* vol 7 (CUP 2017 forthcoming). His *Penguin in Africa* was published by the Penguin Collectors Society in 2015.

**Jane Potter**

***The War Illustrated:*Depicting Africa in a Global War 1914-1918 through Text and Image**

One of the main ambitions of scholars working in the field of First World War studies has been to achieve, by the end of the centenary in 2018, a newer, more nuanced understanding of the Great War. The tendency to focus on the Western Front and the British Tommy or French *poilu* has obscured other battlefields and other combatants, particularly those outside the European theatre of war. This paper will thus turn its attention to the war in Africa and the African and South African forces through the pages of *The* *War Illustrated*, a weekly periodical published in London for a British audience. Subtitled *‘A Pictorial Record of the Conflict of the Nations’, The War Illustrated’s* first issue appeared just over a fortnight after Britain declared war on Germany, its last in February 1919. As its title suggests, articles were subservient to photographs and illustrations, as it ‘brought the war close’. Edited by John Hammerton, the periodical could boast a circulation of 750,000 at its peak at the end of the war. This paper will analyse the language used to describe the actions and demeanour of colonial and dominion combatants, language that drew on the well-established and familiar diction of colonisation. It will speak to a number of the conference’s themes as it will focus not only on the language used in the text, but language as a material object, considering the question ‘what does a book’s materiality communicate about its conditions of production and the messages encoded by its author and publisher?’ as well as ‘the interplay of text and image’, in this case, in a popular wartime periodical. While clearly a propaganda tool, aimed at rallying support for the British nation's part in the War, *The War Illustrated,* I will demonstrate, was far from parochial in its outlook, presenting what has been called the cataclysm of 1914-18 in its global context.

*Jane Potter* is Senior Lecturer in Publishing in the Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies, Oxford Brookes University.  Her publications include  *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women’s Literary Responses to the Great War, 1914-1918* (Oxford University Press, 2005), *Wilfred Owen: An Illustrated Life*(Bodleian Library Publishing, 2014), and, with Carol Acton, *Working in a World of Hurt: Trauma and Resilience in the Narratives of Medical Personel in War Zones*(Manchester University Press, 2015).  She is currently editing a new of *The Selected Letters of Wilfred Owen* for Oxford University Press and for Cambridge University Press, *A Cambridge History of World War One Poetry.*

**Ranka Primorac**

**Chibamba Kanyama, Zambian Books and the Values for Our Time**

The paper focuses on Zambia’s first entrepreneurial self-help manual (and local best-seller), *Business Values for our Time* (*BVFOT*)by the Zambian financial columnist and public figure, Chibamba Kanyama. Self-published in 2010, the book was launched with fanfare in a central Lusaka hotel and distributed through urban bookshops (most prominently, Lusaka’s ‘Readers & Leaders’) and via church networks. Kanyama promoted it through bookshops, state media, churches and electronic channels; in 2011, he published a related volume titled *Achievement Values for Young Adults*. *BVFOT* topped the popularity list in a 2010 reading-habit survey I conducted at the Planet Books bookshop in Lusaka, where most book-buyers’ responses said they read for ‘knowledge’. Like other texts belonging to the genre of financial advice, Kanyama’s volume—designed to help Zambian residents come to grips with a liberalised market economy--has literary (auto/biographical) components.

The paper analyses the kinds of knowledge about selfhood, Zambian nationhood and the world that *BVFOT* may be said to produce, both as a text and as a print object. Kanyama’s volume places the figure of its own author and the business values he advocates in relation to national, regional and global spatial frameworks. I will relate the text’s narrative elements and (what I know of) its publication history to the notions of space, time, wealth and destiny. The paper will argue that *BVFOT* is marked by a certain kind of Pentecostal cosmopolitanism, which bears traces of Zambia’s historical struggles for national unity, economic viability and literary prestige.

*Ranka Primorac* is a Lecturer at the University of Southampton. Among her book-length publications: *The Place of Tears* (2006), *African City Textualities* (ed, 2010). She is interested in the social functioning of literary narratives, new cosmopolitanisms, city texts and cultures and the world’s literary systems. Her current research focuses on Southern and south-east Africa.

**Janet Remmington**

**Navigating Routes to Publication in Early 20th-Century South Africa: Black Authors and Overseas Opportunities**

During the first two to three decades of the 20th century, the independent black press in South Africa continued to experiment and expand from its 19th-century mission press origins in the face of significant socio-economic pressures. While black newspapers found new forms and black journalists published articles in black and some white outlets, there were limited choices for book publication. Mission presses dominated the scene, with one South African university press being set up in 1922, enabling publication of select titles, generally within circumscribed parameters. Self-publication was an option for very few.

This paper focuses on the opportunities realised by three overlapping black figures of the period, each approximately a generation apart, travelling for different reasons and staying varying lengths of time abroad, who arranged publication of their works in Britain through commercial presses. All three were mission-educated and played leadership roles in the early African National Congress (ANC) at various points. In the first decade of the 20th-century, Walter Rubusana issued his isiXhosa anthology, *Zemk’Imkomo Magwalandini* (*The Cattle are Departing, You Cowards!*) (1906), through Butler & Tanner while overseeing the British and Foreign Bible Society’s re-revised version of the isiXhosa Bible through the press. In the century’s second decade, Solomon Plaatje published his political book, *Native Life in South Africa* (1916), under the auspices of P S King while in Britain for the campaign against the 1913 Natives Land Act, with a later 1920 American edition through W E B Du Bois’ *The Crisis*. At the start of the third decade, Silas Modiri Molema, who was studying medicine in Glasgow, agreed publication of his ethnographic and historical work, *The Bantu Past and Present* (1920), with W Green & Son. With reference to these three examples, I explore the racialised politics and dynamics of early 20th-century South African print cultures; consider the opportunities, challenges, implications, and legacies of black South Africans publishing from the metropolitan centre and elsewhere beyond national borders; and reflect on aspects of book studies around cultural nationalism, transnational and trans-imperial exchange, and print preservation.

*Janet Remmington* is a scholarly publisher, researcher, and writer. She is undertaking doctoral research on African intellectual mobilities, c1850–2010, at the University of York. She has published a number of peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and is co-editor of a centennial volume on Sol Plaatje’s *Native Life in South Africa* (Wits University Press, 2016).

**Corinne Sandwith**

**Mutable Mofolo: the History of a Multilingual Book**

Thomas Mofolo’s Chaka was first published in Sesotho in 1925 by the Sesotho Book Depot under the auspices of the Société des missions évangéliques de Paris. It has since been translated into English, French, German, Afrikaans, Kiswahili and Italian. Other aspects of its publication history include its appearance in 1949 in simplified and abridged form as part of The English Readers’ Library series published by Oxford University Press as well as a revised English translation published by Heinemann in 1981. In this paper I offer a reading of the multiple stagings of Mofolo’s novel through an assessment of the changes in both material and paratextual elements including changing book covers, fonts, illustrations, titles, prefaces, blurbs, notes and introductions. In following the fortunes of Mofolo’s Chaka within and across national boundaries, I give particular attention to the political and social import of these changing material iterations, focusing on the ways in which the mutable text is refashioned in relation to the pressures and demands of specific historical contexts. This latter inquiry is supported by means of a careful reading of the novel’s early reception history in South Africa, including its appropriation by African intellectuals in mission journals such as Leselinyane, The Good Shepherd and The South African Outlook as well as its fates in the reading circles of the South African Left.

*Corinne Sandwith* is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Pretoria. She is the author of W*orld of Letters: Reading Communities and Cultural Debates in Early Apartheid South Africa* (2014) and co-editor of *Africa South: Viewpoints, 1958-1961*. Her research interests include the history of reading, criticism and public debate in early apartheid South Africa with a particular focus on marginal print cultures and the dissident press.

**Brian Willan**

**Sol Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa (1916): writing, publication, impact**

This paper marks the centenary of *Native Life in South Africa*, one of South Africa's great political books and the first book-length statement of the black South African cause. Its author, Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje (1876-1932) was a member of a South African Native National Congress delegation to England in 1914, and the book was written primarily as a protest against the Natives Land Act of 1913, and in the form of an appeal to the British public.  On the outbreak of war in August 1914 the other delegates returned home to South Africa but Plaatje decided to stay on in England in order to complete and publish his book. I explore the circumstances surrounding its writing and publication, looking at the impact the war had on its shape and form; Plaatje's relationship with his publisher, P.S. King & Son Ltd; his efforts to raise the subsidy they required; the support networks he built up, and the opposition he faced from John Harris, Secretary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, who sought both to suppress the book. I look briefly at the impact the book made once it was published in May 1916, at its subsequent publishing history, and at Plaatje's efforts to have the book distributed in South Africa and the United States.  Given his situation the publication of *Native Life* was a huge achievement - and an important case study that sheds light on the relations of power in literary production in colonial contexts.

*Brian Willan*is an honorary research fellow at Rhodes University. He edited and introduced the Ravan Press edition of Native Life in South Africa in 1982. This was followed by a biography of Plaatje (Heinemann: 1984) and a collection of Plaatje’s writings (Wits University Press: 1997). He is co-editor of *Sol Plaatje’s Native Life in South Africa: Past and Present* (Wits University Press, 2016).