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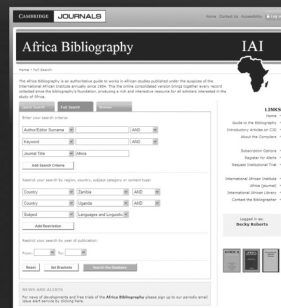
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*The Futures of Culture*

**Anthropology Southern Africa Conference  
University of Stellenbosch  
South Africa  
3-6 September 2011**

During apartheid, anthropology taught at Afrikaans universities, *volkekunde*, supported a racist polity through teaching essentialist, biological and evolutionist notions of culture. Such social evolutionist notions of human difference were what anthropologist Franz Boas wrote against when he referred to habituated knowledge and tradition in his notion of the culture concept. In South African liberation struggle discourse, racial and cultural classifications were understood to be socially and politically constituted. Now, here in southern Africa as well as elsewhere in the world, 'culture' is often again used to mean innate, unconscious drives – so it is sometimes used as an alibi for misogyny, sometimes as an alibi for race-hatred. Contributing to a popular tendency to redefine both race and culture as biological, genetic scientists tell us that culture can be found in human DNA. Where do we, who study humans past and present, stand in relation to the tradition of a culture concept? Do we write against a notion of culture, presenting our work in terms of 'community', income-group, language-group, race, class, citizenship? What are the futures of 'culture' as a category to think with? How does a focus on questions of class, materialities and political economy influence or challenge the ways in which we engage with the culture concept? And we wonder what the future of anthropology, and other disciplines in which sociality is considered would look like without a notion of culture.

If we accept the term 'culture' as having some kind of empirical and conceptual value for us, what are the futures of cultures in southern Africa? Can the process of becoming a nation allow for the kind of cultural difference that apartheid held was essential? Is rainbow multiculturalism inevitably contaminated by its resonance with discourses of apartheid-style separate development? How do cultural practices intersect with political economy? Are cultures invested in as commodity forms? We also ask for consideration of the kinds of futures that different groups of people consider possible or likely, that they hope for or dread, apocalypses and utopias or simply the dull quotidian. In this we would like to pay attention to stories about being human in the future.

We would also consider 'culture' in Matthew Arnold's sense of the word: those creative texts in various media that are touchstones for us of what human existence is – texts that relieve us of the harsh reality of neoliberal economic conditions, or texts that tell us of the human experience of such conditions, that represent human conditions.

It is in the spirit of enquiry into the above concerns that we ground the 2011 Anthropology Southern Africa meeting in the particular history of the Stellenbosch University campus, where *volkekunde* sustained an apartheid epistemology, where slaves worked the winelands, and where communities were forcibly removed to create the beautiful campus. As well as considering the past, we would also like to celebrate burgeoning Afrikaner cultural expressions – from stand-up comedy to hip-hop to cooperative wine-farming – as a case-study of the extent to which this word 'culture' is and is not still useful to us.

Invited keynote speakers are Akhil Gupta, Charles Piot, and Achille Mbembe.

We are looking forward to welcoming you to Stellenbosch. You can find more details about the conference at <http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/Departments/sociology/Tab6>

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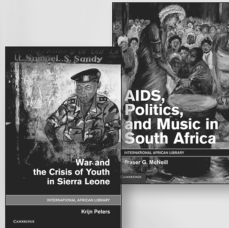
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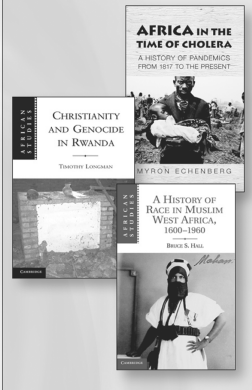
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The aim of this strand of the journal is to introduce and analyse texts – whether oral, manuscript or print – produced by authors outside the literary or academic mainstream.

*Africa* 81.2 (May 2011) features a new contribution to this thematic strand. Oyeniyi Okunoye brings to *Africa*'s readership the work of Lanrewaju Adepọju, one of Nigeria's foremost popular poets and a pioneer in the development of a new form of public poetry, disseminated simultaneously in print, live performance and through the electronic media. The inaugural contribution to the local intellectuals strand (*Africa* 78-3, August 2008), by Stephanie Newell, documents a unique personal memoir by a Gold Coast clerk.

Further information can be found at [journals.cambridge.org/africanintellectuals](http://journals.cambridge.org/africanintellectuals) or for further details on how to submit please contact [iai-africa@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:iai-africa@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

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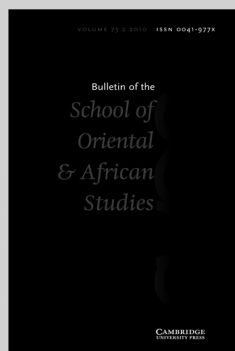
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