

The Violated City: Urban Dystopias in 21st-Century African Literature

AEGIS Thematic Conference

**Department of Anthropology and African Studies
Johannes Gutenberg University at Mainz, Germany
10-12 October 2012**

The Jahn Library for African Literatures, based at the Department of Anthropology and African Studies, University of Mainz, is pleased to announce a conference on “The Violated City: Urban Dystopias in 21st-Century African Literature”, to be held in Mainz, Germany, 10-12 October 2012. The conference is organized by Dr. Anja Oed (aoed@uni-mainz.de). As 10th International Janheinz Jahn Symposium, it forms part of a series of symposia on African literatures launched in 1975. This conference will be held in conjunction with the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies as an AEGIS Thematic Conference.

A great part of contemporary African literature is set in one of the urban centres of African nations, independent of authors’ national or transnational context and/or the language/s specific texts are written in. In some of these fictional works, the city clearly transcends its function as setting and becomes, as Wendy Griswold (2000) has observed with regard to Nigerian literature, a key to the novels’ meaning/s; the physical setting is infused with symbolic content. Many of the themes and issues African writers concern themselves with are thus construed and negotiated through representations of the city. Remarkably often, literary cityscapes in recent African fiction are characterized by an abuse of political, economic or sexual power, sometimes all of these in combination. They are cast as slumscapes, marked by poverty, crime and sexual violence, or are disfigured by (civil) war or genocide. This conference uses a comparative approach to explore literary representations of the violated city in African fiction.

Papers are invited that explore dystopic images and symbolic significations of the city in 21st-century African literature as well as possible theoretical implications.

The conference aims at bringing together 20 to 25 presenters, including researchers from several AEGIS centres. The call for papers is launched within the AEGIS network first (till 31 October 2011) before being communicated to other researchers or the wider community (after 1 November 2011).

Abstracts of not more than 500 words should be submitted for review by **15 January 2012** to:

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or by email to aoed@uni-mainz.de.

Papers selected for inclusion will be notified by 29 February 2012. Participants will be asked to submit a **finished draft of their conference paper** (6000 words maximum) **by 31 August 2012.** It is expected that some or all of the papers will be published in an edited volume. Participants from Africa are particularly encouraged to apply. Depending on the availability of funding, a number of travel bursaries may be available for participants coming from outside Germany/Europe (in those cases, finished drafts may have to be submitted earlier). More information will be published soon at www.jahn-bibliothek.ifeas.uni-mainz.de. Feel free to contact the organizer for further information.