

NEWSLETTER OF
THE STELLENBOSCH
INSTITUTE FOR
ADVANCED STUDY

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STELLENBOSCH INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
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Cover: An aerial view of the STIAS Manor House on the Mostertsdrift Estate, Stellenbosch

Above: The Library in the STIAS Manor House

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6 It is a place where top researchers and intellectual leaders are provided a creative space for the mind and are encouraged to find innovative and sustainable solutions to issues facing the world and, in particular, the country and the continent of Africa.

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Preface

I write this on a gloriously hot summer's day as only Stellenbosch can offer at the start of another exciting calendar year in the STIAS journey.

2023 was a year jampacked with activities and highlights as another two cohorts of fascinating fellows taught us all more about their specialist fields and made us think about the world more broadly.

In this issue of the newsletter we highlight a few of fellows of the 2023 cohort in interviews with multi-award winning Ugandan author Jennifer Makumbi who gives us detailed insights into the hard work that goes in to producing her novels and her thoughts on the pros and cons of book awards; one of our shining Iso Lomso stars Ntakadzeni Edwin Madala who traces his life journey thus far from rural village to the world stage; and, globally acclaimed and legendary child-development expert Linda Richter who recounts her life story, career moves, research highlights and future plans.

The death of STIAS's long-term Board Chairperson Desmond Smith at the beginning of 2023 left a huge and difficult-to-fill gap in the STIAS infrastructure. Founding director Bernard Lategan has taken the reins in filling that void during this year while the search commenced for a suitable replacement. We were delighted to announce in November that Morné du Plessis has accepted the challenge of assuming this important role for the organisation. Read more about him on page 14.

For myself, as director, there have been some important personal milestones – including finally obtaining my Permanent Residence in South Africa which allows me to undertake my second five-year term as director. I acknowledge and am grateful for the huge support received from STIAS board members, supporters and staff in this achievement. The year also ended with me being awarded Membership of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) – see more on page 15 – an accolade for which I am extremely grateful and humbled.

We also ended the year with the Second Nobel in Africa Symposium which focused in on the Chemistry of TB (see page 19) which remains an important scourge globally but particularly in the African region. And not to rest on our laurels, this year sees two such symposia – on Economic Sciences in March and on Cardiology in October with preparations already proceeding at high pace.

This year also sees the physical expansion of STIAS with the commencement of building activities which will increase our fellow occupancy numbers and also the amenities available to the programme into the future. The construction work has been designed to be



Edward K. Kirumira, Director of STIAS

environmentally friendly, in fitting with the overall STIAS ambiance, and to be done as unobtrusively as possible – we look forward to its successful completion.

All in all, 2024 looks to be yet another exciting and activity-filled year, and my staff and I look forward to it with huge enthusiasm and commitment to the ideal of creating a nurturing, productive and, above all, creative thinking space for all our fellows and visitors. **α**



Humanising babies

**“It’s about humanising babies – that’s my biggest contribution,”
said Linda Richter.**

“Human beings are complicated and coherent – a baby is too. The idea that you can somehow ‘fix’ health and not anything else is wrong. Health is in service of living. We suffer from this delusion that the health sector brings health. The child-survival series in *The Lancet* in 2013 reviewed the most effective interventions to prevent more than 60 per cent of child deaths, many of which were things people do at home – breastfeeding, complementary feeding, hygiene, clean delivery, and keeping newborn babies warm. Health practitioners intervene for a few minutes or an hour in people’s lives every six months or less and people do the rest themselves. I conceptualised this as nurturing care in the *Lancet* Series I led.”

Linda Richter is a Developmental Psychologist and Distinguished Professor in the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, of which she was the inaugural Director.

Among countless highlights in her distinguished career, from 2010-2012 she was Advisor on Vulnerable Children at the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Geneva; she co-ordinated the research and drafting of South Africa’s National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, adopted by Cabinet in 2015; led the 2017 *Lancet* Series Advancing Early Child Development: From Science to Scale and currently leads the UNICEF Early Childhood Development Countdown to 2030, the linked country profiles; and, a research programme entitled Harnessing Global Data to Advance Young Children’s Learning and Development. She has been a Visiting Scholar at Harvard, Melbourne and Oxford Universities.

Richter has published over 330 papers in peer-reviewed journals and received Life-Time Achievement awards from the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and the National Research Foundation (NRF). She has twice been rated by the NRF as an A1-rated researcher.

She is one of the original investigators and co-Principal Investigator (along with Shane Norris) of the South African birth-cohort study, Birth to Thirty (Bt30) – one of the most detailed, longest-running studies of this nature globally.

From mining town to the global stage

Richter spent most of her childhood in the mining town of Welkom – the second-largest city in the Free State province, named after Bloemfontein as a City of Roses.

She described it as exactly like the 1970s TV series *The Villagers* which will be very familiar to South Africans of that generation.

“The mining housing was arranged in rows, from the lower-rung to the higher-rung staff – we were in the second-highest rung,” she explained. “My dad did well.”

“My mom never matriculated but had worked as a journalist. She had a job as a private secretary on the mine. She was an incredibly energetic person, very ambitious and determined especially about her children having good schooling – so my two brothers and I went to private schools at one or other stage, although I matriculated from Eunice in Bloemfontein. She devoted her life to educating us.” One of Richter’s brothers went on to become an internationally acclaimed ballet dancer, and the other an incredibly successful businessman.

“She was especially ambitious about me – she wanted me to be clever but also to be a beauty queen!”

“I have good memories of Welkom,” added Richter. “In fact, I always feel boring because I had a happy childhood.”

However, Richter pointed to initially not having any clear direction about her life and career interests.

“Like most young people I started messing up my life,” she laughed. “I received a big bursary to go to Wits to study medicine but I met a Dutch Metallurgist and decided at 18 that I wanted to get married. My mother said: ‘Over my dead body, get a degree first’. So I swapped to a BSc which I hated. Of course, inevitably, I broke up with the guy and spent a few years being purposeless and a bit of a hippy, which was cool.”

But working as a clerk in a parastatal organisation made her realise this wasn’t a world she wanted to be part of for the long run and she eventually went back to university part-time focusing on psychology.

“My whole life has evolved by love for people. There is nothing rational about my choices. One of my lecturers was a hippy-looking character who wore long scarves and was intriguingly sexy. He was one of the few people in South Africa at the time trained in psychoanalysis and I was persuaded by him to go into psychology,” she explained. “I had this funny wisdom at a young age that love was everything. Most of my career moves have been directed by love.”

Although more interested in research, lack of mentorship and the fact that clinical work was the route to qualification pushed her to train as a clinician. After qualifying, Richter got a job lecturing at the University of Natal (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal) and came under the influence of Colwyn Trevarthen from the University of Edinburgh who defied the academic boycott at the time to come to South Africa. She describes him as fundamentally changing the course of her research interests and career.

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“Colwyn called himself a behavioural embryologist and is best known for proposing that babies have intrinsic capacities for communication and cooperation. Prior to his work people thought babies were just bundles of reflexes. I was completely inspired by his work. He was discovering babies.”

Encouraged by Colwyn, Richter spent a Post-Doctoral Fellowship with him in Edinburgh and also time at Bedford College in London and in the Child Development Research Unit at Nottingham University; at one time considering accepting a job offer in the UK. But love again intervened and she returned to South Africa to work with and marry her second husband, Dev Griesel.

Griesel, a neurophysiologist, had a grant from the South African Centre for Science Development to adapt, standardise and produce norms for the development of young, Black children to enable testing for mental delays and disabilities. He recruited Richter to the Institute for Behavioural Sciences at the University of South Africa to design and oversee the testing of a nationally representative sample of children, aged two months to seven years.

“I ended up marrying him and we had a son, Stefan. I had a magical life with him. We worked together. We did everything together.”

But Richter’s work was becoming increasingly prominent, leading to an approach by Derek Yach, then with the South African Medical Research Council, to lead the design and data collection around children’s socio-psychological development in a birth-cohort study of about 3000 children in Soweto-Johannesburg, due to start in 1990. Bt30 was born as Bt10 and later progressed to Bt20.

“From a wide-eyed post-doc, I was propelled into research leadership on a national scale. I went from being a small fish in a very large pond in the United Kingdom to being a big fish in the tiny pond of South Africa’s nascent field of developmental psychology and epidemiology, and eventually a middle-sized fish in my part of the academic world.”

Initially dubbed Birth to Ten, the study has now spanned 30 years and three generations of Mandela’s Children, incorporating thus far 24 data-collection waves, 22 million raw data points, over 300 publications, two books and mentoring of over 50 post-graduate students. Bt30 has produced vital information on biological, psychosocial and educational development, and broken new ground. The study programme concentrates on human-development outcomes, particularly health and mental health, education, economic participation and inter-generational impacts.

It’s been the constant over Richter’s career in the last 30 years while occupying high-level positions at the SAMRC, the Human Sciences Research Council and the Universities of the Witwatersrand and KwaZulu-Natal. Along with her other work, it also helped forge long-term relationships with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.

“From early on I had the opportunity to work globally and this has been inspiring,” she said. “I started a good relationship with the WHO when I was doing work in mother-infant interaction – much of the work in this field was very theoretical but I was always very policy-orientated and knew the work had huge relevance for every aspect of child health and wellbeing. The WHO asked me to chair their Technical Advisory Committee on Child and Adolescent Health which was a huge honour at such a young age, and to author an influential review on the importance of human contact and communication for the survival, health and development of young children. “This relationship has endured and been hugely rewarding. We brought out guidelines on, amongst other things, early childhood development and newborn skin-to-skin contact.”

Describing her career as fantastic, Richter did, however, caution young academics: “You can’t work successfully in South Africa within a single discipline. It’s not easy to make a big career in your own discipline. It’s too narrow, forcing you to become more and more specialised and working on increasing detail. It’s very linear and, in my view, very dull, unless you are in the lead global laboratories and departments. I’ve always worked on the borders of psychology, economics and anthropology, the neurosciences and epidemiology, and that’s been very stimulating and rewarding.”

She also emphasised the importance of collaboration. “I’ve stood on many shoulders,” she said. “I’ve always described myself as a keeper – of things and

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relationships. Every one of my students, mentees and collaborators I have ever been involved with is still in my life. I'm a keeper of students and assistants – everyone who works for me has been around for 20 years. I've never done a piece of work on my own – it's always been collaborative and that has always supplemented or complemented skills and specialised knowledge that I didn't have. As you become more senior and advanced in a discipline you can't keep up with all the technical aspects. I look for people in specialised areas who want a broader perspective. It's been fantastic seeing these people surpassing me."

"One discipline, one approach is not enough."

Examining optimal baby rearing

Her work at STIAS has focused in on trying to understand more fully variations in baby developmental processes and the impact of marketing as the 'cure' for variations in development. The topics emanated from the 2023 Lancet Breastfeeding Series to which she contributed arguments regarding the challenges of normal infant development being exploited by commercial milk-formula companies. "My paper, *Baby for Sale*, will explore the intensive and extensive commercial exploitation of parenting and infancy in ways that increase the anxiety and insecurity of parents, causing them to turn to products that deviate more and more from optimal conditions for infants in their early postnatal months. Related to this, the second topic concerns altriciality, neurological and behavioural immaturity and dependence of babies at birth, and how conditions of care could best enable infants to adapt to life outside the womb, including optimising their drive to learn and acquire human capabilities."

"One of the things that convince me I'm looking in the right direction is some of the products that are coming out – for example, safety socks which monitor blood pressure, oxygen saturation and pulse in sleeping babies. We have gone so far from the most biological plausible sleep which is co-sleep," she explained.

"In traditional seclusion practices there's a lot of resting and contact in the early months and maybe that's what babies need. A lot of things practiced today – like sleep training or crying training go against that and could be damaging to babies. All the research we have indicates that if crying babies are responded to, they stop crying. If not responded to, they cry until they exhaust themselves and the stress puts them to sleep. Do we know the outcome of this? How do we study it? We know that children are not turning out as well as they could be. Is it time to think about what we are doing to them?"

"The pressure on young parents to meet unrealistic deadlines and milestones is crazy. The real issue is that many babies are born too early and are not ready for all

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the things they are expected to do. I'm asking why there is such individual variation and why are some babies easier than others?"

Another area she has been looking at is fertility. "Fertility is dropping everywhere including in Africa. It's dropping precipitously below replacement value in the richest countries. Why are people choosing not to have babies? One idea is that the pressure of how much parental behaviour determines babies is becoming too much for parents. They know that everything that goes wrong is going to be their fault. In earlier generations there was a robustness – we did what we could for the babies and not all turned out okay. I'm trying to ask questions and put those ideas together."

Contemplating a creative retirement

And what of Richter's own future? She admitted that for the first time she is contemplating some form of retirement. Having lost two husbands tragically, she has recently found new love via an over-60s online dating site. "He tells me I can now rest on my big laurels and take the plunge. So for the first time ever I'm thinking about retirement," she said. "I also know that you should leave while you are on top. I could end up not doing things that well. I don't feel I have a big thing left to do."

"There are also so many everyday things I haven't done – I've never been to a Tupperware or an Underwear party," she said, smiling. "I also want to be a granny. I have four stepchildren and three grandchildren. When my son has children, I'd like to be able to be a full-time granny when needed."

"In some ways this experience at STIAS has said to me I may have done enough," she continued. "But also, I've been very inspired by the writers in this cohort so maybe there is something else, something different, something creative I can pursue. We all reach a stage when academic writing is no longer challenging. I've always had a slight regret I didn't study literature. Some of the fellows in the sciences and social sciences are organising to do some flash fiction together. The exposure to people in the arts has been very interesting." α



“You don’t have to have everything to make anything”

“I’ve had international recognition and collaborations but what stands out for me is doing it from UNIVEN. This is a previously disadvantaged institution. I liken my performance here to scoring a century in a cricket match in India. If you score a century in India and you are not from India you are regarded as one of the best batsmen in the world. What we are doing at UNIVEN is like scoring a century in India. I go home every night smiling,” said Ntakadzeni Edwin Madala of the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology at the University of Venda. Madala is a STIAS Iso Lomso fellow, who completed his third residency at the end of 2023 which included a visit to Jacobs University in Bremen, Germany. In 2019 he was recognised as the Best Early Career/Emerging Researcher by the National Research Foundation, and in 2021 he was appointed Associate Professor at the University of Venda (UNIVEN).

“I’ve always believed in this community and that these are some of the best, most talented people I’ve ever met. People from this region are interesting. Venda borders Mozambique and Zimbabwe and there is a mix of African raw talent here. I don’t see myself as just giving back but being part of the bigger picture, advancing something that is unique within that space.”

And Madala is a true success story from this remote area in the Limpopo Province in the far North of South Africa. “I am the last born to my mother who had four children. I was raised by a single mother. I never had the chance to stay with my father. He passed away in 1995 when I was still in primary school.”

Madala’s mother was a self-employed seamstress who could make any garment.

As a child Madala wanted to be a medical doctor. “In the circumstances – growing up in a rural area – it was impossible to imagine yourself going there. At that time Venda was a Homeland and not fully integrated into South Africa. UNIVEN didn’t offer medical sciences. That meant your thinking was limited based on what was available”. By the time he reached secondary school he had developed a passion for science. Although by that time Venda had been fully incorporated into South Africa meaning more opportunities were available, science was still not a major focus at his school so he completed Grade 12 first in his class but without science as a subject (since he failed it) but with huge encouragement from a teacher who believed he would make a good scientist.

“I therefore had to ‘bridge’ when I got to university,” he said. “What they now call foundation or catch up.”

But education was regarded as very important in his family and community.

“Many prominent black South African scientists come from Venda,” he explained. “Venda was unique in that there was a lot of investment in education. It’s one of the few former homelands with its own university. People in my village were educated. There were a lot of schools and most of my seniors – my mother, brothers, cousins, everyone – prioritised schooling.”

“We were taught very early that the way out of poverty was education,” he added. “I grew up in total poverty. We needed to do something to come out of that. There was no other option except education.”

Madala’s undergraduate degree was in biochemistry and biological sciences with the idea that he could still end up in medicine. But he quickly realised that it could take him anywhere – not just into medicine. He applied for an Honours degree at the University of Johannesburg to do plant molecular biology with the idea of going into the agricultural sector. “Initially I was a molecular biologist looking at what can be done genetically to plants to improve their ability to withstand pathogens which seriously limit agricultural production.”

By his PhD he had shifted to working on the chemicals used by the plants to defend against various threats. He did all his postgraduate degrees under the supervision of Prof. Ian Dubery, a remarkable South African biochemist.

Dynamic lecturer

While at UJ Madala was ‘discovered’ by Prof. Debra Meyer who is now a Deputy Vice Chancellor: Teaching and learning at Sol Plaatje University but, who, having been a popular weather presenter with the national broadcaster, knew a few things about presenting and teaching. After watching Madala in action, Prof. Meyer told him he would make a good lecturer and science communicator, and recommended him for a scholarship to enable him to remain in academia. “I received the Next Generation Scholarship at UJ aimed at training the future generation of academics,” he explained. “Many of us who received that scholarship have become prominent academics in South Africa. It showed the proactiveness of UJ at the time. They called it ‘growing your own timber’ – creating black academics for the future. It was under the stewardship of Prof. Adam Habib who later became Vice Chancellor of Wits.”

“I transitioned from being a PhD student to being a lecturer teaching two modules. It was a Baptism by Fire.”

After three years Madala started applying for seed funding to form his own research group and, once he received

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that funding, was promoted to senior lecturer running his own research and supervising students.

But his move into his particular area of research interest was motivated by a small error in his PhD. “When my PhD was marked by someone from Stellenbosch University she pointed out a correction and referred me to a scholar in the UK who had done extensive work on the compound I was working on. That correction became my research career. I later went to Surrey-Guildford in the UK to meet the then-retired professor – Mike Clifford – and spent a day with him taking extensive notes. From that correction and that day, I can count at least 80 publications on that work that have been published in international journals.”

His focus shifted to the influence of non-biological entities on complex plant chemistry. And he moved back to UNIVEN to do this work.

“I felt I needed to go home. I was warned that moving back to Venda might be a mistake but I have something in me that drives me to do things well and I believed that bringing the same zeal would enable me to have the same success not matter where,” he said. “I have done even better here. One of the biggest highlights has been to transform UNIVEN to become a competitive university in the field of mass spectrometry. I can boldly say that UNIVEN is among the top five universities working in mass spectrometry. In fact, I would say we are number one.”

And Madala believes UNIVEN can take this even further. “We have to integrate what we learn at universities into the social spaces. I would like to integrate mass spectrometry analysis more into the health sector – to train my students to do this work. A mass spectrometer is a mass spectrometer regardless of the sample you put into it. Using mass spectrometry we can diagnose disease, do prognosis, tell a baby’s gender, do forensic

“... as a teacher I must share my knowledge in a way that whoever I interact with will be inspired and pass on the knowledge to the next person.”



work, determine which drugs someone is taking and whether they are being effectively metabolised. It's so sensitive it can distinguish between tears of joy and tears of sorrow."

"Training such people means you are training the world of the future."

And although Madala has received recognition as a researcher he remains very committed to passing on knowledge to the next generation. "I use my classroom as a pulpit," he said. "I am very religious and believe that everything I do is God's gift. In the Church of the Holy Ghost (CHG), we are instructed to carry out all our actions with a heightened awareness of God's name, as stated in Colossians 3:17. Therefore, as a teacher I must share my knowledge in a way that whoever I interact with will be inspired and pass on the knowledge to the next person. In my mind I'm doing God's work and I must ensure I do it the best way I can."

"I couldn't believe it was real"

Madala's dynamic teaching skills have served him well at STIAS where he has presented exciting fellow's seminars on his work since 2020. See [Edwin Madala – Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study \(stias.ac.za\)](#)

He explained that he first heard about the Iso Lomso fellowship through a colleague and fellow Iso Lomso fellow – Tatenda Dalu. "He told me you go there do your research, get a free office, free lunch and you can choose anywhere you want to go in the world."

"But he hadn't told me about the calibre of the international scholars," laughed Madala. "I spent my first night at STIAS googling everyone I had met. I realised these were big people. So the next day I chose a lunch table with only Iso Lomso fellows because I didn't think I knew how to speak to these big professors from all over the world. But many people there quickly assured me I was equally capable and I became fully integrated in the programme."

He also pointed to a moment that further shaped his science communication skills when historian Albert Grundlingh presented his seminar. "That was the first time I listened to a non-scientist scholar presenting. It was so well presented that everyone was engaged in that scholarship no matter their field. I knew that I had to present my own work so well that even a historian would understand what I was talking about. That had a huge impact on how I saw the fellowship and STIAS generally. I became an ambassador telling everyone about STIAS."

"I don't think there is anything better for young scholars than the Iso Lomso fellowship. It should be emulated elsewhere. Young researchers must be given time to think, write and generate new ideas, engage with

international scholars, the opportunity to go out into the world – both to learn and to teach others about their work."

The research Madala has been doing at STIAS involves deciphering the biological consequences of metabolites formed by plants due to climate change. He explained that plants have to find ways to survive excessive exposure to sunlight and there is a dynamic change in their chemistry characterised by the formation of new metabolites. "We need to understand the biological consequences of these new compounds," he said. "Are they good or bad for human consumption? We have successfully developed analytical methods to identify and examine these compounds. We have shown that these compounds produced by sunlight are enhancing the biological activities of plants. The medicinal qualities of such plants may be becoming more potent."

"Climate change will stay with us. We must learn as much as we can from what's happening now. If plants can't withstand the heat we might have to change how we practice agriculture. Maybe farming in the future will have to be done in-doors."

"We need to learn now ... we need to learn now!"

And Madala believes STIAS has given him a unique opportunity to learn now. "I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone at STIAS, especially the Director, for the opportunity. What they are doing is God's work."

Madala has a lot more to do but recognises he has already made a huge journey from being raised by a single mother in a rural village. During 2016 he sadly lost his mother and, in memory of her, on his Facebook page he wrote the following:

"My mother was a very skilful individual who every night would watch the news to see what the newsreaders were wearing and the following morning she used cardboard and newspapers to reconstruct the pattern of that dress. People who knew her would come to order those dresses. She was so good that she didn't have to see the back of the dress to make out how it looked. Now fast forward, me as an academic working in a previously disadvantaged institution, I have learnt that skill and every day I read papers from big universities in Europe and USA, and with that wisdom I am able to decipher the next big thing in mass spectrometry and work on it and publish before anyone around the world even thinks about it. During her funeral, my uncle remarked that we were laying to rest '*muhaga*' (a stalwart). May she continue to rest in peace and may her spirit continue to make me see behind the front view."

"You don't have to have everything to make anything." α

“If I have life, I’ll carry on writing”

“It was a slow, cumulative process but at some point I realised it was what I was going to do. The big moment came when I finished my first novel. Having enjoyed myself so much, I felt I had found myself. Everything about me started to make sense. This is who I am. This is where I belong. This is where I’m going. I didn’t care if I made money. I could be poor the rest of my life but this is what I wanted to do,” said novelist Jennifer Makumbi.

Makumbi, who is Ugandan, was STIAS Artist-in-Residence in the second semester of 2023. The multi award-winning novelist and short-story writer is a lecturer in Creative Writing at Lancaster University, from where she holds a PhD. She has published two novels and a short-story collection.

Her first novel, *Kintu*, won the Kwani Manuscript Project in 2013 and was longlisted for the Etisalat Prize in 2014. In 2018, she was awarded the Windham-Campbell Prize for fiction. Her short-story collection *Manchester Happened* was published in 2019 and included the story ‘Let’s Tell This Story Properly’ winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. Her second novel *The First Woman/A Girl is A Body of Water* won the 2021 Jhalak Prize for Book of the Year by a Writer of Colour. *New African Magazine* named her one of the 100 Most Influential Africans of 2020.

“My first novel was rejected but I started a second one. When the second was rejected, I started a third one. I just thought everybody was mad. It didn’t stop me. The only thing that worried me was that everyone had so much faith in me and my abilities yet I couldn’t be ‘a writer’ until I had published a novel. Then they were accepted one by one.”

Makumbi spent her childhood and formative years in Uganda. Mostly raised by her father and aunt, the theme of an absent mother has featured in her books. “It’s not deliberate. I would like to get rid of it but it’s so persistent and integral to my writing that even if people start getting on my case about it. I’m still going to leave it there.”

In 2001 she moved to the United Kingdom to do her Masters and later her PhD in Creative Writing. “I initially thought I would get a big advance, make lots of money and go back to Uganda but when the first novel was rejected I decided to stay. I also got married there in 2009. By the time I had finished my PhD I was able to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain in Britain. I only became a citizen in 2022 when I started to travel outside Britain for long spells.”

“I still identify as an African writer. It’s always interesting to be an African negotiating borders in the UK and on the continent,” she added.

Makumbi was at STIAS to work on her latest novel *Alkebulan: The Lion’s Return* which is set in Africa but includes characters from various regions of the world (for more see: *Alkebulan: The Lion’s Return – a reading by novelist Jennifer Makumbi – Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (stias.ac.za)*).

She explained it’s important to visit the places where her characters and their ancestors lived. “I want to see the places and taste the food so that I can write reality otherwise it’s all imagined.” For this novel that means visits to Uganda, Oman and South Africa. Sri Lanka, Uruguay, The Netherlands, US and Canada, Trinidad, are still hopefully on the cards.

“Being here has changed a lot about my South African character. I initially based him in East London because that sounded interesting. But once here, someone said that the character, who is ultra mega-rich, is unlikely to come from East London so I’ve changed that to Stellenbosch.”

“I have written Stellenbosch into the book big time,” she continued. “The STIAS Manor House and gardens will feature. You will see Stellenbosch from a young boy’s eyes who has just arrived from Uganda. A lot also comes from the angle of the opinionated narrator who as a slave does not particularly like Stellenbosch.”

“I didn’t know what to expect at STIAS which is wonderful. Stellenbosch took me by surprise. It’s hard to believe it’s on the African continent,” she continued. “I like the beauty and the friendly people, but I don’t like the contradictions. But, on the other hand, contradiction is who I am. I never have a very good or very bad person in my books because I’ve never met those people. I’ve been simultaneously comfortable and uncomfortable and that probably helped me to achieve a lot.”

But even with adaptations, the book is a long time in the making. “It’s been in my head since I left Uganda,” explained Makumbi. “It’s always the book that is closest that I write. But when they are in my head it doesn’t mean they are dormant. You write in the mind first. When you realise this book is ready that’s when you start typing. For every book I’m going to write I have a notebook to write things down so when I move on to the next I don’t face a black screen.”

“I put the skeleton down first, then add the flesh, then it’s cutting and editing. Because it’s been in my head the initial writing is quick but I write a lot so there’s lots of cutting and editing. It takes me four to five years to write a novel. Once a book is with an agent or editor I put down what’s in my head for the next one.”

“So there are processes but I am not a disciplined writer. I don’t say to myself I’m going to write so many words a

“I want to see the places and taste the food so that I can write reality otherwise it’s all imagined.”



day, then go for a walk. I just write. I listen to the body. When it says stop, I stop” she continued.

“I’ve always also been very aware of the rhythm in my writing. When I’m editing it’s mostly for rhythm,” she added. “It doesn’t matter how well a sentence is written; it must obey the rhythm. Rhythm is a good way to get to the beauty of your sentence.”

Inhabiting characters

Makumbi also explained her total immersion. “I don’t write myself into my books. But when I’m writing a character I am that character. There’s no way I can write a character convincingly without getting into their bodies. Had I not been a writer I would probably have been an actor. I have to inhabit my character. This probably influences how I structure my books with dedicated points of view for each character.”

“I have been caught out a few times being in character,” she laughed.

“I also pay attention to all five senses,” she said. “Otherwise how do you feel and get to know people? What we present is sometimes mysterious. I hear, feel, touch, taste and smell.”

“By the time I’m finished editing the final draft I don’t want to see the book again. I can’t bring myself to read it again. The writing process is fantastic. It’s wonderful and I enjoy it. But when someone else starts to edit the book, it drives you crazy. The book keeps coming back for you to read it. But you are no longer reading it on your terms and you just want to go back to the version you started with. You have nursed and nurtured those chapters but then somebody comes with their pen and cuts things out. You are often thinking who do you think you are?”

Asked which of her works is her personal favourite, she replied: “Authors often say their favourite is the one that’s least successful. You’ll probably not believe me when I say it is my collection of short stories which is the least successful in terms of sales. The snobbery around short stories is unbelievable because short stories are the hardest. Each short story is basically a mini novel so it’s exhausting. I have had to reread some stories and have thought: Did I actually write this?”

And what do the awards mean? “They mattered a lot in the beginning,” she said. “I’m being validated. I’m making it. I have arrived. And the money is important. As a writer of literary fiction, you don’t have a lot of money so receiving award money is a relief.”

“The Windham-Campbell Prize was important because I won it for one book, my first – *Kintu*. They decided, let’s invest in this woman.”

“However,” she continued. “I started to see a pattern – good books that don’t get published and good books that are published but don’t make the shortlist. Often, you find that someone gets an award and you read their earlier novels and find they earlier work is so much better than the book that won. I started looking at my own work and thought, ‘Jennifer, don’t take yourself too seriously – winning awards does not necessarily mean your books are the best’. Normally, there are about three or four judges loving your book in that moment.”

“I am liberated from looking at awards as a measure of what is good,” she added. “I’m going to do what I set out to do no matter what they say about my work.”

She also spoke of the challenges this poses in working with students. “I get students who are bright eyed and optimistic but you know that the way the publishing and awards’ world is structured, they don’t stand a chance. You want to say keep going but get a day job.”

“Luckily, my son has no interest in writing. He has never read my books. I think intentionally because he’s doesn’t want to find out what I write, and maybe he is not interested in comparing Jennifer the author to Jennifer who is mother. Either way, it does not matter. Most children are not interested in their parents’ work. He is artistic but restless, doesn’t stay at one thing. But we have grown up in very different backgrounds.”

And as for her own future plans?

“I left Africa with a number of books in my head. If I’m walking the length of Africa, I’m still only in Botswana. I have a long way to go. If, God willing, I have life, I’m going to carry on writing. Right now I have two manuscripts on my computer. I still have four in my head so that’s at least another 20 years!”

“I hope I get to a point of looking someone in the eyes and saying I’m finished.” α

“I also pay attention to all five senses. Otherwise how do you feel and get to know people? What we present is sometimes mysterious. I hear, feel, touch, taste and smell.”

IN THE NEWS

Transforming agriculture has impact!

The STIAS book *Transforming Agriculture in Southern Africa* published by Taylor and Francis (Routledge) as open access at <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/41244> has been downloaded 4 692 times as a whole book, and even more impressive, 63 630 as chapter downloads. between 2021 and 2023.

The book was the major output of a long-term STIAS research theme concerned with sustainable agro-ecosystems and the subtheme sustainable intensification of agriculture which ran for five years under the leadership of five international fellows and also included a roundtable involving over 40 international and regional participants who met in Stellenbosch in 2015 sponsored by the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, to discuss strategic directions for agricultural transformation in southern Africa.

“The numbers show that our efforts have made an impact on those working in agriculture in southern Africa and elsewhere,” said fellow Richard Sikora. “I want to thank STIAS for the support in helping me run the long-term project and for securing funding for the book.”

The book provides a synthesis of the key issues and challenges facing agriculture and food production in Southern Africa. Southern Africa is facing numerous challenges from diverse issues such as agricultural transformations, growing populations, urbanisation and climate change. These challenges place great pressure on food security, agriculture, water availability and other natural resources, as well as impacting biodiversity. Drawing on case studies from Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the book considers these challenges from an interdisciplinary perspective, covering key areas in constraints to production, the most important building blocks of good farming practices, and established and emerging technologies.

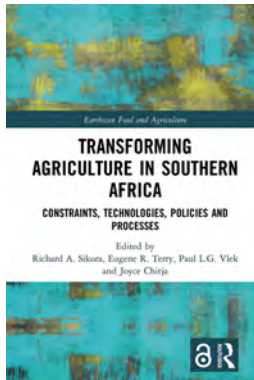
Launch of *The Lion's Historian: Africa's Animal Past*

In December STIAS was delighted to host the launch of *The Lion's Historian: Africa's Animal Past* by STIAS fellow Sandra Swart.

Swart is Professor and Chair of the Department of History at Stellenbosch University and was in residence during the second semester of 2022. At the launch she was in conversation with novelist and Professor at SU's Department of Political Science, Pieter Fourie.

Below: The cover of Transforming Agriculture in Southern Africa

Bottom: Richard Sikora



Left: Sandra Swart

Below: The cover of Sandra Swart's book, *The Lion's Historian: Africa's Animal Past*



“The Lion’s Historian offers a multi-species retelling of our more-than-human past, reconstructing a shifting series of significant inter-species relationships – from quirky idiosyncratic connections to those that triggered major changes.”

The Lion’s Historian offers a multi-species retelling of our more-than-human past, reconstructing a shifting series of significant inter-species relationships – from quirky idiosyncratic connections to those that triggered major changes. The animals in the book – elephants, hippos, okapi, lions, jackals, cows, sheep, horses, white ants, quagga, Nazi cattle, police dogs and baboons – are chosen strategically to highlight different facets of our shared past. With this animal-centric lens, decades of research are brought together in a collection that takes animals seriously but in very different ways.

As the African proverb says: “Until the lion has a historian of his own, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”. This book is an acceptance of that challenge, to write a brand-new kind of history, with the author becoming the Lion’s Historian and reminding us that, as a species, we are not alone.

The book continues an interest in the socio-environmental history of southern Africa that has been developed in many of Swart’s 80+ peer-reviewed articles and chapters in academic books and four earlier books – *Breeds of Empire: The ‘invention’ of the horse in the Philippines and Southern Africa, 1500-1950* (2007); *Canis Africanis: a dog history of southern Africa* (2008); *The Routledge Handbook of Environmental History* (2023) and *Riding High – Horses, Humans and History in South Africa* (2010).

New Board Chairperson for STIAS

In November STIAS announced the appointment of Morné du Plessis as incoming Chairperson of the Board. Du Plessis has had a long-term involvement with STIAS as member of the Academic Advisory Committee and will assume full responsibility of the Board in May 2024.

Below: Morné du Plessis

Below right: Desta Mebratu



Du Plessis holds MBA and PhD degrees from the University of Cape Town, a BSc Honours degree from the University of Pretoria and a BSc Agriculture degree from Stellenbosch University. He is a recognised leader in conservation biology. Under his directorship, the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute was awarded the DST/NRF Centre of Excellence status in biodiversity conservation.

He left academia to become the CEO of the South Africa chapter of the Worldwide Fund for Nature where he has championed the establishment not only of conservation areas in Africa, but also the deep dependence that people have on well-functioning and intact natural systems.

“To me, the uniqueness of STIAS has always been defined by its aspiration to be a globally competitive institution that derives its relevance from Africa,” said Du Plessis. “For almost two decades, STIAS has not only provided a productive space for enquiring minds from far and wide, but also nurtured cohorts of high-potential African specialists early in their careers. The interaction between accomplished and budding scholars brings fresh creativity that is of immense mutual benefit.”

“It’s a great privilege to be associated with this fine institution. I commit to assisting the Director and his team to continue on STIAS’s rising trajectory of excellence while ensuring that its institutional foundations become ever firmer,” he said.

For a full interview with Du Plessis see: [STIAS Incoming Board Chairperson, Morné du Plessis \(youtube.com\)](#)

Mebratu joins prestigious list of engineering icons with London tube station naming

Desta Mebratu is one of the 270 engineering icons after whom stations of the London Metro system have been named based on the decision of the Mayor’s Office and the Royal Academy of Engineering. Mebratu is recognised for his contribution in the field of engineering for sustainability at the international level.

The names of the engineers and innovators will stay on the stations for limited duration while the complete plan will be on permanent display in the Transportation Museum in London. Mebratu joins a prestigious list including Alexander Graham Bell, Michael Faraday, Nicola Tesla and Leonardo da Vinci.

Originally from Ethiopia, Mebratu is an Extraordinary Professor and member of the Governing Board of the Centre for Sustainability Transition, Stellenbosch University. He is a chemical engineer with specialisation in Industrial Environmental Economics and more than 34 years of experience working for industry, universities and international organisations. This includes working

for the United Nations Environment Programme for over 13 years holding different positions, including serving as Head of UNEP Business and Industry Programme and Deputy Regional Director for Africa.

He is widely published in peer-reviewed journals and co-edited the *Handbook on Sustainable Development Policy and Administration* and *Transformational Infrastructure for development of a Wellbeing Economy in Africa*, which appeared in the *STIAS Series of publications*. Prof. Mebratu is a Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences and a number of institutions of Advanced Studies including STIAS where he has held four fellowships since 2015.

Kirumira honoured with ASSAf membership

STIAS Director Edward K. Kirumira joined a prestigious group of top scientists awarded membership of the African Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) at a ceremony held in November 2023.

ASSAf has as core function to honour the country's most outstanding scholars by electing them to Membership of the Academy. Members are drawn from the full spectrum of disciplines and new Members are elected each year by the full existing Membership. Membership of the Academy is a great honour and is in recognition of scholarly achievement. Members are the core asset of the Academy and give their time and expertise voluntarily in the service of society. The 38 new ASSAf Members bring the total membership to 689.

Kirumira is an internationally recognised specialist in the field of medical sociology.

Fellow in residence Florian Luca, who is a Distinguished Research Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, was similarly honoured at the same ceremony, while Iso Lomso Fellow Jess Auerbach was awarded membership of SAYAS, the South African Young Academy of Science.

Research visit brings important new skills and collaborations

STIAS Iso Lomso fellow Alidehou Jerrold Agbankpe from Benin completed his overseas research visit at the Leicester Centre for Phage Research, at the University of Leicester in the UK in 2023. His work involves looking at antimicrobial resistance in human and animal models. The visit allowed him to strengthen his skills in phage research including learning several techniques like phage amplification, biofilm assay, phage cocktail development, phage efficacy testing and phage DNA extraction and sequencing. He also had the opportunity to take part in a training course on Next



Clockwise, from top left: Edward K. Kirumira, Alidehou Jerrold Agbankpe, Jess Auerbach and Florian Luca

Generation Sequencing at the Wellcome Sanger Institute, Wellcome Connecting Science, UK.

The trip allowed him to strengthen research collaborations with the Leicester Centre and with Glasgow University while a working visit to Pakistan also forged further relationships with various Pakistani Universities on work using bacteriophages to fight antimicrobial resistance.

Since his return, characterisation work on a number of phages has shown a wide range of antibacterial activity on clinical pathogenic and multidrug-resistant strains which may make them good candidates for the clinical development of treatments for infectious diseases caused by these pathogenic bacteria. He and his colleagues are currently writing two manuscripts for publication.

He has also started the year in a new position at the Institut Pasteur of Guinea as Senior Researcher and Head of the Bacteriology Research Unit. Agbankpe will be in his final residence at STIAS in the second half of 2024. [α](#)

A 'masterclass' in art and politics

The audience attending a conversation between art historian fellow Tamar Garb and multidisciplinary artist William Kentridge at STIAS were treated to a masterclass in art and politics.

The two explored the intricate relationship between 'the studio' and 'the world' at an event on 8 December 2023, hosted by the Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest (AVReQ).

In her introduction, STIAS fellow Prof. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, who holds the South African Research Chair in Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma at Stellenbosch University, noted that the dialogue formed

part of a project started three years ago, "looking at aesthetic responses to cruelty in the regimes of Soviet Russia and apartheid South Africa".

She said: "We have two people here who are great scholars with a social conscience. So there couldn't be anyone better to conclude this conversation than the two of you."

Garb is Durning Lawrence Professor in the History of Art at University College London. Her recent work addresses post-apartheid culture and art.

Kentridge works across artistic mediums, often with dozens of collaborators, to make art that is grounded in history, literature, politics and science.

They were both students in South Africa in the 1970s – Garb at the University of Cape Town's Michaelis School of Fine Art, and Kentridge at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he graduated with a BA in Politics and African Studies, and later at the Johannesburg Art Foundation, where he obtained a diploma in Fine Arts.

Tamar Garb in conversation with William Kentridge



Back to the future

Casting his mind back to that time, Kentridge said, “There was a question then – obviously, we were deep in apartheid – of what a different society could look like. What would it be not to have racial oppression and the huge gap between rich and poor?”

“What that inevitably meant was that one had to think in a utopian way about what a transformed society would be. And one of the utopias to look at was the Soviet Union after the 1917 revolution.”

He explained that the anti-apartheid movement had idealised the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) at the time, not least because the apartheid regime was supported by the West during the Cold War.

Death of utopia

“But, of course, by the 1970s, we were also talking about the death of utopia, of the things that had not worked, of hopes that had been dashed, of the extraordinary violence accompanying utopia,” Kentridge said, referring especially to the rule of Joseph Stalin from 1924 to 1953.

“Utopian thinking is always quite certain, and certainty seems to need an army with rifles to enforce it. Like in the quote, ‘We’ll beat humanity into happiness with an iron fist.’ So, whether in the USSR, or during colonialism, or in apartheid South Africa, there’s something wrong with the ‘certainty’ of ‘knowing’ what’s best for other people.”

Contemplating a different future did not only intrigue Kentridge on a political level, but also occupied his mind as an artist: “In the studio, there was the question of what imagery to use, what kind of work does one do.”

Connected to the world

He was inspired by two art movements that had their heyday from about 1915 to the mid 1920s.

The first was Dadaism, a reaction to the First World War, with early centres in Zurich and Berlin, later flourishing in Paris: “It said everything was possible, your performance didn’t have to be a painting, it could be a poem, it could be a silence, or a dance. That opened what art making could be, to the benefit of every visual artist in the world to this day.”

The second was Russian Constructivism, propelled by the energy around the 1917 revolution: “There was an extraordinary flowering of art – cinema, photography, painting, sculpture, theatre, writing.”

Both movements looked forwards and outwards, not backwards or inwards.

“Utopian thinking is always quite certain, and certainty seems to need an army with rifles to enforce it. ... So, whether in the USSR, or during colonialism, or in apartheid South Africa, there’s something wrong with the ‘certainty’ of ‘knowing’ what’s best for other people.”

“There was a richness in not letting go of the world, not saying, ‘All I’m interested in is the canvas and colour and texture’, but maintaining a distinct connection to the world.”

Dissidents

These movements captured Kentridge’s attention in the 1970s because he and others were “thinking about the possibility of constructing a different kind of society”. And in time, it would inspire his artistic engagement with dissident modernist aesthetics via the work of Russian writers like Nikolai Gogol, composer Dmitri Shostakovich and film maker Dziga Vertov.

During their discussion, Kentridge and Garb explored the conditions of making art in the Soviet Union and apartheid South Africa. They discussed such questions as the role of the artist as dissident, and how artistic languages encode dissent, affirm life and refuse instrumentalisation under conditions of duress and coercion.

The capacity audience were taken through examples of Kentridge’s work, projected onto a large screen in a packed library in the STIAS Manor House.

Moving film and score

A highlight was his behind-the-scenes explanations of what went into the making of his animated film, *Oh, to Believe in Another World*, performed to Shostakovich’s 10th Symphony. The hour-long film, commissioned and premiered by the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra in 2022, illuminates the complicated relationship between the composer and Stalin.

“Shostakovich finished his 10th in 1953, just after the death of Stalin. And we know he lived in terror of Stalin for many years, as did all artists in the USSR. They feared offending the sensibility of the Central Committee.”

“He lived with a suitcase packed next to his bed ready for secret police to knock on the door and take him away. He survived, but some of his colleagues – artists,

“Part of the way that art works is a reinforcement of connectivity between people.”

theatre directors – were not so lucky. However, there were party faithful who didn’t survive, and there were some dissidents who did.”

The film “became a chance to look at that period, what it was to be an artist at that time,” Kentridge said.

“So, I decided we would make an imaginary Soviet Museum in which to stick all these pieces of history.”

A cardboard model was built, but unlike a normal staging of a production where the model would be scaled up, the model itself became the actual set. Cellphone and GoPro cameras were used to film inside it, while actors and animated props were filmed in front of a green screen, which was later replaced with backgrounds of scenes inside the museum.

The film depicts the horrors of the Soviet dictatorship, showing Stalin eliminating his perceived enemies. But that does not absolve the rest of the system – “he stands in for the whole repressive history of the failure of that vision,” Kentridge explained.

The Gulag and apartheid

“Do you think the conditions for making art under apartheid were similar to the fear and tyranny suffered by artists in the Soviet Union?” Garb asked.

“No, I don’t,” Kentridge answered.

William Kentridge converses with Nancy Adler, Andrea Gullotta and Dmitry Pritykin.



“The Soviet Union was a totalised system, where all art had to be in service of a particular vision. If you were a dissident artist, you faced similar risks to a dissident politician. A bad review in *Pravda* could destroy you – literally.”

“But in South Africa, I think art was seen as marginal, not so important, so you could get away with things. Artists didn’t experience the kind of repression suffered by many other people.”

Garb disagreed: “It depended on who you were, and how you were policed. If you were an artist of colour, you might have had a different experience.”

Colour blindness

Kentridge conceded: “There was a kind of blindness to the different worlds. I once had a conversation with an artist who had been to the same art school as me and had shown at the same gallery. I realised to get from my house to art school was a 12-minute ride on my little scooter, but he had a two-hour journey from his township to town and then to art school. Just to get to the start of our day was totally different. So if you take that into the political sphere, I think you’re right.”

Dream on

The discussion kept returning to the notions of hope and utopia.

“The thing is, we need utopia, yet we can’t find it. But without it, there’s a gap,” Kentridge said.

“But I also think there’s a dichotomy in hope. On the one hand, it’s a very powerful political force, the expectation or desire that things could change. But, also, to say to people living in terrible circumstances just to hope for better could be a way of keeping them passive. So, it’s a double-edged concept.”

However, he continued, “I would say there is an optimism in the very act of making. So, the studio is a physical place of making art, but it is also a metaphoric space of making meaning. And it’s not just a solitary thing. Part of the way that art works is a reinforcement of connectivity between people.” **α**

Article: Desmond Thompson, freelance journalist

Photograph: Wesley Ceasar, Senior Research Coordinator, AVRcQ

Second Nobel in Africa Symposia focuses on Tuberculosis and Antibiotic Resistance

STIAS was delighted to host the second symposium in the Nobel in Africa initiative from 23 to 27 October under the theme, Tuberculosis and Antibiotic Resistance: From Basic Drug Discovery to Clinic. The Nobel in Africa initiative was launched in 2022 in partnership with Stellenbosch University, under the auspices of the Nobel Foundation and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences with funding from the Knut & Alice Wallenberg Foundation. STIAS will host the initiative until 2030.

“STIAS is about constructively disrupting individual and collective thought and therefore the ideal host for the Nobel symposia which is about the convening of academics for the greater benefit of society,” said STIAS Director Edward K. Kirumira at the opening session. “The outreach aspects are particularly exciting and enriching – bringing together the scholarly environment and expanding the footprint on the African continent.”

“Broadening the research scope is critical for wellbeing on the continent,” said Sibusiso Moyo, Stellenbosch University Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies). “The sub-Saharan Africa population is set to double by 2050. Intellectual investment is therefore not just needed but imperative. We have to take science to a wider audience.”

The second symposium brought together a multidisciplinary group of world-leading scientists, working in fields ranging from drug design and its organic chemical synthesis to biochemical analyses and computational approaches, and medical applications in TB diagnosis and treatment.

While Nobel Symposia are closed sessions, each Symposium is accompanied by public outreach events hosted at South African universities and research institutes. The outreach events for this Symposium included the Stellenbosch University Chancellor’s Public Lecture by Clifton Earl Barry of the National Institute of Allergy and

Infectious Diseases of the US National Institutes of Health, as well as a mini symposium on Tuberculosis Research hosted by the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine at the University of Cape Town led by its director Valerie Mizrahi which brought together leading South African and continental TB experts with their counterparts from around the world.

Tuberculosis is considered the world’s deadliest infectious disease, having killed more than 1.6 million people globally in 2022. It remains the main cause of death in South Africa. In 2015 the World Health Organization launched an ambitious End TB strategy to reduce TB incidence by 80% and TB deaths by 90% by 2030. With multidrug resistance of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* on the rise, this strategy is critically dependent on the development of a better vaccine, improved diagnostics and new drugs to fight TB.

Addressing the opening session, Martin Jörnruud, First Secretary for Trade and Economic Affairs of the Embassy of Sweden pointed to TB as a substantial threat to global public health. “Alfred Nobel pushed the boundaries of scientific research and so do you,” he said.

While Symposium Convenor Fredrik Almquest of Umeå University emphasised the amazing journey of working with all the partners in preparing for the Symposium. “It’s about bringing together what is needed to solve big global problems together and make the world better,” he said.

There will be two Nobel in Africa Symposia during 2024 starting with Economic Sciences: Microdevelopment research in the last 20 years: what have we learned? from 12 - 14 March, convened by Jakob Svensson of Stockholm University and Rulof Burger of Stellenbosch University. This will be followed by the symposium on Physiology or Medicine: Progress and Challenges in Cardiovascular Medicine from 21 - 25 October convened by Göran Hansson of the Karolinska Institute. [α](#)



SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

For the full list of publications by STIAS fellows see: <https://stias.ac.za/fellows/publications>

Louise du Toit, Ephraim Meir, Ed Noort and Wolfgang Palaver, Eds. *Nonviolence and Religion*. 2023. MDPI.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/books978-3-0365-7173-7>

This volume discusses the relation between nonviolence and religion by adopting Mohandas K. Gandhi's concept of satyagraha as a starting point and by also discussing

nonviolent hermeneutics of holy scriptures with a special emphasis on interpretations of the Qur'an. The first part consists of chapters that directly deal with Gandhi's concept of nonviolence and how it influenced later faith-based peace activists. By reading Gandhi's active nonviolence through the lens of Judith Butler's recent work on nonviolence, it engages with contemporary discussions about violence and nonviolence and also reflects on how nonviolence relates to gender. It also looks at how Gandhi related to different religions and further broadens the usual focus on physical violence by addressing economic violence and environmental degradation. Gandhi's view of Judaism and Zionism is critically discussed in one chapter.

The second part comprises contributions that study the use of holy scriptures in relation to (non)violence, its problems, its boundaries and its inspiration. Religious authoritative texts play a major role in the continuation and legitimization of connected belief systems. Again, Gandhi's own nonviolent hermeneutics of holy scriptures are investigated and his interpretation of the biblical figure of Daniel is especially discussed. Three contributions deal with the interpretation of the Qur'an and its potential for nonviolence. A concluding chapter provides a range of hermeneutic guidelines for an Islamic theology of nonviolence.

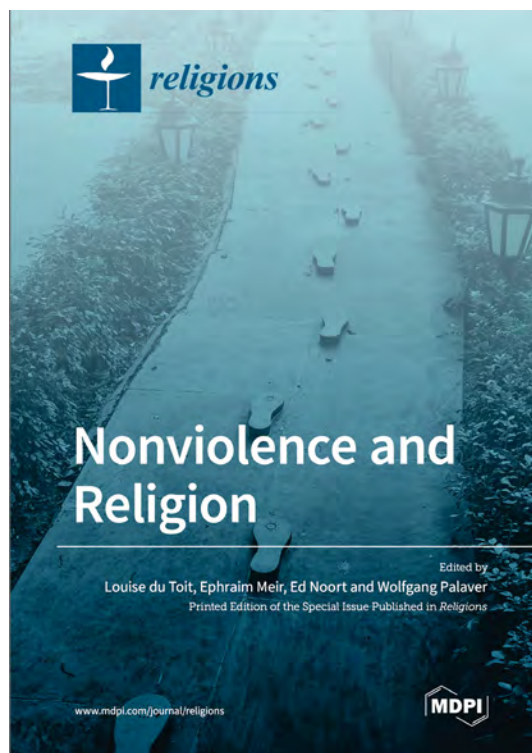
Derek Attridge. *Forms of Modernist Fiction: Reading the Novel from James Joyce to Tom McCarthy*. Edinburgh University Press, 2023.

<https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-forms-of-modernist-fiction.html>

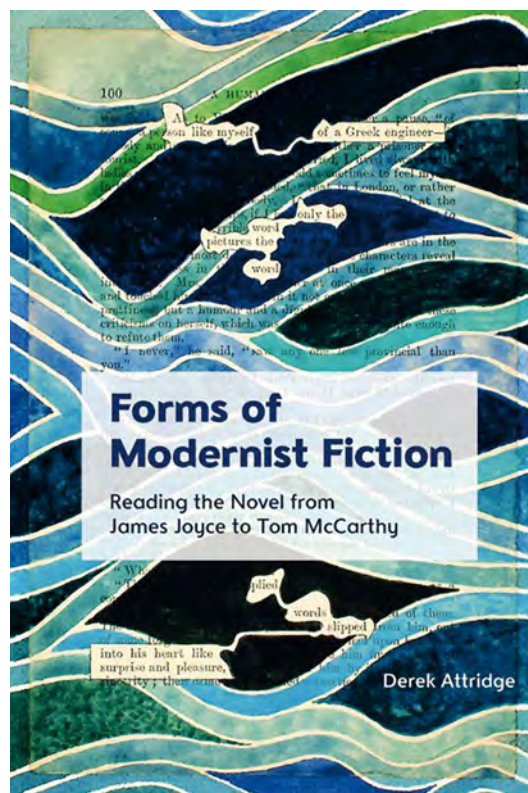
The formal innovations of the modernist novelists have continued to reverberate to the present day, less importantly as a matter of imitation and more as a stimulus to further innovation. Focusing on the experience of the reader in engaging with a selection of these works from around the globe, this book argues that a rigorous attention to formal features

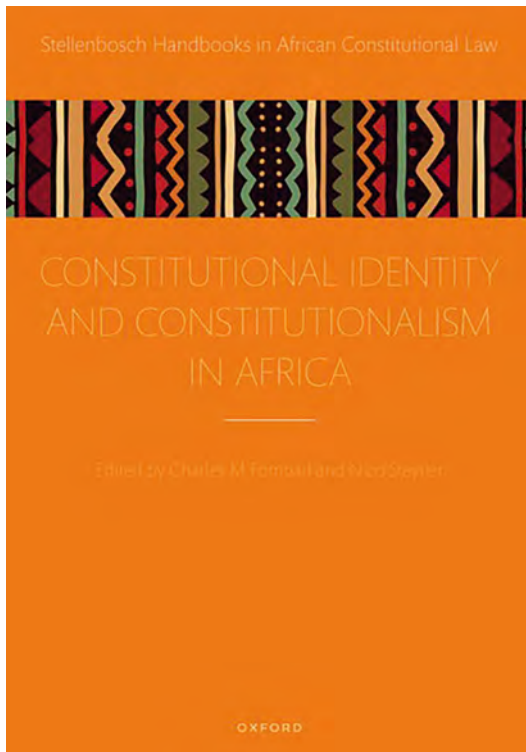
is crucial in appreciating their achievement and in understanding the impact of the early modernists on the history of the novel.

Joyce's *Ulysses* is given particular attention for its feats of formal invention and as an inspiration for many later writers. Among the facets of modernist writing explored are the separation of content and form; the transgression of linguistic boundaries; the defiance of lexical and syntactic rules; the deployment of realist techniques to present the unreal; the political significance of literary form; and, the relation between formal innovation and affect.



It ... looks at how Gandhi related to different religions and further broadens the usual focus on physical violence by addressing economic violence and environmental degradation.





Charles M Fombad and Nico Steytler, Eds. 2024. *Constitutional Identity and Constitutionalism in Africa*. Oxford University Press, 2024.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/constitutional-identity-and-constitutionalism-in-africa-9780198906308>

In its modern history, Africa has experienced different waves of constitutional ordering. The latest democratisation wave, which began in the 1990s, has set the stage over the past decade for what is now a hotly debated issue: Do recent, new, or fundamentally revised constitutions truly reflect an African constitutional identity?

Thoughtfully navigating a contested field, this volume brings to the fore a number of foundational questions about African constitutionalism.

Constitutional Identity and Constitutionalism in Africa asks whether the concept of constitutional identity clarifies our understanding of constitutional change in Africa, including an exploration of the relationship between constitutional identity and a country's unique culture(s) and histories. Building on this, contributions examine the persistent role of colonial heritages in shaping constitutional identity in post-Independence African

nations, and the question of path-dependency. Given the enduring influence of the colonial experience, the volume asks how, why, and to what end African constitutions must be 'decolonised' to form an authentic constitutional identity. This theoretical insight is supplemented and further deepened by detailed case studies of South Africa, Ethiopia, Cape Verde, Cameroon and Egypt. and their diverse experience of constitutional continuity and change.

This volume in the *Stellenbosch Handbooks in African Constitutional Law* series, brings together contributions from established scholars and emerging voices on the study of constitutional processes. The series provides an urgent critical analysis of existing paradigms, concepts and normative ideologies of modern African constitutionalism in the context of constitutional identity.

Moses Khisa, Ed. *Autocratization in Contemporary Uganda: Clientelism, Coercion and Social Control*. Boomsbury Publishing, 2024.

https://books.google.co.za/books?hl=en&lr=&id=o_PiEAAAQBAJ&oi=

Autocratization in Contemporary Uganda analyses two interrelated outcomes: autocratization, manifest

in the deepening of personalist rule or Musevenism, and the regime resilience that has made Museveni one of Africa's current-longest surviving rulers. How has this feat been possible, and what has been the trajectory of Museveni's increasingly autocratic rule?

Surveying that trajectory since 1986, the book takes as its primary focus the years since 2005; bringing to the fore the 'autocratic turn', placing it within a broader comparative lens, and enriching it with comparative references to cases outside of Uganda.

While positing the notion of 'autocratic adaptability' as a defining hallmark of Museveni's rule, the book examines the factors and forces that have made that adaptability possible, analysing the dynamics around three key themes: institutions, resources and coalitions. Through empirical research, each chapter seeks to demonstrate how either one or two of these three variables have functioned in propelling autocratization and assuring regime resilience – producing theoretical and comparative implications that reach beyond Uganda. **α**



Autocratization in Contemporary Uganda

Clientelism, Coercion and Social Control

EDITED BY MOSES KHISA




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