

FRIDAY, 22 April

9.00 - 10.20 Parallel Sessions

Postcolonial Representations of Public Transport

[Metro — La cave]

Convenors

Anna-Leena Toivanen (University of Eastern Finland)

*Sandra García-Corte**

Mordjana Haddad, University of Oum El-Bouaghi

Means of Transportation; or, Vehicles of Spatial Division, Corruption, and Crime in Lagos Noir (2018)

The study aims to shed light on the role of the means of transportation to unmask different realities about Lagos, the largest city in Nigeria, in the collection of crime short stories Lagos Noir. To this end, three main themes have been identified: First, spatial division is interestingly conveyed through the image of transportation and mobility; the rich using helicopters and chauffeurs-driven cars while the poor taking popular means of travel like the canoes and the waterways. In Jude Dibia's "What they did by Night?", robbers use the Kombi to reach Colony Estate and eventually kill a white woman. Not only does the bus reveal crime as the second theme but also highlights the corruption of the cops who facilitate its passage, though a policeman recognizes one of the criminals at the checkpoint. Corruption, the third premise, is reiterated in Chika Unigwe's "Heaven's Gate". In the story, Emeka, an owner of an okada, who drives passengers, wishing to avoid the pressure of the traffic jam in the megacity, dreams to save his family from poverty. In order to fulfill his dream, the character stretches his work hours to night; however, he is murdered in cold blood by greedy policemen to take his money. Moreover, in Pemi Aguda Berger's "Choir Boy", the danfo mini-bus implies the social status of characters and becomes the scene where a band of thieves steals the wallets of the passengers, then, rape a policewoman under their eyes. In Lagos Noir, the means of transportation do not only carry people to their destination but also vehicle certain facts about the society.

Alicia Barnes, University of Surrey

The Indian Eye on Railway Life: British Railway Space and Ethnographic Surveying, c.1860-1900

By the later decades of the nineteenth century, a genre of travel writing produced by travellers from the Indian sub-continent visiting England had emerged. This writing tended to serve as a guide to other visitors wishing to experience the imperial capital, providing an overview of what and who they might find there. This paper identifies a particular interest of the writers that was "to see the British people at home and to study them" (Mukharji, A Visit to Europe, p. 27). This desire to survey British people and culture reflects a subversion of what is now termed the "imperial gaze". Significantly, this Indian gaze on British culture is at its most visible in the texts within railway space. Stations, carriages and platforms provide the writers with a space filled with a sample of the British public available for ethnographic survey. Within the space of the railway, interactions with a range of the public are offered, allowing the Indian writers to comment on travelling practices in Britain, cultural conceptions of time, and the public masses. Their observations do not lend easily to a positive or negative perception of British culture, however. While in some cases, the writers praise the apparent politeness of the railway travelling public, in others, scathing remarks suggest the uncivilized nature of the British people. This paper will explore the moments of ethnographic

observation performed by the Indian travel writers and argue that it is the uniqueness of railway space that allows for such imperial subversion.

Zeynep Ceren Henriques Correia, Åbo Akademi University

Ferry timetables: whereabouts and whenabouts public transport emerges as public space

Literary works on Bosphorus ferries are rich in insights on public space use but reflected in a minor key in Istanbul public transport research. Taking advantage of such rich literature, this study proposes and implements a critical realist approach to the reading of a literary piece focused on Bosphorus ferries to explore how it depicts urban public transport as public space. Firstly, I suggest that a critical realist reading of such literature has the potential to generate novel insights on the emergence of public transport as public space, as it lies at the nexus of both literary and urban mediating realities. Critical realists argue that on an ontological level, a structured and differentiated ontology is needed to understand the complexity and multi-layered realities of the world. Thus, in the context of water-borne transportation, I contend that there is a need to transform the insights from disparate fields such as literature, law, atmospheric sciences or hydrology, into a deeper knowledge of the world and its complex reality which exist independently of our knowledge about them. In this regard, discursive (cultural) elements form part of all levels of social ontology, even if to a different extent. Then, to exemplify these arguments, I describe the results of a case study applying critical realism to explore public transport as public space using a collection of fictional short stories focused on Istanbul's Bosphorus ferries. The results of this work explore what radical change can literary pieces offer to our understanding of how public transport emerges as a public space.

Anna-Leena Toivanen, University of Eastern Finland

Travel by public transport in Afrodiasporic return narratives

Narratives of diasporic return are stories about migrants' returns to their former home countries after several years or even decades of life abroad. The relationship of the returnee with the places that used to be their home is marked by a spatio-temporal gap and the dilemma of un/belonging as captured in Srilata Ravi's (2014) characterisation of relatively affluent returning migrants as *tourist-natives*. Besides being heavily past-oriented on the personal level, return narratives also often convey a sense of disillusionment related to the failures of the postcolonial nation-state.

The context of the diasporic return sets its own specific frames for the narrativisation and meanings of public transport in literary texts. Portrayals of travel by public transport play an important role in return narratives because it is through mobility practices that the returnee tries to re-establish their relationship with the place of return and to be synchronised with its present tense. In this paper, I focus on portrayals of travel by public transport in a set of contemporary Afrodiasporic return narratives such as Daniel Biyaoula's *L'Impasse* (1996), Michèle Rakotoson's *Juillet au pays: Chroniques d'un retour à Madagascar* (2007), Teju Cole's *Every Day Is for the Thief* (2007), Nimrod's *L'Or des rivières* (2010), and Noo Saro Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* (2012). My reading discusses the meanings of travel by public transport as nostalgia trips and experiences of arrhythmia and public transport as a space of encounter (Wilson 2011; Koefoed et al. 2017) that produces differences and unbelonging characteristic of diasporic 'homecomings'.