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Situating the BRICS Phenomenon within the Histories and Cultures of Southern Africa

Lyn Schumaker, Andrew Brooks, Edward Pollard, Debby Potts and Mpalive-Hangson Msiska

From 7 to 11 August 2015, over a hundred international scholars met in Livingstone, Zambia to consider southern Africa's place in the world in the context of the western powers' apparent decline. Although other 'south-south' relationships were considered, the conference primarily focused on southern Africa's relationship with 'the BRICS', an economic consortium made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Last to join, South Africa is also, economically, the 'least' (though it represents a crucial 'gateway' to sub-Saharan Africa). Conference papers also elucidated broader and historically deeper south-south links and provided detailed analyses of regionally important centres. For example, topics included 'Chinese spaces' -- enclaves of economic and social development -- established or planned in places like Cyrildene and Modderfontein in the burgeoning suburbs of Johannesburg. They also included Zambia's Copperbelt, whose current cycles of prosperity and recession, and its (pre)histories of trade that assisted the growth of neighbouring polities like Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe, have influenced southern and eastern Africa and beyond to the Indian Ocean world and China.

While some of the topics reflected the Journal's aim to increase its lusophone coverage, with speakers offering papers on Brazil and its links with Angola and Mozambique, other speakers contributed to panels that emphasised the Journal's multi-disciplinary strengths. Such panels broke the mould of previous BRICS studies, which have been dominated by international relations, politics and economics. For the speakers, this required producing papers based on bodies of evidence that have not been much-explored in relation to southern Africa. The issue is divided into clusters that reflect this unusual disciplinary mix. Archaeology, literary studies, comparative urban studies and cross-cultural studies of violence appear together with political economy: the articles gathered here could only have emerged in an intellectual setting that encouraged the crossing of disciplinary boundaries.

Neither did the conference neglect the more familiar set of disciplines that examine the impact of the BRICS; it included papers on the BRICS countries' influence on agricultural development, transport infrastructure and the construction industry. And the Journal particularly sought to bring internationally recognised scholars to Zambia to interact with emerging scholars from southern Africa. This resulted in a line-up of keynote speakers that included Pádraig Carmody, Debby Potts, Vladimir Shubin, Teresa Cruz e Silva, Ching Kwan Lee, Patrick Bond and Carol Thompson. Also among the many speakers and audience members from universities in southern Africa, over a dozen early career scholars had come specifically to benefit from four days of interacting with established and up-and-coming scholars, by qualifying for a writing workshop that 'bookended' the conference. The work of two of these new authors is published in this issue.

The conference's final day featured a round table that reflected a key goal of the Journal -- to make sense of recent trends in southern African Studies and stimulate

new thinking in African Studies as a whole -- in short, to critique our own practices and pre-occupations as scholars. The Round Table took John and Jean Comaroff's much-discussed *Theory from the South* as its jumping-off point, but unlike the many workshops that have tackled the Comaroffs' argument in recent years, this group of discussants – nearly all of them scholars, at every stage of career, and public intellectuals based in southern Africa – took a different approach. They challenged each other and the audience to find ways to disrupt business as usual in the institutions that teach and fund research in African Studies, demanding a re-centring of African Studies beyond the hegemony of 'northern' institutions and interests. Chaired by David Simon, the Round Table included Trevor Ng'wane, Muna Ndulo, Blessings Chinsinga, Caesar Cheelo and Patience Mususa among others. Thus the conference concluded on a high note, as its participants departed with a critical but hopeful vision of the potential of southern African Studies to address southern Africans' concerns.

The conference began as a JSAS initiative, but its intellectual content and practical organisation depended on the teamwork of two UK-based journals – JSAS and the *Review of African Political Economy* (Roape) – and two Africa-based research institutions – the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA, Nairobi) and the Southern African Institute for Policy and Research (SAIPAR, Lusaka). The conference would not have succeeded without the ideas, support and enthusiasm of all four institutions and those particular members of each who took responsibility for its organisation. Sister journals JSAS and Roape shared in the funding, while the BIEA deserves particular thanks for sponsoring the archaeology panel that opened the conference with talks that uncovered the deep foundations of trade in the region. To a great extent, the success of the conference depended on SAIPAR, whose staff contributed to the intellectual direction, the choice of speakers and the selection of the writing workshop's participants, in addition to ensuring the smooth running of the conference during four days of scholarly discussion and interaction. That interaction was facilitated by two SAIPAR interns, both of them African students studying at Cornell and taking a summer internship at SAIPAR.

Because Zambia, the site of the conference, was the focus of China's development assistance and investment since the 1960s, it was appropriate that the first keynote speaker, Pdraig Carmody (who was conducting research in Zambia at the time) began with a talk that described the impact of the BRICS countries in the region, often using Zambia's experience as an example.¹

Carmody had the unenviable task of setting the scene, so to speak. This meant speaking in broad terms about the patterns of economic, political and social change that had occurred in southern Africa as an effect of the increased engagement of the BRICS. This task was especially challenging because when speaking to an audience of specialists (the participants of the conference), the sweeping trends and patterns

¹ Wherever possible, panel chairs at the conference contributed the descriptions of articles in this introduction: Edward Pollard for archaeology; Deborah Potts for urban studies; Mpalive Msiska for literary studies; and Andrew Brooks for the articles from the writing workshop. To capture the atmosphere of the conference, keynote speeches have retained their informal style and chairs include descriptions of some of the unpublished papers that stimulated discussion. As usual, the surnames of authors of published articles are in bold. Those of authors of unpublished papers are italicised.

often run counter to the local experiences that scholars identify in one specific place and cultural context. Nevertheless, in order to understand transformation at a regional level, his overview from the perspective of political economy is most helpful both at the conference and in the article published in this issue. Carmody stresses the central importance of China as the driver of the BRICS in southern Africa. Interestingly, his argument draws upon knowledge of that powerful nation's unique path of national development, as much as on its history of interaction with Zambia and other southern African countries.

The Archaeological Evidence for Southern African Trade and Contact

Also on the first day of the conference the introductory panel, on archaeology, provided an opportunity to discuss different global regions and commodities, and how historically they became linked together through trade across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The purpose of holding this panel at the outset was to direct the attention of the conference delegates, and their subsequent discussions, to the important point that what we today call the 'globalisation' of trade, communication and contact is not a new phenomenon. Therefore the archaeology talks described how the trading connections of southern Africa go back at least 2000 years. The extent of ancient and present trade is dependent on the level of society, the technology available for extraction of resources, the transport of resources and the connections with other groups, whether nearby or across an ocean. Unfortunately, this contact is not always beneficial: trade included the slaves taken from the 9th-century east African coast to the Middle East,² while the disease of rinderpest and the parasite known as 'jiggers' both arrived in the late-19th century, entering sub-Saharan Africa from the Russian Steppes and Brazil, respectively.³ Ultimately, historical patterns can be assessed to determine the benefits and consequences of globalisation, enabling the determination of possible trajectories of African trade.

The panel consisted of five papers, four of which are published here. Innocent **Pikirayi** set the background to global trade, beginning with a discussion of the 'Silk Route' and, especially, the 'Porcelain Route' involving China, Vietnam, India, Egypt and the eastern African coast from the 1st century AD. He remarks that, traditionally, 'world systems' models treat Africa as peripheral in global affairs, and that this position needs redressing by centralising the importance of global interactions and connectedness as triggers of changes in Africa. He concentrates on trade links between societies of the middle Limpopo valley and the southern regions of the Zimbabwe plateau with eastern Africa and Asia, between the 1st millennium and the middle of the 2nd millennium. The complex societies of Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe, from the 10th to 16th century, responded with accelerated growth to trading opportunities provided by global commerce. His regional approach to settlement studies allows a better understanding of how settlements situated in the hinterlands responded to trading opportunities by developing chiefdom-level or state societies. Thus, the hinterland successively controlled the distribution of trade goods

² M. Horton and J. Middleton, *The Swahili: The Social Landscape of a Mercantile Society* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000), pp.73-5.

³ T. Zeleza, *A Modern Economic History of Africa: Volume 1 The Nineteenth Century East African* (Nairobi, Educational Publishers Ltd., 1997), p. 50-2.

from the coast and helped in the procurement of ivory and gold for export. Furthermore, he argued that while these states witnessed growth and expansion that was propelled by trade, their demise was perhaps also triggered by changing patterns in these long-distance, regional and inter-continental trade links, particularly those involving precious commodities such as gold. Gold mining and production intensified during the 12th and 13th centuries, and some centres traded with the western Indian Ocean coastal cities including Kilwa in modern Tanzania. Apart from glass beads and Persian and Chinese ceramics, the recovery in Great Zimbabwe of a coin minted by al-Hasan ibn Sulaiman (AD 1230–33), a ruler from Kilwa, attests to the commercial links between Great Zimbabwe and the eastern African coast.

Edwin **Wilmsen** takes a further look at the links, in the 8th to 10th centuries AD, between Chibueni on Mozambique's Indian Ocean coast, and sites in Zimbabwe and Botswana, considering the basis for the different 'regimes of value' decided by traders and social peers for beads and anklets. He makes us realise that there are different exchange and consumption values of objects made of ivory, copper, iron, marine shells, glass beads and cotton cloth, diverging from their value in their place of origin all the way along the chain of trade to the point of their deposition, where they enter the archaeological record. Using more recently recorded historical sources and oral tradition, he shows that traders could only use certain types of bead of desired colours or shapes from The Gulf, India or Southeast Asia to obtain goods such as gold, ivory, wax, honey and game meat in the interior of Africa. Southern Africa's early 'customers' often proved hard to please.

In sub-Saharan Africa written records rarely exist before European or Arab contact, while some regions remain archaeologically unexplored even today, and important commodities such as cloth, spices or salt have low prospects of survival in the archaeological record: these factors reduce our ability to directly assess economic activities. However, Nicolas **Nikis** and Alexandre **Livingstone Smith** chose a commodity that can survive due to being more resistant to corrosion – copper, and the copper trade during the 2nd-millennium AD. Copper adornments and axes have been found in graves and interpreted as evidence of the rise of social hierarchies to which the growth of production and diffusion of ingots (called *croisettes*) was related. They compare the sites of the mines with the sites of the discovery of copper objects and *croisettes* in the region of present-day Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe and along trade routes to the Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts. They explain how the trade to the coast from the Kazembe and Luba heartlands in modern Zambia and the DRC was in the hands of middle groups such as the Bisa and Yao who were trading with Kilwa or the Portuguese factories of Mozambique until the 19th century. These exchange networks also reached the west coast, as in the case of the 19th-century copper ingots that travelled from Luanda to Rio in Brazil.

Trade routes have served as conduits for the exchange of ideas as well as goods across oceans and continents. Therefore, analysing different commodities such as beads and copper make it possible to understand how people were interconnected. To further complement a deeper understanding of the history of individual African-traded artefacts and networks, Ashley **Coutu** delivered a paper on the ivory trade.⁴

⁴ Some of this data presented during the conference can be found in A. Coutu, G. Whitelaw, P. le Roux, and J. Sealy, 'Earliest Evidence for the Ivory Trade in Southern Africa: Isotopic and ZooMS

She reported how ivory became an item of trade between southern and eastern Africa and Iran, India and China between 800 and 1500AD. Settlements along the Indian Ocean coastline grew rapidly during this time, which caused an increase in the export of raw materials, including ivory, from interior regions. Although archaeological excavations at Swahili trading settlements such as Kilwa have only recovered small amounts of finished ivory, significant caches and deposits of ivory along with ivory-working debris have been found in southern Africa dating from the 7th to 11th centuries AD, suggesting that these places were centres for ivory carving and production for export. Bio-archaeological techniques have been utilised to determine the species of the ivory, as well as the source regions. The results so far indicate that hippo, elephant and warthog were all used for ivory, and isotope measurements from the ivory have been mapped to reconstruct catchment areas.

Edward **Pollard** and Okeny Charles **Kinyera**'s article takes up from where many of the previous articles finish, to discuss the wider Indian Ocean influence along the east African coast. They do this by examining the imported beads, glass and pottery from their own recent investigations into shipwrecks and ports around Kilwa and Kaole in Tanzania, supplemented with a desktop study from other Swahili settlements from Kenya to Mozambique, Comoros and Madagascar. In their analysis they emphasise foreign trading patterns during the 7th to 10th century AD when trade links were developing and evidence exists of a burgeoning common Swahili material culture. They use imported and local evidence to reveal stark differences in imported artefacts and maritime activities between ports, going on to discuss entrepôts, transshipment ports, ports of call and ports of trade, as well as spheres of Persian, Arab and Austronesians influence.

The second day of the conference featured two parallel streams, one of which dealt with one of the most compelling periods in southern African history and one in which two of the BRIC countries played crucial roles – the struggle of the black majority against the white-dominated colonial and apartheid governments in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique. Relationships of aid and trade, primarily in armaments, joined together the southern African nationalist movements and South Africa's ANC in exile with China and the Soviet Union, among other 'southern' allies and sympathisers. JSAS 43.1 (February 2017) is devoted to these 'transnational connections of southern African liberation movements'. Remembering this history is necessary to grasp the extreme transformation in relations in recent years, between countries that were 'friends' in a time of conflict, but now confront each other in a post-apartheid world of market reform and globalisation.

The Role of the BRICS in Shaping Urban Southern Africa

In southern Africa, that post-apartheid world increasingly has been shaped by the rapid growth of the region's largest cities, and their importance to the quality of life of each nation's inhabitants. The three urban papers in this special issue take different approaches to the key theme of the 2015 Livingstone conference, and all provide

Analysis of Seventh–Tenth Century AD Ivory from KwaZulu-Natal', *African Archaeological Review*, 33 (2016), pp. 411-435.

fresh perspectives on regional urban issues. The focus on the influence and role of BRIC countries on urban southern Africa, or on comparisons with their urban experiences, opened up the possibilities of new types of reflections and debates. In addition, four other papers featured in the urban panel. Their contribution is also briefly considered below.

The urban papers by Deborah Potts and Madalitso Phiri published here both take a specifically comparative perspective. **Potts'** paper is based on her keynote speech. It reflects on some ways in which the ideas of comparative urbanism might be applied in the context of studying urban processes and urban residents' welfare in southern African countries in comparison to the BRIC countries. Key themes are the different ways in which the current neoliberal phase of capitalism has affected urban societies in these different countries, the different mixes of capitalism practised and the emergence of some elements of state-financed economic security systems for vulnerable urban populations in some countries, including South Africa and Brazil. Nonetheless, as **Phiri's** paper trenchantly argues via a comparison of such interventions in South Africa and Brazil, such policies are essentially palliative and can never transform the underlying conditions that perpetuate social and economic vulnerability.

The main theme of the urban papers related to the ways in which two of the BRIC countries, China and Brazil, were influencing urban developments within cities in the region. In his article Romain **Dittgen** 'reads' Johannesburg through its contemporary 'Chinese' urban spaces. These include the ubiquitous shopping malls, which are much analysed in recent urban work in southern Africa, the 'Chinatown' in Cyrildene, and the prospects for a large new urban development project at Modderfontein. These are discussed not only in terms of what they mean for Johannesburg but also their role in the social and economic livelihoods of resident Chinese entrepreneurs and workers.

At the conference a paper on 'Competing geo-economic hegemonies? Chinese versus South African influences on the growth of Zambian cities' by Gilbert **Siame** and Hangwei **Li**, showed how investment from the regional hegemon, South Africa, continues to shape Lusaka's development and compared this with the effects of large-scale Chinese investment. In broad terms South Africa's investments have been from the private sector in retail and real estate, while large Chinese investments have often been state-backed and focus on construction projects and infrastructure. Another conference paper by Jamie **Monson**, 'Turn to the East: Moving Global Goods in TAZARA's Dry Port', considered the emergence of new types of trade goods transferred by porters at Zambia's Kapiri Mposhi railway terminus on to various onward routes within Zambia. These goods well illustrate the 'beyond the West' theme, being sourced mainly from Dubai and China.

Also presented at the conference was a paper by Andrew **Brooks** entitled 'BRICS in Mozambique: Is New Economic Dynamism Delivering Urban Development?'. This was based on interview data from a range of workers and owners of small- and medium-size formal sector enterprises in Maputo. The research showed that the rapid economic growth during the commodity boom, which had lifted African economies across the region, had translated into economic opportunities that were largely perceived positively. Nonetheless, Brooks' paper, along with those of

Monson, and Siame and Li, emphasised the ambiguities of these urban economic changes. The continued precarity and informality of work and incomes for the urban majority were common themes. In general it was agreed that the nature of the changes that had occurred had not transformed the difficult urban social and economic conditions that the vast majority still face in urban spaces relatively untouched by these new developments.

These papers generated further discussion about how urban spaces were being reshaped by new sources of foreign investment. This picked up on theoretical approaches expressed in the papers, including the question of how we might think in terms of the ‘worlding’ of cities,⁵ or in terms of conceptualising cities as assemblages.⁶ Ferguson’s ideas about how capital in the contemporary capitalist era ‘hops’ rather than flows between specific (often urban) enclaves -- thus leaving the spaces between excluded -- were also much alluded to in terms of the consequences for urban populations’ welfare and increasing socio-spatial divisions.⁷

The urban papers showed also how the consequences, actual and prospective, of the external non-western shapers of urban futures in the region were shaped in turn by the regional and national contexts, as would be expected. For example, the ambitious modernistic plans for Modderfontein in Johannesburg appear to be dwindling towards a series of mainly residential schemes for the wealthy, tailored by the realities of South African urban economics. As Dittgen notes, ‘[u]ltimately the market will probably decide what direction the development takes’ which may mean the replication of residential patterns, now segregated by income, against which the post-apartheid urban vision continues to struggle.

Fritz *Nganje*’s paper on Brazil’s technical cooperation in urban planning and its impact on Mozambican cities,⁸ also found that local constraints, including financial and institutional challenges, tended to hinder the full realisation of potentially very positive planning practices in the Mozambican context. Brazil’s attempts to provide various forms of urban development advice to Mozambique via city-to-city projects were generally seen as positive in Mozambique (albeit the impact appeared limited as yet and Brazil was probably using the programmes partly as an exercise in ‘soft power’) in part because ‘traditional’ western donors still provided more material aid, which remains crucial.

Cultural Transnationalism

This conference panel aimed at exploring cultural transnationalism between BRICS countries, as well as each country’s relationship to its region, especially South Africa’s relationship to southern Africa. The focus was on literary, media and other artistic and cultural practices. Megan **Jones**’s article ‘Junk Aesthetics from South

⁵ A. Simone, ‘On the Worlding of African Cities’, *African Studies Review*, 44, 2, (2001), pp. 15-41.

⁶ C. McFarlane, ‘The city as assemblage: dwelling and urban space’, *Environment and Planning, Society and Space* (2011), pp. 649 – 671.

⁷ J. Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2006).

⁸ This article was published in *JSAS* in 2016; see F. Nganje, ‘Brazilian Cities in Mozambique: South–South Development Co-operation or the Projection of Soft Power?’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42, 4 (2016), pp. 659-74.

Africa, Brazil and India: Revaluating the Object' uses the circulation of waste between the three countries to reflect on the validity of the now fashionable object-centred theories, such as Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (ANT), in the context of the social and economic challenges facing the Southern BRICS countries. Object-centred theories regard subjects and objects as of comparable existential status and value. The author analyses representative texts from each country: from South Africa, Ivan Vladislavić's *Portrait with Keys: The City of Johannesburg Unlocked (PwK)* (2006) and Tanya Zack's and Mark Lewis's photobook *Good Riddance* (2015); and from India, Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2013), a collection of interviews with trash pickers in Mumbai; and from Brazil, Lucy Walker's documentary, *Waste Land* (2010), about Brazilian trash pickers and their collaborative work with Vik Muniz, a USA-based 'Junk artist,' as well as Vik Muniz's and L Martin's *Reflex: A Vik Muniz Primer* (2005), a retrospective of Muniz's work. While acknowledging the value of object theories in illuminating the social and political life of objects, as they mediate power relations, Jones argues that the emphasis on the life of objects diminishes the real political and social struggles over objects or things in the three countries. The article, thus, at once shows the potential of an important current cultural theory to provide new insights into the societies of the BRICS countries and equally highlights its limitations in the context of the South.

Mpalive **Msiska** focuses on Legson Kayira's novel, *Jingala* (1969) in order to examine the relationship between Malawi and South Africa. He observes that a number of critics had dismissed its importance to the main debates about culture and society in Africa, seeing it as a light satirical analysis of the clash between tradition and modernity that was also uncritically on the side of modernity, contrary to the prevailing paradigm of cultural nationalism in literature. Msiska argues that such critics had grossly underrated the novel's significance. On the contrary, it engages with one of the most prominent issues of the 1950s and '60s in southern Africa -- the effects of institutionalised migrant labour from Malawi to South Africa. Thus, the novel gives us a glimpse into migrant labour as a conduit through which a particular imaginative geography of South Africa is formed in Malawi and among Malawians. South Africa is primarily viewed as the embodiment of an economic, social and cultural modernity opposite to Malawi. This national imaginary actively mediates the conflict between traditional subjectivities and structures, on the one hand, and those of modernity, on the other. Using world-system theory and the recent literature on globalisation, Msiska argues that *Jingala* exemplifies how literature illuminates the particular workings of global capital and its impact on local cultural identities, a process in which South Africa is constructed as mediating and radiating a global capitalist modernity to the peripheries of the region. He concludes that though the forces of global modernity are on the whole presented as inexorable, there are also instances of resistance, the most dramatic being the trenchant refusal of the main character, Jingala, to acquiesce to such forces. Thus, the novel is best read as a *tragicomic* dramatisation of the effects of a particular formation of global modernity on Malawi.

Natures of Violence: Spaces of Misrule in Contemporary BRICS Literature

A panel convened by Liz Gunner employed a discussion of texts ranging from popular and political song to published literary works, to explore how verbal art interacts with and interprets violence and misrule in particular BRICS societies. Four speakers sought to open up new scholarly territory by uncovering connections between the political cultures of countries linked through their membership of the BRICS, comparing political/economic regimes through the arts of protest and activism as expressed in literature and song.

In an unpublished paper Liz *Gunner* focussed on South Africa's 'singing president', Jacob Zuma, and his choice of songs often drawn from the old repertoire of anti-apartheid activists and (the now ruling party), the African National Congress. She attempted to understand the publics at which his songs are aimed and to analyse the changing role of song in the years after the end of apartheid. She also compared the use of song in South Africa with song and performance in the protest politics of Brazil during the brutal military regime of 1964 to 1985. Meanwhile, Patience *Mususa* examined the recent use of political campaign songs in Zambia. She highlighted the moral narratives that artists as interlocutors of the body politic insert into these songs, as well as the social and political rhetoric deployed as a key entry point into the values and policy directions of the various political parties. More importantly she showed the potential of this kind of study to fill the gaps left by mainstream methods of policy analysis. Zambia, like South Africa, is a rising economic power in the region, and the ramifications of political songs -- and the new ways of doing politics that they signal -- have influenced other countries in the region. Her paper also provided a window into Zambian local understandings and popular perceptions of investor relations with BRICS nations, with many songs commenting, positively or negatively, on China's impact on the country.

Similarly, the two articles published in this issue break new ground, in each case by juxtaposing novels from two different BRICS nations to ask questions about the nature of violence, whether structural or explicit. Michael *Wessels* uses four novels about revolutionary conflicts in South Africa and India to reconsider current theories promulgated by Slavoj Žižek and Étienne Balibar, and their categories of 'objective' and 'subjective' violence. Adapting this approach to examine revolutionary violence, he finds strong commonalities as well as disjunctures between the fictional depictions of violence in the two countries, particularly in the ways in which race, class, caste and gender overlap in each novel's stories of people caught up in black South Africans' ultimately successful struggle or in India's seemingly endless Naxalite rebellion.

Meanwhile Tom *Penfold* interrogates the nature of the BRICS experience in South Africa and Brazil, to understand the impact on the well being of individuals, of a perhaps too-rapid modernisation. Membership of the BRICS, for both South Africa and Brazil, co-incided with a steep economic rise followed by sudden decline. This took place at the end of a repressive regime of 'the generals' in Brazil and the end of apartheid in South Africa. The processes of democratisation that followed have been both applauded and suffered in the two countries, as the inequalities attendant on the new economic regime denied a better life to the majority. Using two semi-autobiographical novels that narrate the experience of madness in each country, Penfold argues that despite enormous changes over the course of their histories, asylums in both countries continue to perpetrate a specific kind of violence that erases

the individuality of the mentally ill and punishes racial and social ‘others’. Penfold provides detailed histories of the treatment of insanity in Brazil and South Africa and makes a compelling case for an experience of BRICS membership that exhilarated and then disappointed, leaving each society in its own state of unhappy liminality, echoed in the symptoms of the mad.

A New Paradigm? Publications from the Livingstone Writing Workshop

The articles published here from two early career scholars based in southern Africa suggest that both authors benefitted from the Livingstone writing workshop and conference experience. It provided them with a potent combination of discussion of their work with other emerging scholars and mentorship in small two-to-one groups. Added to this was the opportunity to observe panel speakers, many of them working on related topics, during the conference.

Fernandes **Wanda**’s paper was most welcome in the writer’s workshop especially as it came from an economist who is comfortable undertaking both quantitative analysis and engaging in political discourse. His work provides an interesting perspective on economic and political transformation in Angola and used evidence that drew heavily on economic data. Importantly it helps to destabilise some myths around the BRICS: first, that their energies are concentrated overwhelmingly in the mineral sector; and second, that they have over-ridden the importance of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) emanating from the West. Cynthia **Kamwengo**’s paper similarly built upon her situated knowledge of Zambia, and it also confronted the rhetoric that surrounds the intervention of China and Brazil in southern Africa’s development. Since taking part in the writers’ workshop she has started a PhD in Human Geography at Durham University.

The issue ends with reviews of six recently published books, most of them related to the BRICS theme. The involvement of Soviet Russian troops in the Angolan War of the 1970s and ‘80s is revealed in Gennady Shubin and Andrei Tokarev’s edited volume of soldiers’ accounts of a conflict fuelled by the antagonisms of the Cold War powers. Another member of the BRICS, India is the subject of Antoinette Burton’s book *Africa in the Indian Imagination*. Burton analyses the Indian-African relationships that developed after the Bandung conference of 1955, which aimed to foster a new post-colonial African-Asian solidarity, but did not always free its Indian participants from a persistent belief in racial hierarchies denigrating to Africans. Another review considers Rachel Bright’s study of Chinese labour in South Africa in the first decade of the 20th century – long before China’s leadership of the BRICS, and at a time when Chinese workers suffered racism and violence in a ‘white man’s country’ that resisted Asian immigration. Meanwhile, Angola is the subject of Ricardo Soares de Oliveira’s *Magnificent and Beggar Land*. He paints a picture of a country sometimes seen as a rising economic power in southern Africa -- when buoyed up by a high oil price and Brazilian investment -- while at other times it is pitied as the victim of a particularly malevolent ‘resource curse’.

Stephane Robolin’s study of contacts between African-American and South African writers during the apartheid years, takes us away from the main conference

theme. Nevertheless, it echoes the theme of transnational connections that characterised many of the conference panels, and reflected in both conference special issues. A review of Pádraig Carmody's book, *The New Scramble for Africa* (now in its second edition), brings us full circle, in an issue that began with Carmody's keynote speech on the BRICS phenomenon in southern Africa.