**UWC Postgraduate Conference 2018**

The keynote addresses delivered on both days of the conference set the tone for a nourishing marriage of creative writing and literary analysis in a manner that pushes the limits of academic paper presentations. Prof Gabeba Baderoon’s keynote address weaved a fine poetic web around the word ‘Not.’ Delving deep into the rich archives of her familial experiences in apartheid South Africa, she erected a creative platform where a decision to buy nameless brands becomes a crucial entry into the past – and also a return to the present. On the second day, participants were treated to an engaging address by Prof Jane Taylor. Like Prof Baderoon, her address opened with Samuel Beckett’s play, Not I, and from the engaging view of a lonely mouth in the dark, as dramatized by Beckett, Prof Jane created a web of readings that spanned classical literature to contemporary African writing.

Postgraduate students from the Department of English Studies, Stellenbosch University, also contributed to this rich discourse between creativity, performance, and literature in their presentations. Award-winning poet, Sindiswa Busuku-Mathese, presented a paper titled “The Relationship between Speculative Fiction and Black Embodiment.” Reading from her rich trove of creative works while also providing crucial critiques of same, she led participants into the enigmatic thought processes of creative writers. Jacqueline Ojiambo’s paper titled “The Re-incarnation of the Nyawawa myth in Hawa Essuman’s Soul Boy” teleported the audience into the heart of Kibiera slum in Kenya to have an engaging encounter with the Nyawawa myth and how it has become an allegorical tool in explaining post-colonial Kenya – and Africa. From the hoofed foot of Nyawawa in Soul Boy,  Maureen Amimo drew our attention to the image of the cockroach in Leah Chishugi’s A Long Way from Paradise to tease out the fluidity of movement, and the slipperiness of being and becoming in Rwanda during the 1994 Genocide. Stephen Temitope David also captured the slipperiness of ‘Biafranness’ in his reading of selected Biafran War songs as sites for the creation, circulation, and deconstruction of Biafran identity. Chantelle Croeser “queered the archive” to call our attention to the politics of inclusion and exclusion that makes – and mars – the archives. She broadened our definition of the archive by focusing on oral storytelling to demonstrate the robust fruits of a queered archive that is not restricted to logocentric parameters. Jaco Adriaanse delighted the audience with his original work on numinous moments in literature and speculative fiction.

In all, the conference provided a space for networking among the next generation of African scholars. Beyond the intellectual nourishment the space provided, participants were also treated to sumptuous meals that helped keep body and soul together on both days. Thanks are indeed due to the organizers, the University of the Western Cape for hosting an excellent conference, and to the Department of English Studies, Stellenbosch University for supporting our trip to the venue on both days.

Stephen Temitope David