

## Kujoni: *South Africa in Malawi's National Imaginary*

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*This article recovers the literary and political value of Legson Kayira's novel, Jingala (1969), dismissed as lightweight by earlier critics. I argue instead for the seriousness of its engagement with a significant aspect of Malawian life, namely the country's historical reliance on the export of migrant labour to its mineral-rich neighbours, especially South Africa. Between 1900 and 1988, the country was the second largest supplier of contracted labour to the South African mines after Mozambique. Kayira's novel offers significant new insights into the effects of migrant labour on Malawians' consciousness of South Africa and themselves. In light of South Africa's current membership of the BRICS (the economic collaboration of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), as well as the BRICS' claim to provide an alternative to the imperial legacy of Africa's relationship with the west, a fresh look at Jingala will allow us to reconsider Malawi's relationship with South Africa, that country's historically imperialist role in the region and the legacy of 'kujoni' -- labour migration to Johannesburg, the city that represented South Africa and its opportunities. Using a broadly cultural materialist approach and Edward Said's notion of imaginative geography, as well as a world-systems theory approach nuanced by recent work in*

*globalisation theory, the article maps out the imagined geography of South Africa represented in the novel and considers how it intervened in everyday life.*

**Keywords:** Legson Kayira, Malawian literature, South Africa, imaginative geography, migrant labour, world system, masculinities.

## **Introduction**

This article examines how South Africa is imagined in Malawian literature, focussing on Legson Kayira's second novel, *Jingala* (1969), set in the colonial and early post-colonial periods.<sup>1</sup> Using rural Northern Malawi as its geographical and cultural setting, represented in the fictional village of Chimaliro, Kayira tells the story of old Jingala who, after his wife dies and in accordance with tradition, is offered a girl by the name of Liz. However, since his betrothed is still young both biologically and culturally, he cannot marry her until she reaches puberty. When his future in-laws announce the news that Liz is ready for marriage, he prepares for his wedding day with great enthusiasm and anticipation. Unfortunately for him, just before the wedding, his

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<sup>1</sup> See L. Kayira, *Jingala* (London, Longman, 1969). The novel's historical setting can be deciphered from a number of clues: Kayira left Malawi for the USA in 1958, settling in Britain from 1965 until his death in 2013. Although he returned briefly to attend Malawi's independence in 1964, he never lived in the rural area again. So, the novel must be based on his experience of 1950s Malawi. For a helpful discussion of the history of migrant labour in Malawi, see W.C. Chirwa, 'The Malawi Government and South African Labour Recruiters, 1974-92', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34, 4 (December, 1996), pp. 623-42 and J. McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966* (Suffolk, James Currey, 2012), p. 256-57.

betrotted runs away to South Africa with a newly returned migrant worker nicknamed 'Muchona' (in *ChiTumbuka* and *ChiChewa*, 'he who has lived away for a long time'), who has tempted her with an irresistibly rosy picture of South Africa. As if that were not enough, his only son, Gregory, joins the celibate Catholic priesthood, defying his father's determined efforts to stop him, which include withdrawing him from the mission school. Consequently, Jingala dies of grief.

The seemingly straightforward plot belies a deep engagement with inter-generational conflicts over cultural identity and biological, social and economic reproduction in mid-twentieth century Malawi, all of which are to a significant extent affected by Malawi's link to South Africa as a regional centre of a larger global system of capitalism and modernity. In this article I argue that the novel is principally concerned with how Malawians fashion an imaginative identification, as well as counter-identification, with South Africa as a function of the tension between, on the one hand, a global imperial capitalist modernity and its specific articulation through South Africa as its regional centre, with, on the other hand, Malawian indigenous modes of production and their related cultural practices.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the conflict between tradition and modernity in the novel has been previously explored, but in terms of the 'cultural-conflict' model which was dominant in African literary criticism from the 1960s to the 1980s. Charles Larson remarks that 'Kayira has chosen for his theme the

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<sup>2</sup> L. Mphande, 'Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Writers Group: The (un)Making of a Cultural Tradition', *Research in African Literatures*, 27, 1 (spring, 1996), pp. 80-101.

conflict of the old and the new Africa'.<sup>3</sup> However, he regards the conflict as 'rarely extend[ing] beyond [the] two main characters', suggesting that the novel has a narrow scope: this is an inadequate reading. The novel concerns broader issues, particularly Malawi's relationship with South Africa. Indeed, Adrian Roscoe acknowledges this point, but by asserting that Kayira dismisses tradition 'with both a shrug and a smile,' he equally diminishes the novel's wider cultural and political significance.<sup>4</sup>

Although Roscoe is right in highlighting the importance of satire, the novel is perhaps better described as a form of *tragi-comedy* in which laughter commingles with sadness, rather than as a wholesale satirical narrative. Kayira employs satire to demonstrate the extent to which, from the perspective of the inexorable logic of Western modernity and capitalism, Jingala's and his fellow-villagers' resistance is doomed to failure. Even so, the villagers' mode of resistance is more nuanced than a direct counter-hegemonic attack: their opposition is to an overzealous embrace of modernity like that portrayed in Wole Soyinka's play, *The Lion and the Jewel*.<sup>5</sup> The forces that undermine Jingala's world derive from the way that capital and Western modernity have transformed the consciousness of the villagers, engendering a *transnational imaginary* that dislocates them from their immediate environment, in

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<sup>3</sup> C. Larson, 'Malawi', *Books Abroad*, 44, 2 (spring, 1970), p. 360.

<sup>4</sup> A. Roscoe, *Uhuru's Fire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 218.

<sup>5</sup> W. Soyinka, *The Lion and the Jewel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

which, to paraphrase the title of a Chinua Achebe novel, they no longer feel at ease with themselves.<sup>6</sup>

South Africa in *Jingala* is part of the *transnational imaginary* that ‘deterritorialises’, to use Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s formulation, the Malawian subject’s relationship to its primary habitat, and reterritorialises it as the subject of a regional economic, political and cultural economy.<sup>7</sup> This structure of domination and alienation and its concomitant resistance suggests that, as South Africa enters the BRICS-phase, we need to be wary of unwittingly reproducing centre-periphery relations inherited from the region’s colonial past. That enjoins us to reflect on the complexity of capital in Southern Africa and to question models of the world-system that over-universalise it, without paying particular attention to how it is modified and challenged *within* the periphery. ‘World-systems theory’ was advanced principally by Immanuel Wallerstein. He argued that since the 1450s a world economic system has emerged, unifying the different cultural and geographical spaces of the world into a single economic formation under capitalism. Characterised by an international division of labour, the system includes ‘core-countries’, primarily Western, that specialise in capital-intensive production, while the ‘periphery’ provides labour and resources.<sup>8</sup> Although lacking an appreciation of local agency (see below), his conceptual structure

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<sup>6</sup> C. Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* (London: Heinemann, 1960).

<sup>7</sup> G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. B. Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1983); A. Kalitera, *Why Father, Why* (Blantyre, Malawi: Power Books, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

of economic hegemony and subordination is invaluable for examining the brutality of the relationship between South Africa and Malawi, especially in the period of the novel, *Jingala*, is set, when Malawi was a major source of labour for South Africa's agriculture, mining and industry. Indeed, *Jingala* both depicts and contests this aspect of the Malawi--South Africa relationship. However, by assuming that capital homogenises and totalises the periphery, as Stuart Hall argues, world-systems theory and similar globalisation theories repress and, sometimes, erase spaces of local agency, autonomy and self-determination.<sup>9</sup> More recent studies of ancient world-systems in general, and in particular those of pre-colonial Southern Africa (see Pikirayi's article in this issue), argue against the exclusive association of the world-system with the rise of capitalism while ignoring earlier historical forms of globalisation.<sup>10</sup> So, while grounded in world-systems theory, this essay illustrates the limitations of that approach, demonstrating how Malawi is not only a site for the elaboration of the system, but also for local resistance by those subjected to it. Through their discourses and practices, they contest the role of South Africa as a semi-periphery of the system. I will use the notion of *imagined geographies* as a powerful way of reading such resistance.

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<sup>9</sup> S. Hall, 'The Local and the Global', in Anthony D. King (ed.) *Culture, Globalization and the World System* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 19 – 40.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; G. J. Stein, *Rethinking World-Systems: Diasporas, Colonies and Interaction in Uruk Mesopotamia* (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1999); J. Stein, 'From Passive Periphery to Active Agents: Emerging Perspectives in the Archaeology of Interregional Interaction', *American Anthropologist New Series*, 104, 3 (1999), 903-16 and D. Chanaiwa, 'Politics and Long-distance Trade in the Mwene Mutapa Empire during the Sixteenth Century', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5, 3 (1972), pp. 424-35.

Although initially employed to define the west's hegemonic representation of the Orient, Edward Said's notion of 'imagined geographies' can be adapted to make sense of the imagining of South Africa in Malawian cultural representations.<sup>11</sup> Jo Sharp, for example, has demonstrated how to apply the concept to post-colonial societies.<sup>12</sup> We must, therefore, regard the idea of 'imagined geography' as having a universal application, as a way of understanding how distant spaces and territories are visualised and/or recorded, and become shared images within a given society. Like Said, we must underline the link between such imagining of other spaces with the question of power. In the case of Malawi's representation of South Africa, this question involves reimagining a dominant and powerful space and formation in national and local terms in ways that, in some instances, affirm or contest that dominance, and in others, form a dialectic of simultaneous identification and counter-identification.

### **The Malawian Presence in South Africa and the South African Presence in the Malawian Imaginary**

South Africa has been present in the consciousness of Malawians since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially through South African missionary work and more so through

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<sup>11</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 54-55.

<sup>12</sup> J. Sharp, *Geographies of Postcolonialism* (London: Sage, 2009).

intensified migrant labour from about 1900 to 1988.<sup>13</sup> During this period, Malawi contributed the second largest amount of contracted labour to the South African mines, after Mozambique.<sup>14</sup> Returning miners were usually better off, at least in the first few months after their arrival, than the people they had left at home, which raised their status in the community. *Jingala* explores, among other things, the social and economic relationship between the returning workers and those who remained at home. Additionally, the returnees' altered status and their stories produced certain perceptions about South Africa--what we might define, after Said, as an *imaginative geography*.<sup>15</sup> Print and broadcast media also disseminated information about South Africa that fed into this picture.

*Jingala* explores the structure of feeling produced by this *imaginative geography*. Literary concern with South Africa is evident in some of the earliest written literature. Samuel Ntara's pioneering *ChiChewa* novel, *Mbiri Ya Nthondo* (1933) presents South Africa as corrupting the morality of Malawians.<sup>16</sup> This representation is taken up again in Aubrey Kalitera's *Why Father, Why?* (1986), a novel published long after Kayira's, in which South Africa is similarly portrayed as destructive of the Malawian traditional family. Concerned with the effects of South Africa on the moral welfare of migrants, Kalitera's and Ntara's texts resemble the 18<sup>th</sup> century *conduct books*

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<sup>13</sup> J.T. Thompson, *Touching the Heart* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> L.M. Sachikoye (ed.), *Labour Markets and Migration Policy in Southern Africa*, Harare: SAPES, Harare, 1998), p. iii.

<sup>15</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>16</sup> It was translated into English by T. C. Young as *Man of Africa*, (London: Religious Tract Society, 1934).



produced in the shadow of the massive social and cultural change of the Industrial Revolution. These Malawian texts betray the same apprehension about the welfare of youth in the face of rapid social change driven by overwhelming economic forces. Kayira's *Jingala* is similarly concerned, but, significantly, rather than adopting a straightforward traditional or Christian moral position, it spectacularly allows urban vice to triumph over traditional morality. This does not mean that the novel privileges modernity over tradition, as Roscoe suggests, but rather that the overall balance of forces is in favour of capitalist modernity rather than tradition. As will be demonstrated later, Kayira's novel refrains from moral propaganda and is instead concerned with the historical and geographical conditions that make so-called vice a more potent force than traditional culture in the formation of consciousness, including personal and social identity as well as social relations in Malawi.

Malawian poetry, too, has engaged with the question of South Africa. Writers such as Jack Mapanje, Frank Chipasula, Felix Mnthali and Lupenga Mphande, among others, who emerged in the 1970s through the University of Malawi Writers' Group, equally address the issue, but notably in a radically different manner from Kayira and the writers mentioned earlier. Here, the primary focus is not on the Malawian immigrant workers per se, but rather on Pan-African solidarity with Black South Africans as victims of apartheid. Indeed, David Kerr and Landeg White have decried

the absence of migrant labour in the Writers' Group's work.<sup>17</sup> Although Kerr and White's criticism refers to the early effort of the writers rather their mature work of the late 1970s and 1980s, surprisingly, what they say to some extent applies to the later writing as well. That is certainly true even in a poem that touches on Malawian migrant labour directly, such as Frank Chipasula's 'The Flood of 1970', in his anthology, *Whispers in the Wings* (1991), which clearly mourns the death of 74 Malawian workers killed in a WENELA plane crash on their way back from South Africa.<sup>18</sup> Chipasula presents the incident as a product of the different, but combined oppressive regimes of Malawi's President Hastings Banda and South Africa's Prime Minister John Vorster, depicting it as a product of the general regional conditions of colonial, racial and, with regard to Malawi, post-colonial oppression that intensified in 1970s southern Africa. In this context, one must perhaps speak not of a singular *imaginative geography* of South Africa in Malawi, but possibly of several, with the difference being determined by the particular historical determinants of each individual subject's or group's consciousness. Ntara, Kayira and Kalitera view migrant labour and its effects on Malawians as of paramount concern, rather than the racial politics of South Africa under apartheid. However, for the university-based writers, largely influenced by the exceptional 1960s and 1970s curricular focus on African history, literature and politics, including southern

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<sup>17</sup> D. Kerr and L. White, 'New Writing from Malawi,' Chancellor College, Blantyre, 1972.

<sup>18</sup> F. M. Chipasula, *Whispers in the Wings* (London: Heinemann, 1991). For some details of the incident, see, 'Does Education alter Marriage and Childbearing Timing?' *GLMLIC Newsletter*, IZA Institute of Labour Economics, October 2015). Available at <http://glmlic.iza.org/file/view/events/GLMLICNewsletterOctober2015.pdf>. Retrieved on 3 January, 2017.

Africa, the national and racialised politics of South Africa dominates their understanding and representation of that country.<sup>19</sup>

Significantly, the Malawian *imaginative geography* of South Africa appears not only in written literature, but also in orature and song.<sup>20</sup> The *ChiChewa* folktale *Sikusinja ndi Gwenembe*, collected and published by G.W. Gwengwe (1965) and still taught in Malawian schools today, represents a creative interpretation of the modern phenomenon of migrant labour in a traditional narrative form. The folktale has also been dramatised in a short feature film, *Mbalame*, directed by David Kerr and featuring Tony Kandiero (1972), with little deviation from its traditional structure. Like Ntara's novel, the folktale serves as a moral fable showing how South Africa undermines the traditional, socially sanctioned value of sibling cooperation and replaces it with deadly rivalry. However, unlike Ntara's text, which was written in the context of Christian literary promotion, *Sikusinja ndi Gwenembe* does not entirely condemn migrant labour, but allows for the possibility of some good coming out of it if one avoids the temptations of the big city. Similarly, a non-moralising approach provides the main thrust of *Jingala*. It may be the first secular novel about migrant labour in Malawi, as it moves away from the earlier traditional as well as Christian view of migrant labour, especially to South Africa, as being necessarily morally damaging to Malawians.

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<sup>19</sup> This point is provisional and deserves research.

<sup>20</sup> For a good discussion of song in relation to migrant labour, see L. Mphande, 'Representation of Trauma: Past and Present', in T. Banda and J. Kumwenda (eds), *Reading Malawian Literature* (Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013), pp. 11-14.

However broadly present South Africa is in Malawian consciousness and cultural forms, here I particularly want to focus on how South Africa is imagined in Legson Kayira's *Jingala*, in order to establish the image of South Africa that emerges from the text and examine how it determines the depiction of social and economic relations in Malawi in the novel. Overall, this article seeks to understand what has changed in the way we might look at a novel like *Jingala*, given new approaches such as *imaginative geography* and our now deeper understanding of the complexity of centre-periphery relationships in light of Stuart Hall's and Stein's rethinking of world-systems and globalisation theories. It will also consider the response of Malawians to the BRICS countries and their promise to avoid the imperialism of the old relationship between Africa and the West.<sup>21</sup>

### **Regional Power, the Local Imaginary and the World-System**

I consider the *imaginative geography* of South Africa presented in *Jingala* as an articulation of a *transnational imagination* principally engendered by, among others, the workings of regional capital in Southern Africa. In doing so, I am touching on the

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<sup>21</sup> Please note that my focus here is not on the Malawian diaspora in Southern Africa as a whole - which is huge and diverse, covering South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia -- but rather on the *imaginative geography* of South Africa among Malawians in Malawi as captured by Kayira's novel. I am aware of the important recent work on the Malawian diaspora, especially in Zimbabwe, such as Z. Groves, 'Urban Migrants and Religious Networks: Malawians in Colonial Salisbury, 1920 to 1970,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38, 3, 2012. For Hall, see 'The Local and the Global,' pp. 19-40; and for Stein, see *World-Systems*, 1999 and his 'From Passive Periphery to Active Agents,' pp. 903-16.

relationship between literature and the economy, which has been a subject of debate in literary criticism. The question has often been stated, ‘Is literature merely a reflection of the capitalist mode of production and its attendant social relations of production, or is it an autonomous cultural practice that is best approached from its aesthetic angle?’ Two main critical approaches dominated critical practice in Anglophone Africa from the 1930s up to the 1980s: the Leavisite approach and New Criticism. As the Nigerian critic Abiola Irele notes: ‘In my undergraduate days in the late 1950s, we studied literature at Ibadan within ... the doctrinal positions defined by the Practical Criticism of the Cambridge scholars, L.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis extended in its canons and procedures by their North American counterparts of the so-called New Criticism’.<sup>22</sup>

Irele further laments the fact that the approach he learned was still dominant in English departments in Nigeria in the 1980s. There is little to suggest that English departments in Southern Africa differed from those in Nigeria then. In general, most scholars of literature in Anglophone Africa were trained in critical practices established and legitimated in Britain and the USA. Of course, other approaches existed, such as Marxism - represented, for instance, by Georg Gugelberg’s, *Marxism and African literature* (1986) and, in Southern Africa, by Emmanuel Ngaru’s *Art and Ideology in the African Novel* (1985). However, Raymond Williams, saw much more in the prevalent dominance of the Leavisite and related approaches than their institutionally

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<sup>22</sup> A. Irele, ‘Literary Criticism in the Nigerian Context’, In Y. Ugunbiyi (ed.), *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature, 1700 to the Present*, Vol. 1, (Lagos: Guardian, 1988), p. 94.

privileged status.<sup>23</sup> He argues that their status resulted from their ability to interpret texts in a more plausible and fulsome manner than the conventional Marxist approaches which mostly examined literature as an index of the political and economic ideology, without giving ample consideration to the complexity of literary textuality.<sup>24</sup> That has certainly been evident in African literary criticism, for example, in Ngara's and Gugelberg's work.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Marxist literary studies have become more effective, especially from the late 1980s onwards under the influence of post-structuralism and post-Marxism. In terms of Southern Africa, a notable early example is Jean-Phillippe Wade's study of Peter Abraham, one of the major South African writers.<sup>26</sup> He explores the terrain that Williams and others had in mind when they proposed cultural materialism as the critical practice best suited to responding to the literariness of literature, as well as its structures and conditions of ideological production. For, as Njabulo Ndebele puts it, in a different context: 'Art is an autonomous entity which, at the same time, appears to derive its objective validity from and within society'.<sup>27</sup> The challenge then is one of conceptualising literature in a way that includes both its

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<sup>23</sup> R. Williams, *Culture and Materialism* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 17 – 22.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> G. Hunts, 'Two African Aesthetics: Soyinka vs. Amilcar Cabral', in G. M. Gugelberg, *Marxism and African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), pp. 64 – 93 and Emmanuel Ngara, *Art and Ideology in the African Novel: A Study of the Influence of Marxism on African Writing* (London: James Currey, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> J.-P. Wade, "'Song of the City" and "Mine Boy": The "Marxist" Novels of Peter Abrahams', *Research in African Literatures*, 21, No. 3 (autumn, 1990), pp. 89-101.

<sup>27</sup> N. Ndebele, *South African Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 37.

autonomy and its connection to the social, economic and political without reducing that tension to either category. Cultural materialism provides such a model, as the relationship between the literary text and the world is seen as dialectical and mutually defining.<sup>28</sup> This approach informs my analysis of the representation of South Africa in Kayira's *Jingala*.

I will also use the 'World Literature' approach represented by Neil Lazarus's recent work.<sup>29</sup> The concept of 'World Literature' has been around in different guises since the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the German writer, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, argued that the future of literature lay in moving away from the idea of national literature and towards that of *weltliteratur* (world literature) that included not only European literatures, but non-European literatures, as well.<sup>30</sup> This view of World Literature led to the founding of the discipline of Comparative Literature in the post-war period, particularly in the USA and Canada, and programmes which often taught courses in world masterpieces, though the world had been reduced to Europe. However, since then, the concept of 'World Literature' has been broadened to encompass most parts of the globe. However, when used this way, the term becomes a matter of the

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<sup>28</sup> Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> N. Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> J.P. Eckermann, *J.W. Goethe: Conversations with Eckermann*, trans. J. Oxenford (New Francisco: North Point Press, 1984, orig. 1835).

geographical coverage of texts rather than of what critical approaches should be employed.

Another use of the concept, however, takes up the question of what critical approaches should be applied to such texts. Indeed, the very term ‘world’ is itself questioned -- for instance, it does not refer to the planet, as such, but rather to the network of states and other formations which have come under the hegemony of western global capitalism.<sup>31</sup> ‘World Literature’, thus, also draws upon Marx’s and Engel’s adaptation of Goethe’s concept to the materialist critique of capital, especially in *The Communist Manifesto* where they employ it to describe the cosmopolitan and transnational character of bourgeois cultural production: for them, in a developed bourgeois society in contrast to earlier formations, ‘national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature’.<sup>32</sup> This strand combined with Wallerstein’s ‘World-Systems theory’ underpins most of the new work on world literature, such as Franco Moretti’s, Pascale Casanova’s and Neil Lazarus’s.<sup>33</sup> That approach has radically changed the discipline, now comprising literatures from the rest

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<sup>31</sup> T.D. Hall, P. N. Kardulias and C. Chase-Dunn, *World-Systems Analysis and Archaeology: Continuing the Dialogue*, *Journal of Archaeological Research*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (September 2011), pp. 236.

<sup>32</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. S. Moore with F. Engels (Project Gutenberg: 2005, orig. 1888), p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> For Moretti, see ‘Conjectures on World Literature’, *New Left Review*, 1 (2000), pp. 54–68; for Casanova, see *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoisen (Harvard U.P., 2004).



of the globe and conceptualising them as shaped by a world-system dominated by western capital.<sup>34</sup>

From the perspective of world-systems theory, the relationship between core and periphery can also be mediated by a semi-periphery; this is particularly relevant to my consideration of the link between Malawi and South Africa. The semi-periphery is defined as a unit of the world-system that dominates the periphery by extracting its labour and resources, while it is itself subjected to a similar hegemony by the core. I will argue that in *Jingala*, South Africa acts as a semi-periphery in relation to Malawi, despite a direct connection between each country and Britain as the colonial metropole. This suggests a more complex relationship between the core, the periphery and the semi-periphery than conventionally presented in world-systems theory. And this also raises the question of how South Africa's BRICS membership, a project designed to contest western historical and contemporary dominance within globalisation, might help the country to disentangle itself from its regional core-country relationship to peripheries such as Malawi and others. This is, however, an ideal outcome of BRICS membership. Criticisms directed at the BRICS consortium often accuse it or its constituent nations such as China, of having established a new imperialism in Southern Africa.

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<sup>34</sup> I. Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004).

Nevertheless, the world-systems approach is too totalising to account for the polymorphic universe of the Malawian situation, specifically as presented in *Jingala*. Perhaps Alain Badiou's notion of the world as singular but simultaneously detotalised and heterogeneous better describes the Southern African regional formation depicted in the novel.<sup>35</sup> It allows for the autonomy of the local within the world-system, as well as what he terms their 'co-appearance' at certain moments. Badiou's conception of the world as *worlds-within-the world* enhances my reading of the co-presence of colonial Britain and the South African semi-periphery in the Malawian *imaginative geography* of South Africa in *Jingala*. It can unveil both the structure of power of the world-system proposed by Wallerstein, but also other indices or configurations of power, such as the outright contestation of the core-periphery structures of global capital and even their mitigation through their co-appearance or co-presence with alternative and local structures and forms of agency. These, for instance in *Jingala*, take the form of the regulating power of indigenous authority – the Chief and the elders and their critique of western modernity and globalisation. Thus this article uses *imaginative geography* to reassert the agency of the local, which the world-systems approach fails to address.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> A. Badiou, *Logics of the World*, trans. A. Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Hall, 'The Local and the Global,' 1991, pp. 19-40 and Stein, 'Passive Periphery to Active Agents,' 1999, pp. 903-16.

### **South Africa as Johannesburg: *Kujoni***

South Africa appears in a number of diverse ways in Malawian literature and daily discourse, but the most striking is the metonymic reduction of the country to the city of Johannesburg. In most of Malawi's main languages, South Africa is referred to as *Kujoni* (Johannesburg). Similarly, in *Jingala*, Muchona does not possess an awareness of South Africa outside Johannesburg. In wooing Liz, Jingala's betrothed, Muchona offers a picture of South Africa based on Johannesburg, which in its affluence becomes a place of refuge from the hardships of Malawian rural life. Nothing suggests that South Africa has villages. The absence of the rural in Muchona's stories reflects Malawian experience: except for those few who worked on farms, Malawian migrants lived and worked in the mine locations and compounds in and near the city, which limited their sense of South Africa as a country. Moreover, for reasons of prestige, if they had in fact worked on farms, they would not have admitted it, as this may have cancelled out the dramatic contrast between Malawian and South African life on which the social value of industrial labour was predicated. Thus, in this imaginative rendering of South Africa, urban production and consumption have become indices of the entire country, marking the economic difference between Malawi and South Africa -- the difference between a periphery and a regional core country.

This economic difference was also valorised when labour recruiters promoted the city of Johannesburg to a labour-exporting country like Malawi. Johannesburg not only came to connote South Africa, but also retained its denotative sign as a city: thus,

as a city, it serves as the means of diminishing the concept of national territory, minimising not only Malawi, but South Africa as well. It is interesting that Jacob Zuma's derogatory statement that Johannesburg is more developed than Malawi operates with a similar logic to that of Muchona.<sup>37</sup> He may not have realised how much he has in common with Malawians in their projection of Johannesburg as the symbol of South Africa. This follows from Njabulo Ndebele's characterisation of the predominant South African attitude to the rural or 'peasant' culture during apartheid.<sup>38</sup> He argues that excision of the rural from the South African national imaginary, especially during apartheid, was amply evident in the literature of the period as well as other public cultural discourses.<sup>39</sup> The most important reason was the political view of the urban dweller as the motor of the radical transformation of society.<sup>40</sup> Thus the miniaturisation of South Africa to the city of Johannesburg may be as much an aspect of the Malawian *imaginative geography* of South Africa as it is of South Africans themselves. That commonality bespeaks the profound ways in which their collective imagination has been deeply marked by the cartography of capital in southern Africa as a whole, in which the centres of production and their attendant social relations become representative of national and regional identities.

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<sup>37</sup> Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24655240> Accessed 7 July 2013.

<sup>38</sup> I am aware that much as the term 'peasant' is a useful classificatory term, it can also have derogatory connotations. I will replace the term in the essay with 'tradition', traditional or rural, wherever possible.

<sup>39</sup> N. Ndebele, *South African Literature*, 1994, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

This deterritorialisation of national formation also serves to represent South Africa as part of Malawi and vice-versa. So, in *Jingala*, the migrant workers play down concepts of national identity and emphasise sites of production as the basis of the *trans-territorial formation* of the region, in which South Africa is coterminous with Malawi but is also seen as primarily a place of greater capitalist production and consumption – a veritable embodiment of the modernity Malawi lacks and to which it aspires. Interestingly, the major xenophobic attacks of 2008 and 2015 on Malawians and other nationals from the region, and the South African government’s authoritarian treatment of immigrants, are not foreshadowed in *Jingala*, which provides no sense of the barriers to workers’ movement, despite those that existed even in the colonial and early post-colonial periods.<sup>41</sup> In this respect, the novel highlights how regional migration fosters a sense of regional identity, an *imaginative geography* that can also be at odds with the reality of the political geography of the region and of the regulation of labour flows into South Africa.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> By all accounts, the desire for Malawian labour appears to have been insatiable, as it rose from about 7,828 in 1951 to almost 229,000 in 1966 (the latter figure includes non-miners and immigrants to Zimbabwe as well). See McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, pp. 256-258. On recent xenophobic attacks on migrants, see Lucy Mkandawire, ‘One Malawian Claimed Dead’, <http://mwnation.com/one-malawian-claimed-dead-in-south-africa/> Retrieved on 2 June, 2017; for the changing official attitudes towards immigration, see N. Trimikliniotis, S. Gordon and B. Zondo, ‘Globalisation and Migrant Labour in a ‘Rainbow Nation’: A Fortress South Africa?’, *Third World Quarterly*, 29, 7 (2008), pp. 1323-1339.

<sup>42</sup> It is worth noting that the importation of Malawian labour by South African mines continued throughout the Apartheid era and only stopped briefly in 1974 after the plane crash that killed all the returning workers on board and ceased completely in 1988. For details and controversy surrounding the issue, see W.C. Chirwa, ‘No TEBA...Forget TEBA’, ‘The Plight of Malawian Ex-migrant Workers to South Africa, 1988-1994’, *International Migration Review*, 31, 3 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 628-654.

The novel also compels us to rethink Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation as an *imagined community*.<sup>43</sup> It suggests that transnational formations, such as regions, can also become *imagined communities* and thus a single geographical entity, to which individuals see themselves as belonging as they follow paths created by and thus in some respects 'owned' by those who cross territorial boundaries.<sup>44</sup> In this context, the BRICS formation can be viewed as another *imagined community*, ostensibly based on the need to establish a new world order. This new community claims to reduce dependency on the West, while it contests the historical western domination of the world-system by creating south-to-south institutions that constitute an alternative to those created by western powers, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.<sup>45</sup> However, despite the radical rhetoric, akin to that of decolonisation, the BRICS countries do not fundamentally challenge the notion of the world-system, but seek to recast power within it. This moves, perhaps, towards a Chinese and Russian hegemony that inadvertently resuscitates the Cold War global cartography of power, but in the form of a proposed new neoliberal capitalist formation against an old one based on western domination of the world.

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<sup>43</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> <http://thebricspost.com/china-brazil-strategic-partnership-demystifying-the-relationship/> Retrieved 7

July 2017.

Nevertheless, South Africa's policies towards migrant labour from Malawi and the region as a whole since the country joined the BRICS in 2010, have not changed in any fundamental way, nor has there been any noticeable change in the semi-periphery-periphery structure of South Africa's relations with her neighbours, rooted in the colonial history of the region.

As the novel demonstrates, this space of regional identity also engenders new forms of symbolisation and communication. The Malawian miners speak a regional miners' 'pidgin' language, known as *Chifanakalo*, which, new research shows, may have been used more widely in southern Africa than hitherto realised. Its chief use is as a regional working-class marker of identity.<sup>46</sup> The narrator of *Jingala* tells us: 'The two miners talked at length between themselves in the strange and incomprehensible language they had learned in South Africa'.<sup>47</sup> The narrator, who, in this instance, assumes the voice and ethical perspective of the novel's mission-educated character, Gregory, derides and satirises the language of the miners, since for him it smacks of both deracination and lack of cultivation in all things western. He also sees the miners as pompous buffoons whose exhibitionism and general manner offend both western and traditional Malawian culture.

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<sup>46</sup> R. Adendorff, 'Fanakalo – A Pidgin in South Africa', in R. Mesthrie, *Language in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 179-196. In Zimbabwe and Zambia, it is sometimes called 'Chilapalapa'.

<sup>47</sup> *Jingala*, pp. 62-63.

Even so, the novel acknowledges that however others see them, the miners themselves feel a real achievement in speaking a foreign language, for it emphasises their location in a cosmopolitan regional and *transnational linguistic community*. Moreover, the fact that *Chifanakalo* is largely based on Zulu, for some Malawians, especially those from Nguni-speaking areas such as Ncheu and Mzimba, it affirms a much older trans-territorial Nguni identity -- a pre-colonial, pre-capitalist and *pre-mfecane* regional identity that cuts across modern national boundaries and states imposed by the European colonial empires.<sup>48</sup> That suggests that such seemingly new forms of cosmopolitanism that are fostered by regional capitalism may be underpinned by pre-colonial cosmopolitanisms rooted in the region's past migrations.<sup>49</sup>

### **Rural Subjects as Subjects of Capitalist Modernity**

*Jingala* reveals how the consciousness of the rural subject is transformed into that of a modern subject of capital, alienated from his roots and beginning to imagine himself or herself in terms of the new social relations of production. In this sense, we might evoke Louis Althusser's notion of 'interpellation' and define these new subjects as being

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<sup>48</sup> P. Kishindo, "'Flogging a Dead Cow?' The Revival of Malawian Chingoni', *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 11, No. 2, 2002, pp. 206-223.

<sup>49</sup> This is supported by the new critique of World-Systems theory which highlights the need to regard formations such as those of cosmopolitanism and globalisation as trans-temporal and as not only confined to the contemporary but also elaborated and practised in the past and, even, the ancient world: see Stein 'From Passive Periphery to Active Agents, 1999, pp. 903-16.



‘hailed’ or conditioned by the sovereignty of capital.<sup>50</sup> In this way, the miners’ new *imaginative geography* aligns with the dominant narrative and temporality of capital rather than that of the indigenous mode of production.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, in the context of the capitalist order, the indigenous mode of production is re-signified as non-production. Jingala’s and his fellow villagers’ agricultural work and animal husbandry are revalorised as non-labour, because their products fall outside the value system of capital and therefore beyond its circuit of production and distribution. Thus the category of the economic is coterminous with capital and all activities that are not within this system are virtually non-economic. For Chinyamata Chipeta, this narrow view of economics marginalises the economic value of many indigenous activities and forms of labour and exchange as well as accumulation.<sup>52</sup> Thus, migrant labour is the means by which the Malawian rural subject becomes an economic subject of the world-system through linkage to South

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<sup>50</sup> Simply, by ‘interpellation,’ Althusser describes the way in which through ideology, as opposed to force, the state transforms the individual into a subject of a particular national ideology. For an extended discussion of this concept, see L. Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’, in L. Althusser, *Lenin, Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971).

<sup>51</sup> *Provincialising Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 63-64.

<sup>52</sup> C. Chipeta, ‘The Money of Malawi in Historical Perspective’, *African Economic History Review*, 2, 2 (autumn 1975), pp. 10-15. Chipeta’s view of the tension between indigenous concepts of labour is shared by more recent studies, for example, A. Kaler, ‘When They See Money, They Think it's Life': Money, Modernity and Morality in Two Sites in Rural Malawi’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2 (June 2006), pp. 335-349.

Africa as the semi-periphery of global capital, transforming the traditional forms of subjectivity and their social relations of production.

However, the capitalist system is not the only economic system or practice presented in the novel, or the world. The indigenous system is the dominant system in Chimaliro village, though increasingly overwhelmed by the world-system. The novel illustrates the exchange value of goods within the indigenous system -- for instance, the villagers pay their taxes in kind rather than cash. Here the value of labour and, indeed, of commodities is tied to their social, not their exchange value, even though certain commodities such as grain can also function as the means of exchange. Thus, if South Africa represents capital, Malawi represents not just pre-capitalist modes of production, but also *counter-capital*, a system that works actively to thwart the power of capital.<sup>53</sup> In this respect, *Jingala* can be read as illuminating how the need for cash, primarily coerced by the taxation system and initially in the form of the hut tax, pushed and continues to push Malawians into the world capitalist system within which their livestock and traditional crops no longer count as wealth. However, villagers also attempt to subvert the system by translating its forms of exchange into the indigenous economic discourse, for instance, when Jingala, as government tax collector, receives tax in the form of commodities rather than cash. Thus, the image of South Africa in

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<sup>53</sup> Chipeta, *Money and Credit*, (Zomba: Imbuli, 2011).

Malawi is a function of a fundamental conflict that is not only cultural, but also, more profoundly, economic, as returning miners bring cash into the village economy.

Thus Deleuze and Guattari are right in describing this movement of rural populations, from city to village, as jumping from ‘one circle to another, or from one sign to another on a different spiral’.<sup>54</sup> Malawian workers indeed do so, particularly when they work on the usual short-term contracts that demand frequent relocation between the two modes of production, making their habitation of the world-system intermittent and precarious. They become quintessentially transient subjects of the two overlapping, but distinctive, historical and cultural temporalities.<sup>55</sup> Even so, the returnees seem more comfortable to return to the regime of capital than to the indigenous economic mode. They may, thus, have begun the process of ‘depeasantisation’, moving toward ‘proletarianisation’ as wage-labourers within the regional semi-periphery, with the possibility, certainly in the case of Muchona, of opting out of rural life altogether and joining the Malawian diaspora. Nevertheless, in the novel, their status remains indeterminate, within a hybrid class of perpetually *peasant-proletarians* until circumstances force them to jump off the conveyor belt and settle in either the rural or urban space. Recent research shows that the patterns of rural to urban migration in Malawi and Southern African as whole are more complex than

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<sup>54</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004).

<sup>55</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe*, 2000, pp. 63-64.

this picture, but Kayira evokes a 1950s world in which the options for Malawians are limited to the two choices.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, the process of ‘depeasantisation and proletarianisation’ represented in the novel produces new forms of masculinities that undermine traditional ones. The conflict between traditional and modern masculinities is staged dramatically between Muchona and old Jingala, in their rivalry for Liz, betrothed to the latter in accordance with tradition. Jingala loses because Muchona breaks with tradition and elopes with Liz, presumably to *Kujoni* as he promised. As for Jingala, he dies of grief. The novel seems to suggest that he is a victim of an unscrupulous modernity. Muchona’s South African experience has given him the capacity to counter-identify with traditional beliefs. He regards the traditional arrangement as utterly unacceptable. Muchona rhetorically estranges himself from life in the village, even as he empathises with the women’s lot.

However, the status of a mine worker’s wife, which Muchona offers Liz, is more imagined than real. He tells her:

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<sup>56</sup> See J. Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999) and D. Potts (ed.), *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 2010).

‘You will hand over all your feminine chores to the servants ... Every morning, you will give orders to the cook and the house boy who ... will address you as dona because that is what you will be’.<sup>57</sup>

Muchona offers Liz a status like that of a South African mine-boss’s wife, thus indirectly acknowledging the inadequacy of a Malawian miner’s status in fulfilling his longing for the masculine ideal of a white middle-class life. Clearly, through the use of irony and satire, the novel pokes fun at his blatant distortion of the truth and his presentation of himself as better than what he is. For Kayira, then, the figure of the miner as a new man is predicated on the construction of a false identity that involves an inversion between aspiration and reality. A Lacanian reading would suggest that Muchona’s identification with his Other identity, the miner -- which is the imaginary ideal subject proffered by capital -- is a conversion of lack (*manqué*) into an ephemeral, even false, plenitude.<sup>58</sup> Thus, in the *imaginative geography* of South Africa presented in the novel, South Africa, as a semi-periphery, extracts Malawian labour by perpetually offering promises that are not fulfilled, thereby enacting the logic of the world-system whose workings the novel lays bare.

Nevertheless, the falsity of Muchona’s self-representation and the image of South Africa he projects do not take away from the fact they have real effects on the

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>58</sup> See J. Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), pp. 1-3.

village of Chimaliro, certainly on Liz who seizes the promise of freedom and a better life. They also destroy Jingala and the stability of the village. Noteworthy, too, is that Muchona draws upon the generalised historical image of South Africa as a place of great material abundance and freedom from the constraints of rural life, to which the villagers also subscribe. The reality of life in South Africa is repressed in the consciousness of the returned migrants, so that the villagers are not aware that material plenitude in South Africa depends on one's place in a social-economic and racial hierarchy. Thus, Muchona's fiction is perhaps no different from that proffered by capital through the mining companies that promise their workers a better life, when in fact, what they are offered is a constantly deferred dream – Lacan's 'endless play of desire'. So, Liz falls for the fiction Muchona offers her, that South Africa emancipates all women without regard to race or class, which has become part of the defining image of South Africa in the Malawian imagination.<sup>59</sup>

Although Muchona exaggerates his status, he has achieved a modicum of social and economic mobility beyond the limits of what is available in the indigenous community. He is better off financially and in terms of status than the chief himself and has access to the means of producing and reproducing a modern way of life. Ultimately the introduction of money into the local economy is the factor that has subverted the indigenous system. It has engendered a new social hierarchy in the

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3.

community that supersedes the traditional one that was based on successful subsistence farming and livestock husbandry, and on the veneration of elders, kinship and traditional political authority. Within this new value system, Muchona sees himself as superior to the chief and Jingala. His transgression of the traditional mores governing marriage, by eloping with Liz, expresses the dominance of the new values over the old ones. What is principally at stake here is the relationship between modern and traditional ways of performing masculine subjectivity. According to tradition, Jingala is as an exemplary man, having treated his wife well and earned the respect and love of his in-laws. He has also built a house with his own hands, something important in his society, and ensured that his family has never been in want of food. This perception of the world is challenged by the transnational and urban form of masculinity represented by the migrant worker. Measured by the newly dominant *transcendental* (or value) system, Jingala is a lesser man than Muchona. He falls outside the circuit of modern value, and whatever his achievements in traditional society, he is worthless compared to Muchona with his *Kujoni* status.

In addition to losing Liz, he also loses his only son Gregory to celibate priesthood in the Catholic Church. Thus, Jingala feels himself to be an utter failure, unable to ensure the reproduction of his culture and himself into the next generation, essential in the patriarchal culture of Jingala's Tumbuka ethnic group. Thus Western culture and transnational masculinity have triumphed over tradition. Kayira could have ended his novel with Jingala abandoned by both Liz and Gregory, eking out a living as

a lonely, old widower. But the fact that the novel concludes with Jingala's death suggests that the author elevates the primary conflict in the novel between indigenous and western culture into a tragic confrontation, reminiscent of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.<sup>60</sup> It is this dimension of *Jingala* that has been missed by critics who argue that the novel is shallow or that it uncritically supports modernity against tradition.

### **Competing Transnationalisms**

Nevertheless, another *transcendental* (or value) system exists in Chimaliro village that interrogates and undermines Muchona's claim to a superior status within that of the Malawian labour migrant. The hierarchy is cathected differently depending on which transcendental dominates.<sup>61</sup> Muchona's elite status depends on the privileging of transnational migrant labour and access to the South African urban experience, and promotion of a masculine identity based on money and capitalist production. That works effectively in opposition to Jingala, the traditionalist, but not in relation to Gregory, a member of the aspiring local intellectual elite. Gregory sees himself as superior to Muchona through a status based on the acquisition of British middle-class values and the symbolic capital that accrues from a mission school education.<sup>62</sup> As one

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<sup>60</sup> C. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958).

<sup>61</sup> For the notion of the 'transcendental' used here, refer to Badiou, *Logics*, p. 101.

<sup>62</sup> For the idea of 'cultural or symbolic capital, see P. Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, trans. R. Nice (London: Sage, 1990).



of the few educated people in Chimaliro village – with an education that included reading the Classics -- he is *interpellated* or socialised differently from the miners. His acculturation into western modernity produces a *transnational consciousness* and a cosmopolitan outlook without the need for physical travel or personal experience of city life. His is a modernity of the mind, perhaps much deeper than that of the miners, from Gregory's point-of-view which is consonant with that of the omniscient narrator. Thus, his patronising attitude to the miners, whose claim to modernity he regards as superficial. Gregory's very presence defines the local as the site of the production of a higher *transnational consciousness*, which complicates the opposition between the categories of the local and the transnational, as the local itself is recognised as transnational and vice-versa.

Moreover, unlike the miners' status, Gregory's is not primarily defined by an obvious display of money and material acquisitions. He tells them, 'I am not interested in money. [...] Not all of us worship money'.<sup>63</sup> This shocks Muchona and his friends. For Gregory, money is functional, but for the miners it must be publically exhibited to mark the social status of its owner. The miners regard Gregory as a puffed-up fool who has no understanding of the value of money or, indeed, of his own labour-power in the

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<sup>63</sup> *Jingala*, p. 64.

market. One asks Gregory: ‘Why don’t you come to the mines? [...] You could easily become a foreman or a head clerk in a big office and this means a lot of money’.<sup>64</sup>

In Gregory’s view, these ridiculously showy, shallow miners have no sense of anything valuable beyond their basic materialism. Thus Kayira dramatises not only the clash of tradition and modernity, but also the clash between two different ways of inhabiting modernity: one educated and supposedly cultured, and the other proletarian and supposedly uncultured. Between them lies mutual incomprehension and disdain. If the miners have been *interpellated* or socialised by capital and its operation in the world-system through the mediation of South Africa as its semi-periphery, Gregory has been incorporated into modernity by the British colonial ideological state apparatus in its specific elaboration as a local colonial polity: mission schools produce not only Christians, but also subjects instructed in the kind of civility needed for colonial governmentality.

Thus, the novel gives us a second vector of western modernity operating in Malawi -- the colonial state and its ideological state apparatus, the trajectory of which is linked to and overlaps with regional capitalism in Malawi, but which at the same time functions as a separate ideological, historical and material force. The production of the white-collar workers requires a different strategy from that of the miners. It involves the creation of an African elite who, to paraphrase Macaulay’s much-cited minute about

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

India, are African in skin, but English in mind.<sup>65</sup> In this context Gregory adopts a worldview in which money is accorded its exchange value but not fetishised, as in the case of the miners. Even so, the representation of the working classes as vulgarly materialist, and the middle classes as less so, is itself embedded in the very ideology that produces that difference.

Gregory, as a member of the educated elite, venerates the symbolic capital that is enabled by money, rather than money itself. Money is however equally important. For example, Gregory's education is not free -- not everyone can attend St. Boniface School. His uncle Kayiteke, who was equally brilliant, had to become a miner and returned to live as an ordinary villager, while Gregory's education is funded by Jingala who, despite his shabby self-representation in later life, earned more as a civil servant than other villagers. He used his position as a tax collector to accumulate wealth by exploiting the poor. Gloatingly, he recalls his past life: 'the pots of honey, goats, chickens and, sometimes, cows that people who could not pay their taxes used to give him. [...] He became rich'.<sup>66</sup> Jingala's excuse is that his government salary was so low that he needed to supplement it.

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<sup>65</sup> T. Macaulay, 'Minute on Education, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1885. Available at: [http://www.columbia.edu/itc/meaac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt\\_minute\\_education\\_1835.html](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/meaac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html). Retrieved on 20 July 2015. It must be noted that in colonial Malawi, the Macaulayan view co-existed with opposing views. For a fuller discussion of this, see McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>66</sup> *Jingala*, p. 10

Thus, he collaborated with the colonial regime in extracting resources from a poor rural population with limited means of earning money. Historians have noted how the hut tax and poll tax played a significant early role in pushing Malawians into wage labour.<sup>67</sup> Kayira provides us with a picture of uncanny justice in the fact that a miner, who may have been pushed into migrant labour by taxation, elopes with a tax collector's betrothed. So Gregory, with an education that allows him to occupy a privileged cultural space, may not worship money, but the accumulation of a certain level of economic power underwrites the overall project. He may also be regarded as exemplifying the classic form of false consciousness that blinds him to the social relations of the production and reproduction of wealth in Chimaliro village.

We must ask, however, if this difference between the educated and the miners, in relation to money, is not itself a product of the very ideology that separates Gregory from the miners? Although Gregory and Muchona come from the same cultural and linguistic community, they are ideologically opposed to each other because of their different positions in colonial capitalist modernity. Here we see the difference between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie emerging in a rural community still dominated by an indigenous mode of production.

The emergence of class difference is sometimes displaced onto other levels, as in Jingala's case. He represents himself and is seen by the miners as an unsophisticated

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<sup>67</sup> W.C. Chirwa, 'Child and Youth Labour on the Nyasaland Plantations, 1890-1953', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4 (December, 1993), pp. 667 and Chipeta, 'Money', pp. 10-15.

villager. He visits Gregory's school in traditional regalia, carrying an axe on his shoulder. To a degree, the novel's narrative point-of-view also foregrounds his identity as a rural subject, contrasting him with his educated son and the miners. In many ways Jingala performs a traditional persona, at times deliberately, in order to contest the very modernity that he himself used to support as a tax collector.

Thus his mode of dress, while neither entirely traditional nor modern, certainly opposes so-called modern dress, whether Gregory's or Muchona's. For his journey to St. Boniface, we are told

[h]e wore a black cloth tied round his waist and kept secure by means of an old scout belt. From one of the two rings attached to the belt hung a bunch of keys which he had collected on various occasions in the course of his life, but whose function was now decorative. He had on a black waistcoat with a silver chain, now grey with age, dangling at a slant across the front, and attached to one end of the chain was a small travelling clock which had long since ceased to function.

He wore no shirt, and no one could remember ever having seen him in one.<sup>68</sup>

This eccentric costume makes him an object of ridicule to those more in tune with modern ways, such as Gregory and his fellow students. The narrator also satirises him. For his fellow villagers, however, his dress accentuates his role as an elder, a man who

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<sup>68</sup> *Jingala*, pp. 1-2.

has lived long enough to be ‘a precious antique’.<sup>69</sup> Far from being odd, Jingala’s mode of dress marks a particular cultural temporality and personal time. His dead watch and bundle of keys signal his former participation in modern cultural forms as a man of authority who once had important doors and safes to open and lock; but, nonetheless, he remains rooted in his culture. Thus the dysfunctional watch fulfils multiple purposes: as a sign of his modernity, perhaps, and a reminder of a time when Western chronometric time had measured his life. He is now located in a different time-frame in which the watch is appropriated for the determination of traditional time, as demonstrated when he and the chief look at their dead watches before looking at the sun to ascertain the time.<sup>70</sup> Although laughable from the narrator’s perspective, here capitalist time is subordinated to pre-capitalist time, coordinated by the movement of the sun, length of shadows and seasonal change.

For the old tax collector and the chief then, Western modernity as well as capital must be subordinated to local time, the indigenous *transcendental* or value system. This is not due to their ignorance of the value of Western time, but an acknowledgement of its relativity. As the chief tells Gregory, ‘You have [...] your own history. [...] You have your own past and your own customs. The white man has his own and he is proud of them’.<sup>71</sup> So, the serious message underlying Jingala’s and the

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

chief's function as objects of satire in the novel is that one can participate in western modernity so long as one is aware that it is not the only system in the world -- that there exist others, including that which governs Chimaliro. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, peripheries and centres are not so clear-cut and separate, because semi-peripheries, even temporal ones, pre-modern and social, exist around, between and even inside modernity's global 'centres'.<sup>72</sup> The villagers' seemingly comic acts are forms of cultural resistance. The villagers do not operate using the binary oppositional logic practised by bearers of modernity such as Gregory and Muchona. Instead their dress and behaviour argue for a form of *hybridity* that is grounded in the local. In this sense they 'provincialise Europe', to borrow a phrase from Chakrabarty, by asserting the validity of their historical and cultural experience despite its existence outside the temporality and determination of capitalist modernity.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, they exemplify the forms of local resistance to the globalising logics of capital, whether in the form of empire or globalisation.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, they accept the logic of capital as an aspect of their lived experience and accept or even seek opportunities for Western education and the new way of life their young men bring back with them from the mines and the city. However, they object to the domination of consciousness and practice by this new way of life. Thus, their

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<sup>72</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincialising*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> S. Hall, 'Old and New Identities', in A.D King (ed.), *Globalisation* (London: Macmillan, (1991), pp. 41-68.

attitude to western modernity, and to South Africa as its regional centre or semi-periphery, is *ambivalent*. *Ambivalence* here also involves the subversion of the structure of colonial authority, which Homi Bhabha regards as characteristic of colonialist discourse.<sup>75</sup> In Jingala's case, though, *mimicry* is not only a function of the *unconscious* of colonial authority, as posited by Bhabha, but also of the assertion of the *conscious* resistance and agency of the colonised. This is an instance of the colonised disrupting the authority of colonial discourse, by imposing on it an indigenous discourse that does not entirely exclude the former – thus, by conceptually reversing the structure of domination. Nevertheless, the novel recognises the inadequacy of such practices for overturning the logic of colonial capital more generally, and as particularly constituted by South Africa as its semi-periphery.

Moreover, in the comparative representation of South Africa and Malawi, the former is viewed as the site of real production and productivity, while the latter is marked by absence. Malawi is the source of labour, but the provision of labour is not itself viewed as a productive activity. The official contracts ensure that the export of labour does not lead to sufficient accumulation of resources by returnees so that their capital can create jobs back home and transform the economy. That circular movement also guarantees the continued reproduction of labour for export. Symbolically, the only form of production taking place in Malawi is that of the biological reproduction of

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<sup>75</sup> See H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).



surplus labour, with the workers given resources sufficient only for that role in the circuit of production. As Kayira remarks:

It was customary for young men to leave the village and go to work in mines or on farms in South Africa. ... After a year or two they came back to the village, speaking a strange and incomprehensible language, and wearing overalls, steel helmets, heavy black boots. ... Then, after a year or so in which, if they were married, they saw to it that the perpetuation of their species was assured, they went back to the mines.<sup>76</sup>

They do not bring back durable capital that they can utilise to transform the rural economy to the point where it can provide local employment opportunities. Like migrant workers everywhere, the surplus profit produced by the Malawian miners is not expended in their countries of origin, but rather in the host country, effectively excluding their labour-power from the national economy.<sup>77</sup> This structure ensures that Malawi never becomes economically self-sufficient and thus remains a permanent source of labour for South Africa.

The creation of a genuinely productive industry in Malawi would of course reduce the labour outflow. That may have been a factor in the low investment in the country by the government, even in agriculture, during the colonial period.

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<sup>76</sup> *Jingala*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>77</sup> Y. Moulrier Boutang, 'Between the Hatred of all Walls and the Walls of Hate', in M. Morris and B. de Barry (eds), *"Race" Panic and the Memory of Migration* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), p. 8-9.

Furthermore, the fact that Jingala loses to the miner, Muchona, in the competition to reproduce, reinforces again the idea that Malawi is a non-productive space compared to South Africa. In addition, predominantly rural economies, such as that of Malawi in the 1960s, are deprived of labour-power not only through migration itself, but also by the diminution of biological reproductive capacity by the temporary export of substantial numbers of young men. It is by abstracting such an *imaginative geography* from a particular historical formation, that Kayira, as a writer, demonstrates how literature, as a cultural practice, can illuminate underlying transnational social and economic relationships in southern Africa.

The dominance of the transnational economy is not entirely supported by Jingala and others, such as the chief and Kayiteke. They remain committed to the traditional way of life in spite of their appreciation of certain aspects of Western cultural and economic modernity. Thus, when Gregory refuses to go to the mines on the grounds that the South African experience is inferior to life at the mission, he is motivated by considerations of class rather than cultural autonomy. This can equally be seen as an attempt to resist the enormous power exerted by South Africa, as a semi-periphery, on Malawi as an absolute periphery. His position will form the foundation of resistance to migrant labour among nationalists during the struggle for independence in Malawi. In a way he resists the logic of the world-system as elaborated at the semi-periphery. But as we have observed, by joining the missionaries, he is under the sway of the same logic, albeit in its imperial metropolitan form and local articulation. That

suggests that although the opportunities for resistance are meagre, the subjects seize upon them to assert their agency and their cultural as well as economic autonomy. However, these forms of resistance come at a cost to the individuals involved: Jingala loses his prospective wife, Gregory gives up the right to have a family and Kayiteke lives in poverty.

These consequences indicate that the transnational world-system exercises a powerful hold over the lives of Malawians. Not only an abstract logic, it permeates the totality of life, even if spaces of resistance exist within it. In recognition of that, Kayira employs the novelistic form to describe the Malawian experience of migrant labour and to probe the impact of such a momentous historical experience on the everyday local of Chimaliro and its relation to the globalised world.

## **Conclusion**

I wish to speculate about how Kayira would have framed the question of Malawian migrant labour to South Africa and its impact on Malawian society if he were writing today: 53 years after Malawi's independence, 23 years after the end of apartheid and seven years after South Africa joined the BRICS. He would perhaps be concerned that many Malawian youths still feel the need to trek to South Africa for employment, despite increased threats of xenophobic attacks. So, in this respect, the periphery-semi-

periphery relationship between the two countries has not changed much.<sup>78</sup> As Niemann contends, regional migration to South Africa is part of the international or global relations that define the lived experiences of the region as a whole today.<sup>79</sup> What has changed post-1994, however, is the growing strength of South Africa's semi-periphery status, through the expansion of its capital into the region. This affects Malawi, as well the region and the rest of the continent, as the country reconsolidates its historical status as a semi-periphery, marketing itself as 'the gateway to the rest of the continent'.<sup>80</sup> It has also become the media and financial centre of the region, all of which would not have been possible during the colonial period, as the colonial powers in the region may not have approved such overt encroachment, sometimes favouring other centres such as colonial Zambia's Copperbelt. It would also have been untenable during apartheid because of the boycott of South Africa by the majority of African countries and its status as a pariah surrounded by the SADC states.

Conspicuously, South Africa's capital in the region is concentrated in media and telecommunications as well as consumer goods, turning the region into its market -- one of the classic attributes of the relationship between the periphery and the semi-periphery. However, in the current regional formation, the position of Malawian workers who migrate to South Africa is much more precarious than in the past,

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<sup>78</sup> M. Niemann, 'Migration and the Lived Spaces of Southern Africa,' *Alternatives*, 28 (2003), p. 115.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.thedti.gov.za/trade\\_investment/why\\_invest\\_insa.jsp](https://www.thedti.gov.za/trade_investment/why_invest_insa.jsp) Retrieved on 8 July 2017.

especially as represented in *Jingala* at a time when their labour was managed and more or less assured by institutions such as WENELA. The new generation of migrant workers must also compete for jobs with immigrants from outside southern Africa. And they face the hostility towards foreigners in contemporary South Africa engendered by high unemployment among South Africa's youth and a shrinking national economy.<sup>81</sup>

Additionally, the globalisation of the *mediascape*, to use Arjun Appadurai's term, means that contemporary migrants cannot get away with the telling of 'tall tales' because Malawians now have greater access to what happens in South Africa through information technology and satellite television.<sup>82</sup> So a contemporary Liz would, perhaps, be less impressed by a modern-day Muchona's stories about his experiences. She might still be impressed by returning migrants from further afield, from the United Kingdom and the USA, implying that South Africa's position in the *imaginative geography* of Malawians may still be significant, but is now somewhat displaced by greener pastures further away, whose images arrive in Malawi's living-rooms and public spaces through satellite television channels, such as CNN. Thus, globalisation of media has transformed the way Malawians imagine and relate to South Africa. But the

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<sup>81</sup> Niemann, 'Migration', p. 115 and H. C. Chidoba Banda, 'Xenophobia as a Form of Human Insecurity: The Plight of Malawian Migrants in South Africa,' *Southern African Peace and Security Studies*, Vol. 2, 2 (2013), pp. 31-46.

<sup>82</sup> D. A. Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,' *Public Culture*, 2 (1990), pp. 1-23.

fundamentally historical structure is still there, just as the opportunities for direct access to the ‘core-countries’ of today’s globalised world are greater compared to the colonial period. Even so, such access is regulated by more stringent labour policies and the changing needs of capital in the core-countries, as evidenced by the recruitment of 193 Malawian nurses to Britain between 1998 and 2003.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the recruitment of the Malawian nurses, predominantly women, would suggest that Kayira, if he were writing today, would not only have had to engage with a greater diversity of destinations of Malawian migrant labour, but also the increase in women’s participation.<sup>84</sup>

Evidently, far from being a lightweight novel, as suggested by some critics, *Jingala* presents a complex view of the relationship between traditional African societies and western modernity, particularly expressed through the connection between Malawi and South Africa as part of the colonially derived world-system, to which the former has been economically and structurally attached since the earliest days of its formation as a national territory. The novel’s preoccupation with Malawi’s place in the political economy of southern Africa and the world-system demonstrates that Malawian literature is not only national, but also part of World Literature, especially in its exploration and interrogation of the global logic of capital or the effects of globalisation

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<sup>83</sup> J. Buchan and D. Dovlo, ‘International Recruitment of Health Workers to the UK: A Report for DFID,’ DFID Health Systems Resource Centre, 2004, p. 8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

manifested in Malawi's particular historical formation. Finally, this analysis of *Jingala* illustrates how the idea of the world-system has been nuanced by more recent scholarly attention to the particular lives of the peoples of the periphery, who must not only be seen in terms of the economic hegemony of the core and semi-periphery, but also in relation to their discourses, spaces and agencies of resistance.

*To Legson Kayira in memoriam, (c. 1942 – 14 October 2012).*

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