



Cambridge Heritage Research Centre

The Memory of Nature, A Heritage of Shame

How did it happen that Africa is now reliant on international entities, be it state entities or (especially) non-governmental organizations, to not only safeguard its natural heritage, but also to introduce Africans to the elephant, the rhino, the zebra, the monkey, the river, the mountain? Why is it that today, many Africans, like most Westerners, are alienated from nature? This lecture considers the heritage of shame Africans inherited from European denatured colonial education; a civilizing imperial project that marked Africans, and most peoples indigenous to conquered lands, as “savages” in need of denaturing from the bush or forests, into the “civilizing light” of the colonial city. Using a few examples of nature-based praise poetry from Southern Africa, this lecture (obliquely) considers the work of Nature-focused international non-governmental organizations and their impact, reinforcing (or advancing) Africa’s alienation from their natural landscapes, and all other life forms in those landscapes.

Poster image from: F. C. Selous, African Nature Notes..., p 273

A poet-historian, Ruramisai Charumbira is the author of [Imagining a Nation](#), as well as articles in peer-reviewed journals; and chapters in peer-reviewed edited volumes, including one in this recent volume: [Women Warriors, National Heroes](#). An Associate Senior Fellow at the Walter Benjamin Kolleg (WBK), [University of Bern](#); she is also the founder of [THoR-Taking the Humanities on the Road](#) with colleagues at the WBK.

Dr Ruramisai Charumbira

Associate Senior Fellow,

Walter Benjamin Kolleg, University of Bern

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To receive a link to this event please register at: <https://tinyurl.com/y4ejaaxf>

