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A Hinge Between the (Un)Free Oceans: Creolised Creativity at the Cape

Abstract:

This lecture will update my ongoing research on creolisation as a transoceanic history and process connecting oceans, cultures, and people, in light of the historic and geographic location of Cape Town at the juncture of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds. As the site of the former Cape Colony, a vital settlement for the Dutch East India Company (VOC), Cape Town is layered with the presences of diasporas of variously unfree labour from across the two oceans. I will use this historical and contemporary valence of the Cape to explore the processes of creolisation which its prime position as transoceanic hinge enables— as manifested in diverse genres of creolised creative expression, from Longarm dancing to Cape Malay foodways, from the Afrikaans language to the work of visual artists such as Thania Petersen. From the performance and retrieval of the memory of creolisation at the Cape, I suggest, we can extract new insights about creolisation as an anti-hegemonic resource for resistance, resilience, and community-building through creativity.

Short Bio:

Ananya Jahanara Kabir is Professor of English Literature at King's College London, and Fellow of the British Academy. Her publications include *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir* (2009), *Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971, and Modern South Asia* (2013), and *Alegropolitics: Connecting on the Afromodern Dance Floor* (forthcoming, 2027). She is the recipient of India's Infosys Prize for the Humanities and Germany's Humboldt Research Prize. Her current research is on creolisation across the Indian and Atlantic Ocean worlds, within which frame she studies the African continent's creolised histories and cultures.