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The African Boy-Soldier: Gender Damage

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Painting by Daren Chambers

The African Boy-Soldier: Gender Damage

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Narratives about boy-soldiers in Africa constitute a new, globally popular genre. Many of these narratives are written by former child-soldiers attempting to create meaning out of trauma. However, they tend to reproduce an all-too-familiar set of ideas about Africa as the site of seemingly insoluble disorder and carnage. The figure of the boy with the gun—and, as in the recent Jean-Stephane Sauvaire film *Johnny Mad Dog*, the boy with a gun wearing a dress—is shorthand for the failure of the modern African state. Novelists in Nigeria, a country that has not experienced recent warfare, have produced rich fictional accounts of the boy-soldier; these are also stories about damaging initiations into masculinity, in which sexual violation is central. I suggest that we try to understand the emergence of this queer figure of anti-modernity in the context of the politics of sexuality and stigma, on a thoroughly globalized continent marked by the AIDS epidemic, the rise of rape as a weapon of war, and the emergence of both a new African gay rights discourse and new forms of homophobia.

Monday, November 5
7:00 pm
314 BTSU

Dr. Munro's lecture is part of the 2012 ICS Visiting Scholars Lecture Series.
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