

# In the Shadow of Empire?

Situating Black British Writing Conference

London Metropolitan Archives

22 & 23  
Sept.  
2023



LEVERHULME  
TRUST



Goldsmiths  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies (CCDS)  
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22 September 2023

Dear Colleagues

We are delighted to welcome you to our Eleventh International Conference

**In the Shadow of Empire? Situating Black British Writing  
Friday 22 and Saturday 23 September 2023**

This year, finally breaking with the pandemic restrictions that so inhibited in-person scholarly interaction, we at the Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies (CCDS) at Goldsmiths, University of London, are delighted to welcome your participation at this timely, if not overdue, conference focussing squarely on Black British Writing.

We acknowledge, with warm thanks, the support of the Leverhulme Trust, which funded the research out of which this conference has arisen. We offer our thanks, also, to the team at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) for their generosity and support in making the LMA available to us for the duration of the conference.

Very importantly for the diaspora context, the conference theme seeks to challenge the limited visibility of Black British Writing in UK higher education institutions generally – and the correspondingly limited Black British scholarship within those institutions, particularly within ‘academic’ curriculum areas. We are especially interested in interrogating the largescale absence of Black British thought in the university, increasing public awareness of the issues involved, and investigating how the situation might be transformed. Furthermore, the conference, in highlighting these concerns, seeks also to promote and develop multi- and interdisciplinary conversations exploring critical, theoretical, historical, and creative questions in the many related fields that together contribute to Black British Writing.

Our conference tradition, established since 1994 with a focus on Caribbean Women’s Writing, has given rise to a blend of rigorous debate and warm camaraderie. We expect this conference to live up to our hard-won reputation and we encourage our delegates to continue doing their part to ensure a stimulating and enjoyable conference for all.

**Conference Organising Team**

**Eleventh International Conference**  
Venue: London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)  
40 Northampton Rd, London EC1R 0HB  
**Friday 22 and Saturday 23 September 2023**

## **In the Shadow of Empire? Situating Black British Writing**

### **DAY 1- FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**9:45**                    **REGISTRATION**

**10:00**                    **WELCOME**

Goldsmiths, University of London/LMA

**10:15-11.30**            **PANEL A: Roundtable**  
**Introducing the Black British Writing Encyclopedia**  
**Project: Dismantling the borders of our knowledge?**  
**(pre-recorded)**  
**(Archive Study Area)**

**Chair:**                 **Dr Joan Nche**

### **PARALLEL SESSIONS**

**11:30-13:00**            **PANEL B: Black British Writing – Questioning Roots**  
**(Huntley Room)**

**Chair:**                 **Dr Leighan Renaud**

Heroic Communities of Care in the Speculative Children's Fiction of Yaba Badoe  
and Patience Agbabi  
Kayra Maes

Transnational Roots and Routes of Black British Writing  
Amirtha Devarajan (pre-recorded)

Black, British, Beyond, and Back Again: Considering a Black British Writer Beyond  
Race  
Dr Juliana Mensah

**OR**

**11:30-13:00**      **PANEL C: Form and Innovation in Black British Writing (Archive Study Area)**

**Chair:**              **Professor Pat Noxolo**

‘Songs of Liberation’: Self-Reflexivity in Laura Fish’s ‘Strange Music’ and the Development of the Black British Neo-Slave Narrative  
Elisabeth Bekers & Katrijn Van den Bossche with Laura Fish

Breaking the Mould: Multimodality in Jay Bernard’s ‘Surge’ and Koleka Putuma’s ‘Collective Amnesia’  
Tara Brusselaers

Situating Black British Theatre: Kwame Kwei-Armah’s ‘Beneatha’s Place’ (2023)  
Dr Susan Alice Fischer

**13:00-13:45**      **LUNCH**

**13:45-14:15**      **BOOK LAUNCH/VISIT THE LMA ARCHIVES**

#### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**14:15**              **KEYNOTE: Situating Black British Writing & its Entanglements: Addressing the priorities (Archive Study Area)**

**Professor Emeritus Joan Anim-Addo**

**Chair:**              **Dr Malachi McIntosh**

#### **PARALLEL SESSIONS**

**15:15-16:45**      **PANEL D: Archival Silences: Resistant Writing (Huntley Room)**

**Chair:**              **Dr Marl’ene Edwin**

‘A story about an encounter with nothing’: listening for Black women’s life stories in archival silences  
Joanna Brown

Reading against the grain: finding the Black British voice in the archives  
Dr Lucia Llano Puertas

Deconstructing the Colonial Cinematic Lens: Racial Discourses and Gendered Counter-Narratives in Joan Riley’s ‘Waiting in the Twilight’  
Becky Drewry

**OR**

**15:15-16:45**

**PANEL E: Place-making and Black Geographies of Writing  
(Archive Study Area)**

**Chair:**

**Dr Juliana Mensah**

Laughter and the Politics of Place-making  
Professor Pat Noxolo

Twin Shores: Gothic Doubling in Nella Larsen and Zadie Smith  
Dr Lenore Todd

Situating Black British Writing in the Archives (pre-recorded)  
Dr Tracey Walters

**16:45-17.00**

**Plenary**

**17:00**

**DAY 1 ENDS**

## **DAY 2 – SATURDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**9:45**                    **REGISTRATION**

**10:00**                    **WELCOME**

**10:15-11.30**            **PANEL F: Roundtable**  
**In the Margins: Black British Writing and UK publishing**  
**(Archive Study Area)**

**Chair:**                    **Dr Kesewa John**

To be a Black Publisher in the UK is to be Political!  
Nana Ayebia Clarke MBE

Black and White Prints: Inserting Colour into UK Publishing  
Abíóḍún Abdul

Dismantling Barriers for Black Dis(abled) Women Writers and Publishers  
Eurekah Shabazz

A Black Student's Step into Publishing: Internship at Quercus  
Samantha Wharton

### **PARALLEL SESSIONS**

**11:30-13:00**            **PANEL G: Routes, Poetics and Black British Writing**  
**(Huntley Room)**

**Chair:**                    **Dr Susan Alice Fischer**

Duplicity + Disempowerment = Duality: Black Womanhood finding (her) self through writing  
Dr Arlene P Weekes

A Relational Poetics of Belonging in Derek Walcott's 'The Arkansas Testament' and Dennis Brutus' 'Stubborn Hope'  
Dr Joan Nche

I Read About It in a Magazine  
Angelique Golding

**OR**

**11:30-13:00**      **PANEL H: Life Stories, Educational Research & Teaching  
(Archive Study Area)**

**Chair:**              **Dr Marl'ene Edwin**

Three Epochs: The Challenges of Teaching Black British Literature  
Dr Lenore Todd

Being a Brown Scholar of Black British Writing: Specific Dilemmas and Challenges  
Dr Leila Kamali

Life Narratives and Storytelling of Black Educators as Educational Research and Application  
Lorraine Anim-Addo and Fezile Sibanda

**13:00-14:15**      **LUNCH & LMA TOUR**

**14:15-15:45**      **PANEL I: Questioning Black British Writing in Higher Education  
(Archive Study Area)**

**Chair:**              **Paul Halliday**

Transcribing Multicultural Identities and Emitting Poetic Sparks: The Poems of Warsan Shire and Momtaza Mehri  
Professor Lamia Tewfik

Black British Writing: Considering the development of an ethics of care approach and its meanings in the UK  
Professor Emeritus Joan Anim-Addo & Dr Gabriella Beckles-Raymond

'So, how does my book get onto your university syllabus': A writer's perspective'  
Yinka Sunmonu

**15:45-17:00**      **PANEL J: CREATIVES UNLEASHED  
(Archive Study Area)**

**Chair:**              **Courtney Conrad**

Ros Martin  
Ronnie McGrath  
Belinda Zhawi

**17:15-17:45**      **PLENARY AND FAREWELL DRINKS**

**18:00**              **CONFERENCE ENDS**

# ABSTRACTS

**PANEL A: Roundtable - Introducing the Black British Writing Encyclopedia Project: Dismantling the borders of our knowledge?**  
(pre-recorded)

**Chair:** Dr Joan Nche

Discussants: **Professor Emeritus Joan Anim-Addo**  
**Dr Nana Wilson-Tagoe**

## **PANEL B: Black British Writing – Questioning Roots**

**Chair:** Dr Leighan Renaud

### **Heroic Communities of Care in the Speculative Children’s Fiction of Yaba Badoe and Patience Agbabi**

Kayra Maes

This paper discusses the representation of heroic communities of care in speculative children’s literature by black British women writers, focusing specifically on *Wolf Light* (2019) by Yaba Badoe and *The Infinite* (2020) and *The Time-Thief* (2021) by Patience Agbabi. Situated at the intersection of (historically) under-researched fields, the study moves beyond the customary focus on race in criticism on black British literature, to consider the novels’ representation of highly diverse communities of care, and on a more formal level, how the use of the genre of speculative fiction influences the use of the trope of the hero’s journey, which coincides with the development of these diverse communities. Together, these elements illustrate how black British women writers are creating innovative stories that are inclusive and socio-politically engaged.

### **Transnational Roots and Routes of Black British Writing**

Amirtha Devarajan (pre-recorded)

This paper attempts to comprehensively analyse the formation and consolidation of the literary corpus of Black British writings by sketching out its transnational roots and routes. On the surface level, Black British writings might be simply understood as a category of literature; however, a deeper probe into its history and context point to several issues, gaps and shifts, which does merely pertain to narratives, but also to the identity of individuals and communities. The corpus of Black British writings rose to prominence in patches (owing to politics of racism and exclusion) with traditions as distinct as abolitionist writings, colonial narratives, immigrant writings, and diasporic and transnational narratives. Despite the diversity in genre and style, the works engage with similar concerns which are structured around framing a vision of an inclusive Britain. This diversity, simultaneously, fosters and resists the categorization of 'Black British writing'.

The aim of this paper is twofold: the first half of the paper illuminates the socio-cultural and intellectual backdrop (late 20th century) of Black British writings showing the transnational roots of the corpus. The second half of the paper sketches out (and problematises) the major features, gaps, labels, and paradigm in order to highlight the multi-directional transnational routes of Black British writings. Although the paper is wary of the generational approach to Black British writing, it draws upon three key texts across the three generations to expound and explicate its argument. These texts include ‘Mary Seacole’s Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands’ (first generation) , Sam Selvon’s ‘The Lonely Londoners’, and Abdulrazak Gurnah’s ‘The Last Gift’. Through the proposed reading, the paper strives to highlight not only the transnational character of Black British writing but also the changing nature of this very 'transnational' character.

## **Black, British, Beyond, and Back Again: Considering a Black British Writer Beyond Race**

Dr Juliana Mensah

With regard to the work of Black writers, Western literary analysis tends to focus on their racial background and postcolonial positioning. This practice limits the exploration of additional themes within the works of Black writers and the potential for their insights to be applied beyond discourses of race and identity.

Aminatta Forna's 2014 novel, 'The Hired Man', saw the writer return to an exploration of civil war. However, unlike her previous novels, which are predominantly set in Sierra Leone, this narrative takes place in Croatia and does not include a single Black character. Regarding this decision, Forna has said, 'I wanted to break this othering of Africa that somehow we were the only people who had wars.' She has spoken frequently of her frustration with the way her fiction, and the fiction of Black writers, is received and reviewed. With this novel, she aimed to challenge racially biased literary expectations.

Set in a fictional town in Croatia during the aftermath of the civil war, 'The Hired Man' raises questions about accountability and responsibility for crimes against humanity when entire populations are implicated. Forna's narrative weaves together individual, community, national, and global levels of responsibility, offering an opportunity for discussions on complicity, human rights, memory, history, justice, and reparations.

However, despite her thematic explorations, Forna's work is often overshadowed by discussions of her Scottish and Sierra Leonean identity, as well as her lived experience of civil war in West Africa. In this talk, I will discuss my experiences of teaching Forna's text at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including my attempts to move beyond discussions of race, and the question of whether, at some point, there is an imperative to return to discourses of race and positionality.

## **PANEL C: Form and Innovation in Black British Writing**

**Chair:** Professor Pat Noxolo

### **‘Songs of Liberation’: Self-Reflexivity in Laura Fish’s ‘Strange Music’ and the Development of the Black British Neo-Slave Narrative**

Elisabeth Bekers and Katrijn Van den Bossche with Laura Fish

This paper shows how ‘Strange Music’ (2008) by Black British author Laura Fish not only addresses our collective “historical amnesia” (Evaristo 2010) concerning trans-Atlantic slavery by recreating missing historical data in fiction, but also innovates the genre of the neo-slave narrative through the intricate use of self-reflexive literary devices. With this paper we aim to situate Black British women’s writing in the scholarly theorization of metafiction, which historically has been restricted to apolitical writing by white male authors and has yet to delineate contemporary (political and cultural) functions of self-reflexivity (Arana 2007; Mwangi 2009).

‘Strange Music’, which draws inspiration from Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s historical contribution to the abolitionist cause and her poem ‘Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point’ (1850) as well as the contemporary poem by Chinese-Jamaican author Easton Lee, alternates between the voices of the Victorian poet and of two Black women on her family’s sugar plantation in Jamaica circa 1840. Although the three narrators never meet, they are connected through their fight for liberation: the bedridden English poet is struggling to come to terms with her family’s involvement in slavery; Sheba, like the protagonist of Browning’s poem, finds a final escape from slavery in infanticide and suicide; Kaydia, a mixed-race housemaid inspired by Lee’s poem, is intent on acquiring some “privilege” by becoming pregnant with her owner’s child (Lee 2000: 131; Fish 2006: 516). While criticism has been restricted to the historical interests of Barrett Browning scholars and brief mentions in Neo-Victoriana Studies, this paper explores Fish’s agnotological interest in the historical silencing of Black women, the question of ethical authorship and the ‘rememory’ of slavery today (Morrison 1987). The use of intertextuality, polyphony, narrative musicalization, literary montage, metanarrative comments and mise en abyme in ‘Strange Music’ allows us to identify it as an example of historiographic metafiction that wrests the narrative on slavery away from the (traditionally white and male) western apparatus of control (Arana 2007). Laura Fish will respond to our paper and shed further light on the genesis of the novel.

### **Breaking the Mould: Multimodality in Jay Bernard’s *Surge* and Koleka Putuma’s *Collective Amnesia***

Tara Brusselaers

This article looks at how Black British poet Jay Bernard and South-African poet Koleka Putuma question historiography and broaden poetry’s conventional generic boundaries in their multimodal debut volumes - ‘Surge’ (2019) and ‘Collective Amnesia’ (2017) respectively - by discussing the specific affordances of their multimodal poetry. Both works are examined as postcolonial engagements with, and attempts at writing back to, their respective (trans)national histories and

compared to one another in their capacity as multimodal poetry volumes. In doing so, the article demonstrates the versatile ways in which non-lyric modes can be used to either lend poetry a sense of ‘objectivity’ or, conversely, question the notion of objectivity often associated with history and historiography.

### **Situating Black British Theatre: Kwame Kwei-Armah’s ‘Beneatha’s Place’ (2023)**

Dr Susan Alice Fischer

Kwame Kwei-Armah’s recent play at the Young Vic, ‘Beneatha’s Place’ (2023), exemplifies his long-term attention to both the ongoing legacy of empire in the African Diaspora and the need to uncover and foreground history as part of the struggle. ‘Beneatha’s Place’ reprises Lorraine Hansberry’s eponymous protagonist and follows her from Chicago and Lagos in 1959 to the University of California in 1971, where she demands that Black Studies be instituted. Set in the present, the second half of the play brings now seventy-year-old Dean Beneatha Asagai-Younger back to Lagos with a group of her American academic colleagues, several of whom are trying to replace African American Studies with a program in ‘Critical Whiteness Studies’.

While academia has long been ‘the citadel through which white supremacy’ has been promulgated ‘across the globe’, Kwei-Armah re-asserts the place of academia as ‘now ripe for the revolution’ and decolonization ‘from the inside’ (‘Falling Forward or Standing Back’, interview with Dr Janine Bradbury). Indeed, ‘Beneatha’s Place’ critically counters the attacks on Black Studies and Critical Race Theory in the US and, by implication, in the UK, as it highlights the ongoing struggle to control the narrative for and about Black people throughout the Diaspora.

This paper will discuss this timely play’s vital significance in exposing the erasure of history and in reaffirming the need for Black Studies and a decolonised curriculum in the US, the UK and elsewhere.

# KEYNOTE

**KEYNOTE: Situating Black British Writing & its Entanglements:  
Addressing the priorities**

**Chair:** Dr Malachai McIntosh

Professor Emeritus Joan Anim-Addo

**Joan Anim-Addo** is Emeritus Professor and Director of the Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies (Goldsmiths, London). She is a poet, librettist and scholar. Her writing includes 'Janie, Cricketing Lady' (poetry); 'Imoinda' (libretto); 'Longest Journey: A History of Black Lewisham' and 'Touching the Body: History, Language and African-Caribbean Women's Writing'. She is Associate Editor of Callaloo, Journal of Diaspora Arts and Letters and a Senior Fellow, HEA. She is a member of the editorial board of Transition Magazine (Harvard). Her recent publications include the co-authored 'This is the Canon: Decolonize your Bookshelf in 50 Books' (Greenfinch).

## **PANEL D: Archival Silences: Resistant Writing**

**Chair:** Dr Marl'ene Edwin

### **A Story About an Encounter with Nothing': Listening for Black Women's Life Stories in Archival Silences**

Joanna Brown

How do you write a novel about Transatlantic slavery from the perspective of an enslaved woman? Where are the life stories and voice traces of Black British women, enslaved and free, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? Published writings by Black women from Britain or the British Caribbean from this time are virtually non-existent: historical records that prioritise their perspectives are woefully scant.

This paper forms part of a broader research project, *The Listening*, through which I explore the limits and possibilities of researching and writing fictional autobiographical accounts of enslaved women. I reflect on what it means to enter the slavery archive when you share that history but not that lived experience. Or to try to access the interior lives of people whose stories have not been recorded. How can fiction meaningfully attend to individual experience in the face of such devastating losses of freedom, personhood and life?

Here I will map the development of a creative methodology for working in the interstitial silences of the slavery archive, narrating the story of my research journey so far in digital spaces and geographical places, archives online and material, libraries and churchyards. My creative practice centres acts of close 'listening' to archival fragments: pausing at each archival fragment to listen to what the records say and what they do not. In doing so, I aim to create breathing space in the 'hold' of the archive to imagine new narrative possibilities. I want to know whether these acts of listening can offer some form of repair to broken life narratives. Can narratives find 'a free state' in a temporality that resists and reaches beyond archival time? Can creative writing offer a mode of reparative historical research while 'respecting what we cannot know?' (Hartman, 2008).

### **Reading Against the Grain: Finding the Black British Voice in the Archives**

Dr Lucia Llano Puertas

Drawing one's fingers over wood, going with the grain, one can feel its contours like a rough caress; but to draw one's fingers against the grain is to feel its very fibres, its jagged splits where the wood has knotted and parted open. As with wood, so with the archives. In this paper, Walter Benjamin's concept of reading against the grain, reiterated by Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and others such as Stephanie Smallwood, Kristina Haug, Peter Buckles and Sarah Welsh, will be drawn on to explore a case of illicit trading in 1829 in enslaved Africans between Barbados and Trinidad, the records for which are held in the National Archives in Kew. Michel Rolph-Trouillot's work on the archives, with specific reference to silencing and erasure, will be harnessed to show this impact on the voice of the enslaved African(s), living under British rule and therefore also British, who raised the alarm. Just as the archives

can be read as history's rough caress, smoothing over colonial exploitation, torture and oppression, so reading against the archives' grain can reveal how the very fibre of history can be read in the interstices. This paper will suggest ways of reading against the grain, drawing on Toni Morrison's work on memory and recreation, to challenge archival silence and enable a reading of Black British voices and agency in the archive.

### **Deconstructing the Colonial Cinematic Lens: Racial Discourses and Gendered Counter-Narratives in Joan Riley's 'Waiting in the Twilight'**

Becky Drewry

Drawing on both Joan Riley's 1987 'Waiting in the Twilight' and the British Colonial Film Unit's 1944 'Springtime in an English Village', the proposed paper seeks to examine the ways in which the legacies of imperial violence have impacted Black British Women's gendered writing. Indeed, this paper addresses the question: what does the colonial cinematic gaze teach us about the ideologies of White supremacy and how, in turn, does Riley's novel resist and reframe those same teachings?

Using Pimentel & Santillanes' concept of the white cinematic lens, I will explore the interactions between the filmic representation of being a woman within the United Kingdom and the emergent literary from within the Anglophone Caribbean by staging an encounter between the two texts. This will allow for a closer analysis of Britain's Empire and the impact that it had and continues to have upon those it colonised. Here, too, the works of Sylvia Wynter ('Africa, the West and the Analogy of Culture: The Cinematic Text after Man', 2000), Onyeka Igwe ('Unbossed & Unbound: How can critical proximity transfigure British colonial moving images?', 2021) and Michael Rothberg ('Multidirectional Memory', 2009) will be used to examine how the white (colonial) cinematic lens has been used to articulate a very specific way of being and knowing within the United Kingdom.

I consider, also, the role that these two mediums play in our collective understanding of womanhood, with a particular emphasis being placed upon the ways in which femininity has become an ethnocentric and performative construct. While contextualising the two texts, I will also seek to examine the ways in which they construct female identity, culturally normative behaviours and, by extension, outline the emergent literary resistance from within Black British narratology.

## **PANEL E: Place-making & Black Geographies of Writing**

**Chair:** Dr Juliana Mensah

### **Laughter and the Politics of Place-making**

Professor Pat Noxolo

This presentation will explore the politics of re-imagining post-Brexit Britain as a shared place. It will argue that, despite the fact that the Brexit vote is often interpreted as a sign of an irredeemably divided nation, Britain is a place that is made daily in and through the lived experiences and material interactions of its diverse population. Diana Evans' (2010) novel 'The Wonder' will be interpreted as an archive of this shared materiality that makes place. In doing this, the novel suggests the importance of laughter in accessing ephemeral traces of past materiality, albeit in unpredictable ways.

### **Situating Black British Writing in the Archives**

Dr Tracey Walters

As we debate the future of a black British canon, we must take into account the institutionalization and transglobality of the black British literary archive. To this end I pose the question and seek to answer the following: who are the custodians of Black British literature? Where are the archives of some of our most prominent and lesser-known literary figures? Who has acquired the rights to their original manuscripts, unpublished materials and private letters? The digitization of many archives has of course allowed for greater accessibility of writers' collections, but this is dependent on the author and size of the archive. Moreover, given the diverse ancestral homelands (and professional residences) of Black British authors, unsurprisingly, the archives exist across the black Atlantic and are housed in literary institutions, universities and with private entities. Finally, are all of these gatekeepers of the black British canon the most appropriate stewards, especially considering the historic hegemonic notions of canon formation — who is and who is not legitimized?

This brief discussion of Black British literature and the archives is meant to instigate a conversation and initiate the foundation for a much larger project — hopefully a digital reference guide for scholars and students to access black British archival materials.

## **Twin Shores: Gothic Doubling in Nella Larsen and Zadie Smith**

Dr Lenore Todd

Zadie Smith's 2016 novel begins with two young mixed-race girls at a dance class in north London. Through these characters, Smith plays with the notion of the Gothic doppelganger. As our unnamed narrator observes: "Our shade of brown was exactly the same—as if one piece of tan material was cut to make us both—and our freckles gathered in the same areas, we were of the same height." Their childhoods begin in parallel, but their respective upbringings and parental dispositions drive their lives apart over time.

One could argue that Smith is also in conversation with Nella Larsen's 'Passing' (1929), which addresses similar themes: racial and sexual ambiguities, female friendship, and the trappings of respectability. Larsen's narrative features a complicated female friendship between two white-passing mixed-race women. But 'Passing' is a very American novel, beginning in a hotel penthouse in Chicago and ending in a courtyard in Harlem. Irene, the more socially conservative of the two, resembles Smith's unnamed narrator. Clare, the more dangerous and daring friend, resembles Tracey. Despite the similarity between these two texts, there has been very little analysis of the two.

In this paper, I will contextualize both works through the lens of Gothic, specifically with the notion of the doppelganger as a manifestation of a conflicted self. It is telling that both focalizing characters are the more "respectable" halves of the doubles, who watch in horror as their unpredictable counterparts threaten their lives. I argue that the location of these characters in their respective Black Atlantic cities determines their sense of identity and subsequent choices. Furthermore, seeing Smith's choices in the light of Larsen's novel underscores the importance of Black British Literature in the canon of Black Anglophone Literature.

**PANEL F: ROUNDTABLE**

**In the Margins: Black British writing and UK Publishing**

**Chair:** Dr Kesewa John

**To be a Black Publisher in the UK is to be Political!**

Nana Ayebia Clarke MBE

My focus in this paper will be on independent Black publishing in the UK and how the power dynamics in these relationships affect their work.

In this paper, I shall examine why the UK publishing industry is dominated by “whiteness” and continues to lack diversity and unpack the reasons why there are so few Black-owned independent publishing houses. The very act of publishing then becomes an act of radical resistance—a defiance to tell our own stories and publish them.

Secondly, I shall demonstrate how the field of literary production has become a site for struggle for dominance, i.e., struggle for the power to define and consecrate producers and products. The agents in this field are of course, people—writers, critics, reviewers and institutions—publishers, schools, journals, booksellers etc.

Toni Morrison’s quote below encapsulates the very act of writing and publishing from a Black perspective ...

... “If anything I do, in the way of writing novels (or whatever I write) isn’t about the village or the community or about you, then it is not about anything. I am not interested in indulging myself in some private exercise of my imagination that fulfils only the obligation of my personal dreams—which is to say yes, the work must be political!”

**Black and White Prints: Inserting Colour into UK Publishing**

Abíqódún Abdul

The politics of Black publishing in the post-Brexit era of Black Lives Matter (BLM) through the paradigm of my upcoming memoir-polemic series ‘Stained Glass Eyes (SGE): A Memoir on Race, Family and Multiculturalism’. This paper first examines feeling hindered in writing on race in the general pre-Brexit/BLM social climate defined by a passive/tokenistic anti-racist sentiment. When writing SGE, I therefore felt my narrative needed a white persona at various points for readers to fully receive the racist recounting within as the rule vs the exceptions. I also felt only Black/Global Majority-specific versus generic writing development organisations could give me adequate support.

In contrast, the post-Brexit/BLM publishing industry attitude has revealed a slightly stronger/more tangible anti-racist sentiment, lessening my hinderances to writing SGE content. I have since felt more freedom to tell the full SGE story, particular seeing more UK publishers becoming more open to racial narratives in

addition to Black British publishers like Jacaranda spearheading drives like #TwentyIn2020: Black Writers, British Voices. More literary agents are also seeking diverse writers. Additionally, generic writing development groups like The Literary Consultancy facilitate mentoring scholarships benefiting writers of colour. In addition, more Black-owned hybrid publishers are helping writers publish their books without over-compromising their message. All this helps us better negotiate our way through the UK politics of Black Publishing.

## **Dismantling Barriers for Black Dis(abled) Women Writers and Publishers**

Eurekah Shabazz

Are African Caribbean disabled (enabled) woman writers and women as publishers, a politically neglected, under-represented group within the UK publishing world? The purpose of the research is to understand and explore ‘what gets in the way’ for this group of writers living with disabilities, and why they continue to be significantly marginalized, invisible and voiceless.

The research uses my own lived experiences as a disabled (enabled) writer, peer reviews of three pieces of prose, ‘Why I Write’ (Columbia University, Eurekah Shabazz, 2003) and content analysis from a cross-section of other disabled (enabled) published writers. It will explore inequalities, discrimination and prejudices and the similarities and differences of shared experiences as well as the symbiotic relationships between disabled writers and publishers.

The Conclusion will bring together the contributory factors and successes, or a lack thereof, of disabled (enabled) unpublished and published authors with evidence. Presently, the lack of available research, thus far, is clearly indicative of the invisibility and voicelessness of African/Caribbean disabled writers.

## **A Black Student’s Step into Publishing: Internship at Quercus**

Samantha Wharton

In this presentation I will talk about my experiences as an Intern at Quercus publishing. My focus will be on the more general concerns that I have become aware of regarding Black British writers & publishing, and what kind of changes might make a difference to the bigger picture, or better prospects in the future.

## **PANEL G: Routes, Poetics and Black British Writing**

**Chair:** Dr Susan Alice Fischer

### **Duplicity + Disempowerment = Duality: Black Womanhood Finding (Her) Self Through Writing**

Dr Arlene P Weekes

Writing as a Black woman, mother and experienced social work professional (Collins 1986), using critical and cultural theory and conflict theories and an autoethnographical approach, I explore the complexity of being a Black woman and mother in the UK. The paper aims to assess the impact of the legacy of slavery and Empire on Black relationships and the Black family and how such identities chart the course of the writing that is undertaken.

The complex nature of racism in the UK is such that one can be blindsided to believe that there are little to no issues, particularly when comparisons are made with the US. Clearly Black people are not shot in the streets at will and as was the case with George Floyd neither are we publicly executed. However, racism exists and is, I would argue as deadly due to its insidious nature, in the UK, so painfully illustrated by the Sewell report, where we were told institutional racism doesn't exist in the UK.

The paper documents a personal quest to be a 'better' mother than my own mother, not because she did everything wrong, but mostly because her parenting style – of physical chastisement a legacy of slavery, temporary abandonment a legacy of Empire – did not suit the child I was. Also, my mother made choices that I would not have made as a woman and mother. Answering such questions as: What makes me the mother I am? How the interconnected identities of being a Black mother, social work manager and academic impact on what I write and the priority I give to writing.

### **A Relational Poetics of Belonging in Derek Walcott's 'The Arkansas Testament' and Dennis Brutus' 'Stubborn Hope'**

Dr Joan Nche

My paper brings into Relation (Glissant, 2010) the poetry of Derek Walcott from St Lucia and Dennis Brutus from South Africa. My central question is how might the legacies of colonialism and slavery, evident in the writings of Walcott and Brutus, serve as a poetic medium in negotiating notions of Home and revising concepts of the human? Using a comparative approach, I offer a reading of the poets' literary representations of their societies with reference to slavery on the plantation in the Caribbean and segregation in apartheid South Africa, to highlight a delinking (Mignolo, 2011) from past servitude and a re-constructing of the present. Walter Mignolo's idea of delinking from coloniality or decoloniality is a process that 'operates on pluri-versality and truth and not in uni-versality and truth' (2009, 38-45) because 'there cannot be only one model of re-existence' (Ibid.) Drawing from this plurality in culture and mode of being in the world, I define that belonging in the works of Walcott and Brutus is based on new forms of identities undergirded by affinities, rather than essence in sites where there are multiple series of

relationships that are never fixed and constantly in flux. I suggest the poets embrace a cross-cultural poetics to offer a particular assertion of Home and belonging. Drawing from Glissant's Poetics of Relation, I argue for a relational poetics that considers the multi-racial nature of the regions under study. Focusing on Glissant's Creolisation theory, I conclude that this process of a new beginning and an openness in Relation to others are necessary for appreciating the poets' shared humanist poetics and their representations of post-independence assertion of identities in societies today.

### **I Read About It in A Magazine**

Angelique Golding

The specific UK background and political 1980s context is the backdrop to the emergence of Black British writing. Wasafiri's arrival at this key juncture in British literary history was no accident. This paper will provide an historicised account through the magazine's lens and reveal, through their attempts to redress the imbalance of Black British literature being taught on the curriculum, its relationship with and influence on this writing. Critically examining selected pieces that straddle three important decades 1980s to 2000s, Wasafiri's textual expression will draw attention to the ways in which Black British Writing was portrayed in their editorials and articles and how these differed from mainstream presentations to provide a new perspective that offers a re-reading of the shifting literary, cultural and political context in which Black British writing is placed.

## **PANEL H: Life Stories, Educational Research & Teaching**

**Chair:** Dr Marl'ene Edwin

### **Three Epochs: The Challenges of Teaching Black British Literature**

Dr Lenore Todd

As a professor to undergraduate students, I'm lucky enough to have some freedom in teaching. Despite being African American, born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, the first course I've developed in my career is "Black British Literature: from Windrush to Brexit." As someone with this occupying my position, I'm drawn to the novel and familiar sensations that Black British fiction brings to me. These stories help expand notions of racialized lives away from dominant American narratives. Reading Black British Literature is a way of reflecting on my own experience without having to stare directly into the sun. I would not be surprised if Black British readers engage similarly with African American literature.

However, in creating a syllabus, one must make a narrative. For legibility and logistics, I find myself clumsily breaking Black British literature and the eras it depicts into three different epochs: slavery, Windrush, and the present day. This paper will address the benefits and drawbacks of this arc and posit some alternatives for a more nuanced Black British story.

### **Being a Brown Scholar of Black British Writing: Specific Dilemmas and Challenges**

Dr Leila Kamali

This talk explores my development as a woman of Asian and white ethnicity, and as a scholar of Black literature. In a historical moment when anti-racism is foregrounded in the public arena, and uncomfortable conversations are required, I examine my motives for the work that I do, in relation to my academic and cultural education, and to my personal identity and heritage.

Important to this discussion is the discipline of literary studies in which I work, which enables a dismantling of the self, and can present conflicts with self-enquiry aspects of anti-racism that presume a stable self. While racism exists, we must inhabit an identity structured by that system, even while as readers we transcend such limits in powerful identifications with diverse positions.

For a non-Black person of colour, anti-racist injunctions for white people to listen in Black-centred spaces can incur some internal dialogue, anxieties to align in a binary power system which squeezes out third or fourth possibilities. In truth, many writers of African descent serve as examples for me of practising cultural admixture (Bernardine Evaristo is just one); at the same time, since childhood aligning with whiteness has at times been instinctive for me, in the manner of racial 'passing'.

In order to begin to address some of the questions raised by bringing my personal identity into conversation with my work, I will draw on anti-racist texts by Nova

Reid and Resmaa Menakem, as well as on literary and critical theory from Edouard Glissant, Stuart Hall and Suzanne Scafe. My aim is to give an account of the cultural and readerly dynamics which are at play for someone like me, in navigating a creolised culture alongside strong current demands that we each as individuals take responsibility for our colour and all it implies in a charged racial moment.

### **Life Narratives and Storytelling of Black Educators as Educational Research and Application**

Lorraine Anim-Addo and Fezile Sibanda

Fezile Sibanda and Lorraine Anim-Addo are Doctoral researchers based at the University of Sussex in the School of Education and Social Work. Both their research centres on the lived experiences of Black educators in England. Oral traditions are intrinsic to Black communities and drawing on this has been an effective method to capture Black lived experience within their work.

Fezile's research is looking at the experiences of Black British academics in Higher Education, and Lorraine is focusing on the relative absence of Black teachers in leadership positions in London schools. This creative presentation will draw on narratives shared during the data collection process of their research using both storytelling and life history narratives. Little attention and recognition is given to the ever-present interconnected histories as a tool to understanding Black experiences.

This presentation will begin to interrogate the epistemological value and relevance of storytelling and narratives within educational research as a valuable way of knowing.

Lorraine and Fezile will use immersive storytelling, reflective free writing and physical theatre to capture and re-present the lived experiences of their contributors and explore how its application can be shared as a form of knowledge exchange and to shape understandings of Black lived experience in education.

## **PANEL I: Questioning Black British Writing in Higher Education**

**Chair:** Paul Halliday

### **Transcribing Multicultural Identities and Emitting Poetic Sparks: The Poems of Warsan Shire and Momtaza Mehri**

Professor Lamia Tewfik

Black British women's poetry has witnessed remarkable developments in the past two decades, with emerging voices articulating a myriad of unique personal, cultural and geopolitical issues that both complement and depart from those tackled by their predecessors. Two of these inspiring voices are Warsan Shire and Momtaza Mehri. Both Somali-British poets offer fresh perspectives on the experience of belonging to multiple cultural heritages. Shire's two pamphlets 'Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth' (2011) and 'Her Blue Body' (2015), as well as her full-length debut collection 'Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head' (2022) present first-hand eye-opening views on the meaning and repercussions of being a refugee in Britain, based on her family's experience. Mehri's poetry, including her pamphlet 'Doing the Most with the Least' (2019) and her debut collection 'Bad Diaspora Poems' (2023) reflects her rich background, encompassing her family's Somali heritage, and her early years in the Middle East. Both poets use their bilingual abilities, infusing their poetry with Arabic words and phrases to express issues of identity and cultural heritage. They employ cultural allusions to create startling moments of collision and poetic spark in their writing. The artistic techniques deployed in their poetry are capable of grounding complex geopolitical, cultural and feminist issues in an innovative poetic craft. This paper looks into the unique methods/moments of transcribing multicultural identities in the poems of Warsan Shire and Momtaza Mehri, analysing the strength of their poetic voices and their innovative ways of grappling with their experiences.

### **Black British Writing: Considering the development of an ethics of care approach and its meanings in the UK**

Professor Emeritus Joan Anim-Addo and Dr Gabriella Beckles-Raymond

This paper arises from on-going conversations that Gabby and Joan are continuing, particularly following their recent, joint paper touching on affect, and delivered at the 'Situating Black British Writing' workshop' in Leeds earlier this year (2023). The purpose of the current paper is to begin an exploration of the nature of a possible 'ethics of care approach' in relation to UK higher education and Black British Writing, one that addresses D Holscher's notion of 'participatory parity' (Fraser 2008) examined in the context of higher education in South Africa and bringing together concerns with both care and justice. Beginning with Holscher's argument that 'the context of higher education in South Africa renders relationships between students and lecturers vulnerable to replicating and reinforcing prevailing injustices in the sector', we consider the UK's context, its poor production of Black British scholars, perhaps especially in the Humanities, and how an ethics of care approach might begin to be developed towards practice that include parity, justice and care.

## **‘So, How Does My Book Get onto Your University Syllabus’: A Writer’s Perspective**

Yinka Sunmonu

The discussion paper focuses on what it could take to get one’s published book onto a university syllabus, with reference to Black British fiction. I ask about the criteria used by the institution; who chooses; the kind of knowledge that supports such choice, and how writers position themselves for success. I ask, also, whether, when writing, whether an aim by the author is ever to get the book on a syllabus somewhere, anywhere? Also, is the selection criteria for fiction on a Black British writing course subjected to similar rigour as for “traditional” fiction courses?

I reference throughout, my novel *Cherish*, which appears on the reading list of the UK’s first ‘MA in Black British Literature’ Programme. Central to the novel is the social context highlighting an area that in the immediate post-Windrush era was of great concern. That is, the trans-racial adoption of Black children. The novel proved to be also of great interest to social work courses. How do trends feature in the selection of Black British literature on university courses?

**PANEL J: CREATIVES UNLEASHED**

**Chair:** Courtney Conrad

Ros Martin  
Ronnie McGrath  
Belinda Zhawi  
.... and more .....

## Biographies

**Abíòdún Abdul** is a Yorùbá-Nigerian writer and UNESCO Cities of Literature Global Poetry Slam Winner 2022. Her expressive writing includes life essays and autoethnographical memoir-polemics encompassing her schooling across Africa (Nigeria), Europe (UK) and Asia (Japan). She also writes Yorùbá-centred short stories and poetry on social justice and topics celebrating our common humanity. Whilst working as an Academic English Lecturer & Assessor across the globe, she conceived initiatives promoting intercultural intelligence - What Colour Are Your Senses? - and combatting prejudice - The Scottish Racism Project. Her work has been published in anthologies; she writes/podcasts for literary magazines; performs at literary festivals/events; and presents at academic conferences.

**Joan Anim-Addo** is Emeritus Professor and Director of the Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies (Goldsmiths, London). She is a poet, librettist and scholar. Her writing includes 'Janie, Cricketing Lady' (poetry); 'Imoinda' (libretto); 'Longest Journey: A History of Black Lewisham' and 'Touching the Body: History, Language and African-Caribbean Women's Writing'. She is Associate Editor of Callaloo, Journal of Diaspora Arts and Letters and a Senior Fellow, HEA. She is a member of the editorial board of Transition Magazine (Harvard). Her recent publications include the co-authored 'This is the Canon: Decolonize your Bookshelf in 50 Books' (Greenfinch).

**Lorraine Anim-Addo** has worked in education in varying capacities for over 20+ years. Her first degree was studying drama and education; she then pursued a degree in law, before embarking on a journey as a teacher of English and Drama, 15 years ago. She has an MA in Social Justice and PgCert in Inclusion and SEN. She has recently left teaching, refusing to 'play the game to get by'. However, despite no longer a classroom teacher, she has not turned her back on education. She is more passionate than ever on matters of social justice, equity and education. She has found another way to use her voice and advocate for others in schools. To that end, she is currently in her 2nd year of a new journey, as a self-funded PhD researcher in Education. Lorraine's research seeks to understand the relative absence of Black teachers from positions of leadership in London schools.

**Nana Ayebia Clarke MBE** is a Ghanaian-born publisher currently resident in the UK. She has a BA (Hons); and MSt in Women's Studies from the University of Oxford. She was Submissions Editor of the highly acclaimed Heinemann African and Caribbean Writers Series for 12 years where she published and promoted prominent writers and Nobel Prize winning authors. She founded Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited with her husband David in 2003 and were later joined by their son Nick Kweku in April 2012. Nana Ayebia was awarded an Honorary MBE in 2011 for services to the British publishing industry.

**Dr Gabriella Beckles-Raymond (SFHEA)** is an independent interdisciplinary philosopher, writer, educator, and CEO of EQBR. Her research and writing is concerned with questions of love, moral psychology, culture, justice and ethics and what it means to 'Liv Good' at the intersections of systemic domination. Gabriella

also has over twenty years of experience as a leader and educational program developer. She is and co-founder of the Black Thought Collective and a member of the Caribbean Philosophical Association and the Collegium of Black Women Philosophers.

**Elisabeth Bekers** is Professor of British and postcolonial literatures at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Her research focuses on authors of African descent, with a particular interest in image/knowledge production, canon formation, intersectionality, the imagination of Europe and Brussels in literature and experimental Black British women's writing. Together with Elizabeth-Jane Burnett and Helen Cousins, she co-edited a special issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* on formal innovation in Black British Women's literature (Autumn 2022). She is co-director of the international Platform for Postcolonial Readings for junior researchers, and, since 2014, editor of an academic website on Black British Women Writers (<https://clic.research.vub.be/research>).

**Joanna Brown** holds an MA in Creative Writing from Royal Holloway, University of London, where she is currently a Techne-funded doctoral researcher. Her practice-based PhD project, *The Listening: fictionalising fugitive voices and fragmented lives in the slavery archive* seeks to recover lost life stories of Black women through an experimental blend of contemporary narrative, historical fiction and autobiography.

Her short memoir 'Birds' can be heard singing through open windows was Highly Commended by the Spread the Word Life Writing Prize, 2020. Writing for children as J.T. Williams, Joanna is the author of 'The Lizzie and Belle Mysteries' and 'Bright Stars of Black British History'.

**Tara Brusselaers** is a pedagogical assistant and PhD candidate at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Her project, "Multimodality in 21st-Century Black British Poetry", aims to shed more light on the poetics and politics of multimodality in 21st-century poetry by authors of African or African-Caribbean descent, and to create a model for the analysis of multimodality in the corpus. She holds a Master in Linguistics and Literary Studies (VUB 2021) and an Advanced Master in Literary Studies (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 2022).

**Courtney Conrad** is a Jamaican poet. Her debut pamphlet *I Am Evidence* is published by Bloodaxe Books. She is an Eric Gregory Award winner and the Bridport Prize Young Writers Award. She was shortlisted for The White Review Poet's Prize, Manchester Poetry Prize, Oxford Brookes International Poetry Competition, and the Aesthetica Creative Writing Award's Poetry Prize. Her poems have appeared in *Magma Poetry*, *Poetry Wales*, *The White Review*, *Stand Magazine*, *Bath Magg*, *Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal*, *Anthropocene Poetry Journal* and more. Her work has been anthologised by Anamot Press, Bridport Prize, Re.creation, Peekash Press, Bad Betty Press and Flipped Eye Press.

**Amirtha Devarajan** is a PhD Scholar at Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune (IISER Pune), India. She completed her Bachelor's (English Literature) from the University of Delhi and her master's (English Literature) from Ambedkar University Delhi. Her doctoral project focuses on the intersection of race, gender, and nation in the literary works of Bernardine Evaristo. To map this intersection, she uses the theoretical framework of transnationalism and intersectionality. One of her specific research interests is to investigate the label 'Transnational Fiction'. Apart from the aforementioned areas, her research interests include women's writing, feminist literary theory, Postcolonial theory and literature, transnationalism and literature, identity politics, South Asian literature, Black British literature, and world literature.

**Becky Drewry** is a current postgraduate research student at Goldsmiths, University of London, whose current research is concerned with the Eurocentrism of the human and Humanisms through an interdisciplinary examination of humanness in the literatures of the Caribbean (and its diasporas) and British colonial film projects. She obtained both her Masters in Literary Theory and Bachelors in English and American Literatures at Goldsmiths.

**Dr Marl'ene Edwin** is the Deputy Director of the Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is a Senior Fellow of the HEA and also a Churchill Fellow. Her research interests are Caribbean Creole Languages and Oral Literature. She is the convenor for the postgraduate module Literature of the Caribbean and its Diasporas taught on the MA in Black British Literature and the MA Literary Studies: Caribbean Pathway.

**Susan Alice Fischer** is Professor and Chair of the English Department at Medgar Evers College of The City University of New York, where she teaches Black British and postcolonial literature. She has published on women's London narratives and contemporary British literature, and she is a co-editor of 'Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education' (Routledge/Taylor & Francis). Her edited volume on Hanif Kureishi appeared in Bloomsbury's Contemporary Critical Perspectives series.

**Laura Fish** is an award-winning writer and Assistant Professor in Creative Writing, Northumbria University. She is a graduate of the MA in Creative Writing Programme at the University of East Anglia (UEA) 2002, and was awarded a PhD in Creative and Critical Writing from UEA in 2007. Laura has held posts as a Creative Writing tutor at the University of St Andrews, University of Western Cape, UEA, and Newcastle University, where she was the RCUK Academic Fellow in Creative Writing 2007–2013. 'Lying Perfectly Still', her third novel (exp pub. Fly on the Wall Press, Nov 2024), won the S I Leeds Readers' Choice 2022, and took third place in the S I Leeds Judges' Award. Her second novel 'Strange Music' (Jonathan Cape 2008; Vintage, 2009) was Orange Prize Listed 2009; International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award nominated, 2009. Iowa International Writers' Programme Fellow. Australian National University (ANU) Visiting Fellow, Australian Studies Institute (AuSI) May - July 2024

After graduating with a Master's in Black British Writing at Goldsmiths University in 2020, **Angelique Golding** won a studentship to undertake a Doctoral Award at Queen Mary University of London in collaboration with Wasafiri Magazine and the British Library. Her research, completing in December 2024, draws on methodologies from archive, postcolonial, and global literary studies combined with book and magazine history. She is co-editor of *Wasafiri 112: Reimagining Education* which considers what education means within and beyond the classroom, investigating government intervention and the reclamation and exploration of decolonisation, and addressing the forces of change and continuity in Britain today.

**Paul Halliday** is a photographer, film-maker and urbanist who originally trained in photojournalism and fine art film at the London College of Communications (LCC) and Central Saint Martin's Art College. He has worked on a number of long and medium-term photographic projects including a twenty-year project about London's streets and public places, a project focusing on urban objects and materialities, and a recently completed project about global spaces and the collapse of geographic certainty.

**Dr Kesewa John** is a historian of liberation movements, intellectual history, and gender. Kesewa's research explores twentieth century political history, specialising in transatlantic, multilingual linkages between Afro-Caribbean activists and the evolution and circulation of Black radical thought. Kesewa is particularly interested in the intersections of Black feminist and Black radical histories of Caribbean activism. Prior to joining Goldsmiths, she previously worked at University College London, and at the Université des Antilles in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Kesewa is a Lecturer in Black British History at Goldsmiths.

**Dr Leila Kamali** is a scholar and teacher of African American and Black British literature, diaspora and aesthetics. She is also a yoga teacher and a birth and postnatal doula. She is the author of 'The Cultural Memory of Africa in African American and Black British Fiction, 1970-2000' (Palgrave 2016), and her articles have been published in *Callaloo*, *Obsidian*, and *Kalfou*. Leila is working on two books: one on the question of place in John Edgar Wideman's writing; the other on the "inner life of Blackness". She is also currently creating an anti-racism training for non-Black people of colour.

**Dr Lucia Llano Puertas** works as a lecturer teaching French. Her subject interests are Transatlantic slavery and the Shoah, and the restoration of the voice and agency of the enslaved African in the archive.

**Kayra Maes** obtained her Master in Linguistics and Literary Studies at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in July 2023 with a thesis on the speculative fiction of Yaba Badoe and Patience Agbabi (supervisor: Elisabeth Bekers). A top student in her cohort, she was one of three students selected by the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings (VUB) for the 2-year "Talent for Research" programme (2021-23), which gives research-oriented students a taste of a career in academic research and encourages them to engage in different types of research activities in preparation of a PhD funding application upon completion of their one-year

master's degree. She is currently developing a doctoral research proposal on Black British children's fiction.

**Ros Martin** is a Bristol based writer/artist, author, poet, playwright, film maker, feminist and archivist. She is of Nigerian and St Lucian parents. Her literary based artistic practice and collaborations in Bristol, London and transnationally, give voice, visibility and expression to marginalised African/ Caribbean and other working-class lives, history and culture in struggle, past and present. Driven by witness, provocations, research and conversations her practice takes on many forms e.g. poetry, play, memoir, audio recordings, pavement chalking, social commentary, digital projections etc to engage the reader/audience and public.

**Ronnie McGrath** (aka “ronsurreal”) is a socially conscious visual artist, neo-surrealist poet and novelist. *Data Trace*, his first collection of poetry, was published by Salt, and he has both poetry and prose in various anthologies published by Penguin, Peepal Tree Press, and 2Leaf Press. A former creative writing lecturer at The University of the Arts, he currently teaches creative writing at Imperial College London, and Stroud College where he also teaches writing as a therapeutic tool. As a community artist, he facilitates a blend of visual art and creative writing workshops for Artlift, an organisation for mental health and physical well-being.

**Dr Malachi McIntosh** is an Associate Professor of World Literatures in English at the University of Oxford and the Barbara Pym Tutorial Fellow in English at St. Hilda's College. He is the author of 'Emigration and Caribbean Literature' (2015) and the editor of 'Beyond Calypso: Re-Reading Samuel Selvon' (2016). He is a 2023 British Library Eccles fellow and the recipient of a Royal Society of Literature Giles St Aubyn Award (2022). His latest book, a collection of short stories, is 'Parables, Fables, Nightmares' (2023).

**Dr Juliana Mensah** is a prose and theatre writer and senior lecturer in English and Creative Writing at the University of York. Her plays have been produced by Live Theatre and Pilot Theatre, among others. Her short stories have been published in various collections and her debut novel, 'Castles from Cobwebs', was longlisted for the 2021 Desmond Elliott Prize and won the inaugural NorthBound Book Award.

**Dr Joan Andzeuh Nche** had her PhD from Goldsmiths university of London in the department of English and Comparative Literature. She did her undergraduate at the University of Yaoundé 1 Cameroon and her MA at Northumbria University, Newcastle. She is interested in the poetry of Black British and African poets.

**Professor Pat Noxolo's** research brings together the study of international culture and in/security, and uses postcolonial, discursive and literary approaches to explore the spatialities of a range of Caribbean and British cultural practices. She was awarded the 2021 Royal Geographical Society (RGS) Murchison Award, and is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. Pat has led two international teams exploring Caribbean in/securities and creativity, and is co-lead of University of Birmingham's Stuart Hall Archive Project. She commissioned the report 'Supervising Black Geography PhD Researchers in the UK' (2021), and is co-founder of the Fi Wi Road internships for Black Geography undergraduates.

**Dr Leighan Renaud** is lecturer in Caribbean Literatures and Cultures at the University of Bristol, UK and Chair of the Society for Caribbean Studies (SCS). Her research interests include Caribbean mothering, Caribbean women's writing, folk and oral traditions in the Anglophone Caribbean, and creative practices of neo-archiving. She has published works in *The Journal of West Indian Literature*, *The Conversation*, and *History Workshop Online*. Her forthcoming monograph, 'Motherhood, Mothering and Marronage' (Peter Lang), examines the representation of matrifocality in twenty-first century Caribbean fiction.

**Eurekah Shabazz** is a published writer with works in several anthologies. Her 2004 self-published health book, 'Ancestral Healing Revelations,' is still sought after. She was a Performance Poet for 15 years, performing in Barbados, Martinique, Hunters College (New York) and London. She holds an MA in Creative and Life Writing from Goldsmiths University. She has also presented papers at Columbia University (New York) and Goldsmiths. Eurekah set up, and ran, creative writing workshops for disabled African Caribbean people. She also founded Disability Inspired Alliance, an organisation creating new public road signage while consulting with other organisations.

**Fezile Sibanda** is a Doctoral researcher based at the University of Sussex in the School of Education and Social Work. Her research is titled 'Coloniality in Academia: the experiences of Black Brit-ish Academics in Higher Education Institutions in England'. Fezile is interested in higher education, race and (de)coloniality. Her work centres on the voices and perspectives of Black and marginalised groups and their experience within and access to (Higher) Education. Fezile is also influenced by anti-colonial scholarship and counter-hegemonic knowledge, and world-making. Fezile has been awarded a studentship in partnership with the School of Education and Social Work and the Stuart Hall Foundation.

**Yinka Sunmonu** is an author and journalist. Her published articles include several on education, adoption and fostering. Her novel, *Cherish* – raising questions about private fostering – led to several initiatives, including the first House of Commons reception on the subject. She also created a Black Literature competition which ran for several years across London's schools. The initiative introduced many pupils and teachers to a range of black authors for the first time.

**Lamia Tewfik** is a Professor of English and comparative literature at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Sadat Academy- Cairo, Egypt. She obtained her PhD in 2006 from Cairo University on the poetry of Caribbean women writers. Her research interests include manifestations of power relations in literary texts, and ecocritical approaches to literature.

Originally from Brooklyn, NY, **Dr Lenore Todd** completed her BA at Amherst College, her MA at Universiteit Leiden, and her MLitt and Ph.D. at the University of St. Andrews. Her current project investigates African American and Caribbean women in Art History and Advertising.

**Katrijn Van den Bossche** is a doctoral researcher on the FWO-funded research project ‘Self- Reflexivity and Generic Change in 21st-Century Black British Women’s Literature’ (supervised by Janine Hauthal and Elisabeth Bekers at Vrije Universiteit Brussel). She obtained her MA with a thesis on the intersection of ecocriticism and memory studies in the work of Elfriede Jelinek (2021, UGent). In the last year, she presented papers on metafictional texts by Helen Oyeyemi, Patience Agbabi, Bernardine Evaristo and Natasha Brown and focused on issues of genre, gender and intersectionality. Recently, she completed a research stay at the Centre for Narrative Research (Bergische Universität Wuppertal, 2023).

**Dr Tracey Walters** is Professor of Literature and former Chair of the Department of Africana Studies at Stony Brook University where she also holds an affiliate appointment with the Department of English and Comparative Literature. Dr Walters works in the areas of Black British literature. She has published a number of articles on the subject of African Diasporic Women’s literature and several books: ‘I’m Not Your Mother’s Mammy: The Representation of the Domestic in Transatlantic Black Women’s Literature’ (Rutgers University Press, 2021), ‘African American Women and the Classicists Tradition: Black Women Writers from Wheatley to Morrison’ (Palgrave 2007) and edited two collections ‘Zadie Smith: Critical Essays’ (Peter Lang 2008) and ‘Zadie Smith Decoded’ (Peter Lang 2022) Walters is currently completing a book on black foster care in England.

**Dr Arlene P Weekes** has 33 years’ experience in the social work profession. Currently dividing her time as a freelance trainer, Fostering Panel Chair and Senior Lecturer, adopting a student-centred constructivist learning pedagogy. Arlene’s PhD research explored how individual biography, attitudes and values influence role occupancy and decision-making. Concluding that to execute their roles effectively, individuals need to be more self-aware, and manage, conscious and unconscious influences. She developed the concept of Effective Personal and Professional Judgement (EPPJ), the model assists individuals to improve decisions and actions, “Increased personal awareness increases professional effectiveness”.

**Samantha Wharton** is an experienced English educator known for her impact on inner London schools. She recently had the opportunity to do an internship with Quercus Books, where her passion for literature was further enriched. She also co-authored a study guide for Winsome Pinnock’s play *Leave Taking*, now part of the English National Curriculum. Her dedication to literature extends to her MA in Black British Literature from Goldsmiths University, where her dissertation explored the ruptures of migration represented in Black British Literature. An advocate for inclusivity and diversity, Samantha fosters an empowering classroom environment and has made valuable contributions to the field of education.

**Belinda Zhawi** is a Zimbabwean literary and sound artist based in London, author of ‘Small Inheritances’ (ignitionpress, 2018), and experiments with sound/text performance as MA.MOYO. Her work has been featured on various platforms including The White Review, NTS, Boiler Room & BBC Radio. She’s held residencies with Triangle Asterides, Serpentine Galleries and ICA London.





Venue: **London Metropolitan Archives**  
40 Northampton Rd, London, EC1R 0HB

## DAY ONE: FRIDAY

10am to 5pm

- **Roundtable - Dismantling the Borders of Our Knowledge**
  - **Black British Writing - Questioning Roots**
  - **Form and Innovation in Black British Writing**
    - **Archival Silences: Resistant Writing**
  - **Placemaking & Black Geographies of Writing**

## DAY TWO: SATURDAY

10am to 6pm

- **Roundtable - In the Margins: Black British Writing & UK Publishing**
  - **Routes, Poetics & Black British Writing**
  - **Life Stories, Educational Research & Teaching**
  - **Questioning Black British Writing in Higher Education**
  - **CREATIVES UNLEASHED**

SPEAKERS & CHAIRS: Abíòdún Abdul · Professor Emeritus Joan Anim-Addo · Lorraine Anim-Addo · Dr Gabriella Beckles-Raymond · Professor Elisabeth Bekers · Joanna Brown · Tara Brusselaers · Nana Ayebia Clarke · Courtney Conrad · Amirtha Devarajan · Becky Drewry · Dr Marl'ene Edwin · Dr Laura Fish · Professor Susan Alice Fischer · Angeliq Golding · Dr Leila Kamali · Dr Lucia Llano Puertas · Kayra Maes · Ros Martin · Ronnie McGrath · Dr Juliana Mensah · Dr Joan Nche · Professor Pat Noxolo · Dr Leighan Renaud · Eureka Shabazz · Fezile Sibanda · Yinka Sunmonu · Dr Lamia Tewfik · Dr Lenore Todd · Katrijn Van den Bossche · Dr Tracey Walters · Dr Arlene P Weekes · Samantha Wharton · Dr Nana Wilson-Tagoe · Belinda Zhawi