

On Whose Terms?: Ten Years On...
(Critical Negotiations in Black British Literature and the Arts)
Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. **March 22nd-23rd 2018**

The cultural power of Black British* literature and the Arts resides as much in the exploration of pressing cultural concerns, as in its innovative material aesthetics and textual practices.

The 2008 landmark conference '*On Whose Terms?: Critical Negotiations in Black British Literature and the Arts*' focused upon local, international and transnational engagements with Black British literature and the Arts, to trace the multiple – real and imaginary – routes through its production, reception and cultural politics. It created a meeting point for prominent and emerging scholars, writers and practitioners, young people and the general public for exploring the impact of this field, both at home and abroad.

The 2018 return conference, '*On Whose Terms?: Ten Years On...*' aims to chart what has happened throughout the past the decade. As substantial reclamations in cultural histories continue to expand and revise the horizons of knowledge, recent cultural and technological changes have also propelled new mechanisms of success as well as marginalization, invisibility and exclusion. This return conference offers a platform for incorporating the developments and questions concerning the impact of globalization and digitization, posthumanism and biopolitics, visibility and materiality.

At a time when established notions of community, human life and democracy have come under new and considerable pressures, this return conference offers a vibrant arena for critically engaging with Black British politics and the aesthetic practices that respond to today's local and global challenges. The conference seeks to take stock of these developments as well as encouraging fresh discourses in the field, in a context of critical investigation and celebration; to continue a journey along diasporic and aesthetic routes.

CONFIRMED KEYNOTES

Carole Boyce Davies gives the
Professor Stuart Hall Memorial
Address

Fred D'Aguiar

John McLeod

Jackie Kay in conversation with
Blake Morrison

Malorie Blackman tbc

EVENTS

- Performance and readings by:
Patience Agbabi, SuAndi, Jay Bernard, Kei Miller, Courttia Newland
- **National Museum of Caribbean Heritage** community project
- **Voices That Shake!: Young Voices in Arts, Race, Media, Power**

EXHIBITIONS

- **Eye 2 Eye Productions** Black Theatre Archive
- **Ronnie McGrath** Paintings and Poems
- **CEN8**

INVITED SPECIALIST PANELLISTS

Pedagogy and Decolonising the Curricula

Joan Anim-Addo, Nathaniel Tobias Coleman, Malachi McIntosh, Maria Lima

Archiving and Longevity

Sandra Shakespeare and S.I. Martin (National Archives of Great Britain), Munira Mohamed (Black Cultural Archives), Sarah White (George Padmore Institute)

Publishing and Prizes

Susheila Nasta - *Wasafiri*,
Kadija Sesay George - *SABLE*,
Bernardine Evaristo - Brunel African Poetry Prize,
Margaret Busby - S.I. Leeds Prize,
Pauline Walker - Alfred Fagon Award.

Poetics and Performance

Winsome Pinnock, Dorothea Smartt, Sacha Wares, Roy Williams

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

National Black Arts Alliance	Oberon Books
Norwich Writers' Centre	New Beacon Books
Pearson Publishing	Peepal Tree Press
Words of Colour	Arvon

Convenors:

Deirdre Osborne, (Goldsmiths University of London)
Birgit Neumann, (University of Dusseldorf, Germany)

In partnership with:

Kei Miller, (University of Exeter)
Catherine Robson, (New York University, London)

OnWhoseTerms10YearsOn@gold.ac.uk

<http://www.onwhoseterms10yearson.org.uk>

*Black British indicates a scope, for ease of reference, to a body of work by writers of African descent in a context of literary history, rather than as imposing racial restrictions upon complex possible identities and self-termining.

On Whose Terms?: Ten Years On...

We invite proposals across a broad spectrum of areas: drama, poetry, prose, performance, film, visual arts, music, curating, publishing, arts management and history. Areas of discussion might connect with the following ideas:

(i) Sites and Sights - The Digital Medium

In the past decade, digital media have given rise to new creative strategies and produced an array of sites and sights that enable interactive aesthetic practices. As digitization made possible various forms of participatory intervention, it has also reinforced socio-political barriers and cultural boundaries in the public sphere. Which role does the digital medium play in the production, circulation and consumption of Black British literature and the arts, and which new sites and sights of creative interaction does it open up?

(ii) Decolonising the Curricula

As the consequences of Britain's colonial legacy continues to contour and influence contemporary British culture, challenges to the traditional verities of educational and public institutions have gathered apace. Campaigns such as 'Why isn't my professor black?' and 'Rhodes Must Fall' have foregrounded the momentum for change. Neo-millennial generations demand a wider and more inclusive curriculum, and diversification of the teaching demographic. How is the tradition of the white interpreter problematised in, and by, Black British writing? What pedagogies and curricula exert a decolonising dynamic?

(iii) Historicising the Field

Imtiaz Habib (2008) has reflected, 'to collect scattered, fragmented, and historically disregarded records of black people from four centuries back, and to talk about them with authority and coherence consistently, is a daunting task.' The genre of historical fiction has taken a new turn in Black British writing and film-making over the past decade, alongside the visibilities created in the historical retrievals in Britain's national archives and broadcasting. How does the model of 're-memory' and the 'imaginary' of literary genres engage with history and *heritage* in a British context?

(iv) Economies of Cultural Visibility: the 'Value' of Black British Literature

Cultural visibility and authority in the public sphere fundamentally rely on the attribution of value. Value, however, is a fraught term that involves creative quality as much as it does economic interests. While Black British literature and the arts are certainly not independent from the logic of the market, they also find ways to assert their difference from it. Wherein lies the value of Black British literature and the arts and on whose terms is value attributed in the 'global alterity industries' (Huggan 2001)?

(v) New Subjectivities: Mixedness, Post-humanism and Afro-futures

At a time when the western humanist project has come under considerable pressure, Black British literature and the arts offer a vibrant arena for critically engaging with concepts of the human, life and subjectivity. How do creative and critical writers present new, possible post-human conceptions of black subjectivity? How do the arts and its possibilities for imaginative self-fashioning, radically reconfigure understandings of mixed and multi-ethnic experiences? Which creative strategies redraw the boundaries between human and the non-human agents, and how does this post-human project affect the modelling of Afro-futures and new, non-Eurocentric temporalities?

(vi) Sexual Textual Practices

The meta-context of hetero-normativity and hegemonic whiteness has been challenged both creatively and critically through the increasing body of work representing black LGBTQI+ experiences in British culture. What continuities can be mapped when we consider work produced 'within a history of exclusion and non-white racialization...both within and outside canonical genealogies.' (Ferguson, 2004)? How do we evaluate an aesthetic legacy of Black British LGBTQI+ perspectives – whether or not these are centralised in individual texts, or are by people who might not personally identify as such? To what degree is textual experimentation a means of reclaiming perspectives previously submerged in culture (and historically persecuted)?

(vii) Holding Environments: Publishing, Archiving, Revivals

Bearing in mind Hall's factors of 'innovation and constraint' (1996) that surround cultural genesis and production, across the interactive British arts sector (in literature, film, television, theatre, museums, and publishing), black writers and performers in Britain can still find their lives and experiences— if represented at all— primarily filtered through the dominance of white editors, publishers, directors, screenwriters, programmers, commissioning agents, reviewers and pundits. Has Black British heritage now become a permanent feature of public spaces and cultural records? Are there revivals of work? What are the classics? How can the legacies of activist artists, black presses and cultural networks be maintained?

First Call for Papers

Please send your **abstract (250 words)** and a **bio (50 words)** by **31 May 2017** to:

OnWhoseTerms10YearsOn@gold.ac.uk