JESSICA ALLEN, UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

Benjamin Zephaniah: On His Own Terms

In a 2002 book review of Benjamin Zephaniah's collection of poetry, *Too Black, Too Strong* (2001), Kwame Dawes suggests that Zephaniah may have been unknowingly used by the very systems he speaks out against. Dawes contrasts Zephaniah to Linton Kwesi Johnson, asserting that while Johnson is often feared by the dominant culture, Zephaniah is loved and perhaps viewed as harmless. A year later, Zephaniah publicly rejected the Order of the British Empire, confronting charges similar to Dawes's in his *Guardian* article, "Me? I thought, OBE, me? Up yours, I thought": "I've been called a sell-out for selling too many books, for writing books for children, for performing at the Royal Albert Hall, for going on Desert Island Discs, and for appearing on the Parkinson show." But, he says, "I want to reach as many people as possible without compromising the content of my work." It seems that the idea of "selling out" is a persistent anxiety among many black artists and their black audiences. My presentation will explore the ways in which Zephaniah transforms the accusations that attempt to place him in a position of passivity and ignorance into an opportunity to emphasize his agency, "secure his credentials" as a Black British artist, and make his presence even further known. He demonstrates that by "selling" or spreading his rage against injustice, he is *consciously* dedicating himself to his political messages of anti-racism, feminism, pacifism, and countless others.

BLAKE BRANDES, UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Anthologies Without Apologies: A Lens for Reading Contemporary Black British Poetry

In his essay "Multiculturalism Without Guarantees: From Anthologies to the Social Text," Cary Nelson employs a conceptual mapping of multicultural literary anthologies to the larger social text of a nation. Although Nelson's study addresses American anthologies, it provides a useful foundation and terminology for the discussion and analysis of contemporary black British

poetry anthologies, most notably *The Fire People* (ed. Sissay 1998). This study will present an analysis of Lemn Sissay's poetry from *The Fire People*, a collection of urban black British poets, as a way of interpreting black British anthological and poetic structure. The close readings will advance a tripartite theory of interpreting contemporary black British poetry through the lens of cultural affiliation while acknowledging the poets' complexity outside of said discourse. Featuring interviews with the poet and a rap component, this presentation expands the discourse of black British literature in an increasingly post-postcolonial world.

GODFREY BRANDT, BIRBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

PoBo: Poetics of Black Origin

The Creation of the MOBOS did not only highlight the contribution of Black *musics* and performance artistry to the Music and Arts scene. It placed Britain on the map of major international Arts awards. The contribution of Black Poetics/Verse to the contemporary poetry scene is without doubt and incontestable. It is, however, the nature of that contribution that makes for particularly interesting academic exploration. In this paper I wish to explore some of the origins and dynamics of Afro-Caribbean poetry especially in relation to the contemporary influences of Reggae and dub culture, as well as the influence of rapping, rhyming and rhythmic speech to the re-birth, rejuvenation and popularisation of poetry. We will specifically look at the performance aspect of the forms and how they might have served to re-vitalise the national appetite for poetry; thereby popularising the form.

In the final section we will examine the continuing march of Black poetry into the core of the poetic life of the nation, in form, content and modes of presentation.

JANE BRYCE, DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE, LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, CAVE HILL

Speaking to the 'real': the (ir)relevance of Isaac Julien to cultural nationalism, gender politics and creole identities.

At the last Barbados Festival of African and Caribbean Film, Isaac Julien presented his experimental triple screen video work Paradise Omeros, which translates Walcott's Omeros into a narrative of diaspora. A member of the audience commended him on the work, but regretted it was not being shown to the 'real Barbados', to which Julien retorted that gallery audiences were also 'real', and moreover necessary to an artist like himself, who seeks to challenge conventional visual expectations of genre in both film and art.

This paper examines Julien's video work, Paradise Omeros, and poses the question – is it 'relevant' to a Caribbean audience, or does it remain exclusively within the purview of Black British cultural agendas and/or an elite artistic community? Does the challenge it poses to regional pieties of nationalism, gender and creole identity mean that its voice resonates only with the metropole? If not, in what ways does it cross the boundary between metropolitan and regional constructions of selfhood to intimate new linkages?

WINNIE CHAN, VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Lip Service in London: Restaurant Workers and the Performance of Authenticity in Novels of Black Britain

Devoted to "THE BEST PLACE TO EAT IN THE WORLD RIGHT NOW," *Gourmet* magazine's 2005 "London issue" was sufficiently noteworthy to be featured on VisitLondon.com, the city's "Official Website." That Tamarind and Hakkasan, stylish descendants of immigrant restaurants, feature more prominently than upscale paeans to pub grub is perhaps to be expected of a millennial Cool Britannia, whose embrace of immigrant restaurant food signified to the late Foreign Secretary Robin Cook "the strength and future of British identity," a distinctly multicultural one. Cook's conflation of gastronomic consumption and social cohesion became instantly legendary as "The Chicken Tikka Masala Speech," whose eponym Cook proclaimed "a true British national dish," triumphant proof that Britain has "com[e] to terms with multiculturalism." Although the paper proposed here cannot improve upon chicken tikka masala, it does examine novelistic representations of immigrant restaurants as transcultural spaces in which the owners' non-immigrant children learn identities as truly British, but more varied and less willingly assimilated, than the national dish. From the earliest "Black British" novels, the sale of "ethnic" food has been associated with the performance of otherness, the shop or restaurant a stage pushed ever outward to the margins in a process of reverse colonization. While the availability of saltfish and ackee in Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) is a reasonable response to a newly lucrative market, the declaration that calypso fêtes make "It like Saltfish Hall in London!" sounds alarms two years before the Notting Hill riots. From the Ho Ho and Dah Ling takeaways in Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet* (1982), to the Shandaar Café in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1989), to Ardashir's tourist trap and O'Connell's chip shop in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, immigrant restaurants constitute sites of performance where "authentic" ethnic identities are performed and parodied in a process of reverse mimicry. While its ostensible spectators include the unthinking

patrons, its transgressive potential is realized in the second generation, whose aspirations lie far beyond the kitchen or the dining room.

SUSAN CROFT

Histories Lost, Recent and Future: Archiving and Documenting Black Performance

Such dominant cultural narratives as exist have tended to identify the presence of black and Asian theatre in Britain from c1968 where, alongside the emergence of the alternative theatre movement and fuelled by the larger political upsurge including the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in the US, companies like Temba, Tara Arts and Black theatre Co-op were established. This version of history excludes an extensive earlier history. This paper aims to trace some of the earlier initiatives that, from at least the 1930s sought to create a theatre consciously addressing black and Asian theatre and experience. It will discuss where evidence of this history can be found and the access initiatives needed to make it available, drawing on my own experience at the Theatre Museum and on the Black and Asian Studies association / Society of Archivists working party. This presentation will go on to examine the archiving and documentation of black and Asian theatre and performance in Britain, mapping and looking at the various initiatives in the field, covering physical archives, digital / online resources, and education, publication and other access initiatives arising out of them. It will introduce some of the recent online initiatives in the field such as SALIDAA, British Asian Theatre Project at Exeter University, and Future Histories and look at the representation of black and Asian work within other initiatives like my own project Unfinished Histories and the University of Sheffield British Library Theatre Archive Project.

PILAR CUDER-DOMÍNGUEZ, UNIVERSITY OF HUELVA (SPAIN)

Being Two: Mixed-Race Twins in Oyeyemi and Evans.

The first novels published by Helen Oyeyemi and Diana Evans feature twins of mixed-race parentage--a Nigerian mother and an English father--, growing

up in Britain. Eight-year-old Jessamy in Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl* is unaware that she was born a twin, but on travelling to Nigeria she encounters a troublesome girl she seems unable to shake off, TillyTilly. Georgia and Bessi in Evans's *26a* are identical twins who share all their experiences until a visit to their mother's homeland of Nigeria opens a breach in their perfect union. Both novels were published in 2005 and display a number of commonalities in plot, characterization, locations, and stylistic choices. In them Oyeyemi and Evans explore the Yoruba beliefs surrounding the special nature of twins, half way between the world of humans and gods. If one twin dies, parents commission a carving called "ibeji" to honour the deceased, and to provide a location for his/her soul. The specialness attributed to twins by the Yoruba is compounded in both novels by the fact that they are mixed-race and by the diverging locations, cultures, and languages of their parents. Thus, this paper will address how the two writers deploy Yoruba belief in order to raise questions about the cultural grounding of their characters' identity, and how being twins becomes a metaphor for the "double consciousness" of being Black and British.

ALISON DONNELL, UNIVERSITY OF READING

From feminism to feel good? The persuasions and politics of pleasure in Gurinder Chadha's films.

This paper would fall under the textual/sexual practices rubric. It would seek to map the trajectory of Chadha's work from the documentary / realist mode of her early works that foregrounded questions of exclusion and marginality (particularly as these operate at the intersection of gender and ethnic identifications), through 'Bend It Like Beckham', a film that arguably brokers a generic space between a narrative of hard-won multiculturalism and that of romantic comedy, to her more recent intertextual, celebratory, feel-good films.

Although the paper will only examine a small number of films, the wider questions concerning the debates about black British feminist politics and the shift from a focus on the social suffering of the minority woman to a focus on woman as a desiring subject may also relate to other genres of black british

cultural production. The aim is to consider to what extent this shift in genre - from feminist to feel good - can be read as a political resignification around women's pleasure rather than a commodification of minority identity politics.

DAVID ELLIS, WOLVERHAMPTON UNIVERSITY

'Watching for Detectives': Contemporary Black Crime Writing.

The proposed paper will discuss the growing body of literature by black British writers that falls within the genre of crime or detective fiction. My interest here is twofold: firstly, a discussion of this genre has the capacity to extend what we mean by 'black British writing' in the context of debates in the past ten years over the ghettoising potential for this term. Secondly, since a focus on national and personal identity has been a recurring characteristic of black writing in Britain, it seems apt to consider the dynamics of a genre where the puzzle of identity (i.e. of the killer) takes on a rather different valence.

My argument will proceed from a core problematic. Should we read black crime fiction as an additional means by which issues of national and social identity can be expressed or should it be taken out of such debates altogether and discussed purely in relation to the genre itself? Using novels by Mike Phillips, Victor Headley and Courttia Newland, I shall focus on the crime-solving central characters in each, as individuals located between official law enforcement and a black community still wary of criminalisation and racial stereotyping. Such characters are distanced from events and people through their detective's objectivity whilst also providing the narrative perspective through which the reader experiences and evaluates the plot. It is this combination of objectivity and intimacy that offers potentially fresh ground for both black writing *and* the crime genre. This paper will encompass issues of a black British literary canon, publishing and an implied reading public and would be relevant to each of these suggested areas of discussion.

SUSAN ALICE FISCHER, MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Spatial Tropes in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*

In *Small Island* (2004), Andrea Levy uses various London spaces to explore Caribbean migration to London before, during and immediately after WWII. Levy examines identity, belonging, marginalisation and nationality at a crucial time in English history, when the shrinking British Empire becomes a 'small island'. In *Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis*, John Clement Ball (2004) offers a useful theoretical framework for examining the sorts of rhetorical strategies Levy uses to resist imperial culture by envisaging 'a downsized London' as she redefines Englishness.

This paper will focus on the spatial tropes that Levy develops in her examination of Caribbean migration to Britain. Throughout the novel, Levy configures space to show that it is racialised and contested. The house at the centre of the novel signifies England and the promise of 'home' that comes with England's request for migrant workers to take up the jobs that white English have not filled. Levy frequently uses doors as spatial metaphors in this novel. For instance, we first see Hortense ringing the malfunctioning doorbell at Queenie's house, waiting a long time to be let in, and her welcome is qualified. Doors also mark boundaries that are violated or become permeable. By the end of the novel, space has become so contested that Gilbert says he has 'come to dread a knock at the door' (413) as it will mean the necessity of defending his boundaries once again. Levy similarly presents the public spaces of the street and work as problematic.

LAURA FISH, SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

The Black Woman in the Mirror

The mirror is key to the way in which racial oppression has been analyzed. The popular image of black people is the mirror opposite to that of white people. In the opening to the *Invisible Man* (1953) Ralph Ellison explains why white people are unable to see the main protagonist: 'I am invisible … because people refuse to see me … it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard distorting glass'. But the mirror is also key to arguments about the position of women in general. Virginia Woolf says in *A Room of*

One's Own (1929): 'Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size' (p. 34). Black women therefore function as looking-glasses in a dual way. This paper explores ways in which the mirror has been essential in how black women are viewed and reflected back. It offers an account of this mirroring in our writing by focusing on episodes in the history of our literature in Britain. The writing discussed seeks ways to overcome the situation in which black women are placed.I start by discussing early slave narratives, such as *The History of Mary Prince* (1831); followed by *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*, (first published, 1857); I then concentrate on the work of Una Marson (1905-1965), who wrote poetry and plays, and worked for BBC radio before and after the Second World War.

EDITH FRAMPTON, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Cosmopolitan Aesthetics: The Transatlantic Goddesses of Zadie Smith's On Beauty

Theorist Homi Bhabha has long been interested in 'the interstitial passage between fixed identifications [that] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity'. However, in recent years, Bhabha has realigned his thinking, rejecting, for instance, the term 'multicultural', and probing, instead, the possibilities of the concept of 'cosmopolitanism'. He has called for a new cosmopolitanism, or, in other words, 'new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting beyond one's particular society'. While, historically, most cosmopolitan political formations have been coercive and unequal, Bhabha suggests the possibility of a non-coercive and equalitarian 'minoritarian' cosmopolitan politics and cultural praxis. He envisions 'supraregional' solidarities and sensibilities, which would not erode cultural difference nor merely universalize on the basis of a Western standard.

Black British writer Zadie Smith's 2005 novel, *On Beauty*, depicts both cultural hybridity and, simultaneously, a version of the new cosmopolitanism that Bhabha has postulated. This highly acclaimed novel represents a

transatlantic triangulation between the Cambridge, Massachusetts domestic sphere of Howard and Kiki Belsey and their children, the East London home of Monty Kipps and his family, and the profoundly marginalized world of a Haitian underclass. This cosmopolitanism is put into play against a background of aesthetic inquiry, as indicated by the title of Smith's novel. Throughout the narrative, art historians Howard and Monty battle over the ideological legacy of Rembrandt; however, the central artistic legacy of the story is in fact not European, but Haitan: artist Hector Hyppolite's vibrant and voluptuous representation of a Voodoo goddess, Maîtresse Erzulie. That aesthetic legacy is transmitted through the female, rather than the male line, from Carlene Kipps to Kiki. While Kiki is the genuine, albeit challenged, heir to the painting, she is simultaneously the heir to a material feminine beauty, signified most prominently by her bountiful breasts. Deploying the theorizations of Bhabha, this paper explores the intersections of a new cosmopolitan ethos, aesthetics, and gender politics in Smith's award-winning reenactment of E.M. Forster's *Howards End*.

DOROTA GOŁUCH, JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN CRACOW, POLAND

On Whose Terms? – Translation of Black British Literature into Polish

Canon and its negotiation, cultural difference and politics of representation open the list of questions recurrent in the study of Black British literature. These three issues prove essential also for contemporary, culturally-oriented Translation Studies and hence they will receive main focus in my discussion of Polish translations of Black British literature. The material for analysis comprises published translations of Monica Ali, Andrea Levy, Caryl Phillips and Zadie Smith, as well as my work-in-progress on a Polish translation of Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*.

First, I will propose to investigate mechanisms governing the translators' and publishers' choice of works for translation and, second, examine strategies regulating the transfer of complex cultural meanings into the target culture. Third, I will ask how some themes and motifs central to Black British writing are represented and received in the Polish context.

In the analysis I will apply critical tools introduced by prominent translation scholars: Andre Lefevere's category of authority, Lawrence Venuti's translation strategies of 'foreignizing' and 'domesticating' and the polysystem theory as described by Itamar Even-Zohar. Research into the *process* of translation includes analyzing texts and paratextual devices (blurbs, prefaces, etc.) and interviewing translators, whereas the *product* of translation and its reception are examined mainly via critical reading of reviews.

I will also try to interpret my results in the context of changes and challenges that Poland is facing today. While tracing parallels, most notably between Black British and Polish emigration experience, I will admit divergences, such as Polish society's reluctant attitude towards Others.

JAMES GRAHAM, UNIVERSITY OF MIDDLESEX

'this in't *Good Will Hunting*': *Londonstani* and the marketing multiculturalism debate

The subject of a fierce and much publicised bidding war, Gautam Malkani's novel *Londonstani* was initially viewed as a publishing 'phenomenon' by the mainstream media then later reviewed as a 'failure'. This paper explores the novel's fate in the context of the debate on 'marketing multiculturalism'. Focusing on its narrative and linguistic techniques, my paper argues that the novel's portrayal of the transformative possibilities of desi youth subculture jars against the more conservative expectations of the audience it was initially marketed to. In a post 9/11 post *White Teeth* climate, this predominantly white, predominantly middle-class audience has developed a taste for realist fiction by black and Asian authors (such as Andrea Levy and Monica Ali) that depicts Britain as a multicultural patchwork of 'knowable communities' (Raymond Williams). By contrast, *Londonstani*'s focus on desi subculture, strongly influenced by black American cultural forms and seemingly more concerned with consumerism than community, has alienated this readership but is proving to be a cult success with a younger generation. The novel's perceived 'failure' is therefore better read, I suggest, as an expose of the mainstream publishing industry's limited multicultural vision and, by extension, the dominant vision of multicultural society in Britain today.

DAVE GUNNING, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

The 'black' and 'foreign' in the writing of Caryl Phillips

Caryl Phillips's most recent novel brings together the stories of three black men in Britain: Francis Barber, Randolph Turpin and David Oluwale. The novel is called *Foreigners* and it serves as a further development of Phillips's consistent exploration of lives structured by lived experiences of difference. This paper argues that ideas of the foreign particularly serve as a point of focus in his writing. To be a foreigner is neither pre-given by the facts of one's historical or biographical trajectory, nor an immutable condition. Rather, the

experience of foreignness is relational and comes about only as an adjunct to particular processes of community-formation. These processes of a group's coming to shared identity are essential in the development of any positive political discourse, yet they also serve to exclude and create the often infrahuman figure of the foreigner.

Phillips has explored many experiences of the African diaspora throughout his writing and is as aware of the benefits drawn from communal affirmation within black communities as he is of the repeated marginalisation suffered by figures like those he portrays. But his writing must be understood as more than a chronicle of the black experience: not all of his foreigners are black, and not all of his black characters are foreign. This paper will suggest that, particularly in Phillips's most recent works, we are offered a way of reading the historical experience of blackness that offers insights into the logics that label and degrade today's foreigners, whoever they may be.

SONIA HOPE, THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY, LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Black British Feminist Writing and Publishing: Barbara Burford's *The Threshing Floor*

Barbara Burford's *The Threshing Floor* was published by Sheba Feminist Publishers in 1986. Using documents from the Sheba Feminist Archive to substantiate my argument, I contend in this paper that *The Threshing Floor* is a significant work in Black British women's fiction. This is because not only did the stories receive significant critical acclaim, but also because Burford's text displays a significant willingness to experiment and to test the limits of genre. Burford's attention to the role of language in establishing genre is examined by focusing on the science fiction/fantasy narrative 'A Time for Every Purpose'. The novella 'The Threshing Floor' from which the collection takes its title, describes the complexities of Black female relationships and Black feminist collectivity. I will indicate parallels between the collective/co-operative glassblowing business portrayed in 'The Threshing Floor' and the activities of Sheba, which functioned as a co-operative, by drawing on the research of

Simone Murray into feminist publishing houses, and integrating theories of Black women's organisations, with reference to Julia Sudbury.

Barbara Burford was in political alignment with feminist, lesbian and gay activism. Therefore, I will argue that the decision to produce texts addressing these issues, and to publish with an independent feminist publisher was primarily a way of consolidating an established literary aesthetic and political stance, rather than a reaction to the indifference of mainstream publishing houses.

YING-YING HUNG, THE OVERSEAS CHINESE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, TAIWAN

The Art of Playing 'Britishness' in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*

This paper attempts a new critical approach to Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*. Up to the present, Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* has been mostly discussed for his use of dialect or narrative technique. Although there are some essays which discuss Selvon's representation of London as an alienating and hostile city for black immigrants, there has been no publication which examines Selvon's farcical representation of "Britishness" through the characters of those comical but meanwhile tragic black immigrants. In this paper, I would argue Sam Selvon's black immigrants play reversely the idea of "Britishness" and it is in their reversed play that makes *The Lonely Londoners* a comedy. As readers find those West Indian migrants pathetically try to settle in the hostile city, they also find it humorous to see them mischievously mimicry their perceived standard of English manners. Focusing on Selvon's treatment of immigrant experience in post-war London, this paper attempts to discuss another critical investigation upon Black British fiction, apart from the discussion on diasporic or transnational identities.

LEILA KAMALI, UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

'The Sweet Part and the Sad Part': From 'Black Power' to 'Black Atlantic' (and Beyond) in African-American and Black British Literature and Culture

This paper offers a survey of the contrasting roles played by the notion of 'tradition' in the development of African-American and Black British canons, between the mid-1960s and the 1990s. In this discussion, I examine the uneven relationship between African-American and Black British writers, artists and activists across the period.

Taking the height of the Civil Rights movement as a moment from which a particularly strong performance of 'blackness' has resonated throughout global culture, I begin by discussing the implications of that moment for the conceptualisation of black identity among African-American writers of the succeeding generation. I then go on to interrogate the particular ways in which black writers in Britain have 'received' these dominant images of blackness from the United States during a time when a discrete 'Black British' identity was being mobilised.

I discuss the concern of African-American writers in this period that the politics of Black Power is neglectful of an African-American past in which a coherent African-American tradition has been established, and is felt in contemporary forms of expression. Responding to the narrative of Black Power from a very different, yet similarly equivocal perspective, Black British writers express the sense that this is a notion of 'blackness' which fails to speak explicitly to their diverse experiences. They conclude that their own successful engagement with American tropes of blackness must involve significant adaptation to their particular, often quite individualised, needs.

As writers from each of these cultural sites 'write back' to the narrative of Black Power, then, they express their 'Black Atlantic' sensibilities in diverse ways – African-Americans with an emphasis upon tradition, and Black Britons with an emphasis upon self-creation. In each of these sites, the notion of performance is integral, and this paper seeks to capture the creative dialogue which develops around that theme.

DAVID KILLINGRAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Getting into print: Black writers in Britain 1770s to the 1930s

Opportunities for Black people (of African origin and descent) to publish books within British colonies were limited by economic constraints and sometimes by law. A certain number of books by Black authors were published in the colonies but a common course was for an author to seek to have their work published in Britain. From the 1770s to the 1930s nearly three-hundred books by African, African-American/Caribbean, and Black British authors were published in the United Kingdom, as well as articles for journals and newspapers. A few of these authors are well known, for example Equiano, whose two volume autobiography appeared in 1789, and E.W. Blyden the nineteenth century West African intellectual who wrote political works. However, most Black authors are relatively unknown; they wrote memoirs, autobiography, travel accounts, poetry, novels, sermons, hymns, theology, history, economics, ethnography, politics, as well as works of translation. The questions to be investigated in this paper include: why did they write books, who was their intended audience, how did they find a publisher, finance publication, how were their books marketed, received and reviewed, and who read their writings. A list of books by Black writers accompanies the paper.

ERIKA LAREDO AND YVETTE SMALLE, YOUTH AND COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME AT LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Carnival: a social pedagogy

At a time when communities are more fragmented than ever, the role of Carnival takes on an even greater significance. Although many writers have focused on carnival as spectacle, this paper will explore other essential contributions that carnival has made. It will argue that the contribution and significance of the Carnival in the community is more than just as a festivity, it has a greater role as a means of providing an authentic form of social glue. The focus will be of Leeds West Indian Community Carnival, which is the oldest Caribbean carnival in Britain, celebrating its 40th birthday in 2007.The Leeds West Indian Carnival continues the tradition of using carnival as a form of protest, sharing history, celebrating the body and having fun. The success of the Leeds Carnival can be seen in its significance in the cities social

calendar and in its diverse appeal. To understand the significance of Carnival we will be informed by a Freireian perspective, which argues the centrality of engaging people from where they are, and the importance of using their experiences to make sense of the world. From this perspective Carnival helps to develop a critical consciousness that enables participants to take an active role in their communities.

Drawing on participant observation, testimonies and stories from young people and senior members of the community the paper will explore the ways in which carnival creates an invaluable environment for collaborative learning.

This paper will argue that the Leeds Carnival offers a way of working that strengthens the spirit of community. It will also argue that Carnival operates as an invaluable repository for memories, while at the same time is engaged in a constant process of renewal, and therein lies its success.

MARIE LAURITZEN, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS

On transcultural London's terms?

– A take on the black British subject and city in Diana Evans' 26a

Increasingly, Black British literature has come into focus from the second half of the twentieth century and onwards. Scholars have paid ever more attention to black presences in otherwise white, clearly defined literary historical categorisation. With postcolonialism and postmodernism, the diasporic was firstly realized as an oppositional revolutionary other. Lately, however, it has come to be articulated and analysed as an unsettling force within settled ideas and ideals of literary history. From its inside position, the black British does not exhibit and engage with disruptive powers of deconstruction or activist grass roots intentions, but embody articulation and action in or in between traditional classifications and limitations. And so it is with London's black British literary and cultural scene.

In prose, Diana Evans is one black and white Londoner to illustrate the contemporary sphere into which this literature is progressing. With her debut

novel 26a British Nigerian Evans presents a course of identity conflict and process of maturation that does not centre nostalgically or resentfully on the terms of Empire and Commonwealth or a racially prejudiced England. Instead, the novel focus is upon personal places and relations, recognising hybridity as contemporary reality. Multiculturalism is no longer an issue for critical negotiation or part of postcolonial discourses. It simply is. 26a, the narrative and its protagonists willingly and creatively exist on the terms of hybridity as it constitutes the black British subject in transcultural urban life today.

HARALD LEUSMANN, BALL STATE UNIVERSITY MUNCIE

Diaspora Consciousness in Fred D'Aguiar's Early Poetry

D'Aguiar has at his disposal a sort of selective memory that is unique to diasporic people as they are not living in the place they are reminiscing about. What D'Aguiar records is a diasporic imaginary, very selective and subjective, not based on common experiences he may share with other members of the Guyanese diaspora in Great Britain in the 1980s and early 1990s.

In this presentation I argue that D'Aguiar, in *Mama Dot* (1985) and *Airy Hall* (1989), shows an ability to write and communicate the singularity of his experiences in Guyana. Guyana becomes the canvas for the artist to be filled with words. He can write a Guyana he experienced years ago into existence. Guyana is the imaginary homeland that D'Aguiar can conjure up through images that he was able to capture as a child. The physical sensation of actually being there is not possible anymore in a diasporic condition, so the mind has to function like a repository of memory and remembering to imagine a Guyana specifically in D'Aguiar's terms. With *British Subjects* (1993) D'Aguiar embarks on an attempt to make sense of what it means for him to be British. He examines the contemporary British situation, being a diasporic person in Great Britain and how to bring together particular cultural threads and belongings to a larger culture at the same time. Through *British Subjects* I will examine how D'Aguiar reflects upon the experiences of blacks as British citizens with all its accompanying stereotypical shades, like the book's cover

indicates. But he goes beyond stereotypes in an attempt to expand whatever it means to be British.

MARTA SOFIA LÓPEZ, UNIVERSITY OF LEÓN

(Travel) narratives, stories, histories: Caryl Phillips' The Atlantic Sound and Ekow Eshun's Black Gold of the Sun.

Stuart Hall has argued that "[black] has always been an unstable identity, physically, culturally and politically. It, too, is a narrative, a story, a history" ("Minimal Selves"). Both Caryl Phillips' *The Atlantic Sound* and Ekow Eshun's *Black Gold of the Sun* constitute efforts to negotiate black British identities at the multiple intersections of personal and family stories and the collective history of slavery, (post)colonialism, migration and diaspora. Identification and dis/identification with the metanarratives of black victimization and black pride are equally relevant in both these texts at the time of constructing "contingent closures of articulation" (Hall, op.cit). Equally important are the tensions between the need to feel "at home" (be it in Britain, Africa, or, as Ekow Eshun suggests, in the midst of "a nexus of histories") and the will to inhabit a nomadic trajectory which inscribes multiple displacements within the core of the self, revealed in the course of both texts as an ongoing dialogical project between "the 'unspeakable' stories of subjectivity" and "the narratives of history, of a culture" (Hall, op. cit). The fact that both *The Atlantic Sound* and *Black Gold of the Sun* are travelogues adds an even more dynamic and global dimension to a personal quest which cannot be divorced from the myriad collective narratives that circulate across the Black Atlantic.

MARIA HELENA LIMA, SUNY GENESEO

"Payback Time": Valerie Mason-John's Neo-Slave Narrative

My reading of Valerie Mason-John's *Borrowed Body* argues that perhaps it is time for critics to stop invoking the German *Bildungsroman* as a point of origin for seemingly autobiographical novels. Because we have been reading *Bildungsromane* much before focusing our critical attention on slave

narratives, we read the latter against the norms of the former, falling into the trap that genre itself seems to create rather than understanding that they are *both* a product of the Enlightenment episteme. To simply call *Borrowed Body* a story about growing up is similar to calling *Moby Dick* a story about a whale. It is a fictionalized account of Mason-John's own childhood, told from the magical realist perspective of a child, in a blend of conventions and traditions. Because in *Borrowed Body,* the supernatural is as real as the natural world, readers have to relinquish Cartesian skepticism and believe that spirits are indeed reincarnated. Most importantly, we need to immerse ourselves in the African worldview of accountability, accountability to our ancestors and to the generations following ours.

I also argue that the ideology of the traditional *Bildungsroman* genre disavows accountability. So rather than measuring the novel against the conventions and assumptions of the already read—the B*ildungsroman*—I suggest that we read it as a neo-slave narrative. Like in the slave narrative, the narrator of Mason-John's story attempts to locate herself as a subject in each location she has forcibly been removed to—that self's unbelonging, its "not being home," does constitute the genre.

MARSHA LOWE, *SABLE* LITERARY MAGAZINE

Mic Dreams: How government funded music courses are cementing the marginalisation of young black males

This study investigates the rise in music technology courses aimed primarily at young people in deprived areas. It will examine the effects of initiating arts programmes outside of the established arts community and instead placing it within a wider social exclusion/regeneration/crime prevention context. The effects of these conflicting agendas on the quality of the musical arts produced in general, and on the future prospects of young black men in particular, will form the basis for this piece of work.

Youth Music's Plug into Music programme will be used as an example of a genuine attempt to provide quality music education to disadvantaged youth. However, the issues highlighted in their project evaluation, such as the difficulty in securing qualified trainers and the sheer proliferation of grants from alternate bodies being poured into deprived areas, demonstrate why this approach is becoming increasingly problematic.

This paper will argue that the effects of this social problem led approach to musical arts provision has a particularly detrimental effect on young black men, because music, alongside sport, has traditionally been seen as the main avenue for disenfranchised black youth to 'succeed' on the scale of their white counterparts. So while many young people may well view these courses as a sideline, increasingly young black men, particularly those who are unskilled and/or unqualified, are treating them as a lifeline out of poverty and obscurity. As a result, the future for these young men and indeed for the wider black British cultural arts community is under significant threat.

VALERIE KANEKO LUCAS, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Diasporan Dreaming: Black identities and Post-Empire Immigrants

This presentation considers the role of the 'mother country' for first-generation immigrant characters in contemporary Black British theatre. The post-Empire diaspora brought to Britain immigrants from both Africa and from the

Caribbean; for such individuals, a key challenge in identity formation stems being stranded between two worlds: Britain and their former homeland. Both are mythologized by the immigrant: the former homeland is remembered through the lens of nostalgia as a lost paradise, a stable and moral community; the myth of Britain as 'mother country' contrasts sharply with the experience of immigrants coming to Britain to face alienation and racial discrimination. Paul Sirett and Paul Joseph's musical, *The Big Life* offers an optimistic view of settlement in 1950s Britain, while Mark Norfolk's *Wrong Place* reveals the second-generation's cynical view of how Britain failed the first generation of Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Kwame Kwei Armah's *Fix Up* articulates current debates about the transnational and hybrid status of Black Britons, who draw upon pan-Africanism as a means of ethnic affirmation. In these plays, Black characters search for an identity that can be both Black and British, contesting notions of monocultural national identity and dual heritages.

SHEREE MACK, WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE, LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Creating a Female Black British Literary Tradition: Phillis Wheatley, Mary Prince and Mary Seacole.

Recent decades have seen the publication of a developing body of literature about and by black British writers. The long history of slavery and colonialism is present within this writing, along with the documentation of a more immediate history of migration and living in contemporary Britain. However, few publications extensively cover the period before 1948, before Windrush. This paper deals with the themes of the canon and black British writing, focusing on the difficult relationship between the two, with a close examination of three early black women writers in Britain. The first writer is Phillis Wheatley and involves the issue of transnationalism. The second example is Mary Prince and discusses how her text testifies to the black experience of slavery. The final section explores Mary Seacole, in order to highlighting the importance of self representation to identity and belonging. This paper does

not attempt to offer an overview of early black Britishwriting nor of my chosen themes. Rather, it selects examples that highlight some of the issues surrounding the question of a 'Black British Canon' such as legitimacy, formation and composition.

KATY MASSEY, NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Considering mixed race subjectivities in contemporary British literature

The work of mixed-race authors such as Zadie Smith, Hanif Kureishi, Jackie Kay, Monica Ali and Diana Evans display a distinct consciousness of race and racial mixing pressing in on the 'self' in a literary context. This paper, taking mixed-race life writing as its focus, argues that a distinct mixed-race subjectivity does exist in mixed-race literature, but this does not annunciate a coherent set of ideas about 'race' per se. Rather it is one which redefines the ordering of influences, so that race is negated as a primary organising category. Uncertainty, ambivalence and the ephemeral nature of the individual's position in relation to the group instead emerges as the primary defining characteristic of this writing.

Utilising Gloria Anzaldua's conception of the 'border area', where 'two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races, sexualitites, classes, genders occupy the same territory" (Carole Boyce Davies) this paper will use the Scottish writer Jackie Kay's work to explore mixed-race writing as a site where (mis)identification and the politics of loss are tolerated and explored while never being 'solved' or successfully unified. In doing so, this paper will seek to problematise the usefulness of the concept of hybridity to explore mixed-race consciousness. It will also question the conception of the fragmentary self and argue that mixed-race authors in writing their lives provide a literary response to the idea that the mirror onto the self is only ever illusion. Further, it will argue that there is a political process at work in the discovery of the wholeness of the self being imaginary, because that wholeness, or even its illusion, is not and never has been the prerogative of the mixed race individual.

PAMELA MCCALLUM, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Writing at the Crossroads: Biyi Bandele's *The Street*

Studies of contemporary British writing have underlined the claiming of public space by immigrant groups. In Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and Transnational Metropolis, John Ball notes that writings by diasporic authors can be read as acts of resistance that lay claim to the streets of the city: "as writers render those experience into autobiographic or fiction narrative, they reinscribe the metropolis against their backgrounds and identities as formerly colonized subjects. The London that once imposed its power and self-constructions on them can now be reinvented by them" (9). Similarly, in *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (2004) John McLeod writes about an emerging body of diasporic writing that is "confident, cognizant of its transcultural past, optimistic, full of creative energies nurtured from the conjunction of different times and places in both city and self" (188). *The Street*, the 1999 novel about Brixton by Nigerian-British writer Biyi Bandele, certainly situates itself within these strategies. Bandele's diverse group of characters, his strong evocation of Brixton streetlife, his descriptions of the movement of characters throughout London, all suggest a claim to the streets of the metropolis.

My paper will develop and extend these analyses by exploring intersections of storytelling in The Street where Bandele uses a narrative style inflected by African oral traditions. In particular, the narrative is inspired by the Yoruba trickster god, Èshu, who is associated with roads and crossroads, an appropriate deity to preside over a novel about an urban streetscape. Bandele's "trick" on his readers, I will argue, is the production of a London story that constructs and represents a black-Atlantic diaspora, drawing not only on African traditions, but also opening out into the cultural practices of African-descended peoples on the other side of the Atlantic (blues, jazz). Taking Huston Baker's commentaries in Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory as a point of departure, I will analyse Bandele's incorporation of black American cultural forms in the novel. In this

way, The Street situates itself within both the traditions of diasporic London stories and a collectivity of black writing across the globe. As Bandele has commented, “the story never ends, no matter what happens: the story continues” (Ninth Dialogue 168).

MICHAEL MCMILLAN, UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS, LONDON/ MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

The ‘West Indian’ front room

The front room is a phenomenon that resonates throughout the African Diaspora reflected in colourful floral patterns in wallpaper and carpets, opulent furniture and consumer fetish. Diaspora here echoes Stuart Hall’s concept of cultural identity as a performative process: dialectically continuous and disruptive. The term ‘West Indian’ is coded in the representation of the ‘front room’, and refers to a particular historical juncture, when cultural political shifts mediated by anti-colonialist struggles signified a decolonising process. Post World War II black settlers in Britain found it easier to find jobs, than somewhere to live and encountered signs saying: “No Irish, No Dogs, No Coloured” when looking for rented accommodation. Eventually they did buy their own homes and like other immigrant communities, the front room became an aspirational space that spoke of working class respectability in terms of no matter how poor you were, if the front room looked good, then you were decent people. Dressed by the mother of the home, this room symbolises the fruit’s black women’s labour and participation in an emerging consumer culture. It’s maintenance raises issues of ‘good grooming’ amongst people of African descent and echoes Daniel Miller’s duality: transcendent and transient: ‘artificial things which are viewed as long-lasting, and things covered over which are seen as cherished for the future.’ The juxtaposition of Jim Reeves and Mighty Sparrow playing on the ‘Blue-Spot’ radiogram, crochet dollies and artificial flowers on the drinks cabinet, The Last Supper and hand painted wedding photos on the wall, plastic covered upholstery, was less about valorised white-bias ideals of beauty, than the performativity of status and the creolisation of popular culture. It raises questions about the

notion of authenticity in Caribbean and therefore black popular culture, and therefore it's contradictory nature, reveals how diasporic identities have been contested through inter-generational identifications, disavowal and the negotiation of gendered practices in the domestic domain.

KLAUS PETER MÜLLER, JOHANNES-GUTENBERG-UNIVERSITÄT MAINZ

Goodness Gracious Chadha, or: What's British in the American Bollywood Film 'Bride and Prejudice'?

In the context of research on how individual people, ethnic groups, regions and nations define their identities, how they use specific media in order to reflect and express notions of themselves and their cultures, I have examined a successful musical raising intriguing questions concerning Black British identities ("'Reaching for the Ska': The Hybrid Reconstruction of Black British History in the Musical The Big Life", in: Sigrid Rieuwerts (ed.), *History and Drama*, Trier 2006, 210-228). I would now like to discuss Gurinder Chadha's film 'Bride and Prejudice', which provides revealing answers to the question 'On Whose Terms?'. In order to find out to what extent the terms are actually strongly defined by the media and the cultural contexts employed, I will discuss what the film suggests about Indian, British, and American human beings, how the fictional characters conceive themselves and others, what concepts of identity it presents, and how it defines itself within the various cultures and value systems presented. Where do the traditions of Jane Austen and the comedy of manners come in, and are they treated in the same way as Indian traditions? What about the courtship narrative and the class issues, ethnic, gender, and generation conflicts? Who or what is the target of irony? Is there a balance between the different cultures, or is one of them favoured, and, if so, why and how? Similar questions arise in connection with the genres, the media, and the cultural contexts, e.g. romance, comedy, social and cultural criticism, novel and film, Bollywood and Hollywood as well as Britain. I'll address these questions from the point of view of a continental European who is not a member of any of the ethnic groups depicted in the film

and who wonders whether it is the result of historic evolution, cultural adaptation, or the creative ingenuity of its makers. Its hybridity certainly calls for an appropriate mixture of useful approaches taken from adaptation studies, media studies, cultural studies, and semiotics.

It will probably be necessary to limit myself to this film, but eventually I will compare the film with other works of art of the same time (such as the musical already mentioned or Kwame Kwei-Armah's *A Statement of Regret* (2007) and *Elmina's Kitchen* (2004)), as I think there are significant similarities and developments noticeable in the larger cultural context of Black British Art in today's media.

SOFÍA MUÑOZ VALDIVIESO, UNIVERSITY OF MÁLAGA (SPAIN)

Empowering Voices: Slave Narratives in Contemporary Black British Fiction

The present paper examines two Black British novels of the nineties that revisit the older tradition of the slave narrative to capture the voices of the silenced slaves and reconstruct the life of Africans in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. Several years before the 2007 commemorations granted visibility to British involvement in the slave trade, with their imaginative recreations of the black Atlantic and African life in Britain in *Cambridge* (1991) and *A Harlot's Progress* (1999), Caryl Phillips and David Dabydeen responded to what Bénédicte Ledent has called the long amnesia regarding the practice of slavery in critical and fictional writings in Britain. The first-person narrators in both novels write themselves into existence in their autobiographical texts, but these neo-slave narratives write back to the original genre by showing the uncertain relation of narrative to history and reality. In *Cambridge* this is done by setting off part of the narrator's story against other narratives of the same events, and in *A Harlot's Progress* by questioning the value of texts as mirrors of reality with a narrator that disrupts the conventions of realism and provides different beginnings, mixes events from alternative versions of his past, and disturbs notions of cause and effect. The fiction of Phillips and Dabydeen is frequently discussed in the context of

Afro-Caribbean writing, but the present paper focuses on their contribution to the imaginative construction of Black British history as they dismantle a myth that Paul Gilroy has repeatedly denounced, the belief that the black presence in Britain is an intrusion into an authentic national life which before post-war immigration was stable and ethnically undifferentiated.

JENNIFER P. NESBITT, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, PENN STATE YORK

Rum and Black British Subjectivity in George Lamming's Fiction

Rum can make you drunk. This capacity to intoxicate the self, coupled with rum's historical role in the colonial slave trade, renders it a potent image for the context in which "post"-colonial subjectivities emerge during the era of decolonization. In this presentation, I first consider the circulation of rum as a commodity through crisis points in George Lamming's novels *The Emigrants* and *Water for Berries*, arguing that rum persistently fosters misrecognition of material conditions as cultural beliefs, and vice-versa, engendering apparently self-destructive reactions in the male characters of the novels. Conversations in a rum-shop motivate Collis, the nominal protagonist of *The Emigrants*, to invest in England as his future. The failure of this investment returns in the figure of Derek, whose rage against British racism is unleashed by a "souvenir-sized" bottle of rum in Water with Berries. Rum registers the "post" colonial as a fantasy (or phantasmagoria) in which impoverished economies of Black British subjectivity are embedded in a denied, dispersed history of colonial exploitation that continues to circulate through its commodities. The latter part of the essay counters circulation by triangulating Lamming's figuration of rum with similar, later, efforts by Michelle Cliff (Jamaican/US), in a bar scene in *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), and Barry Unsworth (English), in an encounter with a Black British writer in *Sugar and Rum* (1988), to analyze the material conditions of postcolonial subjectivity through an engagement with rum. This triangulation offers a momentary, temporary fix on the potential of "the material turn" in contemporary literary studies to draw

attention to the multiple, transnational contexts in which notions of Black Britishness have been negotiated.

MARIA CRISTINA NISCO, UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI "L'ORIENTALE"

Literary and diasporic narrations of identity: Lucinda Roy's *Lady Moses*.

Black British literature continues to be the focus of critical investigations and discussions. Apart from the labels associated to writers, a significant literary production constantly emerges and creates multiple forms of testimonies encouraging to take an ethical responsibility for one's position in the world. In fact, writing realizes a fundamental strategy: it exposes readers to (what is usually perceived as) alterity, it obliges them to confront with the definition of themselves and of the others.

In this context, the novel *Lady Moses* (1998) written by Lucinda Roy offers a new perspective on how the writing of a story allows the writing of one's (biographical or fictional) life, consequently allowing the re-writing of oneself. *Lady Moses* accompanies readers on a journey towards physical and geographical places but also – and most importantly – towards critical identitarian and cultural spaces. Roy's novel is open to questioning and investigation and also opens a site of creativity where different positions are negotiated in a heterogeneous way, refusing a stable and univocal idea of Britishness. Therefore, Britishness will be explored in relation to a literary production involving multiple forms of narration – written and oral forms (both present in Roy's novel) – that gradually become a spatial dimension, a vital and existential dimension.

The paper will also discuss the contribution in this field of eminent scholars like Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, their theorizations of a different concept of identity, and their suggestion to engage with literary and artistic diasporic productions in order to experience new perceptions of oneself and the others, realizing significant negotiations towards a multicultural proximity.

ROSE OLURONKE OJO, SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

The Ritualized Black Male Body in the Work of the Late Rotimi Fani Kayode

I would like to present my paper entitled The Ritualized Black Male Body in the Work of the Late Rotimi Fani Kayode. I will analyze the representation of Rotimi Fani-Kayode's multi-layered identities in his work in relation to how it was received by the international arts communities in both the United States and the United Kingdom.

Rotimi Fani Kayode was born in Nigeria in 1955 but relocated with his family to Brighton, England in 1966 as a result of the Nigerian Civil War and a military coup. Rotimi Fani Kayode utilized Yoruba religious beliefs in his work such as *Sonponnoi*, 1987 and Every Minute Counts, 1989 to refer to his unique positioning as a Black African homosexual male based in Britain. Both works also referenced his battle with AIDS. Fani- Kayode stated that his work dealt with "the darkest of Africa's dark secrets" in respect to homosexuality in his essay Traces of Ecstacy (Fani- Kayode, 1999), and *Sonponnoi* can also refer to the effect that the AIDS epidemic has on individuals in black communities in Africa and around the world. Fani- Kayode died in 1989 from complications due to AIDS.

ALPESH PATEL, UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

Black (British) Aesthetic Strategies as "Camp:" Production, Circulation, and Reception

I have argued elsewhere that artists who are destabilizing the South Asian diaspora as a knowledge category often use some or all of the following formal, aesthetic strategies: sumptuous, vivid use of color (or lack thereof); use of spectacle or arresting images; spatial theatricality (maximal or minimal use of size/space in artwork); visual appropriation (parody/irony/humor); yoking beauty with the grotesque; and a particularly, synaesthetic visuality. These aesthetic strategies that I have characterized as "camp" are often used

primarily to destabilize a broad array of often intersectional, identity categories. These strategies, I argue, are also indexical of works of artists who interrogate the African diaspora.

In addition, I will contextualize these “camp” strategies by considering how an artist positions him/herself, as well as his/her artist practice, within larger artworld trends, such as recent, post-millennial claims of identity as being "post," or in some sense irrelevant through the assumed homogenizing effects of globalization and the elision of differences. At the same time, I interrogate the viability of theorizing “Black British” art as separate from the larger pan-European and North American-driven artistic network in which it is often circulated. This framework allows me to consider a broad array of “African-American” (Kehinde Wiley, Kara Walker and Wangechi Mutu) and “Black British” (Chris Ofili, Yinka Shonibare, and Isaac Julien) artists who often (are) exhibit(ed) together and interrogate the African diaspora as a knowledge category.

ESTHER PEEREN, UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

Carnival and Spectacle (based on two chapters in *Intersubjectivities and Popular Culture: Bakhtin and Beyond*)

My paper will connect to the Carnival and Spectacle area and is based on two chapters in my recent book Intersubjectivities and Popular Culture: Bakhtin and Beyond. Through a close analysis of two representations of the Notting Hill Carnival – Isaac Julien’s short film Territories and Linton Kwesi Johnson’s dub poem “Forces of Victory” – I argue that the Carnival, in its heydays of the late 1970s and early 1980s, staged a territorial confrontation between an established, dominant British identity and an emergent black British identity. I analyze this confrontation through the concepts of carnival, chronotope and performativity, with territory functioning as the point of their material and political coagulation. In the Notting Hill Carnival, territories are no longer the exclusive domain of the dominant order, but become capable of providing a strategically shifting ground for the political assertion of oppositional identities,

which are never static but always engaged in a process of what I have called “versioning”. Versioning captures the capacity of events and subjects actively to intervene in the performative reiteration of normative identities in order to keep identities in process and articulate them differently. Versioning appears in Johnson’s use of dub, in Julien’s metaphors of the sound system and the cutting room, and in the way the Notting Hill Carnival as an event was heterogeneously positioned between art and politics not just from the outside (by the British authorities) but also from the inside by the ideological struggle between the CDC (Carnival Development Committee) and the CAC (Carnival and Arts Committee).

MICHAEL PERFECT, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Fold the paper and pass it on: Historical Silences and the Democratization of Narrative Structure in Andrea Levy's Fiction

Critical accounts of Andrea Levy's fiction have tended to focus on the ways in which her novels explore the hybridized identities of British-born, female protagonists of Jamaican descent and the experiences of racism to which they are subjected. While such analyses have often proved fruitful, in many ways the complexities of Levy's work have not been addressed; in particular, its formal complexities and its treatment of historical silences have not received adequate attention.Reticence and the unspoken are ubiquitous in Levy's fiction. In each of her first three novels, the young protagonists find their parents very reluctant indeed to talk of the past, and the novels not only warn against such silences but increasingly attempt to confront them. With Small Island's evocation of post-war London, Levy engages with a supposedly familiar historical moment and yet, in doing so from the perspective of a number of different protagonists, explores aspects of that moment about which many have been similarly disinclined to talk. It is somewhat fitting that Levy's first, second and fourth novels employ, respectively, one, two, and four narrators, and with this increasing propensity towards using a multiplicity of voices - towards narrating across the boundaries of family, class, ethnicity and gender - Levy's work explores not just the experiences of racism but also, crucially, different complicities with racism.

Examining each of Levy's four novels to date but focusing primarily on Small Island, this paper argues that Levy's work has increasingly attempted to confront historical silences and cultural amnesia, emphasizing the importance of narrating, rather than negating, the past. Moreover, I argue that this increasing insistence upon the importance of narrative has been concurrent with an increasing tendency to embrace the democratization of narrative structures, and that the implication of this concurrency is that to engage with history at all is, necessarily, to engage with a multiplicity of voices.

SU PING, UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

History, Form, Responsibility: A Comparison of Caryl Phillips and Ge Fei

This paper will undertake a cross-cultural comparison of two contemporary writers' approaches to the role and the responsibility of the writer in fiction. It will compare the writing of pre-eminent black British writer Caryl Phillips and the contemporary Chinese writer Ge Fei, a pioneer in the Chinese avant-garde movement, which emerged in the late 1980s as a challenge to the socialist realism dominating China since the New Culture Movement in 1919. These writers, from totally different cultural backgrounds, share many similarities and both resist any kind of simple categorization. Phillips rejects labels such as 'British' writer, 'Black British' writer, 'Caribbean' writer, 'Postcolonial' writer, etc. while Ge Fei resists labels applied to him such as 'avant-garde.' But both believe that one of the most important functions of fiction is the struggle against amnesia, especially historical amnesia. They also share a common interest in narrative form and both express a belief in the responsibility of the writer and a refusal to compromise this for commercial reasons. Ge Fei's Ren Mian Tao Hua (*Face like a Peach Blossom*) took him nearly ten years to finish and Phillips also stresses in interviews that literary fiction should not be rushed.

In this comparison I will investigate how both writers subvert the claims to 'absolute truth' of official history and represent histories from multiple perspectives by engaging with characters whose voices have been repressed. I will examine the ways in which they both experiment with narrative forms

and techniques to better transport their story, and argue that their similar opinions about the writer's responsibility have led to a common way of looking at history and form. This comparative study of Caryl Phillips and Ge Fei will shed new light on the understanding of Black British literature in a global context.

EVA ULRIKE PIRKER, UNIVERSITY OF FREIBURG

An oppressed discourse? Representations of 'mysterious' deaths in British police custody

It is the peculiar paradox of police misconduct cases that it is the very agents of the state who are notionally charged with the task of upholding law and order that are the alleged perpetrators of illegality and disorder. Almost uniquely among the numerous types of cases that come before the courts the complainant is in practice not only denied the protection of the agency that in other circumstances would impartially investigate and prosecute the wrongdoer but typically finds him- or herself ranged against one of the most powerful institutions in the land which can seem bent upon discrediting their version of events and vindicating its own officers. (Harrison, Cragg and Williams: 2005, v)

Deaths in British police custodies are a sensitive matter, as can be gathered from the observation of their treatment in different media and genres, and even more from a lack of coverage. The discourse around deaths in British police custody is connected to the discursive contexts of race relations, the role of the police as an institution, the role of the media in the representation of both, but also the changing role of the media in (British) society. This contribution seeks to trace the intricacies at work on both levels, of the subject matter and its representation in diverse forms of expression. First, the subject matter of deaths in police custody as well as representational practices with respect to these incidents are considered in an overview. A subsequent part is devoted to the recent debate around Ken Fero's film Injustice (2001) and the societal and political background from which it evolves (i.e. 1990s Britain). Injustice is read against the backdrop of earlier representational practices and

discourses. All in all, the relation between the sensitive subject matter of 'deaths in police custody', politics and representational practices reveals a shift in power relations that arguably parallels a shift in practices surrounding censorship in the UK.

JAMES PROCTER, NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Reading after Empire: Reception and the West Indian Literary Colony in London, 1940s-1960s

It is now well known that London represented a literary headquarters for West Indian writers after World War II, and critics ritually remind us that 137 Caribbean novels were published in the metropolis between 1952 and 1967 (Ramchand). Much less has been said on the reception of these writings during the same period. Examining contemporary reviews and criticism, letters exchanged between writers and editors, and literary representations of reading, this paper will attempt to critically reconstruct the reader and reading acts during a key phase in late-colonial/early post-colonial metropolitan culture.

LAURI RAMEY AND OLUWATOSIN WILLIAMS, JAZMIN DELGADO, ROMEL KHALAF, BARBARA MUÑOZ, MISA HAYASHI, KU'UIPO AKI-SILER, JASON HARDWICK, SIRENE-ROSE LIPSCHUTZ, CHRISTINA OLAGUE, MELISSA RAY, CARINA QUAN, JODY FEHR, MANUEL CUADROS, JOHN INGLES, GRAHAM GREMORE, MONIQUE BURNLEY, MILDRED FOLGAR, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES

Busman's Red, White, and Blues: Multicultural American Students' Reception of and Critical Engagements with Black British Literature"

This presentation will share the perspectives of developing scholars from the US who are newly addressing Black British writing and culture for their undergraduate capstone class in British literature, and correlating it with their prior educational experiences. They will discuss their processes of discovery,

theorization and research in Black British writing and culture, focusing on topics relating to categorization and self-articulation; national canons beyond national borders; reading perspectives of "outsiders" (from our multicultural university largely comprised of underserved populations) on other "outsiders;" dual and multiple marginalization; challenges of publishing, distribution, teaching, research and curriculum; and comparative issues of immigration and national/individual/group identity/boundaries. The presentation will be a panel discussion moderated by the professor followed by questions and answers. The dynamic interchange among panelists will be structured around a set of brief individual presentations of abstracts. The topics have evolved cohesively from themes identified as key issues in preparing for this conference. Close consideration has been given to the proposed conference themes, and strands from several major ideas have proven relevant to the group's interests.

JOSIANE RANGUIN, PARIS IV - SORBONNE UNIVERSITY

Performative blackness in Caryl Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark.*

Caryl Phillips, a Caribbean-British writer currently living in the United States, wrote *Dancing in the Dark* in 2005, a work of immigrant fiction based on the life of Caribbean-born minstrel performer Bert Williams, who became the most famous black American entertainer at the turn of the previous century.

This paper will focus on Caryl Phillips's exploration of the production and perception of black performance at a time when black entertainers were struggling to be recognized as artists. We will examine how C. Phillips's address of "such an American topic", in his words, conveys the plight of a black performer who feels cornered into minstrelsy by the expectations a white audience, caught as he is in the double bind of "performative bondage" (p. 6) and performative assertion of a self-demeaning image.

Artistic interpretations and reinterpretations of the self are then at the centre of this reflection on Bert Williams as a black artist seen through the prism of multiple perspectives as a "colored performer(s)", a "colored American performer", a "colored American", or a "colored man"(p. 100)

As we follow C. Phillips's rendition of a performer's consummate artistry, we are given a glimpse of the black actor's cognitive skills at work during performance, as Bert Williams, playing his white audience, tries to subsume the image he is trapped in through sheer artistry, his artistic answer to his plight being to sublimate a stereotype into a perfect art form before 'it shudders and breaks and falls back to earth'(p.6).

SUSANNE REICHL, UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Out of this world: Learning from aliens and other others

In this paper I would like to discuss the rich potential of teaching Black British literature at university. In connection with a (very brief) contextualisation of the aims and purposes of teaching literature in a foreign language setting, this paper will introduce a way of using Black British writing in the (foreign language) classroom that goes beyond the reading of a realistic novel. My experience has shown that, despite a great interest in the topic, students on the whole are more likely to fall into simplistic patterns of understanding a text if that text is a realistic account of racial discrimination and cultural (un-) belonging. What they learn, often, is an assertion of (literally) black-and-white patterns of thinking, and because the pattern is so simple, students can put a certain distance between themselves and the texts. They can look at it as a typically British situation that happens somewhere else, to someone else, and while this in itself might be interesting, learning about literature can and should go deeper than that.

To encourage a deeper and more critical engagement with the issues involved, as well as to establish a link to students' own experiences, I would like to introduce some texts that construct alternative worlds instead, such as Patience Agbabi's "Ufo Woman." By means of such a rather drastic and bizarre decontextualisation from concrete issues, readers can grasp some of the universal patterns underlying alienation processes. A combination, then, of realistic Black British texts and alternative fictional worlds, I would argue, provides an opportunity for students to learn about both patterns of cognition

and behaviour, and ways in which these patterns manifest themselves. This, in turn, enables them to see the wider implications of the issues discussed and make a more imminent connection between literature and life. Texts discussed will include: Patience Agbabi, “Ufo woman” and Malorie Blackman, the *Noughts and Crosses* trilogy.

ALAN J. RICE, UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE

Black British Artists and Writers in English Art Institutions and Galleries: Revealing Histories, Dialogising Collections

This paper will interrogate three key exhibitions organised in response to the Bicentennial of the Abolition of the slave trade held during 2007. The major focus will be on the Trade and Empire: Remembering Slavery exhibition at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester which I co-curated with black British artists Su Andi and Kevin Dalton Johnson and Revealing Histories researcher Emma Poulter. The exhibition took as its starting point the Whitworth’s collection and sought to interrogate the networks connected to slavery that underpinned it. The multi-media exhibit includes work by contemporary artists Godfried Donkor, Althea McNish, Su Andi and Tony Phillips as well as historical works by J.M.W. Turner, William Hogarth, Thomas Hearne, Olaudah Equiano and Henry Box Brown. Having been involved in the curatorial discussions for the selection, I will discuss the ideologies contributing to the display of the work and the way it was contextualised in accompanying labels and panels. I will concentrate on the Contemporary and historical Black Atlantic contributions to the exhibit and the way these brought new perspectives on the historical works in the hitherto conservative environment of the Whitworth. More specifically, I will discuss the way individual works gain new interpretations in the light of their hanging in this particular context. To essay the exhibition’s regional and national importance, I will contrast it to Lancaster Museums Service’s Abolished? (in particular Lubaina Himid’s installation Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service) and the Victoria and Albert Museum’s Uncomfortable Truths exhibitions. These also use contemporary artists’ work to dialogise their collections. The former works

well, partly because of its small scale, whereas the latter rather than revealing links to the slave past is rather dwarfed by the sheer weight of historical riches in the museum. The paper will conclude with a discussion around the benefits of localism in making polemical points about a global phenomenon.

MIDORI SAITO, GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON AND HITOTSUBASHI UNIVERSITY, JAPAN

Race and Gender in the CAM

In my paper, I shall discuss the CAM in contrast to the négritude and insular literary movements in the Caribbean of the 1930s. I argue that the rootlessness and diasporic state of the writers and artists in the CAM, together with their varied cultural backgrounds, contributed to the unique nature of Caribbean literary nationalism. To put it differently, if Western nationalism is defined by geographical territory, or by language, Caribbean nationalism expressed through the CAM differs from the Western notion of nationalism. Further, the CAM is more complex than a mere repetition of the negritude movement, more heterogeneous in its character, incorporating multitude of views. In contrast to the négritude movement, the definition of blackness in the CAM movement was more inclusive, to which contributed the unique notion of blackness in the British context. For instance, in Savacou, Brathwaite writes on black consciousness: "Black consciousness is not concerned with excluding people, but with filling a void; it is not with separatism, but with the establishment of universal values" (p7 SAVACOU: December 1970 March 1971, Kingston) He redefines the black people as "the people who feel the burden of non-possession," and suggests that "the majority of those who possess nothing and who are articulate about it in song, dance and poetry, are black." I shall discuss that the prominence of women writers was facilitated by its inclusive characteristics of the CAM movement.

SUZANNE SCAFE, LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY

Whose Memory? Performance, History and the Limits of Representation

This paper examines a selection of dramatic works that were commissioned and performed in London in 2007 to 'commemorate' the bicentenary of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1807) including, among others, Caryl Phillips's adaptation of Simon Shama's *Rough Crossings*, Kwame Kwei Armah's *Statement of Regret* and Roy Williams's *Joe Guy*. I present these productions in two broad categories: historical dramas that reconstruct a primary experience that is outside history, thus raising questions about recoverability and representation, and drama that sees the trauma of a slave past revealed in the violent dysfunction of the present. In both categories of drama the experience of slavery is presented as a trauma which can only be retold figuratively and in ways that simultaneously attempt and escape interpretation. Each work reveals an incomplete and contested 'memory' and the possibility of an only partial understanding of the past and its complex reverberations in the present.

The plays, which range from optimism to tragedy and pessimism, characterise the range of possibilities and the limits experienced by a fragmented black community. They demonstrate the extent to which individual identities are inextricably bound up with the past of slavery, colonialism and Empire and suggest that the challenge for Black communities in the twenty-first century is to prevent the return of the violence and dislocation that marks a shared history of capture, captivity and enslavement.

JUTTA SCHAMP, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY DOMINGUEZ HILLS, LOS ANGELES

From Memory to Inter-ethnic "Post-Memories": David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress*

While there is already some research on 18th-century African writers in Britain, the investigation of Black and Jewish relations, as well as (shared) memories, in the 18th century and contemporary literature is still in its incipient stage. In Britain, the 18th- century African writer Ignatius Sancho — in conjunction with

Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano —is primarily known as one of the founding figures of African British literature. While Sancho's *Letters* have been analyzed from the vantage point of the construction of a complex African-British identity, literary critics have largely ignored the anti-Semitism Sancho's *Letters* exhibit. In contrast to Sancho, the narrator in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, however, tries to highlight the similarities between Jewish and African histories. Relying on Ignatius Sancho's *Letters*, Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, as well as other 18th-century African writers, as a starting point, I will first trace African-British and Jewish-British relations in the 18th century. After having historicized African-Jewish relationships, I will then probe the transfiguration of separate memories to interethnic post-memories in Indo-Guyanese-British David Dabydeen's novel *A Harlot's Progress* (1999). I will show how David Dabydeen successfully builds interethnic memories between Africans and Jews by (1) reconfiguring anti-semitism in 18th-century Caucasian popular culture, Sancho's *Letters*, and Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*, (2) creating parallels between the Holocaust and slavery, and (3) employing complex and sometimes paradoxical character development.

DAVID SINGH, UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

Black British Fiction and the Fiction of Terra Nullus: Seeking Associative Solidarity in this 'Place'.

The paper will argue that the critical preoccupation with transnational identities within Literary and Cultural Studies has valorised itinerancy to the point of ignoring the 'local'. Using Aileen Moreton-Robinson's conceptualisation of the 'possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty', I seek to foreground the notion of the black British indigene within black British fiction. This is attempted through an examination of the fictive portrayals of racial violence, where attempts at effacement can paradoxically lead to redoubtable expressions of local belonging.

The paper will also examine questions which arise from an engagement with Black British literature outside of Britain. What responsibilities do we owe those whose political intelligibility has been curtailed while ours, through our novel research, has been authorised? In what ways does an acknowledgment of those responsibilities influence critical responses to Black British literature? These questions have troubled the PhD candidacy of a Black Briton living in Australia, a place marked by migration, indigenous dispossession, and whiteness. The paper is premised on the notion that it is politically spurious to critically engage with black British fiction in Australia without first locating oneself in relation to Indigenous sovereignties. I interrogate my anti-racist subject position and reveal ways in which my intelligibility has been sanctioned by a normative Australian whiteness premised on the fiction of Terra Nullus. As such, I find myself in the position of colluding with white racism and white privilege whilst at the same time researching British variations and their fictive portrayal in black British fiction. Only by adopting Sara Ahmed's notion of the 'double turn' towards others, the paper argues, can one attempt to escape this bind.

FLORIAN STADTLER, SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Kwame Kwei-Armah's National Theatre Tryptich: Staging the Black British experience

This paper discusses Kwame Kwei-Armah's tryptich Elmina's Kitchen, *Fix Up* and *Statement of Regret*, which were all written for the Royal National Theatre and staged between 2003 and 2007. Looking closely at the plays' themes the paper raises the question of the role and place of Black British theatre in the context of the National Theatre, which aspires to reflect in its repertoire the diversity of a national culture. The acclaim and box office success of these plays, including *Elmina's Kitchen*'s West End transfer, gesture towards a shift in perspective that allows for the narration of Black-British stories on their own terms within the mainstream. The paper will engage with theatre as a medium with which to articulate hybrid and marginal identities within the mainstream. The performance of these plays has brought a younger, mixed audience to

the National that reflects perhaps more accurately the demographic of people living in London today. Yet it raises the question of how an institution like the National through its programming addresses contemporary British life. How does contemporary Britain engage with the African and African-Caribbean Community living in Britain and vice-versa? How do the plays articulate the problems of the Black British community and multicultural Britain? In addressing these questions this paper argues that a combination of a change in perception within Britain and a more conscious sense of its multicultural, multiracial self has allowed for these plays to reach a broader audience and allowed for a reformulation of what may be considered ‘mainstream’.

HUGH STULTZ, SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

The problem of Black British theatre aesthetics writing away from the centre; presentation and representation

"Writing is that . . . space . . . where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing." There is only the text. Damn! Better make the text the subject of the sentence. *The Death of the Author* states that all writing--no, writing can state nothing about writing or about anything else. The text is irrevocably cut off from that of which it attempts to speak. This somewhat facetious quote, a counterpoint to Barthes’ exposition on writing poses a number of problems for the critic of modern playwriting in particular the critic of playwriting within the ‘Black’ community in the UK. It is my contention that for the Black British playwright the opposite is true that writing is the beginning of identity, that space where the writer begins to define himself and articulate his identity individually and on behalf of the Black community.

Issues of identity are integral to African [Black] diasporic theatre in Africa and the Caribbean, these concerns have resurfaced in the UK as the children of Diaspora have relocated and settled in the UK, these concerns continue to seek outlet thematically and aesthetically. Critics such as Errol Hill and Chris Balme have argued that one of the tasks of writers in (or from) post- colonial societies is to begin the task of forging and articulating a new identity away from the cultural hegemony of empire.

This paper is interlinked with the broader thematic title ‘Celebrate or integrate the problematics of a Black British canon’ and will show by contrasting examples of Black British playwriting [*Christ of Coldharbour Lane*, Blue Mountain Theatre , *Statement of Regret*] the emergent trends within the canon and contrast these to former representations such as O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones.* I will argue that without a canon as Hill has prescribed there is no hope for self- identity, renewal as both are integral to a distinctive cultural identity.

HELEN THOMAS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FALMOUTH

Black Performance in C18th and C19th Britain.

“It’s de same old tale of a palpatating niggar
ev’ry time, ev’ry time;
It’s de same old trouble of a coon
Dat wants to be married very soon;
It’s de same old heart dat is longing
for it’s lady ev’ry time, yes ev’ry time,
But not de same gal, not de same girl
She is ma Lily, ma Lily, ma Lily gal!
She goes ev’ry sundown, yes, ev’ry sundow
n Callin’ in de cattle up de mountain;
I go kase she wants me, yes, ‘kase she wants me
Help her do de callin’ and de countin’.
She plays her music
To call de lone lambs dat roam above,
But I’m de black sheep and I’m waitin’
For de signal of ma little lady love.”
(G.H. Elliott, C19th white performer, the Majestic Music Hall.)

This paper examines key moments of black oral, literary and street performance in C18th and C19th Britain and determines them as self-conscious interrogations and revisions of dominant narratives of western ideology and power. Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative of 1789* is seen

to perform simultaneously as 'autobiography', fictional narrative and abolitionist discourse, thus highlighting the fluid identity of black subjects amidst emerging narratives of race, freedom and nationalism. Ira Aldridge's 'black' performances in plays such as *Othello*, *Mungo*, *Obi! Three Fingered Jack* and *Oroonoko* are examined alongside the performances of the old black merchant sailor, Joseph Johnson, and situated against our more familiar understandings of C18th and C19th British culture.

RYAN S. TRIMM, UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

Of Fairy Tales and Teeth: Zadie Smith and the Metropolitan Melee

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* works to retroactively construct a genre: that of the multicultural metropolitan novel. The novel's depiction of Londoners of scattered backgrounds and mobile relations helps forge a line running from Sam Selvon to Salman Rushdie. In particular, Smith's novel uses its incorporation of the Rushdie affair as means of rewriting *The Satanic Verses.* Millat's journey to Bradford to participate in the demonstrations against publication of Rushdie's novel is more than a simple act of homage; this allusion in fact betrays a deeper negotiation with the manner multicultural Britain rewrites nationness. Where *Verses* tracks how "newness comes into the world" through a performative immigrant hybridity rescripting national culture, *White Teeth* offers a far more unstable melee (to use Jean-Luc Nancy's term). Such is seen in *Verses'*s contrast of vibrant multicultural London with the crumbling English country house: here, according to Homi Bhabha, cultural blending is the only source of life. However, such a hybridity works to reinforce the notion of a prior national purity (a "fairy tale" according to Smith), an English identity now altered and diluted. In contrast, *White Teeth* offers an identity always already in flux, one where supposed roots of purity are themselves admixed: the novel's English pub (now under Iraqi management) has always fronted an Irish name; Magid returns from Bangladesh as the quintessential Englishman; Archie, the novel's English everyman, is offered new life by an halal butcher. Indeed, the novel's core metaphor of dentistry stresses the necessity of root canals, a replacing of a

source that is in fact not an original purity but itself a mixture. As a result, *White Teeth* restages Rushdie's celebration of the present performance of migrant hybridity with a past itself always already mixed and unstable and a now that escapes even the supposed lockstep of genetic coding.

INGRID VON ROSENBERG, TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DRESDEN

Black British Art and the German Art Scene

Though art and artists travel a lot in the globalized world, nevertheless, the representation of one country's art in the art scene of another is inevitably selective. Thus only few of the impressive range of black and Asian British artists have so far been presented in German exhibitions, most prominently Chris Ofili, Yinka Shonibare, Isaac Julien, to a lesser degree Zarina Bhimji, Hew Locke and some others. Their work has been shown at two different types of venues, commercial galleries and publicly-funded arts bodies dedicated to an educational agenda. It seems worthwhile taking a closer look at some recent exhibitions in which black artists played a major role: e.g. *The Black Atlantic* (2004) at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, *Documenta 11* (2002), *Chris Ofili: Blue Rider Extended Remix* and *Isaac Julien, Tue North – Fantôme Afrique*" at the Kestnergesellschaft in Hannover (2006) as examples of non-profit events on the one hand, and shows of Christ Ofili's work at the Contemporary Fine Arts Gallery, Berlin, especially *The Blue Rider* (2005), as examples of a commercial gallery's activities on the other. The paper would try to explore the motivations and intentions of organisers, curators and funding bodies as well as discuss which events have proved most successful in promoting knowledge of black British culture in Germany and in supporting artists in their work. At least in the case of *The Blue Rider* show in Berlin it can be argued that the gallery owners did not only familiarize a German public with Ofili's work, but actively stimulated a new phase in his work.

My suggestion relates to idea no. VI "Arts bodies, cultural policy and education".

LEON WAINWRIGHT, MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

The Art of Black Britain at New Peripheries

The field of historicising the art and artists of the African diaspora has a political locus in the United States, which demands to be made transparent with reference to the new 'margins' and 'centres' it constructs. This paper will look at instances of exhibition curating and historical commentary that indicate black America as a hegemonic locus of the African diaspora, presenting obstacles for a more global historical inquiry. To what extent have claims been made of cultural and political ownership in the African diaspora, in such a way that crosses national boundaries? How has the curatorial and historiographic cherry-picking of art practices in Britain been negotiated by those who are reluctant to misrecognise themselves in the 'outside' image it engenders? What of the art and visual histories that have refused to be conscripted to the often U.S.-centric terms of African diaspora studies? In broaching such questions this paper will assess how the current values of historical inscription have implicated the art of black Britain at new peripheries. Writing the Art of Black Britain at New Peripheries

JESSICA WALTER, UNIVERSITY OF POTSDAM

Laughter and Black British Literature

Black British literature has taken a prominent position in the process of redefining Englishness. The paper will be concerned with the function of laughter in black British literature by second-generation authors. It will be shown that laughter, as an anthropological constant, can have identity-constituting effects and thus can be seen as an important criterion of analysis for black British literature.

In order to investigate the different functions of laughter, it will be examined what kind of laughter is applied in the texts. Acting on the assumption that laughter is a response to a certain stimulus, it is not only the latter that is of significance in this context. As laughter is highly subjective and depends on social upbringing as well as cultural background, the focus has also to be put

on the reasons for laughter, which could be, for example, desire for social integration, avoidance of conflict, or the crossing of cultural boundaries. Furthermore, laughter about oneself or the community one belongs to will be of interest as, by making fun of what influences an individual's identity, a superior position can be taken that seems to neglect any social or cultural influences. Laughter thus constitutes the individual alongside conventions that affect his or her identity. Apart from categories such as class, gender, or ethnicity, laughter can work as a tool for the analysis of black British literature.

TRACEY L. WALTERS, STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Absent From England: Why are All the Black British Writers in America?

Over the past ten years the British government and cultural institutions have made a concerted effort to celebrate and acknowledge the many significant cultural, political, and social contributions of Blacks in Britain (think the windrush celebration and host of other programming). But for all of the gestures of gratitude, the British, specifically those in England, have yet to really take seriously the many contributions that Black Brits have made and continue to make to its society. In regards to Black British literature and scholarship, Black British writers continue to be virtually ignored in Academia and by the mainstream press. Only the popular well-known handful of artists and critical writers are granted the respect given to their white British counterparts (Rushdie, Smith, Phillips, etc). The interesting thing is, most of the successful Black British writers and scholars reside in America and not in their home country (Gilroy, Phillips, Carby, Walcott, and a host of others). Coincidentally, most average Americans (white or Black) do not even know who these individuals are, and only in small academic circles—those dealing with cultural criticism or transatlantic or Africana studies—have a clue as to who these luminaries are either. So, my question for consideration is: Why do most of the Black British writers and scholars abandon their own country for America, what is the impact of their departure on Black British literature and scholarship in Britain, and what does this say about the relevance and presence of Black Brit literature on both sides of the Atlantic. And secondly, in what way does the presence of these writers impact upon the African American audience that they serve on the other side of the Atlantic?

HAZEL WATERS, CO-EDITOR, *RACE & CLASS*

Ira Aldridge – pioneer for cultural equality

2007, as well as the bicentenary of the parliamentary abolition of the slave trade, was also the bicentenary of Ira Aldridge's birth. Aldridge was a black American who came to England in 1824 to forge a career as an actor. He performed not only the length and breadth of the British Isles, but widely across Europe, where he received plaudits from all sectors of society for his skill and power. This paper will examine Aldridge's career in England, in the context of a growing racism – which, in turn, was shaped in and through the debates over slavery and emancipation. The theatre of the time was *the* popular medium, accessible to lettered and unlettered alike, and the constant supply of hastily written dramas for popular consumption both reflected and reinforced prejudices and attitudes about black people. It was in this milieu that Aldridge not only became famous, despite racist critical hostility, but also worked to extend the very limited repertoire available to a black actor. Although there was a substantial 'black' presence on the English stage, since, indeed, the sixteenth century (played invariably by white actors in the blackest of make-up), the scope allowed to such roles was strictly defined. In contending against this, and in his refusal to keep to his allotted 'place', Aldridge was a pioneer of black liberation and equality as much as the American black abolitionists who frequently toured Britain during this period to further their cause.

SUSAN YEARWOOD

Black canonisations and artistic (literary) appropriation within Black British culture

The idea of a Black British Canon is not without ambiguity. My paper is concerned with the historical basis of contemporary attribution. Also pertinent is how Western tradition and African thought meet at the juncture of assimilation of this idea or a definition of a relatively new form? As an idea the Black British canon has a role to play. It is a facilitator of Black literary

thought that is growing as an art form and needs a framework within which to develop authorship and literary appreciation. As a form that has been present for over a hundred years it has longevity that requires discussion and extensive critique, taking into consideration its contemporary re-appropriation as art. My paper reflects on the idea of a Black British canon – what it means and what artistic form it takes – and an acceptance of that discrete canon and its ambiguities accentuated by identity, nationhood and culture.

Drawing on the intellectual work of du Bois, Christian, Bakhtin and Medvedev this paper reflects on a form, whether at a nascent stage or historically redolent, that requires a commitment to advancing Black British art appropriation. Further reflection on this subject requires an aesthetic framework of Black British canonical thought; another necessary step for Black cultural advancement in the humanities.