

Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture

EDITED BY ALISON DONNELL



**COMPANION TO
CONTEMPORARY
BLACK BRITISH
CULTURE**

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**FOR PAULINE POLKEY (1958–99) AND THE
JOY OF INSPIRATIONAL FRIENDSHIPS**

Fifteen years ago we didn't care, or at least I didn't care, whether there was any black in the Union Jack. Now not only do we care, *we must*.

(Stuart Hall, 1987)

Extraordinary new forms have been produced and much of their power resides in their capacity to circulate a new sense of what it means to be British. . . . The seemingly trivial forms of youth sub-culture point to the opening up of a self-consciously post-colonial space in which the affirmation of difference points forward to a more pluralistic concept of nationality and perhaps beyond that to its transcendence.

(Paul Gilroy, 'The peculiarities of the black English', 1993)

For me the fact that it's so difficult to pin down blackness in Britain is a positive thing, it leaves me freer.

(Lola Young, 1998)

Where is the integration? Blacks as radio and television presenters, as MPs, as arts wallahs means nothing if the lives of ordinary Black people at the bottom of the pile have not improved.

(A. Sivanandan, 2000)

Unlike their parents, the second generation of Black youth did not see themselves as 'temporary guests' of Her Majesty's government. They were not here to work and eventually return 'home' to the Caribbean or Africa. Britain was their home, and according to one of the symbolic political slogans of the time, they were 'Here to Stay!' Consequently, they had little choice but to engage the class- and race-laden structures of British society.

(Owusu, 2000)

Contents

Editorial team	viii	Entries A–Z	1
List of contributors	ix		
Introduction	xii	Index	339
Thematic entry list	xvii		
List of websites	xxv		

Editorial team

General editor

Alison Donnell

Nottingham Trent University, UK

Advisers

David A. Bailey

University of East London, UK

Satinder Chohan

Freelance writer, UK

William Henry

Goldsmiths College, UK

D. Keith Peacock

University of Hull, UK

James Procter

University of Stirling, UK

Karen Ross

Coventry School of Art and Design,
Coventry University, UK

Kadija Sesay

Editor/publisher of *Sable*, UK

Yinka Summonu

Goldsmiths College

Carol Tulloch

Royal College of Art, UK

Lynnette Turner

Oxford Brookes University, UK

Andy Wood

Dundee University, UK

List of contributors

Margaret T. Andrews

Teacher and educator, UK

An'Yaa Anim-Addo

James Allen's Girls' School, UK

Joan Anim-Addo

Goldsmiths College, UK

Rebecca Arnold

Central St Martins College of Art and Design, UK

Elaine Aston

Lancaster University, UK

David A. Bailey

University of East London, UK

Derek A. Bardowell

Freelance journalist, UK

Andrea D. Barnwell

Spelman College of Fine Arts, USA

Ian Baucom

Duke University, USA

Dipti Bhagat

Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK

Suman Bhuchar

Tamasha Theatre Company, UK

Christopher Breward

London College of Fashion, UK

Huw Bucknell

Freelance writer, UK

Eleanor Byrne

Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Gavin Carver

University of Kent at Canterbury, UK

Janice Cheddie

Goldsmiths College, UK

Gail Ching-Liang Low

University of Dundee, UK

Satinder Chohan

Freelance writer, UK

Sandra Courtman

Staffordshire University, UK

Susan Croft

Theatre Museum, London, UK

Pauline de Souza

Universities of East London and Birmingham, UK

Alison Donnell

Nottingham Trent University, UK

Tobias Döring

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Oliver Double

University of Kent at Canterbury, UK

Andrea Enisuh

Freelance journalist/literature consultant, UK

Raymond Enisuh

Journalist, *New Nation* newspaper, UK

Diana Omo Evans

Freelance journalist, UK

Len Garrison

London, UK

Lynette Goddard

University of London, UK

Donna Griffiths

Freelance writer, UK

William Henry

Goldsmiths College, UK

Peter James

Birmingham Central Library, UK

Doreth Jones

London, UK

Kris Knauer

University of Silesia, Poland, and WriteOnLine, UK

David Knight

University of Central Lancashire, UK

Paola Marchionni

Commonwealth Institute and *Wasafiri*, UK

Pinkie Mekgwe

University of Sussex, UK

Shaheen Merali

University of Westminster and Central St Martins College of Art and Design, UK

Cynthia Moody

Keeper Ronald Moody Estate, UK

Susanne Mühleisen

Universität Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Nyantah

PR consultant, London, UK

Paul O’Kane

Goldsmiths College, UK

D. Keith Peacock

University of Hull, UK

Anita Naoko Pilgrim

Goldsmiths College, UK

Sandra Ponzanesi

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Tracy J. Prince

Portland State University, USA

James Procter

University of Stirling, UK

Ruvani Ranasinha

Oxford University, UK

Niru Ratnam

The Open University, UK

Karen Ross

Coventry University, UK

Sara Salih

University of Kent at Canterbury, UK

Linda Sandino

Camberwell College of Arts, UK

Suzanne Scafe

South Bank University, UK

Asha Sen

University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, USA

Kadija Sesay

Editor/publisher of *Sable*, UK

Alpana Sharma

Wright State University, USA

Jane Sillis

Freelance arts consultant, UK

Gareth Stanton

Goldsmiths College, UK

Mark Stein

Universität des Saarlandes, Germany

Francis Summers

Sleazenation magazine, UK

Rafiel Sunmonu

St Olaves, UK

Yinka Sunmonu

Goldsmiths College, London

Debbie Thacker

Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, UK

Alex Tickell

University of York, UK

Carol Tulloch

Royal College of Art, UK

Lynnette Turner

Oxford Brookes University, UK

Catherine Ugwu

Freelance curator and producer

Leon Wainwright

SOAS, London University, UK

Sam Walker

Black Cultural Archives, UK

Tracey L. Walters

Stony Brook University, USA

Pawlet Warner

Cambridge Cultural Planning, UK

Patrick Williams

Nottingham Trent University, UK

Andy Wood

Dundee University, UK

Samina Zahir

Nottingham Trent University, UK

Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, notions of what constitute Britishness, blackness and culture have all been opened up and fiercely debated in a post-imperial nation that has experienced the collapse of Empire, large-scale immigration from its former colonies, the mass women's movement, black power and nationalist movements, institutionalised racism, Thatcherism and multiculturalism. This book charts black British cultural production from 1970 to 2001 and documents the creative and intellectual achievements of the second generation of black Britons.

The focus of this *Companion* on the contemporary period is in no way a denial of earlier black British cultural production but simply an indicator of the necessary limitations of the project as a single-volume publication. Indeed, the historical life of black people in Britain goes back at least four centuries and there is much to say about this history, as well as more to be researched. Perhaps, though, 1970 does offer a useful starting point as it marks a historical moment from which black as an identificatory category began to establish itself within Britain, reconstructing ideas of community and difference around a political signifier. As Kobena Mercer describes, 'When various peoples – of Asian, African and Caribbean descent – interpellated themselves and each other as /black/ they invoked a collective identity predicated on political and not biological similarities... alliance and solidarity among dispersed groups of people sharing common historical experiences of British racism' (1994: 291). For the purposes of this *Companion*, black signifies this collectivity and alliance under a political identity, and encompasses people of African, Caribbean and South Asian

descent. The debates about for whom and to whom black as an identity category should refer are well documented. Nevertheless, given the problematic nature of black British as a proposed cultural category (where does it begin and end?) and the fact that it is a cultural identity that is often expressed as ambivalent, conflicted and deeply felt, it seems important to offer some discussion of the issues and debates that have shaped its discursive and political currency.

Stuart Hall describes Britain in the 1970s as 'the land which they are *in* but not *of*; the country of estrangement, dispossession and brutality' (1978: 357) and the conscious orchestration of identity around blackness at this time was crucially concerned with the need to express resistance and protest against a white national British culture that appeared fairly definable and monolithic. The politicisation of black consciousness in the 1970s – when the media cocktail of race riots, mugging and carnival led to a powerful and damaging representation of black youth as criminalized and subcultural – was clearly a reaction and opposition to state racism and offered a vital, if limited, platform for self-representation. Nevertheless, the relationship between street politics and acts of representation was mutually beneficial to many of the cultural practitioners and products of this decade, and continued the intellectual traditions of black Britain that, like those in the Caribbean and other ex-colonial regions, have always been engaged with political and rights movements. There was very much the sense that artists, practitioners and cultural activists were providing intellectuals and theorists with what Stuart Hall has termed 'a new vocabulary and syntax of rebellion' (Hall 1978). Moreover, this cross-fertilisation between acts of

political representation and those in the cultural sphere, the reciprocation between the street and the study, and the need to pursue questions of representation alongside those of rights was always an organic process, as many of the key figures from this period, such as C.L.R. James, Farrukh Dhondy, and John La Rose, had a firm footing in both spaces.

However, as well as a joining of forces across generational and cultural lines, there was also an important shift taking place across this decade in terms of an engagement with a specifically black British identity. Many of those who had been influential in setting the early agendas around black politics and consciousness in Britain, such as Kamau Brathwaite and other members of the Caribbean Artists Movement, had provided a valuable link between black communities and activities in the USA, the Caribbean and Britain, but many of their works and their inspirations had a focus beyond Britain, which was re-interpreted by the second generation in more urgently localised tones. In many areas of cultural production an articulation of specifically black British concerns was emerging in the late 1970s with writers Linton Kwesi Johnson, James Berry and Buchi Emecheta; film-makers Horace Ové and Menelik Shabazz; musicians Dennis Bovell and Jah Shaka; dance companies MAAS Movers and Company 7; the playwright Mustapha Matura and the theatre companies Tara Arts and Temba Theatre Company. The 1970s had delivered a far more visible and definable notion of black British culture by the decade's end, and it was very much a culture concerned with issues of race, representation, resistance, empowerment and justice.

The cultural and political projects of the 1970s had enabled a shift in terms of identification and representation, from being perceived as the black presence in Britain to the black dimension of Britain by the 1980s. Although the catalyst for mainstream public exposure in this decade was still police racism and the civil disturbances that followed (1981, 1985), there was a more consolidated profile of commentators from within the black community and an established and accomplished set of practitioners in film, visual arts, music, writing and performance works. The generation of artists David A. Bailey, Ingrid

Pollard, Rasheed Araeen; writers John Agard, Grace Nichols, Merle Collins, Benjamin Zephaniah; film directors John Akomfrah, Isaac Julien, Hanif Kureishi and Maureen Blackwood; organisations Ten.8, Black Audio Film Collective, Black Theatre Co-operative and Asian Women Writer's Workshop demonstrated the strength of their work and a determination to be received on their own terms.

However, if black British culture now had a more visible and coherent profile within the national culture, within itself fractures were beginning to be felt and, by the mid-1980s, there was also a more sustained questioning of the usefulness of black as an organising category. This came from the voices of an emergent black British cultural studies, in many ways initiated by the important work of Stuart Hall. The collective commitment to achieving cultural recognition, voice and visibility did not necessitate conformity or ideological consensus. The fact that there were tensions, conflicts and serious differences among key thinkers, practitioners and commentators was publicly highlighted by the now notorious exchange between Salman Rushdie, Stuart Hall and Darcus Howe, in January of 1987, over the representational strategies and aesthetic value of the film *Handsworth Songs*. Also, a number of interventions by women scholars such as Hazel Carby and Amrit Wilson drew attention to the need to account for gender politics, and work by Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer highlighted the significance of sexuality in the constitution of cultural identities. Cultural production began to reflect the need to articulate the multiple imbrications of identity.

The need to acknowledge multiple perspectives and the pluralisation of cultural forms and positions within the arena of black British culture was an almost inevitable consequence of the growth of interest and work being done in this area. However, there was also the sense that this opening out was crucial in terms of the expectations and constraints under which black artists were working. In his important article, 'Black art and the burden of representation', Kobena Mercer outlined the problematic status of the black artist: 'burdened with the impossible task of speaking as "representatives"', in that they are widely expected to "speak for" the marginalized communities from

which they come' (1994: 235). In a sense, the success of the 1980s meant that black culture could now afford to entertain internal disputes and controversies without being under threat.

Indeed, despite inevitable tensions, in the 1990s there was a strong sense that these differences within the black community were both important and enabling to articulations of identity and creative works. Cultural and scholarly interests were less directed towards collective definition in the face of an unknowing or unwilling host culture than towards more complex and diverse acts of self-definition, and participation in reconfigurations of national culture. As Gilroy documents: 'Extraordinary new forms have been produced and much of their power resides in their capacity to circulate a new sense of what it means to be British' (1993: 61–2). Although less optimistic about the receptiveness of British society, Stuart Hall seems to echo Gilroy's perception of black British culture's recognition of its own value and cultural capital in his observation that: 'Black British culture is today confident beyond its own measure in its own identity – secure in a difference which it does not expect, or want, to go away, still rigorously and frequently excluded by the host society, but nevertheless not excluding itself in its own mind' (Hall 1997, in Owusu 2000: 127). However, it is in this same article, 'Frontlines and backyards: the terms of change', that Hall also argues that black no longer works as an identificatory category for African, Caribbean and Asian communities in Britain because of the 'internal cultural segmentation'. The proposition that cultural and ethnic differences have now become so pronounced as to make the idea of collective identity untenable is an issue that Kwesi Owusu raises in interview with the editor of *Race and Class*, and intellectual, A. Sivanandan. Sivanandan responds with the statement that 'recognizing cultural segmentation is not to accept it... my preoccupation is with racial justice and a political culture that can deliver racial justice... political culture tends to cut across such segmentation' (Owusu 2000: 423).

While the racially motivated murders of Stephen Lawrence and Michael Menson testify to the fact that racial justice remains an urgent political cause, many of the works, organisations, practitioners and artists included within this volume

attest to the achievements and the continued realities of cutting across the segmentation. Black British culture and black British cultural studies have had a considerable impact on acknowledged conceptions of cultural and national identity over the last thirty years and hopefully they will continue to do so, as both the subject and the subject positions of national culture remain a site of struggle and contestation. To date, it has remained a usefully dynamic and self-reflexive field, which is constantly re-opening discussions on the difficult cultural issues around identity, representation and rights. As difference becomes both more marketable and more nuanced, the notion of black as an identificatory category will surely both demand and seek constant re-definition; nevertheless, while institutionalised racism persists, it would seem that for many in Britain black remains a politically resonant and historically significant sign of alliance.

Looking across the diverse and culturally plural composition of this *Companion*, it would appear reasonable to conclude that while difference has remained both an academic and a political focus for cultural workers, the conceptualisation of difference has moved on and there has been a reconstruction of positions on agency and authenticity. Not only is there a stronger sense of the recognition of difference within the communities that had elected to identify through the category 'black', but there is an acknowledgement that black may not be the necessary starting point for self-articulation – black may now be seen as one identity category alongside that of artist; or writer; or woman; or Muslim; or gay. It is still important to ask what it means to refer to Jackie Kay's poetry as black British rather than as Scottish or as lesbian, but it is perhaps less urgent to do so now that black culture is less restrained by the burden of representation and Kay's poetry is well known for its autobiographical power, its interrogation of Scottishness and its articulations of sexuality.

The scrutiny of whiteness and Englishness as dominant ethnicities, indeed as ethnicities at all, which has been occasioned by the cultural and ethnic diversity of contemporary Britain, as well as the devolution of Scotland and Wales, suggests a recognition of the way in which cultural identities are formed through complex patterns of difference and alliance, in the context of a nation in which

definitions of nationality are now more mobile and multiple. From a point at the twentieth century's end, it is possible to see cross-cultural and inter-cultural interactions that are constantly challenging and refining our ideas of cultural identity. I am not just referring to the historically important borrowings and crossings of black cultural forms, such as music and fashion, by white youth groups, which can be traced back to the 1950s, but rather to newer forms of cross-cultural interaction. The recent study of white Englishness by Darcus Howe in his television series *White Tribes* (2000) suggests a horizontal expression of political engagement and human interest that in turns helps to re-write possibilities for cross-cultural representations. Donald MacLellan's photographic exhibition 'Black Power', which showed at the National Gallery in 1998, also offers new ethical models of representation by returning to the relationship of white photographer/black subject with an awareness of its historical dimensions and a strategy of empowerment, allowing subjects to enunciate their own subject positions through statements that appear alongside the photographic representations. The phenomenal success of the Asian comedy series *Goodness Gracious Me*, which satirises both South Asian and white British cultural traits alongside each other, speaks of a certain confidence to address the issues of cultural sensitivities and idiosyncrasies across, as well as within, cultural and ethnic communities.

It is the very nature of working in the contemporary period that we do not know how history will record our age but it seems significant to make representations that work against conventional historical biases and it is in this spirit that the *Companion* makes a gesture towards recording the immense and yet often unrecognised talent and significance of contemporary black British culture. The *Companion* is designed to be one starting point within the project to fully describe and annotate the field of post-1970 black British cultural production. It covers seven major overlapping areas: writings; performance works; visual and plastic arts; intellectual life; television; film and cinema; and music. However, entries as diverse as 'hairdressing' and 'new racism' point to the fact that cultural forms need to be recognised as having a social and political context that has both shaped

them and which they in turn shape. While restrictions on space have meant that categories such as politics and sport have not been able to be included, the aim has been to open up each chosen field beyond the familiar names and known achievers. The entries are listed in alphabetical order for ease and simplicity, and cross-references are made by following those terms marked in bold type. Those wishing to search a particular specialist area can consult the subject listings at the front of the book, but it is my aim that this book might encourage browsing, and exploratory reading as unfamiliar names, organisations and works appear.

The overview entries for each of the main areas are designed to suggest the broad contours and wider pictures of each field, as well as to gesture towards those names and works that could not be represented by individual entries in this first volume. Indeed, in some cases, our list of potential entries was so extensive, for example that from David A. Bailey of over 300 artists, that selection seemed impossible to reconcile with representation. Of course, these issues are always at the forefront of edited collections of any sort but with reference to black British culture, which has suffered from both blatant and subtle forms of neglect and marginalisation, the arguments concerning the issues and burdens of representation seemed both urgent to address and impossible to fulfil.

As I have sought to outline, contemporary black British culture is both complex and unstable, and it is the objective of this *Companion* as a whole to trace some of those complexities and instabilities rather than to offer any kind of resolution or settlement. The *Companion* is in no way designed to be definitive or authoritative; rather, contributors have been encouraged to offer individual perspectives and confront contentious issues. This approach seemed particularly important given the dearth of publications in the field and the particular nature of the historical engagement of reference works with black culture that has shaped this work as a *Companion*, rather than the more imperial and definitive form of an encyclopaedia. Indeed, it is designed to be read as a consciously provisional and frustratingly partial beginning.

This *Companion* began life several years ago, as an endnote on a book report that I wrote for a volume on post-colonial cultures. I made the

comment that, once again, black British culture had not been recognised or attended to under this designation and that there was very little in the way of reference books to document the black British dimension. When this observation was taken up by Routledge in the form of a contract to edit a multi-disciplinary reference work on contemporary black British culture, I was given the opportunity to set this record a little straighter, at least. I realised then that editing any reference work would be a challenge simply because of the issues around scope, coverage and accessibility, and I was aware that I would have few previous volumes to refer to, review or raid. However, I was not aware of how difficult it would be to resource and harness all of the available information, or of how little information had previously been collated and recorded in certain subject areas. The struggle to compile a balanced and broad selection has been significant and the project has been a total education in terms of how archives, organisations, academics and just plain old folk work. Although I am aware that much more work needs to be done in this field, perhaps this *Companion* will inspire others by its inclusions as well as its omissions.

The issue of selection and representation has been taken very seriously by the whole advisory team. In the end, word limits and deadlines have been the final deciders, and I am aware that, as I hand this work over for publication, its blind spots are far more glaring than any of its visions. Although the tendency is always for reference works to appear somehow definitive or descriptive of a field, I would want to finish this piece of introductory writing by working in the opposite direction and making a serious invitation to scholars, researchers, academics, students, practitioners and other interested parties to help take this project forward by making contact with any works, individuals and organisations that are not currently listed and which merit inclusion. If this book is designed to be a starting-point and a place of

signposts that others may follow and elaborate on, then I hope that some of them may point back here.

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Alison Donnell
Nottingham Trent University

Thematic entry list

Fashion and design

Asian fashion
Bakare, Ade
Boateng, Oswald
Bradford art galleries and museums
Campbell, Naomi
Casely-Hayford, Joe
Chic
Edge, Nina
fashion and design
funky dreds
hairdressing
Joe Bloggs
Jones, Adebayo
Lilliard, Derek Alvin
lovers' rock style
Natt, Sarbjit
Nehru Gallery
Oldfield, Bruce
raggamuffin
Rana, Mah
Rastafari
Shah, Fahmida
Wek, Alek

Film and cinema

Adefarasin, Remi
Akomfrah, John
Amin, Ruhul
Andrews, Naveen
Attille, Martina
Auguste, Reece
Babymother
Bhaji on the Beach
Bhattacharjee, Paul

Black Audio Film Collective
Black Film Bulletin
Blackwood, Maureen
Bollywood
British Film Institute
Burning an Illusion
Campbell, Topher
Chadha, Gurinder
cinemas
Dehlavi, Jamil
East is East
Electric Cinema
film and cinema
Givanni, June Ingrid
Grewal, Shani
Handsworth Songs
Henriques, Julian
Hussein, Waris
Jaffrey, Madhur
Jaffrey, Saeed
Jamal, Ahmed
Jamal, Mahmood
Jean-Baptiste, Marianne
Julien, Issac
Kapur, Shekhar
Khan, Shaheen
Kureishi, Hanif
Laird, Trevor
Lester, Adrian
Looking for Langston
McQueen, Steve
Marsh-Edwards, Nadine
My Beautiful Laundrette
My Son the Fanatic
Newton, Thandie
Nubian Tales/b3 Media
Onwurah, Ngozi

Ové, Horace
Owusu, Kwesi
Parmar, Pratibha
Prasad, Udayan
Pressure
Puri, Om
Quarshie, Hugh
Retake Film and Video Collective
Sankofa Film Collective
Seth, Roshan
Shabazz, Menelik
Territories
Uzzaman, Badi
Wolf, Rita
Young Soul Rebels

Intellectual life

Ahmad, Aijaz
Bhabha, Homi K.
black Atlantic, the
black British
Brah, Avtar
Carby, Hazel
Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
(charles), Helen
cosmopolitan celebrity
cultural hybridity
diaspora aesthetics
diasporic intellectual
difference
essentialism
ethnic minorities
Gilroy, Paul
Hall, Stuart
identity politics
intellectual life
James, C.L.R.
Mercer, Kobena
métis(se)/mixed race
Mirza, Heidi Safia
Nasta, Susheila
new ethnicities
new racism
post-colonial space
queer theory
Sivanandan, A.
Staying Power
Wilson, Amrit

womanism
Young, Lola

Music

A Guy Called Gerald
AbbaKush
Ama, Shola
Anjali
Anokha
Apache Indian
Asian Dub Foundation
Aswad
Babylon Zoo
Badmarsh
Bhamra, Kuljit
bhangra
Biswas, Anup Kumar
Black Star Liner
Campbell, Bill
Cherry, Neneh
Cleopatra
Collapsed Lung
Cookie Crew
Cornershop
Credit to the Nation
Crucial Robbie
Daddy Freddy
Dalal, Zane
dancehall
David, Craig
Dodge
Eternal
Fashion Records
Fun-da-Mental
Future Pilot AKA
Gabrielle
Gift, Roland
Goldie
Grant, Eddy
Greensleeves
Grooverider
Hall, Ian
hip hop
Hunningale, Peter
Hustlers HC
Imani
Jah Shaka
Jazzie B

Joi
 Jones, Fae
 jungle
 Kaliphz
 Knight, Beverly
 Lewis, Shaznay
 Loose Ends
 lovers' rock
 LTJ Bukem
 Macka 'B'
 Mad Professor
 Massive Attack
 Mau/Earthling/Cuba
 Mel B
 Mercury, Freddie
 Mishra, Jyoti
 Misty in Roots
 music
 Mwelwa, Hilary
 Nation Records
 Nelson, Shara
 Nelson, Trevor
 Ocean, Billy
 Oriental Star Agencies
 Outcaste
 Paris, Mica
 Parvez
 Pine, Courtney
 post-bhangra
 Priest, Maxi
 Quaye, Finley
 Rebel MC
 reggae
 Reneau, Francis
 Richards, Derek
 Sade
 Sagoo, Bally
 Sawhney, Nitin
 Seal
 Shri
 Siffre, Labi
 Singh, Talvin
 Singh, Tjinder
 Size, Roni/Reprazent
 ska
 Small, Heather
 Smiley Culture
 soul
 Soul II Soul

sound system DJs
 Sutherland, Luke
 Tippa Irie
 Transglobal Underground
 Tricky
 Trojan Records
 Wee Papa Girl Rappers
 White Town
 WOMAD

Organisations

African Cultural Exchange
 Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project
 arts funding bodies
 Asian Women Writers' Collective
 Autograph: the Association of Black Photographers
 Black Arts Alliance
 Brixton Black Women's Group
 Camden Black Sisters
 Caribbean Artists' Movement
 Caribbean Women Writers' Alliance
 Centerprise Women's Café
 Commission for Racial Equality
 Drum, the
 Greater London Authority
 Greater London Council
 Institute of Contemporary Arts
 Institute of International Visual Arts
 Live Art Development Agency
 Minority Arts Advisory Service
 Mosaic
 New Playwrights Trust
 Newham Asian Women's Project
 Nia Centre for African and Caribbean Culture
 Organisation of Women of Asian and African
 Descent
 Panchayat
 Radical Alliance of Poets and Players
 Rock against Racism
 Southall Black Sisters
 Ten.8
 Working Group against Racism in Children's
 Resources

Others

Black British Englishes
 Lawrence, Stephen

Mangrove Trials
new racism
Oriental Star Agencies
Rushdie Affair, the
Windrush
youth culture

Performance works

Agbabi, Patience
Bains, Harwant
Bancil, Parv
Bandeke, Biyi
Beaton, Norman
Bhattacharjee, Paul
Bhuchar, Sudha
Bhuller, Darshan Singh
Black and White Power Plays
Black Mime Theatre Company
Black Theatre Co-operative
Blackgrounds
Blackwood, Richard
Bloom, Valerie
Breeze, Jean 'Binta'
Brewster Yvonne
carnival
Chowdry, Maya
comedians
Cooke, Trish
dance
Desai, Polomi
East is East
film and cinema
Fraser-Munro, Ronald
Ghir, Kulvinder
Gideon, Llewella
Glynn, Martin
Griffiths, Donna
Jaffrey, Saeed
Jeyasingh Shobana
Johnson, Linton Kwesi
Jones, Fae
Kapur, Shekhar
Kaur, Parm
Khan, Keith
Khan, Shaheen
Khan Din, Ayub
Landon-Smith, Kristine
live art

McLeod, Jenny
McMillan, Michael
Man Mela Theatre Company
Mannafest
Mason-John, Valerie
Massey, Jamila
Motherland Project
Moti Roti
Naidu, Vayu
New Playwrights Trust
Patel, Jyoti
performing poets
Pinnock, Winsome
Rubasingham, Indhu
Rudet, Jacqueline
Sissay, Lemn
Smarrt, Dorothea
SuAndi
Talawa Theatre Company
Tamasha Theatre Company
Tara Arts
theatre
Theatre Museum Archive
Theatre of Black Women
theatre venues
Tyson, Cathy
Verma, Jatinder
Walker, Rudolph
Wall, Akure
Williams, Fred
Wilmot, Gary
Wolf, Rita
women theatre collectives
Wong, Denise
Yashere, Gina
Zaidi, Ali
Zephaniah, Benjamin

Print-based media

2nd Generation
Adebayo, Dotun
Agbenugba, Gbenga
Ali, Arif
Artrage
Asian Age, the
Asian Times
Black Beauty and Hair
Black Cultural Archives

Black Film Bulletin
 Bogle L'Ouverture
 Busby, Margaret
 Calabash
 Chic
 children's publishers
 Eastern Eye
 Federation of Worker Writers and Community
 Publishers
 Francis, Joy
 Hansib Publishing
 Hunt, Marsha
 Mango Publishing
 Mantra Publications
 Maya
 New Beacon Books
 New Nation
 Nubian Tales/b3 Media
 Peckham Publishing Project
 Peepal Tree Press
 Pride
 publishing, books
 publishing, newspapers and magazines
 Race and Class
 Race Today
 Savacou
 Sunmonu, Yinka
 Ten.8
 Third Text
 Voice, the
 Wambu, Onyekachi
 Wasafiri
 Weekly Journal, the
 Wilson, Amrit
 X Press

Television and broadcasting

alternative minority media: cable and satellite
 Andrews, Naveen
 Asian radio comedy
 Aziz, Lisa
 Baadass TV
 Badawi, Zenab
 Bandung File
 Beaton, Norman
 Bhaskar, Sanjeev
 Black Britain
 Black Londoners

Black on Black
 Blackwood, Richard
 Channel 4
 Dennis, Ferdinand
 Desmonds
 Empire Road
 Eshun, Ekow
 Etienne, Treva
 Flava
 Ghir, Kulvinder
 Goodness Gracious Me
 Griffiths, Derek
 Gupta, Sneh
 Harkishin, Jimmi
 Henry, Lenny
 Howe, Darcus
 Jamal, Mahmood
 Jordan, Diane Louise
 King of the Ghetto
 McDonald, Trevor
 Nazareth, H.O.
 Network East
 Pascall, Alex
 Perera, Shyama
 Peters, Andi
 Phillips, Trevor
 Prescod, Colin
 projects supporting black media talent
 radio comedy
 Saghal, Gita
 Seth, Roshan
 Stuart, Moira
 television
 television prizes
 Tyson, Cathy
 Uzzaman, Badi
 Vir, Parminder
 Wadia, Nina
 Walker, Rudolph
 Workshop Declaration, the

Visual and plastic arts

198 Gallery
 Abdu'Allah, Faisal
 Adrus, Said
 African and Asian Visual Artists Archive
 Ajamu
 Aracen, Rasheed

- Arif, Saleem
art forms
Autograph: Association of Black Photographers
Bailey, David A.
Being Here I, II and III
Bhimji, Zarina
Biswas, Sutapa
Black Art Gallery
Black Art Group
Black Art: Plotting the Course
black arts movements
Black Perspectives
Black Power
Black Women Time Now
Bowling, Frank
Boyce, Sonia
Bradford art galleries and museums
Burke, Vanley
Burman, Chila Kumari
Butt, Hamad
Caribbean Artists' Movement
Chambers, Eddie
Chandra, Avinash
Chuhan, Jagit
Cooper, Clement
Dash, Paul
de Souza, Alan
Dhanjal, Avtarjeet
D-Max
Donkor, Godfried
Douglas Camp, Sokari
Edge, Nina
Essential Black Art, The
Fani-Kayode, Rotimi
Forrester, Denzil
Fowokan
Francis, Armet
From Negative Stereotype to Positive Image
From Two Worlds
Gregory, Joy
Gupta, Sunil
Himid, Lubaina
Holiday, Amanda
Holmes, Claudette May
Horizon Gallery
Hylton, Richard
Institute of International Visual Arts
Jantjes, Gavin
Jegade, Emmanuel Taiwo
Joseph, Tam
Julien, Isaac
Kapoor, Anish
Kaur, Perminder
Keegan, Rita
Kempadoo, Roshini
Khan, Addela
Lamba, Juginder
Lewis, Dave
Lloyd, Errol
Locke, Donald
Lyons, John
McQueen, Steve
Mannafest
Martin, Taslim
Medalla, David
Merali, Shaheen
Ming, Bill
Minorities' Arts Advisory Service
Mistry, Dhruva
Moody, Ronald
Moti Roti
Natt, Sarbjit
Nehru Gallery
Nimarkoh, Virginia
Odonkor, Mowbray
Ofili, Chris
Olton, Munirah
Other Story, The
Oyekan, Lawson
Palmer, Eugene
Panchal, Shanti
Panchayat
photography
Piper, Keith
Pitshanger Manor and Gallery
Pollard, Ingrid
Rana, Samena
Raphael, Alistair
Rodney, Donald
Roy, Chinwe
Ryan, Veronica
Sanderson, Lesley
Sealy, Mark
Shah, Fahmida
Shonibare, Yinka
Sikand, Gurminder
Smith, Marlene
Souza, Francis Newton

Sule, Gloria Ojulari
 Taylor, Robert
 Tegala, Simon
 Ten.8
 Thin Black Line, The
 Third Text
 Transforming the Crown
 visual and plastic arts
 Walker, Maxine
 Williams, Aubrey

Writing

Abani, Chris
 Adebayo, Diran
 Afrobeat
 Agard, John
 Agbabi, Patience
 Agbenugba, Gbenga
 Ahmad, Rukhsana
 Alvi, Moniza
 Anim-Addo, Joan
 Asian Women Writers' Collective
 Bains, Harwant
 Bancil, Parv
 Bandele, Biyi
 Berry, James
 Bildungsroman
 Blackman, Malorie
 Boakye, Paul
 Booker Prize
 Braithwaite, E.R.
 Buffong, Jean
 Burford, Barbara
 Charles, Faustin
 Chatterjee, Debjani
 Chaudhuri, Amit
 children's literature
 Chowdhry, Maya
 Collins, Merle
 Cooke, Trish
 Dabydeen, David
 D'Aguiar, Fred
 Dennis, Ferdinand
 Dhingra, Leena
 Dhondy, Farrukh
 Emecheta, Buchi
 Evaristo, Bernardine
 Figueroa, John

Gavin, Jamilla
 Gayle, Mike
 Ghosh, Amitav
 Gifford, Zerbanoo
 Gilroy, Beryl
 Glynn, Martin
 Gupta, Sunetra
 Gurnah, Abdulrazak
 Harris, Wilson
 Headley, Victor
 Heath, Roy
 Hodges, Jo
 Hosain, Attia
 Hunt, Marsha
 Huntley, Accabre
 IC3: the Penguin Book of New Black Writing
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 Third World Books
 Johnson, Amryl
 Kay, Jackie
 Khan, Shamshad
 Kureishi Hanif
 La Rose, John
 Lamming, George
 Levy, Andrea
 literature
 Markandaya, Kamala
 Markham, E.A.
 Martin, S.I.
 Massey, Reginald
 Matura, Mustapha
 Mehmood, Tariq
 Naidu, Vayu
 Naipaul, Shiva
 Naipaul, V.S.
 Namjoshi, Suniti
 Newland, Courttia
 Ngcobo, Lauretta
 Nichols, Grace
 Okri, Ben
 Owusu, Kwesi
 Phillips, Caryl
 Phillips, Mike
 Prescod, Colin
 Randhawa, Ravinder
 Riley, Joan
 Ross, Jacob
 Ross, Leone
 Rushdie Affair, the

Rushdie, Salman
Saga Prize
Salkey, Andrew
Sam, Agnes
Selvon, Sam
Sen, Sudeep
Sesay, Kadija
Sewell, Tony
Sheikh, Farhana
Shinebourne, Janice
Sissay, Lemn

Smartt, Dorothea
Smith, Zadie
Sulter, Maud
Sutherland, Luke
Syal, Meera
Traynor, Joanna
Williams, Fred
Wilson, T-Bone
women's writing
WriteOnLine
Zephaniah, Benjamin

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The 1990 Trust

www.blink.org.uk

UK site for ethnic-minority issues

Africa Centre

www.africacentre.org.uk

Apples and Snakes

www.applesandsnakes.org

Premier poetry organisation

Aviva – women's world-wide web

www.aviva.org

The international women's listings magazine

Black About

www.blackabout.com

Black Art Alliance

www.baas.demon.co.uk

Black Books and Stuff

communities.msn.co.uk/BlackBooksStuff

For people of African heritage who are interested in personal and spiritual development

Black Britain

www.blackbritain.co.uk

Wide scope of information on black Britain

Black Filmmaker

www.blackfilmmakermag.com

Blacknet

www.blacknet.co.uk

Entertainment and news

Blackpresence

www.blackpresence.co.uk

BLU Magazine

www.blumagazine.net

Edutainment

Darker than Blue

www.darkerthanblue.com

Home of black music

Ethnic Media Group

www.ethnicmedia.co.uk

Griot World

www.griotworld.demon.co.uk

UK's site for African World Culture

IC3

www.penguin.co.uk

Man Mela Theatre Company

www.man-mela.dircon.co.uk

Moti Roti

www.motiroti.com

Nubian Tales

www.2359.com

Black British arts, culture and entertainment listings and magazine

Paublo Books

www.multiculturalbooks.co.uk

Precious Online

www.preciousonline.co.uk

Online magazine for black women

Saltpetre

www.saltpetre.com

Poetry

Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust

www.stephenlawrence.org.uk

The Voice

www.voice-online.co.uk

WriteOnLine

www.write-on-line.co.uk

Publisher of electronic books

198 Gallery

Founded in 1988 by Zoe Linsley-Thomas, the 198 Gallery is named after its location at Railton Road in Brixton. The gallery's initial policy was to promote the work of contemporary Asian, Afro-Caribbean and African artists whose expressions represent the cultural diversity of British society. The policy has since changed to include artists from outside Britain. Bisi de Silvia was the gallery's first black curator in 1991, followed by Julian Barnes. Between 1993 and 1995, Linsley-Thomas ran the exhibition programme and then invited artists Godfried **Donkor**, Maria Amdu and Faisal **Abdu'Allah** to form an exhibition committee. In 1989 the gallery's first commission 'The First Child' project was awarded to the Nigerian artist David Matusa. However, due to various problems the project continued for ten years, finally being completed in 1999 by Raymond Watson.

In 1995, as part of the AFRICA 95 festival, the gallery held 'Winds of Change', a series of three exhibitions by African artists working in Europe. In the following year the exhibition 'Revelations' showed the dramatic work of Faisal Abdu'Allah and Kofi. The gallery's self-sufficiency remains evident in its Exhibition Support Fund, which has been running since 1990. The gallery's Contemporary Art Sale, organised by Linsley-Thomas, at Letherby Gallery in the Central School of Art was the first commercial enterprise for the support fund.

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PAULINE DE SOUZA

2nd Generation

'Second generation' is a term that has increasingly been applied to the children of migrants, and the magazine *2nd Generation* draws heavily upon this theme. *2nd Generation* was launched in 1997 by editor-in-chief Imran Khan and editor Rahul D. Singh. In 1998, after just one year in print, *2nd Generation* was given the Youth in Media award by the **Commission for Racial Equality**, specifically for its efforts to promote a multicultural UK. Khan has commented that part of the problem in editing a magazine such as *2nd Generation* is defining what or who the term actually applies to. The difficulty lies in categorising groups as belonging to specific cultures or cultural forms, when, in fact, there are no acknowledged parameters. *2nd Generation* therefore draws on the youth and club scene culture, with some issues-based articles, although these are more lifestyle than politically led. The magazine also concentrates on 'multicultural' elements that reflect a sense of the fusions which are taking place. In *2nd Generation*, Khan stresses British relevance, with articles discussing the group Kula Shaker and Madonna's use of *mehndi*, as well as those people deemed 'second generation', such as **Cornershop**, **Asian Dub Foundation** and Morcheeba.

SAMINA ZAHIR

A

A Guy Called Gerald

b. 1967, Manchester, UK

artist, producer, remixer, DJ

Gerald Simpson has been an innovative figure at the forefront of the UK dance scene since the late 1980s. He first came to prominence as a founder member of 808 State, but it is as a solo artist recording as A Guy Called Gerald that he has made his best-known work. From *Voodoo Ray* in 1988, which made the transition from underground club hit to number twelve in the charts, to the ground-breaking album *Black Secret Technology* in 1995, which featured contributions from **Goldie**, 4 Hero and Finley **Quaye**, Simpson has always managed to keep at least one step ahead of his peers in the innovative field of dance music. Moving from the Chicago and Detroit house-influenced sounds of his early albums, *Hot Lemonade* (1988) and *Automanik* (1990), to the hard edged jungle of *28 Gun Bad Boy* (1993) and the more reflective experimentation of *Black Secret Technology* (1995) has meant that Simpson has yet to repeat the commercial success of his first solo release. *Essence* was released in 2000 and Simpson runs his own label, Juicebox, and is also a stalwart of Radio 1's *One In The Jungle* show.

ANDY WOOD

Abani, Chris

b. 1966, Afikpo (now Ebonyi State),
Nigeria

writer, poet, saxophonist

In Nigeria in 1985, Chris Abani was arrested and imprisoned after his first published novel *Masters Of The Board* was considered to be a blueprint of the failed political *coup* involving General Vasta. Abani also published the critically acclaimed novel *Sirocco* (1987) in Nigeria. After settling in Britain and dividing his time between London and the USA, Abani eventually became a creative writing teacher in Hackney. He is regarded as one of the most talented and understated writers of the black British arts scene and has also taken an active role in London's Black Literature Development Project. Abani has contributed to the acclaimed black writing anthologies *Burning Words*, *Flaming Images* and *The Fire People*, and was a section editor of the black arts community journal **Calabash**. In 2000, Abani published his acclaimed political poetry collection *The Kalkuta Republic*, inspired by the torture he underwent during his time as a political prisoner, and by the legendary Nigerian musician Fela Kuti. Abani is also an accomplished saxophonist.

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- Newland, C. and Sesay, K. (eds) (2000) *IC3: the Penguin Book of New Black Writing in Britain*, London: Penguin.
- Sesay, K. (ed.) (1998) *Burning Words, Flaming Images*, London: SAKS Publications.

RAYMOND ENISUOH

AbbaKush

Formed in 1981, AbbaKush was the first mainly female **reggae** band in the UK. The quintet was formed by 1983 and they began their musical career by supporting **Misty in Roots**. Their music reflects their strong commitment to **Rastafari** ideals of love, peace and unity, and their work draws strongly on Jamaican reggae rhythms but also incorporates other African diasporic forms such as jazz and soca. Among their best-known tracks are 'Batta Dem' and 'Strong, Cultural and Black'. They have performed at reggae festivals internationally and, in March 2000, joined with Akabu, Thriller Jenna, Aisha and Jayzik to form 'Sista', a female reggae collective, to celebrate International Women's Day.

ALISON DONNELL

Abdu'Allah, Faisal

b. 1969, England
visual artist

Educated at the Royal College of Art, Abdu'Allah converted to Islam in 1991, an event that has greatly affected his artistic output. His conversion attests to the growing relevance of Islam to the black British community, and reflects the variety of concerns for young black British artists. Abdu'Allah has explored the links between religion and contemporary urban experience in works such as *The Last Supper*, in which eleven black men and women sit in Islamic costume around a table, while the figure corresponding to Judas stands with a gun

behind his back, which is only visible to the viewer. Other works feature portraits of young black men, such as *Silent Witnesses*. The accompanying soundtrack of rap, prayer and interviews suggests the confluence of discourses surrounding the contemporary black subject. Abdu'Allah's use of light-boxes can be read as referring to Islam (Allah as 'the light that shines within us') or purely formally, heightening the isolation and unworldliness of his subjects. Everyday urban violence is another theme that preoccupies Abdu'Allah, who explores this through images of morgues and guns.

Further reading

- Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art (1997) *Out of the Blue*, exhibition catalogue.

NIRU RATNAM

Adebayo, Diran

b. 1968, London, England
novelist, journalist

Of Nigerian descent, Adebayo was born in North London. He read law at Oxford and has since worked as a journalist for both newspapers (he regularly contributes to the *Nation*) and television (BBC and LNT). He is best known as a writer, and his first novel, *Some Kind of Black*, won the **Saga Prize**. He has since adapted the book for radio. The book was regarded as a 'major step in black British literature' (Sesay), especially in its use of language and characterisation. The protagonist, Dele, rebounds between London and university, as well as between different accents and social roles, while he self-consciously dons personalities that range as wide as his stylish garb. This navigation across a continuum of black British identities reveals an irreverence for ethnic or cultural purity. However, his sister's particular vulnerability (she suffers from sickle cell anaemia) shows Dele the tangible limits of this ideal when a brutal police arrest sends the young black woman into a coma. Coming to terms with being black in an often hostile and predominantly white society – an important thematic concern of black British

literature – Dele has to juggle racism and counter-racism, the demands of peers and parents, and of groupings that opportunistically seek to co-opt his sister as a *cause célèbre*. A second novel, *My Once upon a Time*, was published in 2000.

Select bibliography

Adebayo, D. (2000) *My Once upon a Time*, London: Abacus.
 — (1996) *Some Kind of Black*, London: Virago.

MARK STEIN

Adebayo, Dotun

b. 1959, Nigeria

publisher, journalist

Adebayo moved from his home in Lagos, Nigeria to London at the age of six to join his parents. He developed a thirst for reading as a young child and was guided by his father, an academic, to the works of the Black Panthers and contemporary US fiction. He studied at Stockholm and Essex Universities, but also worked as a music journalist, later taking a job with the *Voice* newspaper. It was while at the *Voice* that he first worked with Steve Pope, then editor of the newspaper, with whom he later established **X Press**, a black British publishing house specialising in popular fiction and reprints of classic black texts. His brother Diran **Adebayo** is a novelist.

ALISON DONNELL

Adefarasin, Remi

b. England

cinematographer

Adefarasin excels in a profession that is hardly mentioned by cultural thinkers in black arts – cinematography. He developed an interest in photography through his English grandfather (his father is Nigerian) and went on to study film and photography at Harrow Technical College. He won a place on the renowned BBC Camera

Training Scheme and now works in film and television producing mini-series and television films. He has the respect of his peers and works in Hollywood. In 1998, he won an Oscar for Best Cinematographer for the multi-award-winning film *Elizabeth*. Other accolades for the same film included an American Society of Cinematographers Award and a Fennecus award for Cinematography composition and lighting. Other credits are for *The House of Mirth* (2000), with *X Files* star Gillian Anderson, *Sliding Doors* (1998), starring Oscar-winning actress Gwyneth Paltrow, and the acclaimed film *Truly, Madly, Deeply* (1991), with Juliet Stevenson and Alan Rickman. Among his **television** credits is his work for BBC 2 *Playhouse* and *Grown Ups*, which starred Oscar-nominated actress Brenda Blethyn (who co-starred with Marianne **Jean-Baptiste** in *Secrets and Lies*). In 2001, he worked on *Unconditional Love*.

YINKA SUNMONU

Adrus, Said

b. 1958, Kampala, Uganda

visual artist

Adrus, born in Kampala of Indian descent, trained in English art schools, graduating from Trent Polytechnic in 1983. His early work echoes the brash, often racist, urban graffiti he witnessed in the North of England and involves layered imagery, words, bright colours and aerosols while sharing characteristics with 1980s neo-expressionists like Basquiat or Guston. After graduating, he visited family in Switzerland where he learned more about the plight of immigrant workers and their experience of racism and inequality. He then travelled to India where Gujurati imagery and cinema posters enhanced his already bright palette. Adrus's complex cultural make-up, spanning India, Uganda, Britain and Switzerland, influenced him to pursue threads of 'colour'-as-identity woven through official national distinctions. Later works embraced an equally vivid potential of computer imagery and, at Bracknell Gallery in 1995, Adrus used video and sound to produce a 'challenging environment'. Adrus thinks of the world as a collage of imports,

exports and migrations and cites Warhol and Rauschenberg as influences. His exhibitions include: 'Creativity, Knowledge and Faith' (1987), 'History and Identity – Seven Painters' (1991) and 'Transition of Riches' (1993), which toured Birmingham, Southampton and Stirling.

PAUL O'KANE

African and Asian Visual Arts Archive

The African and Asian Visual Arts Archive (AAVAA) is an arts organisation founded in 1989 by Eddie **Chambers** and originally based in Bristol. In 1995, the archive was re-housed at the University of East London. It is now co-ordinated by David A. **Bailey** and Sonia **Boyce**. AAVAA is designed to be a 'living' archive, in that it aims to foster links between its clients – both the artists who contribute and those who visit it. The archive contains over 6,000 slides of artwork by black British artists and detailed information on over 200 individual artists. It also holds relevant books and exhibition catalogues, and information about other British arts organisations, art historians, cultural critics and curators, especially those involved in post-colonial debates. As an archive, AAVAA is a key source of information on the history of black British **visual artists**, as well as contemporary developments. It is a key resource for students, curators and writers, among others, with information on 1980s exhibitions that is hard to find elsewhere. In addition, under the banner 'AAVAA Creative Forum', it aims to help shape contemporary debates around post-colonial issues through artists' commissions and round-table discussions.

NIRU RATNAM

African Cultural Exchange

African Cultural Exchange (ACE) was founded in Birmingham in October 1996. The company members, formerly of Kokuma Dance Theatre, have included Joanne Bernard (dancer), Gail

Claxton-Parmel (dancer), Ian Parmel (musician), Stuart Thomas (dancer) and Skibu (musician). A major facet of the company's work involves educational and outreach work in, for example, schools and community venues. ACE stresses the need to enable African and Caribbean musicians and dancers to access arts provision, stimulating and encouraging long-term development and recognition of such performance arts forms.

Their key aims are to highlight African and Caribbean dance and music, exploring old and new performance-based art forms while developing them within the context of the contemporary black British experience. ACE consider themselves to be developing a black dance technique for the future, influenced by the traditions of the past. In 1997, the company devised *The Path*, a performance piece that toured nationally. *The Path* contained four elements, fear, hope, laughter and change, and was supported by RJC Dance Company. In 1998 ACE worked on a number of pieces, including *Loss* and *Vibe*.

SAMINA ZAHIR

AFRICAN PEOPLE'S HISTORICAL MONUMENT FOUNDATION see Black Cultural Archives

Afrobeat

Afrobeat (1999), edited by Patsy Antoine, is an anthology of black British writing. In the 1990s, such anthologies started to be produced because of a growing interest in black British writing and **literature**. This collection features contributions from new writers and from **Saga Prize** winners Joanna **Traynor** and Judith Bryan, as well as works by Kadija **Sesay**, Yinka **Sunmonu** and others. The stories cover topics such as HIV, racism, confession-style **television** shows, obsession and **new racism**. Although it is generally noted that more women take up fiction writing than men, it is still surprising to note that twelve of the fifteen contributors are women. *Afrobeat* and *IC3: the Penguin Book of New Black Writing* both showcase new and established writers, some

of whom may well make their mark on the UK's literary establishment.

RAFIEL SUNMONU

Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project

The Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project (ACER) was established in 1978 by Len Garrison in order to produce learning materials that challenged the Eurocentric approach common in British schools in the 1970s and 1980s. This was the same education system that ignored the positive features and attributes of black children's ethnic and cultural heritage, and which diverted African-Caribbean children from mainstream schools into Educationally Sub-Normal schools in alarming proportions (Coard 1971). ACER provided materials that treated black children as valued equals in the culture of the school curriculum and which became the cornerstone of ILEA's Multi-Cultural Policy in the late 1970s and 1980s. The project team devised, piloted and developed learning materials for children aged three to seven at primary level (ACER *Myself*, 1978) and the seven to twelve age range (ACER *Ourselves*, 1981) for the multi-cultural as well as the all-white classroom. The learning materials reinforced ILEA's objective: 'to ensure that, with a society that is cohesive not uniform, cultures are respected, differences are recognised and individuals' identities are secure' (Malik 1996: 149). ACER staff ran special courses for teachers in centres and schools across London, as well as presentations to conference workshops and teachers' centres in other parts of the country.

An equally important part of ACER's work was its research library and its information service. ACER's library holding runs to over 10,000 books, journals and papers on African, African-Caribbean, multi-cultural and anti-racist reference materials, which provides a unique resource base in the community. ACER's work has also been influential in Europe and the Anne Frank Foundation (Schellekens 1995) incorporated the spirit of ACER's learning materials in a comprehensive Inter-Cultural Education scheme for children in

the Netherlands. These packs are being published in Dutch and will be translated into German and Danish for use in those countries.

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 Coard, B. (1971) *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Sub-Normal in the British School System*, London: New Beacon Books.
 Malik, K. (1996) *The Meaning of Race*, London: Macmillan.
 Schellekens, E. (1995) *This Is Me*, Amsterdam: Anne Frank House.

LEN GARRISON

Agard, John

b. 1949, Guyana

poet, editor

Agard wrote poetry from the age of sixteen but began his career teaching English, French and Latin, and later working in a library. While in Guyana he joined the performance troupe 'All ah We'. In 1977, he came to the UK, where he has lived since. Although Agard has published nearly a dozen volumes of poetry, and his writing is widely anthologised, performance is still crucial to his work. His poetry has covered an enormous range of subjects and is direct, complex, humorous and moving – sometimes all at once, as in 'Half Caste', one of his best-known verses. In 1982, he won the Casa de las Americas prize for his collection *Man to Pan* and he was shortlisted for the Smarties Prize in 1987 for his children's collection *Lend Me Your Wings*. Some of his works focus directly on the Caribbean, such as *The Calypso Alphabet* (1989), *No Hickory, no Dickory, no Dock* (1995) and *A Caribbean Dozen* (1994), the last two which he edited with his wife Grace **Nichols**. After a residency with London's South Bank Centre, Agard was engaged as the BBC's first poet-in-residence and he played a key role in their **Windrush** season.

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- (1985) *Mangoes and Bullets: Selected and New Poems 1972–1984*, London: Pluto Press.
- Agard, J. and Nichols, G. (1991) *No Hickory, no Dickory, no Dock: Caribbean Nursery Rhymes*, London: Penguin Viking.

ALISON DONNELL

Agbabi, Patience

b. 1965, London, England

poet, performer, workshop facilitator

Patience Agbabi is British-born Nigerian, her family are from the Ijaw community; she also remains close to her white foster family. She read English language and literature at Pembroke College, Oxford. Agbabi is one of the foremost artists on the performance scene. She has toured nationally and abroad, has appeared on radio and television, and has been published in fifteen anthologies. Her first collection, *R.A.W.*, was published by Gecko Press in 1995 and reprinted in 1997. Agbabi has worked extensively with young people in schools and youth clubs. She has performed at venues ranging from Ronnie Scott's to the Royal Albert Hall, and at the Glastonbury Festival, Edinburgh Book Festival and Europride. In 1994, she toured South Africa. Together with Adeola Agbebiyi and Dorothea **Smartt**, she performed *Fo(u)r Women* at the **Institute of Contemporary Arts** in 1996. She appeared on BBC 2's Def II in 1992 and **Channel 4's** LITPOP in 1998. In 1997, she won the Excelle Literary Award. Her second collection *Transformatrix* was published by Payback Press in Autumn 1999. From August 1999 to April 2000 she was in-house poet in Flamin' Eight, funded by the Poetry Society's Poetry Places scheme. In 2001 she took up a joint residency with the School of Healthcare and the School of Humanities at Oxford Brookes University.

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ANITA NAOKO PILGRIM

Agbenugba, Gbenga

b. 1966, London, England

novelist, journalist, editor

The experience of his return to London from Nigeria and reading Sam **Selvon's** *The Lonely Londoners* inspired Agbenugba's first novel, *Another Lonely Londoner* (1991). He was the first young Nigerian-British author to reflect a West African viewpoint, writing about the experience of living within the Nigerian youth circuit in London, writing in a mixture of English and Nigerian pidgin. Agbenugba came to England to study scriptwriting for screen and stage, and this is his central interest. He was editor of the Nigerian lifestyle magazine *Ovation* (1996–7), and in 1999 became the editor of the Nigerian lifestyle magazine *Omega*. He is the Media Consultant to African Independent Television. Agbenugba wrote his second novel, *Many Rivers to Cross* (1997), under his own name, Ola Opesan.

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KADIJA SESAY

Ahmad, Aijaz

academic

Aijaz Ahmad is a cultural theorist and Professorial Fellow at the Centre of Contemporary Studies, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. His polemic and erudite work *In Theory: Classes, Nation, Literatures* provides a Marxist re-reading of a range of iconic authors and positions in literary theory, engaging with issues of empire, post-colonialism and migrancy. *In Theory* created much debate and discussion in the field of post-colonial theory, largely through its critique of arguments such as Fredric Jameson's in 'Third World literature in the era of multinational capitalism': that all Third World literary texts are national allegories and that the individual story cannot be anything except the telling of the collectivity. Ahmad challenges the ideologies behind the break-up of the globe into First, Second and Third Worlds. He argues that, while the division between the 'First' and 'Second' Worlds is defined in terms of production systems (capitalism or socialism), the definition of the 'Third World' only refers to externally inflicted phenomena such as colonialism and imperialism. Thus the 'Third World' is defined not by relations of production but rather by internal domination. Ahmad is particularly outspoken on the theoretical and political incompatibility between Marxist and post-colonial positions, and bemoans the fact that very few critics have continued with an exclusively Marxist interrogation of empire. He argues that most have turned towards post-structuralism, which he believes grossly overlooks capitalist modernity. He particularly challenges established post-colonial critics such as Edward Said, Salman **Rushdie** and Homi **Bhabha**, whom he regards as profiting from high-profile careers in Western academia while pretending to speak for extant colonial peoples. Ahmad's 2000 publication *Lineages of the Present* traces the complex histories of right-wing nationalist movements currently gaining prominence in many regions across the globe.

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SANDRA PONZANESI

Ahmad, Rukhsana

b. 1948, Karachi, Pakistan

writer, translator, artistic director

Rukhsana Ahmad taught English at Karachi University and came to England after her marriage in 1973. She has four Masters degrees and finds it stimulating to learn something new. Ahmad is motivated by a feminist activism. She was a founder member of the **Asian Women Writers' Collective**, and began the Kali Theatre Company, which she co-founded with Rita **Wolf** in 1990, to draw more Asian women to the theatre. She wrote Kali's first play, *Song for a Sanctuary*, which was nominated for the Susan Blackburn Smith Award. Ahmad also writes for radio and the radio version of *Song for a Sanctuary* was shortlisted for the **Commission for Racial Equality** Race in the Media Award in 1993. Her adaptation of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* was runner-up for both the Writer's Guild Award for 'best radio dramatisation' and the CRE Race in the Media Award in 1994. She also worked on the World Service drama series *Westway*. Ahmad edited and translated a popular and important collection of feminist Urdu poetry, entitled *We Sinful Women*. Her play *River on Fire* was toured by Kali in 2000/2001.

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SUMAN BHUCHAR

AHMED, SHAMI see Joe Bloggs

Ajamu

b. 1963, Huddersfield, England
fine-art photographer

A self-taught photographer, Ajamu has been a practising artist since 1990. His work has been exhibited in London, New York, Frankfurt, São Paulo, Amsterdam and Paris. His first solo exhibition was at Centerprise Community Centre in London in 1991. In 1994, Camerawork, London, showcased his work in the exhibition 'Black Bodyscapes'. Among other group exhibitions, he has taken part in the first 'Open Gay Pride Show' (London, 1991), Arles Photographic Festival (1993), 'Kissing the Dust: Artists' Working Collections' (Huddersfield, Oldham and Oxford, 1997) and 'Africa by Itself' at the Musée Européenne de la Photographie (Paris, 1998). His work is featured in several books, including Sue Golding's *The Eight Technologies of Otherness* (1997, London: Routledge), Emmanuel Cooper's *Fully Exposed: Male Nude in Photography* (1995, London: Routledge), Kobena Mercer's *The Camera as Kinky Machine* (catalogue for 'Black Bodyscapes' exhibition) and Lloyd Vega's *In Our Own Image: the Art of Black Male Photography* (1993, Vega Press). In 1995, Ajamu was the subject of Topher Campbell's film *The Homecoming: a Short Film about Ajamu*.

Further reading

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ANITA NAOKO PILGRIM

Akomfrah, John

b. 1957
film-maker

John Akomfrah is best known for the films he has directed as part of the **Black Audio Film Collective**: *Handsworth Songs* (1987), *Testament* (1988), *Seven Songs for Malcolm X* (1992) and *Mothership Connection* (a.k.a. *Last Angel of History*) (1995). The collective received financial backing

from **Channel 4** and, before that, the **Greater London Council**, which enabled them to make independent and experimental works. *Handsworth Songs*, which won the Grierson Prize, is now regarded as a crucial landmark of black British cultural production of the 1980s, addressing questions of representation, identity and politics through a distinctive and innovative documentary format that drew on news footage of the 1985 Handsworth riots and disturbances in Birmingham, as well as earlier moments, to present an alternative history. *Seven Songs for Malcolm X* continued Akomfrah's stylised documentary work, this time focused on the African American civil rights leader. The film was awarded Best Use of Archive Footage in a Documentary at the Chicago Film Festival in 1993. *Mothership Connection* works with science fiction imagery and powerful digital effects.

Further reading

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ALISON DONNELL

Ali, Arif

b. 1935, British Guyana
publisher

After pursuing several lines of work in Guyana, Ali came to the UK in 1957 and founded the monthly *West Indian Digest* in 1971. A relaunched *West Indian World* followed in 1973, and in 1979 the *Asian Digest*. In 1981 he launched two newspapers, *Caribbean Times* and *Asian Times*. He founded **Hansib Publishing Ltd** in 1973, the largest of Britain's specialist black **publishing houses**. Ali, known as a pioneer in the field of black publishing (see **publishing, books**), was an Outstanding Merit Award Finalist in the *Windrush* Achievements Awards, 2000. He collaborated with Catherine Hogben and James **Berry** on *Grassroots in Verse*

(1988, London: Hansib) and wrote *1992*, published as a leather-bound book.

ALISON DONNELL

alternative minority media: cable and satellite

Increasingly, minority viewers who are disillusioned with the offerings of mainstream **television**, even from those departments ostensibly set up to meet their needs, are turning to minority cable and satellite. The developments in cable technology, and its growing availability, have opened up new possibilities for black viewers and black media professionals working in broadcasting. That there is a vibrant and enthusiastic audience for popular black-originated work can be seen by the success of the US cable network Black Entertainment Television (BET), which was valued at between \$220 million and \$250 million in 1992. When Robert Johnson conceived the project in 1979, his objective was for the company to become the primary producer-distributor of black-oriented cable programming, as well as the most significant vehicle through which to reach black consumers (Salmas, 1992). Fifteen years later BET remained the only cable channel of its kind, reaching 31.9 million households with a schedule of entertainment, music, news, current affairs and sport. In 1990, the British-made *Desmonds* was the first British show to be broadcast on BET. The politico-economic aspects of broadcasting and distribution are outside the scope of this unit but clearly, as Downing points out, the development of some ethnic minority media is simply 'good' business – niche marketing rather than good community relations (Downing, 1992).

The success of BET in exploiting the potential of an eager black audience eventually made the transatlantic crossing to Britain and Identity Television (IDTV), marketed as Britain's first black entertainment channel, was launched in June 1993. IDTV was backed by BET and began transmitting on the London Interconnect system to approximately 150,000 homes. The publicity material for the channel boldly says: 'it's your identity – get to know it!' The schedule was a mix of programmes

from the USA, the Caribbean, Africa and the UK, and included soaps, music, comedy and current affairs programmes. When launched, IDTV intended to raise awareness among all those who at the time received cable – about 600,000 nationally – although the total market was thought to be in the region of 2.9 million homes. However, after very few years in operation, IDTV was wholly taken over by its parent company BET, and in 1997 BET pulled out of the UK market to be replaced with BET on Jazz, a 24-hour rolling jazz sister channel, largely because it was most 'mobile internationally' (Sutherland 1998: 40).

Namaste TV has been broadcasting since 1992 and aims to cater to the new second and successive generations of UK-born Asians. Namaste is promoted as 'truly East greets West' and, unusually for a minority channel, over 40 per cent of the channel's output is produced by UK crews, but only 20 per cent of their output is broadcast in English, although much of the programming is sub-titled. The range of genres includes Asian music, soaps, light entertainment, drama and business programmes, and more recently the channel has launched a youth-oriented strand called TeenAsia. More recent entrants into this particular niche market include AsiaVision and AsiaNet.

In 1997, the UK-based African Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) was launched, aiming to become 'the first black television channel to serve the UK black TV consumer market, particularly in London' (Sutherland, 1998: 39). In June 1998, ABC was granted a licence from the ITC to begin broadcasting and Mine TV was open for business, confident that it would succeed where its predecessor, IDTV, had failed. ABC's managing director, Alistair Soyode, argues that it is important to have a menu that reflects the interests of Britain's black communities, not simply a regular and monotonous diet of US-imports (Soyode cited in Sutherland 1998: 40). He also believes that the channel needs to be of interest to non-black audiences and envisages that at least 20 per cent of his audience will be cross-over.

The constant search for resourcing, particularly from advertisers, has the inevitable result that, despite these new channels' potential to run more challenging material, entertainment-based pro-

grammes become their principal output. In addition, the stated aim of many minority channels is to produce programmes in-house or at least to commission UK-based companies, but too often channels rely on cheap(er) imports to bulk out their schedules. As Ismond argues, ‘one of the consequences of low-level investment in domestic production is that it does not augur well for the promotion of cable as a showcase for innovative and experimental (read “risky”) material’ (Ismond cited in Cottle 1997: 205–6). Hopefully, though, over time, as consumers get more switched on to the opportunities for alternative products, channels will be able to produce the range of output that really does begin to challenge the normative versions of ‘race’ and ethnicity, which are such a commonplace everywhere else in the media.

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KAREN ROSS

Alvi, Moniza

b. 1954, Lahore, Pakistan

poet, teacher

Alvi’s first collection of poems, *The Country at My Shoulder*, was published by Oxford University Press in 1993. Selected poems from this collection had already appeared in a pamphlet in 1991, for which Alvi was judged joint winner of the Poetry Business Competition. Her second collection, *A Bowl of Warm*

Air, appeared, to equal acclaim, in 1996, and, in 2000, Bloodaxe Books published a new series of her poems, *Carrying My Wife*, which included both of Alvi’s previous works. She reads poems from all three collections on *The Poetry Quartets 6* audio cassette series (the British Council/Bloodaxe Books). She has also co-edited the *Poetry London Newsletter*.

The daughter of a South-Asian father and a British mother, Alvi grew up in Hertfordshire, and her poetry shows a sophisticated engagement with migrancy, **cultural hybridity** and self-remaking. Her poems focus equally on personal, familial connections with the subcontinent, and on the English landscapes of her own childhood. Alvi now lives and teaches in London.

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ALEX TICKELL

Ama, Shola

b. 1979, London, England

R’n’B singer and songwriter

While chart success for UK R’n’B and soul artists had been sporadic since **Soul II Soul**’s initial impact in 1989, Shola Ama’s rendition of Randy Crawford’s ‘You Might Need Somebody’ in 1997 helped open up the market again. Discovered by Kwame of D-Influence while waiting at Hammersmith tube station in 1995, ‘You Might Need Somebody’ sold almost 350,000 copies in the UK and reached number four in the national charts. Ama’s follow up-single ‘You’re the One I Love’ went to number three and her debut album *Much Love* reached number six in the album charts. *Much Love*, an album of accessible soul rhythms behind Ama’s winsome vocals, featured Ama as a co-writer on the

majority of the tracks. Such success helped her win a Brit Award for Best British Female Solo Artist. For the next two years, Ama split her time touring with the Fugees and 3T while recording new material for an album. In 1999, she kept herself in the spotlight by collaborating with WEA label mate Glemma Kid on his Top 10 hit 'Taboo'. Her second album, *In Return* (1999), did not match her previous success.

DEREK A. BARDOWELL

Amin, Ruhul

b. Bangladesh

film-maker

Amin is an East London Bangladeshi film-maker whose films reflect his assertion that: 'By birth, I am a Bengali. By naturalisation, I am a British subject and, spiritually, I am an East Ender.' From documentaries such as *Purbo London* (1978) and *Flame in My Heart* (1983) to short films *Moviewallah* (1992) and *Rhythms* (1994), Amin has created emotionally resonant, humanistic portraits of Asian migrants – particularly, migrants from a displaced Bengali community living in the UK. Loss and longing for the homeland are primary tropes in his early work, as demonstrated in Amin's 1986 debut feature *A Kind of English*. In Amin's film (see **film and cinema**), 9-year-old Samin assists his grandmother in re-creating the village back home to overcome their family's over-riding feelings of isolation in London. In the highly lyrical vignette *Rhythms*, Amin again represents the healing generational bonds between Bengali migrants and their British-born descendants through an old man and young boy's love of Bengali **music**. Amin deploys a neo-realist aesthetic, his films inhabiting visually expressive realms where dialogue is sparse and lingering silences punctuate evocative images. His use of non-professional actors from the Bengali community in films such as *A Kind of English* contribute to the drama-documentary atmosphere, while his representations of women foreground their oft-unspoken grievances and innermost concerns. A British-Bengali, thoroughly art-house director who helped design a multimedia installation at the Arts Worldwide Bangladesh Festival

2000, Amin's films bespeak the resilient spirit of Bengali East London.

SATINDER CHOHAN

Andrews, Naveen

b. 1969, Balham, England

actor

Naveen Andrews was born and brought up in South London. He attended the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and his peers included Ewan McGregor and David Thewlis. At the end of his studies, Andrews was offered the part of Bike in Hanif **Kureishi's** *London Kills Me* (1991). One of his memorable early performances was as Zaf, a wild and enthusiastic leader of a Southall Country and Western band, in *Wild West* (1992), a film (see **film and cinema**) written by Harwant **Bains**. This role earned him a nomination for the most promising newcomer in the Evening Standard Drama Awards, 1993. Andrews went on to play Karim Amir, in the **television** series of Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1993), which fell foul of television watchdogs for depicting a six-minute sex orgy. However, it was his role of Kip, the Sikh bomb disposal expert, who won the heart of Hana, played by Juliette Binoche in Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient* (1996), that brought him international fame. He went to Bombay and worked on Kaizad Gustad's debut feature, *Bombay Boys* (1998). Other credits include Mira Nair's *Kama Sutra* (1996), where he played the dissolute king, Raj Singh, and the television drama, *The Peacock Spring* (1995). Andrews is now living and working in the USA, where his credits include *The Chippendales Murder* (2000) and *Blessed Art Thou* (2000).

SUMAN BHUCHAR

Anim-Addo, Joan

b. 1948, St George's, Grenada

lecturer, writer, editor

Anim-Addo is Head of the Caribbean Centre at Goldsmiths College, University of London, where