The Cambridge History of Black and Asian British Writing provides a comprehensive historical overview of the diverse literary traditions impacting on this field’s evolution, from the eighteenth century to the present. Drawing on the expertise of over forty international experts, this book gathers innovative scholarship to look forward to new readings and perspectives, while also focusing on undervalued writers, texts, and research areas. Creating new pathways to engage with the naming of a field that has often been contested, readings of literary texts are interwoven throughout with key political, social, and material contexts. In making visible the diverse influences constituting past and contemporary British literary culture, this Cambridge History makes a unique contribution to British, Commonwealth, postcolonial, transnational, diasporic, and global literary studies, serving both as one of the first major reference works to cover four centuries of black and Asian British literary history as well as a compass for future scholarship.

Susheila Nasta is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Literature at Queen Mary University of London. She is the founding Editor of Wasafiri, the magazine of international contemporary writing. A pioneer in the field of postcolonial writing, she received an MBE for her services to black and Asian literatures in 2011. She has published over thirteen books, directed major award-winning research projects, and judged numerous literary prizes.

Mark U. Stein is Professor of English, Postcolonial, and Media Studies at Westfälische Wilhelms-University Münster where he founded the interdisciplinary MA in National and Transnational Studies. His research interests include diaspora, transnational, and postcolonial studies. He has published ten books, including Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation and Locating African European Studies.
THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF BLACK AND ASIAN BRITISH WRITING

Edited by
SUSHEILA NASTA
Queen Mary University of London

MARK U. STEIN
Westfälische Wilhelms-University of Münster
To Maya, Alexander, and Lara
and the future mixings of cultural streams
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Nicola L. Abram is Lecturer in Literatures in English at the University of Reading. Her research values literature in relation to global justice, and focuses on postcolonial and women’s writing. Nicola’s publications include the monograph Black British Women’s Theatre: Intersectionality, Archives, Aesthetics (2019) and articles and chapters on plays by Helen Oyeyemi (in ‘Telling it Slant’: Critical Approaches to Helen Oyeyemi, ed. Chloe Buckley and Sarah Ilott, 2017), Winsome Pinnock (in Modern and Contemporary Black British Drama, ed. Mary F. Brewer, Lynette Goddard, and Deirdre Osborne, 2014), and debbie tucker green (in Journal of Contemporary Drama in English, 2:1, 2014).

Rehana Ahmed is Senior Lecturer in Postcolonial and Contemporary Literature at Queen Mary University of London. She is the author of Writing British Muslims: Religion, Class and Multiculturalism (2015), and the co-editor of South Asian Resistances in Britain, 1858–1947 (2011), Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing (2012), and a special issue of the Journal of Commonwealth Literature on ‘British Culture after 9/11’ (2018).

Ashok Bery is a Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. He is the author of Cultural Translation and Postcolonial Poetry (2007) and the co-editor of Comparing Postcolonial Literatures (2000). His essays have appeared in a number of academic journals and critical works, and his poems in a variety of British magazines and anthologies, including PN Review, Stand, The North, and Life Lines. His research interests are mainly in modern poetry and Indian literature. He is currently working on a series of poems about the Indian Rebellion of 1857–1858.
Roger Bromley is Emeritus Professor in Cultural Studies at the University of Nottingham, and was a Visiting Professor at Lancaster University until 2016. He worked for forty-four years in a range of UK Higher Education institutions, and is the author of Lost Narratives: Popular Fictions and Politics (1988), Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions (2000), From Alice to Buena Vista: The Cinema of Wim Wenders (2001), and four other books, as well as more than fifty scholarly articles. His current research interests include migration, diaspora, and literary/cinematic representations of refugees and asylum seekers.

Sarah Brouillette is a Professor in the Department of English at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. She is the author of Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace (2007), Literature and the Creative Economy (2014), and a forthcoming book on the history of UNESCO’s book-related programming.

J. Dillon Brown is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Washington University in St Louis, USA. He specialises in anglophone Caribbean, postcolonial, and world literatures. He is the author of Migrant Modernism: Postwar London and the West Indian Novel (2013) and the co-editor, with Leah Rosenberg, of Beyond Windrush: Rethinking Postwar Anglophone Caribbean Literature (2015).

Antoinette Burton is Professor of History and Swanlund Endowed Professor at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA, where she also directs the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. She is the author of The Trouble with Empire (2015) and An ABC of Queen Victoria’s Empire (2017), and the editor, with Tony Ballantyne, of World Histories from Below (2016). Her most recent project is as editor of the six-volume series A Cultural History of Western Empires (2018). She is currently at work with Renisa Mawani on an anti-imperial bestiary.

Chris Campbell is Lecturer in Global Literatures at the University of Exeter. He teaches and researches in the areas of world literature, environmental criticism, and postcolonial studies. He is co-editor of The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics (2017) and has published articles on world literature and world-ecology, Caribbean writing, and broadcast culture and decolonisation.
Notes on Contributors

Vincent Carretta, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Maryland, USA, specialises in transatlantic historical and literary studies during the long eighteenth century. Vincent has published two books on verbal and visual anglophone political satire between 1660 and 1820, as well as authoritative editions of the works of Olaudah Equiano, Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, and other eighteenth-century transatlantic authors of African descent. His most recent books are biographies of Equiano (2006) and Phillis Wheatley (2011), as well as authoritative editions of the writings of Philip Quaque (2010), Ignatius Sancho (2015) and Phillis Wheatley (2019).

Colin Chambers was Literary Manager of the Royal Shakespeare Company (1981–1997), and since 2014 has been Emeritus Professor of Drama at Kingston University, London. He co-edited Granville Barker on Theatre (with Richard Nelson, 2017) and edited the Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre (2002), which he is updating. He has written extensively on the theatre, including The Story of Unity Theatre (1989); Peggy: The Life of Margaret Ramsay, Play Agent (1997; winner of the inaugural Theatre Book Prize) and Peggy to her Playwrights (2018); Inside the Royal Shakespeare Company (2004); Here We Stand: Politics, Performers and Performance – Paul Robeson, Isadora Duncan and Charlie Chaplin (2006); and Black and Asian Theatre in Britain: A History (2011).

John R. Coleman is a doctoral candidate in English at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. His thesis analyses the impact of neoliberal British education policies on contemporary British literature, particularly writing by authors from minoritised communities. He is interested in showing how neoliberal education policy has privileged a relatively homogeneous creative class, whose hegemony resonates across literary production. He is also concerned with discerning the lines of flight that have emerged to elude this class’s control. Wasafiri published his article ‘Making Readers: Book Trust’s Multicultural Programming in the Creative-Economy Context’ (2016).

Denise DeCaires Narain is Reader in Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Sussex. She is reviews editor for Contemporary Women’s Writing and co-editor for Palgrave’s Contemporary Women’s Writing series. She teaches Caribbean and postcolonial writing with an emphasis on gender in the contexts of global feminisms. She has published widely on Caribbean and postcolonial women’s writing, including two monographs, Caribbean Notes on Contributors
Notes on Contributors

Women’s Poetry: Making Style and Olive Senior: Writers and their Work. Her current research is on the representation of servants in postcolonial women’s writing for a book project titled Maids and Madams: Postcolonial Feminisms, Solidarity and Servitude.

Alison Donnell is Professor of Modern Literatures in English and Head of School of Literature, Creative Writing and Drama at the University of East Anglia. She has published widely on anglophone Caribbean, diasporic, and black British writings, with a particular emphasis on challenging orthodox literary histories and recovering women’s voices. Her current projects include General Editorship of Caribbean Literature in Transition, 1800–2015 (three volumes) with Cambridge University Press and a monograph, Caribbean Queer: Culturequeer Belonging, Creolised Sexualities and the Literary. She is also leading a major research project, ‘Caribbean Literary Heritage: Recovering the Lost Past and Safeguarding the Future’ funded by the Leverhulme Trust (www.caribbeanliteraryheritage.com).


Felipe Espinoza Garrido is Associate Professor in English, Postcolonial and Media Studies at the University of Münster, Germany, where he received his PhD with a thesis on ‘Post-Thatcherism in British Film’. Currently he is researching a book on empire imaginations in rediscovered women’s sensation fiction. His research interests also include neo-Victorian studies and
transmedia franchises, as well as adaptation studies. He has published on British popular fiction and co-edited *Locating African European Studies: Interventions – Intersections – Conversations* (with Caroline Koegler, Deborah Nyangulu, and Mark U. Stein, 2020).

**Kate Houleden** is Senior Lecturer in World Literature at Anglia Ruskin University, and has worked previously at Liverpool John Moores University, the University of Surrey, and Queen Mary University of London. Her book *Sexuality, Gender and Nationalism in Caribbean Literature* appeared in 2016 and a co-edited collection, *Popular Postcolonialisms*, in 2018. She is one of the founders of the international World Literature Network and her current research focuses on the intersections between queer studies, transnational feminism, and world literature. An essay on queer and world-literary approaches to the work of Anna Kavan appeared in *Women: A Cultural Review* in 2017, and she is currently working on her next monograph, *Queering World Literature*.


**Tabish Khair**, an Associate Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark, was born in Ranchi and educated in Gaya, Bihar, India. His scholarly books include *Babu Fictions* (2001), *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness* (2009), and the co-edited anthology *Other Routes: 1500 Years of African and Asian Travel Writing* (2005). He is also an award-winning poet and novelist. The chapter in this anthology was written with the support of the Leverhulme Trust when Khair was a Leverhulme guest professor at Leeds University.

Notes on Contributors

writing, publishing, and culture, with a particular focus on ‘making’ of African literary institutions. She has published widely in the field of African literatures.

Ole Birk Laursen is Lecturer in Postcolonial Indian Literature at New York University, London. His research concerns the literature and history of black and South Asian people in Britain and Europe, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, with a particular focus on anti-imperialism and anarchism. He is co-editor of Reworking Postcolonialism (2015), Networking the Globe (2016), and of a special issue of SubStance on comics and anarchism (2017), and editor of M. P. T. Acharya, We Are Anarchists: Essays on Anarchism, Pacifism, and the Indian Independence Movement (2019). His monograph, The Indian Revolutionary Movement in Europe, 1905–1918, will be published in 2020.

Sarah Lawson Welsh is Associate Professor and Reader in English and Postcolonial Literature at York St John University. Her most recent research focuses on writing and Caribbean food cultures with a new monograph, Food, Text and Culture in the Caribbean, published in 2019. She authored the first monograph study of the writing of Grace Nichols (Grace Nichols, 2007) and, more recently, a chapter on ‘Black British Poetry’ in The Cambridge Companion to British Poetry 1945–2010 (ed. Edward Larrissy, 2015). She is one of the founding members of the international Journal of Postcolonial Writing.

Bénédicte Ledent teaches at the University of Liège, Belgium, and is a member of the postcolonial research group CEREP (www.cerep.ulg.ac.be). She has published extensively on Caryl Phillips and other contemporary writers of Caribbean descent. She has also worked on several editorial projects, the latest of which are a volume entitled Madness in Anglophone Caribbean Literature: On the Edge (co-edited with Evelyn O’Callaghan and Daria Tunca, 2018) and a special issue of the Journal of Postcolonial Writing devoted to minor genres in postcolonial literature (edited in collaboration with Delphine Munos, 2018). She is co-editor of Brill’s book series Cross/Cultures.

Gail Low’s teaching and writing interests are in creative non-fiction, creative criticism, and book/publishing history; her research publications address the ways in which institutions and institutional practices help or hinder creativity. Author of Publishing the Postcolonial (2011), White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism (1996), and co-editor, with Marion
Notes on Contributors

Wynne-Davies, of *A Black British Canon?* (Macmillan, 2006), she is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* and is founder-editor of DURA – Dundee University Review of the Arts.


**Javed Majeed** is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at King’s College London. He is the author of several books on modern South Asia, including *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s ‘The History of British India’ and Orientalism* (1992), *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal* (2007), *Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics, Postcolonialism* (2009), and *Nation and Region in Grierson’s Linguistic Survey of India and Colonialism and Knowledge in Grierson’s Linguistic Survey of India* (2 vols., 2018). He has co-edited *Hali’s Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam* (with Christopher Shackle, 1997) and *India and South Africa: Comparisons, Confluences, Contrasts* (with Isabel Hofmeyr, 2016).


**Peter Morey** is Professor of 20th Century Literature at the University of Birmingham. He has written widely on colonial and postcolonial literature, with particular reference to South Asia and its diaspora. Most recently he has been working on literary and cultural representations of Muslims. He is the author of *Fictions of India: Narrative and Power* (2000), *Rohinton Mistry* (2004), *Framing Muslims* (with Amina Yaqin, 2011), and *Islamophobia and the Novel* (2018). He has co-edited four books on South Asian and Muslim writing,

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multiculturalism, and Islamophobia. He has also led two research-council funded projects into the media framing of Muslims and into the conditions for building intercultural trust through dialogue.

Mpalive-Hangson Mlisika is Reader in English and Humanities and Course Director for BA Arts and Humanities at Birkbeck, University of London. His main research interests are in African literature, especially Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe, Caribbean literature, and black British writing. Mpalive-Hangson has published the books Post-Colonial Identity in Wole Soyinka (2007), Chinua Achebe’s ‘Things Fall Apart’: A Study (with David Whittaker, 2007), Wole Soyinka (1998), and Writing and Africa (co-edited with Paul Hyland, 1997), among others. He is a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Southern African Studies and the Council of the British Institute in Eastern Africa.

Mona Narain is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Texas Christian University, USA. She is the Scholarship Editor for ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640–1830. Her areas of expertise are eighteenth-century British literature, (post)colonial studies, gender, and critical race studies. Publications include her co-edited book Gender and Space in British Literature, 1660–1820 (2014) and articles on eighteenth-century Indians writing about Britain in Literature Compass and SEL. She is currently working on a project on cross-cultural encounters, funded in part by a research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Susheila Nasta mbe is Professor of Contemporary and Modern Literatures at Queen Mary University of London and Emerita at the Open University. Founding Editor of Wasafiri, the magazine of international contemporary writing she launched in 1984, she has published widely, especially on the Caribbean, the South Asian diaspora, and black Britain. From 2007 to 2013 she led a major research and public engagement project on South Asian Britain. Her books include: Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora (2002), Writing Across Worlds (2004), India in Britain (2013), and Asian Britain: A Photographic History (2013). She is currently writing a group biography, The Bloomsbury Indians, and was awarded the Benson Medal in 2019 by the Royal Society of Literature.

Meenakshi Ponnuswami is Associate Professor of English at Bucknell University, USA. Her research focuses on postwar black British, British Asian, and African American drama. Her recent publications include ‘Dutchman in Notes on Contributors

the Drama Class’ (in Approaches to Teaching Baraka’s ‘Dutchman’, ed. Matthew Calihman and Gerald Early, 2018) and ‘British Muslim Feminism on Stage’ (Contemporary Theatre Review, 2018). She is currently researching British Asian feminist performance and stand-up comedy; African American women’s playwriting of the 1960s; and contemporary South Asian American theatre. Professor Ponnuswami teaches modern American drama, including courses on American masculinity in performance, the theatre of the Civil Rights Movement, and American ethnic comedy.

James Procter is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Literature at Newcastle University. He is the author of Dwelling Places (2003), Stuart Hall (2004), and Reading Across Worlds (with Bethan Benwell, 2014), and the editor of Writing Black Britain (2000) and Out of Bounds (with Jackie Kay and Gemma Robinson, 2012). He is currently completing a monograph as part of the Leverhulme-funded ‘Scripting Empire’ project on West Indian and West African radio writing at the BBC between the 1930s and 1960s.

Ruvani Ranasingha is Reader in Postcolonial Literature at King’s College London. She specialises in postcolonial literature and theory, especially relating to South Asia and the South Asian diaspora. She is the author of Hanif Kureishi (2002), South Asian Writers in Twentieth-Century Britain: Culture in Translation (2007), and the lead editor of South Asians Shaping the Nation, 1870–1960: A Sourcebook (2012). Her most recent monograph is Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women’s Fiction: Gender, Narration and Globalisation (2016).

Pallavi Rastogi is Associate Professor of English at Louisiana State University, USA, where she teaches classes on postcolonial literature and culture. She has published numerous articles on South Asian and South Asian diaspora literature. In addition to editing a collection entitled Before Windrush (2008), she has also authored a monograph entitled Afrindian Fictions: Diaspora, Race, and National Desire in South Africa (2008). Her second book, Postcolonial Disaster: Narrating Catastrophe in the Twenty-First Century, will be published in spring 2020.

Susanne Reichl is Professor of Contemporary English Literature at the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Vienna, Austria. Her main research interests are black and Asian British literature, children’s and young adult literature, teaching literature and culture in the foreign language classroom, cognitive approaches to literature, multimodal
Notes on Contributors

texts, and time travel stories. Publications include Cultures in the Contact Zone: Ethnic Semiosis in Black British Literature (2002), Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial (edited with Mark U. Stein, 2005), and Cognitive Principles, Critical Practice: Reading Literature at University (2009). She co-ordinates the interdisciplinary research platform #YouthMediaLife, which investigates young people’s media lifeworlds.

HENGHA MEH SAROUKHANI is Assistant Professor in Literatures and Cultures of the Black Atlantic at Saint Mary’s University, Canada. She has published essays on dub poetry, contemporary black British literature, black British soldiers in British and Irish film, and the cultural politics of the car. Her work has appeared in the Journal of Postcolonial Writing, Études Anglaises, Caribbean Quarterly, and British Literature in Transition, 1980–2000. She is currently working on a monograph that examines the cosmopolitics of twenty-first-century black British texts.

ANNA SNAITH is Professor of Twentieth-Century Literature at King’s College London. Her publications include Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London, 1890–1945 (2014), an edition of Virginia Woolf’s The Years for the Cambridge University Press Edition of the Works of Virginia Woolf (2012), and of A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas for Oxford World’s Classics (2015). She is currently working on a project on interwar modernism and noise, and is editing a volume on Literature and Sound.

FLORIAN STADTLER is Senior Lecturer in Postcolonial Literatures in the Department of English and Film at the University of Exeter. His research focuses on South Asia and its diasporas and he has published widely on Indian popular cinema, South Asian writing in English, and British Asian cinema, drama, history, and literature. His monograph Fiction, Film and Indian Popular Cinema: Salman Rushdie’s Novels and the Cinematic Imagination was published in 2013. He is the Reviews Editor of Wasafiri: The Magazine of International Contemporary Writing.

MARK U. STEIN is Chair of English, Postcolonial and Media Studies at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität (WWU) Münster, Germany. He specialises in diaspora, transnational, and postcolonial studies with a focus on phenomena such as porosity and translocation in anglophone cultural production. He is the author of Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation (2004) and has co-edited Postcolonial Ideology (with Katja Sarkowsky, 2020), Edward Said’s Translocations: Essays in Secular Criticism (with Tobias Döring,
Notes on Contributors

2012), African Europeans (with Lyn Innes, 2008), and Laughter and the Postcolonial (with Susanne Reichl, 2005). ptrs.wwu.de/stein.

Sara Upstone is Professor of English Literature and Head of Humanities at Kingston University, London. She is the author of three monographs – Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel (2009), British Asian Fiction (2010), and Rethinking Race and Identity in Contemporary British Fiction (2016) – and is also editor of three co-edited collections, most recently Postmodern Literature and Race (2015). Her most recent publication is Literary Theory: A Complete Introduction (2017).

Julian Wacker teaches English, Postcolonial and Media Studies at the University of Münster, Germany. His doctoral thesis focuses on space and identity politics in grime culture and examines its remediation in contemporary British inner-city fiction. His research areas include black and Asian British film in the twenty-first century, black neo-Victorian/neo-Edwardian imaginaries, and Afropolitan writing. He has previously published an interview with the Chinese Jamaican author Kerry Young titled ‘Outside the Boxes’ (2017) in Wasafiri. Articles on grime poetry and on obscurity in Teju Cole’s work are forthcoming.

Preface and Acknowledgements

We began work on this book in 2015 to consolidate the now significant body of academic scholarship which has sought for several decades to provide a wide-angled vision of Britain’s mixed cultural heritage and to locate the history of black and Asian literary culture as a formative and integral element within it. As the development of the project coincided with a referendum called by the UK government in June 2016 for Britain to ‘exit’ the European Union (Brexit) and once more close its borders, the broader aims have become even more urgent. Ironically perhaps, given this context, this project has been built on the fruits of much cross-cultural exchange and communication: not only are the editors situated in different locations – one in Britain at Queen Mary University, London and the other in Germany at the University of Münster – but black and Asian British writing is featured prominently on the literature curriculum in both institutions.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

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Susheila Nasta and Mark U. Stein