

An Island Full of Voices: Writing Britain Now

Participant profiles

Fred D'Aguiar is an award-winning poet, novelist and playwright. Author of eight collections of poetry and four novels, his first book *The Longest Memory* won the 1994 Whitbread First Novel award. *Continental Shelf* (2009), his sixth collection, was a UK Poetry Book Society Choice and shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize. His most recent collection, *Translations From Memory* appeared in 2018. Born in London and brought up in Guyana, he is Professor of Creative Writing at UCLA.

Bidisha is a writer, broadcaster and film-maker. She is the author of five books including *Beyond the Wall: Writing a Path through Palestine* and, most recently, *Asylum and Exile: Hidden Voices of London*. Her film *An Impossible Poison* has been selected for numerous international film festivals. She is Trustee of the Booker Prize Foundation and the Forward Arts Foundation, and patron of the SI Leeds Literary Prize, for unpublished fiction by black and Asian women in the UK.

<http://bidisha-online.blogspot.com/>

Imtiaz Dharker has published six collections of poetry which include *Over the Moon* and *Luck is the Hook*. Awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 2014, she has been Poet in Residence at Cambridge University Library and worked on projects across art forms in Leeds, Newcastle and Hull, as well as the Archives of St Paul's Cathedral. She is also an artist and video film-maker.

<http://www.imtiazdharker.com/>

Louise Doughty is the author of nine novels, including *Apple Tree Yard* (2013), which was a top ten bestseller and adapted for BBC Television. Her sixth novel, *Whatever You Love* (2010) is also being adapted and was nominated for the Costa Novel Award and the Orange Prize for Fiction. Her work has been translated into thirty languages. Her most recent book is *Platform Seven* (2019). She is fiction judge of the Wasafiri Queen Mary New Writing Prize, now in its 10th year.

<https://www.louisedoughty.com>

Bernardine Evaristo is an acclaimed author of eight books of fiction and verse fiction including *Mr Loverman*, *Lara*, *Blonde Roots* and *The Emperor's Babe*. Her latest novel, *Girl, Woman, Other* has been shortlisted for the 2019 Booker Prize. Writing in a range of genres, she is a literary activist for inclusion and Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University London. She is currently Vice Chair of the Royal Society of Literature.

<https://bevaristo.com/>

Maggie Gee has published thirteen novels, including *The Ice People*, *My Cleaner*, *My Driver* and *The White Family*, a collection of short stories, *The Blue*, and a memoir *My Animal Life*. Her most recent novel, *Blood* is a black comedy set in a disturbed and chaotic Brexit Britain. She has judged international prizes including the Booker Prize and her work has been shortlisted for awards including the Orange Prize and the international Impac award. Until recently, she was Director of the Faber Academy of Fiction and has taught at Arvon. She is Professor of Creative Writing at Bath Spa.

Romesh Gunsekera is the author of nine works of fiction including *Reef*, shortlisted for the Booker Prize, *The Sandglass*, winner of the inaugural BBC Asia Award, and *The Match*, a ground-breaking cricket novel. His most recent book *Noontide Toll* captured a vital moment in post-war Sri Lanka. A new novel, *Suncatcher*, will be published in November 2019 by Bloomsbury. He was born in Sri Lanka and lives in London.

<http://www.romeshg.com/>

Maya Jaggi is a global cultural journalist, critic and artistic director. She writes for publications including the *New York Review of Books* and the *Financial Times*, and contributes to the BBC, after fifteen years as profile writer and critic for *The Guardian*. She has reported from five continents, won four national newspaper awards and been a finalist for the Orwell Prize. She holds degrees from Oxford and the LSE, and an honorary doctorate from the Open University. She has judged many literary awards, including the Man Asian Literature Prize in Hong Kong and the Dublin Impac prize.

Anthony Joseph is a Trinidad-born poet, novelist, academic and musician. He is the author of four poetry collections and three novels. The latest *Kitch*, is a fictional biography of the calypsonian, Lord Kitchener, has been shortlisted for the 2019 Republic of Consciousness Prize, the OCM Bocas Fiction Prize and the RSL's Encore Award. In 2019 he was awarded a Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship. His latest novel *The Frequency of Magic* will be published by Peepal Tree Press in October 2019. <http://www.anthonyjoseph.co.uk/>

Rachel Long is a poet, curator and founder of Octavia, Poetry Collective for Womxn of Colour. Octavia was born in response to the lack of representation and inclusivity in literature and academia. Since 2015, Octavia have come together to read beyond the canon and write themselves. Currently based at the Southbank Centre they have featured widely in the media and have run poetry and creative-educational workshops across the UK.

<https://www.octaviapoetrycollective.com/octaviapoets>

Nick Mahoha's debut collection *Kingdom of Gravity* was shortlisted for the 2017 Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection and nominated by *The Guardian* as one of the best books of 2017. His poems have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Poetry Review*, *Rialto*, *Poetry London*, *Triquarterly Review*, *Boston Review*, *Callaloo*, and *Wasafiri*. He is a Creative Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Goldsmiths College, working to create an in-depth online digital archive of the Metic experiences of Black British Writers. A Trustee for the Arvon Foundation and a member of the Malika's Poetry Kitchen collective, he is also 2019 writer-in-residence at *Wasafiri*.

<https://nickmakoha.com/>

Malachi McIntosh is Editor and Publishing Director of *Wasafiri*. Prior to this he was the co-lead of the award-winning Our Migration Story project at the Runnymede Trust. He has worked as a lecturer at Cambridge University and Goldsmiths College, is the author of *Emigration and Caribbean Literature*, and the editor of *Beyond Calypso: Re-Reading Samuel Selvon*. His fiction and non-fiction have been published widely, including in the *Caribbean Review of Books*, *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine*, *Fugue*, *The Guardian*, *The Journal of Romance Studies*, *Under the Radar*, *Research in African Literatures*, *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature*, and *The Book of Birmingham*.

Susheila Nasta is Founding Editor of *Wasafiri*, the magazine of international contemporary writing she launched in 1984 and has led for 35 years. An academic and activist, she has published numerous books on Caribbean, South Asian, black British and women's writing. Recent work includes the publication of the special *Wasafiri* anthology, *Brave New Words: The Politics of Writing Now* and *Wasafiri* No 100, 'An Island Full of Voices'. Professor of Contemporary and Modern Literatures at Queen Mary University of London, she has recently completed the co-editing of the first *Cambridge History of Black and Asian British Writing* and is completing a literary biography, *The Bloomsbury Indians*. She was elected Honorary Fellow of the RSL and awarded the 2019 Benson Medal.

<https://rsliterature.org/fellow/susheila-nasta/>

Ben Okri is a poet, novelist, and playwright. His novel, *The Famished Road*, won the Booker Prize in 1991. His works have been translated into 26 languages and his books have won numerous international prizes. The recipient of a number of honorary doctorates, he is a vice-president of the English Centre of International PEN and was presented the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum for his outstanding contribution to the Arts and cross-cultural understanding. He also wrote the film script for the film 'N: *The Madness of Reason*.' He is an honorary fellow of Mansfield college, Oxford. He was born in Nigeria, and lives in London. His latest novel is 'The Freedom Artist.' His latest book, a volume of stories, is 'Prayer for the Living.'

<https://benokri.co.uk>

Caryl Phillips is the acclaimed author of numerous books of fiction and non-fiction and began his writing career as a playwright. His awards include the PEN Open Book Award, the Commonwealth Literature Prize, the Martin Luther King Memorial Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *Crossing the River*, which was also shortlisted for the Booker Prize. He has written for the stage, television and film. He wrote and co-produced a film of *The Final Passage* for British television, and adapted V.S. Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur* for Merchant Ivory Films. He writes for newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. Caryl Phillips was born in St. Kitts and brought up in England. Professor of English at Yale University, his latest novel, *A View of the Empire at Sunset* was published in 2018.

<http://www.carylphillips.com/>

Nikesh Shukla is a writer, journalist and critic. He is a columnist for the *Observer* and has written for several publications including the *Guardian* and the *Independent*. His debut novel, *Coconut Unlimited*, was shortlisted for the Costa First Novel Award 2010. Co-founder of the literary journal *The Good Journal* and The Good Literary Agency, he edited the acclaimed collection *The Good Immigrant*, which was shortlisted for Book of the Year at the British Book Awards. His second novel *MeatSpace* was released in 2014 and his most recent novel *The One Who Wrote Destiny* was published in 2018.

<http://www.nikesh-shukla.com>