

## *All Borders Blur*

### **Mapping Intersections and Genre Crossings in UK Spoken-Word Poetries Since 1965**

A two-day conference celebrating intersections of literary and performance traditions in contemporary UK spoken-word poetry

#### **Keynote Speakers**

Joelle Taylor  
and  
Dr. Anthony Joseph

**Queen Mary University of London, UK**

[in-person/online]

11th-12th November 2023

**Deadline for Abstracts: 8th May 2023**

#### Call for Papers

Several critics have described the story of post-war British poetry as one that is characterised by an increasing openness. The essays collected in Sean O'Brien's *The Deregulated Muse* (1998), for instance, call attention to the postwar neoliberal turn in Britain that has redrawn the map of British poetry and widened poetic creativity since the 1960s. In the twentieth century, the availability of new technologies led poets and artists to further experiment with the intermedial potential of poetry, including its visual and sonic dimensions. Bob Cobbing's work is pivotal in this respect, as it moved from visual texts to vocal and live performance merging dance and music in the mid-1970s. The poetic experiments of Maggie O'Sullivan, Caroline Bergvall, Elizabeth James/Frances Presley, and Redell Olsen similarly blur the boundaries between avant-garde literary traditions and performance traditions drawn from music and film. Linton Kwesi Johnson's hybrid body of work offers fresh perspectives into the broadening of poetry as genre. His multimedia, multi-sensory experiments in dub poetry stimulate a reflection on the variousness of contemporary poetry in Britain that encourages a 'pluralism of poetic voice' (Hulse, Kennedy & Morley 1993).

Contemporary UK spoken-word poetry—that arguably offers an 'ongoing avant-garde'—pushes such border blurs to an extreme by moving beyond the bounds of a single genre or artistic discipline (McGrath 2022). Nathalie Teitler's *Dancing Words* project, which has produced multiple dance-poetry films featuring Malika Booker, Karen McCarthy Woolf, and Kayo Chingonyi, bears testament to the value of such intersections. Choreopoetic practices also manifest in the work of MC, dancer, and spoken-word artist Jonzi D, who blends hip hop dance and theatre with poetry, as well as poets like Safiya Kamaria Kinshasa, whose work reimagines the Caribbean female body and its everyday movement through choreography, lyric verse, and spoken word. Poet and musician Anthony Joseph's recent cross-media collaborations contain multitudes; his work occupies the space between jazz, poetry, the rhythms of Caribbean speech and music, and moves the listener in startling and intimate ways. Birmingham Poet Laureate Jasmine

Gardosi's astonishing debut show, titled *Dancing to Music You Hate*, similarly intertwines poetry with beatboxing and Celtic dubstep. Finally, former UK slam champion Joelle Taylor continues to propel poetry in not only innovative but also crucial ways by blurring the boundaries between spoken-word performance practice, slam, and theatre.

This conference seeks to critically reflect on the wealth and complexity of these directions and document trends and currents that are still emerging in the field. **We warmly invite poets, critics, and academics to send 20-minute papers, presentations, panels and/or performances that examine intersections of literary and performance traditions in contemporary UK spoken-word poetics.** We particularly welcome approaches that combine creative and critical perspectives on the spoken-word format. Areas of discussion might include (but are not limited to):

- \* Spoken-word poetry and its relationship with the visual arts/music/dance/theatre
- \* Avant-garde poetic performances in the twentieth century and their use of diverse media (for instance, Writers Forum and Live New Departures gigs/performances; SubVoicive reading series)
- \* The evolution of poetry films (Tremlett 2020) and performance poetry clips (Pfeiler 2010)
- \* One-person poetry shows and their artistic fusion with other media
- \* Spoken-word poetry and its relationship with digital media
- \* Machine-poetry (for instance, Jay Gao's experiments with algorithmic poetry scrambling) or
- \* Spoken-word poetry as thinking with/against technology
- \* Jazz slams, comedy slams, slams and live painting, or poetry slam TV
- \* Poetry, intermediality, and social justice: performed poetry and its relationship with queer politics, gender, race, heritage, cultural memory
- \* Multimedia spoken word performance and disability justice (see, Khairani Barokka's *Eve and Mary Are Having Coffee*)

The conference will form the basis for a special issue with a scholarly journal. It will be an in-person event with options for remote attendance. A limited number of travel subsidies are available.

Please email abstracts of no more than **250** words and a short bio (maximum **80** words) to: [allbordersblur2023@univie.ac.at](mailto:allbordersblur2023@univie.ac.at). You can also find out more information at <https://allbordersblur.univie.ac.at>. We aim to notify participants by **30th June 2023**.

### **Organisers:**

Dr. Shalini Sengupta (University of Vienna)  
Prof. Andrea Brady (Queen Mary University of London)  
Prof. Peter Howarth (Queen Mary University of London)



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With the submission of your proposal you consent that any data you submit will be saved by the organisers until the end of 2023. Your email will be used for the limited purpose of informing you about updates and news regarding the conference and subsequent publications and will not be passed on to any third parties.