

# New Daughters of Africa



# New Daughters of Africa

Edited by

Margaret  
Busby



First published in 2019 by  
Myriad Editions  
www.myriadeditions.com

Myriad Editions  
An imprint of New Internationalist Publications  
The Old Music Hall, 106–108 Cowley Rd,  
Oxford OX4 1JE

First printing  
1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

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A CIP catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library

ISBN (hardback): 978-1-912408-00-9  
ISBN (trade paperback): 978-1-912408-01-6  
ISBN (ebook): 978-1-912408-02-3

Designed and typeset in Dante and Sabon  
by WatchWord Editorial Services, London

Printed and bound in Germany  
by CPI Books GmbH

*To sisterhood,  
love,  
and friendship*



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# Introduction

What a joy to be introducing *New Daughters of Africa*—a truly collaborative venture that will have an inspiring legacy for years to come! Enabling it to be assembled in record time, writers not only came on board with enthusiasm and alacrity but often steered me in the direction of others whose work they admire, lest these were not already on my radar. Altogether, more than 200 living writers have contributed work to these pages—an amazing party guest list!

A template of sorts was provided by the anthology I compiled more than twenty-five years ago, *Daughters of Africa*; yet this present volume represents something of a fresh start, since it duplicates none of the writers who appeared in the 1992 collection.<sup>1</sup>

*New Daughters of Africa* begins with some important entries from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and that a limited number of names represent these periods is not to say that there are not many others whose words could have expanded the early sections; however, these few names serve as a reminder of the indisputable fact that later generations stand tall because of those who have gone before. The chronology continues in the ordering of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century writers who follow by decade of birth, primarily to give context to the generational links.

Beginning this anthology with Nana Asma'u<sup>2</sup> (1793–1863) signals that there are foremothers who could have occupied a leading place in any era. A revered figure in northern Nigeria, she spoke four languages and was an educated and independent Islamic woman who can be considered a precursor to modern feminism in Africa. In her “Lamentation for 'Aysha”, epitomising the depth of connection that at best can be found between sister-friends, she mourns the loss of her lifelong confidante with the words:

Know you not that love, when firmly established, is priceless?  
There is no child who could make me forget that love  
and no brother, nothing that could soothe me, not even all sorts of riches.

...

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1 See a full listing of those who appeared in *Daughters of Africa* (1992) on pp. 796–7.

2 Nana Asma'u was brought to my attention, after the publication of *Daughters of Africa*, by Jean Boyd, who kindly sent me her 1989 book, *The Caliph's Sister: Nana Asma'u 1793–1865: Teacher, Poet and Islamic Leader*, and who translated much of this extraordinary woman's work, published in *The Collected Works of Nana Asma'u, Daughter of Usman dan Fodiyo 1793–1864* (edited by Jean Boyd and Beverly B. Mack).

I cry for her with tears of compassion  
and of longing and sympathy for her, and loving friendship...

Sarah Parker Remond (1815–1894), abolitionist, lecturer, suffragist and much else, who leads the nineteenth-century grouping, demonstrates many of the themes and serendipitous connections that characterise this collection. A prime example of internationalism, she was born in Salem, Massachusetts (where her father had been brought as a child from the Dutch island of Curaçao), and lectured and studied in England before relocating to Italy, where she became a doctor and married. Her letter of September 1866 to the London *Daily News*, in which she waxes eloquent on “the reactionary movement against the coloured race in the United States”, and castigates the social commentator Thomas Carlyle for having “claims to the gratitude of all negro haters on both sides of the Atlantic”, makes one wonder how she might have reacted to a tweet by Donald Trump. Delia Jarrett-Macauley’s essay “The Bedford Women” delves further into her remarkable story, along the way revealing personal links much closer to home.

It gives pause for thought that Elizabeth Keckley (1818–1907), her life bridging the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, was describing first-hand the trauma of enslavement in her autobiography *Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*, published in 1868—exactly one hundred years before the “mould-breaking year” that Jarrett-Macauley refers to, when “on university campuses from Paris to New York, students were protesting against the old order, against bureaucratic elites, against capitalism, sexism and racism and all forms of authoritarianism”, one direct result being the birth of black studies programmes in such places of learning as Cornell, Howard and Harvard. And 1968 would be blighted by the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King in April (later that month MP Enoch Powell gave his notorious “Rivers of Blood” speech, scaremongering about mass immigration to the UK), and made notable too for the moment when at the Mexico City Olympic Games, African-American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists in an iconic Black Power salute on the podium after winning medals, watched by, among others, the only black girl in Angela Cobbinah’s Cornish village, who recalls: “I felt an unfamiliar emotion. Call it connection or kinship, or the bubbling of a youthful rebelliousness...”

Such connections, and bonds of kinship, actual as well as intuited, strengthen the links between contributors to this volume, and those in my earlier anthology, and those who hopefully will discover themselves in these pages or draw inspiration to continue the legacy in their own ways. There are the literal mother-daughter relationships, beginning here with Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin (1842–1924) and Florida Ruffin Ridley (1861–1943). It is especially pleasing to note the emergence as a writer of Yvonne Bailey-Smith, having raised and empowered three children (Zadie Smith and her brothers) to successful careers, and to see Atillah Springer follow the pathway of her mother Eintou Pearl Springer, a contributor to *Daughters of Africa*, and to see

Rebecca Walker, daughter of Alice Walker, achieve prominence in her own right. Exciting, too, to see work from Juliane Okot Bitek and Wanjiku wa Ngũgĩ, whose fathers' writings I have enjoyed, and illuminating to read the experience of Arthenia Bates Millican (1920–2012), mentored by a father who was mired in “stuckness” but taught by Langston Hughes about “the value of humor in literature as a means to obliterate the soreness from difficult bruises to the soul”.

We each have our individual experiences of the mother-daughter relationship, some of which are shared in these pages, such as Marina Salandy-Brown's “Lost Daughter of Africa”. Recognition of connection to the crucial and indelible maternal spirit is given by H. Cordelia Ray (1852–1916) in her 1991 poem “To My Mother” and in Akosua Busia's elegiac “Mama”:

She is the centre of my earth  
 The fire from which I warm my soul  
 The spark that kindles my heart.  
 The sustenance I feed my daughter  
 Is the nourishment I sucked from her once-succulent flesh  
 Turned brittle-boned, held together by willpower  
 Mama feeds me still—

Permeating the very personal stories in these pages is always an awareness of the wider world, and of the impact of national and international politics. As well as honouring her mother, Cordelia Ray celebrates the heroic Toussaint Louverture, leader of the Haitian Revolution expelling the French, British and Spanish armies that enforced slavery in Haiti and Santo Domingo. Effie Waller Smith (1879–1960), meanwhile, both addresses world issues in her poem “The Cuban Cause” and finds time from the perspective of the first decade of the twentieth century to praise “The ‘Bachelor Girl’”:

She's no “old maid,” she's not afraid  
 To let you know she's her own “boss”...

Of politics and all the tricks  
 And schemes that politicians use,  
 She knows full well and she can tell  
 With eloquence of them her views...

She does not shirk, but does her work,  
 Amid the world's fast hustling whirl,  
 And come what may, she's here to stay,  
 The self-supporting “bachelor girl.”

(Definitely one of the “Independent Women” sung about by Destiny's Child.)

In many ways 1992 seems longer ago than a quarter-century; yet, while much has changed, many challenges remain to impact on the publication of work by women of African descent. Who imagined in 1992 that we would celebrate the first African-American US president in 2008, and who could have predicted what would follow Barack Obama's achievement, a decade later, on the watch of his successor in the White House? Much more empowering to think of 2018 as the year former first lady Michelle Obama broke records on the publication of her autobiographical memoir *Becoming*, which sold 1.4 million copies in its first week.

In 1992, Toni Morrison had not yet been awarded the Nobel Prize. Only the following year did she become the first black woman to win that laureate, and to my mind her international celebrity had been slower to come than it should have been, given that *The Bluest Eye* was published in 1970. Since then, I had looked up to her, and was privileged to spend time with her when she was in London for the British publication of *Beloved*—I interviewed her in 1988 (recorded by then fledgling filmmaker Sindamani Bridglal, and subsequently shown on Channel 4), not long before she won the Pulitzer Prize. Toni Morrison was my beacon. In the 1960s, when I started out as a publisher, she was the only other black woman editor I knew of, the first black woman senior editor at Random House, championing books by Toni Cade Bambara, Angela Davis, Gayl Jones, Henri Dumas, as well as compiling *The Black Book* (1974), an anthology of photographs, illustrations, essays and other documents of black American life. She continued as an editor while producing extraordinary novels of her own, before leaving publishing in the 1980s to devote more time to her writing, including her play *Dreaming Emmett*, about the 1955 murder of the black teenager Emmett Till—also the subject of Bonnie Greer's contribution to this present anthology. *Beloved*, too, was inspired by a true story, that of enslaved African-American Margaret Garner, whose story Morrison discovered while compiling *The Black Book*. History "rememoried" unfailingly drives many of the stories that keep these pages turning.

In 1992 came Morrison's novel *Jazz*, the second in a trilogy that ended with *Paradise* (following publication of which I would again have the honour of being in conversation with her, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1998), as well as her succinctly powerful volume of essays, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, containing the stand-out quote: "As a writer reading, I came to realise the obvious: the subject of the dream is the dreamer."

That special year 1992 also saw the publication of Terry McMillan's *Waiting to Exhale*, which remained on the *New York Times* bestseller list for months, and with the election of Bill Clinton as US President, Maya Angelou would in 1993 read her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at his inauguration, the second poet (after Robert Frost at Kennedy's inauguration in 1961) in history to read a poem at a presidential inauguration, and the first African-American and woman.

Many accomplishments were years away, and names now very familiar and deservedly lauded were still at the starting line. Jackie Kay, current poet laureate (or makar) of Scotland, had only just begun to receive recognition and the accolades

that would start piling up after the 1991 publication of her first collection of poems, *The Adoption Papers*; her additional talents as novelist and memoirist were yet to be shown to the world. Ama Ata Aidoo was on her ever-upward journey, and was two decades away from becoming the subject of a film by Yaba Badoe.

Custom, tradition, friendships, mentor/mentee relationships, romance, sisterhood, inspiration, encouragement, sexuality, intersectional feminism, the politics of gender, race and identity—within these pages is explored an extensive spectrum of possibilities, in ways that are touching, surprising, angry, considered, joyful, heartrending. Supposedly taboo subjects are addressed head-on and with subtlety, familiar dilemmas elicit new takes.

How candid and engaging is Jay Bernard’s “I resist the urge to destroy my own records by reflecting on archives, how I use them, and what they have meant to me”:

I used to be a bit of a psychogeographer. All criticisms considered, I used to like the term, the ideas, and made a zine for a short time called *Psychogeography for the Modern Black Woman*. I equated my gender with the city around me. I was not simply a woman, but a specific knot of places, perceptions, possibilities. It detailed my walks around London and mentioned the bookshops, squats and other spaces I used to go to—Silver Moon, Index, Kennington Books, New Beacon—locations that made me make sense. Only one of those, New Beacon, still exists.

Isn’t that just what happens? Things disappear.

How fearlessly revelatory is Nawal El Saadawi in “About Me in Africa—Politics and Religion in My Childhood”, in which she writes:

I was brainwashed by my official education as a Muslim, Egyptian girl from the working class. In primary school the British and Egyptian teachers praised the upper-class girls, with fair white skin. My maternal Turkish grandmother despised my dark skin, which I inherited from the poor peasant family of my father.

My maternal aunt used to hide my dark skin with white powder, and would straighten my hair with a hot iron. I liberated my mind from this slavery by educating myself. Also, my enlightened mother and father helped me to undo what teachers did to me.

How disarming and informational is Zuleica Romay Guerra in “Something About Me”, which concludes by saying:

I am the Cuban Revolution, I am an outcome of the process started in the sixteenth century when, weighed down with chains in the lower decks of the slave ships, brutally dropped into their own excrement, and thrown

overboard as garbage when they were on the point of death, more than a million African men and women arrived upon this island in order to keep on writing a history in which their offspring—all Cubans today, without any qualifying prefixes whatsoever—keep on with our struggles to win the fullest justice ever.

How courageous and touching is Andaiye’s recollection of her amity with Audre Lorde:

I do not remember when I wrote Audre but I did, and I remember that she answered immediately and sent me a copy of *A Burst of Light* with the inscription, “Sister Survivor—May these words be a bridge over that place where there are no words—or where they are so difficult as to sound like a scream!”

And so began my friendship with Audre Lorde, around the sharing of the fear of living with, perhaps dying from, cancer. She wrote often, mostly on cards. She’d say, “I need your words too.” I couldn’t write too many. So I called, often. And she called too.

Lorde’s is a name that recurs in other contributors’ work, including that of Edwidge Danticat, Sisonke Msimang and Panashe Chigumadzi, who writes:

It wasn’t until I met the force of the unflinching stories of our mothers and grandmothers and aunts and sisters written by black women—Yvonne Vera, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, Jamaica Kincaid, Edwidge Danticat, Maryse Condé—that I was compelled to ask more of my view of their worlds, to find an answer to the question: what did it mean to be a black woman in my grandmother’s time?

Echoes and cross-references abound; the history we all are part of creating can be reimaged in many ways. Makhosazana Xaba and Diana Ferrus both pay poetic tribute to Sarah Baartman. Dorothea Smartt contributes “Poem Beginning With A Line From Claudia Rankine”, and Rankine herself contributes “Making Room” from her innovative *Citizen: An American Lyric*.

In my introduction to the 1992 anthology, I concluded that “Throughout these women’s words runs the awareness of connectedness to a wider flow of history, to the precursors, our foremothers. Our collective strength, like that of a chain, derives from maintaining the links.”

The different ways of connecting to an African heritage is an ever-present theme, as are stories of migration, and specifically “Windrush stories”, typified by the writing of Andrea Levy, whose father was among those immigrants who sailed to Britain from

the Caribbean on the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, to be joined soon afterwards by her mother. To quote from Levy's acclaimed novel *Small Island*: "It was inconceivable that we Jamaicans, we West Indians, we members of the British Empire would not fly to the Mother Country's defence when there was threat."

Windrush is an inescapable reference point in the British-Caribbean nexus, whether mentioned specifically (as in Beverley Bryan's "A Windrush Story" or Selina Nwulu's poetry) or informing and permeating the creative consciousness. Stories of mothers separated from offspring, and the resultant psychological effects, inform many of the contributions.

Ifeona Fulani's essay "Three Islands, Two Cities: The Making of a Black/Caribbean/Woman Writer/Scholar" talks of how her parents' migration, "a few steps ahead of the great wave of Caribbean migrants to England in the late 1960s", led her to becoming accustomed to being "the single grain of allspice floating in the milk jug" in the course of her very British education, and of her own transatlantic criss-crossings with which so many others would find common cause.

Jamaican-born Yvonne Bailey-Smith draws on her own memories of rejoining a mother who had gone ahead to the promised land that forever beckons immigrants, laying the ground for her daughter Zadie later to muse—as she is accepting the Langston Hughes medal in New York—about the significance of "all those years I'd spent as a child in England trying to prove that I was both Black and British; that I knew their plays and poems and history, that I could get into the finest institutions of education they had to offer, that I could perhaps even add a few words to the history of their literature—that I, too, was England."

Yvette Edwards in her short story "Security" brilliantly captures the emotions of a septuagenarian woman regarded as a foreigner worthy of deportation after half a century of sacrifice and thwarted hope in Britain. Carmen Harris, in her "Hello... Goodbye", pins her hopes on being able to recreate an identity through her father's migration story.

Sue Woodford-Hollick's "Who I Was Then, and Who I Am Now" gives another aspect of finding identity in the course of growing up in Britain, as does Simi Bedford's excerpt from her novel *Yoruba Girl Dancing*, showing the particular experience of being an African at boarding-school in England shared by many (myself included). Others who speak to the British experience include Kadija Sesay, whose formative years included being fostered (an experience in common with Patience Agbabi). Time and again, a topic that arises is the need to be uplifted by finding oneself mirrored in early reading.

Whether the journey is from a childhood in West Africa—as happened to Nah Dove—or from rural Cornwall in England's southwest—Angela Cobbinah's early life—it is London that encapsulates the Black British experience, with all its possibilities for racism, and much else besides. For Donu Kogbara, whose harrowing tale is of being kidnapped in her Nigerian homeland ("Losing My Fragile Roots"), London has become a sanctuary.

Women reveal themselves in these pages as survivors of violence and trauma. Verene Shepherd gives some valuable context in “Historicizing Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean”. A variety of partnerships and marital relationships elicit poignant writing, including Barbara Jenkins’ “A Perfect Stranger”, Reneilwe Malatji’s “My Perfect Husband”, and Catherine Johnson’s “The Year I Lost”.

Andrea Rosario-Gborie, whose personal commentary from the perspective of her last days of working in Hollywood has resonances for today, identifies 1992 as a landmark in other ways: the year of major rioting in Los Angeles in April, following the acquittal of four police officers in the Rodney King beating criminal trial, while in the same month in Sierra Leone, West Africa, a group of young soldiers launched a military coup that brought to power a new twenty-five-year-old head of state.

Minna Salami, introduced to feminism by her mother, acknowledges that “we are feminists because there were women before us who were feminists. What causes the sense of loss, then, is that due to the invasion of Africa, the majority of historical records of these women are missing. So when someone says that feminism isn’t African, we are reminded that we do not have the historical proof to show how continuous our presence is in the continent.” She quotes from my introduction to *Daughters of Africa*—“Tradition and history are nurturing spirits for women of African descent. For without an understanding of where we have come from, we are less likely to be able to make sense of where we are going.” She goes on to assert: “Without doubt, it was this sense of loss that led me to Oya, who unlike any other figure in precolonial African history has expanded my purview of where I come from and of where I am going.”

That restorative African feminist lineage is something Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie finds in the conclusion to her iconic essay “We Should All Be Feminists”:

My great-grandmother, from stories I’ve heard, was a feminist. She ran away from the house of the man she did not want to marry and married the man of her choice. She refused, she protested, spoke up whenever she felt she was being deprived of land and access because she was female. She did not know that word *feminist*. But it doesn’t mean she wasn’t one. More of us should reclaim that word. The best feminist I know is my brother Kene, who is also a kind, good-looking and very masculine young man. My own definition of a feminist is a man or a woman who says, “Yes, there’s a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better.”

*All of us, women and men, must do better.*

Self-image is examined in numerous ways. “You will get your hair done” is the refrain in Bridget Minamore’s piece, “New Daughters of Africa”. Zadie Smith, accepting her Langston Hughes medal, concludes her acceptance speech, poignantly and humbly, by saying:



...I am so thankful that tonight it has stretched far enough to include a Black-British woman like me, a freckle-faced woman like me, a mixed-marriage woman like me, a green-card holder like me, an immigrant like me, a second-generation Jamaican like me, a distant but not forgotten daughter of Africa, like me. Thank you.

The importance of nomenclature is a recurrent theme. Ellah Wakatama Allfrey in “Longchase”, linking her Zimbabwean heritage—specifically the saga of her great-uncle, a veteran of colonial warfare—to her own engagement with the world and the perennial traversing of borders, reflects that it is “an imprecise thing, this English naming of Africans”. For the main protagonist of Chibundu Onuzo’s story (“Sunita”), Toni Morrison’s epiphany “that the subject of the dream is the dreamer” could not be more apt, while Nana-Ama Danquah in “Saying Goodbye to Mary Danquah” points out:

The practice of conferring Christian, or English, names on African children was introduced by missionaries from the Western world who came to what they considered the Dark Continent for the purpose of religious indoctrination. In many cases, children were required to have Christian names in order to register and attend classes in the missionary-run schools. Usually that meant balancing an existence of duality—using one name when operating within the colonial system and using another when operating within one’s native culture.

The process of translation from one culture to another is amplified when it comes to language itself. This anthology, though, of course, limited by resources, gives a rich glimpse of the dynamic range of original sources out there to be discovered. Trifonia Melibea Obono’s *La Bastarda* was the first book by a woman writer from Equatorial Guinea to be published in English and I am delighted to be able to include a passage of her work, “Let the Nkúkú má Speak”, translated by Lawrence Schimel, who also provided translations of the poems by multilingual Benin writer Agnès Agboton, whose mother tongue is Gun.

The genres represented here are widely varied—fiction of different types, including short stories and extracts from longer works; essays; journalism; columns; blogs; poetry; speeches; extracts from plays and film scripts; poetry; other experimental forms... An unexpected pleasure is to read writers expressing themselves in a genre with which they are not normally associated. Who knew that Nadifa Mohamed, one of *Granta*’s “Best of Young British Novelists” in 2013, was also a fine poet? Adrienne Kennedy, best known as a playwright, contributes the memorable poem “Forget” about her white grandfather. Zoe Adjonyoh, from whom cookery writing might have been expected, delivers a memoir of her father that is indeed “A Beautiful Story”.

As much as the contributors are all grouped together as writers, they are each made up of many parts, that if labelled according to the work they do would run almost the gamut of the alphabet: academics, activists, bloggers, campaigners, children's writers, critics, curators, diarists, directors, dramatists, editors, essayists, fiction writers, filmmakers, historians, journalists, lecturers, lyricists, memoirists, novelists, painters, performance artists, playwrights, poets, politicians, producers, publishers, science fiction writers, screenwriters, short-story writers, speculative fiction writers, travel writers, young adult writers...and more.

Now, as in past decades, the nature of the publishing industry has a bearing on what reaches the marketplace. In *Daughters of Africa* I touched on the importance of pioneering black publishers—including New Beacon Books (founded in 1966) and Bogle-L'Ouverture, begun half a century ago by Jessica Huntley, who responded to the 1968 “Rodney riots” that followed the banning from teaching in Jamaica of Guyanese scholar Walter Rodney by producing his book *The Groundings with my Brothers* in 1969. (Earlier in that same year Allison & Busby—the publishing company I co-founded—defied all odds by turning Sam Greenlee's subversive first novel *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* into a publishing success.) Other imprints to be remembered include the Black Ink Collective, and Buzz Johnson's Karia Press, credited with having “rediscovered” Claudia Jones by reprinting her writing. Both Jessica Huntley and I were founding members of an initiative called Greater Access to Publishing (GAP), campaigning to bring about a more multiracial publishing industry, and a 1988 article that I authored (together with Lennie Goodings of Virago) in trade magazine *The Bookseller* began with a statement by Toni Morrison that chimed with our reasoning thirty years ago, and remains relevant: “It's not patronage, not affirmative action we're talking about here, we're talking about the life of a country's literature.”

Lasting change in the publishing workforce as a whole has yet to be achieved, although the aspirational mantra of inclusivity and diversity has become increasingly routine in today's mainstream and corporate industry. The category of African literature, let alone literature by women of African descent, is debatable, depending on who is doing the categorisation. Lesley Lokko in her essay “‘No more than three, please!’” says:

The tensions over classification are exacerbated by the fact that much African literature is published outside Africa, for audiences that may *include* Africans, but not exclusively, with everyone having a view on what it should be, what it should say, who can write it and who may read it. Yet the confusion and contestation are liberating. The “real” question is whether current and aspiring African writers will invent forms of their own.

Verna Wilkins, founder in 1987 of the children's imprint Tamarind Books, in “A Memory Evoked” explains what frustrates and motivates her:

Having witnessed, year after year, over more than a quarter of a century, the exclusion of Black and ethnic minority children from books aimed exclusively at children, something had to be done...

I...began working in diverse classrooms in the UK. The existing barriers that exclude children of colour from books aimed at children could start with the children. They should see themselves as the authors, editors, designers, illustrators and publishers of the future.

It was in 2000 at a publishing party that I first met Ellah Wakatama Allfrey — we could hardly have missed each other, being the only two black women present. She was at the time working at Penguin Books, and the connection we made then has been sustained through many a project. (For example, at her request I wrote an introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics edition of Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*.) Beyond that, the role she has played in mentoring others is exemplary, culminating in her taking on the laudable adventure of becoming Publishing Director of new publishing house the Indigo Press. Likewise, the indefatigable Bibi Bakare-Yusuf of Cassava Republic Press is a role model for how to grow a respected independent list.

Individual editors have an opportunity to make change happen, particularly where they lead imprints, as in the UK with Sharmaine Lovegrove heading Dialogue Books at LittleBrown, or Valerie Brandes at Jacaranda. Other ventures to applaud include gal-dem, Digitalback Books, and Knights Of, as well as such online resources as Mostly Lit, Brittle Paper, Kinna Reads, Africa in Dialogue, and James Murua's blog. Among those to whom kudos is due in the US are Amistad, founded by Charles Harris, a ground-breaking publisher in an era that also saw flourish the likes of Paul Coates of Black Classic Press, and the late Glenn Thompson of Writers and Readers.

Festivals and literary celebrations—Aké Arts and Book Festival in Nigeria, Abantu in South Africa, Mboka in The Gambia, Bare Lit and Africa Writes in London, the Bocas Lit Fest in Trinidad, Calabash in Jamaica, the Yari Yari conferences put on by the Organization of Women Writers of Africa, and the African Writers Trust in Uganda, the Harlem Book Fair in New York—have played their part in nurturing literary careers, as have initiatives such as Africa39 (represented in these pages by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Monica Arac de Nyeko, Jackee Budesta Batanda, Nana Brew-Hammond, Edwige Renée Dro, Hawa Jande Golakai, Nadifa Mohamed, Glaydah Namukasa, Chibundu Onuzo, Taiye Selasi, Namwali Serpell, Lola Shoneyin, Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, Chika Unigwe and Zukiswa Wanner), *Granta's* "Best of" lists of novelists (the British choices including in 2013 Nadifa Mohamed, Taiye Selasi and Zadie Smith, who also featured in 2003; the American choices listing Edwidge Danticat and Chinelo Okparanta), and prizes and competitions such as the Caine Prize for African Writing, winners over the years including Leila Aboulela, Monica Arac de Nyeko, Makena Onjerika, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor and Namwali Serpell (intimations of Chimamanda's increasingly stellar talent came when she was a runner-up, in 2002

when I was a judge, pipped to the post by the visionary Binyavanga Wainaina, who used his prize money to found the influential Kenyan journal *Kwani?*), the Brunel African Poetry Prize (winners including Warsan Shire and Safia Elhillo), the SI Leeds Literary Prize, the Etisalat Prize, the Golden Baobab, and the Bocas Prize, which has showcased the gifts of Tiphonie Yanique, Edwidge Danticat, Jacqueline Bishop, as well as *Daughters of Africa* alumnae Lorna Goodison and Olive Senior.

From the Myriad First Drafts Competition, which in 2018 focused on women of African descent, came two excellent winners whom we gladly welcomed on board, Anni Domingo, with an excerpt from her debut novel *Breaking the Maafa Chain*, about Sarah Forbes Bonetta, and Rutendo Chabikwa with “Mweya’s Embrace” from her work-in-progress *Todzungaira*. Mention must in addition be made of the shortlisted candidates—Christine Amede, Gila K. Berryman, Emmanuella Dekonor, Malika K. McCoy, Ethel Maqeda, Morenike May, Melita Vurden and Roxanne Young—who all, it is to be hoped, will be emboldened to keep creating.

Many glorious firsts are represented among contributors, whether Diane Abbott becoming in 1987 the first black woman elected to the British parliament, or Warsan Shire, who won the inaugural African Poetry Prize in 2013, in 2014 being appointed the first Young Poet Laureate for London, or Safia Elhillo becoming the first Sudanese American to win the George Ellenbogen Poetry Award in 2018. We must aim high and strive to break through glass ceilings and barriers; but let us be wary of the trap of remaining “the only”. Ponder the words of Karen Lord: “If we want people to walk this path again, we have to tell more than facts. We must tell truths, root-deep, tree-tall testaments to understanding...”

Countries represented include Antigua, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Benin, Bermuda, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Cuba, Dominica, Egypt, England, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Puerto Rico, St Thomas, US Virgin Islands, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Scotland, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, USA, Wales, Zambia, Zimbabwe...

Yet the history of these regions is driven by constant social and political change—the Bahamas of Patricia Glington-Meicholas probably connects with that of Meta Davis Cumberbatch more in terms of memory than actuality, yet she says defiantly: “I ain’t goin’ nowhere / this land and me is one.” Nevertheless, few of us remain static forever. Deise Faria Nunes, born and raised in Brazil, and living in Norway for the past two decades, as she embarks on an exploration of Candomblé, with its West African roots, writes in “The person in the boat”:

Some fellowships we do not choose: we are born into them. Others we walk voluntarily into, with our eyes wide open, even though we do not know what will meet us on the other side.

There is legitimacy in the joy and burden of one's place of origin, the joy and burden of one's place of settlement, the joy and burden of one's adopted homeland, the affiliations rejected or chosen. I feel some native pride that Ghana is a chosen subject or destination for many who originally hail from elsewhere—Candace Allen, Attillah Springer, Sandra Jackson-Opoku and others—knowing also that I have familial ties in Dominica, Trinidad, Barbados, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Europe, America... We are universal, and it is the right of any artist to resist categorisation or the sort of pigeonholing that sets out to be restrictive and stifling. But just as naming oneself can be liberating, so we need never feel limited by labels. Explaining why she does not mind being called a black writer or a black woman writer, Toni Morrison has said: "I really think the range of emotions and perceptions I have had access to as a black person and as a female person are greater than those of people who are neither... So it seems to me that my world did not shrink because I was a black female writer. It just got bigger."

*Wasafiri* magazine, the literary journal that since 1984 has been a champion of black and diasporic writers worldwide (its name deriving from a KiSwahili word meaning "travellers"), marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Daughters of Africa* with a special issue in December 2017, a feature of which was brief testimony from a handful of writers about what their first encounters with the anthology meant to them. Hailing the milestone, Bermudian Angela Barry spoke of her thrill at coming across a contributor whose father was from her island, allowing her to feel "that I also was a daughter of Africa and that I too had something to say."

Goretti Kyomuhendo revealed: "I first encountered *Daughters of Africa* nearly ten years after it was first published—and my first reaction was that of total excitement. I carried a few copies back with me to Uganda, which I shared with nearly forty members of FEMRITE—The Uganda Women Writers Association, which I was directing at the time. *Daughters of Africa* was to become the gift that never stopped giving..." Somali novelist Nadifa Mohamed testified that her writer's block was cured as the result of a copy of the anthology being passed on to her, enabling her to follow the thread of writers "who left their stamp on the world only through the written word."

Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, who as Commonwealth Poet in 2014 performed her poem "Courage—it takes more" at Westminster Abbey, wrote: "We were behind the bars of apartheid—we South Africans had been cut off from the beauty and majesty of African thought traditions, and *Daughters of Africa* was among those works that replenished our starved minds, connecting us to the Black planet of memory and imagination, correcting the imbalance of information and awakening our own potential in ourselves... *Daughters of Africa* brings our separate spaces on the planet into each other's purview, our experiences accented by our geographical and historical conditions, a text that creates solidarity, appreciation and reminds us that

we are never alone... Putting African experience at the centre of our understanding, at the centre of ourselves, we learn more about how to be together, to heal ourselves and to plan for the most fabulous future.”

Edwige Renée Dro from Côte d’Ivoire talked about the fact that, as she was starting out on her literary journey, “literary columnists were talking about the rise of African writing, a wonderful fact for me even if the majority of the writing they were praising seemed to come from Nigeria. Or from anglophone Africa...” She continued:

So here I was, heralding from a country that needed its name translated for people to have any idea, living in England and writing in English. Here I was also immersed in a literary milieu that defined Nigerian writing as African writing. What was a lacking-in-confidence aspiring francophone writer living in England to do but set her novel in Nigeria? It is during that time that I stumbled upon a copy of *Daughters of Africa* at my local library... I let out a Yes! as I recognised names like that of my compatriot Véronique Tadjo, but also other francophone writers including Aminata Sow Fall or Mariama Bâ or Marie Vieux-Chauvet with their works set in Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal, and Haiti. From that moment, I stopped the transportation of my story to a country I hadn’t even been to. The writer’s block lifted and my confidence returned. It was as if the daughters of Africa featured in that anthology were telling me, their daughter and grand-daughter, to bravely go forth and bridge the literary gap between francophone and anglophone Africa.

That these intrepid writers have found their rightful place in *New Daughters of Africa* is a source of immense satisfaction to me, and I trust to them as well.

The passing years since this book’s ancestor, *Daughters of Africa*, appeared have meant saying goodbye to irreplaceable friends and family. My own mother, my dedicatee in 1992, had died the previous year (my father in 1981), so could not share the pleasure of seeing the project come to fruition. Many whose words graced those pages we will not see again:

Maya Angelou (1928–2014), Toni Cade Bambara (1939–1995), Valerie Belgrave (1946–2016), Louise Bennett (1919–2006), Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000), Barbara Burford (1944–2010), Octavia Butler (1947–2006), Aída Cartagena Portalatín (1918–1994), Alice Childress (1916–1994), Michelle Cliff (1946–2016), Lucille Clifton (1936–2010), J. California Cooper (1931–2014), Jayne Cortez (1934–2012), Noemia de Sousa (1926–2002), Alda do Espírito Santo (1926–2010), Buchi Emecheta (1944–2017), Mari Evans (1919–2017), Beryl Gilroy (1924–2001), Rosa Guy (1922–2012), Kristin Hunter (1931–2008), Noni Jabavu (1919–2008), Alice Perry Johnson (1932–2011), Amryl Johnson (1944–2001), Marion

Patrick Jones (1931–2016), June Jordan (1936–2002), Caroline Khaketla (1918–2012), Ellen Kuwayo (1914–2006), Audre Lorde (1934–1992), Lina Magaia (1940–2011), Anne Moody (1940–2015), Gloria Naylor (1950–2016), Laretta Ngcobo (1931–2015), Flora Nwapa (1931–1994), Grace Ogot (1930–2015), May Opitz (1960–1996), Anne Petry (1908–1997), Carolyn Rodgers (1940–2010), Sandi Russell (1946–2017), Ntozake Shange (1948–2018), Zulu Sofola (1935–1995), Maud Sulter (1960–2008), Efuia Sutherland (1924–96), Elean Thomas (1947–2004), Miriam Tlali (1933–2017), Adaora Lily Ulasi (1932–2016?), Margaret Walker (1915–1998), Myriam Warner-Vieyra (1939–2017), Dorothy West (1907–1998), Sherley Anne Williams (1944–1999).

We mourn them, but are thankful that their words still inspire and urge us on.

Countless other writers, past and present, deserve to be celebrated alongside those in these pages, and indeed in any company, and we stand on the shoulders of many. Restrictions of space, time and resources are the blight of every fantasist anthologist.

There are those on whom the spotlight will always shine, those whom the cameras seek out, yet who sometimes yearn for anonymity. For others, to bask in reflected glory is enough, to see our sisters triumph and take curtain calls, to stand tall while giving others a well-deserved standing ovation. Yet the imagination respects no hierarchy. There will be names within these pages that are, as yet, unfamiliar to many readers but deserving of as much attention as the household names.

My ambition was and is to shine a light on as many as possible of the deserving, whether or not they are acknowledged or lauded by the gatekeepers, who traditionally single out a privileged few, seemingly never too many to rock the boat. But the boat is going nowhere if it is content to drift in stagnating water.

In November 2018, Canadian contributor Esi Edugyan added another award, a second Giller Prize, to her enviable collection. Her thoughtful and perceptive essay, “The Wrong Door: Some Meditations on Solitude and Writing”, provides a caveat to the celebrity that many an aspirant craves:

I think it would come as a surprise to most readers to learn that most writers in their middle to late careers regard with nostalgia their days of obscurity. I remember being puzzled when a writing professor sat us down and told us to savour our collegiate days, because our motives for writing would never again be this pure. We dismissed her as jaded, and longed for the days when we would see our words bound and prominently displayed in the local bookstore.

... But I understand now too that what she was speaking of was a certain lack of privacy, a certain public spotlight that can begin to erode not only our artistic confidence but even motive, the very impetus for writing in the first place. I have spoken to a German writer who after publishing an

international bestseller thirteen years ago struggles to write, paralyzed by the idea of tarnishing his own reputation with an unlikeable follow-up. I have spoken to an American writer who was so badly shamed for an extra-literary occurrence that she cannot bring herself to enter again the public sphere. All of these tragedies are tragedies of exposure, and they speak to the very fundamental need for an area of silence, a room of, yes, one's own.

I feel undeterred in my proselytising for greater visibility for women writers of African descent, which until relatively recently I had thought that I began doing towards the end of the 1980s, when I began to work on compiling *Daughters of Africa*. However, while searching through the archive of papers surrounding me at home, I happened on a letter from Wole Soyinka (who in 1986 made us all proud by becoming the first African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature). In 1975, while he was editor of *Transition* magazine, he wrote me a letter responding to something I had said when our paths had crossed in London and I had seemingly berated him for not including enough women in an anthology he had recently curated. His warm response read, in part: "It goes to show—the proportion of women poets never did occur to me—a greater testimony to my non-sexist outlook I cannot imagine! But seriously though, it's quite true, and I am sure you wouldn't have wanted double standards applied in selection. But you are right to point it out. I know that in the next edition I will especially search for poetry by women." Thank you, Prof, for speaking out boldly against male monopoly as recently as December 2018 at the award ceremony for the prize that bears your name, which I was honoured to judge—and which was won jointly by a man and a woman—take a bow, Harriet Anena from Uganda.

Long may those handsome garlands keep coming. For my part, I award every woman—more than 200 of you—who did me the honour of accepting my invitation to feature in this anthology the Venerable Order of True African Sisterhood. May you wear it proudly! A legacy of *New Daughters of Africa* that has been facilitated by your generously waiving your usual fees is a major new scholarship at London University's School of Oriental Studies (SOAS). This will directly benefit African women, making possible a course of study free of the worry of fees and accommodation costs.

And may all who find their way to this anthology, regardless of gender, class or race, feast well on its banquet of words.

*Margaret Busby*



# Acknowledgements

Back in 1989, I met a young editor called Candida Lacey, from feminist publishers Pandora Press, who had just brought out *An Anthology of British Women Writers* (edited by Dale Spender and Janet Todd). We talked of the need to rectify the absence of black women from the literary canon, and I agreed to take on the world single-handedly with her commissioning me to compile *Daughters of Africa: An International Anthology of Words and Writings by Women of African Descent from the Ancient Egyptian to the Present*. Then I became a sort of literary stalker. Pandora transitioned to HarperCollins, and I followed; I was right behind Candida when she moved on to Jonathan Cape, where *Daughters of Africa* was eventually published in 1992. Twenty-five years later, with the original long out of print, and Candida now publisher of Myriad Editions, along came the notion of a completely new edition.

Thank you, Elise Dillsworth, for kickstarting the idea, and thank you again, Candida, for running with it with so enthusiastically. Your hands-on commitment to *New Daughters of Africa* demonstrates everything one could wish for in a publisher. And gratitude aplenty for the dedication of the Myriad-New Internationalist team—seen and unseen—including Corinne Pearlman, Kelsi Farrington, Dawn Sackett, Emma Dowson, Anna Burt, Charley Chapman, Linda McQueen...

Brilliant backup from the US came in the person of Stephanie Steiker, whose efforts resulted in the welcome partnership with Amistad.

I owe more than I can ever express to my siblings—George and Eileen—who have been by my side from day one, ready to help whenever and however necessary, including with translations. Other family members around the world continue to be loyal cheerleaders and keep me going in various ways—Allyson, Phyllis, Moira, Natalie, Ibrahim, Jamil, Kathryn...

Innumerable friends (which category embraces contributors too—you know who you are) and colleagues gave time, encouragement, practical help, and occasionally much-needed chocolate. To mention just a few: Pauline Melville; Burt Caesar; Joan Harris; Christopher MacLehose; Irene Staunton; Sylvester Onwordi, son of the late Buchi Emecheta; Eve Lacey; Miranda Pyne; Ike Anya; Nicola Cross; Nuruddin Farah; Lorna Goodison; Mandla Langa; the late Ernest Hecht...

How fortunate I am to have Luke Daniels in my life, providing sustenance, sharing the good times and keeping me on my toes. There is no one I'd rather go dancing with!

Which brings me to music, without which I can't function, so the soundtrack of NDOA features Aaron, Abbey, Abdullah, Ahmad, Al, Albert, Alberta, Alexander,

Ali, Alice, Alicia, Alick, Althea, Amadou, Amakye, Andra, Andy, Angela, Angelique, Anita, Ann, Anne-Marie, Antonio, Archie, Aretha, Art, Arthur, Asa, Aston, Astor, Ayanna, Baaba, Baba, Babs, Barbara, Barry, Béb , Bebo, Ben, Benny, Beres, Bessie, Betty, Bettye, Beverley, Beyonc , Bheki, Bi, Bill, Billie, Billy, Bob, Bobby, Bonga, Booker, Brandi, Brenda, Brian, Brook, Bruno, Bud, Buddy, Burt, Byron, Caetano, Cal, Cannonball, Carl, Carla, Carlos, Carmen, Carole, Cassandra, Cece, Cecil, CeeLo, Celia, Celina, Cesaria, Chaka, Chano, Charles, Charlie, Cheikh, Chet, Chick, Chucho, Chuck, Cissy, Clarence, Cleo, Cleveland, Cliff, Clifford, Coleman, Corinne, Count, Cuba, Curtis, Daddy, Dakota, Damian, Dave, David, Dawn, Dee Dee, Della, Denise, Denyse, Derrick, Desmond, Des'ree, Dexter, Diana, Diane, Dianne, Dick, Dinah, Dionne, Dizzy, Dobet, Dolly, Don, Donna, Donnie, Donny, Dorothy, Duke, Eartha, Ed, Eddie, Eddy, Edwin, Elizabeth, Ella, Ennio, Eric, Erma, Ernestine, Ernie, Erroll, Erykah, Esperanza, Esther, E.T., Etta, Fats, Fela, Femi, Filomena, Fontella, Francis, Frank, Freda, Freddie, Freddy, Fundi, Gary, Gato, Gene, Geoffrey, George, Gil, Gladys, Gloria, Grace, Gregory, Guy, Gwen, Habib, Hank, Harold, Harry, Hazel, Heather, Helen, Herbie, Hope, Horace, Hugh, Inez, Irene, Irma, Isaac, Ivie, Jackie, Jamelia, James, Janet, Jean, Jeff, Jeffrey, Jennifer, Jevetta, Jill, Jim, Jimi, Jimmy, JJ, Joan, Joe, John, Johnnie, Johnny, Jon, Joni, Joseph, Josephine, Joyce, Kadija, Kai, Kaissa, Keith, Ken, Kenny, Ketty, Khadja, Kirk, Kitch, Lauryn, Lee, Lena, Lenny, Leona, Les, Lester, Letta, Linda, Lionel, Lisa, Lizz, Lonnie, Lorez, Lorraine, Lou, Louis, Lucky, Lukie, Luther, Lynn, Ma, Machel, McCoy, Macy, Mahalia, Manu, Marcel, Marcia, Marcus, Maria, Mariah, Mariam, Mariza, Mark, Marlina, Martha, Martinho, Marvin, Mary, Mary Lou, Mavis, Max, Maxine, Maya, Melba, Melissa, Mercedes, Me'shell, Miatta, Michael, Michel, Mildred, Miles, Millie, Milt, Milton, Minnie, Miriam, Mitty, Monica, Monty, Moses, Mwenda, Nana, Nancy, Nat, Natalie, Nawal, Nene, Neneh, Nico, Nikki, Nina, Nneka, Noel, Nona, Norah, Norma, Oleta, Oliver, Omar, Omara, Ornette, Oscar, Otis, Oumou, Owen, Paco, Papa, Pat, Patrice, Patsy, Patti, Paul, Paulinho, Peabo, Peaches, Pearl, Peggy, Percy, Pharoah, Pharrell, Phineas, Phoebe, Phyllis, PP, Prince, Queen, Quincy, Rachelle, Randy, Ray, Rebecca, Red, Regina, Richie, Rita, Roberta, Rokia, Roland, Ronald, Rose, Roy, Ruben, Ruby, Ruth, Ry, Sade, Salena, Salif, Sam, Samantha, Sambou, Sammy, Sarah, Sathima, Sergio, Seydu, Shadow, Sheila, Shirley, Shontelle, Sibongile, Siphon, Slim, Smokey, Solomon, Sona, Sonny, Souad, Sparrow, Stanley, Stephanie, Stevie, Susana, Susheela, Syreeta, Tadd, Taj, Tammi, Tania, Teddy, Thad, Thelma, Thelonious, Thomas, Tina, TK, Tommy, Toni, Tony, Toots, Toumani, Tour , Tracy, Tunde, Tyrone, Virginia, Vusi, Walter, Wasis, Wayne, Wes, Whitney, Wilson, Winston, Wyclef, Wynton, Yemi, Yolanda, Youssou, Yvonne, Yusuf, Zoe, ZZ... (stop me when I run out of space, because I won't run out of names), ABBA...