

FEBRUARY  
2024



“Put some matter in my hands”  
(chine colle monoprint, 2023)  
THEYFXRST (SA Smythe & Autumn Knight)

# THE COLLABORATORY *for* BLACK POIËSIS NEWSLETTER

Happy Black Futures month, dear Collaborators! We’re one month into the Winter semester at the University of Toronto, and one month into the Western year, with the Lunar New Year on the horizon. We hope that wherever you are when you read this, you are continuing to orient yourself and your communities towards peace. We’re excited to congregate this year and the rest of this semester is filled with possibilities in and outside the collaboratory! This newsletter comes after the cycles of general buzz, hope, renewal, and disheartening that the month of January may carry. As we move deeper into February, we trust January’s lessons and recollections of loss are not in vain.

This newsletter introduces you to the CBP and some of our upcoming events, dreams, and inspirations. Read through to see what we’re up to and where we might go/grow together.



[www.blackpoiesis.org](http://www.blackpoiesis.org)  
[blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca](mailto:blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca)

# THE COLLABORATORY *for* BLACK POIËSIS

## February 2024 Newsletter cont'd...

We are in the midst of Black History Month across many geographies. For many of us, it is an occasion to celebrate how far our communities have come on these long journeys of joyous struggle towards the horizon of freedom. Many of us also witness the material reality of what Amiri Baraka referred to as “the changing same,” in the wake of competing genocides and domicides, climate catastrophe, dispossession, creeping fascism and ongoing pandemics the world over, from Sudan to Palestine to Haiti to Ukraine to Abya Yala to Turtle Island to Congo to Ilẹ Káàárò-Oòjìrè to the islands to Lahaina, Hawai'i to Libya to Lampèdusa to the Red, Black, and Mediterranean Seas. To home. To every geography untrained from our tongues or warped into some evidentiary litany of rehearsal. We feel the weight of the world and fight for the survival of our people, however we learn to name them. We know there is joy in struggle. We know there is so much more work to be done. However we may contextualise our divergent paths and converging dreams, may we take time to (re)commit ourselves to the constellations of liberation and the manifold imaginative practices and technologies that bring us into alignment with our ancestors and a transnational, borderless coalition of kin that ignite our way.



Credit: @patiasfantasyworld on instagram  
Image created by @the\_real\_lenoxtwins

Poet and teacher June Jordan once asked, “And what shall we do, we who did not die? What shall we do now? How shall we grieve, and cry out loud, and face down despair? Is there an honorable, non-violent means towards mourning and remembering who and what we loved?” Those are some of the core principles organising us within and beyond the Collaboratory for Black Poiësis. Indeed, as “poiësis” circulates as a concept throughout the West-inflected academy, we name this space to acknowledge that we have been long committed to lives in relation to poetics that mark emergence of yet-to-exist, rooted ways and practices of becoming for generations: in our communities, on the soils and seas from whence we we hail, and into the horizons of possibility where freedom reigns.

## WHO WE ARE

We're thrilled to introduce three inaugural Research Fellows at the Collaboratory for Black Poiësis, funded by the Faculty of Information: **Alexa Fairclough** is a Caribbean-Canadian BA student in Anthropology. She is an artist and writer working in 2023-2024 as our research fellow and memory (n)ethnographer (she/her) within the CBP and a research assistant at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. **Anu Makinde** is our research fellow and folk-literature (n)ethnographer. She is completing her MA in Human Geography, at work on a thesis that embarks on a sonic journey dedicated to her ancestors, whose lives revolve around the phonetic language Yoruba. Rounding out our trio is **Melissa Vincent**, our lead research fellow and sonic (n)ethnographer. Melissa is a music journalist, researcher, and strategist whose work broadly explores equity, intimacy, and community formation as it relates to music, technology, and culture. She is completing her Master's in the Faculty of Information's Culture & Technology concentration. Together, this core team of fellows working with our director and assistant professor of Black Studies and the Archive, **Dr. SA Smythe**, are visioning a sustainable foundation for their work, respectively and within the Collaboratory.



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The Collaboratory for Black Poiēsis had our public launch event on October 5th in UofT's Faculty of Information (Bissell, 140 St. George). Over the course of the evening, we shared amazing Caribbean food catered by Chef Peter and his team over at Veggie D'Light with good food and great company. We introduced ourselves and made a moment by gathering in witness.....one of our activities was a listening session and collective liner notes envisioned by our fellows, which bore out some of our core principles of community and "attunement," a collaborative practice of listening and deepening one's study and cultivating harmony in the wake of a distracting attention economy. In that same vein, we've held impromptu sessions involving making posters, knitting & other crafts to read aloud poetry sessions of Palestinian and Sudanese poets from the last 50 years including Mahmoud Darwish, Safia Elhillo, Rasha Abdulhadi, Rania Mamoun, and Zaina Alsous.

CBP LAUNCH EVENT

OPEN INVITATION TO OUR GATHERING

ALL COLLABORATORS WELCOME



**COLLABORATORY**  
*for* **BLACK POIĒSIS**

6PM TO 8PM

ROOM 307, BISSELL BUILDING  
ROBERTS LIBRARY  
140 ST GEORGE ST, TORONTO

October 11 2023

○ LEARN MORE ○ LISTEN ○ LINGER ○

# SAVE THE DATE!

## Calling the Conjurers

AN OTHERWISE SYMPOSIUM  
FOR TECHNOLOGIES OF BLACK LIFE & STUDY

FEATURING BASHMENT, PERFORMANCES & ART SHOWCASE

**CREATIVE WORKSHOPS**

- + Zines & print-making
- + Creative writing + Sound / music production + Movement
- + Media literacy + Nature-based wellness + Honing ancestral technologies + Black trans technē + Engineering practices and more...

**INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC NETWORKING GATHERINGS**

- + Black GLAM orgs & community centres
- + Tech workers & cryptographers
- + Emergent & freelance culture workers
- + Local art practitioners, organisers, and community educators

CROSSTALKS + ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATIONS


**23-26 MAY 2024**


WWW.BLACKPOIESIS.ORG | BLACKPOIESIS@UTORONTO.CA

WE KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE. MASKS ENCOURAGED / PROVIDED.

We know that Black futures will be celebrated year round! The CBP will be hosting our first biennial symposium: **Calling the Conjurers: An Otherwise Symposium for Technologies of Black Life & Study**, 23-26 May 2024! We're collaborating with some amazing partners including BAND Gallery (Black Artists' Network in Dialogue); It's Ok\* Studios, a Black-led and operated, interdisciplinary, multipurpose arts space; Jackman Humanities Institute "Program for the Arts," ArQuives, and various partner labs, cultural orgs, social movement collaborative arts incubators across Turtle Island, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. Our co-organising partner is Logic(s), a print+digital magazine dedicated to the radical exploration and expansion of culture, technology, and/in journalism. Stay tuned and get ready to answer the calling ✨



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# WHAT WE'RE READING...

Last Fall, the CBP began hosting [magnitude+bond], a multimedia reading group. Meeting on the 4th Monday of each month from 4-6pm, we're making our way through Octavia Butler's *Patternist Series*, and sharing music and other media to support our journey through Butler's words and worlds. The group name was derived from a famous refrain of one of our ancestral collaborators, the poet and teacher Gwendolyn Brooks. Get in where you fit in and join us! RSVP for our February session, where we'll discuss *Mind of My Mind* (1977).

Some of us are forming satellite reading groups based on interest in global contemporary Black poetry; Black internationalism and political education (reading texts like Cedric Robinson's foundational *Black Marxism*); and a "reading" group of listening sessions around our Collaboratory's record player for innovations in Black sound. Reach out if you have interest or capacity to facilitate or join in reading other texts with us in coming seasons!

**[magnitude & bond]**  
Reading Group

Join us for our year-long multimedia investigation and close reading sessions

We'll delve into the mind of our eminent galactic worldmaker Octavia Butler's *Patternist Series*, reading from the 2007 edited collection, *Seed to Harvest*.

ROOM 307, BISSELL BUILDING  
FACULTY OF INFORMATION  
(NEXT TO ROBERTS LIBRARY)  
140 ST GEORGE ST, TORONTO

4TH MONDAYS  
4PM TO 6PM

COME AS YOU ARE  
RSVP BY THE FRIDAY  
BEFORE EACH SESSION TO:  
BLACKPOIESIS@UTORONTO.CA

December 4th - *Wild Seed* (1980)  
January 22nd - *Wild Seed* (1980)  
February 26th - *Mind of My Mind* (1977)  
March 25th - *Mind of My Mind* (1977)  
April 22nd - "A Necessary Being" (2014) [virtual guest tbd]  
May 27th - *Patternmaster* (1976)

OCTAVIA E. BUTLER  
WILD SEED

OCTAVIA E. BUTLER  
MIND OF MY MIND

OCTAVIA E. BUTLER  
CLAY'S ARK

OCTAVIA E. BUTLER  
PATTERN MASTER

Our folk-literature (n)etnographer Anu has been dwelling on this poem by Lucille Clifton, originally published in *Two-Headed Woman* (1980). She's also created a January playlist titled *solice*, which intends to be used in the search for solitude amongst others in the Toronto "winter" air.

the light that came to Lucille Clifton  
came in a shift of knowing  
when even her fondest sureties  
faded away. it was the summer  
she understood that she had not understood  
and was not mistress even  
of her own off eye. then  
the man escaped throwing away his tie and  
the children grew legs and started walking and  
she could see the peril of an  
unexamined life.  
she closed her eyes, afraid to look for her  
authenticity  
but the light insists on itself in the world;  
a voice from the nondead past started talking,  
she closed her ears and it spelled out in her hand  
"you might as well answer the door, my child,  
the truth is furiously knocking."

Our director, Prof. SA Smythe, is teaching "Trans Technē," a grad course in the Faculty of Information where they're revisiting *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility* edited by Tourmaline, Eric A Stanley, and Johanna Burton. Smythe is diving into read Canisia Lubrin's debut work of fiction, *Code Noir* with stunning illustrations from Torkwase Dyson, and still obsessed with André 3000's flute game on *New Blue Sun*. It's on vinyl and on repeat.

Our sonic (n)etnographer Melissa has been revisiting the spatially-asymmetrical — and spaciouly haunting — record, *Exit Simulation* by the South Carolina-based artist Nicey Blues. It pairs almost seamlessly alongside *Song for Salvation* by the powerhouse death-doom duo, Dream Unending. Right now, there's no snow in Toronto. She's been unable to resist pausing her walk for a small treat: the world-famous veggie patty at Bathurst subway station and a Mochi cookies n' cream donut for something a lil' sweeeeeeeet. 🍡



# LOCAL (TKARONTO) EVENTS...

- On February 7th, Nia Centre for the Arts is celebrating their Writer's Forum with a showcase event, "[For the love of our words](#)"
- On February 28th, we have [The Crossings Lecture Series](#), curated by Dr. SA Smythe (FOI) and Dr. Qui Alexander (OISE), a new speaker series that foregrounds Black trans life and thought. *Crossings* reflects a commitment to principles and practices of abolition, transnationalism, disability justice and other interrelated frameworks. The inaugural speaker is AfroZapotec writer, curator, and educator, Alan Pelaez Lopez. RSVP [here](#)
- At UofT, look out for ongoing programming from [WGSJ](#) for their 50th anniversary
- On March 1st and 2nd, the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies will hold a public reading of the play [A Wretched Mourning: Decolonizing Dramaturgy](#).
- On March 8th to 10th, The Music Gallery will be hosting their [Women from Space Festival](#) which will feature [Lina Allemano](#), [Matana Roberts](#), [Mali Obomsawin](#) and many more...
- We're still in the world and there is no business as usual in a time of competing genocides, pandemics, and catastrophes; there are ongoing protests, teach-ins, and other formations, and fundraisers in digital and physical space. Tap in, check on your people, resource yourself and be a resource for others. Let's get [free!](#)

## SPREAD THE WORD

Thanks for reading! We're always looking for curious and imaginative people who research, create, and dream in relation to Black life, thought, aesthetic practices, and study. Get in touch with us to propose collaborations, impromptu gatherings, and to help us continue to develop and resource this work.

**Tell your colleagues, comrades, co-learners, and collaborators who are committed to Black life, Black study, Black arts and other practices for freedom dreaming to get in touch:**

[blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca](mailto:blackpoiesis@utoronto.ca)

Stay tuned for the Spring launch of our website with the programme for our symposium and other community resources at [www.blackpoiesis.org](http://www.blackpoiesis.org) !