

Conference - Call for Papers

Female, Queer and Nonbinary Voices in African Literatures: Bodies, Ecologies, Herstories

University of Leicester
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Organisers:

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(Convenors of the Collaborative Research Group in African Literatures of the European Association of African Studies, AEGIS)

In the last fifteen years, a new generation of African female and non-binary authors have made major interventions in the field of African Literatures, from Akwaeke Emezi to NoViolet Bulawayo, Djaili Amadou Amal to Kopano Matlwa. In parallel, women writers from earlier generations, such as Tsitsi Dangaremba (winner of a Windham–Campbell Literature Prize in 2021), Paulina Chiziane or Ana Paula Tavares (who were both awarded with the Camões Prize in 2021 and 2025 respectively) have received major literary distinctions, celebrating their contributions to African postcolonial literatures in particular, and literature in general. In Europe, new Afropean female voices (Alice Zeniter, Leonora Miano, Djaimilia Pereira), are stretching conventional delimitations of the field of African literatures and offering fresh perspectives on European colonialism, past and present.

The aim of the workshop is to foster conversations across languages, regions and generations to examine the multifaceted dynamics, aesthetics and agendas of female, queer and nonbinary authorship in African literatures. Comparative perspectives will be particularly welcome to emphasize both the diversity and commonalities of literary representations of women's experiences on the continent, and to examine the ways in which women's writing has shifted since the trailblazing works of the independence generation authors such as Mariama Bâ, Ama Ata Aidoo, Bessie Head and so many others.

While the workshop is invested in work across the broad spectrum of female, queer and nonbinary voices in African literature, it will address three major themes:

(Re)writing (Her)History: Despite their frequent absence from patriotic histories and colonial archives, women and queer people have been intimately involved in transforming and creating African histories. This theme asks how female, queer and/or nonbinary narratives of resistance challenge, complicate and subvert African patriarchal and heteronormative constructions of the nation.

Writing the Body: The body assumes different, often opposing, and sometimes troubling forms in both the conflict between and the convergence of colonial and African knowledges. This theme asks what the limitations and/or affordances of the body are, and how female, queer and nonbinary African writers articulate a conception of the body that resists colonial, patriarchal and heteronormative logics of domination.

Female and Queer Ecological Writing: Amidst increasingly precarious environmental and climatic conditions, women and other marginalised groups, including queer and nonbinary people, bear the brunt of ostensibly natural disasters. This theme asks how such writers define the environmental, and whether their works might queer the very concept of ecocriticism in local and transnational African contexts.

Papers addressing topics related to these themes can include, but are not limited to:

- Narratives of resistance during and after colonialism
- Critical reflections on patriarchy and heteronormativity within and beyond colonial legacies
- The role of storytelling in creating African histories
- Women, queer and nonbinary subjects as key historical agents of African history
- Constructions of the body within and beyond colonial logics
- The limitations and/or affordances of the body
- African knowledges of gender, sexuality and the body
- Spirituality, science, corporeality and embodiment
- Humanism, posthumanism and counter-humanism
- Queering the environment
- Gender, activism and environment
- Gendered and environmental resistance to (neo)colonial and neoliberal exploitation

We also welcome proposals that address the broader field of female, queer and nonbinary African writing beyond the themes and topics above.

- Kindly send 300-500 word proposals as well as a short bio (100-200 words) on a Word document with your name and email address by 1st April to africanlitcrg@gmail.com.
- Please state whether you would like to present online or in person.
- Notifications of acceptance will be communicated by 1st May.
- Presentations should be 15-20 minutes long.
- The CRG has a limited budget to support the travel of early career or independent scholars from the UK and/or Europe (who do not benefit from institutional funding), with a maximum of £50 for non-Leicester based participants in the UK. Please indicate in your application if you believe you may be eligible.

