

Title:

“an indulged child-bearer”: (De)colonizing Maternity

Abstract: (250 words)

The starting point of the roundtable discussion is Yemeni-Scouse artist, Amina Atiq's poem "Wench" (2022), a poetic response to a letter from 1779, in which the apprentice James Millett asks to purchase an enslaved woman with whom he had “the misfortune to breed” four children. In the poem, we hear the mother’s voice talking back. Amina Atiq will share details of her creative process of writing this harrowing poem, which has inspired the panelists to respond with papers discussing the ways in which maternity has been colonized across time, space and sexual identity.

Dóra Janczer Csikós will look at 18th-century constructions of motherhood in Britain through the narratives of Captain Stedman (1773-77; pub. 1796), who—like Millett—had a child with an enslaved girl in Surinam, and discuss William Blake’s poetic and artistic response to Stedman in the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793).

Kata Gyuris will discuss Yvette Christiansë’s *Unconfessed* (2006), a novel responding to a court record, according to which an enslaved woman in the Cape Colony murdered her son in 1822. Christiansë writes back to the hegemonic power of the (colonial) archive and decolonizes notions of motherhood and mothering.

Mubashara Khan will explore how Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) challenges the perceptions of motherhood as a (female) gender binary prerogative, through the protagonist Anjum, who is born intersex and raised as a boy. Anjum later identifies as a transgender woman and adopts a daughter, experiencing motherhood from the margins within a South Asian community.

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