

2021

Summary Remarks on Conversations about “Researching, Reading and Writing During the Pandemic”

Kate Ozment

California State Polytechnic University - Pomona, keozment@cpp.edu

Mona Narain

Texas Christian University, m.narain@tcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/abo>

 Part of the [Dramatic Literature, Criticism and Theory Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ozment, Kate and Narain, Mona (2021) "Summary Remarks on Conversations about “Researching, Reading and Writing During the Pandemic”," *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830*: Vol.11: Iss.1, Article 9.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/abo/vol11/iss1/9>

This Conversation is brought to you for free and open access by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830* by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Summary Remarks on Conversations about “Researching, Reading and Writing During the Pandemic”

Abstract

Summary remarks on the Spring 2021 issue that includes Conversation essays by participants in the ABO summer 2020 writing camp #WriteWithAphra. The participants describe their experience of reading, researching, and writing during the pandemic.

Keywords

Gender, publishing, writing, pandemic, Asian, Asian American, Lisa Lowe, Christina Sharpe, Writing, Summer 2020, Twitter, Support groups

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

In 2020, the *ABO* editorial board and our feminist colleagues hosted the #WritewithAphra summer writing and support group, [detailed in the Fall 2020 issue](#) by editors Laura Runge and Tonya Howe. The last six months have not alleviated the challenges for our summer writing program participants, and total submissions to the journal continue to be down as a direct result of this reality. Rather than skip an issue or have an incomplete one, we are using this space for those affected to tell their stories in their own words. These Conversations are a catalogue of living, writing, mothering, teaching, researching, and surviving. They contain pain and hope, optimism, and a stark call to action in response to how inequity in academia is leaving behind too many of our community. They detail how students, teachers, researchers, and writers must do this work during the ongoing trauma of grief, loss, and confinement in a global pandemic that simultaneously overlaps with political turmoil and racialized violence that continues to be an everyday reality for people of color.

This past year has especially highlighted the differential challenges of living through a pandemic and coming face-to-face yet again with the eighteenth-century construction of modern race that was gestated within networks of colonization and slavery. Some of our participants write from their racialized positions about the weight of racial visibility and its lived reality's impact on their scholarship. The legacies and impact of slavery, colonization, and the systemic genocide of indigenous people in the time period we study, 1640-1830, is one that has become imperative to discuss for all aspects of our scholarship. Christina Sharpe's evocative phrase (and the first part of the title of her important book) "In the Wake," which she uses to delineate "what survives despite such insistent violence and negation," aptly describes the work especially of black scholars, scholars of color, and women scholars this past year. We applaud their painful persistence.

In *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lisa Lowe has brilliantly demonstrated how eighteenth and nineteenth-century colonialism and slavery created the entanglements between far-flung continents and brought together enslaved Africans, dispossessed indigenous peoples in the Americas, and indentured servants from Asia in service of European capital. Lowe demonstrates that Western liberal ideas of freedom are predicated on the erasure of the labor of the colonized, the enslaved, and the indentured. Lowe also shows how the importation of laborers from Asia to the Caribbean, North and South America in this time period was linked to the British decision to end the slave trade and emancipate slaves in the West Indies (25-26). Thus, the elastic figure of the Asian

coolie served as the intermediary between the enslaved and free, opportunistically used as a wedge between white and black populations, but also denied citizenship rights such as in the US Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the decision to debar South Asians from naturalization in *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* in 1923. By the same token, migrant lower-caste Indian women were seen as immoral because they had migrated to the northern hemisphere (34). And the prohibition of Chinese female immigration in the Page Law of 1875 in the United States demonstrated the ambivalent conception of the figure of the Chinese woman who was conceived as adding stability to the colonial order as well as threatening that same order (30-33).

These legacies of the eighteenth and nineteenth century have come into sharp relief in terribly recurrent ways locally and globally in the past year as we witness systemic racism in our polity leveled at all those perceived as “others” and in the worldwide inequities of access to vaccines. The pandemic of violence has recently been particularly vicious against the most vulnerable, working class Asian/Asian American women and Asian/Asian American elders in the United States where our journal is located. Understanding the historical foundations of violence and hate’s trajectory is vital to challenging it and to stopping it. As scholars of the long eighteenth century, we have a special responsibility to study such trajectories and to “explain *the politics of our lack of knowledge*,” as Lowe terms it (39). *ABO* remains committed to such inquiries.

The Conversations published here and in our forthcoming fall issue encapsulate both the lived and scholarly struggles with these legacies during this past year. The future demanded and imagined by these writers deserves our attention, and we cannot imagine a more important contribution to the scholarly conversation on the state of the field during this time.

Works Cited

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke UP, 2015.

Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Duke UP, 2016.