

# A Call for Papers: Postcards on Beauty, Method, and Ephemera

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**Abstract:** Taking the ubiquitous call for papers in academia, this essay invites an imagined audience to create a long-form postcard digital project for submission to a fictional journal. Rooted in Black Feminist scholarship, Queer studies, and Indigenous studies and with a focus on slow scholarship, *A Call for Papers (A Call)* invites scholars to submit a series of collaborative postcards to a fictional journal.

Using Christina Sharpe's (2023) definition of beauty as method, *A Call* offers an opportunity for scholars to actively engage in beauty as a method. Asking those interested in submitting to this fictional journal to think about postcards they would send to potential colleagues, the essay asks the question: What beautiful words and images would scholars send to each other?

Inspired by the Dear Data project between Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec (2016), and exploring Sophie Marie Niang's (2024) scavenging as methodology, *A Call* is an attempt at a new methodology of creating, presenting, and relating to data. Scholars are invited to submit their postcards on a range of topics about pleasure, whimsy, and beauty as a way to approach creating, presenting, and relating to data. *A Call* employs a scavenging methodology that asks scholars to actively and meaningfully engage in the process of selecting a topic, potential collaborators, postcards for exchange, and the final product.

*A Call*, using Katherine McKittrick's (2021) work on and use of footnotes, shares in its footnotes a one-sided conversation between a scholar and an unnamed collaborator. Sharing one side of the conversation is an invitation to the imagined audience to be in relationship with the unnamed scholar, thus becoming their imagined collaborator. The conversation in the footnotes is one attempt at what McKittrick defines as Black method—being “precise” and “detailed” in the limited space on the back of a postcard.

Throughout, *A Call* is an attempt at mapping out how to engage in and with slow scholarship, beauty as method, scavenging methodology, and asks scholars to consider what beautiful scholarly ephemera we leave behind in the digital world.

**Keywords:** beauty, black method, pleasure

## A Call for Papers: Special Issue [] Write to/with Each Other about [].

We at the *Not so well known journal but will definitely count on your CV/tenure packet (NSWJBWDCOYCT)* are pleased share our call for the inaugural special issue titled *[] Write to/with Each Other about []*. The goal of this special issue is to offer scholars an opportunity to collaborate with each other focusing on beauty as method, Black method, pleasure, and the ephemera we leave behind as academics. Recognizing academic institution's extractive power, we use Christina Sharpe's definition of beauty which "is an attentiveness to a kind of aesthetic that has escaped violence whenever possible" (2023, 85) and invite scholars to think of the beauty in their scholarship and collaborate with a peer(s) to submit to this inaugural issue.

Drawing on Robin Wall Kimmerer's words, collaboration is seen as being "the sweetest way . . . hav[ing] someone else hold the end so you pull gently against each other" (2013, ix). We recognize that collaboration comes with its own tensions; however, we invite scholars to consider these tensions in scholarship as sweet because, as Christina Sharpe writes, they "rupture, make possible" a new world (2023, 79).

Not only do we encourage scholars to consider beauty as method, and view collaboration with all its tensions as sweet, we at *NSWJBWDCOYCT* welcome submissions that use Black method, which Katherine McKittrick defined as "precise, detailed, coded, long, and forever" (2021, 5). Drawing on McKittrick's definition of Black method, for this inaugural issue, we invite scholars to think through all parts of McKittrick's definition, especially on how scholarship changes when we think about work lasting forever and consider the question, what do we want to leave behind for our scholar descendants to explore/enjoy/get free? And in the spirit of getting free even within the confines of academia, we invite scholars to engage with Sophie Marie Niang's (2024) scavenging as methodology, especially what she describes as both refusal and world making.

### *Submission Guidelines*

The deadline for submissions is **24 months** from **today's date**.

To be included in this special issue, please submit a letter of intent to the editors. Please read the instructions below to determine whether you have the time, resources, and bandwidth to work on a project that will take two years<sup>1</sup> before it is finally published.

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1. Postcard 1: Dear friend, I recognize that the name of this journal makes it seem like a predatory journal, but I am intrigued by what they propose. As soon as I saw it, I thought of you dear friend, and I wanted to ask: Would you like to write participate with me in this project? No, I believe is a full sentence and I will not be offended because this call gave me the

Prospective authors should reach out to a peer/colleague whom they have known or have always wanted to work with, preferably one whose home address they have on hand. Inquire if a potential collaborator is interested in submitting to this special issue. If feeling particularly saucy, prospective authors are encouraged to reach out to two colleagues and have themselves a collaborative threesome. We only recommend a threesome because an orgy (four or more peers/collaborators) would make the editorial process rather difficult.

Once an agreement has been reached, prospective authors are invited to head over to their favorite store, the one that smells sweetly of books of an indeterminate age, with a store pet which always says hello, drink orders that are always perfect, and has that one perfect seat by the window where you can watch the world go by, and purchase some postcards. Given the peer (s)/colleague(s) invited to collaborate, authors are encouraged to be intentional about the type of postcards chosen. Postcards should delight, amuse, or induce a belly laugh in colleagues, because authors know each other well enough to know what would delight the other.<sup>2</sup> Consider paper the postcard is made with, how heavy is it, how light is it, can you plant said postcard in the soil and watch it grow? Consider the pen and the ink that will be used to write on this postcard.<sup>3</sup> Consider the beautiful gifts of art and prose that will be sent to one another.

Over the course of 12 months, collaborators are encouraged to send each other physical postcards telling stories about topics outlined below. For this special issue, the first author will be the person who sends the invitation postcard, which will be used as the introduction to the final piece. Through the process of writing and responding to each other, we welcome stories and conversations that will lead to, as Nawal El Saadawi (2011) said, “[a] revolution [that] is built on creativity.” Prospective authors are invited to please look through the topics below and pick one that tickles them and their collaborators’ fancy.

1. Drawing maps to our own and collective pleasure<sup>4</sup>
2. Notes on the birdsong<sup>5</sup> outside my window

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opportunity to send you this post card I had because it reminded me of when we had both just started grad school. Sending lots of love

2. Postcard 2: Thank you, thank you for saying yes. And did chuckle at your note that I am usually the one saying no to things. What can I say refusal is a daily practice. But I am saying a “Hell Yes” to this, because it seems like a disruption, a chance to be what Harney & Moten call a subversive intellectual. And you know I will always take any opportunity to discuss pleasure as praxis. Lots of love (always)
3. Postcard 3: You are right, dear friend, to question how yet another journal asking for our labour and production is in any way shape or form disruptive. I return to Moten and Fred and the subversive intellectual, the one who doesn’t toil in misery. You have sent me two post cards, that had me laughing like a loon at my mail box. So I am finding pleasure, rapture and joy in writing to and with you. Lots of love.
4. Postcard 4: I did think about the question of where does one start when writing about pleasure. I started with adrienne marie brown’s pleasure activism and her pleasure principles. And in some circuitous fashion I ended up with what I am calling my “soundscape of liberation” which is really a fancy way of saying, I want to write about the music that set you and your scholarship free. What say you? Want to chat about the soundscape to our scholarly liberation? Lots of love.
5. Postcard 5: I worry that the Palestinian Sunbird will lose its song.

3. Elixirs to aid in the battles with real and imagined trolls
4. Fairytales and myths that are true
5. Play(fulness)<sup>6</sup> as theory and praxis<sup>7</sup>
6. Nail polish names as pedagogy
7. Grace Jones<sup>8</sup> and other patron saints<sup>9</sup> of defiance

We recommend that you label your postcards as they come to your post because they will help with the editorial process. We at *NSWJBWDCOYCT* Journal would like to let you know that we will accept letters of intent until we have three sets of storytellers per topic. Thus please include in your letter of intent the following

- A. Collaborator(s)/peer(s) names
- B. Choice of topic

Once all topics have three different storytellers, this call will close.

### *Editorial process:*

At the end of 12 months (or until collaborators decide that they have written all they can about the topic of their choice), schedule a meeting. Over food and drinks read with each through all the postcards that were written to each other and decide which of all postcards sent and received will be the final submission. Once decided, authors are encouraged to upload the front and back pictures of their postcards to this *fancy grant-funded website*. Please be sure to obscure physical addresses prior to submission. Postcards should be uploaded in the order authors would like them to appear on the journal

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6. Postcard 6: Oh my word, you do know me well. Yes, the first song on my list will be a song by the Spice Girls. It is, as you asked, *Wannabe*. Yes it is their most famous song, but what I love about it is it begins with Melanie Brown aka Scary spice, laughing. Her laughter on that song has been with me since I first heard it many moons ago. Because it is Black Girl joy even when we know her very name feeds into the scary Black woman trope. I still dance to it. And for you I am guessing it will be Nina Simone. Lots of love

7. Postcard 7: Ha! I was very wrong, I thought you were going to go with *Don't let me be misunderstood*, and you went with *I want a little sugar in my bowl*. Both these songs ask for a kind of sweetness and care that is necessary in the work we both do. But we are more than the work we do and produce, in institutions that take, take, and give crumbs back. So allow me to add some "sugar" to your "bowl"—*Redemption song by Bob Marley & The Wailers, Chineke! Orchestra*. With love and solidarity.

8. Postcard 8: Grace Jones!! I love Slave to the Rhythm and it reminded me of Warsan Shire's poem "Bless Grace Jones" calling Grace Jones patron saint of unapproachable women. I now I'm thinking of difficult women—Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Mel B, artists who have at one time or another been labelled difficult but still made beautifully heart wrenching music. I want to escape that violence and still create beauty . . . I want my own *Champagne Shit*

9. Postcard 9: As you asked my own scholarly patron saint is Dr. Toni Morrison. In moments of great academic anguish her words bring me comfort and give me language, which is what we do. Who are your academic Patron Saints?

website. Note: Postcards will not be available to view for the public for 24 months. This is to give you and your peers/colleagues the space and time to collectively tell stories.

There are no fees needed to pay to publish in this special issue. Visitors to the website will be able to click on each individual postcard and read what is on the back. Visitors will also have the option to read the backs of the postcards as one long-form essay.

We at *NSWJBWDCOYCT* look forward to being in collaboration with you.

## Author Biography

Born and raised in Kansanga, Uganda, **Janet Nalubega Ross**, who goes by their middle name Nalubega, spends her time asking Sub-Saharan Africans living in the United States, how they learn about sex, with a focus on pleasure, peer-to-peer learning and how social media helps or hinders this learning. When not asking people somewhat detailed questions about their sex lives, she studies transnational migration of Sub-Saharan Africans around the world and how United Nations policy helps and fails to help international migrants. Nalubega is very interested in research methods and theories that empower Black people and realign the power structures between researchers and their interlocutors. Through all her research, Nalubega uses Black history as a lens to understand the experiences of present day Black women. When not doing research, Nalubega spends time listening to music, sometimes embroidering rude words, reading novels, and having all manner of adventures with her family and close friends.

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