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PRESENCIA Y RESISTENCIA – BRITISH LATINX WRITING & ART. WASIFIRI, LONDON, V. 40, N. 4, ISSUE 124, DEC. 2025.

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Abstract

This review aims to discuss *Presencia y Resistencia – British Latinx Writing & Art*, dissecting the literary works of first- and second-generation Latinx writers living in the United Kingdom. The focus relies on Anglo-Brazilian writers, a term coined by Mariana Soletti da Silva in her thesis *Há mais coisas entre o Brasil e o Reino Unido: literatura anglo-brasileira, memória e identidade*. Nevertheless, the theoretical and literary frameworks offered by other Latinx writers towards sexuality, ancestry, and corporeality, are also thoroughly discussed. The review further aims to promote British LatinX Writing in Brazil, given the fact that Brazilians constitute the largest Latin American population living in the United Kingdom, according to the latest census research conducted by Queen Mary University of London.

Keywords: British Latinx Writing. Anglo-Brazilian Literature. Wasafiri Magazine.

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Presencia y Resistencia: British Latinx Writing & Art, published by *Wasafiri* in December 2025, arrives not simply as a themed issue, but as a critical intervention. Bringing together fiction, poetry, essays, interviews, and editorial reflection, it offers a textured account of Latinx cultural production in Britain while also insisting on the urgency of reading these works as part of the contemporary literary field rather than as its picturesque margin. What makes the issue especially striking is that it does more than gather voices under an umbrella category: it stages a conversation about visibility, migration, embodiment, language, and belonging at a moment in which British cultural identity remains deeply entangled with questions of race, borders, and historical exclusion. For a Brazilian readership, likely unfamiliar both with the issue itself and with the field from which it emerges, it opens a necessary space from which to think not only about representation, but about the terms through which literary communities are imagined in the first place.

The importance of reviewing such an issue relies on deciphering a field not yet discussed in larger places–the presence of Brazilians in English Literature. As one reads in Mariana Soletti da Silva's thesis, *Há mais coisas entre o Brasil e o Reino Unido: literatura anglo-brasileira, memória e identidade, No Longer Invisible: The Latin American Community in London* is an unpublished report produced by Queen Mary University of London in partnership with Trust for London and Latin American Women's Rights Services. In 2011, an estimated 113,500 Latin Americans were living in London, a figure four times higher than in 2011. Brazilians already constituted the largest nationality group, followed by Colombians, Bolivians, Ecuadorians, and Peruvians. Although the majority were employed (85%), around 40% had experienced abuse and exploitation in the workplace; 11% earned no more than the UK minimum wage, an illegal practice. This figure was ten times higher than the average (1.1%). Difficulties surrounding access to public services, such as the NHS, as well as housing-related problems, persisted during this period. Many respondents (70%), including second-generation immigrants, perceived discrimination as the main barrier preventing them from achieving upward social mobility. More recently, according to a seminar presented at the *Latinx Brixton Festival*, organisations such as CLAUK have been campaigning for changes to the census so that this population can be better represented and supported. It is also worth highlighting that respondents faced a *linguistic* barrier (38%), pointing to a long-term problem for this population.

British Latinidad is an original topic in academia. In its editorial, the issue expressed how "the challenges of our diverse diasporic experiences have contributed to the formation of strong and complex identities, as demonstrated by the authors featured here, who craft new narratives that enrich the fabric of society in Britain, and our work is only just beginning" (Lickorish Quinn and Leo Boix 2025, 3). That broader field may be described, however provisionally, through the idea of British Latinidad. The term names neither a homogeneous identity nor a stable community, but rather a set of diasporic formations shaped by

migration to Britain and by the uneven encounters that follow from it. It gathers subjects marked by different national histories, racial formations, class positions, and linguistic repertoires, even as they may be addressed from the outside as though they formed one coherent bloc. This is precisely why the topic demands careful framing, especially for readers in Brazil: "Latinidad" in the British context does not map neatly onto Latin American self-understandings, nor does it erase the tensions between, say, Brazilian, Chilean, Colombian, or Peruvian trajectories, or between first-generation migrants and British-born descendants.

While *Presencia y Resistencia* offers a rich and varied panorama of British Latinx writing and art, I am especially interested in the ways it sharpens a set of questions central to my own research on Anglo-Brazilian literature, particularly the relation between multilingualism, cultural memory, and the uneven experience of belonging. My argument is that these texts are especially revealing not only because they register migration or hybridity in general terms, but because they stage language itself as a site of tension: between intimacy and estrangement, between Englishness and Brazilianness, between collective categories and singular embodied lives. Thus, the issue becomes a powerful lens through which to examine what Anglo-Brazilian writing can disclose about British Latinidad more broadly.

In the lead feature *Towards an Embodied Resistance: Female LatinX Writers in Britain*, Natalie Teitler says that she writes from a body, a female body. Many British Latinx women writers tend to do it too, so we can see this female body not only in exile or state of migration, "a body that always holds cultural dissonance and lives in a permanent state of existing in-between: in between languages, in between countries. Carrying the burdens of being a woman in two cultures. Doubly embodied, or doubly disembodied" (Teitler 2025, 6), but in a war within the very concept of being present in the world as female. Taking from Cixous' *écriture feminine*, the writing reflects the body "through which the woman writes herself and closes the gap so violently opened" (Teitler 2025, 8).

Teitler also reads Patrizia Longhitano's work as a reminder of the fluidity of the human body. Although she mentions 'Now you see me', Longhitano published *St John The Baptist Visited in Prison by Salome* in Wasifiri's issue, where she still deals with bodily issues as a Brazilian woman with foreign acquaintances that shortly recognises her as the Other abruptly. The displacement of the poetic subject is seen in the frustration of not being fit in a relationship with people and the city. Her body is not simply a medium but a contested location: a surface where absence is performed, and where art is quite literally inscribed on the female form and spoken through it.

> While reading an article on Caravaggio and Guercino,
> I think of the poetry salon I've been to,
> where another guest with a very self-inflicted
> grammar school inflation tried to guess
> where I was from: *Mexican? Peruvian?*

> Your accent… Where is it from?
>
> (Longhitano, 2025, 113-114).

Another Brazilian writer featured in *Presencia y Resistencia* is Gael Le Cornec, in the *Life Writing* section titled *The Flood of Apinagès Lane*. It starts with the narrator telling us about her hometown, Belém do Pará; alongside the description of the city itself, there's a historical context of what has been going on around such an 'unknown' area for most of Brazil: the politics of Brazil's Military Dictatorship (1964-1985) towards the construction of the Transamazônica. The affection of Vó Janaína's recipes and the way her cousin would sing along to 'the protest songs of 'outrageous' band Secos and Molhados and the hippies Novos Baianos' (Le Cornec 2025, 29) makes one think if the representation of Brazil will be, at some point, universal: in my state, people could be chanting milongas. The particularities of the region can be seen in such a passage: "The doctor blamed the maniçoba dish that the gluttonous man ate at his godson's thirtieth birthday party. They suspected it was not well cooked. (This popular Amazonian dish must be cooked for three to five days for the cyanide poison of the manioc leaves to evaporate)" (Le Cornec 2025, 29).

As someone of multiple heritages, bringing Indigenous cultural memory into a "writing of the self" is not a decorative return to the past, but a political re-entry into a history that Brazil has repeatedly tried to make untraceable. In a country still narrated through the myth of "discovery" by Portugal conquers (*sic*), ancestry is often permitted only as folklore – kept safely at the level of costume, proverb, or museum object – while Indigenous presence is denied as a living epistemology, a way of sensing the body, illness, land, kinship, and time. To write from fragments of oral knowledge, family ritual, embodied superstition, and inherited fear (the cough across the street, the dread of pneumonia, the sewage-water that demands blessing) is to insist that colonial violence did not merely happen "then" but continues as an atmosphere shaping what can be remembered, claimed, and spoken. The self becomes an archive where macro erasure is felt in micro scenes: ancestry returns as an act of reclaiming what was suppressed both privately (within families taught to silence certain lineages) and nationally (within a state built on the management of Indigenous disappearance).

Writing with ancestral residues therefore contests the official timeline and repositions indigeneity as contemporaneity: not a vanished preface to the nation, but a persistent, bodily inheritance that demands language, narration, and public recognition. Evoking the *Matita Pereira* creature is a fine example of Indigenous cultural resistance through art. Being *indecente* puts her body into a singular subjectivity alongside the invisible, marginalised Indigenous heritage. Her fluidity and hybridity between cultures enhances the forecited feeling of displacement, and the injunction functions less as consolation than as method: a demand that *home* be redefined against the nation's official grammar of belonging. What

follows is not a nostalgic flashback but an embodied return, as if the body itself were the archive the state refuses to keep.

Luiza Sauma's *Alligator* deals with a relationship between two estranged brothers, Antônio and José, "a tall, white madman, and a short, dark índio" (Sauma 2025, 63). José has been away for too long, for he lives in London. On the black and white pavement by Ipanema beach, in Rio de Janeiro, they meet, and Antônio realises immediately that 'Zeca' has changed: "London had changed him. He didn't speak Portuguese like a gringo, but he didn't seem like a carioca to Antônio. In fact, it wasn't José's accent that seemed different; it was the way he moved" (Sauma 2025, 63). They go to the beach, order caipirinhas and swim, while the narrative takes temporal lapses and go back to when Antônio was 18 years old and was spending his time in a damp shared house in Finsbury Park before José moved over, as well to his very first memory, in Brazil, with his family – "Just a sliver of memory", because "After London, dreams and reality were one and the same" (Sauma 2025, 64). London and Rio are mixed with memories from their parents and Antônio's experiences taking English classes and visiting museums several times, while he thought "the whole world was there" (Sauma 2025, 67). As the waves come from behind and they start swimming in present tense, one may feel that the passage of time is channelled through the feeling of the water lifting them up and taking them alone. They were all carried by the waves.

Towards memory, the short story creates a bridge towards transparency rather than a method of preserving residue, opacity, and affect. It does not only remember what happened, but how it continues to live in speech, accent, and presence. In the end, Luiza Sauma's memory works like a heat-haze: sensory first (stone temperature, ocean glare, smoke), meaning later. What's "true" matters less than what the scene protects or explains, so details wobble. After an immigrant experience, recollection becomes indistinguishable from dream: an emotional reality that overwrites fact.

Lastly, in *Imaginaries of (Un)belonging: Language and Identity in Contemporary British and US Latinx Writing*, Emma Staniland confirms to us that comparative work on US and UK Latinx writing can make a specific contribution to that wider project, but only if it begins from a basic premise: the United States is not the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom is not the United States. The priorities, methods, and circumstances that organise Latinx studies in the US cannot simply be transferred, intact, to the British context. Even so, the two nations remain anglophone global powers with shared origins and entangled histories, long sustained through the rhetoric of a "special relationship". Reading Latinx writing across these two sites therefore becomes a way of tracing what it means to inhabit a hybrid identity under overlapping sociocultural and political legacies: colonialism, postcolonial afterlives, and neocolonial power; "cold" and "hot" wars waged on drugs, terror, and migration; globalisation alongside reactionary retrenchment; prolonged austerity; and an enduring insistence on capitalism as the sole route to prosperity. Against this backdrop, placing selected

Latinx works from these distinct yet connected national terrains into conversation proves illuminating, not least because both societies now share a form of hybrid Latinidad within their social fabric.

In that sense, Emma Steiniland is correct. British LatinX Writers have as much to offer as US LatinX writers, and the Wasafiri issue showed that such an academic field has been slowly visibilising and celebrating the value of their contributions to English Literature through the lens of multiculturalism. Ideally, its "growing creative output needs framing within the specifics of our racial, linguistic, cultural, and social hierarchies and heritages, and analysing for all it has to say about a nation for whom multiculturalism is bedrock, but where belonging remains a battle" (Steiniland 2025, 106).

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