



Archives of the Black Atlantic: Reading Between Literature and History (Routledge Research in Atlantic Studies)

Wendy W. Walters

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Many African diasporic novelists and poets allude to or cite archival documents in their writings, foregrounding the elements of archival research and data in their literary texts, and revising the material remnants of the archive. This book reads black historical novels and poetry in an interdisciplinary context, to examine the multiple archives that have produced our historical consciousness. In the history of African diaspora literature, black writers and intellectuals have led the way for an analysis of the archive, querying dominant archives and revising the ways black people have been represented in the legal and hegemonic discourses of the west. Their work in genres as diverse as autobiography, essay, bibliography, poetry, and the novel attests to the centrality of this critique in black intellectual culture. Through literary engagement with the archives of the slave trader, colonizer, and courtroom, creative writers teach us to read the archives of history anew, probing between the documents for stories left untold, questions left unanswered, and freedoms enacted against all odds. Opening new perspectives on Atlantic history and culture, Walters generates a dialogue between what was and what might have been. Ultimately, Walters argues that references to archival documents in black historical literature introduce a new methodology for studying both the archive and literature itself, engaging in a transnational and interdisciplinary reading that exposes the instability of the archive's truth claim and highlights rebellious possibility.

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