

# NARRATIVE ENCOUNTERS WITH ETHNIC AMERICAN LITERATURES CONFERENCE



Photo Credit: Juan Alvarez-Ajamil

**September 2-4, 2021**

**Program**

## Program Narrative Encounters Conference

Taking a cue from pioneering efforts at the intersection of context-oriented approaches in race and ethnicity studies and post-classical narratology, this conference is interested in the relationship between narrative, race, and ethnicity in the United States.

Reading so-called “ethnic” American literatures means encountering characters and storyworlds imagined by writers associated with various minority communities in the United States. Without doubt, the formal study of narrative can help us gain a deeper understanding of such encounters, but until recently, narratologists rarely grappled with the question of how issues of race and ethnicity force us to rethink the formal study of narrative.

Attesting that the relative “race/ethnicity-blindness” of narrative theory is a severe limitation, scholars such as James Donahue have called for a “critical race narratology” (2017, 3) that addresses this lacuna. A range of recent book publications (e.g. Aldama 2005; Donahue 2019; Donahue, Ho, and Morgan 2017; Fetta 2018; Gonzáles 2017; Kim 2013; Moya 2016; Setka 2020; Wyatt and George 2020, Weik von Mossner, Mikić, and Grill, forthcoming) demonstrate that a variety of insights can be gained from narratological approaches that open themselves up to issues of race and ethnicity in conjunction with other important identity markers including class, religion, gender, and sexuality. And, as Sue Kim has noted, there are shared interests in understanding the ways in which such narratives “operate within larger social structures as well as an investment in the scrutiny of how minds and subjectivity work in and through narratives” (2017, 16).

How do ethnic American literary texts use narrative form to engage readers in issues related to race and ethnicity? What narrative strategies do they employ to interweave these issues with other important identity markers such as class, religion, gender, and sexuality? How do they involve readers emotionally in their storyworlds and how do they relate such involvements to the racial politics and history of the United States? And how does paying attention to the strategies and formal features of ethnic American literatures change our understanding of narrative theory? These are some of the questions we will address at this conference.

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Conveners: Alexa Weik von Mossner, Marijana Mikić, and Mario Grill, University of Klagenfurt

Technical and organizational support: Bianca Harnisch, TU Vienna

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**The Narrative Encounters Conference is part of the FWF Project “Narrative Encounters with Ethnic American Literatures (P 31189-G30)**

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**Technical support** and **preliminary practice opportunities** will be available, both in advance and during the 15-minute set-up period for chairs and presenters. The conference platform (Zoom) will allow you to share your screen during the presentation.

If you wish to present a pre-recorded video, please contact us before August 30.

In all cases, please ensure that you keep strictly within the 20-minute limit for panel papers to allow for a 10-minute discussion on each paper.

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Times in the program are given in **Central European Summer Time (CEST)** and all other relevant time zones for speakers.

## Program Narrative Encounters Conference

### THURSDAY, Sept 2

4:30 am PT | 5:30 am MT | 6:30 am CT | 7:30 am ET | **1:30 pm CEST** | 3:30 pm GST | 7:30 pm SGT

#### Welcome

4:45 am PT | 5:45 am MT | 6:45 am CT | 7:45 am ET | **1:45 pm CEST** | 3:45 pm GST | 7:45 pm SGT

#### **PANEL 1: Perceiving and Constructing African American Identities**

Chair: Mario Grill

**Eva Gruber, University of Konstanz**

"(Mis-)Perceiving Race: Perspective, Focalization, and Knowledge in Narratives of Passing"

**Kathi King, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg im Breisgau**

"Collectively Narrating America – African American Woman Writers and the FWP"

5:45 am PT | 6:45 am MT | 7:45 am CT | 8:45 am ET | **2:45 pm CEST** | 4:45 pm GST | 8:45 pm SGT

#### Break/Setup

6:00 am PT | 7:00 am MT | 8:00 am CT | 9:00 am ET | **3:00 pm CEST** | 5:00 pm GST | 9:00 pm SGT

#### **PANEL 2: Alternative Histories and Futures in African American Literature**

Chair: Marijana Mikić

**Claudia Sackl, University of Vienna**

"Temporal Antinomies in Moments of Existential Crisis: Narrativizing Trauma in *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds"

**Marlene Allen Ahmed, United Arab Emirates University**

"Whole New Worlds: Narrative Strategies Used in Afrodiasporic Speculative Fiction"

7:00 am PT | 8:00 am MT | 9:00 am CT | 10:00 am ET | **4:00 pm CEST** | 6:00 pm GST | 10:00 pm SGT

#### Break/Setup

7:15 am PT | 8:15 am MT | 9:15 am CT | 10:15 am ET | **4:15 pm CEST** | 6:15 pm GST | 10:15 pm SGT

#### Keynote 1

**Frederick Luis Aldama, University of Texas, Austin**

**"BIPOC Teen Comics & The Formative Ethnoracial Pause"**

8:15 am PT | 9:15 am MT | 10:15 am CT | 11:15 am ET | **5:15 pm CEST** | 7:15 pm GST | 11:15 pm SGT

#### Break/Setup

8:30 am PT | 9:30 am MT | 10:30 am CT | 11:30 am ET | **5:30 pm CEST** | 7:30 pm GST | 11:30 pm SGT

#### **PANEL 3: Legacies of Trauma**

Chair: Matthias Klestil

**Stella Setka, West Los Angeles College**

"There Were Strands of Darker Stories": Reading Third-Generation Holocaust Literature as Midrash"

**Marijana Mikić, University of Klagenfurt**

"Race, Trauma, and the Emotional Legacies of Slavery in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*"

## Program Narrative Encounters Conference

### FRIDAY, Sept 3

4:45 am PT | 5:45 am MT | 6:45 am CT | 7:45 am ET | **1:45 pm CEST** | 3:45 pm GST | 7:45 pm SGT

#### **PANEL 4: Voices of Resistance: Female Narratives**

Chair: Marijana Mikić

**Diana Mistreanu, Luxembourg School of Religion & Society**

“But you are a woman. You do not count.” Cognitive Framing, Gender and Ethnicity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*”

**Brygida Gasztold, Koszalin University of Technology**

“The Female Narrator as Collective ‘We’ in Julie Otsuka’s *The Buddha in the Attic*”

5:45 am PT | 6:45 am MT | 7:45 am CT | 8:45 am ET | **2:45 pm CEST** | 4:45 pm GST | 8:45 pm SGT

#### **Break/Setup**

6:00 am PT | 7:00 am MT | 8:00 am CT | 9:00 am ET | **3:00 pm CEST** | 5:00 pm GST | 9:00 pm SGT

#### **PANEL 5: Gender and Forms of Narration**

Chair: Mario Grill

**Alexa Weik von Mossner, University of Klagenfurt**

“Stories, Love, and Baklava: Narrating Food in Diana Abu-Jaber’s Culinary Memoirs”

**Tereza Jiroutová Kynčlová, Charles University Prague**

“Mary Helen Ponce’s Literary Study of Gender Violence: Narration and (Dis)Belief”

7:00 am PT | 8:00 am MT | 9:00 am CT | 10:00 am ET | **4:00 pm CEST** | 6:00 pm GST | 10:00 pm SGT

#### **Break/Setup**

7:15 am PT | 8:15 am MT | 9:15 am CT | 10:15 am ET | **4:15 pm CEST** | 6:15 pm GST | 10:15 pm SGT

#### **PANEL 6: Healing Trauma**

Chair: Matthias Klestil

**Mario Grill, University of Klagenfurt**

“Polychronic Narration, Trauma, and Disenfranchised Grief in Mario Alberto Zambrano’s *Lotería*”

**Elizabeth Garcia, University of Colorado, Denver**

“Healing Narratives: Historical Representations in Latinx Young Adult Literature”

8:15 am PT | 9:15 am MT | 10:15 am CT | 11:15 am ET | **5:15 pm CEST** | 7:15 pm GST | 11:15 pm SGT

#### **Break/Setup**

8:30 am PT | 9:30 am MT | 10:30 am CT | 11:30 am ET | **5:30 pm CEST** | 7:30 pm GST | 11:30 pm SGT

#### **Keynote 2**

**Paula Moya, Stanford University**

“Race and the Form of the Decolonial Novel:

**Webs of Connection in Tommy Orange’s Multifocal Novel *There There*”**

## Program Narrative Encounters Conference

### SATURDAY, Sept 4

4:45 am PT | 5:45 am MT | 6:45 am CT | 7:45 am ET | **1:45 pm CEST** | 3:45 pm GST | 7:45 pm SGT

#### **PANEL 7: Haunting Relations and Temporalities**

Chair: Mario Grill

**Michelle Wang, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore**

“Attachment Relations and Moral Intuitions in Lan Samantha Chang’s ‘San’”

**Matthias Klestil, University of Klagenfurt**

“Time(s) of Race: Narrative Temporalities, Epistemic Storytelling, and the Human Species in Ted Chiang”

5:45 am PT | 6:45 am MT | 7:45 am CT | 8:45 am ET | **2:45 pm CEST** | 4:45 pm GST | 8:45 pm SGT

#### **Break/Setup**

6:00 am PT | 7:00 am MT | 8:00 am CT | 9:00 am ET | **3:00 pm CEST** | 5:00 pm GST | 9:00 pm SGT

#### **PANEL 8: Non-Linear Time(s) and Meta-Paratexts**

Chair: Marijana Mikić

**James Donahue, SUNY Potsdam**

“Indigenous Time / Indigenous Narratives: The Political Implications of Non-Linear Time in Contemporary Native Fiction”

**Derek Maus, SUNY Potsdam**

“Metaparatextual Satire in Percival Everett’s *The Book of Training* and Kent Monkman’s *Shame*”

7:00 am PT | 8:00 am MT | 9:00 am CT | 10:00 am ET | **4:00 pm CEST** | 6:00 pm GST | 10:00 pm SGT

#### **Break/Setup**

7:15 am PT | 8:15 am MT | 9:15 am CT | 10:15 am ET | **4:15 pm CEST** | 6:15 pm GST | 10:15 pm SGT

#### **Keynote 3**

**Patrick Colm Hogan, University of Connecticut**

“Love and Sin in Lesley Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*”

8:15 am PT | 9:15 am MT | 10:15 am CT | 11:15 am ET | **5:15 pm CEST** | 7:15 pm GST | 11:15 pm SGT

#### **Break/Setup**

8:30 am PT | 9:30 am MT | 10:30 am CT | 11:30 am ET | **5:30 pm CEST** | 7:30 pm GST | 11:30 pm SGT

#### **Roundtable and Concluding Discussion**

Panelists:

Frederick Luis Aldama, James Donahue, Elizabeth Garcia, Patrick Colm Hogan, and Derek Maus

## KEYNOTES

**FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA, University of Texas, Austin**

**“BIPOC Teen Comics & The Formative Ethnoracial Pause”**

This multimedia presentation examines a range of comic book narratives that center on the formation of teen of color protagonists. I will examine how the visual-verbal shaping devices of comics across a range of genres—horror, realist, and superhero—create absorbing and expansive teen storyworlds that can and do tell us much about the struggles and triumphs of core identity formation for those violently pushed to the racial, sexual, and gender margins. In my analysis of the way creators construct the ethnoracial pause, I also explore how the visual-verbal distillations and reconstructions of realworld experiences can and do dishabituate and make new readers’ perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and worldviews about the world teens of color inhabit.

**PAULA MOYA, Stanford University**

**“Race and the Form of the Decolonial Novel: Webs of Connection in Tommy Orange’s Multifocal Novel *There There*”**

In this talk, Moya shows how ethnic writers like Tommy Orange employ multifocal narrative structures for the purpose of making visible too-often-obscured social realities—in Orange’s case, the existence and aspirations of detribalized urban Indians. By de-forming and re-forming conventional narrative structures, such writers develop a variety of strategies to engage readers’ emotions while teaching them how to more accurately “read” the racialized social world in which we live.

**PATRICK COLM HOGAN, University of Connecticut**

**“Love and Sin in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*”**

Hogan’s book, *The Mind and Its Stories* (2003), presents evidence that a few narrative genres recur prominently across storytelling traditions. The most prominent of these genres are heroic, romantic, and sacrificial. Understanding Nationalism extends this work, arguing that these genres play a key role in organizing peoples’ national identifications, with the heroic genre providing a default structure for nationalist imagination. In contrast, the romantic structure tends to be emphasized in situations of subnational division, while the sacrificial structure becomes prominent in conditions of national devastation. Literary works need not be overtly focused on nationalism for these genres to appear with their nationalist functions. Indeed, examining the sometimes attenuated instantiations of these genres in apparently non-nationalist works can be particularly revealing. Specifically, such an examination may highlight political and cultural suggestions of a work that might not have been evident otherwise. This is the case with Silko’s *Ceremony*.

*Ceremony* includes heroic, romantic, and sacrificial narrative sequences. The sacrificial sequences are the most prominent, providing the work with its overall narrative arc and characterizing most of the mythic and folkloric interpolations. This is the structure that develops the most obvious thematic concerns in the novel, those bearing on tradition. Part of Silko’s specification of tradition involves delimiting a national in-group and a national out-group. This division is elaborated in the more limited romantic sequences in the novel. Silko’s use of heroic narrative (in the war sequences) is insistently anti-heroic. In this regard, the novel is in many ways anti-nationalist. However, Silko develops the sacrificial and romantic structures in a way that demarcates a racialized in-group that at least appears to suggest a natural relation of social identity groups to particular cultural traditions and to particular geographical places—a virtual definition of nationalism.

## ABSTRACTS

**Marlene Allen Ahmed, United Arab Emirates University**

**“Whole New Worlds: Narrative Strategies in African American Speculative Fiction”**

For much of the history of speculative fiction, stories in this genre often erased the presence of people of African descent from their imaginary worlds. With some notable exceptions such as Delany’s and Griggs’s pioneering black science fiction novels in the nineteenth century and Du Bois’s and Schuyler’s speculative works in the early twentieth century, black characters’ racial identities and histories were often de-emphasized, and the characters subsumed into a united human front in the face of threats from alien or supernatural beings. In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, works that feature the experiences of characters of African descent in artistic genres such as literature, film, and television or web series emerged on the speculative fiction scene. The paper analyzes several narratives produced during this time, including Steven Barnes’s alternate history novels *Lion’s Blood* and *Zulu Heart*, Justina Ireland’s zombie tales *Dread Nation* and *Deathless Divide*, the Marvel superhero film *Black Panther*, and the Netflix series *Always a Witch*, to explore the storytelling techniques their creators use to rewrite the actual stories of Afrodiasporic people as speculative fiction. Across these different media, the narrative techniques employed include Afrocentric worldbuilding and the use of time travel and alternate history as plot devices. Drawing on critical race narratology, I show how these works treat Afrofuturist themes such as the fraught-filled relationship between black people and technoculture in their reimaginings of Afrodiasporic pasts and presents and their visualizations of black futures, arguing that they create “whole new worlds” that differ from those often presented in mainstream speculative fiction.

**James J. Donahue, State University of New York at Potsdam**

**“Indigenous Time / Indigenous Narratives: The Political Implications of Non-Linear Time in Contemporary Native Fiction”**

Building on his recent research into fiction and comix produced by Native American (US) and First Nations (CA) artists, I explore some of the various ways narrative artists have represented Indigenous understandings of time. Compared to the modern, western understanding of linear time, “Indigenous Time” has been characterized by a variety of non-linear terms, including but not limited to asynchronous, spiralic, and cyclical. Many Native artists have consciously avoided linear representations of time as a means to challenge one of the many aspects of settler colonial epistemology that has worked to oppress, erase, and rewrite Indigenous peoples, histories, and literatures. As such, the various representations of time that I explore in this paper—drawn from works across genres, produced by artists from different tribal nations—constitute a political act of survivance, as Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) has used the terms. Grounded in the work of such theorists as Vizenor, Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo), and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Nishnaabeg), I will explore various means by which Native narrative artists have represented non-linear time, and the political implications of such representations in these works.

**Elizabeth Garcia, University of Colorado, Denver**

**“Healing Narratives: Historical Representations in Latinx Young Adult Literature”**

In this paper, I use a Latinx feminist lens to look at the narrative strategies employed by Latina authors of Young Adult literature. In Sonia Manzano’s *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* and Guadalupe Garcia McCall’s *All the Stars Denied* we find two young Latina girls in the midst of key historical moments in Latinx history in the United States. Both young women protagonists experience the trauma that comes with

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racial discrimination and exclusion. Yet, they both refuse to succumb to their silencing and erasure, each role-modeling for their readers how to stand up against the forces of oppression. Latinx feminist theorists and writers such as Aida Hurtado, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Aurora Levins Morales have consistently included healing as one of the vital components of Latinx feminist empowerment. They argue that not only have Latinx women experienced the traumas of racialized and gendered oppression, but that this trauma has been exacerbated by the historical erasure of these experiences. Our responsibility as scholars and writers is therefore to create healing historical narratives that document these historical traumas. My paper explores in what ways historical narratives for younger audiences serve to both document historical moments while presenting healing possibilities for both the protagonists of these texts and their readers. To this purpose, it analyzes the strategies employed by Manzano and Garcia McCall to create healing historical narratives.

**Brygida Gasztold, Koszalin University of Technology**

**“The Female Narrator as Collective ‘We’ in Julie Otsuka’s *The Buddha in the Attic*”**

The focus of my presentation is the we-narrative voice used by Julie Otsuka in her novel *The Buddha in the Attic* (2011). The focal point of the novel are assimilative hardships of the Japanese picture brides, who embarked on an arduous journey to make America their home. Their story is told through the collective narrator – an “unnatural” (Alber, Iversen, Nielsen ) narrative voice, which is used to express a shared, communal experience of Japanese immigrant women at the beginning of the 20th century. My aim is to identify the we-narrator in Otsuka’s text and examine the ways in which it constructs and impacts the novel. Special attention will be paid to the aspect of gender. Looking at various definitions of we-narrators/narratives, I will introduce major problems in evaluating this type of narrative.

**Mario Grill, University of Klagenfurt**

**“Polychronic Narration, Trauma, and Disenfranchised Grief in Mario Alberto Zambrano’s *Lotería*”**

Mario Alberto Zambrano’s novel *Lotería* tells the story of the Chicana girl Luz, who tries to cope with three intersecting traumas. Resulting from sexual abuse, physical abuse, and the psychological repercussions of a violent police encounter that lead to the death of her sister, the traumas that haunt Luz are never acknowledged by the society around her. In her first-person account, Luz only gradually reveals the causes for her debilitating grief and pain in a fractured and unchronological manner. This narrative strategy attests to her dual emotional disenfranchisement within her patriarchal Chicanx community and a deeply racist American society. It also reminds us that disenfranchised grief triggered by experiences of trauma cannot be told in a straightforward manner since the nature of trauma necessitates inexactly temporally coded narratives. Drawing on David Herman’s concept of polychronic narration, I explore how *Lotería*’s fuzzy temporalities highlight the difficulties of narrativizing loss while inviting readers to perceive Luz’ traumas the same way she remembers them. I will argue that the fractured and unassimilated nature of polychronic narration is what allows Luz to re-enact her traumas while cueing readers to mentally witness them and feel along with her not only when she experiences pain, but also when she copes and eventually reclaims agency over both her racialized body and her narrative. The novel’s polychronic “storying of the world” (Herman) thus invites the imaginative “worlding of the story” that might negotiate the effects of real-world intersectional trauma inflicted on and within ethnic communities in the US.

**Eva Gruber, University of Konstanz**

**“(Mis-)Perceiving Race: Perspective, Focalization, and Knowledge in Narratives of Passing”**

Race, as a concept, is first and foremost based on visible factors: We can, so the assumption, simply see which race a person belongs to. Narratives of passing, i.e. texts in which legally black but light-skinned



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characters pass for white, have long suspended this logic of the visible as an epistemological guarantee for racial affiliation. They thus provide a fascinating corpus for studying the link between race, its perception, and its narrative representation: The questions of “who sees,” or, as Genette later specified, “who perceives” (1988, 68) a character’s race, and “who speaks” and thus mediates that character’s perceived race to readers, are inherently complicated by the indeterminacy of the perceived subject, begging the question of how and at which narrative level the allocation of race occurs (and possibly also how these levels impact one another with regard to this process). Perception in narrative, as pointed out by Susan Lanser or Manfred Jahn, amongst others, far from being neutral, is shaped by the perceiving subjects’ experiences and ideologies. Indeed, as James Donahue has shown, focalization as such needs to be reconsidered as a culturally informed process, with attention to “how ideology binds the narrating agent, providing a limit not to what the narrating agent can ‘see,’ but rather what it can know, which in turn colors how that focalized object is seen” (Donahue 2014, 60). As I will argue, establishing race in narratives of passing constitutes a performative process in which focalizer and narrator do not simply perceive, identify, report, but actually create and bestow race, depending on their own knowledge and experience. Looking at two examples – Nella Larsen’s 1929 novella *Passing* and Britt Bennet’s 2020 novel *The Vanishing Half* – my talk will explore the ideological processes of racialization as functions of focalization and narration, targeting the paradox of race as being both a visual category to be perceived and an imperceptible, ideologically imagined essence.

**Tereza Jiroutová Kynčlová, Charles University Prague**

### **“Mary Helen Ponce’s Literary Study of Gender Violence: Narration and (Dis)Belief”**

*The Jewelry Collection of Marta la güera* is an anthologized short story by a Chicana author Mary Helen Ponce. Barely spanning five pages, the short story conveys a multidimensional portrayal of domestic violence; the short story is almost a textbook example of consequences this form of gender abuse bestows on both the perpetrator and the victim as well as on their closest family members, especially their offspring and relatives. Set in a Mexican/ChicanX barrio in LA, the story of a wealthy Mexican-American “boss” who violates his fair-skinned wife’s bodily integrity is narrated by the couple’s daughter’s friend. The narrator establishes her narration not on observation and/or on her being an eye-witness, but on the daughter’s relating of the events. The disturbing effect of the short story is achieved not only through the perspective – a (seemingly innocent) child’s perspective –, but most importantly through the fact, that the daughter identifies with her father’s harassment of her mother and aims to perpetuate the violence. Although the narrator makes attempts to distance herself from what she is being told, the association with the abusive daughter is hard to shed as it is informed by harsh disparities in class identity on the one hand, and racial, cultural and religious affinity on the other. The paper thus seeks to analyze Ponce’s short story by employing intersectionality and gender analyses as primary tools for interpretation thereby showing how the boundaries between the categories of narrator, perpetrator, victim, witness on the one hand, and the categories of race, gender and class on the other are intertwined and mutually constitutive.

**Kathi King, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg im Breisgau**

### **“Collectively Narrating America – African American Woman Writers and the FWP”**

The 1930s saw the US go for an unprecedented venture: to create a polyphonic portrait of America, “warts and all.” In the midst of the Great Depression, the federal government hired unemployed writers and artists to help re-write the American narrative. The Federal Writers' Project (FWP) documented the experiences of “ordinary people,” in order to do justice to the diversity of American society. They gathered the largest body of first-person narratives ever collected in the USA. A small number of African American writers were tasked with documenting the country's diverse black community. Among them were three black women writers, namely Margaret Walker, Dorothy West and Zora Neale Hurston. In Chicago, New

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York and Florida respectively, they conducted interviews, collected folklore, wrote and edited manuscripts. They used both their time and material on the FWP for their own fiction and poetry also. This way narratives of black female subjectivity formed a multi-vocal tapestry opposing white-supremacist and male-centered narratives of American identity. By writing black female voices and heroines into the historical and literary narrative of the USA, they also revised, transformed and subverted traditional codes and genres. The collaborative narratives these authors created together with the black women they interviewed and encountered defy genre conventions and begot a multitude of poetic innovations. Informed by documentary and reportage, they challenged both the white canon as well as African American literature to accommodate narratives of black female subjectivity. These narratives have been sleeping in archives since the beginning of WWII. Their gradual recovery calls for a recognition and evaluation of this body of work, which challenges not only our understanding of the FWP and of the subsequent literary and poetic work of these authors, but of how gender and “race” are being articulated and represented in narratives that were produced in a collaborative fashion.

**Matthias Klestil, University of Klagenfurt**

### **“Time(s) of Race: Narrative Temporalities, Epistemic Storytelling, and the Human Species in Ted Chiang”**

Critics have often perceived Ted Chiang as apolitical and indifferent to questions of race, an assessment that is hardly surprising since the writer’s stories rarely feature racially or ethnically marked characters. Drawing on postclassical narrative theory and Chiang’s own view of race as a polymorphic phenomenon, my paper demonstrates that two of Chiang’s stories nonetheless deal with racialization by playing with temporal and epistemic elements of narrative in relation to the human species. “Story of Your Life” (1998), an alien encounter narrative, centrally involves a temporal hybridity, formally realized through Chiang’s handling of verb tense and temporal markers. Reading this hybridity through the narratological categories of anachrony and achrony, I show that the story performs a de-racializing ethics in line with Chiang’s understanding of race. In “Seventy-two Letters” (2000), Chiang addresses race through an epistemic storytelling technique that interweaves historical and alternate epistemic layers into the story’s fantasy version of Victorian times. By subtly alluding to the enslavement of black people, and by presenting humanity on the brink of extinction, the text plays with a temporal “scaling-up of the imagination,” thereby commenting on racialization processes at the intersection between human species narratives and biopolitical practices. I argue that, beyond revealing the underlying racial dimensions of the stories, exploring Chiang’s fiction through a narratological lens contributes to interlinking the means of a “critical race narratology” (Donahue) with concerns over a perceived imbalance between formal and sociopolitical analyses in Asian American studies.

**Derek C. Maus, State University of New York at Potsdam**

### **“Metaparatextual Satire in Percival Everett’s *The Book of Training* and Kent Monkman’s *Shame and Prejudice*”**

At first glance, Percival Everett’s *The Book of Training* by Colonel Hap Thompson, Roanoke, VA 1843 and Kent Monkman’s multimedia project *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience, Excerpts from the Memoir of Miss Chief Eagle Testickle* may seem to have little in common beyond their unwieldy titles. A concept derived from a combination of narrative theory and transmedia studies, though, allows us to assess the nature and structure of these works with a deeper understanding. Each of them utilizes what transmedia scholar Matt Hills—building on the work of Gerard Genette and others—called “coordinating metaparatexts” in their creation of scathing historiographic commentaries on the manner in which dehumanizing racial and/or ethnic identities have been constructed and disseminated by the dominant (white) cultures of the United States and Canada. The understood omnipresence of both Everett and Monkman as the ultimate authors of these works creates a further paratextual layer of meaning atop the fundamentally

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paratextual relationship at the center of both books. The relationship between the wholly fictional Col. Thompson and the fictionalized version of Calhoun that appears in *The Book of Training* is constantly subjected to ironic subversion by the fact that Everett is not only the implied author of both of their texts, but also the real author of the book itself. The cultural counternarrative conveyed by Monkman's verbal and visual art relies on a similar recognition of his implied authorship, both satirically reproducing and overthrowing the historical erasure of First Nations peoples from Canadian cultural memory.

**Marijana Mikić, University of Klagenfurt**

### **"Race, Trauma, and the Emotional Legacies of Slavery in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*"**

The paper examines how Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016) imaginatively interrogates the emerging science of epigenetics through literary form and content. Taking a cue from Josie Gill's *Biofictions: Race, Genetics and the Contemporary Novel* (2020), I argue that Gyasi's neo-slave narrative, like Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*, models "in its narrative structure, a way of living with 'a new form of racialization based on processes of becoming rather than on a pre-given nature'" (134). By presenting the characters' experiences through various spatiotemporal junctures, *Homegoing* offers a means of comprehending the effects and affects of slavery, colonialism, and institutionalized racism, and it furthers readers' understanding of the embodied and emotional consequences of the fantastical category of race. Drawing on Patrick Colm Hogan's account of "affective narratology," my paper will pay special attention to how Gyasi's representation of her characters' affective experiences lays bare the consequences and possibilities of epigenetic transmission of both trauma and resilience. Studying the ways in which *Homegoing* negotiates the legacies of slavery and racism that reverberate across generations not only offers a way of making sense of the implications of epigenetics in the context of race, it also points to the relevance of ethnic American literatures in shaping contemporary cultural narratives about emergent scientific findings.

**Diana Mistreanu, Luxembourg School of Religion & Society**

### **"'But you are a woman. You do not count.' Cognitive Framing, Gender and Ethnicity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*"**

The aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between cognitive framing and trauma on the one hand, and the depiction of gender and race on the other, in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). Adichie is a Nigerian-American writer and feminist activist based in the United States, and her work addresses themes such as the legacy of colonialism (*Purple Hibiscus*) and the Biafran War (*Half of a Yellow Sun*, 2006), as well as the perception of – and the misconceptions about – the African community in the US society (*Americanah* 2013). The paper draws on the burgeoning field of cognitive literary studies, which investigates the interplay between fiction and cognition (Zunshine 2015), to argue that the phenomenon of cognitive framing is at the heart of the storyworld depicted in *Purple Hibiscus*. Cognitive framing can be defined as seeing the world through one rigid narrative, which results in taking one's "mental model of the world" (Feldman Barrett 2016) for the world itself. Indeed, cognitive framing is used as a conflict-generator that enables the story to move forward, as the characters look at the world through different, and often divergent, "frames." For example, Eugene, the most powerful as well as the most abusive character in the novel, draws his (deeply traumatic) authority over the other characters' minds and bodies from his firm belief that his role is to "civilize" and Christianize his own people, embodying, as another character puts it, "a pure product of the colonization." In Eugene's worldview, women and men, Christianity and "pagan" religious beliefs, children and adults, as well as the Nigerians and the British are conceptualized as well-defined categories that have to fulfill a particular role in the contemporary society. Thus, cognitive framing also functions as a lens through which one can interpret and define categories such as gender, race and ethnicity. I will analyze these categories from the perspective of the mental functioning of the characters, arguing that *Purple Hibiscus* can be read as a polyphonic novel that depicts interactions between characters that illustrate different forms of framing.

## Program Narrative Encounters Conference

**Claudia Sackl, University of Vienna**

### **“Temporal Antinomies in Moments of Existential Crisis: Narrativizing Trauma in *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds”**

In his young adult verse novel *Long Way Down* (2017), Jason Reynolds tells the story of a decisive elevator ride. After his brother has been shot, Will has to decide whether to avenge his death, following “The Rules” that have determined the lives in their neighborhood for generations, or whether to disrupt the fatal entanglements of people’s lives, gang crime, and gun violence that have been (re)produced by structural discrimination, marginalization, and criminalization in the United States. On his ride from the eighth floor to the lobby, ghosts from Will’s past visit the grieving protagonist. As they reveal the circumstances of their equally violent deaths, the temporal antinomies between these (imagined or supernatural) events and the surface structure of the story force us to rethink the traditional differentiation between story, discourse, and narrating time as established by the structural narratologist Gérard Genette: On the superficial story level, the elevator ride lasts one minute, which contrasts starkly not only with the more than 200 pages of discourse time, but also with the duration of the events as experienced by the narrator. Facing the trauma of losing his brother and the murder Will sets out to commit, Will is fully trapped within his own mind, his spinning thoughts, and the increasingly claustrophobic space of the elevator in a moment of existential crisis. Employing the reduced and condensed language of free verse and the narrative strategy of immediate introspection, Jason Reynolds not only emphatically revalues Black bodies and Black lives, which have been degraded, dehumanized, and derealized (Butler) by systemic and institutional racism. At the same time, the African American author also depicts the (sub)consciousness of a traumatized victim of gun violence in a way that makes it necessary to redefine the classical structure of narrative temporality. Based on the assumption that, in some narratives, there is more than one diegetic timeline (Shen, Richardson) and on the distinction between figural and narratorial perspectives (Schmid, Martinez/Scheffel), I will discuss possible extensions of the Genettean model of time that allow us to accommodate the discrepancies of temporality in Reynolds’ text, which go beyond the scope of classical mimesis and narratology, within a non-homogenous concept of story time.

**Stella Setka, West Los Angeles College**

### **“‘There were strands of darker stories’: Reading Third-Generation Holocaust Literature as Midrash”**

This paper examines how Julie Orringer’s *The Invisible Bridge* and Boris Fishman’s *A Replacement Life* adapt the Jewish exegetical tradition of midrash as a tool for responding to the gaps and silences in the historical record and their inherited memories of the event. In so doing, these works evince the transference of loss and the ways in which residual transgenerational trauma carries the weight of history into the future. Although *The Invisible Bridge* and *A Replacement Life* approach the Holocaust via different narrative genres—Orringer’s novel can best be characterized as a work of historical fiction, while Fishman’s fits more comfortably within the genre of magical realism—both work midrashically to enact the fragmented nature of third-generation memory as well as to animate the gaps and silences in Holocaust history, testifying to the persistent resonance and relevance of Holocaust memory in the present. These twin goals are underscored by the presence of third-generation characters who struggle to excavate and resurrect the past in the absence of cohesive family narratives, and in so doing, highlight the contours of what has been lost and acknowledge what cannot be fully known but is still felt nevertheless. Through their use of midrash, these texts encourage an active discourse between writer, text, and reader, enabling a felt connection to the tragedy and a critical engagement with the way that it continues to haunt our contemporary world.

## Program Narrative Encounters Conference

**W. Michelle Wang, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore**

### **“Emotions that Haunt: Attachment Relations in Lan Samantha Chang’s Fiction”**

Difficult attachment relations are a distinctive aspect of Lan Samantha Chang’s storyworlds. Her characters variously fear, refuse, or attempt to escape “attachment[s] overpowering enough to destroy them,” or are paradoxically driven apart by these very relations. Taking Chang’s novella “Hunger” and her short story “San” (1998) as case studies, the chapter examines the salience of the moral/ethical in characters’ attachment relations, drawing on scholarship from cognitive narratology, moral foundations theory, and Asian American studies to explain how such moral situatedness of attachment relations is a dominant feature of many ethnic American literatures. Since human beings tend to empathize conditionally—wherein attachment relations and in-group dynamics enhance such empathy—I am particularly interested in examining the question of how the texts’ rhetorical dynamics shift when attachment figures violate moral intuitions. By attending to how the autodiegetic narrations of Min (“Hunger”) and Caroline (“San”) mediate ongoing processes of encoding and elaboration, the paper explains the value of attending to the stories’ emotional structures. It also works to address Chang’s relative critical neglect, which is somewhat curious given how accomplished her writing is and her further distinction as director of the prestigious Iowa Writers’ Workshop. Even as Chang’s work offers rich insights into the complex valences of attachment relations, these emotional structures are not idiosyncratic to American, ethnic American, or Asian American literatures; rather, they feed into the broader energies of world literatures that are similarly steered by such intergenerational conflicts.

**Alexa Weik von Mossner, University of Klagenfurt**

### **“Stories, Love, and Baklava: Narrating Food in Diana Abu Jaber’s Culinary Memoirs”**

Diana Abu-Jaber’s culinary memoirs, *The Language of Baklava* (2005) and *Life without a Recipe* (2011) trace her life journey from the United States to Jordan and back, highlighting the crucial role that food has played on those transnational relocations. Not only is food presented as means of maintaining a deep emotional connection to the Middle East in Abu-Jaber’s own, culturally hybrid, family, but it also serves to engage readers—especially non-Arab American readers—in stories about a culture and community they might find unfamiliar and, in a post-9/11 world, even anxiety-inducing. In my paper, I approach Abu-Jaber’s memoirs from a cognitive narratological angle to highlight how the texts’ affectively charged food memories are related to issues of language and cultural identity while also serving as a formal structuring device. Abu-Jaber organizes her recollections around vivid evocations of fondly nicknamed Middle Eastern dishes along with some more prosaic-sounding items of the Standard American Diet. Coming with their own recipes, these dishes interrupt the main text, drawing attention to themselves. The combination of vivid evocations—in which the dishes come sensually alive for readers who may not be familiar with their ingredients, scents, textures, or colors—and accompanying recipes not only uses ethnic food as a cultural bridge. It also encourages readers to use the memoirs as cookbooks and to thereby extend their engagement with Arab-American culture beyond the reading experience.