

# North American Ethnic Literatures in the 21st Century

Intersectional  
Transatlantic  
Perspectives

International Symposium  
May 25-26, 2023  
Universitat Jaume I  
Castelló (Spain)

**UJI** UNIVERSITAT  
JAUME I  
Facultat de Ciències Humanes  
12081 - 12085  
Departament d'Estadística Anglesa

**LÈNA**  
Lenguajes  
Estudios Norteamericanos

 UNIVERSITAT  
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Innovació, Ciència i  
Tecnologia

The aim of this international symposium is to augment and amplify ongoing transatlantic conversations in the fields of ethnic minority literatures and critical race theory in North America that are reconsidering terms such as race, ethnicity, indigeneity, identity, mobility, community, solidarity, and futurity, and to explore 21st-century literary texts through an intersectional lens. In a series of thematic panels, we will examine these shifting critical, literary, and pedagogical practices paying special attention to the Obama and Trump eras in a local, national, hemispheric, and global context.

The symposium is organized by the research group LENA: North American Ethnic Literatures in a Global Context (Universitat de València – Universitat Jaume I) and funded by the Generalitat Valenciana (Proyecto I+D+i “Reconfiguraciones de género, raza y clase social en la literatura étnica norteamericana de la era Obama/Trump” – GV/AICO/2021/249) and Universitat Jaume I. Collaborating entities include the Unesco Chair on Slavery and Afrodescendancy at UJI and the Western Literature Association.

More information about the ongoing activities and projects of the research group LENA can be found at <https://www.uv.es/lenaval>.

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Universitat Jaume I



**Call for Papers**  
**North American Ethnic Literatures in the 21st Century:**  
**Intersectional / Transatlantic Perspectives**  
**An International Symposium**  
**May 25-26, 2023**  
**Universitat Jaume I - Castelló de la Plana (Spain)**

North American writers of color have transformed canons through the critical dissemination of alternative histories, cultural practices, epistemologies, styles, political preoccupations, and interests concerning the region's diversity of communities and nations. Even though many of these authors are now solidly positioned in the literary canon, 21st-century ethnic minority writing has gone through a series of shifts that respond to new post-9/11 traumas, racial profiling, heated debates on the so-called colorblind society, the reconfigured white ethnoscape, the interconnections of the environmental and racial justice movements, the sensitivities and demands of a woke generation, and the destabilization of gendered and racialized categories after #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, among other factors.

Despite the new visibility received by ethnic minority authors (who are winning major literary prizes and public recognitions), their literature is still frequently taught and theorized from the margins or as a mere token or a multicultural supplement to a literary center that is still predominantly Anglo, white, masculine, and heteronormative. This happens most especially in European universities where the field of North American literary studies is often reduced to two or three courses in the curriculum.

The aim of this international symposium is to augment and amplify ongoing transatlantic conversations in the fields of critical race theory and literary studies that are reconsidering terms such as race, ethnicity, indigeneity, identity, mobility, community, solidarity, and futurity, and to explore 21st-century literary texts through an intersectional lens. In a series of thematic panels, we will examine these shifting critical, literary, and pedagogical practices paying special attention to the Obama and Trump eras in a local, national, hemispheric, and global context.

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**Suggested topics may include the following:**

- 21st-Century North American ethnic minority literatures: old and new genres, narrative strategies, and styles
- Constructions of race and ethnicity in the 21st century: post-race, transethnicity
- Understanding the North American ethnic debate in a global context: transnational/transatlantic perspectives
- Ethnic-centered theories and pedagogies
- Intersections between the environmental humanities and critical race studies
- Race, gender, sexuality, and class as crossroads in narrative construction
- New social movements and their connections to ethnic narratives and racial formation
- International mobility and mobility justice in literary works
- Circulation, markets, and readers across the Atlantic
- Cross-cultural, cross-ethnic alliances
- Reading North American ethnic minority literatures in translation
- The future of BIPOC writing in the publishing world and in university education

**Oral Communications:** 20-minute papers can be delivered in English, Spanish or Catalan and, following the conference, we will invite participants to submit full articles to be considered for publication in a high ranked journal.

The deadline for abstracts is January 25th 2023 (extended deadline). Submissions should include a title, a 250-300-word summary, a short biographical note, your academic affiliation, and contact information.

Please send abstract proposals to: [lenaresearchgroup@gmail.com](mailto:lenaresearchgroup@gmail.com)  
Contact emails: [ortel@ang.uji.es](mailto:ortel@ang.uji.es), [Anna.M.Brigido@uv.es](mailto:Anna.M.Brigido@uv.es), [Vicent.Cucarella@uv.es](mailto:Vicent.Cucarella@uv.es)

## Plenary Speakers



### **KALENDA EATON**

#### **‘SEE YOU AT THE CROSSROADS’: DIGITAL BLACK LITERARY FUTURES AND THE CHALLENGE TO THE ACADEMY**

Kalenda Eaton is an Associate Professor in The Clara Luper Department of African and African American Studies at the University of Oklahoma and Director of Oklahoma Research for the Black Homesteader Project funded by the National Park Service in partnership with the Center for Great Plains Studies. Dr. Eaton is a humanities scholar focused on African American western studies, intersections of Black literary studies and feminist criticism; African American social and cultural history; and Black Diaspora studies. Recent publications include “Black Women Writers Reclaiming Western Literature,” the co-edited *New Directions in Black Western Studies*, and “Teaching the Black West” (with Michael Johnson in *Teaching Western American Literature*). Dr. Eaton is a Fulbright scholar, SSRC Mellon-Mays Fellow, and held the Steinbrucker Endowed Chair in Humanities and Social Sciences at Arcadia University from 2017-2019, where she also founded and directed a Humanities Research Lab.

The presentation will discuss the ways African American literature and Black Studies scholarship in the contemporary moment continue to subvert traditional systems and widen discussions of community, tradition, gender politics, and social progress in a “post-pandemic” world. The analysis will center interdisciplinary Digital Humanities projects and the role they have in preserving the past and future of Ethnic Studies scholarship.



## YOGITA GOYAL

### AESTHETICS OF REFUGE

Yogita Goyal is Professor of African American Studies and English at UCLA and the author of two monographs: *Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) and *Runaway Genres: The Global Afterlives of Slavery* (NYU, 2019), winner of the René Wellek Prize from ACLA, the Perkins prize from the International Society for the Study of Narrative and Honorable Mention for the James Russell Lowell Prize from MLA. She is also the guest editor of a special issue of *Research in African Literatures* (2014), editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Transnational American Literature* (2017), co-editor of a special issue of *American Literary History* on “Exiles, Migrants, and Refugees” (2022), and editor of the journal, *Contemporary Literature* (2015-2022). Past President of A.S.A.P., the Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present, she has published widely on African diaspora, postcolonial, and US literature.

This talk focuses on the contemporary refugee novel, keeping in mind the often-repeated claim that the refugee is the iconic figure of the contemporary era and that the border is itself an aesthetic phenomenon – it is seen, narrated, comprehended through metaphor and analogy. I explore how the contemporary refugee novel reshapes and makes legible historical experiences that are still unfolding, refusing the spectacular immediacy of traumatic images of refugees focused on crisis without cause in favor of giving them voice and subjectivity. The paper goes beyond the usual arguments for the value of fiction – its capacity to cultivate empathy and invite identification, or to disrupt the exclusions of legal regimes via narrative experimentation, or to refuse to succumb to the demands of verifiability. The somewhat anodyne turn to the attempt to humanize the refugee, or to stage familiar dynamics of recognition or estrangement doesn’t seem adequate to the crisis we face. To explore how the refugee novel is a racialized form, allowing for useful accounts of relation across US racial formations and the postcolony, I turn to Toni Morrison’s 1997 novel, *Paradise*, for its theorization of sanctuary and borderlessness, alongside several other recent refugee fictions.



## ANA MARÍA MANZANAS CALVO

### **BORDER INSIDE OUT: A LOOK AT INCLUSION/EXCLUSION IN AMERICAN LITERATURE**

Ana María Manzanás Calvo is Professor of American Literature at the University of Salamanca. Together with Prof. Jesús Benito, she directs the editorial series “Critical Approaches to Ethnic American Literature,” published in its first years by Rodopi and currently by Brill (ranked 11th in the world). Apart from articles in high-ranked journals, she is coauthor of the monographs *Hospitality in American Literature and Culture: Spaces, Bodies, Borders* (Routledge

2017); *Cities, Borders, and Spaces in Intercultural American Literature and Film* (Routledge 2011); *Uncertain Mirrors: Magical Realisms in Ethnic American Literatures* (Rodopi 2009); and *Intercultural Mediations: Mimesis and Hybridity in American Literature* (Lit Verlag, 2003). She has co-edited several volumes, such as *Border Transits: Literature and Culture across the Line* (Rodopi 2007), *Literature and Ethnicity in the Cultural Borderlands* (Rodopi 2002) and *Narratives of Resistance: Literature and Ethnicity in the United States and the Caribbean* (UCLM 1999).

The crossing of borders constantly saturates the news. Their situation on the contours on countries contributes to creating the image of borders as static spatial arrangements, and as marginal to our way of thinking. This talk reassesses the nature and the power of borders as epistemic tools. Borders and boundaries move, contract, and expand as they reconfigure both the outside and the inside. Thus the talk relocates the violence of exclusion to the inside, to a middle territory that we can term insideoutness. As a consequence, the production and reproduction of alterity does not stop at the geopolitical border but spreads to the inside, as the exterior border refracts into interior borders. The analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri’s “The Boundary” illustrates all these processes as the inside transforms into different outsides. Through an example of the hospitality industry, the writer examines how an unnamed country protects itself from alterity, and how difference is rerouted and silenced. It is Lahiri’s way of tracing the wide spectrum of borders that create and perpetuate what Bauman calls “the outsider incarnate”.



## BEGOÑA SIMAL-GONZÁLEZ

### SOMETHING SOMEWHERE ALL AT ONCE: AN ANALYSIS OF 21ST CENTURY ASIAN AMERICAN SATIRE

Begoña Simal-González teaches at the Universidade da Coruña, where she coordinates the American Studies Research Group (CLEU). She has written extensively on ethnic literatures and magical realism; her latest work focuses on ecocriticism and transnational studies. She has published several books, among them *Uncertain Mirrors: Magical Realisms in US Ethnic Literatures*, with Jesús Benito and Ana Manzananas (Rodopi 2011) and *Ecocriticism and*

*Asian American Literature: Gold Mountains, Weedflowers and Murky Globes* (Palgrave Macmillan 2020). Her articles have appeared in journals such as *MELUS*, *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, *Concentric* or *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos*, as well as in essay collections published by Palgrave Macmillan, Brill, Rodopi or Routledge.

Although humor was not entirely new in Asian American culture, the Daniels' latest film, *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (2022) took humor to new levels precisely by parodying everything (from) everywhere: Asian American narratives depicting intergenerational conflict, Wong Kar Wai's stylized films such as *In the Mood for Love*, cyberpunk culture (most notably *The Matrix* saga), American animation films (Pixar-Disney's *Ratatouille*), Kung Fu movies... But parody is just one among the many types of a centuries-old genre: satire. Itself a mish mash of genres, satire has been approached as a literary mode of Cirque-du-Soleil flexibility. In my talk I will try and tease out the different uses that the versatile satirical mode has been put to in recent Asian American literature. In particular, I will engage in a close reading of the latest narratives published by two very different Asian American authors, Karen Tei Yamashita and Ling Ma. Satire, as I intend to show in my analysis, can be effectively deployed to capture and lambast the (ongoing) systemic racism in the US, the (ongoing) colonialist attitudes in the Americas and, last but not least, the perils of taking certain discourses to the extreme.

# North American Ethnic Literatures in the 21st Century Intersectional / Transatlantic Perspectives

May 25-26, 2023  
Universitat Jaume I – Castelló de la Plana (Spain)

**THURSDAY MAY 25TH**

**9:30-11:00**

## **RECONFIGURATIONS OF IDENTITY, MIGRATION, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Brygida Gasztold (Koszalin University of Technology)**

How to Attain and Maintain the American Dream in Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*

My presentation offers an analysis of Imbolo Mbue's novel *Behold the Dreamers* (2016), with a special focus on the representations of the concept of the American Dream. Idealized versions of the American Dream, such as the one penned by James Truslow Adams, over the years have become a resilient and persistent national ethos. In my interpretation, I discuss the narrative portrayal of the pursuit of the American Dream from two opposite sides: old-stock, white Americans and recent African immigrants. The juxtaposition of two families that are situated on the opposite rungs of the social ladder: Cameroonian undocumented immigrants and wealthy, upper-class New Yorkers, allows me to demonstrate the social power dynamics of this broad cultural ethos. Through the lens of the protagonist's legal status, social class, race, and gender, I explore the factors that obstruct the attainment of the American Dream for the underprivileged. Furthermore, I argue that it is equally problematic for affluent Americans to maintain the Dream in the 21st century socio-economic environment, while its accessibility has been increasingly questioned. Finally, I demonstrate that the novel represents the waning of the American Dream of happiness, educational mobility, and economic justice for all, as it no longer depends on hard work and self-discipline but is buffeted by economic and social forces beyond the protagonists' control.

**Miguel A. Tamargo (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)**

Mapping the Queer Palestinian-American Hyphen in *You Exist Too Much: A Narrative of Acknowledgement and Resistance*

The decision from the Trump administration in 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel not only tore apart a decades-long policy of illusive impartiality, but also brought the question of the existence and survival of a potential Palestinian state and its citizens back into the foreground of international affairs, reopening a wound that has stayed on the back-burner since 1967. The uncertainty of the American-Palestinian relations currently poses great questions for those who identify at the intersection of both. Many theorists agree that the ramifications of this ever-present situation, in which Palestinians must identify with and move around a space whose boundaries are not widely recognized and is marked by military conflict, create the need for a decolonial epistemology that allows Palestine to fight against the oppression from Zionism, and that equates their very existence with resistance. Not coincidentally, several of these academics have also agreed that there is a certain relationship between the notion of Palestinian resistance and the dissident concepts defended by queer theory, as a type of unsettling and questioning of

hierarchically imposed categories. Thus, this paper analyzes the several crossroads that the unnamed protagonist of Zaina Arafat's novel, *You Exist Too Much*, has to face while negotiating her hyphenated identity: being a woman, Palestinian, American and queer. It examines how her relationships with family and lovers replicate the manner in which both Palestinian liberation and queer movements contend against being invisibilized and oppressed by the boundaries imposed around them, while requesting acknowledgement from the same forces that create such borders. This paper maps the line the narrator of the novel draws as she moves herself within her own queer Palestinian epistemology against the boundaries imposed by the alleged "melting pot" that is 21st century America.

### **Touhid A. Chowdhury (Technical University Chemnitz)**

Locating Identity within the World's Changing Horizon of Expectations: Reading Mira Jacob's *Good Talk*

This paper bears witness to the fact that the (re)construction of identities throughout time and space is subject to the world's 'horizons of expectation' change, to use Hans Robert Jauss' term. Since the political and cultural identity of the world emerges differently and discursively in different historical times, one's understanding of the concept of identity has to respond, therefore, to the political, social and cultural changes generated by the world's 'horizons of expectations.' Based on the political upheaval of Trump-like candidates and its impact on the race and ethnicity debate in the USA, this article examines how this political shift has influenced ethnic minority writers to reconceptualize and reconsider the terms such as identity, ethnicity and race. To come to terms with its argument, this article examines Mira Jacob's graphic memoir *Good Talk: A Memoir in Conversation* (2019). Drawing upon postcolonial and ethnic studies approaches, this paper argues that the state of being a minority in the USA, in Jacob's case Indian-American, has often brought one to a crossroads where the person faces the dilemma of locating one's own identity. By arguing how Mira Jacob's memoir articulates the mode of existence and the intricacies of minority subjectivities before and during the Trump era, this article concludes with the main line of thought, which highlights the idea that it is very crucial today to rethink the concept of race, ethnicity and minority identity in post-Trump political and cultural 'order of discourse.'

## **ETHNIC WOMEN IN NORTH AMERICAN THEATER**

### **Araceli González Crespán (University of Vigo)**

Ethnicity, Gender, and Class at the Crossroads: Urban Mobility in *Intimate Apparel*

Esther Mills, the protagonist of Lynn Nottage's *Intimate Apparel* (2003), is an African American middle-aged seamstress working in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century. Her exquisite work in making delicate, sophisticated, elegant, and glamorous undergarments gives her the opportunity to move around the city from her room in a boarding house in Lower Manhattan to visit her customers and suppliers. Thus, Esther goes to the Upper East Side boudoir of her affluent, white customer Mrs. Van Buren, the Tenderloin District where Mayme, an African American prostitute lives or a Downtown tenement flat to visit Mr. Marks, a Jewish immigrant who provides her with fabric. Mobility gives her access to a variety of worlds within the urban setting. Linked to the geographical movement across boroughs, she can come into contact with people of different ethnicity and class, enjoy some freedom and a partially non-segregated life. The aim of this paper is to analyze how the intersection of race, gender and class is represented in the play and how those experiences she goes through enlarge her universe, account for a redefinition of her identity as an African American lower-class woman and provide some possibility for autonomy and independence.

### **Ludmila Martanovschi (Ovidius University of Constanta)**

"Survival through the Decades": African American Women's History in Dominique Morisseau's *The Detroit Project*

*The Detroit Project*, a 2018 Theatre Communications Group volume, consists of three plays: "Paradise Blue" (2015), "Detroit '67" (2013) and "Skeleton Crew" (2016). The motto with which Dominique

Morisseau, award-winning author born in 1978, opens the book informs readers that she dedicates these plays to her beloved Detroit, more specifically, its “ongoing survival through the decades”. Living up to the expectations created by the dedication, the three pieces capture essential moments in the city’s life – 1949, 1967, 2008 – and focus on the African American experience, which, due to the playwright’s masterful storytelling, becomes defining for Detroit’s history. My paper will analyze the women characters, showing that their strength, versatility and determination constitute the key to their community’s continuing capacity to navigate multiple forms of discrimination. If in 1949 Pumpkin, a young poetry-lover who takes care of Paradise Club, seems to embody a type of femininity that contrasts with that portrayed by Silver, the fascinating drifter whose arrival announces trouble for Paradise Valley’s jazz musicians, in 1967 Chelle and Bunny are united by a sense of sisterhood, their enthusiasm for Motown music partying as well as their shared struggles against uncontrollable forces that cause upheaval in their part of town. In the case of Faye and Shanita, the two workers featured in “Skeleton Crew”, the age gap sets them apart, but the threat of downsizing at their stamping plant brings them together. Using Black Feminist Criticism and insights from the field of Theatre Studies, my analysis will emphasize the theatrical strategies Morisseau relies on in order to write African American women into the history of Detroit and, more broadly, urban America.

### **Ana Fernández Caparrós (University of València)**

#### **Quiara Alegría Hudes’s Broken Language and Polyphonic Theatrical Experimentations: Planting the Seeds of Latinx and US Drama Renewal in the 21st Century**

Quiara Alegría Hudes shall be considered as one of the best well-known and most successful American playwrights and lyricist of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Born in Philadelphia to a Jewish father and a Puerto Rican mother, Hudes has strived throughout her career to place Latinx characters center stage. She is best known for her Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Water by the Spoonful* (2012) and Pulitzer-finalist play *Elliot, A Soldier’s Fugue* (2006), which together with *The Happiest Song Plays Last* (2013) conform the “Elliot trilogy”, which summons onstage a diasporic Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia and beyond. As a lyricist, she has collaborated with composer Lin Manuel Miranda in *In the Heights* (Tony Award for Best Musical 2008) and the screenplay of the animated film *Vivo* (2021). Her latest musical, *Miss You Like Hell*, premiered in 2016 at La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego.

Evident as Hudes’s success has been, in her essay “High Tide of Heartbreak” (2018), the playwright nonetheless confessed how much she had been likewise wounded by theatre and how she still doubted her work’s impact within an institutional theatrical landscape that in the United States is still dominated by an atheist white male aesthetics and resists to hold multiple worldviews and paradigms on its stages. Building on Hudes’s recent memoir *My Broken Language* (2021) and on selected scenes from her plays, my paper will explore Hudes’s construction of a rich theatrical cosmos and “a turbulent woman’s tongue” (2021, 207). I will discuss how her Boricuan and Latinx matriarchal heritage and her musically inspired formal innovations have given shape to a dramatic oeuvre that resists to be read ethnographically as revealing an unmediated truth about Latinx life (Ybarra 2017) and strives instead to be read and taught as a work that seeks to engage American audiences with socially engaged stories that celebrate radical and unpredictable relationalities.

**12:30-14:00**

## **NEW DIRECTIONS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE**

### **Maria Lauret (University of Sussex)**

#### **African American Literature in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter**

African American literature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can, at first, appear as a literature of mourning. Otherwise disparate writers such as Ta-Nehisi Coates, Jesmyn Ward, Colson Whitehead, Claudia Rankine and Angie Thomas address the slow violence that has been and continues to blight African American lives to the point of premature death by white violence, disease, environmental disaster or the daily grind of racialised microaggression and hate. Yet these writers do not only grieve the loss of Black life. Instead, they exercise their agency as artists working in the wake of slavery and its legacies in the present (pace Christina Sharpe’s book *In the Wake*) to imaginatively explore both the magnitude of the crime against humanity that was

Atlantic slavery and the many ways African Americans protest and resist their debasement, building on a distinctive culture and tradition. For these writers explicitly draw on and engage with the elders who inspired them: Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Richard Wright, Walter Mosley and other giants of the African American literary tradition, thus creating a contemporary literature that remembers and pays homage to Black letters as well as Black lives. By reading this literature in the context of the mass social movement that has come to be known as #BlackLivesMatter, African American writers of the 21<sup>st</sup> C emerge as “cultural activists” involved in the common project of mourning and memorialising Black lives whilst raising consciousness and envisioning new imaginative futures.

**Daniel Valella (University of Michigan)**  
Harryette Mullen’s Multiethnic Afrosurrealism

In the Obama and Trump eras, several cultural critics pointed to a burgeoning surrealist aesthetics among Black artists. In 2009, D. Scot Miller published his “Afrosurreal Manifesto” in the San Francisco Bay Guardian, while Maya Phillips wrote in Slate in 2018 of a “New Black Surrealism,” citing Donald Glover’s *Atlanta* (2016–2022), Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* (2017), and Boots Riley’s *Sorry to Bother You* (2018) as central cinematic examples of the form. Surrealism, from its 1920s origins in Europe, has accentuated “strange juxtapositions” and “dreamlike” styles to reveal what André Breton called the “superior reality” of the subconscious mind. Afrosurrealism amplifies this approach by depicting, as Phillips puts it, “the realities of contemporary black life through its intersections with the absurd and unlikely. It’s as fluid and true as a dream, though still open to interpretation.” In this paper, I turn to the 21st-century poetry of Harryette Mullen to illuminate its important yet long-underrecognized contributions to (Afro)surrealist practice. Not only has Mullen directly cited the transatlantic innovations in surrealism—from Breton to Gertrude Stein to Aimé Césaire to Jayne Cortez—that influence her own avant-garde writing, Mullen’s poetry also is characterized by a decidedly multiethnic consciousness, exploring how U.S. discourse has marginalized Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian communities alike. From *Sleeping with the Dictionary* (2002) to *Urban Tumbleweed* (2013), her works activate a dreamlike “minority consciousness” (an experiential position of disorientation and marginalization) in the subjectivities of both the poetic speaker and the reader. In this way, they resist both the Eurocentric (and male-dominated) aesthetics of early-twentieth-century surrealism and the tendency in other Afrosurrealist works to adhere to “the Black/White binary.” Given that our current times—when lines are blurred between news and entertainment, conviction and performance, reality and dream—are themselves quite surreal, Mullen’s multiethnic Afrosurrealism enables us to better understand our present, as well as to dream and to craft better futures.

**Ewa Barbara Luczak (University of Warsaw)**  
Eugenic Sterilizations, Perpetrators and the Ethics of Engaged Witnessing: Toni Morrison’s *Home*

This presentation focuses on Morrison’s *Home* (2012) and the novel’s engagement with the ghastly legacy of the medical abuse of the black female body. In her novel, the Nobel Prize laureate draws attention to the presence of the science of eugenics in US medical practice in the 1950s- the topic that has gained a lot of attention in the last decade. One of the main female characters is rendered sterile due to a gynecological experiment performed on her by a white medical doctor. Inspired by Dr. J. Marion Sims, the father of modern gynecology, who performed experiments on enslaved women, Madison Grant, the proponent of racial eugenics, and also drawing on the ideology of nordicism, the doctor in Morrison’s novel endorses a eugenic belief in his right to control a female black body and in the need to engineer the reproduction of those deemed racially inferior. Morrison not only challenges the dominant narrative of the progress of US medical history but also draws attention to the possibility of overcoming the odious legacy of racism in medicine. She focuses on the role of the witness and invites the reader to take this issue up, portraying characters who take an active ethical stand and support the victim. In this way, Morrison actively counters the logic of victimization and points to the power of trans-human solidarity in shaping the future.

## LEGACIES OF FEMALE ANCESTORS

**Patricia Coloma Peñate (Catholic University of Murcia)**

Conjure Feminism: A Transcultural Epistemology

Kinitra Brooks, Kameelah L Martin and Lakisha Simmons (2019) recently coined the term ‘conjure feminism’ to refer to black women’s epistemology, a knowledge taught from generation to generation at kitchen tables, gardens, and which appears portrayed in literary works throughout the inclusion of practices such as: motherwit, root medicine, food as ancestral memory, mothering, and spiritwork (452). These activities have historically provided agency to women of African descent through the Atlantic world. The aim of this presentation is to interrogate this African centered philosophy through three different works: Lawrence Hill’s *Someone Knows My Name* (2007) Maryse Conde’s *I Tituba Black Witch of Salem* (1986,) and Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* (2016). The employment of ancestral knowledge, embodied in the concept of conjure feminism, is a key tool for the protagonist’s self-realization and identity in each of them. Hill’s novel historically contextualizes the Atlantic journey of African-based ways of knowing from Africa to the New World and then to Europe and in this way, he illustrates how it constitutes a source of self-preservation and economic autonomy for the novel’s protagonist, Aminata. Conde’s description of Tituba’s spiritual power and strength highlights how her African belief system is a source of political power often discredited by the Western World and lastly, Beyoncé’s personal journey through *Lemonade* engages this female-based tradition to guide not only the singer, but also the community she incorporates in her visual album. At the core of this examination, lies a questioning of how conjure feminism engages an often ignored philosophy and consistent tradition. Through the examination of these works, I aim to contribute to the academic inclusion of this epistemology as a key theory to be included in the understanding of the Atlantic world.

**Mayron E. Cantillo Lucuara (University of València)**

Honorée Fanonne Jeffers and the Absence of ‘Unkind Contrast’: Demythologizing Dido and Framing Phillis Wheatley

Scotland's Scone Palace is home to an unusual double portrait of Dido Elizabeth Belle and Lady Elizabeth Murray. Neoclassical in its style, it dates from the late 1770s and shows the common features of academic portraiture. The painting has been subject to titular, authorial and interpretative changes. Some of its successive titles – “Lady Elizabeth and Mrs Davinier” and “Portrait of Lady Finch Hatton seated in the garden with an open book and a negress attendant” – have concealed, erased and distorted the role and identity of the black girl named after the mythological Queen of Carthage. The authorship of the portrait has also been an unsettled matter: it was initially attributed to German painter Johan Zoffany on account of his close connections with British aristocrats, but in 2018 an episode of the BBC documentary series *Fake or Fortune?* revealed that the most plausible candidate could be Scottish artist David Martin, a protégé of the German painter and brother-in-law to Dido’s father. Equally variable are the meanings of the portrait in light of the two most salient lines of interpretation in recent scholarship. On the one hand, the painting has been celebrated as an early representation of interracial equality and sorority arguably commissioned to foster the abolitionist agenda in late eighteenth-century Britain. On the other hand, for other interpreters, the portrait is far from progressive: it participates in the Eurocentric tradition of cultural orientalism and presents Dido as an ethnically othered and exoticized figure. In her recent verse collection *The Age of Phillis* (2020), African American writer Honorée Fanonne Jeffers offers her own construal of the portrait in the form of a laconic ekphrasis that, as this conference paper aims to argue, underscores the unprecedentedness of the black figure, worships the absence of racial contrast in the oil, redefines Dido as a demythologized carefree teenager, and most importantly, includes her within a larger narrative of synchronous correlations with the life and work of Phillis Wheatley.

**A. Robert Lee**

Memories of Now: A Verse Quartet of Carmen Tafolla, Luci Tapahonso, Marilyn Chin, Natasha Trethewey

Four poets, four poetries. This presentation, across a US multicultural spectrum, revisits the flair of the names above. Each has longstanding claim to attention, literary careers launched from the 1970s to 2000

and still in exuberant flow. To call their work “memorial” only begins to meet the case: here is memory and its histories drawn from, encased in, vivified, through their writings. Taking a single poem by each and leaning into it with both admiration and, I hope, due ear and eye, the aim is to see how the particularity of its remembering invites its own remembrance. Carmen Tafolla’s “La Isabela de Guadalupe y El Apache Mío Cid” remembers a historic love-hate affair of Spaniard and Native, the rise of a Chicano/a nation. Luci Tapahonso’s “A Birthday Poem” remembers Hózhó, the Navajo/Diné ethos of balance, harmony, her people’s sacred pledge to its meaning through time and change. Marilyn Chin’s “How I Got That Name” remembers family, the Pacific, Angel Island, Chinese American assimilation and its discontents, and the call to poetry. Natasha Trethewey’s “Thrall,” a title poem, remembers Juan de Pareja, assistant to Velázquez, and so-called mulatto and painter in his own right, and the persisting semantics of “mix,” colour, identity.

**15:30-17:00**

## **SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE: TRAUMA AND SURVIVANCE THROUGH A PEDAGOGICAL LENS**

**Renee Watchman (McMaster University)**

Indigenous Seed Stories of Survivance

Gardens are sources of life, resilience, restoration, and “seed stories.” The nurturing and evolution of gardens call attention to land, freedom, diaspora, and livelihoods, which is testament of Indigenous and Black existence and futures, and a threat to colonization. The act of seeding constitutes thriving (ways of being, knowing, and doing). For the International Symposium, I will offer an exploratory paper informed by Indigenous literary aesthetics and theories to examine the tropes of gardens and seeds in *Garden in the Dunes* (2000) by Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna) and *Cherokee Rose: A Novel of Gardens and Ghosts* (2016) by Tiya Miles. Their novels uplift active presence, survival, and resistance of Indigenous and Black women protagonists. Their “survivance” (advocated by Anishinaabe theorist Gerald Vizenor) interweave Indigenous homelands, histories, and temporalities and embrace Indigenous and Black futurities. Though both novels propel us backwards to the nineteenth century, whereby Silko and Miles re-imagine Indigenous and Black experiences of ruptured gardens and kinship, forced removals, relocations, enslavement, land dispossession, and genocidal U.S. governmental policies, I advance a Diné (Navajo)-centred reading to “imagine otherwise” (Daniel Heath Justice). To uplift stories of restoration and regeneration of Indigenous and Black livelihoods (gardens), is to nurture seed stories of survivance. Seeding as the literal act of planting seeds and seeding as the metaphorical act of renewing life demonstrates Indigenous and Black resistance, amplifying vibrant futures of Indigenous and Black brilliance.

**Kathryn W. Shanley (University of Montana)**

A Pedagogy of Grit: Catharsis of Post-colonial Violence in the Work of Richard Van Camp (Dogrib)

In the twenty-first century, we have seen increasing mainstream awareness of the ways Indigenous peoples have suffered through assimilative and genocidal U.S. / Canadian policies such as mandatory Indigenous attendance at boarding schools; prohibition of Indigenous religious practices and incarceration of practitioners; Native disenfranchisement from citizenship; disinheritance and alienation from homelands, etc. Among current BiPOC resistance movements, Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (People), seeks justice for and recognition of Native women/people whose lives have not been deemed to “matter.” A central question: In our historical moment of Indigenous resistance, truth-seeking, and reconciliation, how do Indigenous writers keep historical trauma in focus without ignoring Indigenous strengths and strategies for healing? How do they fit within literary canons of imperialistic nation—building as more than victim narratives? Canadian Dogrib author, Richard Van Camp’s 1996 novel, *The Lesser Blessed* entered the literary canon as a coming-of-age narrative, pulsing with an angst both tragic and funny. The youth of a Dogrib community must navigate a terrain of historical trauma, including child sexual abuse; the protagonist’s response to trauma is enough to bring any simple-minded notion of decolonization to its knees. As the editors of *Booklist* declare, “Its halcyon moments are cigarette scorched, and it has teeth—lots of them. *The Lesser Blessed* stood apart in 1996, and there has yet to be anything like it.” This essay argues that the *Lesser Blessed*, seen in the context of Van Camp’s later writings, e.g., *the Moon of Letting Go*,

enacts what I term a “pedagogy of grit” – something more than “resilience.” A “pedagogy of grit” fits in a meta-theoretical framework involving a paradoxical tolerance as well as a bodacious embrace of Indigenous futures.

**M. Antònia Oliver-Rotger (Pompeu Fabra University)**

Valeria Luiselli’s “inventory of echoes” as Transformative “thought and action” in *Lost Children Archive*

In *Tell Me How It Ends* Valeria Luiselli joined the ranks of Latinx writers and journalists who have “documented the undocumented” (Caminero-Santangelo 2016) and denounced global state violence on the residual poor. Based on her experience as a volunteer translator of migrant children at a federal immigration court, this chronicle fulfils the “metrics of authenticity” of testimonial writing as a denunciation of the brutal violation children’s rights before and after they cross the border, and as a meditation on the ethics of writing and reading (Smith and Watson 2012). The sequel to this work, *Lost Children Archive*, fictionalizes the ethical debate on how to write and read stories about these children, expanding it onto the related question of aesthetics and politics. The leitmotif of the family road trip to the border is adeptly used to portray the intertwining of the personal, the aesthetic, and the political dimensions of writing, storytelling, and interpretation. Storytelling to and by the children, based on their parents’ readings and respective documentary projects on Central American migrant children and on the Apaches, leads to playful re-enactments of history, active reinvention of stories, free associations between stories, characters, and places, and to the narrator/mother’s thoughts on the relationship between storytelling, knowledge, creativity, and the responsibility involved in educating and protecting children. The novel mirrors a pedagogical “practice of freedom” in that it addresses the critical and creative engagement with reality to participate in the transformation of the world (Freire 1970). Contrary to the notion of a repository of organized documents that preserves the past, the novel’s archive is one of associations between narratives through storytelling, questioning, retelling, and enacting in which the children develop the ability to critically and creatively establish connections between their experiences and those of others, and conceive reality as a process in which they may actively intervene (Freire 1970). This poetic, political, and genealogical approach to the archive (Halberstam 2005; Eichhorn 2013) is at times about “the past of the present” (Brown 2002); at others, it is “a kind of valley in which your thoughts can bounce back to you, transformed” (Luiselli 2019). Works by William Golding, Virginia Woolf, Cormac McCarthy, Joseph Conrad, Natalie Diaz, and Gloria Anzaldúa, among many others, link up to a fictional Book of Elegies about migrant children, to the “real” protagonists of the migrant children’s crisis, and to the narrator’s children. Luiselli’s transcultural approach to cultural memory as an interactive “inventory of echoes” expands the “new [literary] memory of latinidad” (Irizarry 2016) as one where the migrant children’s story is told “many times, in many different words and from many different angles, by many different minds” (Luiselli 2017). Most importantly, the narrator’s children’s retelling, understanding, enactment and reinterpretation of stories of lost childhood and displacement remains a pedagogical legacy “for posterity” (Luiselli 2019).

## SEXUALITY AND ANTI-COLONIAL RESISTANCE

**Lowry Martin (The University of Texas at El Paso)**

Kettly Mars’s Metaphors of Change: Sex and Silence as Resistance in *L’Heure hybride* and *Je suis vivant*

This conference focuses on the ways ethnic literatures are still most often taught from the margins as a supplement to a white, heteronormative, male-dominated literary and cultural center. Novelist and poet, Kettly Mars, an award-winning Haitian writer from Port-au-Prince, provides a counter narrative counter to this dominant literary center through works that focus on such topics as queer sexualities, environmental injustice, and racial inequities. This presentation illustrates how her novels provide fresh alternatives and resistance to this dominant literary center through a discussion of two of Mars’s novels. In this presentation, I argue that the protagonists’ non-normative sexualities in two novels, *Je suis vivant* (I am Alive) and *L’Heure hybride* (The Hybrid Hour), serve as metaphors for change during two pivotal and transitional periods in Haitian history: the waning years of the Duvalier regime and Haiti post 2010 earthquake. Juxtaposing the rare representation of a closeted gay Haitian sex worker with a repressed female painter that loves women, I argue that their same-sex desire embodies what Erica Caple James calls “*ensekirite*” (Haitian Creole for ‘insecurity’). This idea of insecurity implicates the seemingly random political and

criminal violence that ebbed and flowed in waves amid ongoing economic, social, and environmental decline of the waning Duvalier regime and in the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake. In Mars works, these harrowing historical moments of instability offer the possibility of breaking the oppressive silence camouflaging guilt, helplessness, jealousy, anger and even madness that are often ignored or elided in dominant narratives.

### **Sara Soler i Arjona (University of Barcelona)**

#### **On Making Alternative Routes: Queerness, Diaspora, and Resistance in Ocean Vuong's Writing**

"Often we see queerness as deprivation," Ocean Vuong explains, "But when I look at my life, I saw that queerness demanded [that I] make alternative routes" (Louisiana Channel, 2022). It is indeed by the means of queerness that Vuong's latest two works provide an alternative route for survival and resistance for queer diasporic subjects living in 21st-century North America. In his novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019), Vuong draws on his own experience as a Vietnamese refugee and situates a Vietnamese American queer protagonist at the center of his non-linear narrative, which excavates the protagonist's family history, blurring the boundaries between past and present, to trace the multiple histories of displacement informing who he is today. The novel's temporal disorientation becomes a formulation of queer time: by disrupting the heteronormative structure of temporality that normalizes linear patterns of repetition and progression, the novel envisions an alternative understanding of time where the queer subject is endowed with agency (Muñoz 2009; Freeman 2010). Most importantly, Vuong's non-linear structure of remembrance recovers the alternative histories of those effaced by Western representation. Furthermore, queerness does not only allow for disruptive narrative strategies in Vuong's work, but it also permeates the forms of kinship, community, and solidarity he envisions. Specifically, both the novel and his poetry collection *Time is a Mother* (2022) interrogate how queerness may reformulate the practices of intimacy, care, and support that constitute kinship relations to usher in strategies of survival and resistance in the diaspora (Halberstam 2007; Rifkin 2014). Both works emphasize the complexity of Vuong's familial ties—simultaneously scarred and adaptive, troubled and nurturing. It is by mapping this affective structure of belonging that he imagines possibilities for healing and joy in the face of violence and loss, a paradox encapsulated by the fragmented lives of contemporary queer diasporic subjects.

### **Elena Cortés Farrujía (University of Barcelona)**

#### **"An NDN Home Is Like a Dandelion": Queer Indigenous Futurities in Joshua Whitehead's *Jonny Appleseed* (2018)**

Since Joshua Whitehead published his debut novel, *Jonny Appleseed* (2018), the (inter)national acknowledgments for his ground-breaking work have only flourished. The story follows its eponymous protagonist, a young Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer man who lives in the city, through a physical and mental journey back to the reservation to attend his stepfather's funeral and visit his kokum's grave. In this way, *Jonny Appleseed* constitutes a homecoming narrative that conflates different temporalities and spaces in a non-linear account, from his apartment in the city to his kokum's house in his childhood memories, thus, creating a multidimensional tapestry that explores the gendered, sexual, ethnic and class configurations of the spaces -and times- that he inhabits. By using the novel as a key to enter the emerging field of Queer Indigenous phenomenology, I aim to unravel the temporal and spatial possibilities of approaching Two-Spirit, Queer Indigenous home(making) by utilizing the dandelion as a metaphor for -Two-Spirit- Queer Indigenous frames of reference and home configurations. Moreover, departing from the idea that Whitehead's account is devised as a healing and transformative journey, this paper examines how the text inscribes queer Indigenous futurities throughout the novel. The present paper is thus an approach to the myriad narrative strategies that Whitehead uses throughout the novel to show that "the Native Child was already queer" (Smith 48) and, from there, to construct an Indigenous and queer space in the novel that embodies his Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer subjectivity in the converging porous temporalities and spaces that he inhabits, a rhizomatic tapestry, which is not only subverting Euro-American notions of "tradition" and "modernity," indigeneity and sexuality but also providing a spatiotemporal place of identification that "unhouses" settler-heteronormative timeframes.

**18:00-19:30**

**WESTERN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION PANEL:  
RESIGNIFYING SPACE THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE,  
MULTIGENERATIONAL STORYING**

**Karen R. Roybal (Colorado College)**

Resistance through Storytelling: Countering Spatial & Racial Violence in *Sabrina and Corina*

Nationally-bestselling Chicana author Kali Fajardo-Anstine transports readers to Denver, Colorado and the neighboring town of Sagarita in her short story collection, *Sabrina and Corina* (2019), where she weaves together the stories and lived realities of multi-generational mestiza/o, Chicana/o, and other mixed-race characters who grapple with what it means to live in a liminal space. Their experiences as racialized others, gendered subjects, and inhabitants of a city being subjected to a rapidly shifting economy and gentrification reveal what it means to be displaced from society, from the historical record, and from their homelands. The stories comprising *Sabrina and Corina* convey how racial capital and dispossession work in tandem to perpetuate multiple forms of spatial and racial violence against marginalized communities. This paper examines how in her short stories, Fajardo-Anstine makes visible the (il)logic of spatial violence perpetuated through displacement, dispossession, and racialization. Political theorist Robert Nichols (2020) explains that dispossession “signals the absence of some attribute.” Fajardo-Anstine subverts that notion by showing how minority communities in Denver resist the violence of displacement by maintaining their cultural and racialized identities and by (re)membering place. The stories are grounded in the reality of instability and spatial violence. The characters thus demonstrate “what it means to grieve your place while you’re in your place” (Fajardo-Anstine 2019). However, through the short story form, Fajardo-Anstine develops counternarratives that depict how her characters navigate and resist dispossession by asserting and validating their presence.

**Meredith Harvey (Aurora College)**

Schools as Sites of Trauma, Confrontation, and Reconciliation: Renegotiating Identities of African American and First Nations People in *Nickel Boys* and *The Marrow Thieves*

Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* is set in a school, the site of the African American protagonist's trauma, as well as his eventual confrontation, and reconciliation regarding the role systemic racism has played in forming his identity. Likewise, Metis Canadian author Cherie Dimaline's dystopian novel *Marrow Thieves* utilizes repurposed schools as the site of trauma, confrontation, and reconciliation for the indigenous peoples of the text. While Whitehead's novel is set in a juvenile detention center in 1960s Florida and Dimaline's in the wastelands of Canada's dystopian future, both authors approach the schools as systemic antagonists. For Whitehead, the school is based upon the historical Dozier School for Boys that closed in 2011, and Dimaline's 'schools' intentionally echo the First Nations' residential schools, the last of which only closed in 1996. Both novels emphasize the schools as sites for systemized trauma met out on bodies of color, the easy disposal of black and indigenous bodies, and erasure of identity that occurs because of such injustice. In diverse ways the two novels also frame the schools as sites for reclaiming lost identities as part the characters' confrontation with injustice, and as prerequisite to reconciliation. In a final parallel, while *Nickel Boys* was inspired by a 2014 discovery of unmarked gravesites at The Dozier Schools for Boys, *Marrow Thieves* was released four years prior to discovery of unmarked grave sites at residential schools throughout Canada. Beyond the text and within classrooms, these discoveries provide a teachable moment, in reminding our students of how distant the past might not be. In conjunction with current contexts, I think such comparative readings could facilitate discussions about the rhetoric and reality of Black Lives and Indigenous Lives not "mattering" in North America, as well as the need for confrontation and reconciliation regarding the realities of systemic racism.

### **Amaia Ibarrarán-Bigalondo (University of the Basque Country)**

Go West, Young Robert! And Find your Dream: Manuel Luis Martínez, *Drift* (2003)

The West as a shared, imagined concept was built and exported upon the idea of one-directional mobility: geographical, social and eventually, personal mobility. The movement West, thus, was conceptualized as the path to the construction to a new, young nation, and to the achievement of the American Dream. The critical revision of the making of the West, however, has shown that the movement was not an only-one-way one, and similarly, that there was no Dream for everyone. This is the case of the journey that Robert Olmos, the 16-year-old protagonist of Manuel Luis Martínez's young adult novel, *Drift* (2003), undertakes. Born and raised in San Antonio into a fractured family, Robert travels to L.A. in search of a new life where his shattered family and life can be rebuilt. However, the Californian dream he seeks for seems not available for a young, "problematic" Chicano as himself. This essay has a twofold aim: the first will attempt at establishing connections between the construction of the West, and in particular, of California, as the natural site of the American Dream (only for some), as imagined in Robert's personal quest. The second will address the "pedagogical applicability" of this novel in particular, and of multiethnic young adult literature in general, to understand our contemporary societies and generate lines of thought and debate among the youth (Spanish, Basque).

## **21st CENTURY AMERICAN DIASPORAS**

### **Ana María Crespo Gómez (University of Almería)**

Re-storying *The Ramayana* in the 21st Century:  
Gender and Sexuality at a Crossroads

In India, one of the most influential Sanskrit sacred texts is *The Ramayana*, which expounds on the morals and philosophy from old times and "contains ideal models of familial bonds and social relations [even to contemporary Indians]" (Kakar, 1981: 63). It revolves around Rama's story, a reincarnation from the God Vishnu and his wife, Sita. From this perspective, Sita is seen by Hindu women as an idyllic *pativrata* or a perfect woman (Shah, 2012: 77). *The Ramayana* has been written as a narrative in epics or songs, but it is by no means located just in India. Still, the diaspora has spread this myth worldwide for decades, enabling a reinterpretation of Sita's myth. This presentation seeks to delineate how Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni ponders from a diasporic lens in favour of Sita in *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019). Precisely, this paper aims to locate the author's writing and her progressive distance from the South Asian American canon while she moves closer to a retelling of traditional epics in ways that connect them with contemporary women worldwide in light of the #MeToo Movement. All things considered, we will enquire into how this "misreading" may change the perception of Sita as a helpless and submissive character, analysing her complexities against the patriarchal institutions of our time. Finally, the paper concludes by pointing out how this reinterpretation of the epics may impact close and tight ethnic communities in the United States.

### **Soffia Medina López (University of València)**

Migration, Identity and Trauma in Edwidge Danticat's Works

Edwidge Danticat, Haitian-American novelist and short writer, uses her voice and her bicultural identity to narrate the hardships of Haitian people through decades of invasions, dictatorships, and repressions focusing mainly on the experience of the black female body in the diaspora and the transgenerational transmission of trauma from generation to generation. Her works mirror her own history of dislocation, exile, family fragmentation and transnationality as well as her search for a sense of self in the United States. The novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), tells the story Sophie Caco, a young Haitian girl who moves from Haiti to New York to reunite with her mother Martine, who she barely knows and who immigrated years before to United States after being raped by a Tonton Macoute (a member of the civil militia, becoming pregnant of Sophie). This work portrays the struggles experienced by many Haitian immigrants moving to the United States escaping poverty and political persecution from a female point of view. The novel presents Haiti as a place devastated by the dictatorship of François Duvalier, an authoritarian and corrupted state where women find themselves oppressed, being the target of rape, torture, and murders. Sophie suffers the mental and psychological consequences of traumatic corporeal experiences such as virginity tests or her

mother's rape as well as the generational burden of being a woman in Haiti and the inheritance of pain and silence. In *The Dew Breaker* (2004), Danticat presents through a collection of stories that intersect with each other, the process of healing and resistance of the characters traumatized by the brutal crimes committed by the Tonton Macoute, the Haitian paramilitary force created by the dictator François Duvalier, that were also known as the *dew breakers*. Nightmares, ghostly presences, or paranoia are some of the aftereffects Haitian citizens suffer after the violent regime. Similarly to Sophie Caco in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), the main character in *The Dew Breaker* (2004), Ka, an Haitian woman raised in Brooklyn, has to burden the guilt of discovering that her father was one of the men that inflicted so much pain on Haiti's local population. The collection of stories presents how Ka manages the culpability and traumas shared intergenerationally and presents at the same time how her father's victims cope with the pain. Sophie Caco in *Breath Eyes Memory* (1994) and Ka in *The Dew Breaker* (2004) show the importance of reconciling with the past by embracing their hybrid identity and their life in a new country without denying their roots. The weight of the past and their ancestral legacy is healed through acceptance and with the help of their bicultural identity that enables them to understand Haitian traditions and history from a new perspective.

### **Parisa Delshad (University of Valladolid)**

#### Tracing 'You': The Manifest Destiny of Assimilation in Second-Person Narration of Roya Hakakian's *A Beginner's Guide to America* (2021)

The themes related to home and belonging hold a significant place in Iranian-American literature. Over three generations, Iranian-American writers have depicted the ever-evolving challenges of migration and displacement, as well as the difficult balance between maintaining one's cultural roots and adapting to American society. Roya Hakakian's *A Beginner's Guide to America: For the Immigrant and the Curious* (2021) presents a story that echoes the idea of Manifest Destiny and emphasizes the conditions of hospitality. In an unmoored narrative, it employs a second-person narrator to address an unnamed, silent migrant. This universal narratee is followed from the moment she enters America until her immigration saga comes to an end in a naturalization ceremony. Taking its cue from Uri Margolin's contention that second-person narration has oppressive qualities (1990), this paper intends to ground the narrator and the narratee. It draws on narrative theory to argue that the use of second-person narration in Hakakian's narrative obscures power dynamics and reinforces the dominant ideology of assimilation and conformity to American society. Ultimately, this analysis seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the themes of home and belonging in Iranian-American literature and their significance in contemporary American society.

### **Carla Abella Rodríguez (University of Salamanca)**

#### Unearthing Hospitality and Farming in Natalie Baszile's *Queen Sugar*

Natalie Baszile makes contemporary Black agricultural life centre stage of her novel *Queen Sugar* (2014). The story follows a young Black woman, Charley, who moves from California to Louisiana with her daughter to take charge of the sugar farm she has inherited from his late father. The novel documents Charley's trials and tribulations as she struggles to get the sugarcane farm back into shape in a white-dominated business. Within this rural landscape misogynoir comes to the fore in the already-hostile farming industry. Set against the backdrop of sugarcane fields and wetland, the story unravels the importance of family and community, as solidarity becomes crucial for the characters' survival. The aim of this working paper is to analyse Black farming as a hospitable act that allows the occupation and resignification of natural spaces, which are charged with layers of meaning and power dynamics reminiscent of the Southern past. The farmland appears as a Black geography where rupture and hope come together. The novel reveals Black farming as the creation of welcoming sites where the hostility of the land is met with possibilities of newer hospitable gestures for the local community to thrive. The study also seeks to explore the relationship between land and ownership and how both of them are reinscribed to grapple with notions of race, belonging and legacy. Going back to their paternal family roots and leaving metropolitan life behind, the protagonists are inevitably thrown into a communion with the land, which prompts them to face their deepest demons but also opens the possibility of a more hopeful future.

## FRIDAY MAY 26TH

9-10:30

### ETHNIC MINORITY LITERATURES THROUGH PEDAGOGY, ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE, AND TRANSLATION

**Margarida Castellano & Dolores Miralles (University of València)**

Reading Images Through Critical Visual Literacy: Coming-of-Age Multimodal Intercultural Texts in the EFL Classroom

Getting to know the culture and its literature is an essential part in the process of learning a foreign language. As a matter of fact, should culture not be introduced in the language classroom, language teaching could be regarded as incomplete and inaccurate. It cannot be denied that history is intrinsic to a community's culture, as the events that a specific group may have gone through or experienced can determine the way its members react to certain aspects. This piece of research aims at combining both the learning of social and historical events and the development of the students' competences in the English language through the use of Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006), Joy Harjo's *For a Girl Becoming* (2009) and Riad Sattouf's *Esther's Notebooks* (2016). Dealing with topics such as the construction one's identity, life between languages and cultures or the process of coming of age, the transatlantic comparison of these multimodal texts serves as a way to delve into some of the facts that have shaped and still are shaping societies in the 21st century as melting pots, where inequalities and unfair situations take place. It is through the reading of these texts that we propose a learning path addressed to high school students (12-16 years old), dealing with multimodality, visual literacy and critical thinking. This learning path will also help in the field of intercultural understanding and the critical detection of current individual and social prejudices. Taking into account that literature can be considered as a bridge that enables us to find not only differences, but also similarities with other cultures, this learning path proposal advocates that by reading and teaching literature, students broaden their knowledge, understand the behavior and traditions of the target language, and specially, will become more open-minded.

**Miguel Sanz Jiménez (Complutense University of Madrid)**

Between the Tasked and the Underground:  
Translating Coates's *The Water Dancer* into Spanish

Published in Spain as *El baile del agua* in February 2022, Ta-Nehisi Coates's *The Water Dancer* joins the group of African American neo-slave narratives that have been translated into Spanish in the last five years: Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2017), Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2017), McBride's *The Good Lord Bird* (2017), and Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2022). This paper is based on Descriptive Translation Studies and aims to study Javier Calvo's rendering of Coates's debut novel. Originally published in September 2019, *The Water Dancer* is narrated by Hiram, an enslaved young man at the Lockless tobacco plantation in Virginia. It is thanks to his own account of life in bondage and joining the Underground Railroad that readers experience the power of memory and storytelling in the antebellum South, as well as learn the different terms used for the institution of slavery at Lockless: the enslaved workforce is referred to as the "Tasked," whereas the white aristocracy is known as the "Quality," and the "Low" are the white trash that remain between them. Once the publication of Coates's book during the Trump era has been contextualized, this study addresses how *The Water Dancer*'s alternative take on Southern slavery has been transferred to the Spanish context. Trying to offer some insight into how translators, target publishers, and their policies have conditioned the reception of contemporary African American literature in Spain, the paratexts accompanying Javier Calvo's translation for Seix Barral will be considered, including footnotes, blurbs, covers, and press reviews. Additionally, this paper looks into Calvo's strategies for dealing with the semantic field of plantations and the literary dialect spoken by the dispossessed protagonists, analyzing if they go in line with those employed in the other four neo-slave narratives that have been published recently in Spain.

## **Maite Aperribay-Bermejo (University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU)**

### **Ecoxicanismo: Autoras Chicanas y Justicia Medioambiental**

El pueblo chicano ha sido un pueblo históricamente sometido. En los años sesenta, al darse cuenta de su situación de opresión, y al ver que otros grupos oprimidos comenzaban a organizarse y a manifestarse en favor de sus derechos, se organizaron en torno al *Movimiento Chicano*. Se fraguó un proyecto cultural y político muy complejo que abarcaba numerosos flancos de acción, y cuya finalidad era la erradicación de la pobreza mediante la lucha en favor de una justicia social y medioambiental. La denuncia de la contaminación medioambiental, el racismo y la opresión que padecía el pueblo chicano pronto encontraron reflejo en la literatura chicana. Las obras, con gran contenido reivindicativo, plasmaban las características más significativas de su identidad, y en ellas los autores describían su experiencia como ciudadanos dentro de un grupo minoritario. Esta ponencia se centrará en el estudio de diversas obras ecofeministas chicanas desde una perspectiva en la que confluyen literatura, género y medioambiente. Se efectuará un recorrido por obras que renombradas autoras chicanas como Ana Castillo, Lucha Corpi, Helena María Viramontes, Cherríe Moraga o Alicia Gaspar de Alba publicaron a finales del siglo XX y comienzos del siglo XXI. Teniendo en cuenta categorías de desigualdad como el género, la clase o la raza, se llevará a cabo un análisis con enfoque interseccional que evidenciará las múltiples formas de discriminación de las que son víctimas las protagonistas de estas obras. La relectura de estas novelas desde un prisma ecofeminista permitirá descubrir cómo estas autoras continúan con la tradición identitaria de sus predecesoras e incluyen al mismo tiempo una perspectiva ecofeminista. Todas ellas comparten el interés por la tradición y el folklore mexicanos y precolombinos, la crítica al catolicismo, al sistema capitalista y a la desigualdad de género. Estas características reflejan en última instancia su lucha en pro de la justicia social y medioambiental.

## **INDIGENOUS GENRES IN THE 21st CENTURY**

### **Judit Agnes Kadar (University of Pannonia)**

#### **Narrative Identity Formulation, the “Homing Plot” in Southwestern Mixed Heritage Prose Texts**

This presentation explores narrative encounters in and beyond ethnic American literature: mixed heritage (Euro-American and Indigenous) authors are mostly discussed under the label of Native American writing. I wish to interpret this kind of literature with special interest in the Postcolonial voices that tackle the clash of Colonizers and the Colonized in their family history, in their own “conflicting blood,” furthermore, they present a tendency of reengaging with indigenous culture, that is, culturally appropriate their own sense of ethnic identity. Cultural appropriation and the frontier zones of Indigenous and Anglo culture have been the earlier research foci with regards to “white man’s indjun,” (see Kadar: *Going Indian*, PUV, 2012), while recently it is the blended heritage narratives of the Southwest US and the return to Indigenous roots. Scott Momaday, Paula Gunn Allen, Louis Owens and Joy Harjo are traditionally categorized as Native American writers, however, all of them come from Native and Anglo-American mixed families and in different ways explore the challenge to the Colonial concept of stigmatized “half-and-half” notions of identity and the sense of “conflicting blood.” Postcolonial fictional counter-narratives have been created, where the characters’ de-stigmatized identity is actually shifting to a more homogeneous sense of the self. I wish to call attention to narrative identity formulation, with special regards to three aspects: firstly, the combination of Western modes of writing and Indigenous storytelling, secondly, identity as textuality, the fictional presentation of mixed blood identity and its change, and finally “the Homing Plot” (J. Gamber), re-engagement and Indigenization. The presentation outlines these exciting phenomena and introduces *Ethnic Positioning in Southwestern Mixed Heritage Writing* (Lexington, 2022).

### **Connie A. Jacobs and Debra K.S. Barker (University of Arizona)**

#### **Postindian Aesthetics: Re-imagining New Tribal Literatures for Our Times**

The twenty-first century has produced few anthologies of critical essays viewing contemporary North American Indigenous literatures through the interpretive lenses now available to us, considering developing literary and interpretive practices driven now by Indigenous writers, critics, and educators. Attending to this dearth of new books featuring the important Indigenous assuming central stage in Native literary discussions, Connie A. Jacobs and Debra K. S. Barker propose a presentation on new directions in

contemporary Native writing. We can speak to the reconsideration of such terms as identity, intersectionality, the constructions of race vis a vis community, and literary sovereignty. At this international symposium, we seek an opportunity to introduce the critical anthology we edited, featuring Indigenous literary artists and critics working in the twenty-first century. This anthology is titled *Postindian Aesthetics: Affirming Indigenous Literary Sovereignty*, published in April 2022, by the University of Arizona Press. Indigenous writers and cultural critics have effected an important paradigm shift in Indigenous aesthetics and literary practices. This shift contests colonial perceptions of Indigenous art and society. Steven Leuthold opens conversations on Indigenous aesthetics by drawing preliminary distinctions between those and Western aesthetics: “The divorce of spirituality, beauty, and ethics from Western aesthetics contrast with the continued interrelationship of these in indigenous aesthetics” (Leuthold 202). This literary art is beautiful, political, gothic, provocative, innovative, and at times visionary, evocative of tribal national histories, traumas, and landscapes. Propelled by a decolonizing trajectory, this art is Post-Indian, in Ojibwe critic Gerald Vizenor’s sense of the term. This art disrupts the dialectical loop of the white, romantic, voyeuristic gaze, curious to capture the nature of what it means to be a “real” American Indian in the twenty-first century writing for audiences of “real” Indigenous readers. Today, Native artists are writing also for a growing audience of Native readers, expanding the imaginative limits of Native creativity as well as the spectrum of subjects with which Native people concern themselves—including the aesthetics of history, Indigenous erotics, disability, Haida manga, poetics, and decolonization. Artists we will introduce include Orlando White, Heid Erdrich, Esther Belin, Stephan Graham Jones, Cheryl Savageau, and David Treurer. We look forward to introducing the assessments of this body of new writing, as well as advancing the conversations around what constitutes North American Indigenous art in the twenty-first century.

### **Silvia Martínez-Falquina (University of Zaragoza)**

#### **Detective Monique Blue Hawk: Devon A. Mihesuah’s Creation of a Role Model**

Devon A. Mihesuah is an enrolled citizen of the Choctaw Nation and a Chickasaw descendant. She is a historian and has written several books on issues as diverse as Indigenous women, racism, stereotypes, sovereignty, Indigenous foodways or Natives in academia. She is also a prolific fiction writer, with seven novels to her name. In her scholarly work, Mihesuah shows her concern about all the issues that Native people are facing today, such as racism, stereotypes, genocide, treaty abrogation, health disparities, repatriation, poverty, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Hence, she states that in fiction writing, she assumes the responsibility “to project positivity and strength and accuracy” and to show how Native women are and how they can be (in Hughes 2022). This is the main motivation of her creation of Detective Monique Blue Hawk, the protagonist of the novels *Document of Expectations* (2011), *Hatak Witches* (2021) and *Dance of the Returned* (2022). Monique is strong, tough, and not intimidated by sexist men in her job. She wears a tattoo that symbolizes “Indigenous woman power” (2021, 168), and she is described as tall, broad-shouldered and attractive, with a confident and resonant voice. Yet, she is also vulnerable, prone to migraine, slightly addicted to beer and has a hair-trigger temper and some insecurities. Part of her courage comes from her interest in the history of her people and her willingness to learn more, especially through her uncle, a traditional healer called Leroy Bear Red Ears. Monique has dreams and visions which require a special sensitivity and openness, and this becomes a powerful source of knowledge which helps her solve the various crimes in the novels. Strongly rooted in place, both the texts and their heroine respond to settler colonialism with a vindication of Choctaw cosmology and ritual, which makes her an Indigenous heroine for the twenty-first century.

**12-13:30**

## **ETHNICITY AND STATE CRISIS: TRANSNATIONAL AND MULTILINGUAL APPROACHES**

### **Samir Dayal (Bentley University)**

#### **The Ethnic American Writer and the Autoimmunitary State**

Ethnic American writing over the last several decades registers major shifts, representing perspectives of marginalized, particularly at moments of social and political crisis. Here I highlight a key set of contradictions in the state’s crisis response: simultaneously seeking containment-and-exclusion of the

perceived threat or enemy (whether external or internal), and, paradoxically, producing an autoimmune response to the perceived crisis, in Jacques Derrida's expression, at once prophylactic and self-damaging, even "suicidal." The Holocaust was one iconic crisis. Slavery was another. But here I touch on minority literary representation of two crises of the 20th and 21st centuries— the Japanese Internment after Pearl Harbor, and 9/11. Ethnic/ minority writers register the imprint of the state's autoimmune response, in both U.S. and international contexts. I situate my discussion of literary works by framing the discussion of the novels within two key discourses: affirmative action and Afropessimism (alongside the BLM movement) John Okada's 1957 novel, *No-No Boy*, is a landmark account of the resistance of one Japanese American (Ichiro Yamada) against the autoimmune measures taken by the state after Pearl Harbor. I trace the enduring legacy of this autoimmune response, through Vincent Chin's racist 1982 murder to the 2018 Harvard Affirmative Action case on behalf of Asian American complainants. I also discuss Philip Metres' *Sand Opera* (2015), a collection of post-9/11 poems, about the impact of the state's containment/exclusion and autoimmune response on brown people—Muslims and Arabs—at US detention centers including Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay (GITMO). Drawing on Afropessimism I emphasize the need for a more expensive and inclusive discursive frame that does not pit one ethnic or racial group against others, and challenges the autoimmune response that harms a democratic social polity. It is a plea for more truly intersectional, pluralized, even transnational discourses on race and ethnicity.

### **Jee Hyun An (Seoul National University)**

#### **"Fuku", "Zafa" and Rewriting America in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao***

In *Junot Diaz and the Decolonial Imagination*, the editors write, "Junot Diaz's work reflects a turn in American letters toward a hemispheric and planetary literature and culture" (1). Indeed, Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*'s eloquent and seamless weaving of comic books, modernist poetry, fantasy, sci-fi, urban vernacular and histories of the empires and the African diaspora rewrites the history of the Americas. The intricate conjoining of the 'fuku' of the personal history of Oscar Wao and the 'fuku' of the colonial history of the Dominican Republic narrated through the viewpoint of Yunior creates an intimate historiography that posits colonial violence and slavery as the "beginning" of the New World. This paper examines how *Oscar Wao* questions and challenges the historiography of the conquerors through the conceptualization of *Fuku americanus*. Yunior de Las Casas, by narrating the family history of his friend Oscar as a story of "fuku," is rewriting Bartolome de Las Casas's *History of the Indies*. Diaz uses Yunior's wry, cynical and seemingly nonchalant tone to describe—to borrow Toni Morrison's well-known words—"unspeakable" colonial history that is inevitably and inextricably tied to Oscar's family history. Bartolome de Las Casas's name appears only once in the text in a footnote, but by giving Yunior the same last name, the text bestows authorial power to Yunior over Bartolome de Las Casas. Yunior's story comically inverts Bartolome de Las Casas's colonial history which famously gave an apologetic account of the brutal conquest of Indians. In this regard, the colonial encounters are reimagined through the narrative encounters between the two de Las Casas narrating competing stories of the Americas.

### **Jane E. Evans (University of Texas El Paso)**

#### **French as Lingua Franca and Innovation in Aki Shimazaki's 21 st-century Fiction**

Aki Shimazaki is a Canadian (originally Japanese) novelist who has been writing in French for the past twenty-three years. She published her first work, *Tsubaki*, at the turn of the 21st century, in 1999. She has grouped her novels in pentalogies, or in series of five, although they can be read individually without forfeiting thematic or structural coherence. She is currently at work on her fifth series. When Aki Shimazaki began writing her first novel, she was a beginner student of the French language. Although she had lived in Anglophone Canada for many years working as a Japanese teacher and translator, she did not move to Montreal until the late 1990s, which necessitated her using French. In an interview dating from the year 2000, Ms. Shimazaki stated that as a student and author writing in a new, adoptive language, her head was always in the dictionary during those years. Shimazaki's writing in French raises many sociolinguistic issues, including notions of language use, literary genres, and the French literary "canon," among others. In this conference paper, I will elaborate Japanese being a gendered language whose semantic and syntactic expectation for men and women clearly differ. For this section, I will rely on works depicting the evolution of Japanese over the past thirty years, including Nanette Gottlieb's *Language and Society in Japan*

(Cambridge UP, 2005) and Okomato and Shibamoto-Smith's *Japanese Language, Gender and Ideology* (Oxford UP, 2004) and *The Social Life of the Japanese Language* (Cambridge UP, 2016). Who assumes a public voice and who does not will also figure into my discussion, as will the reception in their homeland of female novelists who "tell all" when writing in their native Japanese. I will then address the measure of freedom that French has accorded Aki Shimazaki in her choice of themes and writing style, and will place her among other female authors of the 1990s who chose to write in French instead of their first language. Her first five novels demonstrate an innovative narrative approach, that is, by focusing directly and minimally on retelling the history of the Second World War in Japan and other sensitive subjects. For this reason, her novels have been compared to the Japanese haiku, a poem in which an essential message is conveyed in merely seventeen syllables. The next part of my analysis will speak about the reception of Aki Shimazaki's in France, long held to be the place where the French literary and linguistic "canons" were decided. With their prize-winning quality, both in Canada and the Hexagone, Ms. Shimazaki's novels in her chosen language challenge the longstanding idea that the best Francophone literature must come from France, and not from other places where French is spoken or, in the case of this writer, adopted.

## EMPLACED VIOLENCE, MOBILITY, AND IDENTITY

### **Marionne Rohrleitner (The University of Texas at El Paso)**

Speaking the Unspeakable, from Port-au-Prince to Ciudad Juárez: The Ethics of Representation in Myriam J.A. Chancy's *What Storm, What Thunder* and Alessandra Narvaez Varela's *Thirty Talks Weird Love*

There is a longstanding scholarly tradition in ethnic American literature that reads fictional texts through the lens of trauma theory. Drawing on psychoanalytical theories that focus on "the talking cure", many multiethnic and/or immigrant American writers have claimed to "give a voice" to those whose stories have been silenced, marginalized, or distorted - often because of immediate or intergenerational trauma. In recent years, however, critique from both within and outside of ethnic communities have emerged that draw attention to the exploitative nature of some representations of violence, for example against women of color, which serve to perpetuate victimization through a voyeuristic lens rather than counteract violence and silencing. These critiques have been especially pronounced in the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake in January 2010, and narratives about the femicides in Ciudad Juárez. In my presentation I argue that two novels that were recently published by members of such communities offer a much-needed counterpoint to gratuitous representations of violence and suffering by choosing innovative narrative forms that resist rather than indulge exploitation. Myriam J.A. Chancy's award-winning 2022 novel *What Storm, What Thunder* does not shy away from sharing the horrors of the earthquake and its aftermath, but it does so in a polyphonic, complex manner that discourages capitalizing on the suffering of the Haitian people. Similarly, Alessandra Narvaez-Varela's 2021 YA novel *Thirty Talks Weird Love* chooses an unconventional form, a novel in verse, to tell the story of a young Mexican American girl who lives through the worst years of cartel violence and femicides in Ciudad Juárez. Both contemporary novels "tell the truth/but tell it slant" and in doing so encourage sincere and ethical engagement with traumatic experiences of Mexican and Haitian communities in the diaspora

### **Laura Roldán-Sevillano (University of Zaragoza)**

Highway to Growth: Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child* as an Updated African American Bildungsroman and Road Narrative in the Obama Era

The African American Bildungsroman has traditionally portrayed and exposed the effects of growing up in a country where racial prejudice is ubiquitous (Graham 2019, 134; Raynaud 2004, 106). In general terms, novels within this genre depict a journey from a childhood tormented by "the condition of being black in America" to a precocious maturity triggered by the protagonist's discovery of US society's racism (Raynaud 2004, 106). Hence, the successful fulfillment of this character's personal growth towards adulthood is normally related to the development of the capacity to "understand the workings of his/her oppression" (109). Although this has not always been the case, in some contemporary Bildungsroman with Black American protagonists there is some sense of optimism—usually with a degree of ambiguity—

despite the hardships of growing up in a country that continuously reminds the protagonists of their Otherness. This is the case of Toni Morrison's last fictional work published at the end of the Obama Era, *God Help the Child* (2015), which unlike the author's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), is not a truncated coming-of-age story. This last creation by the Nobel laureate writer revolves around the maturation journey of Lula Ann, a blue-black young woman haunted by a childhood trauma resulting from her light-skinned mother's rejection and mistreatment, an unmotherly behaviour caused by the latter's phobia about being exposed as an African American in the US society of the 1990s-2010s in which, ironically enough, discourses of colour-blindness and post-racism proliferated. Yet, as this paper aims to demonstrate, penned with a traditionally realist and straightforward style uncommon in Morrison, *God Help the Child* is also a twenty-first century road narrative which purposefully reverses this white and masculine genre popular in US fiction from a gender and racial/ethnic viewpoint by presenting Morrison's black heroine on a road trip of self-discovery, post-traumatic and personal growth. In this sense, as the paper will conclude, Lula Ann's journey could be read as the resignification and reoccupation of the American highway as an act of individual resilience and resistance towards a white supremacist and patriarchal system that keeps on alienating—even spatially—women and people of colour today.

### **Juan Ignacio Oliva (University of La Laguna)**

'Border Bullets': Sense of Place & Belonging in *Meditación fronteriza* de Norma Elia Cantú

Chicana theorist, academic, activist and thinker, Norma Elia Cantú (1947-), published in 2019 a selection of poetic texts entitled *Meditación fronteriza. Poems of Love, Life, And Labor*. Divided in six parts that cover physical borderlines and cultural boundaries—land, frontier, bodies, art, heritage and identity—and read as a whole, they embody both, the love for the land she (and the memory of her ancestors) inhabits, and the recognition of her rich and multiple roots, that are the product of several historical and traumatic racial encounters. This commingling of the physical and the ideological is key to the understanding of the message conveyed in Cantú's pieces: one of lyrical anagnorisis and political firmness when facing the Texas frontier as a polyglottal space affected by tensional oppositions. Thus, following new ecomaterialist analyses, such as ecotones (Jiang, Lloyd), eco-perma-bodies (Alaimo, Haraway) and the viscous porosity of borders (Tuana), this paper will tackle the tight connection the author feels for the territory, seen as a palimpsest of stories that converge and diverge at the same time. This polysemy of voices is crucial to understand the chiasmic fierce political denunciation and, equally, the passionate and intimate chant uttered by Cantú's voice in her collection. "Border bullets," in this sense, are accompanied by "miel de mesquite," in an attempt to give its true dimension to the lives jeopardized by the "dangerous times" the author admits to be presently living.

**15-16:30**

## **BLACK (SUPER) HEROES**

### **Mar Gallego (University of Huelva)**

The Afrofuturistic Reign of Wakanda: Intersections of Race and Gender

The release of the blockbuster *Black Panther* in 2018 had a major impact on American and global audiences, markedly affecting the critical perspectives on Afrofuturism from then onwards. The Afrofuturistic subgenre became very popular, as it was based on a combination of historical fiction, envisioned futures and African-based cosmologies. With the advent of the sequel *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* in 2022, this subgenre was further consolidated as it attracted major critical and audiences' attention to the movie theaters. Due to the two movies' unprecedented success, I would like to contend that Afrofuturism has finally become part of the mainstream, another saga within Marvel's superhero stories with its characteristic tropes such as patriotism, heroism, and technology advancement. But what is effectively compelling is to delve into the various ways in which gender and race intersect in these movies and are reconceptualized from an intersectional perspective. On the one hand, traditional gender expectations and roles are deconstructed, as both black masculinities and femininities are redefined. Both

men and women play powerful leading roles as strong, capable and intelligent individuals who work for the well-being of the community. On the other, the fact that the superheroes and superheroines are all black living in an all-black state on African soil helps to rethink the demeaning stereotypical designation to which African and African American people are still subjected to. Therefore, both movies intend to complicate univocal definitions of black people by emphasizing the enriching diversity of the African and African diasporic experience which should sustain alternative and empowering ways for healthier and interdependent forms of subjectivity and community.

### **Xelo Forés Rossell (Independent researcher)**

Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Black Panther*:

#### **A Shakespearean African Superhero for the 21st Century**

In 2016, the acclaimed African-American writer Ta-Nehisi Coates became the author of the script for Marvel's comic *Black Panther* with a series of episodes titled "A Nation Under Our Feet". This would be the origin for the box-office hit film version and its sequel, *Black Panther and Wakanda Forever*. *Black Panther* was created in the 1960's as a minor character for Marvel comics, inspired by the Pan-African movement and the fight for the civil rights. Finally, the success of the comic's revision by Coates has definitely contributed to make *Black Panther* an icon of blackness and black culture activism. Coates' narrative background and his poetic style have brought to the superhero complexity and literary density, while loading of political charge the whole serial comic. King T'Challa is the young heir of the *Black Panther* dynasty to the throne of Wakanda, a rich and technologically advanced African nation thanks to the exploitation of vibranium. This rare metal is also coveted by foreign countries and inner conspirators who want to dethrone the King Panther. These menaces and the decisions the monarch has to take in order to reconstitute his power will bring a deep conflict between the two sides of his personality: the king and the hero. That complex personality, which debates about the responsibilities and the consequences of his decisions over the nation, shows T'Challa as a Hamletian character full of Shakespearean shades. Thus, *Black Panther* has been transformed into a piece of popular culture which blends Shakespearean references with African culture to create a superhero for the times of Black Lives Matter. The analysis of both aspects literary and aesthetic will show how Coates' *Black Panther* becomes a Shakespearean African superhero to empower black people and show black culture to the global world in the 21st century.

### **John Goodie (University of Salamanca)**

#### **Horrors and Heroes of American Slavery in Selected 21st Century North American Ethnic Literature and History**

In a study of multicultural literature, the dominance of ignorance and prejudice in propagating and perpetuating oppression and marginalization of others is all too common, as is the denial or suppression of the identity of decolonized peoples. We even see the rewriting of history in favor of those in power; wherein the ideas of the oppressed are suppressed, as is the truth of this awful and real history. Furthermore, the African writer Chinua Achebe "has spoken of the imperative need for writers to help change the way the colonized world was seen, to tell their own stories, to wage 'a battle for the mind with colonialism' by 're-educating' readers" (qtd. in Boehmer 189). This paper is an attempt to do just that as it examines not only the violent treatment of the oppressed in the Horrors of chattel slavery, a treatment largely hidden and downplayed in subsequent periods of American history, but also the Heroes who fought for overcoming the abuse and oppression faced by the marginalized African American slaves of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Examples abound of the heroes who risked their lives to overcome slavery both in history and in fiction. Furthermore, we look at recent 21st century African American ethnic literature which still reflects the real bones of the violent oppression slavery was, so the truth can be brought out. This paper, therefore, presents "The Underground Railroad," literature by the 2017 Pulitzer Prize winning author Colson Whitehead, and also brings to the fore the Heroism of Harriet Tubman in her rescue of escaped slaves in the era of American slavery. We seek the truth as revealed in examining specific examples from the history of Tubman's metaphorical Underground Railroad and the fictionalized account of the physicalized Underground Railroad of Colson Whitehead, through a postcolonial lens.

## NEW NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA

**Juan Carlos Ontiveros Gómez (University of Oviedo)**

‘Past is in the Past. Got to Move Forward’: the Representation of Trauma in *Yellow Wife* (2021)

The seventies and eighties saw the emergence of trauma studies as a field with many researchers and writers contributing to the topic. Not too long after that trauma started to be explored in literary and cultural studies such as Holocaust Studies, Postcolonial literature, Black Studies, or Feminist Studies which allowed new voices to be heard. In the case of Black Studies, trauma studies coincided with the proliferation of neo-slave narratives in the early seventies, thus prompting interest in the representation of trauma as a legacy of slavery. The black experience for the most part has been plagued by violence, inequality, oppression, and racism, therefore authors of neo-slave narratives utilize trauma as a recurring theme to fill in the gaps of history, to tell the stories that many of their ancestors were not able to produce. In this paper, I will examine the way trauma is presented in Sadeqa Johnson’s novel *Yellow Wife* (2021), where she delves into Pheby’s life as she tries to get her freedom from a slave prison in Virginia. Pheby needs to endure her jailer’s cruelty and confront the traumatic experiences that occur to her by sacrificing the things that matter the most to her. Following Cathy Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), in which she offers an in-depth study of trauma in literature and the way it “does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned” (151). In Johnson’s novel, the traumatic past serves as a guidepost that allows Pheby to face her present and shape her future, which is what authors of neo-slave narratives aim to do by using trauma as an essential aspect in their novels. *Yellow Wife* mirrors the ongoing controversies over race in America, although set in mid-nineteenth century Virginia, the novel certainly fills in the gaps of history, and more importantly it pierces the silences left by the peculiar institution (Smith 2011, 22-23).

**Rosa Segarra Montero (University of València)**

“The dust around us listens, the walls see, the air pumped into this room tastes our emotions”: Moral Architecture in *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich

Esta presentación analiza una de las novelas distópicas feministas contemporáneas más recientes, *Future Home of the Living God* (2017), de Louise Erdrich, desde una perspectiva arquitectónica y de género. En esta novela, son distintas las instituciones penitenciarias que presentan una arquitectura panóptica de vigilancia y subyugación del cuerpo femenino, y que lo convierten en una anatomía política. De acuerdo con Erving Goffman (1961), las instituciones totales son aquellos establecimientos cuyo carácter envolvente o total está simbolizado por una barrera que neutraliza toda relación social con el exterior y la posibilidad de marchar. Esta barrera se hace presente a través de elementos físicos como puertas con cerradura, muros elevados, alambres de espino, acantilados, agua, bosques o páramos. En este grupo de instituciones, Goffman incluye las cárceles y los hospitales psiquiátricos, que recuerdan a los espacios heterotópicos de desviación distinguidos por Michel Foucault en *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology* (1998): las residencias de ancianos, los hospitales psiquiátricos y las cárceles. Foucault también destaca las heterotopías de crisis, aquellos espacios que pueden desencadenar no solo un cambio físico, sino también un estado de crisis o transformación biológica. Todas estas instituciones pueden considerarse arquitecturas morales, esto es, espacios públicos cuya estructura forma parte de su discurso; un discurso que, asiduamente, potencia la segregación y opresión de sus pacientes, considerados una amenaza para la sociedad circundante. Las heterotopías de crisis y desviación o instituciones totales, si utilizamos el léxico de Goffman, son, por tanto, organismos que operan bajo los caprichos de la sociedad y que limitan la libertad física de sus confinados. De acuerdo con Peter Johnson (2006), a diferencia de las heterotopías de la cultura primitiva y del siglo XIX, que marcaban el comienzo de distintos ritos de iniciación o *rites de passage*, las heterotopías modernas pueden relacionarse más bien con ritos de segregación, exclusión y dislocación, pues están destinadas a separar aquello que se desvía de lo ‘normal’. En este artículo, analizaré la arquitectura moral de los espacios heterotópicos presentes en *Future Home of the Living God* (2017), la novela distópica y especulativa de Louise Erdrich, para así demostrar cómo el diseño de estos espacios (hospitales carcelarios), con la ayuda del personal sanitario, participa activamente en el biocolonialismo, es decir, en la explotación y el abuso físicos de la protagonista y, por consiguiente, en su progresivo deterioro psicológico.

**Vanesa Lado-Pazos (University of Santiago de Compostela)**

**“Us here, us here, us ever here”: Invisibility and Resistance in Jesmyn Ward’s “Mother Swamp”**

Jesmyn Ward has become a fundamental voice in today’s African American literary landscape. Her latest short story, “Mother Swamp” (2022), engages with a topic often overlooked in American racial history: marronage. Through the character of Afice, a girl coming of age amid the devastation of her community, the narrative embarks on the historical reconstruction of a fictional, all-female maroon settlement. Founded by a pregnant runaway slave, the now decimated group had survived and flourished for nine generations hidden in the Louisiana swamps, disturbed only by the youth’s reproductive expeditions to a fellow secluded community of Manilamen. This paper stems from a reflection on the status of invisibility, and more specifically its strategic use through what Esther Peeren has termed the “agency of invisibility” (2014). This critical analysis seeks to explore the manner in which this story can be read as predicating on the representation of African Americans in the annals of the United States history. Thus, the marginalization of marronage in historical accounts works as an attempted erasure of these acts of resistance that contravene the discourse of inferiority upon which the enslavement and subjugation of African peoples was justified, as well as the fallacious rhetoric of the institution’s benevolence. The narrative archeology performed by contemporary African American authors in recuperating these voices moves beyond narratives of victimization and employs the past as a model to face the current challenges of structural racism. Furthermore, the tale that Ward crafts is informed by the critical debates of our time, as such, she tackles inter-ethnic relations and the legacies of slavery alongside with a defining gendered and environmentalist perspective. In this exercise, cultural memory is outlined both as a lens through which those invisibilized are foregrounded, and as a productive tool through which to articulate a social movement for racial equality.

**Celia Cores Antepazo (Universidad de Salamanca)**

**“And we shall still love you”: Reading Resilience Affectively  
in Colson Whitehead’s *The Nickel Boys***

In his “Christmas Sermon on Peace” pronounced on the Christmas Eve of 1967, Martin Luther King Jr urges black churchgoers to confront their “most bitter opponents” in the name of classic Greek agape, i.e., unconditional love towards all humankind: “We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. . . Throw us in jail, and we shall still love you” (74). Whilst enduring the traumatic experience of attending racially segregated Nickel Academy, a sadistic juvenile facility for boys, African American student Elwood Curtis holds Dr King’s words close to his heart. Nonetheless, Elwood’s hopeful thoughts are confronted with fellow student Jack Turner’s cynicism, who has lost faith in breaking the cycle of white supremacy and advises El to “quit [his] eager-beaver shit” (Whitehead 53) if he wants to make it out of Nickel alive. Seemingly written from Elwood’s point of view and moving between the 1960s and the 2010s, the narrative attends to his escape journey into “the free world” (Whitehead 86) while also revealing that the aftermath of trauma persists in the memory, thus making it eventually inescapable. Whitehead carefully constructs two distinct notions of resilience: one transformative, another adaptative; one loving and hopeful, another hateful and acquiescent; one of refusal, another of acceptance. Often defined as the capacity of humans to withstand “shocks by being able to adapt, renew, and even thrive in the face of adversity while keeping their essence” (Fraile-Marcos), resilience, along with love, hate, and fear, stands at the core of *The Nickel Boys*. Thus, this paper explores Elwood and Turner’s journey of endurance from the times of Civil Rights Movement to the era of Black Lives Matter, whilst considering both African American subjects as victims of an emerging neoliberalism that highly impacts their ability to understand and resist racial oppression.