AWP 2024 Event Outline

EVENT
Dazzling Multiplicity of the Actual: Nonfiction Hybridity & Intersectional Form
Thursday, February 8, 2024, 1:45 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Room 2102B, Kansas City Convention Center, Street Level

EVENT DESCRIPTION
Conventional approaches to nonfiction emphasize single stories, linear revelations, and verifiable facts, but pressure to conform to familiar narrative modalities can silence those who write from marginalized and non-normative perspectives. In this panel, five writers of hybrid and intersectional nonfiction discuss how their work disrupts norms, shatters singular narratives, and complicates facts—embracing instead the power of blended genres, multiple identities, and prismatic points of view.

EVENT CATEGORY
Nonfiction Readings

EVENT ORGANIZERS & MODERATORS
This event was organized by Jen Soriano and Barrie Jean Borich. The moderator is Barrie Jean Borich.

EVENT PARTICIPANTS
Barrie Jean Borich (she~they); Jen Soriano (she~they); Julie Marie Wade Constance Collier-Mercado; Marco Wilkinson. Bios listed below.

PANEL STRUCTURE
This panel will be structured as a conversation among panelists as well as with the audience. The Moderator will welcome attendees, ask one of the panelists to share a land acknowledgment, give reminders for accommodations and accessibility, and provide some context for the panel and how it came about. The moderator will introduce the panelists, and each will then read a 3-minute excerpt of their work to set the tone of the panel and offer craft examples to revisit in discussion (15). Panelists takes turns “co-moderating”—reflecting back a theme from the readings and directing a question toward the rest of the panelists (40). Moderator opens up to Q&A, stacks questions from the audience and prioritizes questions for panelists to discuss (15)
PANEL AGENDA

[Welcome and housekeeping—10 mins]

Welcome to **Dazzling Multiplicity of the Actual: Nonfiction Hybridity & Intersectional Form**. Thank you all for being here. We really appreciate you spending the next seventy-five minutes with us.

We will begin with a **Land Acknowledgement**.

**A few reminders before we get going:**

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel (speaking now) know, and a printed copy will be delivered to you.
- Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
- Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
- Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
- Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

This panel will be structured as a conversation among panelists as well as with the audience. **Today’s panelists are:**

**Barrie Jean Borich** (she~they) is the author of the lyric memoir *Apocalypse, Darling*. Her hybrid essay *Body Geographic* won a Lambda Literary Award, and her memoir *My Lesbian Husband* won a Stonewall Book Award. A professor at DePaul in Chicago, Borich edits *Slag Glass City*, a journal of the urban essay arts.

**Jen Soriano** (she~they) is a Filipinx writer who has received Artist Trust, Jack Jones, Hugo House, and Vermont Studio Center Fellowships. Her debut essay collection *Nervous*, named one of the best nonfiction debuts of 2023 by Poets & Writers, is now available from Amistad/HarperCollins.

**Julie Marie Wade’s** most recent collections are *Otherwise: Essays* (Autumn House 2023), *Fugue: An Aural History* (Diagram/ New Michigan Press, 2023), and *Skirted: Poems* (The Word Works, 2021). She is a professor of English & Creative Writing at Florida International University in Miami.
**Constance Collier-Mercado** is an experimental writer/artist whose work explores dialectical, multilingual, and equivocal spaces. A MacDowell, Hambidge Center, and Jack Jones Fellow based in Atlanta, she is influenced by the Black Arts Movement, cycles of repetition and revision, and the Afrosurreal.

**Marco Wilkinson** is an assistant professor of literary arts and cultural studies in the literature department at UC San Diego. His focus is on creative nonfiction and eco-writing. He is the author of *Madder: A Memoir in Weeds* and his work has appeared in *Ecotone, Kenyon Review, DIAGRAM*, and elsewhere.

[Panelist Set-Up and Readings—20 mins]

This panel came about through ongoing conversations between Jen Soriano and myself, beginning when they were my student working on a critical paper on nonfiction form as part of the completion of their MFA degree. As we discussed all the reasons we loved (as we wrote in the panel description) nonfiction works that *disrupt norms, shatter singular narratives, and complicate facts*, we came upon the idea that the examples we were drawn to, by writers with all manner of intersecting marginalized identities, were as much intersectional in identity and scope as they were made up of myriad genre and subgenre forms—which then led to Jen’s marvelous craft essay “Multiplicity from the Margins: The Expansive Truth of Intersectional Forms” (which you can all read online in *ASSAY: A JOURNAL OF NONFICTION STUDIES*). In our panel today, five writers of hybrid and intersectional nonfiction, including Jen and myself, will address how hybridity informs our work and the work we write, read, and teach—and in doing so rejects the simplification of familiar linear narrativities and embraces the power of blended genres, multiple identities, and prismatic points of view.

We begin with three minutes of reading from the work of each of our panelists, after which we will all pose a question to the other panelists.

Barrie Jean Borich; Jen Soriano; Julie Marie Wade; Constance Collier-Mercado; and Marco Wilkinson will each read a 3-minute excerpt from their work.
Panelist Discussion—30 mins

Barrie Jean Borich:
I taught a class last year called Curious Poses: Hybrid and Experimental Nonfiction, where we read (works by many of the authors on this panel, among others) and wrote braided essays, segmented, collage, and montage memoirs, image + text works, hermit crab essays, nonfiction-fiction hybrids, nonfiction ekphrastics, speculative nonfiction, and lyric microprose works. I will get us started by asking the same question I asked my students: What are the possibilities of hybrid and experimental prose forms and how do these curious poses, fragmented accumulations, and borrowed forms render what we can’t get to through linear narratives?

Jen Soriano:
When we open ourselves up to hybridity, there can be a fine line between expression that is lyric ecstasy and expression that is slightly muddled confusion. How do you revise toward clarity, or is clarity a misguided goal?

Julie Marie Wade:
How have other panelists have found hybridity both widening and deepening their content; how do hybrid forms lend themselves to the braiding of personal and public histories in their work. I find this to be something continually surprising and exciting about the lyric essay for me—the range and intimacy possible in a less traditional structure. I want to learn more from fellow hybridists about their experience!

Constance Collier-Mercado:
How have you all used hybridity in your nonfiction to engage multiple conversations with readers—or different groups of readers—throughout a single piece? I'm interested in hybrid writing as an act of marronage or cultural crosstalk able to encode, redact, or otherwise obscure how much of my personal and cultural story is laid bare for the general public. What are your experiences with managing this kind of dual conversation—one at surface level and another under the table?

Marco Wilkinson:
Texts in some ways teach their readers how to read them, and in the process develop ever-evolving conventions of reading and textual legibility/intelligibility. How do you see the hybrid texts of the past thirty years or so having nurtured and evolved a readership at ease with encountering them? Is that ease a benefit or an obstacle to the work of hybrid writing?

Audience Q &A—15 mins
We will conclude in conversation with the audience.