2024 brings the centennial of two very different writers born in Kansas City. Evan S. Connell emerged from a prosperous white family. Vincent O. Carter grew up on the Black side of town, far removed from Connell’s world. Their respective fictional portrayals of Kansas City—Connell’s two novels of the Bridge family; Carter’s posthumous novel *Such Sweet Thunder*—serve in yin-yang fashion to illuminate how economic and racial differences operate in works of the imagination.

The moderator and panelists will bring complementary readings of Connell’s *Mrs. Bridge* and *Mr. Bridge* and Carter’s autobiographical novel, prompting surprisingly contemporary discussions of race in literary fiction, publishing, and author aspirations of the mid-20th century. Each panelist has a deep perspective on one or both of these authors, on the making of biographical and critical projects, and on the nature of reclaiming lesser-known and culturally diverse literary figures.

Organizer: Steve Paul

Moderator


Panelists

**Jesse McCarthy** is Assistant Professor in the departments of English and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. He is the author of the essay collection, *Who Will Pay Reparations on My Soul?*, winner of the 2022 Whiting Award for Nonfiction, and a novel, *The Fugitivities*. 
Gemma Sieff is a writer and editor. She interviewed Evan S. Connell for the *Paris Review* in 2014, and published an essay about Connell's life and work in *Harper's* magazine in 2022. She lives in New York City.

Panel Proceedings

After a brief welcome, the moderator will describe the range of the discussion and introduce each panelist, who will speak for 20 to 25 minutes about their work on one or both of the panel subjects and their observations of the pertinent racial and literary landscapes. Presentations will include selected readings from each author's work. After the panel discussion, there will be a 15-minute audience Q&A.

Moderator Questions

[tk]