

Eva Jungbluth

# Narrating Diaspora Across Media

Vera Nünning, Ansgar Nünning (Hg.)

RABE

Reihe Alternativer Beiträge zur Erzählforschung

RAVEN

Research on Alternative Varieties of Explorations in Narrative

Band 4

Members of the International Advisory Board

Jan Alber (Aachen)

Mari Hatavara (Tampere)

Ursula Heise (Los Angeles)

Liesbeth Korthals Altes (Groningen)

Stefan Iversen (Aarhus)

Susan Lanser (Boston)

Susana Onega (Zaragoza)

Sylvie Patron (Paris)

Roy Sommer (Wuppertal)

Shang Biwu (Shanghai)

Eva Jungbluth

# **Narrating Diaspora Across Media**

 Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

**Jungbluth, Eva:** Narrating Diaspora Across Media /

Eva Jungbluth.-

Trier : WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2018

(RABE ; Band 4)

ISBN 978-3-86821-746-9

Zugl.: Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Diss., 2015

D.30

Umschlaggestaltung: Brigitta Disseldorf

© WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2018

ISBN 978-3-86821-746-9

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Nachdruck oder Vervielfältigung nur mit  
ausdrücklicher Genehmigung des Verlags

WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier

Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier

Tel.: (0651) 41503, Fax: (0651) 41504

Internet: [www.wvttrier.de](http://www.wvttrier.de)

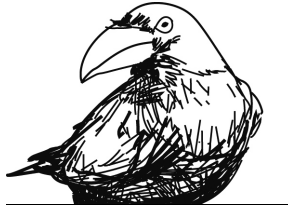
E-Mail: [wvt@wvttrier.de](mailto:wvt@wvttrier.de)

[www.facebook.com/wvttrier](http://www.facebook.com/wvttrier)

## The Raven

“Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,  
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore.”

(Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven*)



*“Raven is our version of what you call Coyote in the Southwest. Raven stirs things up and makes change happen. He catalyzes different interactions to occur. Whether you like it or not, Raven makes the people grow and change.*

[...]

*Maybe that’s how change starts – with someone getting angry enough to upset the apple cart, to initiate revolt, to cause trouble, like Raven did.”*

(indigenous story, quoted from Lewis Mehl-Madrona,  
*Narrative Medicine: The Use of History and Story in the Healing Process.*  
Rochester/Vermont: Bear & Company, 2007, pp. 60-61)

Sowohl die traditionelle Narratologie als auch die interdisziplinäre Erzählforschung haben in den letzten Dekaden einen anhaltenden Boom erlebt, der zur Entwicklung zahlreicher neuer Ansätze in einer zunehmend transgenerisch, intermedial und interdisziplinär orientierten Erzähltheorie geführt hat.

Die neue Buchreihe RABE/RAVEN trägt diesen Entwicklungen nicht nur Rechnung, sondern stellt ein Forum dar für Monographien und konzeptorientierte Sammelbände, die

- sich mit Erscheinungsformen des Narrativen in lange als ‚nicht-narrativ‘ eingestuftem Gattungen (z.B. Drama und Lyrik) oder in vernachlässigten Phänomenen und Texttypen (z.B. Rituale, Nachrichten, Alltagserzählungen) beschäftigen,
- Formen des Narrativen in anderen Medien (z.B. Cartoons, graphic novels, Film, bildende Kunst, Musik, Hyperfiktion, Erzählen in den neuen Medien) oder multimodales bzw. transmediales Erzählen untersuchen,
- narratologische Kategorien rekonzeptualisieren, neue narrative Formen untersuchen oder die Konzepte, Modelle und Methoden der klassischen und postklassischen Narratologie erweitern,
- Ansätze, Erkenntnisse und Methoden aus der Erzählforschung anderer Disziplinen (z.B. Geschichtswissenschaft, Linguistik, narrativer Medizin, Psychologie, Kognitionswissenschaft, Sozialwissenschaften) einbeziehen,
- Formen des langsamen Wandels (z.B. Altern, Evolution, Klimawandel, der durch digitale Technologien ausgelöster Geisteswandel, Krankheit, Artensterben) und andere Phänomene (z.B. Performances, Rituale, komplexe Systeme) erforschen, die auf nicht-narrativen Logiken basieren, sich einer narratologischen Analyse widersetzen und mit zentralen Kategorien der Narratologie nicht recht zu erfassen sind (z.B. Geschichten ohne Akteure, Ereignisse, Handlungen, Plot).

Darüber hinaus versteht sich die Reihe als ein Forum für innovative Publikationen und alternative Beiträge zur Erzählforschung, die die Grenzen der Narratologie ausleuchten und der Erzählforschung neue Gegenstände, Konzepte, Methoden und Horizonte erschließen. Sie ist auch ein Forum für Bände, die Definitionen des ‚Narrativen‘ im Sinne eines kognitiven Schemas, einer (Repräsentations-)Form oder eines semiotischen Artefakts weiterentwickeln, das Narrative von anderen Modi/Strategien der Sinnerzeugung abgrenzen oder es in seinem Verhältnis zum ‚Fiktionalen‘ bestimmen. In der Reihe erscheinen Bände in deutscher und englischer Sprache. Die Bände werden von den Herausgebern und/oder Mitgliedern des internationalen Beirats begutachtet.

Both traditional narratology and interdisciplinary narrative research have witnessed an ongoing boom during recent decades which has resulted in the development of a host of new approaches in an increasingly transgeneric, intermedial and interdisciplinary narrative theory.

The new book series RABE/RAVEN does not only reflect these developments, but offers a forum for monographs and concept oriented collective volumes which

- deal with forms of narrative in genres traditionally regarded as ‘non-narrative’ (e.g. drama and poetry) or with relatively neglected phenomena and text types (e.g. rituals, the news, narration in everyday contexts),
- explore forms of narrative in other media (e.g. cartoons, graphic novels, film, art, music, hyperfiction, storytelling in new media), and multimodal or transmedial storytelling,
- reconceptualise narratological categories, explore innovative narrative forms, or extend the range of concepts, models and methods of classical and postclassical narratology,
- take into consideration approaches, insights, and methods developed by narrative researchers working in other disciplines (e.g. history, linguistics, narrative medicine, psychology, cognitive science, the social sciences),
- examine forms of slow change (e.g. ageing, evolution, climate change, mind change as a result of the impact of digital technologies, illness, extinction of species) and other phenomena (e.g. performances, rituals, complex systems) that are based on non-narrative logics, and that challenge or defy narratological analysis and its key concepts (e.g. stories without actors, events, actions, and plot).

The series offers a forum for innovative publications and alternative varieties of explorations in narrative which gauge the limits of narratology and which open up new objects, concepts, methods and horizons for research in narrative studies. It is also a forum for volumes which advance definitions of narrative as a cognitive schema, as form or as semiotic artefact, which conceptualise narrative in contradistinction to other modes/strategies of meaning-making, or which probe into the relationship of narrative and fiction. The series publishes books in German and English. All volumes are peer reviewed by the editors and/or members of the international advisory board.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is a slightly revised version of my PhD thesis, which was submitted to the Faculty of Modern Languages (Faculty 10), Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, in 2015. It developed from my long lasting (research) interest in Anglophone migration and diaspora literatures and the dynamics of narratives and narrating. Focusing on cultural aspects of literary narratives in the context of diaspora gave me the opportunity to integrate fields and approaches in which these aspects play an important role, including cultural memory and media culture studies, and the increasingly context-oriented realms of narratology. This opportunity was both intriguing and challenging, and I am much obliged to the people, whose support and commitment contributed greatly to the development and completion of this study.

My very special and sincere thanks go to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Astrid Erll, for her expert advice and training in these fields, and for her continuous support and patience throughout the years, from the beginning of my research to the publication of this book. I also cordially thank my second supervisor at Goethe University, Prof. Dr. Frank Schulze-Engler, for his encouraging and knowledgeable critical comments. Furthermore, as part of the Joint Award PhD Programme between the Faculty of Modern Languages at Goethe University and the Faculty of Arts at Monash University Melbourne, my PhD thesis was also submitted to the latter in 2016. At Monash, I heartily thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Chandani Lokuge, on whose most valuable advice and encouragements before, during and ever since my research visit to Monash (2012-2013) I could always rely. I highly appreciate their marvellous support of my participation in the programme, which gave me the opportunity to connect between two exciting research environments – the Institute for English and American Studies (IEAS) at Goethe University and, especially, the Department for New Anglophone Literatures and Cultures (NELK), and the School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics (LLCL) at Monash Arts. This, of course, involves further people, and special thanks are due to the staff of LLCL for their warm reception and commitment during my research visit, particularly Professor Sue Kossew. Eventually, I am grateful to the International Office and the *Verein der Freunde und Förderer* at Goethe University for their support.

Furthermore, I am grateful for the opportunities I had at the IEAS and NELK for regular research exchange at several colloquia sessions on topics echoed in this study, including the Memory Studies Group, the colloquium Transculturality and Memory in the Anglophone World and the biannual NELK PhD colloquium. I warmly thank my then PhD fellows and colleagues for a wonderful and enriching time. In particular, I would like to dearly thank my colleague and friend Maria Dorr for a great time working together, for encouraging and humouring me in moments of pressure, and for sharing with me her expertise in memory studies, amongst others. Moreover, I thank Janneke Rauscher for her valuable comments on my writing on ‘space,’ Erin Högerle

for advising me in film theory, and Dr. Andrea Gremels for inspiring discussions on Caribbean literature in general and Díaz's *Oscar Wao*, in particular. My very special thanks, indeed, belong to Malte Schudlich for supporting and accompanying me throughout the development of this study with a unique combination of knowledgeable advice, professional backup and friendship.

After some slight revisions of the PhD thesis, I feel honoured that this study will now be published in the new RABE/RAVEN series on 'Research on Alternative Varieties of Explorations in Narrative,' and I sincerely thank the editors, Prof. Dr. Vera Nünning and Prof. Dr. Ansgar Nünning, for this opportunity. My special thanks also belong to Dr. Erwin Otto of Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (WVT) for his most helpful counselling on matters of publication and his patience, and to Anika Türkkan for her work on the manuscript.

This book would not have been possible without the tireless support of friends, of whom I would like to thank especially Tina Wagner, Gerd David, Janet Göppl, Nic Lindenberg and Frederike Felcht. It is dedicated, with my wholehearted gratitude, to Ira Jungbluth, Gisela and Ernst Jungbluth, and Klaus Wettstein.

Eva Jungbluth  
Hamburg, June 2018

## CONTENTS

I.	Introduction: Context, Narrative Form and Medium – Viewing Today’s Diaspora Literatures .....	1
II.	Diaspora Narratives .....	9
1.	Diaspora: Conceptions and Tensions .....	9
2.	Media Culture and Memory: Sharing Figures of Diaspora .....	27
2.1	From figures of diaspora to travelling schemata .....	27
2.2	Diaspora Narratives and media culture .....	34
2.3	Diasporic Memory .....	48
III.	Narrating Across Media .....	55
1.	Narrative Form Re-loaded: Narratology in the Postclassical Age .....	55
2.	Cultural and Transmedial Narratologies at the Crossroads .....	60
2.1	Narratology in/as Cultural Analysis .....	60
2.2	Cultural Narratology and Transmedial Conceptions .....	69
IV.	Narrating Diaspora in Verbal and Visual Narratives .....	81
1.	The Time-Space of Diaspora: Using the Chronotope for the Study of Culture and Narrative .....	81
2.	Journeys, Distance and the Semantics of Space .....	89
2.1	Multiple Journeys and Conceptions of Space .....	89
2.2	Novel: Jhumpa Lahiri, <i>The Namesake</i> .....	101
2.3	Film: Tony Ayres, <i>The Home Song Stories</i> .....	119
2.4	Graphic Narrative: Shaun Tan, <i>The Arrival</i> .....	138
3.	The ‘Homeland’ and its Histories: Diasporic Temporalities .....	157
3.1	History, Memory and ‘Fissures’ in Narrative Time .....	157
3.2	Novel: Junot Díaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> .....	170
3.3	Film: Atom Egoyan, <i>Ararat</i> .....	190
3.4	Graphic Narrative: GB Tran, <i>Vietnamerica: A Family’s Journey</i> .....	211
V.	Conclusion: Media Representations and Diasporic Imaginations .....	237
VI.	Works Cited .....	241

## LIST OF FIGURES

Snapshots from the films and details from the graphic narratives are printed in colour in cases where colours are particularly relevant for generating meaning, or when details would otherwise be difficult to recognise.

### Chapter IV 2.3 Tony Ayres, *The Home Song Stories*

Figure 1: Example I, Close-up Tom .....	123
Figure 2: Example II, Close-up Tom .....	123
Figure 3: Introduction: Family .....	127
Figure 4: Eyeline Match Rose .....	127
Figure 5: POV Shot, Arrival Melbourne 1964 .....	128
Figure 6: Arrival Melbourne 1964 .....	128
Figure 7: The Suburb I: Encounter .....	131
Figure 8: The Suburb II: Encounter .....	131
Figure 9: The Suburb III: Arrival .....	131
Figure 10: Framing Surveillance I .....	134
Figure 11: Framing Surveillance II .....	134
Figure 12: Staging Dependency .....	135
Figure 13: Mirrors: Distorted Space .....	135
Figure 14: The Mall: Spatialization I .....	136
Figure 15: The Mall: Spatialization II .....	136
Figure 16: Touch I .....	137
Figure 17: Touch II .....	137

### Chapter IV 2.4 Shaun Tan, *The Arrival*

Figure 1: Departure .....	144
Figure 2: The Voyage I: Zooming out .....	146
Figure 3: The Voyage II: Open Space .....	148
Figure 4: The Voyage III: Spatiotemporal Dimensions .....	148
Figure 5: The Voyage IV: Passengers .....	150
Figure 6: Suitcase and Crowd .....	151
Figure 7: Walking the City .....	153
Figure 8: Housing .....	154
Figure 9: Imagination and Memory .....	155

Chapter IV 3.3 Atom Egoyan, *Ararat*

Figure 1: Credits I ..... 195  
Figure 2: Credits II ..... 195  
Figure 3: Credits III ..... 195  
Figure 4: Credits IV ..... 195  
Figure 5: Shot and Dissolve: Spatiotemporal Layering ..... 196  
Figure 6: Sequencing I: Act of Painting, 1934 ..... 197  
Figure 7: Sequencing II: Gorky and Photograph, 1934 ..... 197  
Figure 8: Sequencing III: Gorky and Shoshan, “Ararat” ..... 197  
Figure 9: Sequencing IV: Ani’s Lecture, the ‘Present’ ..... 197  
Figure 10: Hands I ..... 200  
Figure 11: Hands II: Repetition and Dissolve ..... 200  
Figure 12: Touch I: Wiping Hands ..... 200  
Figure 13: Touch II: Camera Position ..... 200  
Figure 14: Performing the Past: Jedvet Bey in “Ararat” ..... 204  
Figure 15: Observing Performance: Film Set ..... 204  
Figure 16: The Film’s ‘Surface’: Footage Turkey I ..... 206  
Figure 17: The Film’s ‘Surface’: Footage Turkey II ..... 206  
Figure 18: Shot Raffi in Turkey ..... 206  
Figure 19: Temporal Layers I: Camera Display ..... 210  
Figure 20: Temporal Layers II: Camera Display and Voice-Over ..... 210  
Figure 21: Cut “Ararat”: Death March ..... 210

Chapter IV 3.4 GB Tran, *Vietnamerica: A Family’s Journey*

Figure 1: Legacies (p. 17) ..... 219  
Figure 2: Canvas ‘72: Temporal Layers (p. 23) ..... 220  
Figure 3: Blind Images (p. 24) ..... 222  
Figure 4: Father and Grandfather: Staging Distance (p. 198)..... 224  
Figure 5: ‘Box’ and ‘Archive’ (p. 151)..... 226  
Figure 6: Propaganda Poster Style (p. 186) ..... 228  
Figure 7: ‘Shock of Return’ (p. 201) ..... 232  
Figure 8: Return: Staging Absence (p. 204) ..... 233



# I. INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT, NARRATIVE FORM AND MEDIUM – VIEWING TODAY’S DIASPORA LITERATURES

## Narrating Diaspora: An Outline

In the course of the 1990s diaspora and migration literatures have become a vital branch of Anglophone ‘world literatures’ and a focus of English literary and cultural studies. Within this field, scholarly attention is devoted to literary examinations of diasporic experiences, which are marked by diverse forms of global migration and settlement, their dynamics, changes, and consequences as well as by transnational and transcultural exchanges. With the understanding of literature as a specific form of communication and expression that is interdependent with the cultural and social contexts of its production, literary research interest in diasporas has entailed an interdisciplinary practice ever since. Context- and content-sensitive analyses rely on conceptions of social and political sciences, historiography, anthropology, geography, philosophy, media studies, and more in order to grasp historical backgrounds and cultural mechanisms against which diaspora narratives are investigated and interpreted. Such interdisciplinary practice is inevitably necessary when dealing with a global phenomenon that is ancient and at the same time thoroughly contemporary in terms of migration and journeys, departure, arrival and settlement, forced displacement and exile, in terms of social structures and communities, of conflicts, economics, and politics of place.

In the first place, as Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur remind us, diaspora is a “human phenomenon – lived and experienced” (2003: 8), and as such it is inherently plural, consisting of various histories, experiences and memories that are again shaped across generations, gender and class; it is collective and personal, global and local, iterative but always new. Avtar Brah considers diaspora as consisting of “multiple journeys” that “may configure into one journey via a *confluence of narratives* as it is lived and re-lived, produced and reproduced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory” (1996: 183; emphasis in the original). The understanding of diaspora as ‘multiple journeys’ and a ‘confluence of narratives’ will become a thread throughout the following chapters, which focus on the significance and dynamics of narratives and narrating in diasporic contexts.

This book explores literary diaspora narratives along selected themes – motifs or ‘figures’ – that can be observed to be recurrent across the highly diverse body of diaspora literatures. These include, or connect to, for example, journeys and immigration procedures, arrival and settlement, questions of ‘home’ and belonging, cultural identities, family, history, (and family history), and collective and individual memories of displacement and the ‘homeland,’ which, again, vary from generation to generation. While engaging in context-oriented literary analysis, the present study focuses particularly on various forms of narrative representation in distinct media formats, including

novels, feature films and graphic narratives. By including also multimodal media beyond exclusively linguistic works, it traces the dynamics of narrative constructions across diverse medium-specific properties and devices, and explores the ways in which selected narratives individually engage with acts of storytelling. Furthermore, it views these narratives – and diaspora narratives in general – in the context of media culture, and considers literary acts of storytelling as communicative processes that demand a mutual engagement with stories and their ‘shape’. This interest in narrative forms and structures connects to approaches in narrative theory, and adds the central question of ‘how’ respective themes or figures are narrated across media. How, for example, do these media employ their properties and devices to stage the idea of ‘multiple journeys’ or meanings of ‘home’? How do they orchestrate intergenerational shifts in memorising and thinking about a homeland other than the one lived in?

As a method and theoretical approach to narrative form, such transmedial perspective combines two branches in narrative theory – transmedial narratology as concerned, basically, with the study of narrative phenomena across media, and cultural narratology, which encompasses studies of narrative forms in relation to their cultural and historical contexts. The intersection of literary and cultural studies (of studying cultures via their texts, and texts as cultural productions) constitutes an acknowledged field particularly since the 1980s and such emerging context-oriented approaches in New Historicism, feminism and postcolonial criticism, amongst others. Generally, in these approaches, context-oriented analysis is concerned with the relationship between the contents of narratives and the reality they mediate. Structural analysis, however, seemed to run against this interest, following Roland Barthes’ famous proclamation of the *Death of the Author* in 1967 as the gist of French structuralism. Narratology and ideological literary criticism have not been regarded, in principle, as attracting each other much, let alone cross-fertilise as theoretical approaches to literature.

At the same time, however, prominent literary and cultural theorists across the world have directed their attention toward narrative form as shaped by the content (and not merely the reverse) and the culture in whose context it is produced or constructed, involving certain practices, beliefs, knowledge, etc. Mikhail Bakhtin’s essays in *The Dialogic Imagination*, written between 1934 and 1942; Yuri Lotman’s semiotic investigations in *The Structure of the Artistic Text* and of cultural space (the ‘semiosphere’) in the 1970s; Fredric Jameson’s ‘ideology of form’ introduced in *The Political Unconscious* in 1981; Susan S. Lanser’s “Toward a Feminist Narratology,” proposed in 1986; and Mike Bal discussing the question “What’s the Point of Narratology?” in 1990 – they all provide points of references for today’s narrative theorists and for literary ideological critics who feel at home in what developed (also) during the 1990s toward today’s ‘postclassical’ narratologies. Narratology in the plural is characterised by this very interest in interfaces between structural analysis and content- and culture-oriented interpretation; the inspection of narrative forms and functions beyond printed literary texts, now including all media capable of telling stories (film, documentary, drama, graphic narratives, computer games, etc.); and the cognitive and reception-oriented analysis of narrative constructions.