

## CONVENORS

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**Østfold University College**  
Department of Languages, Literature and Culture

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# READING AND STUDYING NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA, CRISIS, AND ILLNESS

2-DAY SYMPOSIUM

ØSTFOLD UNIVERSITY COLLEGE,  
CAMPUS HALDEN, C1-007 ("VIP-ROOM"),  
2-3 OCTOBER 2023

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# OUR SYMPOSIUM

This two-day international symposium on trauma, crisis and illness narratives is connected to the new ELLA project "Literature in the Time of Crisis" at Østfold University College, and has been made possible by means of ELLA's generous funding.

The symposium investigates literature's potential to facilitate emotional reader engagement, ethical reflection, and (individual/collective) processing of traumatic memory and takes the 'embodied nature' of trauma and illness narratives as its point of departure. As trauma research has shown, traumatic experiences reshape both body and brain of an individual – and societies as a whole in the case of collective trauma (Van der Kolk 2014; Madigan 2020; Neria and Ataria 2016). In line with [ELLA's philosophy](#), this symposium will pay attention to:

- Language as the means both through which readers access texts and react to texts.
- How literature and languages (understood both as means of communication and as aesthetic-stylistic approaches to narratives) contribute to not only educating the mind in a narrow sense, but also the *heart* – that is, the deeply embodied, enactive, socially embedded, and affective nature of the human mind-body (Colombetti 2014).

Highlighting the crucial relevance of emotions both in reading and studying narratives of trauma, crisis, and illness, the symposium will also explore the concept of 'sensuous knowledge' developed by Salami (2020). In her words: "The truly hard problem is that the fragmented knowledge system in use today is unable to deal with the real issues confronting humanity because it neglects the experienced side of reality. Our educational systems are stale; they teach how to transform the brain but not the psyche; they explain how to design evolved societies but not how to be evolved citizens of them; they claim that emotions – central as they are to life – are incapable of explaining existence." (Salami 2020: 17)

In line with Salami's notion, El-Tayeb suggests an approach of 'collective affective ownership' when it comes to teaching and studying (postcolonial) trauma narratives, and argues for "focusing less on avoiding triggers than on strategies to deal with the anger, trauma, and sadness that invariably surface when addressing the experiences of communities of color under racial capitalism." (El-Tayeb in Hanhardt et al. 2020, 55).

The symposium stresses a comparative perspective and brings together presentations on textual case studies and contextualised class teaching experiences that address both the individual side and the social/collective side of trauma, crisis, and illness narratives.

# MONDAY, 2 Oct

<b>9.30 – 10.00</b>	Coffee & Welcome
<b>10.00 – 10.45</b>	<b>Annika Mörte Alling</b> (Østfold University College): The Role of Emotions in Literature Classes, or Why Are There No Tears in the University Corridors? (Chair: Rémi Armand Tchokothe)
<b>10.45 – 11.30</b>	<b>Yasemin Hacıoglu</b> (Volda University College): Emotions as Agency: Re-Framing Crises in Feminist Fictions Using a 4E Cognitive Perspective (Chair: Anje Müller Gjesdal)
<b>11.30 – 12.15</b>	Roundtable Conversation with <b>Elin Nesje Vestli</b> (Østfold University College): Literature in the Time of Crisis (Chair: Natalia Igl)
<b>12.15 – 13.15</b>	Lunch

<b>13.15 – 14.00</b>	<b>Wladimir Chávez</b> (Østfold University College): Testimonies from the Madhouse: Perspectives on Trauma and Mental Illness from Both the Patient and the Caregiver (Chair: Olga Michael)
<b>14.00 – 14.45</b>	<b>Johanna Chovanec</b> (University of Vienna): Narrating Neurodiversity: The Autism Spectrum in Literature (Chair: Yasemin Hacıoglu)
<b>14.45 – 15.15</b>	Coffee
<b>15.15 – 16.45</b>	Joint Working Session 1: Short Presentations and Discussion of Recommended Reading
<b>16.45</b>	End of Day 1
<b>18:30</b>	Network Dinner

# TUESDAY, 3 Oct

<b>9.45 – 10.15</b>	Coffee & Recap
<b>10.15 – 11.00</b>	<b>Rémi Armand Tchokothe</b> (University of Vienna): Students' Sensuous Power: Using Emotional Resources in Teaching Rwanda 1994 (Chair: Elin Nesje Vestli)
<b>11.00 – 11.45</b>	<b>Olga Michael</b> (Independent Scholar, Cyprus): Tracing Wounds in Literary Fiction and Poetry of and on Cyprus (Chair: Annika Mörte Alling)
<b>11.45 – 12.45</b>	Lunch
<b>12.45 – 13.30</b>	<b>Anje Müller Gjesdal</b> (Østfold University College): Trauma and Filiation in Marguerite Duras' <i>Savannah Bay</i> (Chair: Wladimir Chávez)

<b>13.30 – 14.15</b>	<b>Natalia Igl</b> (Østfold University College): Re-Lived Experiences, Multilayered Lives: Violence, Trauma, and Agency in Postmigrant German Literature (Chair: Johanna Chovanec)
<b>14.15 – 14.45</b>	Coffee
<b>14.45 – 16.45</b>	Joint Working Session 2: Short Presentations and Discussion of Recommended Reading
<b>16.45 – 17.15</b>	Wrapping Up & Publication Prospects
<b>18.30</b>	On-Site Programme, TBA

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## **The Role of Emotions in Literature Classes, or Why Are There No Tears in the University Corridors?**

The role of emotions and of affective engagement in our relation to literature is a research area in rapid evolution since the "affective turn" at the beginning of the 21st century, thanks to scholars like Rita Felski (e.g. 2008, 2015, 2020), Patrick Colm Hogan (2011, 2018), Suzanne Keen (2007), Martha Nussbaum (2001), Jenefer Robinson (2005) and Jean-François Vernay (2013, 2016).

Notwithstanding, there still seems to be little room for emotion in literature courses at the university today, and in the academic world in general, as Rita Felski stresses. Why is that, despite all the research pointing to the absolute necessity of emotional attachment in literary studies, there are no tears in the university corridors?

This subject will be central in my talk. If it is a matter of lack of time and space in the courses, how can we circumvent these challenges? And how can we meet the objection that emotional responses are not possible to evaluate in exams? How do we create a balance between a more subjective approach and the always also necessary distanced and critical reading? To go even further, how do we make experiences of passion and attachment for literature become a part of the knowledge that we want to transmit to our students?

Thus, my talk will try to relate theory to practical questions. The empirical point of departure will be observations made in the teaching situation, based on oral and textual productions by university students of French literature at Østfold University College.

## **Short bio**

Annika Mörte Alling is Associate Professor of French literature, PhD in 2003, researcher and teacher at Lund University 1995-2020, from 2021 at Østfold University College. Research interests are the French nineteenth-century novel (e.g. Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert) the role and function of literature, the role of emotions in literature and teaching, mimetic desire and space/place in literature.

2016-2021 active within the research programme "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Dynamics in World Literatures" (worldlit.se), where she has been coeditor of two anthologies, the last one recently published by Bloomsbury: *Literature and the Making of the World: Cosmopolitan Texts, Vernacular Practices* (2022). Her chapter treats images of Paris in novels by Balzac and Flaubert. She has also published studies on the translation and reception of French literature in Sweden in the nineteenth century, the "bovaryism" of Jules de Gaultier, endings in Balzac and mimetic desire in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac.

## **Recent publications**

Mörte Alling, Annika. "The Making of Paris in Novels by Balzac and Flaubert" (p. 149-183). In: *Literature and the Making of the World. Cosmopolitan Texts, Vernacular Practices*. Ed. Annika Mörte Alling, Helena Bodin, Stefan Helgesson. Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, New York, London, Oxford, 2020.  
[0.5040/9781501374180.ch-4](https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501374180.ch-4)

Mörte Alling, Annika. « On oublie trop souvent de faire vivre les textes littéraires »: Entretien avec Jean-François Vernay. À propos de *La séduction de la fiction*, Paris, Hermann, 2019. Propos recueillis par Annika Mörte Alling. *Cahiers de narratologie*, 2022. Nr 42.  
<https://doi.org/10.4000/narratologie.14019>

## Wladimir Chávez

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### Testimonies from the Madhouse: Perspectives on Trauma and Mental Illness from Both the Patient and the Caregivers

The books *Manicomio: Una Historia Real* [Mental Asylum: a True Story], by Spaniards Montse Batalla and Xevi Domínguez; and *Locas* [Crazy Women], by Argentinian writer Lucía Mazinghi, are dramatic testimonies of people who have spent time in psychiatric hospitals. These are examples of pathographies that portraits the challenges and the fight against mental illness, relying heavily on visual language and a first-person perspective. *Manicomio* is a graphic narrative whose story is told by the view of a patient. In *Locas*, the testimony has been written by a person who was a caregiver for 20 years in a neuropsychiatric hospital of Buenos Aires. In addition to the book, *Locas* has a fanzine with simple but expressive drawings.

For the theoretical approach to the narrative of illness, this research considers reflections of scholars such as Thomas Couser, who has published *Recovering bodies: illness, disability, and lifewriting* (1997), and Anne Whitehead (*Trauma fiction*, 2004). Regarding the field of graphic narratives, theories by Susan Squier, who wrote "Literature and Medicine, Future Tense: Making It Graphic" (2008), Alison E. Germaine ("Disability and Depression in Thor Comic Books", 2016), Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott (*How Picturebooks Work*, 2006) will also be applied.

### Short Bio

Wladimir Chávez was born in Quito, Ecuador. He has a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing in Spanish (New York University), and a Ph.D. in Latin American Studies, with a major in Literature (University of Bergen). Currently he works as an Associate Professor at Østfold University College (Norway). He is author of several articles published in scholarly journals such as *Dialogía*, *Variaciones Borges*, *Revista Iberoamericana*, and *Revista Caracteres*.

### Recent Publications

Chavez, Wladimir Alfredo (2022). "Broken Alliances, Resumed Alliances. Latin American Migrant Literature in Encuentros [Encounters, 1997]". In Orban, Franck & Larsen, Elin Strand (Ed.), *Living Alliances, Leaving Alliances: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Waxmann Verlag. ISSN 978-3-8309-4449-2. p. 47–59.

Chavez, Wladimir Alfredo (2021). "Versos para sobrevivir. Naufragio y poesía en Aleyda Quevedo y Juan Secaira". *Revista Letral*. ISSN 1989-3302. p. 195–217.



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## „Narrating neurodiversity: the autism spectrum in literature“

Recent years have seen an increase in academic work on health humanities, defined as an interdisciplinary and sometimes activist field of study engaging with the notion of medical and psychological ‘well-being’ from the perspective of arts and literature. Despite a surge of contributions on mental health, however, research on autism as a neurodiverse condition and its relation to the humanities has remained limited. This is all the more surprising in light of the prominence of autism in public debates, and as a motif in films, series, documentaries and literature. Until the 1990s, representations of autism were scarce and mostly shaped by stereotypical portrayals such as the figure of Raymond in the 1988 film *Rain Man*. In the early 2000s, popular novels such as Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) or the TV series *The Big Bang Theory* (since 2007) started presenting an image of the socially awkward, yet loveable and brilliant male autistic nerd. While these popular portrayals of autism were usually the work of neurotypical authors, more recently autistic voices have made themselves heard as novelists, producers and youtubers, contributing to a pluralisation of discourses on what it means to be autistic. Against this backdrop, this talk approaches autism in contemporary literature: how is autism represented in literary texts? Do images of autism – or of protagonists with autism – fundamentally diverge depending on whether authors approach autism from an outsider’s perspective, such as in Graeme Simsion’s *The Rosie Project* (2013), or whether the novel is autobiographically inspired, as in the case of Judith Visser’s *Zondagskind* (2019)?

Is there a difference between autistic and non-autistic authors in how they portray autism, especially with regard to the reproduction of stereotypes? Based on a selection of texts published over the last decade, the analysis is set to put a particular focus on the aestheticization of moments portrayed as autistic crisis and/or strength.

## Short Bio

Johanna Chovanec is a researcher and lecturer at the University of Vienna where she teaches at the departments of Comparative Literature and Near Eastern Studies. She studied comparative literature at the University of Vienna and Istanbul Bilgi University and held scholarships from the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes). During her doctoral studies, Johanna was a guest researcher at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, the University of Oslo, and the University of Amsterdam. Prior to embarking on her PhD, she worked as a researcher for the EU Horizon 2020 project “FEUTURE: The future of EU-Turkey relations” at Sabancı University in Istanbul. Johanna is a co-editor of *Narrated Empires: Perceptions of Late Habsburg and Ottoman Multinationalism* (Palgrave, 2021) and has published on modern Turkish literature, comparative empire studies, the post-imperial narrative, and identity construction in Europe and Turkey. Her book manuscript *Turkey’s Occidental Condition: Images of Self and Other in Early Republican Literature* examines East-West dynamics in modern Turkey. Johanna’s post-doctoral project is set to examine mental health narratives, with a focus on intersections between literature and neurodiversity.

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## **Trauma and Filiation in Marguerite Duras' Savannah Bay**

*Savannah Bay* by Marguerite Duras (1982) represents two women, the ageing Madeleine, and the Young Woman who tell a foundational story, or the legend, of two young lovers and of a young girl who committed suicide on the day she gave birth to a child.

*Savannah Bay* deals with the memory of trauma and loss, and questions how such events can be reconstituted and reconstructed through language, and to what extent they change and remain the same for the ageing subject.

I focus on the linguistic features that contribute to the representation of Madeleine's communication of trauma and her faltering memory, specifically the repetition of the story as well as the verb forms of the conditionnel passé and the imparfait which creates an impression of unreliability, of the unreal as well as of the original trauma as being situated in a mythical place and time.

I interpret these discursive features as indicative of the breakdown of communication that accompanies ageing and trauma, but they could also be read as a dialogue with the young woman and therefore as indicative of the possibility, the potential of communication, rather than its breakdown and futility. Thus, we may understand the play as dialogic, opening for the co-construction of memory and shared history, rather than as two monologues that never meet, and that are unable to reconstruct the past trauma.

This is further strengthened by the bond of filiation, of generations and family that link Madeleine and the Young Woman, which, I argue, also challenges an individualistic view of the place of the ageing person in our society.

## **Short Bio**

Anje Müller Gjesdal is associate professor of French language at Østfold University College, where she teaches French language and sociolinguistics. Her current research focuses on the linguistic and discursive representation of gender, migration and exile.

## **Recent publications:**

Gjesdal, A. M. (2022). Å finne sin egen stemme. «Skeiv» flerspråklig i Fatima Daas' *La petite dernière*. In. Barstad, G. et al. (eds.). *Fortellinger om migrasjon: Skandinavisk, tysk,- fransk- og spanskpråklig samtidsliteratur*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Eide, L., C. Skalle & A. M. Gjesdal (2022). Intercultural Competence in the Foreign Language Classroom. Pedagogical Applications of Literary Texts on Migration and Exile. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2022.2042842>



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## **Emotions as Agency: Re-Framing Crises in Feminist Fictions Using a 4E Cognitive Perspective**

This paper builds on the classroom experience of teaching Charlotte Dacre's radical novel *Zofloya* (1806). While undergraduate students were comfortable with discussing the heroine as a passive victim, there was initial resistance to the notion that she becomes a conscious perpetrator of violent responses. This oversight mirrors critical approaches to the novel: while *Zofloya* challenges representations of gendered violence during a time of a backlash to feminism in British politics, the heroine's responses have mostly been interpreted through the historicist lens of medicalised disorder (Hoeveler 1998; Craciun 2005; Zigavorich 2020). Underexplored are the protagonist's experiments with progressively reframing her gendered emotions and actions. I will discuss the potential of using 4E cognitive approaches to reconsider such extreme responses, from representations of passive responses to crises, to methods of enabling the reader to practice the imagining and embodiment of new choices for behaviour. 4E cognitive studies recognises reading as an embodied, haptic, and material process; through this perspective, fictional narratives can be understood as curating these experiences in the development of socio-emotional skills (Mangen et al., 2019; Kucirkova and Kamola 2022; Kukkonen 2020). I argue that within this approach, the distinction between affective engagement on the one hand, and emotions on the other, can theorise how narratives such as Dacre's *Zofloya* challenge how we perceive gendered emotions as "natural".

In particular, I draw on the distinction the psychologist Lisa Feldman Barrett makes between "emotions", as a conceptual tool enabled through language, and "affect", which Barrett terms a 'general sense of feeling' (Barrett 2017, 72). I argue that expanding this critical distinction within narrative study – especially where the protagonists are shown to practice feeling in new ways – can enrich discussions of how feminist fictions utilise the representation of creative responses to gendered violence, to also represent methods of practicing agency.

## **Short Bio**

Yasemin Hacıoğlu is Associate Professor of English Literature, Culture and Didactics at Volda University College, Norway. She defended her PhD in autumn 2021 at the University of Oslo, in association with the research group "Literature, Cognition, and Emotions". Since then, she has held lecturing positions at the University of Oslo, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and the University of Stavanger. She is a committee member of the international "Women's Studies Group 1558 – 1837", is interested in developing the intersection of cognitive studies, feminist scholarship, and material culture, and has a monograph forthcoming with Bloomsbury US titled *Thinking through Poems: Composition, Emotion, and Decision-Making in Romantic-Era Women's Novels*.

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### **Re-Lived Experiences, Multilayered Lives: Violence, Trauma, and Agency in Postmigrant German Literature**

As a formative part of contemporary German literature, so-called postmigrant literature deals with topics of social conflict, racialized violence, and individual/collective trauma against the backdrop of (generationally passed on) experiences of migration, marginalization and othering. Novels such as Fatma Aydemir's *Ellbogen* ("Elbow", 2017) and Olivia Wenzel's *1000 serpentinaen angst* ("1000 serpentinaen of fear", 2020) deal with scenarios of exclusion and identity, of ubiquitous social aggressions and racist violence against their protagonists, and not least of (post-)traumatic stress and the radically embodied effects of permanent alertness. However, novels like those by Wenzel and Aydemir do not only put into words the (re-)lived experiences and effects of marginalization and victimization. Rather, they utilize narrative strategies such as multiperspectivity or second person narration to negotiate and manifest possibilities of agency and – as I aim to show – have the potential to engage their readers in a process of developing their 'sensuous knowledge' (Salami 2020) about the shared experiences of multilayered lives and the crucial importance of epistemic justice (Medina 2013).

In my presentation, I will argue for the importance of studying postmigrant German literature both in the literature classroom as well as in the context of intercultural learning and shed light on postmigrant German literature's potential (1) to portray contemporary discourses of individual and collective trauma, and at the same time offer means of empowerment and remedy, (2) to utilize narrative strategies

of polyphony and dialogic discourse and engage readers' senses and emotions, and (3) to relate reality / lived experiences and fiction to negotiate epistemic (in)justice.

### **Short Bio**

Natalia Igl is Associate Professor in German Literature and Cultural Studies at Østfold University College, Norway, and an associate researcher at University of Oslo's interdisciplinary hub "Literature, Cognition and Emotions". Previously, she was Assistant Professor in Modern German Literature (University of Bayreuth) and German Linguistics (Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich). In her latest project as Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow in Comparative Literature at University of Oslo, she studied the radical forms of reader engagement in contemporary multimodal novels. Her research interests lie inter alia in complex perspectival strategies in narrative, interplays of literature's materiality and the embodied reader, (postmigrant) contemporary German literature, and the "aesthetics of observation" in literature from (German) modernism to the present.

### **Recent Publications**

2023. "Stylistic Design Elements of Literary Texts." In: *Language and Emotion. An International Handbook*. Volume 3, edited by Gesine Lenore Schiewer, Jeanette Altarriba, and Bee Chin Ng. (HSK 46/3) Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 1511–1528. DOI: 10.1515/9783110795486-008

2022. "Making Sense of the Material: Multisensory Reader Involvement in Contemporary Multimodal Novels." *Art Style, Art & Culture International Magazine* 10 (September 2022, Special Issue on Multimodality): 71–85. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7020556

## Olga Michael

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### Tracing Wounds in Anglophone Literary Fiction and Poetry of and on Cyprus

Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021) attempts to narrate collective and private traumas stemming from the (post-)colonial, conflict-ridden, and partitioned status of Cyprus, through the private story of its protagonists, Ada Kazantzakis, her Greek-Cypriot father, Costas, and her Turkish-Cypriot mother, as well as that of the fig tree planted in their garden in their family home in UK. Casting a fig tree as one of its narrators, the novel foregrounds Cypriot wounds that have remained silenced in the preoccupation with human traumas by turning readers' attention to environmental injustices that affect, as they also mirror, other forms of violence suffered by the island and its inhabitants, reshaping and scarring their respective identities, and causing migratory movements and diasporic subject formations as those of its protagonists – human and non-human alike.

(Post-)colonial wounds, traumas and diasporic subject formations also constitute core aspects of Anthony Anaxagorou's poem 'After the Formalities' (2019). Rather than focusing on traumatic events themselves (British colonization and the 1974 escalation of the Cyprus conflict), in this presentation, I explore their residues on human lives that are marked by different forms of (visible) otherness and the insidious, daily trauma (Root 1992) that accompanies it.

Drawing from postcolonial trauma theory (Craps 2013), affect (Ahmed 2004; Ahmed 2007) and decolonial theory (Mignolo and Vazquez 2013; Mignolo and Gaztambide-Fernández 2014), I look into what different colonialisms have morphed into after the end of the island's colonization by the British, and how they shape, at the same time as injuring, Cypriot lives in the British metropolis and its island (post-)colony. I argue that in exposing contemporary colonial wounds, the selected texts also point to the power of (colonial) language to (re-)produce and sustain historical erasures and injuries, demanding decolonized, postcolonial reading acts that pay attention to emotion as well as to reason in order to unpack the complexities of the wounding itself, and to thus open up space for decolonial healing.

### Short Bio

Olga Michael has recently completed her monograph, *Human Rights in Graphic Life Narrative: Reading and Witnessing Violations of the 'Other' in Anglophone Works* (forthcoming in September 2023 with Bloomsbury Academic) during her postdoctoral research fellowship (2020-2022) in the English Studies department at the University of Cyprus. She has written chapters for *The Palgrave Handbook of Testimony and Culture* (2023), *Representations of 21st Century Migration into Europe* (2022), *Arts of Healing: Cultural Representations of Trauma* (2020), and *Autofiction in English* (2018). Her articles have appeared in journals such as *The Journal of Perpetrator Research; Studies in Twentieth and Twenty-First-Century Literature; Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly; a/b: Auto/Biography Studies; Life Writing; Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, and *Image Text*. She has also taught various courses on Anglophone literature in tertiary education in Cyprus.

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### **Students' Sensuous Power: Using Emotional Resources in Teaching Rwanda 1994**

After spending many years searching for the right framing and the necessary energy for designing a course on the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, I came up during the summer term 2021 with a Master's course titled: 'Black Skin, white bones': Rwanda 1994 and Humanity's collective Memory(cide). I spent half of my winter term break compiling the course materials for this conversation. While working on the schedule I noticed how difficult the first two sessions could be due to the cultural 'distance' between Rwanda and Austria. As it turned out, they were also students from Iran, the US and China. In order to break the ice and to 'locate' my co-teachers, I came up with the idea of asking them: would you draw me memory(cide)? This presentation starts by exploring the multilayered narratives in the video that a participant in the course genuinely put together and which shows the creative and emotional potentials in students with different cultural backgrounds. We will carry on by zooming on two 'new' shapes that two participants gave their drawings at the semester's end. The paper develops the following argument: students' feelings, emotional creativity and knowledgeS of the heart are a unique didactic tool that we should consider more in our teaching. In doing so, the contribution will highlight the relevance of this thought: "The truly hard problem is that the fragmented knowledge system in use today is unable to deal with the real issues confronting humanity because it neglects the experienced side of reality.

Our educational systems are stale; they teach how to transform the brain but not the psyche; they explain how to design evolved societies but not how to be evolved citizens of them; they claim that emotions – central as they are to life – are incapable of explaining existence" (Salami 2020: 17).

### **Short Bio**

Rémi Armand Tchokothe (B.A, University of Buea, Cameroon; M.A, and PhD, University of Bayreuth, Germany) has since 2020 been a Tenure-Track Professor of Comparative Literature with a Focus on African Literatures at the University of Vienna (Austria). He was visiting professor in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in South Africa, Tunisia, Mayotte and Mauritius. His research foci include: the (in)visibility of African Languages Literatures; Francophone Indian Ocean Literatures; Accented and Creative Teaching; Literature, Genocide, Re-memembering and Memorycide. In the field of outreach, he has been and continues to be active as laudator, moderator and discussant at numerous events in Austria and Germany. He has published, translated, and edited works on Wolof, Comorian, and Swahili Literatures, including *Transgression in Swahili Narrative Fiction and its Reception* (2014).

### **Recent Publications**

2023. « *Entré en tant que cousin, sorti en tant que gendarme* »: *Visa Balladur, Kwassa Kwassa, (Im)mobilité et Géopoét(h)ique relationnelle aux Comores*. (Brill, Leiden, scheduled September 2023.)

2022. Edited with Hannah Mühlparzer. "Just... Doing African Comparative LiteratureS", *Stichproben, Vienna Journal of African Studies* 42.

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### **Roundtable Conversation with Elin Nesje Vestli: Literature in the Time of Crisis**

In 2023, HiØ's strategic research programme ELLA (Education – Literature – Language) started the new umbrella project "Litteratur i krisens tid – Literature in the Time of Crisis", headed by Elin Nesje Vestli. This project, which our symposium also is affiliated to, shines a spotlight on what function(s) literature can have in the face of various crises, both on an individual (for example illness, trauma, flight and migration) and a social level (for example war, natural disasters, or political upheavals). The project's overarching goals are to examine how literature addresses crises based on its media-specific forms, strategies and affordances, how literature contributes to increasing our understanding of crises – and last but not least how literature can contribute to solving them.

In our roundtable conversation, we will talk about different aspects of looking at crisis in literature and discuss potential approaches to the triadic relationship of literature, crises and (readerly) emotions.

### **Short Bio**

Elin Nesje Vestli is Professor of German-language literature and cultural studies at the Department of Language, Literature, and Culture at Østfold University College. She studied German studies, Nordic studies, and theater studies at the University of Oslo, the University of Vienna, and Freie Universität Berlin.

She received her doctoral degree (dr. philos.) from the University of Oslo with a dissertation on German-language documentary theater in the 1960s and 1970s. Her research interests include contemporary German-language literature, migration literature, and graphic novels. Her recent publications include works on Melinda Nadj Abonji, Melitta Breznik, Herta Müller, Doron Rabinovici, Julya Rabinowich, Elisabeth Reichart, Robert Schindel, Sasa Stanisic, Vladimir Vertlib, and Iris Wolff.

Vestli is responsible for German-language literature in the *Store norske leksikon* (Great Norwegian Encyclopedia). She writes for *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Critical Lexicon of Contemporary German-language Literature) and participates in the international research network "Literatur der Migration" (Literature of Migration) in connection with the Chamisso Prize/Hellerau. She coordinates the thematic area "Literature in Context" in the strategic research program ELLA (Education - Literature - Language) at Østfold University College and heads the ELLA-project "Literature in Times of Crisis".

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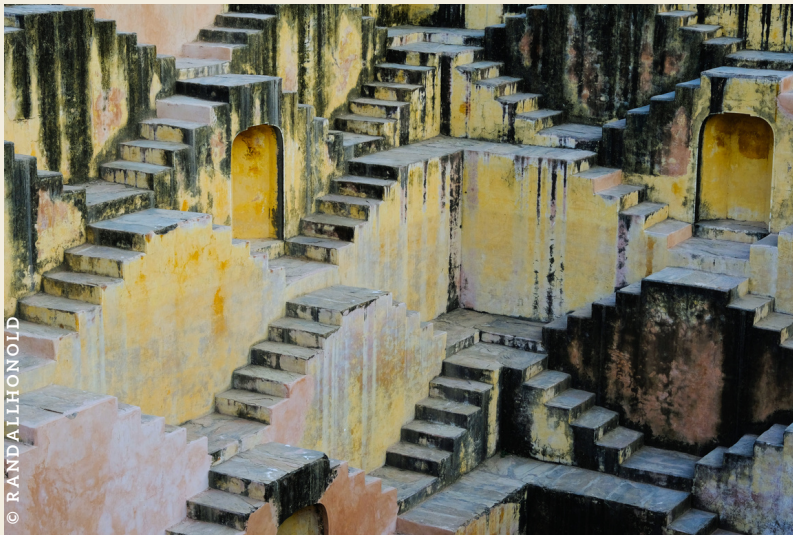


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