



SELMA

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



SELMA
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY
OF STORYTELLING,
EXPERIENTIALITY
AND MEMORY

SELMA

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF STORYTELLING, EXPERIENTIALITY AND MEMORY

SELMA is an international hub for interdisciplinary research on the interrelations between storytelling, experientiality and cultural memory. Our research foci include life-storying, trauma narratives, transcultural memory and digital storytelling. We explore the intersections of narrative, experience and memory from both theoretical and historical perspectives. SELMA organises research events on both theoretical and topical social issues and is committed to interdisciplinary dialogue. It aims at crossing the borders between arts and sciences, promoting social engagement and fostering international collaboration between scholars, artists and other people outside academia.

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EDITORIAL

In 2024, the SELMA community hosted several visiting scholars and organised various workshops, seminars, and gatherings. We also began preparing for 2025, which marks the 10th anniversary of the SELMA Centre.

Throughout 2024, we continued our interdisciplinary discussions on key concepts and topics that bring together scholars from diverse fields. We also engaged in current political and societal debates. For example, we organized research events on Queer Histories and Memories, Grief, Narrative Imaginaries of the Middle East, Narrative Medicine, and Gendered Parenthood.

We collaborate with various national and international research networks, as well as research projects operating under the auspices of SELMA. We also work closely with the Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS). SELMA aims to foster collaboration with research projects, and this year, for instance, the seminar Insecurity and Uncertainty in Literature and Arts was co-organized with two research projects: Intersectional Reading, Social Justice, and Literary Activism (INTER-ACT) and Counter-Narratives of Cancer: Shaping Narrative Agency. We also continued our collaboration with the strategic research area Cultural Memory and Social Change by organizing webinars and a reading group. We hosted three visiting scholars from Ghent, New Jersey (USA), and Spain, who stayed with us for varying periods.

We aim to organize events in both English and Finnish, catering to academic audiences as well as the general public – for example, through discussions held in libraries. This year, we organized a discussion at the Turku City Library with scholar and writer Hanna Kuusela on her topical book *Syytös* (Accusation), which blends autobiographical elements with documentation to spark dialogue about Finnish universities and science policy. Our long-standing collaboration with the Turku-based arts and science event Aboagora continued in August, where we co-produced a panel session titled “Friday Evenings at Six O’Clock – Public Art, Memory, and the Finnish Civil War.” One of SELMA’s research projects, The Grove of Stories, organized artistic research events at the Villa Sagalund Home museum at Kimito Island at the archipelago of Turku.

In 2025, we will continue our work by celebrating SELMA’s 10th anniversary. We look forward to welcoming new students and scholars to get to know SELMA. Please spread the word and encourage anyone interested – including students and junior scholars – to become affiliated with the Centre and join our activities.

Thank you to all members and friends of SELMA for participating in our activities in 2024!

Hanna Meretoja, Director

Professor of Comparative Literature

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, Vice Director

Senior Lecturer, Adjunct Professor of Cultural History



SEMINAR SERIES

CULTURAL MEMORY AND SOCIAL CHANGE



Remembering is interaction between individuals, and memories are socially shaped and negotiated. Media, popular culture, art as well as educational institutions create and disseminate cultural memory. They shape narratives through which experiences are shared within communities and across generations. Cultural memory refers to the collective practices that societies use to build and uphold their relationship to the past, living in the present, and preparing for the future. The thematic collaboration in cultural memory and social change supports extensive, critical and multidisciplinary research on memory and its social connections. As a part of this interdisciplinary collaboration, SELMA has co-hosted the following webinars and reading groups:

Monday 12 February

Reading Group

Etkind, Alexander (2004). Hard and Soft in Cultural Memory: Political Mourning in Russia and Germany.

Chaired by: **Liisa Merivuori**, Doctoral researcher, Literary Studies and Creative Writing, University of Turku

Monday 11 March

Webinar

After the music museum: popular music, heritage-making, and institutional memory

By **Anna Peltomäki**, Doctoral Researcher, Digital Culture, Landscape and Cultural Heritage, University of Turku

Glaciers as Affective Modes of Cultural Memory in Icelandic Literature and Culture

By **Per Mendoza**, Doctoral Researcher, Literature Studies and Creative Writing, University of Turku

Monday 8 April

Reading Group

Rothberg, Michael (2019). The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators, Chapter 1: The Transmission Belt of Domination. Theorizing the Implicated Subject.

Chaired by: **Guido Bartolini**, Senior Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Literary Studies, Ghent University

Monday 13 May

Webinar

Fascism in Italian Culture: Notes from Cultural Memory Studies

By **Guido Bartolini**, Senior Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Literary Studies, Ghent University

Due to changes in the thematic collaboration, there were no events during the autumn semester.

SEMINAR SERIES

GUEST LECTURES BY SELMA VISITING SCHOLARS

SELMA is happy to host visiting scholars with an interest in our research foci to create connections and encourage networking between people from different universities all around the world. In 2024, SELMA had the pleasure to welcome three visiting scholars: Dr. **Guido Bartolini** from Ghent University, Belgium; Dr. **Amir Moosavi** from the of Rutgers-Newark School of Arts and Sciences, New Jersey, USA, and Dr. **Sara Villamarín-Freire** from the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Dr. Bartolini and Dr. Moosavi visited SELMA during spring 2024, and Dr. Villamarín-Freire arrived in September 2024 and will stay in Turku until September 2025. Our fourth guest lecture was held by **Selma Ćatović-Hughes**, who we are happy to announce has joined as permanently in 2025. We are happy to have arranged possibilities for all our visiting scholars to give a guest lecture on their area of specialty as well as opportunities to participate in other SELMA events.

Wednesday 24 April

Guido Bartolini, FWO Senior Postdoctoral Fellow at Ghent University

Responsibility in Memory: Dealing with the Past between Forgetting and Cultural Memory

In his talk, Bartolini proposed a theoretical reflection on memory and the process of dealing with the past, which underpins his current research on the cultural memory of Fascism in Italian literature. For the past twenty-years, memory politics and memory research across the world have been informed by what Barbara Misztal has called the “dealing with the past” agenda (Misztal 2010). This mnemonic perspective, which has been strongly enhanced by international institutions, operated under the assumption that the memorialisation of past crimes can strengthen democratic values, fight racism, and prevent the reoccurrence of dictatorships and violent conflicts. This model has recently come under the scrutiny of several scholars who have criticised many of its presuppositions—showing that these were based on ideas stemming from Western psychology and a Christian conception of healing—and have argued that there is no evidence that such model for memory politics can actually achieve its supposed goals (Gensburger Lefranc 2020; David 2020; Pisanty 2020). This recent trend of criticism deconstructs the foundations of memory studies research, challenging axioms

that underpin the entire field, such as notions of the duty to remember, justice for victims of past human rights violations, and the need to face up to the past. In this talk, Bartolini offered a way forward that accepts many of these critiques without running the risk of denying the social value of memory work. In order to develop this perspective, Bartolini argued that it is necessary to rethink the process of dealing with the past, which needs to be reassessed in the light of theories of forgetting and a more thorough understanding of responsibility and complicity.

Amir Moosavi, Assistant professor in comparative literature, Rutgers-Newark

Dirty Marshes and Headless Palms: The Ghosts of War in Contemporary Arabic and Persian Fiction of the Iran-Iraq War

The Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) was the longest two-state, conventional war of the twentieth century. It engulfed both countries for most of the 1980s, and its effects have lasted until today. Both governments produced massive amounts of state-sponsored literature that reinforced two official war narratives during wartime. Since the war ended, however, there has been a proliferation of writing about the conflict from a variety of perspectives, with many

works of postwar literature challenging the narratives of the two wartime states and focusing on the terrible human consequences of the war: physical and mental trauma narratives of soldiers and civilians, stories of widows, orphans, and refugees.

Yet, the war also left behind myriad consequences on non-human victims and destroyed parts of the natural environment in the border regions between Iran and Iraq, specifically the ecologically diverse border zone in Iran's southwest and the Iraqi south. Extant studies by environmental and social scientists have focused on air and water pollution from weapons and spilled oil and the effects of leftover mines. Fiction, however, offers another perspective that calls for a more comprehensive understanding of the war's consequences and its victims. Moosavi's presentation brought together two recent novels *Haras (Pruning the Palm Trees*, 2017) by Iranian writer Nasim Marashi, and *al-Sabilyyat* (trans. *The Old Woman and the River*, 2016) by the late Kuwaiti writer Ismail Fahd Ismail, to show how writers of fiction have used the devastating effects of war on the peoples, animals, and physical environment of the marshlands in the two countries to create alternative narratives of this long war. Moreover, this paper highlighted how two prominent novelists working in Persian and Arabic, two literatures rarely brought together in comparative contexts, have found common thematic grounds around the need to address environmental degradation in contemporary fiction. In his presentation, Moosavi drew especially from recent critical work in animal studies and eco-criticism to explore notions of victimhood, mourning, and loss across contemporary Arabic and Persian literatures.

Wednesday 16 October

Sara Villamarín-Freire, 'Xunta de Galicia' postdoctoral fellow at the University of Santiago de Compostela

Narrating the Father's Body: Storytelling, Paternal Asomia and the Father-Child Bond

Sara Villamarín-Freire's doctoral dissertation, *Against Dominant Fiction: Seeking Alternatives to Hegemonic Fatherhood in Contemporary American*

Literature, interrogated the role of literature in the configuration of alternative models of fatherhood—specifically, literary representations of paternity shaped like acts of reciprocal storytelling between fathers and their children. In sum, it aimed to test whether it is possible to rethink the paternal figure outside the limits of hegemonic masculinity through the use of narrative imagination. Departing from the assumption that identity is constructed through dialogic practices—including individual interaction but also interaction with narratives understood as cultural models of interpretation—she studied representations of hegemonic fatherhood, defined as a set of discursive and interpretative practices linked to a changing social-historical context that can be traced in specific cultural manifestations.

Her current project, "*Narrating the Father's Body: Storytelling, Paternal Asomia and the Father-Child Bond*", seeks to continue this established line of research. It rests on the assumption that literary manifestations can contribute to undoing the association between fatherhood and patriarchy through the representation of individual fathers as fallible, vulnerable, and embodied figures, anchored in materiality; yet literary manifestations can likewise contribute to reinforcing existing cultural narratives. Fathers whose bodies become visible via their representation as fallible or vulnerable individuals defy others who adhere to hegemonic masculinity/paternity, which is traditionally associated with asomia or bodilessness. Incorporating cues from narrative hermeneutics, ethics, and autobiographical studies, she seeks to further investigate alternatives to hegemonic fatherhood by focusing on the materiality and form of the paternal body and the father-child bond, with a focus on contemporary Anglophone literature.



Tuesday 26 November

Selma Ćatović -Hughes, artist, architect, and doctoral researcher in Cultural History at the University of Turku

Somatography of Memory Sediments: Tracing the city of elusive fragments and invisible boundaries

Selma Ćatović-Hughes grew up in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her ongoing research about memory began as a subconscious form of therapy, creating a collection of individual and collective voices. She has experimented on a number of mixed media projects of different scales, materials and functionality, exhibiting art and architecture in USA, Chile, Spain, Bosnia, and UAE. Selma's work 'A Series of Tactile Memory' was awarded Public Prize at the Biennal de Ceramica d'Esplugues, Spain. Most recently she has been awarded the Paul Ré Peace Prize, the Lifetime Achievement Award for Historical Healing Through Art. Selma holds Master and Bachelor degrees in Architecture and has been an active participant in a number of conferences and academic writings that delve into issues of transitional justice accountability, difficult histories and identity.

Her talk in Turku focused on how composite memory of experiences resonates with the topography of our identity, establishing osmosis between the past and the present. The process of revealing tangible and elusive boundaries constructs a journey, intertwined with personal reflections and evolved into a set of renewed memories. Research proposal, Somatography of Memory Sediments, relies on the underutilized (mis)use of the ICTY archives to

reveal a tactile palimpsest of collective remembrance and identifies the urgency of transitional justice accountability in the aftermath of contested judicial narratives. The conceptual process of analysis of memory sediments with its multimodal approach questions a correlation that analytical research of archival documentation can be reconciled with creative practice to enhance authenticity of individual episodic memory towards shaping the collective narratives.



SELMA SYMPOSIA AND WORKSHOPS

SELMA co-organises several seminars and symposia each year with other research centres and projects in the University of Turku. Along those, SELMA seeks to independently organise full- or half-day symposia or workshops 1-3 times each year to focus on the intersections between our general foci, new applications of related research, and current world events. In 2024, we organised two symposia and one workshop to address the topics of narrative medicine, narrative imaginaries in the Middle East, and grief. These events are often bilingual to attract both Finnish and English-speaking attendees.

Friday 8 March

SELMA SYMPOSIUM Humanistinen terveyden ja sairauden tutkimus: lähestymistapoja, menetelmiä, käsitteitä

(In English: Medical humanities: approaches, methods, concepts)

Symposiumissa esiteltiin kolme uutta hanketta, joissa terveyttä ja sairautta lähestytään humanistisesta näkökulmasta. Hanke-esittelyjen jälkeen keskusteltiin hankkeiden keskeisistä käsitteistä ja menetelmistä. Kaksikielisen tapahtuman tarkoituksena oli pohtia erityisesti englanninkielisen medical humanities / narrative medicine -sanaston käänämistä suomeksi sekä näihin tutkimusaloihin liittyvää metodologiaa.

Tapahtumassa vierailivat seuraavat hankkeet ja tutkijat:

”Syövän vastakertomukset: muovaamassa kerrovalista toimijuutta” -hanke (Suomen Akatemia, 2023-2027), **Hanna Meretoja, Astrid Joutseno, Eevastiina Kinnunen, Päivi Kosonen ja Markku Lehtimäki**

”Sanoja terveyden tekijöille: kaunokirjallisuus, terveydenhuolto ja demokratia” -hanke (Koneen Säätiö, 2024-2027), **Anna Ovaska, Viola Parente-Čapková, Laura Karttunen, Riitta Jyttilä, Jussi Valtonen, Alexandra Salmela, Niina Kekki, Elina Renko, Sonja Sulkava**

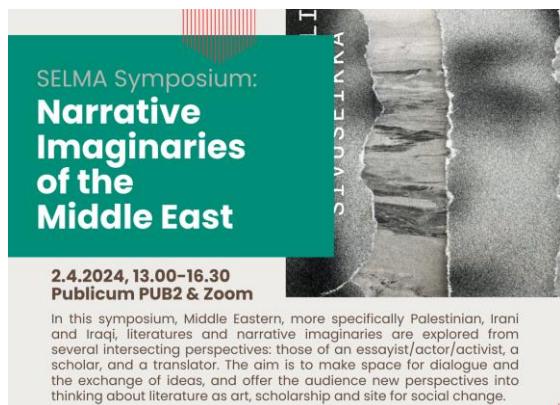
”Reading Recovery: Narratives of Recovery in Culture, Medicine and Society” -hanke (Suomen Akatemia, 2023-2027), **Avril Tynan**



Left to right standing: Astrid Joutseno, Päivi Kosonen, Niina Kekki, Jussi Valtonen, Riitta Jyttilä, Anna Ovaska, Sonja Sulkava, Laura Karttunen, Eevastiina Kinnunen; left to right sitting: Viola Parente-Čapková, Hanna Meretoja, Avril Tynan

Tuesday 2 April

SELMA SYMPOSIUM Narrative Imaginaries of the Middle East



In this symposium, Middle Eastern, more specifically Palestinian, Irani and Iraqi, literatures and narrative imaginaries were explored from several intersecting perspectives: those of an essayist/actor/activist, a scholar, and a translator. The aim was to make space for dialogue and the exchange of ideas, and offer the audience new perspectives into thinking about literature as art, scholarship and site for social change. The symposium was chaired by Koko Hubara who is a Doctoral researcher in comparative literature at the University of Turku and the author of an essay collection *Ruskeat Tytöt – Tunne-esseitä* and a novel *Bechi*.

The programme was opened by Koko Hubara and Hanna Meretoja, Director of SELMA, and included following presentations:

Noora Dadu, MA (Theatre and drama), actor, playwright (*Minun Palestiinani*, and *Fai!*), activist and essayist, author of newly published *Roolitus* (Vastapaino)

Turning the gaze: Decolonizing (internalized) oppression structures in art work

Can art act as a tool of decolonization while maintaining its intrinsic value of freedom?
How to avoid instrumentalization of art when a specific work has a strong social message?
How to maintain artistic freedom in the times of oppression, apartheid and genocide?

What happens to a personal (decolonial) text when it is transformed into live performance, and what happens to a performance when it's transformed into a book?

Being Palestinian, meaning solely existing as a person with Palestinian heritage, challenges the mainstream Finnish narrative of Palestinian being, which is almost non-existent and when it does exist, vilified, questioned, simplified and marginalized. This narrative is not interested in the constant threat of (cultural) genocide, forced assimilation and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian people nor it is interested in the complexity, humour or strength inside Palestinian society.

To be a Palestinian artist in this narrow space requires one to turn the gaze, from the one that is being looked through or at, into the one who does the looking; from an almost invisible object into a subject; a teller of a detailed story. This act is done to contradict normative narratives and create a paradigm shift in harmful cultural discourse. This process is always internal and external at the same time, since the greatest risk for colonized people is adapting the colonizers gaze and concept of reality.

In her presentation, Dadu reflected and analyzed on this process of writing, and performing, and writing about performing. In the center of this presentation was the body – the object, the subject, the question.

Amir Moosavi, Assistant professor in comparative literature, Rutgers-Newark

Warfront Apocrypha: The Dead, Desertion, and Dystopia

The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) dominated the first decade of the Islamic Republic of Iran's existence. Since its conclusion, the government has continually returned to this war, which it calls the "Sacred Defense," (defa'-e moqaddas) and used it as its foundational narrative. An essential part of the Sacred Defense narrative frames the war with Iraq as a mod-

ern reenactment of the seventh-century martyrdom of the third Shi'i Imam, Hossein bin Ali. As such, the soldiers who died in the Iran-Iraq War participated in a holy war; they did not die but were martyred on the battlefield. Since 1980, the Iranian government has sponsored the production of thousands of works of fiction, memoirs, poetry collections, and films that espouse this narrative and purport to speak the sole truth of the conflict.

However, the Sacred Defense narrative has not gone uncontested, and since the 1990s fiction has been one arena that has emerged as a combative space over the representation of the war. This paper presents subversive depictions of the war front in two Persian-language novels written and published in Iran in the early 2000s. It examines how two Iranian writers who are veterans of the war, Ahmad Dehghan and Hossein Abkenar, have used the familiar tropes of state-sponsored literature, like war front heroism, the inviolability of martyrdom, and the notion that the war front soldiers were ideologically committed to the sacredness of the war, to write transgressive narratives of the war with Iraq. Although their styles differ, the two authors employ their positions as war veterans and write under the guise of fiction to publish and beat the censors (at least temporarily) in Iran. Of particular interest in this paper is how these writers disenchant the war front experience through the figure of the martyr (shahid) and martyrdom (shahadat), and the etymological connection that exists in Persian and several other languages between them the words “witness” and “witnessing.”

Sampsia Peltonen, translator of contemporary literature; has translated works by such authors as Hassan Blasim, Alaa al-Aswani, Mohamed Mbougar Sarr, Rajaa Alsanea, Leïla Slimani, and Adania Shibli

Thoughts After Having Translated Adania Shibli into Finnish

Translating literature from conflict zones is crucially important, because good fiction can

give readers an insight into what Peltonen likes to call the *emotional realities* of the people living there, thus adding a more humane dimension to the general discourse dominated by fact-based media reports. Translating a text implies great responsibility: appropriation is an important part of the translation process – but how can a translator make sure that the Finnish version of Shibli's *Minor Details* is not about him?

The programme concluded with a roundtable where the speakers and the chair Koko Hubara discussed their talks further.



Left to right: Sampsia Peltonen, Koko Hubara, Hanna Meretoja, Noora Dadu, Amir Moosavi

Wednesday 11 December

SELMA WORKSHOP Suru / Grief



This workshop explored the concept of grief from intersecting interdisciplinary perspectives, bringing together perspectives from life writing studies, narrative studies, queer studies, affect studies, and health humanities. It considers grief as a diverse affective and relational experience that has both a public and a private dimension and a complex temporality.

The programme included three papers:

Tracing the Grief of the Dying in Life Writing

By **Astrid Joutseno**, researcher in the Finnish Research Council project Counter-Narratives of Cancer” and a visiting scholar at the Oxford Centre for Life-Writing, musician and author of *Viimeinen kirjani* and *Noitarakastaja*

In her paper Joutseno presented her working definition for the grief of the dying. She argued that it is present in life writing by and about those ill with metastatic cancer, even though grief is not always explicitly addressed. She drew examples from digital and literary life writing, where grief punctures linear narratives, offering the possibility of constructing and telling lives (and deaths) differently.

The Garden as a Space for Grieving in Art and Literature

By **Avril Tynan**, Research Council of Finland Fellow (2023–27) at the University of Turku and editor of *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*:

In this paper, Tynan explored how cultural representations of the private garden are entangled with stories of grief in productive and creative ways to demonstrate ongoing attachments and relationships with the dead. Build-

ing on the turn in grief and death studies towards a “continuing bonds” model, she argued that grief is enmeshed in the spaces and places of the past, present and future, in relations between self and others, and in the social performance of private and public expectations. The garden is thus an ideal location in which to think about grief alongside perpetual return, persistence and multiplicity as an activity of ongoing and future-oriented interaction with the deceased.

Queer Grief: A Public and Private Feeling

By **Varpu Alasuutari**, postdoctoral researcher in Gender Studies at the University of Turku, editor of *Sukupuolentutkimus*

Queer grief has been explored in queer studies as a driving force for queer activism, alongside anger and other negative affects resulting from living in a heteronormative and cisnormative world. Thus, grief has political importance in queer activism as a public feeling. However, as deeply relational human beings, queer people also encounter grief as an inevitable part of our personal lives: we are affected by the losses that we encounter, and we mourn the deaths of those near and dear to us, whether they have political and public importance or not. In this presentation, Alasuutari explored queer grief as a diverse affective experience and as both a public and a private feeling, based on international research on queer activism and my earlier work on death and loss as part of queer and trans personal lives. She argued that queer grief does not limit itself to the public and political domain but comes to matter as an inseparable part of queer personal lives as well.



Left to right: Astrid Joutseno, Varpu Alasuutari, Avril Tynan

OTHER EVENTS

29 June 2024

SAGALUND ELÄÄ / SAGALUND LEVER / LIVING SAGALUND

SELMA:n johtaja Maarit-Leskelä Kärjen Tarinoiden lehto -hanke järjesti kaksi työpajaa sekä keskustelutilaisuuden Sagalund elää -tapahtumassa Sagalundin museossa Kemiössä.



Työpajat:

Sinisen salongin runoiliija – tutkija ja taiteilija aineistojen äärellä

Tutkija Karoliina Sjö ja taidemaalari Erika Adamsson lähestyivät Villa Sagalundin entisen asukkaan ja juhlavuotta vietävän Adèle Wemanin sata vuotta sitten tuottamaa materiaalia. Sjö luki mm. Wemanin runoja, päiväkirjoja ja muuta kirjallista aineistoa ja Adamsson tulkitsi niitä luonnostellen maalauskeinoin. Tapaturma avasi tutkijan ja taiteilijan yhteistyötä, historiallisen tiedon tuottamista ja maalauskeiden ideointiprosessia kohti valmista taideteosta.

Valokuvat tutkimuksen ja taiteen lähteenä

Tutkija Katja Weiland-Särmälä esitti valokuviien käyttöä osana tutkimusta ja Erikan taiteellista prosessia.

Paneelikeskustelu

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, Katja Weiland-Särmälä, Erika Adamsson ja Jarmo Kujala esittelivät Tarinoiden lehto -hanketta ja keskustelivat Adèle Wemanin merkityksestä Vretan koululla.

28 to 30 August 2024

ABOAGORA: The Planets



In 2024 ABOAGORA kicked off a new thematic series, The Planets. The theme is based on the orchestral suite of the same name by the composer Gustav Holst (1874-1934), composed between 1914 and 1917. The composition's seven movements famously all represent a planet in our solar system, bringing forth various ideas, myths and dreams connected to the celestial bodies and the astrological characters associated with them.

The first movement of the Planets suite was Mars, the Bringer of War, and ABOAGORA 28-30.8.2024 took on the theme of war from a broad cultural and scientific perspective. The presentations, panels and workshops explored human rights, war trauma, post-war recovery, war memorials and ethical issues in the study of war, armed conflicts and nature and dystopias and alternative futures. On the final day of the event we were also reminded of peace: all wars eventually have to end. The program also engaged with the planet Mars, exploring astronomical features, musical frequencies and literary imaginations.

SELMA was a part of a panel discussion organized in 29 August and included in the Mars, Bringer of War movement. In the panel the artist Love Antell, researcher Silja Laine and professor Anne Heimo discussed the themes of civil war monuments and memorials, the inspiration behind Antell's new artwork "Friday evenings at six o'clock".

After the session there was an opportunity to visit the virtual monument "Friday evenings at six o'clock" together as a group.

8 November 2024
INSECURITY AND UNCERTAINTY
IN LITERATURE AND ARTS

INSECURITY AND UNCERTAINTY
IN LITERATURE AND ARTS

8.11.2024, PUBLICUM 209



In our modern times, insecurity and uncertainty are prevalent in various aspects of life. The central context for the examination is created by a situation that can be called, like Astra Taylor's book (2023), *The Age of Insecurity*. Prolonged political and military tensions in Europe and around the world have led to global instability and insecurity, which is also felt in Finland. The rise of authoritarianism threatens democracy, while the challenges posed by climate change create uncertain prospects for the future. Many minority groups are forced to live in fear of violence. The lingering effects of the pandemic, especially on the emotions and experiences of young people, are evident. These feelings of insecurity and uncertainty extend to literature, arts, as well as the experience of reading literature and art.

On November 8, 2024, we co-hosted a symposium at the University of Turku to explore the themes of insecurity and uncertainty as depicted in literature and other arts. The symposium was organized by Aino Mäkkilä from the Comparative Literature department at the University of Turku together with KONE foundation funded project *Intersectional Reading, Social Justice, and Literary Activism (INTERACT)*, Research Council of Finland funded project *Counter-Narratives of Cancer: Shaping Narrative Agency*, and research centre SELMA. Ample time was reserved for discussion, brainstorming, and collaboration. The symposium was conducted in both Finnish and English.

The programme included three sessions with papers by **Liisa Merivuori** ("Lapsuusajan turvattomuus aikuisen kertomuksessa: *Häritys*,"

Tapauskertomus"), **Suvi-Tuulia Reivilä** ("Uhkaava tunnelma taloudellisen turvattomuuden kuvauskessä"), **András Lempel** ("Uncertainty and Form: Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*"), **Koko Hubara** (Turvattomuus ja kohtaamattomuus tytärten ja äitienvälistissä suhteissa: poimintoja intersektionaalista elämäkirjoituksista"), **Hanna Meretoja** and **Eevastiina Kinnunen** ("Epävarmuus syöpätarinoissa"), **Eila Rantonen** ("Exit: väkivaltaisesta ääriliikkeestä luopuminen ja henkinen muutos Kent Lindahlin ja Henrik Holapan muistelmissa"), **Mikael Tuominen** ("Kuoleva maapallo ja kaiken katoavaisuus"), **Ansa Salonen** and **Anne Riippa** ("Kerronnallinen turvattomuus Marie NDiayen teoksissa"), **Kaiju Harinen** ("Turvattomuus, intersektionaalisuus ja valkoisuus Maija Laura Kauhasen romaanissa *Ihmeköynnös*"), **Kaisu Rättyä** ("Empatiapositiot ilmastoahdistusaiheisessa kuvakirjassa"), **Kati Kanto** ("Häpeän tiloista kohti autenttista paikkaa Hellevi Salmisen nuortenkirjoissa *Baby ja Enkelikasvo*"), and **Ida Hartikainen** ("Kaksoisen menettämisen aiheuttama epävarmuus goottilaisessa nykykirjallisuudessa").



Left to right: Kaisa Ilmonen, Aino Mäkkilä, Liisa Merivuori, Hanna Meretoja, Eevastiina Kinnunen, Kaiju Harinen

15 September 2024

WORLD-MAKING REMEMBRANCES: NORDIC QUEER HISTORIES AND MEMORIES

Celebrating Rainbow History Month at University of Turku



The event centred around a keynote lecture ***Queer publicity in the shadow of the Swedish sin: The reception of “homophile” film characters in the 1950s*** by **Ingrid Ryberg**, Associate Professor in Film Studies at the Department of Cultural Sciences at the University of Gothenburg. Her current project “Queer world-making in the welfare state”, funded by the Swedish Research Council, is a reception study exploring the role of audiovisual media in queer counter publics in Sweden between 1944–89. Ryberg is the author of the forthcoming book *Swedish Film Feminism: Ambivalent Exceptionalism During the Second Wave* (Bloomsbury, 2025), which offers the first in-depth historical account of the feminist film movement in Sweden in the 1970s and 80s and makes an original contribution to current methodological debates in feminist film studies.

Ryberg’s lecture was followed by short papers by **Varpu Alasuutari** (“The History of Nordic Queer Loneliness”), **Anu Koivunen** (“Tracing Queer History in Public Service Broadcasting Archives”) and **Riikka Taavetti** (“Sweden-Ferries in Finnish Queer Memories and Histories”), and a panel discussion led by Anu Koivunen. The participants were authors **Hannu Harju, Jonimatti Joutsijärvi** and **Rita Paqvalen**.

The symposium was co-organized by the Gender Studies department of University of Turku, SELMA: Centre for the Study of Storytelling, Experientiality and Memory, and IDA – Intimacy in Data-Driven Culture -consortium.

25 November 2024

KESKUSTELUTILAISUUS: *Syytös*

Mikä on yliopistojen tila 2020-luvulla? Sosiologian apulaisprofessori Hanna Kuusela kirjoitti omakohtaisen, kaunokirjallisen teoksen yliopistoista, joissa ei enää tiedetä mitä ne tekevät. *Syytös* on ”kirja kurjistuneesta työelämästä, hiippuvasta demokriasta ja merkityksensä hukanneista yliopistoista – syytettyjen penkillä maan korkeimmin koulutetut ihmiset”.

Hanna Kuusela oli Turun yliopiston SELMA-tutkimuskeskuksen vieraana maanantaina 25.11. klo 17-18. Keskustelutilaisuudessa Kuusela ja SELMA-keskuksen johtajat Hanna Meretoja ja Maarit Leskelä-Kärki keskustelivat demokriasta, sivistysestä ja yliopistojen tehtävästä nyky-yhteiskunnassa. Keskustelussa pohdittiin myös, millaista tutkijan on kirjoittaa omista kokemuksistaan. Tilaisuus järjestettiin yhteistyössä Turun kaupunginkirjaston kanssa.



3 December 2024

GENDERING PARENTHOOD: PERSPECTIVES FROM INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERSECTIONAL RESEARCH

This seminar presented recent and ongoing interdisciplinary research on how motherhood, fatherhood, childhood and family relations figure in representations and lived experiences, in contemporary as well as historical times and across (trans)national contexts. The program offered four research presentations by scholars active at Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS), and University of Turku (UTU), as well as a joint discussion of familial phenomena, research approaches, and theorizations in critical research on parenthood.

The seminar was co-organised by the Turku Institute for Advanced Studies (TIAS), Department of Cultural History, Department of European and World History, Degree Programme in Literary Studies and SELMA: Centre for the Study of Storytelling, Experientiality and Memory.

The programme was following:

Helena Wahlström Henriksson, Professor in Gender Studies, Uppsala University and TIAS Visiting Professor: *Parental Bodies in Literature and Popular Culture*

Ranjana Saha, TIAS TIES Fellow, Department of European and World History: *Mothers, Babies and Print Media in Colonial India*

Heidi Kurvinen, TIAS Collegium Fellow, Department of Cultural History: *Motherhood and Feminism in 1970s Finland*

Koko Hubara, Doctoral Researcher, Department of Comparative Literature: *(Intersectional) Daughtering, the Forgotten Parallel Concept of Mothering*

MOBILITIES

In January,

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki and her project "Grove of Stories" organised a session "Kotimuseo muistamisen paikkana." at 1800-luvun tutkimuksen päivät, Helsinki.

Kaisa Ilmonen gave a keynote presentation "Justice, Democracy, and Feminist Politics: a Symposium to Remember Giovanna Covi", in University of Trento, Italy.

Hanna Meretoja gave a talk, "The Critical Potential of Literature in the Midst of the Storytelling Boom", in the MLA (Modern Language Association) Annual Convention, Philadelphia, US.

Karoliina Sjö presented the paper 'Nils Oskar Janssonin ja Adèle Wemanin elämänkerraliset aineistot muistin muokkaajina / The life-writing materials of Nils Oskar Jansson and Adèle Weman as shapers of memory' at the 1800-luvun tutkimuksen päivät conference, The Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki.

Kaisa Ilmonen organised the Biannual seminar and discussion forum organized by INTER-ACT –project: Creative Methods in Anti-racist work, University of Turku.

Tiina Mahlamäki presented the paper "Rajatiedon paikka ennen ja nyt" in Tiinan 60-vuotisjuhlaseminaari, Turku.

In January–April,

Markku Lehtimäki organized a studia generalia lecture series 'Romaanin tieto: Kirjan ja kirjailijan muuttuvat roolit yhteiskunnassa' at the University of Turku.

In February,

Tiina Mahlamäki presented the paper "Enkelit nykypäivän henkisyydessä" in Harkko-museo, Raisio.

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki attended a discussion on the theatre play Kurjet at National Theatre, organized by Aino Kallas Society and National theatre, Helsinki.

In March,

Liisa Merivuori presented the project INTERACT - Intersectional Reading, Social Justice and Literary Activism in The Nordic Summer University (NSU) Winter Symposium Feminist Intersectional Pedagogies, Helsinki.

Tiina Mahlamäki presented the paper "Esoteria ja symboliikka – Mitä symbolit kertovat?" in Studia Masonica, Kansallisarkisto (online event).

Kaisa Ilmonen presented the paper “Intersectional Reading as Activism” in American Comparative Literature –association ACLA 2024, Montreal, Canada.

In April,

Hanna Meretoja gave a talk, “Metanarrativity and the Potential of Narrative Medicine to Strengthen Narrative Agency”, in the Narrative Conference at Newcastle, UK.

In May,

Kaisa Kortekallio, Faeze Rezaei, and Markku Lehtimäki organized the ’Juno and TIAS seminar on New Materialism and Posthumanism’ at the University of Turku.

Hanna Meretoja gave a talk, “A Hermeneutics of Dialogical Understanding in the ‘Post-Truth’ Era”, in “Updating the Interpretive Turn: A Book Symposium” (online).

Avril Tynan presented the paper “Early-onset Alzheimer’s in twenty-first-century French literature: Ethics and aesthetics” in Dementia in Film, Media and Culture Conference, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, UK.

Liisa Merivuori presented the paper “Totuus, trauma ja teksti. Iida Rauman *Häivitys* todistuskseen lapsiin kohdistuvasta sorrosta” in Kirjallisuudentutkimuksen päivät, Jyväskylä.

Kaisa Ilmonen presented the paper “Intersectional Cultural Memory” in From sexual outlaws to model citizens workshop, University of Reykjavik, Iceland.

In June,

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki organized a session Fragments, Ethics, Memories: Writing Past Lives and presented a paper “Who owns a life? The contested cultural memory of Tove Jansson” and participated in the Roundtable: (Un)fragmenting Nordic and Baltic Lives: Notes Toward Creative Methodologies of Teaching” with Leena Käosaar (chair), Maarit Leskelä-Kärki and Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir at IABA World “Fragments of life”, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Karoliina Sjö presented the paper ‘Fragments of Past Lives in Life Writing of Two Finnish Writers, Kirsti Teräsvuori (1899-1988) and Adèle Weman (1844-1936)’ at the IABA World 2024 Conference ‘Fragmented Lives’ at the University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland.

Hanna Meretoja gave a talk, “Fragmented Life-Writing in Counter-Narratives of Cancer”, in Fragmented Lives: IABA World 2024 Conference, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Karoliina Sjö co-organized a workshop ‘Sinisen salongin runoilija – tutkija ja taiteilija aineistojen äärellä / The Poet of the Blue Salon – A Researcher and Artist Engaging with Archival Materials’ as part of the Grove of Stories project, Kemiönsaari, Sagalund, Finland.

Markku Lehtimäki presented the paper ‘Stephen’s Green: A Fictional Mind and Its Environments in Portrait and Ulysses’ at ‘XXIX International James Joyce Conference’ in Glasgow, UK.

Kaisa Ilmonen co-organised the seminar Controversies in US Literature and Film (11.6.2024) - together with John Morton Center for American Studies, University of Turku.

In July,

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki presented a paper “On the borders of the land and the sea: nature and femininity in the story of Stormskärs Maja” at “Borders”, EU Pop (European Popular Culture Association Annual Conference) Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn, Estonia.

Hanna Meretoja gave a keynote lecture, “Narrative Agency and the Sense of the Possible”, at the 4th International Possibility Studies Conference, University of Cambridge, UK

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki gave an invited speech ”Ihmiselämän sisin tuoksu.” Miten tarina toisen elämästä syntyy?” at Volter Kilpi -päivät.

In August,

Tiina Mahlamäki presented the paper “Take care of your planet.” The Cosmic messages in the UFO movement in Finland. Nature, Ecology, and Religious Responses to Climate Change” in EASR2024, Göteborg, Sweden.

Hanna Meretoja gave a keynote lecture, “Hermeneutic Literary Ethics and Counter-Narratives of Cancer”, at “What Remains? Literature and Ethics in a Time of Crisis” conference in Stockholm, Sweden.

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki organized and chaired a panel “Environmental biography as a methodological challenge” and presented a paper on “Lives on islands: environmental biography as a cultural historical approach” at World Congress of Environmental History, University of Oulu.

Anne Heimo took part in the panel ”Friday evenings at 6 o’clock” together with artist Love Antell (Stockholm) and Silja Laine (University of Turku) at Aboagora, Turku.

In September,

Tiina Mahlamäki presented the paper ”Viipuri kirjailija Kersti Bergrothin elämässä ja tuotannossa” in Viipurin luovat naiset, Viipurin Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuseuran tutkimuspäivä, Tieteilijöiden talo, Helsinki.

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki participated a discussion on writer Aila Meriluoto with playwright Virpi Haatainen and actor Ella Pyhältö concerning the play “Tältä kohtaa Aila”, YLE Kulttuuriykkönen ”Aila Meriluoto oli pioneeri naisen himon kuvaamisessa - oliko hän seksi- vai rakastumisaddicti?” <https://areena.yle.fi/1-70944000>

Anne Heimo presented together with Ene Kõresaar (Tartu University) the paper “On Limits of Multiperspectivity: Exhibiting First-Person Narratives in Finnish and Estonian Museums” at the 7th World Conference of the International Federation for Public History, University of Luxembourg, Belval.

In October,

Eevastiina Kinnunen presented the paper "Narrative agency and narrative well-being in bibliotherapy research" in "Encounters, Paths and Challenges in Troubled Times: 1st European Biblio/Poetry Therapy Conference 2024", in Budapest, Hungary.

Hanna Meretoja gave an invited talk, "Analyzing data from narrative agency reading groups", in Paris at the workshop "Public Memory and the Shoah" (7-8 October), organised by The American University of Paris.

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki gave a talk "Ei päivää ilman piirtoa" – Krohnin kolme kirjoittavaa si-sarta" at Turun Pietari-seura.

Anne Heimo presented the paper "Hybrid memory practices and everyday history making on Facebook: Family memories and settler colonialist narratives" at the Memory Studies Association Nordic conference The Art of Conviviality, Malmö University, Sweden.

In November,

Anne Heimo attended the Migration Institute of Finland's conference "Migration Into the Future" organized to celebrate the Migration Institute's 50th anniversary and took part in the workshop "Migrant Archives and Community" at Hotel Kakola, Turku.

Avril Tynan presented the paper "The Recovery Narrative in Mental Health: Contesting Stories of Triumph and Closure" in Recovery in Mental Health Workshop, University of Cologne, Germany.

Anne Heimo attended and acted as chair at the Finnish Oral History Networks' (FOHN) symposium Memory in Movement: Pace, Connection & Introspection, University of Jyväskylä.

In December,

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki gave a speech "Aarni Koudan ja Elsa Roschierin arkisto – unohtuneen jäljillä" at the book launch of "Tutkimuspolkuja yksityisarkistoihin". Finnish Literature Society.

Tiina Mahlamäki presented the paper "Itsenäisyyspäivän merkityksistä epävarmuksien ajassa" in Sammatin itsenäisyyspäiväjuhla, Sampaala.

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