

## Transnational Aspects of Finnish Literature

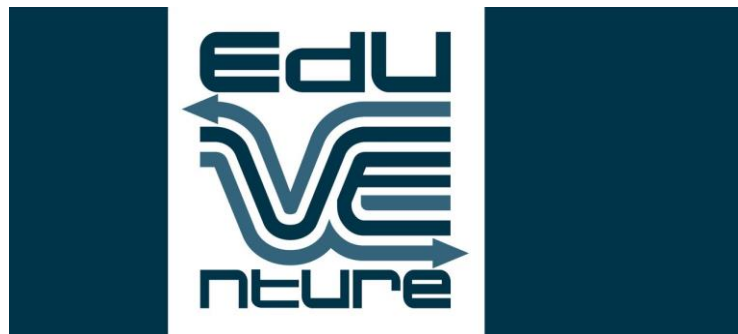
a course by j o l n e s –

Joint Learning in Northern European Studies

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An interview with **Viola Parente-Čapková** (University of Turku - Kotimainen kirjallisuus - Department of Finnish Literature) and **Anne-Katrin Heinen** (University of Cologne, Department for Scandinavian and Finnish Studies).



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## Transcript

### Viola Parente-Čapková

*Tällä hetkellä toimin Turun yliopiston kotimaisen kirjallisuuden määräraaikaisena lehtorina; olen myös Turun yliopiston sekä Prahan Kaarlen yliopiston dosentti. Tutkimusintressini ovat Suomen kirjallisuus yllirajaisena ilmiönä, kirjallisuushistoria ja sen teoria, digitaaliset ihmistieteet sekä sukupuoli, intersektionaalisuus ja toiseus kirjallisuudessa. Olen myös kiinnostunut kielen opettamisesta kirjallisuuden avulla. Nämä tutkimusintressini näkyvät kahdessa tutkimusprojektissani, joiden johtajana toimin tällä hetkellä.*

At the moment, I am a Senior Lecturer and an Associate Professor at the Department of Finnish Literature, University of Turku as well as at Charles University, Prague. My main research interests are Finnish literature in transnational context, literary history and theory of literary history, digital humanities, and gender, intersectionality and otherness in literature. I am also interested in teaching language through literature. At present, I work as a leader of two research projects, which of course, reflect these interests.

### Anne-Katrin Heinen

Hello, I'm Anne-Katrin Heinen from the University of Cologne, Department of Scandinavian and Finnish Studies and I was a co-founder of j o l n e s – Joint Learning in Northern European Studies in 2013.

The cooperation initiative j o l n e s – Joint Learning in Northern European Studies aims to interconnect the teaching of Scandinavian and Finnish Studies in Germany and other European countries. Collaborative digital teaching within the j o l n e s - network complements the local teaching of each department.

## OUR COOPERATION HAS A LONG HISTORY. CAN YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

### Viola Parente-Čapková

Yes, our department indeed has been involved in cooperation with the University of Cologne for quite some time, also in the capacity of a network partner. In 2013, I designed and carried out, together with my colleagues from Turku, a course named *Aspects of Finnish Literature: Texts and Contexts*. In that course, we wanted to introduce Finnish literature to international students by discussing various aspects and themes, united by the contextual approach to studying literature, which is an approach shared by all colleagues in our department. We discussed various genres from novels to essays and presented various methods and theories, from queer theories to ecocriticism. I found the course very rewarding: it was open not only to students of Finnish or Scandinavian studies, but also to those of comparative literature at

various European universities. In this way, students could learn from each other: those from Nordic countries brought in insights from the Nordic context and Nordic Studies and the knowledge of Finnish and Nordic literatures obviously and those from comparative literature were able to compare the works we discussed with texts from elsewhere. The course has been taught twice and for me, both times were very interesting and instructive.

## **WHAT IS THE COURSE ‘TRANSNATIONAL ASPECTS OF FINNISH LITERATURE’ ABOUT?**

### **Viola Parente-Čapková**

Compared to the *Aspects of Finnish literature* that I mentioned previously, this year’s course is much more compact, since it orbits around one theme, though a rather vast one: it deals with transnational aspects of Finnish literature. In fact, there will be various trans-aspects there, since we will address the issue on transnational, transcultural, multilingual and transborder aspects of Finnish literature. The course will, for example question the strategy of methodological nationalism, embedded in the discipline of literary theory. For a long time, Finnish literature used to be presented as rather monolithic. Through various case studies, I want to show the plurality of writing that has been associated with Finland throughout history. We will discuss texts from folk poetry to contemporary comics. The aim of the course is to introduce students to topical methodological issues in literary history, as well as get them acquainted with a wide range of literary phenomena.

## **WHICH METHODS/TOOLS ARE USED IN THE COURSE?**

### **Anne-Katrin Heinen**

The course consists of online lectures, live seminars with discussions, elements of flipped classroom, reading and writing assignments as well as student presentations. It also makes the students acquainted with the latest developments in digital literary studies as a part of digital humanities through assignments in which students are expected to work with online materials and online digital archives like the *Digital Collections of the National Library of Finland*. The sessions are twice a week, at least one session per week will be live on Zoom and the other will be a recorded lecture or an assignment of reading, writing and commenting on ILIAS or a whiteboard in Mural.

## **FROM YOUR PROJECT EXPERIENCE: HOW DID COLLABORATIVE DIGITAL TEACHING DEVELOP?**

### **Anne-Katrin Heinen**

When we started cooperative, network-based digital teaching in 2013, it was really new territory in Germany and there was hardly any experience in co-teaching or teaching students from different locations in one and the same course. To be honest, as recently as 2019,

protagonists with stable experience at German universities were few. Since the Corona pandemic, the entire country has been testing how digital teaching and also cooperative teaching works best and there has been good progress and the possibility of finding sustainable solutions - within universities and at a higher political level.

### **WHAT IS THE SITUATION IN FINLAND?**

#### **Viola Parente-Čapková**

In Finland, there is the National E-learning network in humanities called *Valtakunnallinen humanistinen verkko-opetus*. It coordinates courses developed as joint venture among various Finnish universities. Just now, I am involved, with a colleague of mine, in collaborating on a course covering the role of archives in humanities: my colleague and myself will be discussing the role of both traditional and digital archives in literary studies.

### **WHICH ASPECTS OF COLLABORATIVE DIGITAL TEACHING WITHIN THE JOLNES-NETWORK DO YOU FIND PARTICULARLY EXCITING?**

#### **Viola Parente-Čapková**

During the last year, I think, we have all become accustomed to digital teaching and have had possibilities to reflect on its positive and negative aspects. I find the transnational teaching, enabled by the digital tools, very exciting because of the reasons I mentioned earlier: there is a possibility to reach students from various countries and backgrounds, which makes the interaction so very interesting.

### **WHICH ASPECTS DO YOU FIND CHALLENGING?**

#### **Viola Parente-Čapková**

The very fact that the group you teach may be very heterogenous can be, of course, also a huge challenge. I remember it very well, for example, from the period when I taught literary courses for international students at the University of Helsinki. The digital tools might not be easy for everyone either, though we are all now much better equipped than in 2013, when I coordinated that first course we spoke about. But I believe that the very theme of my present course, the transnational aspects, goes very well with this way of teaching.

## Credits

The interview was conducted on April 06 2021 via Zoom.

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