



**November 13, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. (EST) via Zoom:**

<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/87697106647?pwd=T3NXbjNSc0YxbmNPMFR3QzNkOXILZz09>

**Scholars share current work-in-progress in the fields of Memory and Trauma Studies, with discussion and helpful insights to follow, all are welcome.**

**Elise Westin:**

**Affective Decolonial Poetics and Everyday War: Reading Beloruset's War Diary**

**Abstract:** This work-in-progress introduces a pilot study that explores how affective reading practices can be used to investigate experiences of emotion, temporality, and identity in contemporary Ukrainian war writing. Drawing on Yevgenia Beloruset's *War Diary* (2023), a fragmentary account of daily life in Kyiv during the early weeks of Russia's full-scale invasion, the study explores how feelings of dislocation, alienation, and resistance are registered through language and form rather than explicit expression. Situating the analysis within a framework of affective decolonial poetics, the project combines insights from affect theory and decolonial studies to trace how emotion circulates as both a personal and historical force within texts shaped by the interrogation of colonial pasts. Through close readings of selected entries from *War Diary*, the paper considers how temporal dislocation and linguistic tension create an affective record of war that moves beyond the limits of testimony or reportage. Beloruset's writing reveals how the collapse of ordinary time and the instability of language become central to articulating life under invasion. The pilot study forms part of a broader inquiry into the aesthetics of feeling in postcolonial and decolonial literatures, asking how attention to affective form might expand our understanding of the ways in which identities are deconstructed and reformed in Ukrainian war writing.

**Elise Westin** holds a PhD in Central and East European Literature with a thesis on representations of victims in Ukrainian genocide survivor literature. Her current research focuses on contemporary Ukrainian war novels and the techniques through which they convey the emotional and temporal effects of war on perceptions of identity and nationhood. Elise's broader scholarly interests include affect theory,

postcolonial and decolonial poetics, and the intersections of emotion, language, and power in literature emerging from conflict zones. Her recent publications in *Intergenerational Trauma in Refugee Communities* and *Life Writing* explore the impact of postmemory on descendants of the Ukrainian Holodomor. In addition to her academic research, Elise is a published creative writer whose work has appeared in *The Saltbush Review* and was longlisted for the Queen Mary Wasafiri New Writing Prize.

**Annie St. John-Stark:**

**Address and Redefined Identity in Catastrophe: Human-Caused and Natural Catastrophe Survivor Interviews**

**Abstract:** Trauma's recounting in the interview narratives of survivors of catastrophe – in the cases of the human-caused catastrophe of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks and in the natural catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina - occurred in a post-event setting, but the narratives were in fact also situated inside the rupture of trauma in the midst of the actual catastrophes. Linguistic evidence gathered from transcripts of interviewee narratives (post-9/11 attacks, post-Hurricane Katrina), through discourse analysis, reveal that the narratives often position the interviewee inside a flashback, a reliving of the experience. The interviewee is in the midst of trauma during the narrating of their experience, and they become both the person immersed in trauma and a recipient, along with the interviewer, of the calls for acknowledgment and address. Their mid-event person is narrating – often – the experience whilst within the -later- recounting at the request of the interviewer(s) as listener(s). This paper is an analysis of the language within survivor accounts, from two catastrophic events: the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, USA in 2005. I examine linguistic markers of trauma in the context of the expectation of address for survivors, mid-event and post-event. I argue that language of description often transforms into mid-event narration even in interviews of survivors months after the apogee of a catastrophe. Mid-event narration in this post-event setting speaks trauma as it situates the teller back within the event. To whom is the interviewee, the survivor, speaking? Who will address the messages sent outward from the inside of trauma? I argue that in telling the trauma, the survivor is in a distinct position as also the recipient, completing the transit of the message of trauma. The survivor, identity redefined, initiates address by participating in the post-event interview.

**Dr. Annie St. John-Stark** is Assistant Professor in History in the Department of Philosophy, History and Politics at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia, Co-Editor of the book series *Transdisciplinary Trauma Studies* (De Gruyter Press), and Co-Chair of the Trauma and Memory Working Group in the Memory Studies Association. Her research focus ranges across trauma and catastrophe in British, European and American history, combatant and veteran experiences and survival from the 17th century to the 19th, and intersections of trauma, temporality, address and identity. These foci continue to drive a multi-discipline approach, particularly involving the respective methodologies of memory studies and trauma studies, within fields of sociology, literary analysis, and psychology. At present Dr. St. John-Stark is conducting research in survivorship and trauma within a larger analysis of concepts of rescue and the occurrence of Post-Trauma Stress Syndrome symptoms associated with the 9/11 attacks in the USA and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.