



Introduction

Fiction and truth, learning and literature: Interdisciplinary perspectives

Viktor Johansson 

Associate Professor in Education at the School of Culture and Learning, Södertörn University Sweden, Huddinge, Sweden

Ingeborg Löfgren 

Senior Lecturer at the Department of Literature, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

Abstract

Literature and fiction, in various forms, both textual and oral, have an undeniable place in human growth and education: they are a constitutive part of our reality. This raises the question: how and what do we learn from fiction? Even when fiction does not mirror reality directly, can it still, explore, express, and teach us about the world? If so, how? In this special issue education becomes something of a link between the fictional and the real. Approaching fiction to learn from it, or learn with it, enables us to examine our experiences and to transform them in our everyday lives. The special issue, if perhaps for the most part indirectly, testifies to the various ways love of literature often expresses love of truth. Not because all the articles describe or use the notions of “truth,” “fiction,” “literature,” and “learning” in the same way, but because they offer an extension of these concepts.

Keywords

Philosophy and literature, literature and education, fiction, reality, interdisciplinary education

Flowers, dragons, and attention to and through fictions

Literature and fiction, in various forms, both textual and oral, have an undeniable place in human growth and education: they are a constitutive part of our reality. This raises the question: how and

Corresponding authors:

Viktor Johansson, Associate Professor in Education at the School of Culture and Learning, Södertörn University Sweden, Alfred Nobels väg 7, Huddinge, 141 89, Sweden.

Email: viktor.johansson@sh.se

Ingeborg Löfgren, PhD and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Literature, Uppsala University, Sweden. Thunbergsvägen 3P, Box 635, 751 26 Uppsala, Sweden.

Email: Ingeborg.Lofgren@littvet.uu.se

what do we learn from fiction? Even when fiction does not mirror reality directly, can it still, explore, express, and teach us about the world? If so, how?

Let us begin this special issue by responding to such questions with a short story.

By chance, on one of those happy occasions when you don't realize you are about to get lucky, Viktor saw a small book in a bookshop he had stumbled into on a rainy spring afternoon. The book looked like a botany book for children. Still, there was something curious about it. Of course, there were pictures of flowers on the cover, Scandinavian meadow flowers to be more precise; but in the upper left corner, there was a small dragon. When he looked more closely at the flowers, Viktor noticed more dragons, hardly detectable, in shapes and colors similar to the different flowers. As his eyes reached the title of the book, it all started to make sense (or did it, does it?). It was called *Drakarnas första flora: Ängsblommor* [The Dragon's First Book of Botany: Meadow flowers]. What can we expect from a book with such a cover and title? At a first glance, it looked like a traditional introduction to botany, almost. It contained facts about and pictures of sixteen meadow flowers. The first sentence, as well as the cover and title, suggested that there was more to the book than that:

Det är inte många som vet det, men det sägs att alla världens växter har en speciell liten drake som lever tillsammans med dem. [Not many people know this, but it is said that every plant in the world has a small dragon who lives along with it.] (Linderoth, 2019: 5).

Viktor had certainly been among those who did not know this. He bought the book and took it home. He had the feeling that everybody should study it. He couldn't wait until he got home to read it, the pictures were so intriguing.

So what did it say? "The flower dragon of the wild pansy is really good at spitting" (Linderoth, 2019: 6) *Spitting*? What was this? He had never heard of such a thing as a flower dragon, and certainly not that there was a specific one for wild pansies. However, Viktor soon realized how it all made sense. The dragon, according to the book, spits out the seeds of the wild pansy as a defense against birds and other animals who like to eat small flower dragons. Wild pansies scatter their seeds just as far as the dragons can spit them. This is, of course, advantageous for the flower, as it enables them to spread, but it is also good for the dragons, who catch the ants that come looking for the nutritious seeds. The (real) facts about the wild pansies thus seemed to simultaneously reveal the (fictitious) dragons' habitat. Both are common along the Swedish coast, the book stated. Viktor was excited, wild pansies were also common where he lives. "In a few weeks," he thought, "I will be able to see them and look for the dragons."

At home, his two boys, then 5 and 7, became enchanted by the book. They recognized some of the flowers and learned about new ones. They could hardly wait until spring and early summer to go out and look for the flowers—and the *dragons*! So, as the snow melted, and spring's first flower buds were bursting, they went out searching. The dragons were small and hard to find. As they searched they needed to remember all that they had learned about the flowers from the botany book. They inspected every part, from every angle, as well as the surroundings of the flowers they found. Absorbed by the task, a new world of small meadow flowers opened for them and for Viktor. The tiniest detail in the flowers became a thing of utmost importance. Still, they didn't pick any of them, wishing to leave the dragons' homes as they found them, unharmed. They did not speak much about what they were doing, the book seemed to have said it all, but they looked at life and they looked for life, the actual life of flowers, living symbiotically with the dragons they hoped to find.

What is fictitious in this little story? The description of *Drakarnas första flora* is a description of an actual book by an actual author, Karin Linderöth. Viktor did indeed buy the book and read it with his two youngest sons. They did go out looking for flowers and their dragons. But what did they see? Did they really find dragons living with the flowers? And what about the book? Why read a book to children that mixes facts with fiction in such a way, and why present it in a half fictional narrative? Is this not simply invite confusion? To us it seems like any straight answer to these questions, either affirmative or negative, would oversimplify matters. A too rigid and uncontested conception of the border between fact and fiction can itself distort the truth: the truth about fiction, about the truth in fiction, about what truths we may access through fiction. Recalling the use of another story may serve as a starting point for another kind of answer.

In northern Norway, from Bodø and southward along the Helgelandskysten [the Helgeland coast], there are islands and mountains that take their names from a tale about a family of trolls. Seven sisters and Lekamøya, the eighth sister who was well known for her wisdom and beauty, were bathing off the island of Landegode, outside Bodø. Hestmannen, the son of the troll king Vågakallen, saw them, and immediately fell in love with Lekamøya. Hestmannen mounted his horse and rode off to claim her. Lekamøya and her sisters heard the thundering hooves and fled. They threw their clothes on to the island, Dønna, but as the sun rose, one by one the sisters were caught by the sun's rays and turned to stone on the island of Alsten. Today on Alsten you can see the mountaintops called "The Seven Sisters". Lekamøya, however, had thus far escaped both Hestmannen and the dangerous sun. When Hestmannen realized he would not reach her before the sun also turned him to stone, he shot an arrow toward her, trying to ensure that if he could not have her, no one would. However, Vågakallen's archenemy, Skarfjellsgubben, had seen what had happened and saved Lekamøya by throwing his hat in the arrow's path. Lekamøya reached the island of Leka before the sun finally caught her and she too was turned to stone (Hoff, 1982).

This story offers an explanation for the silhouettes of the islands and mountains along this coastline: they do look like the trolls, the hat, and the arrow from the story. Sailors and fishermen used to tell this story to younger generations at sea, pointing out the islands and mountaintops as they told the tale of their origins, and of the trolls. When new fishermen and sailors learned the story, they simultaneously learned to orient themselves along the coast; they learned the order in which the islands were placed along the coastline and how to recognize them. They thus learned their way about at sea, in the real world, *through* this tale. "This is all fine," someone might say, "but what about truth? Today, when we have more precise and reliable navigation systems, and know about botany, why do we need to mix these 'truths' with fictional storytelling? What do we learn from fiction?"

The American philosopher Stanley Cavell, who plays a pivotal role in several of the essays in this special issue, draws on Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau to suggest one possible answer to that question. Fiction, in Cavell's view, offers us occasion to, as he calls it, *check one's experience*. Cavell uses this expression—*checking one's experience*—when writing about the fiction of films, in particular. We take the expression to be of relevance for understanding how we can learn from the fictions of other art forms as well, however, including literature. Cavell explains what he means by this expression in the following way:

I mean the rubric [checking one's experience] to capture the sense at the same time of consulting one's experience and subjecting it to examination, and beyond these, of momentarily *stopping*, turning yourself away from whatever your preoccupation and turning your experience away from its expected, habitual track, to find itself, its own track: coming to attention (Cavell, 1981: 12).

In the above quote we find another central concept drawn on by many of the authors in this special issue; namely, *attention*. Attention links the empirical, the conceptual, and the moral issues that are raised, pondered, and sometimes (possibly) resolved in fiction and in our engagement with fiction. The notion of attention brings to mind two philosophers in particular: Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch. Iris Murdoch expanded on Weil's (Weil, 1973) idea that attention involves a love of its subject—of the world, of the other, of a particular object, or subject matter—and conceives of it as an educative, prayerful, relation to the world. Murdoch describes this attention as having a “just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality” (Murdoch, 2014: 33). More recently Cora Diamond has emphasized the role of attention in reading literature, both with regard to how inattentive reading is in danger of “refusing the adventure” of literature (Diamond, 1991: 315), and with regard to how attention to the particularities of our ordinary uses of words are of utmost importance for philosophical clarity. Toril Moi, in turn, expands on both Weil, Murdoch, and Diamond in *Revolution of the Ordinary* (2017) when she argues that, rather than methods and theories, to become good academic readers we need to educate and devote our attention to literary works. This is, in turn, part of what it is to *acknowledge* (another, central, Cavellian word) literature and fiction:

To be open to adventure is to be attentive, ready to be illuminated by the text, to assume that it can work “the miracle of literature” and show us something new. Reading as a practice of acknowledgement requires full attention to particulars. ... Moreover, if we want to be literary critics [or, we would like to add, philosophers, educators, teachers, readers, pedagogues], we need to be writers [storytellers and poets] too, for our task is to find the right words to express *our* adventure. Acknowledgement requires attention to particulars, and to language, our own as well as that of others (Moi, 2017: 221).

There is something of Plato's Socrates in this idea of attention. Its origin in Weil (in turn rooted in Plato) brings out how our longing for knowledge must free itself from our prejudices of what that knowledge must, or should, be: “Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it” (Weil, 1973: p. 111). The kind of attention expressed here is a matter of being open to what is there, to our experience; it involves trusting our experience while, at the same time, not letting presumptions and preconceived ideas steer our experience away from the adventure.

One could think of this notion of attention to fiction as something that also merges realist and empiricist strands of thought. Diamond's understanding of attention is connected to her view of Wittgenstein's philosophy as being guided by a “realistic spirit” (Diamond, 1991). Cavell, also a great reader of Wittgenstein, connects the notion of attention to *experience* and describes our learning from it (in checking one's experience) as also involving a kind of empiricism. Cavell writes:

Think of it as learning neither to impose your experience on the world nor to have it imposed upon by the world. ... It is learning freedom of consciousness, which you might see as becoming civilized.

It is fundamental to this view of experience not to accept any given experience as final but to subject the experience and its object to the test of one another (Cavell, 1981: 12–13).

To a contemporary reader, the idea of “becoming civilized” is hardly straightforward to accept. The notion of “civilized” always implies a notion of “the uncivilized,” and the dichotomy reminds us of a very real world of murky colonial baggage. However, we read Cavell’s use of the expression almost as interchangeable with “becoming cultivated” or, perhaps simply, “being educated” by one’s interaction with the surrounding world. One could perhaps imagine here Cavell to be describing something like an “empiricist spirit” (to complement Diamond’s notion of a “realistic spirit”). What he describes is a philosophical practice guided both by one’s trust in one’s experience, and by one’s willingness to educate that experience.

The moral of this practice is to educate your experience sufficiently so that it is worthy of trust. The philosophical catch would then be that education cannot be achieved in advance of trust (Cavell, 1981: 12).

If we link this empiricist spirit of attention to Diamond’s (and Murdoch’s and Moi’s) realistic one, we get a vision of philosophy as a form of pedagogy where fiction becomes, what Murdoch calls, “an educator and revealer” (Murdoch, 2014: 63).

How does such a philosophy and pedagogy through fiction work? Just think of what *Drakarnas första flora* did to the attention of Viktor and the boys! They became attentive, curious, reflective, and interested in their surroundings. They began to look at the flowers as figures in a story, as part of a world to be discovered, which made it meaningful to delve into the details of the world of meadow flowers. Think of the tale of the trolls and what it can do for sailors. It becomes a vehicle for the sailors to check their experience, to examine how they see the shapes of the mountains, to orient themselves in their surroundings. The story gives meaning to this particular archipelago; it imbues it with a certain feeling and mood. At the same time, it offers the sailors concrete guidance while they are traveling at sea. With the fictions of the dragons and the trolls, one learns to be attentive to one’s world and to reshape one’s experience.

Education then becomes something of a link between the fictional and the empirical. Approaching fiction to learn from it, or learn with it, enables us to examine our experiences and to transform them in our everyday lives. This idea is precisely what is explored in various ways by the authors of this special issue, whose texts we will turn to now.

The articles of this issue

In this special issue on fiction, truth, literature, and learning, we bring together what we see as a diverse set of texts that testify to the *variety* of ways in which these concepts interrelate, become important, offer insight, or prove hopelessly difficult to get clear about. The contributing writers come from different disciplines and academic traditions, and their texts are animated by a wide array of questions, methods, and materials. At first glance, these essays may even seem *too* dissimilar, too far apart in terms of outlook and concern, to constitute fruitful intellectual company to one another. After all, one might ask, what can possibly be gained in terms of conceptual clarity—about the interrelation between fiction, truth, literature, and learning—by bringing together, say, a text that compares literary heritage sites’ claim to (biographical) truth, on the one hand, and one that offers a Maori séance with a dead German romantic philosopher, on the other? What, indeed, does an essay on Sámi children’s oral story-telling and play have in common with an essay that explores queer love, epistemic habits, and critique in Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts*? The questions about truth, fiction, literature, and learning that these texts raise and attempt to answer are surely not the same, and sometimes, only vaguely related to one another.

This is an important point of this special issue, however; something we consider a strength rather than a flaw. It is a point particularly stressed, and spelled out in more analytic detail, in the first essay by Niklas Forsberg: “Unintentional Investigations: Truth in Drama and ‘All that “Ordinary” in the Phrase “Ordinary Language Philosophy” Means’.” Forsberg begins by noting that too often philosophers interested in the concept of truth in relation to literature, start off with a very narrow conception of truth and what its relation to literature can be. Moreover, Forsberg argues, literature may figure centrally in the philosopher’s theory about what constitutes truth, but the way literature is employed in the philosopher’s argument is often as a reservoir of examples that may help or hinder the desired philosophical point about some central concept (such as reference or representation). This has the peculiar consequence of rendering the literary works themselves of secondary importance. Forsberg, by contrast, urges us to begin by acknowledging that “literature” is not simply one “thing” (just as “philosophy” is not only one “thing”), which means that its relation to truth is notoriously complex and varied. Instead of trying to offer a theory of literature or fictionality and its (general) relation to truth, Forsberg suggests that we ask such questions in a more piecemeal way. He goes on to explore questions about truth *in* literature through a reading of Harold Pinter’s Nobel Lecture from 2005 in the light of some remarks by Stanley Cavell. A central idea in Forsberg’s essay is that literature may very well, occasionally, “do philosophy”; literary works or authors may challenge philosophical convictions and presuppositions in a profound way that spark philosophical reflection; literature may show us something true about language, ourselves, and the world we inhabit. But this, Forsberg argues, is not due to some special relation that literary, or fictional, discourse has to truth as such. Rather, it may be something that happens quite unintentionally, and all the better for it. In order to discern these unintentional truths, and learn from them, we need to “look and see” the variety of ways truth may be present in—or reached by the reading of—literature.

As if taking this point to heart, the second essay, David Rudrum’s “A Tale of Two Dickens: Or, Learning as Fact, Fiction, and Play,” turns to a quite specific cultural institution, namely, *literary heritage sites*, to explore what conceptions of truth, literature, and learning operate as their *raison d’être*. Presumably, Rudrum argues, museums of writers’ homes and birthplaces are conceived of as, significantly, *educational* sites. These museums often claim to offer “the truth behind the fiction,” real contextual (biographical and historical) knowledge that helps to further literary understanding and appreciation. This assumption, and its underlying conception of what constitutes learning truths about literature, is one that Rudrum challenges by comparing two literary heritage sites in England devoted to Charles Dickens: the Charles Dickens Birthplace Museum in Portsmouth, Hampshire, and the (now closed) literary theme park Dickens World in Chatham, Kent. With reference to two literary characters from Dickens (Mr Gradgrind and Mr Sleary), Rudrum contrasts two competing conceptions of what learning about literature is and should be: the museum’s focus on facts behind the fictions, on the one hand, and the amusement park’s invitation to play and imagination, on the other. Not only does Rudrum find many of the museum’s claims to authenticity, realness, and truth to be rather contestable when put under scrutiny, but also and more importantly, he questions whether a focus on biographical data—outside the fiction—is what best fosters educational engagement with Dickens’ literary *oeuvre*. Is it not rather, Rudrum asks, imaginative play and make-believe—activities the literary works themselves require and reward—that teach us best about fictions? Though not trying to deny the importance of historical facts or the relevance of biographical knowledge in literary education, nor wanting to create a false antagonism between the two, Rudrum writes at the end of his essay:

Perhaps it may be easier to teach a child an appreciation of Dickens's characters than of his biographical circumstances, but would that make the latter the more urgent, the more impressive? Conversely, would teaching grown adults to reconnect with the world of make believe and play through the lens of Dickens' fiction be a more remarkable achievement than getting them to pore over glass cases and text panels in a traditional museum? Would it be more remarkable than teaching children about Dickens's fiction through the world of make believe they already inhabit? We do no favours to literary education by assuming the answers to such questions are self-evident or straightforward.

There are indeed many remarkable things we may want to learn from literature. Some of those things will prove difficult to learn, and some easy. What kind of difficulty literature poses to our efforts to learn from it will of course vary, especially if we take into consideration that the "we" in question varies too. Who exactly is to learn—needs to learn—what and why? What does the grown-up academic take him- or herself to need to learn from literature? What do we believe that the child learns or needs to learn? Fiction and truth, learning and literature are important to adults and children alike. Yet, their importance may not be of identical nature, and the same could perhaps be said with regard to children's and adults' relation to philosophy. On the other hand, philosophizing *with* children through literature may also offer unique occasions for intergenerational dialogue and reflection.

This is an important theme in the third essay by Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Lavery, which is devoted to one of the pioneers in the study of philosophy in children's literature, Gareth B. Matthews. Matthews demonstrated that much children's literature, both fantastic and realistic, is abundant with philosophical perplexities and questions. In "Frog and Toad at the Academy: Gareth B. Matthews on How Children's Literature Goes Philosophical," Gregory and Lavery identify and analyze five distinct ways in which Matthews understands children's literature to "go philosophical." Gregory and Lavery argue that each of these categories brings with it certain literary features, or narrative formulas, designed to present a particular *kind* of philosophical problem or perplexity. They illustrate the presence of these categories through examples from Matthews's reviews of children's literature. Gregory and Lavery's essay offers a detailed case-by-case demonstration, and a systematic (though not exhaustive) overview, of ways in which children's literature invites its readers (young and old) into philosophical reflection through the literary use of irony, fancy, thought experiments, fables, and realism.

That children's stories can indeed offer philosophical reflection—and not only for the children themselves but across generations—is a central idea in Viktor Johansson's essay "Sámi Children as Thought Herders: Philosophy of Death and Storytelling as Radical Hope in Early Childhood Education." This essay does not focus on philosophical features of literature written for children, but on the presence of philosophical reflection in children's own storytelling while playing. Recounting his experience with a group of Sámi preschoolers as they played outdoors, Johansson writes of how the children's spontaneously weaved fictions can draw us (the adults, the educators, the philosophers) into philosophical perplexities. The children Johansson accompanies develop a fictional world for a "mini-people" in the melting snow outside their early childhood center. The mini-people struggle with forces of nature, with flood water, and the constant risk of drowning. Johansson situates their story in the context of Sámi oral story-telling traditions, and puts it in dialogue with the modern classic Sámi poetry of Nils-Aslak Valkeapää. Johansson asks whether these young children can be considered critical indigenous philosophers and he offers the poetical notion of a "thought herder" to characterize the spirit and activity of such a philosophical position. The essay itself takes the form of a story about a philosopher who is instructed and inspired by the children as he accepts their invitation to take part in explorative thinking through fiction. The philosopher's encounter with

the children, Johansson suggests, becomes part of the process of decolonizing western pedagogies and philosophies.

The urgency of decolonizing indigenous thinking, and the significance of literary *form* in philosophy, are addressed by both Johansson's essay and Carl Mika's essay "Darkly Truthful: An Indigenous Séance with Novalis." In Mika's essay, these two ambitions are intimately and intricately intertwined. Mika combines both critical and invitational gestures towards traditional Western philosophy and creates a conversation between Maori philosophy and German romanticism. The manner in which Mika does so is highly unconventional, however, and challenges the border between philosophy and literary fiction. The essay is called a *séance*—a discursive format that hardly enjoys general approval in academia—and takes the form of a dialogue between Mika and the German Romantic philosopher and writer Novalis. It is a dialogue between the dead and the living about the very possibility of talking with "the dead" and whose "deadness" is questioned as the conversation unfolds. "Mika" and "Novalis" talk about what death, life, writing, art, thinking, the "thing in itself," and truth can mean and be, from a Maori and from a Romantic point of view. The result is a fascinating merging of dissimilar life worlds and philosophical horizons. Having pushed the conventions of academic writing thus far, "Mika" nevertheless expresses a sense of failure to convey *the truth* as it is conceptualized in Maori philosophy:

This has been an issue that has plagued me for some time – how to *not* treat our ideas simply as empty, human-derived things. Art, music and poetry have the upper hand in naturally being able to present the All, but those who write in the academy are at a distinct disadvantage. The truth lies, from a Maori perspective, in being able to present the All. The artists and poets know this: they can hold the sense of all things whilst moving from theme to theme, whereas those of us who speak "like the wise ones" are, on the contrary, only able to discuss one thing at once. For Maori, it poses a massive contradiction because, on the one hand, we believe the world is interconnected; on the other, we write as if the world is disconnected.

"Mika" and "Novalis" advise us to put our hope and trust in a form of life-giving *uncertainty*, rather than in knowing and rationality. By approaching "mystery, darkness, nothingness, and enchantment" through literature and other arts, we can hope to catch a glimpse of "the All" of which we are part, and in which our being is grounded, according to Maori philosophy. "Mika" and "Novalis" ponder over how obscurity and uncertainty can generate "the truth of poetry," and what it could mean that we need to be "dead in order to be darkly truthful."

There are many inflections of darkness in the world in need of philosophical description. If the darkness and uncertainty sought in Mika's essay are of a life-giving kind—bringing to mind the image of a womb—a more sinister form is scrutinized in the essay that follows it, Ingeborg Löfgren's essay "*Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, Totalitarian Lived Skepticism, and Unlearning How to Love." Mika's poetic employment of the words "death" and "the dead" are used to counter a colonizing Western rationality that threatens to alienate us (or has perhaps already done so) from the rest of the living world. In Mika's coinage, "the dead" can help to liberate the living from oppressive and harmful cultural forces. Löfgren—by contrast—explores how being one of "the dead" in the totalitarian context of George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* is tantamount to being deprived of one's own inner life and free spirit. In *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, uncertainty and obscurity are not benevolent forces with which to fight oppression. They are instruments of control, used by a totalitarian society in order to make free thinking impossible. Löfgren argues that the obliteration of the capacity for individual judgment, and the destruction of objective truth, are not the final goals of The Party (although these are indeed important). Instead, it is *love* that must

ultimately be destroyed, and with it our most intimate knowledge and understanding of ourselves and others. Löfgren borrows the notion of “lived skepticism” from Stanley Cavell in order to describe the condition of doubt and existential estrangement in which the inhabitants of Orwell’s dystopian world are forced to dwell. Through The Party’s perverted “pedagogy” of torture and indoctrination, the novel’s main character, Winston, unlearns the concept of love; he becomes unable both to feel it and to know what it is. By reflecting on the novel’s portrayal of lived skepticism in a totalitarian setting, the reader, Löfgren argues, is asked to test the boundaries of her own morality and sense-making. Such an activity can hopefully teach us something true about ourselves, about language, about the importance of truth, and enhance our capacity to tell sense from nonsense.

The last essay of this special issue stays with the theme of love and the possibility of understanding love and how to live lovingly, but it does so in a brighter and more hopeful key. In “Queer Love, Literature, and Philosophy. On Reading Maggie Nelson’s novel *The Argonauts*,” Salla Aldrin Salskov investigates how the novel both challenges and makes visible prevalent “epistemic habits” in literary studies, gender studies, and queer theory. The novel is a love story about Maggie (the author) and Harry (her partner) and about how their love and understanding of each other develops. Aldrin Salskov demonstrates how the novel explores issues about gender, identity, intimacy, sexuality, language, and politics in a manner that brings existential and moral dimensions of “I-You”-relationships to the fore of theoretical discussions about queer and trans experiences. Reading Nelson’s novel in the light of thinkers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Toril Moi, and Sara Ahmed, Aldrin Salskov emphasizes Nelson’s ability to depict philosophical problems as rooted in the messiness and vulnerability of our everyday lives. What does it mean to really ask—and to have succeeded in asking—whether words “are good enough”? What does it mean to have, or lack, a *faith* in language’s capacity to capture and communicate our innermost truths? *The Argonauts*, Aldrin Salskov argues, does not ask such questions merely in the abstract, but shows the lived experiences of people for whom these questions are real, alive, and urgent.

That we end this special issue on fiction and truth, learning and literature, with the theme of love is perhaps also significant. Attending to literature, means also attending to our deep existential investment in it, our care and passion for it. If truth requires a just and loving gaze, then in order to offer a truthful account of how literature comes to matter to us, in real life, we should also acknowledge how our love of literature plays an important role in our capacity to learn from it. In *The Limits of Critique* (2015) Rita Felski writes: “Why, even as we extol multiplicity, difference, hybridity – is the affective range of criticism so limited? Why are we so hyperarticulate about our adversaries and so excruciatingly tongue-tied about our loves?” (Felski, 2015: 13). We hope that this special issue has also, if perhaps for the most part indirectly, loosened that tongue, and testified to the various ways love of literature often also expresses love of truth. Not because all the articles have described or used the notions of “truth,” “fiction,” “literature,” and “learning” in the same way, but because they have offered an extension of these concepts, as when we spin “a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres” (Wittgenstein, 2009: §67).

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ORCID iDs

Viktor Johansson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0298-3832>

Ingeborg Löfgren  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6588-7971>

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Author Biography

Viktor Johansson is Associate Professor (Docent) of Pedagogy at Södertörn University, Sweden. He works on philosophy of education, children's philosophies and existential questions, children's literature and intercultural, especially, indigenous early childhood education. His books include *Literature and Philosophical Play in Early Childhood Education: A humanities-based approach to research and practice* (Routledge 2019) and *Filosofi i tidig barndom: omedelbarhetens pedagogik (Philosophy in Early Childhood: The pedagogy of immediacy)* (Gleerups 2019).

Ingeborg Löfgren is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Literature at Uppsala University, Sweden. She is interested in the intersection of philosophy and literature and in particular in the Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP) tradition after Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell. She has written about skepticism and literary interpretation and about Ordinary Language Criticism (OLC), and is currently working on a research project about the Swedish novelist and activist Sara Lidman's (1923–2004) literary philosophy from an OLC perspective.