In this lecture, Fatima Festič will present her current project that aims to analyse the cultural manifestations of disconnecting from ethnic groups in the wake of collective traumatic events. This topic requires thorough reexamination in view of increasing cognitive mobility, global migrations, clashing worldviews, and concerns with identification and belonging in changing spaces of habitation. I use a comparative research pattern to cultural/artistic manifestations of movement from Croatia and from Bosnia-Herzegovina within the European continent in/after the 1990s. To that aim, I urge a clarification of the concept of dispersion, in my attempt to elaborate a novel theory of dispersion as a form of movement that describes individuals rather than groups. Dispersion is not clearly differentiated from diaspora (a widely studied aspect of group migration) in so far as 1. recent transnational approaches to migration are usually based on the understanding of nation as a group 2. scholars rarely criticise groupism 3. mobility studies have provided neither a definition of dispersion nor an answer to it 4. nor is this concept theorised in humanities or social sciences in general. As my project proposes, dispersion refers to both movement and production; it describes the singular acting of a critical creative cultural subject, and implies the transforming function of memory and its political materialisation. The project aims to offer crucial insights into dispersive creative interventions which deal with the effects of ethnic violence/divisions and the huge potential of both affirmative-affective production and thought that strengthen European integrative processes. My interdisciplinary scientific goal is to develop a new scientific field of dispersion, employing the insights of nomadic philosophy at the intersection of movement and memory studies – exploring the relation of dispersion to memory production in literature, other art-media, and theory.

Fatima Festič has worked as a Visiting Professor, Lecturer, and Research Fellow in the fields of comparative literature, cultural studies, and humanities at various universities in the USA, Western and Eastern Europe, South Africa, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and as an Assistant to Professor Edward Said. She holds research affiliations with the Northwestern University, Chicago, and UvA; she is a Permanent Fellow of the International Communicology Institute and a member of the executive boards/committees of several major international academic associations. Festič has published more than forty articles pertaining to literary, psychoanalytic and feminist theory/criticism, semiotics and cultural studies, and the books The Body of the Postmodernist Narrator, Constructions of Victimhood in Contemporary Cultures, and Gender and Trauma: Interdisciplinary Dialogues. Currently, she is working the study The Politics of Inter-art Translation, and developing a longer-term global research project on Dispersion expected to be based at the University of Vienna.

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