CHAPTER 2

Roundtable: Memory, Literature, and "Literary Memory Studies"

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Lucy Bond: In what follows, our round-table participants discuss where literary memory studies—if there is such a thing—has come from, where it sits today and where it might go in the future. We would like to explore the centrality of literature in memory and trauma studies, and the connection between the aesthetics of literature and the ethics of memory, although I don't

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L. Bond et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Literary Memory Studies*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69594-0_2

want to separate out those two things. As a starting point, could you each tell us about your background—how you have come to the study of literature and memory, either as separate disciplines, or together?

Stef Craps: I did not identify as a memory scholar at the start of my career, even though with hindsight I had actually been working on issues of memory from the very beginning.

I even wrote my first MA thesis, at KU Leuven, on a novel that's a textbook example of what Linda Hutcheon has called "historiographic metafiction": Salman Rushdie's *Shame*. These are novels that deal with history but do so in a very self-conscious manner: they construct versions of the past but make the reader aware of the construction process and critically interrogate inclusions, exclusions, interpretations, etc. My PhD also started out as a study of historiographic metafiction, in the work of the contemporary British author Graham Swift, whose novel *Waterland* is one of the best-known examples of the genre.

However, as I was writing my PhD thesis, the focus shifted to trauma and ethics in Swift's novels. This was the late 1990s. My PhD supervisor, Ortwin de Graef, had drawn my attention to the then-recent work on trauma by such scholars as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman. It's no coincidence that he took an interest in this body of scholarship, as just like these scholars he had a background in deconstruction and poststructuralism. Moreover, also just like them, he had been deeply shaken by the Paul de Man affair. In fact, it was Ortwin who had discovered de Man's antisemitic wartime writings while working on his PhD. I believe that he saw and welcomed trauma theory as an attempt by a beleaguered critical paradigm—textualism, say—to reinvent itself in an ethical guise and thereby to redeem itself. So that's my background: I inherited my interest in trauma studies from my PhD supervisor. If you'd asked me at the time, I might have told you that I was a trauma scholar: I was active in the field of trauma theory or trauma studies. It wouldn't have occurred to me to call myself a memory scholar.

In fact, it wasn't until several years later, in the mid-2000s, that I discovered memory studies, via the work of Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney. Nowadays it seems fairly obvious that memory and trauma scholars are active in the same field, but as I recall it, that wasn't the case at the time. After all, memory studies and trauma studies had a very different intellectual history. Until I stumbled upon Astrid's and Ann's work, I simply hadn't been aware of Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, or Jan and Aleida Assmann, to name some founding figures of the field of memory studies. They didn't play any role at all in trauma studies, which arose from a convergence between Freudian psychoanalysis and de Manian deconstruction.

It took some time before the twain would meet. I still remember Ann's response to an invitation I had sent her to participate in a symposium I was organizing back in 2009 on "Literature and the Memory of Catastrophe": she very politely declined, saying, "Sorry, but I don't do catastrophe". Just last year, though, Ann and Astrid each contributed an essay to a special issue

of the journal *Social Research* on cultural trauma. Conversely, I renamed the research group that I had co-founded in 2007 as the Centre for Literature and Trauma the "Cultural Memory Studies Initiative" in 2014, I co-edited a book on new directions in memory studies, and just like Ann and Astrid I embraced the Memory Studies Association (MSA).

So I find it interesting that what is taken for granted today wasn't obvious at all, or at least not to me, just 15 years ago.

What I found compelling about trauma theory, by the way, is the claim, which was at least implied, that literature is a privileged site for bearing witness to trauma, that it could give the reader access to limit events and extreme experiences that weren't accessible any other way, and that a deconstructive reading practice could help bring about social solidarity, create new forms of community, etc. I thought this was a marvellous way of reasserting the value of literature and literary studies, which were under threat at the time. I still think there is at least some truth to these claims or beliefs.

Ann Rigney: I guess my trajectory is different from many of the people here, though I'm beginning to realise everybody's trajectory is different in its own way. I come from the field of literary studies and I did my PhD in comparative literature, but from the word go I was very reluctant to do literature in the traditional sense of literary texts.

I've always been fascinated by what you might call literature in the wild: the idea that literary phenomena—the aesthetic, the poetic, narrative—play a role outside the confines of literary texts as such. A lot of my graduate work involved looking at non-literary genres—especially historiography—to see if I could identify the workings of the literary in the production of knowledge. Foucault was really important at this time. But where Foucault was talking about discourse, I was more interested in the role of language as such as well as poetic and narrative structures in knowledge production.

I guess one of the defining features of my work has been its focus on collective narratives and collective identities rather than on personal stories, which might have been the case had I followed a trajectory through gender studies or trauma theory rather than historiography. I've always been interested in public events and the collective negotiation of their meaning. So I ended up doing my PhD on how historians, in the run-up to the Revolution of 1848, remembered and interpreted the earlier Revolution of 1789. I showed how these 19th-century historians, while drawing on more or less the same archive, produced competing accounts of the past and projected different futures by applying narrative techniques to produce their own story.

My framework at that time was structuralist narratology in the sense of people like Gérard Genette and Roland Barthes. This was also the time when Hayden White was making waves by claiming that all histories were constructed along literary lines. Semiotics were also important and, in retrospect, they have been really crucial to cultural memory studies by allowing us to extend the idea of meaning-making well beyond the textual.

My interest in historical narratives brought me into conversation with historians and theorists of history. But as a literary scholar who was fascinated, less by what had happened, than by the way events were represented, I remained very much an outsider. So I started to turn away from historiography to other genres for narrating the past—monuments, museums, tourism and, especially, historical fiction. At that point—it must have been around 2000—I was lucky enough that someone said to me that I should read the work of Aleida Assmann. And that was a real turning point: I'd finally found a name for the thing I was studying, and that was cultural memory. From then on, I began to find people I could actually talk to, people sharing an interest in storytelling in relation to the big events of the modern era. After my first book on the French Revolution I did a book on the *Afterlives of Walter Scott*, which brought me back for a while to literature. Scott was of course the founder of the historical novel, but I would say he also invented much of modern memory culture as a response to modernisation and empire. I studied his afterlives in material culture, in theatre and in all sorts of reworkings in everyday life and in public culture.

Coming from 19th-century studies, as I do, has given me a different position in many discussions. Stef already mentioned my reluctance to "do catastrophe". Although I've studied responses to revolution and disruption, my work has not been fed by the Holocaust and by what one might call the traumatic paradigm within memory studies. My work is also unusual in not being confined to the post-World War Two era and in having a historical component, although it has increasingly extended into the contemporary world.

I have a project running now called Remembering Activism: it takes the Paris Commune of 1871 as its starting point but then works through into the present, trying to capture the multiple ways in which protest is culturally remembered and how that memory is linked to hopes for the future. This is in some ways a return to my earlier interest in stories of revolution but now reframed within memory studies. It's also an attempt to redirect memory studies, away from war and genocide towards civic life, and to link the study of memory to the question of the future. I'm hoping to show the role of memory in shaping ideas of active citizenship that operate transnationally. That's been another big interest of mine: how stories travel and how media connect people across traditional national frameworks.

Jill Jarvis: I also didn't think of myself a memory studies scholar until I published my first book, which has the word "memory" in the title. The book had been my dissertation, but it didn't have "memory" in the title as a dissertation. However, as I revised and tried to find the bones of the book, I came to see that I was really grappling with a lot of the memory studies, trauma and testimony studies scholarship that I've inherited. I found myself confronting the idiosyncrasies of particular strand of French and francophone memory studies, which struck me as rather squarely oriented by French experiences and

narratives about decolonization, even when operating in the mode of critique. Instead, I wanted to work from a critical perspective squarely oriented by Algerian literary genealogies and histories, and to work, think, and teach in ways that recognize French *as* an African language not especially preoccupied with France. These are all also problems of memory, it turns out.

I'm a literary scholar. For the last six years I've been on the faculty in the French department at Yale, and am also active on the councils of both African Studies and Middle East Studies. At Princeton, where I did my PhD in comparative literature, I also worked closely with Simon Gikandi running the African Humanities Colloquium, and helped him to run a conference on African Memory. So this is a sketch of my intellectual orientation.

It's interesting to belong to a French department because my work has been resolutely not located in France but indeed grounded in Algeria, which is where I did most of research during doctoral training, and now am interested in works from different regions of the Sahara and Sahel. During doctoral training I was primarily interested in the multilingual Maghreb and Algeria in particular. The dissertation I mentioned—which became a book—reflected years of effort to think through a politics of literature in the long wake of the catastrophe of French colonial occupation through Algeria's decolonizing war, the 1990s civil war, and into the present.

I've been more or less obsessed with questions of state violence and issues of justice, and interested in how literary works supplement and work through juridical problems and impasses. I think that literature has particular ways of doing important epistemological work. It's the blank spots in memory, the absence of memory, that have captured my attention—what Ann Stoler calls colonial aphasia and the effects of what Ariella Azoulay has called constitutive state violence. I've been interested how aesthetic works can help to create infrastructures to think about what's been rendered unthinkable by colonial violence or that is *unavailable* to memory, that has not yet become a subject for memory studies. Consider, for instance, the fact that the French detonated their first thirteen nuclear bombs in Algeria during the 1960s, and until recently almost no one seemed to remember or know this. Why have the still-unfolding effects of French nuclear imperialism not become a subject of memory or historiography until now?

So, that gives you an idea of my own trajectory. Now I'm thinking about the ways in which the African-Sahara has in some senses been written out of history and written out of memory by a French imperial project whose consequences are not in the past. And I will simply underscore that I am learning to think about this through aesthetic works—literary, cinematic, but also other art forms—which are the basis of my research.

Cathy Caruth: I actually trained as a romanticist and a literary theorist. My dissertation and first book were on notions of experience in literary, philosophical and psychoanalytic texts that centered on moments that were not

experiential, so for example an encounter of a child and dead parent or a parent and a dead child.

I was going to write after that on the accident, and some paradoxical aspects of the accident in literary texts, when I became interested in the accident in Freud, particularly in Moses and Monotheism, where the train accident is a prime example of what causes trauma. I was struck by the conjunction, in Freud's text, of proper place names (his leaving Vienna, going to England, etc.) with a theory of trauma that focused on the missing of experience. There was, on the one hand, the notion of a missed experience (a delayed experience) in his theory, and on the other hand, a set of specific proper names related to his own historical circumstances. I was interested in how the theory of missed experience was linked to the specificity of concrete historical names and contexts.

Around that time Dori Laub, the psychoanalyst, who was a survivor of the Holocaust, gave me a video of a conference on the L'Ambiance Plaza disaster, in which a building that was being constructed in Connecticut had fallen on and killed many construction workers. One therapist speaking at the conference, Robert Ostroff, presented on a patient whom he called Mr. Blank, who had seen his best friend die. This man, who later kept seeing the eye of his friend that had been hanging out of its socket, and kept hearing the gurgling and of his dying (or dead) friend, asked the therapist repeatedly, "Did he see me? Did he hear me?" There were many striking and moving aspects of this story but one I found remarkable was Dr. Ostroff's remark that Mr. Blank's hallucinations and dreams of the sights and sounds of his dying friend were precise and accurate until Mr. Blank got better, at which point his dreams became symbolic again. So it seemed that some aspect of the truth of the death of Mr. Blank's friend was most apparent when Mr. Blank was "ill", and became distorted (or "symbolic") when he became "well". The seeming pathology of post-traumatic stress disorder, that is, conveyed a truth. This was surprising. And it also resonated for me with what I had been learning theoretically about literary texts: that the referential or truth-related elements of texts might not become available through their "meaning" but rather through the interruption of their meaning, the way they interrupted their own meaning. This was sometimes referred to as "unreadability"; but for me it had to do with the transmission of something true. So the theoretical work on literature I had been doing intersected with an existential crisis. In both a certain kind of truth (or one aspect of an event's truth) emerged through an interruption: of consciousness (in the delayed experience of trauma), or of "meaning". The power of the trauma story, and its implications for thinking about truth, or of experience or events (ultimately this became for me a matter of "history"), and also the resonance of this story with issues surrounding the reading of literature, became particularly clear at that point, and contributed to my becoming very committed to working on trauma. Or I could reverse that and say that my discovery that the difficult theoretical questions I had learned to think about

were echoing with a certain kind of existential crisis, was to me important and surprising.

At Dori Laub's suggestion I also attended, around this time, the annual conference of the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies. It seemed to me that all of the presentations I heard revolved around similar paradoxes as the one described in Freud's late text and more currently in Ostroff's presentation. The clinicians, the nurses, the doctors, the Vietnam vets, the survivors, were all, in one way or another, talking about some form of existential, or physiological, or clinical, paradox. Some neuroscientists would say, "The cortisol levels in stress ordinarily go up, but in our traumatic subjects they go down" (this was surprising because post-traumatic stress disorder was at least in part based on a stress model). Other people would talk about the traumatic temporal paradoxes, which, as Freud noted, centred on the peculiar nature of an experience that you don't experience when it happens, but returns repeatedly later, both not fully experienced and insistent, later on. Others spoke about the weird combination of accuracy and lack of consciousness associated with traumatic flashbacks. Ultimately what I found a truly exciting process of listening to trauma specialists in so many fields led to the interdisciplinary collection I assembled and later the book of interviews I conducted with theorists, clinicians, film-makers, activists and others working with trauma across different fields.

At the same time, I shifted from writing the planned monograph on the accident to a book on trauma—something I was told was not literary enough for an English department (and perhaps, one might speculate, the accident was somehow a less dangerous topic). But for me, the notion of trauma I was writing about grew out of a very literary reading of Freud, as well as literary and other psychoanalytic texts. I think that is something that has been missed in many of the debates around trauma. My own interest in trauma first grew out of the temporal paradox in Freud—the delayed and returning (non-) experience. It was a conceptual problem but it was always tied up with, and inextricable from, specific (literary) figures, such as those of departure, awakening and so on. It was never a dogma. Many of the debates in so-called trauma studies—a phrase I don't like—have, unfortunately, treated trauma "theory" as a kind of dogma, a set of concepts, rather than as the unsettling mode of writing in which the most profound thinking on trauma in fact emerges.

The literary element has also been very important in my own writing. I'm not a clinician, I'm not a philosopher, I'm not a psychoanalyst—although I've been in analysis multiple times. My parents were analysts. But what is crucial in reading the most impactful writings on trauma is that non-dogmatic aspect of the texts. In this context we must also remember that Feud never speaks from above or outside of trauma; it is never just a concept or object for his thought. He is always inscribed in his own trauma texts. And their language, moreover, is not only something he simply masters. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, for example, he derives that language of trauma (as I have argued),

the language of departure, from the words of a child (the child playing "fort da"). So the conceptual complexity and surprise of trauma allows it to cross many disciplinary boundaries, but the language of trauma remains tied to the specificity of particular texts and figures, which need to be read closely.

More recently, I've been interested in returning to a theme or a topos, one might call it, that has appeared across different writers on trauma theory for decades—that is, the problem of address, the thinking of trauma as the collapse of address and the need to create an address where there isn't one, either because people won't listen or because it's not yet an articulation. This allows us to think about trauma without entering into debates about representation, which I don't think are productive, and also approaches the problem of traumatic experience differently than, say, around questions focused on knowing and not-knowing (one can know but have no one to whom one can address the story).

I would say to your point, Stef, about trauma theory saving deconstruction, that (laughter) it never occurred to me ever to try to save deconstruction. I never thought it needed saving. I was just very, very interested in the fact that the existential crisis of trauma intersected with the conceptual issues that I had learned in thinking critically and theoretically about literature; those things spoke to each other. And that was powerful.

Marianne Hirsch: It's so great to hear how coherent all your narratives are. I'm just finding it so difficult to tell a linear story about this. It's certainly not linear. I'm happy that we're having this conversation today because I just arrived in my house in Vermont where I found an artifact that I wanted to show you. I had lost it and found it again after many, many years.

It is my BA/MA thesis at Brown, submitted in June 1970. It's called *Memory in Vladimir Nabokov's* Lolita *and Robert Musil's* Tonka. Though, it was written at a very intense political time, it's a totally formalist, thematic analysis of these two texts. Part One is on *Lolita*, part Two is on *Tonka*. There are four parts to each of the two parts. They're memory as a motivational force, memory as a structuring force, verbal memory and memory as a rhetorical device.

I cannot tell you what any of those things are because a couple of years ago during the pandemic when I found it again, I made the mistake of rereading this embarrassing piece of writing, that showed how a good student can both find such categories in these novels and apply them, without taking them much further. It may seem like this was the beginning of my interest in memory, but it is not memory that I was to pursue but the experimental literary aspects of these texts. In fact, for the subsequent 15 or almost 20 years I worked on very different things, first on the new novel, and then literary feminism.

It's really through that interest that I came back to trauma and memory studies. The beginnings of the second wave of feminism and feminist literary studies took me to a study of generations. I wrote a book on mothers and daughters in literature, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, through the 1980s. At the

same time, I got involved in the School of Criticism and Theory, which, for a number of years, had its seat at Dartmouth where I taught at the time. In the summer of 1986, Geoffrey Hartman who was the School's director brought *Shoah* to be shown at Dartmouth.

Because of my personal history as a child of survivors of the Holocaust, I had always tried to avoid seeing films about the Holocaust or looking at photographs. My parents were not camp survivors but they were survivors of ghettos and persecution, they had to wear the Yellow Star and so on. This was not a history I was willing to face, nor did it seem related to my academic interests.

We watched *Shoah* in a large auditorium and I sat right next to the door because I did not know whether I could really sit through this film. But of course I did. I got completely immersed and obsessed with it and it led to a number of really important conversations, first, actually, about the place of gender in the film. It was through those conversations, and through Geoffrey Hartman, really, that I became interested in talking about trauma and began to read Shoshana Felman's work and, Cathy, your work. Unspeakability and trauma emerged as important subjects for me, along with my continued interests in generations and transmission through the literary and artistic.

It was during an NEH Institute on Gender and War in 1990 that Leo Spitzer and I wrote our article on Lanzmann and on gender in *Shoah* after meeting Lanzmann and listening to his public conversation with Shoshana Felman at Yale where he insisted that gender, or the virtual absence of women witnesses in the film, was not an issue at all. But to us it had everything to do with what stories were told and how they were told and also with whose voices were heard and how.

My interest in memory and trauma grew out of these projects and I am speaking not so much individual memory (which is what I had analysed in Nabokov and Musil all those years ago) but cultural memory. With several colleagues, we organised a second institute at Dartmouth on "Cultural Memory and the Present" in 1995. The book *Acts of Memory* emerged from that institute. With our senior fellow Mieke Bal, we worked very hard on contesting the idea that literary memory and trauma could be discussed as forms of representation and argued that notions of performance and re-enactment were more productive for understanding memory through the literary.

It was at that time also that I began participating in a growing personal turn in academic writing. I found that my interest in feminism, in trauma and in the Second World War, which was the history I had inherited, came together and brought me to the work I was going to be doing for the subsequent decades, which is on generational legacies of traumatic and painful histories. Specifically the Holocaust, where I began, but I've gone beyond it in working much more comparatively or, as I prefer to think of it, connectively through different violent and painful histories.

Even though I found that work on the Holocaust, specifically on testimony, autobiography, personal writing and witnessing, has been interesting and enabling to scholars in other fields, it has also delimited memory discourses in particular ways. Stef, we've had many conversations about this and your work has made that claim. I guess what I would like to talk about more is the shape of this field in the United States today, which has much more to do at this point with the legacies and memories of slavery and their very real-life afterlives in the lives of African Americans today. Memory studies as a field has been dominated by the Holocaust—and to a lesser extent by histories of empire and colonialism—but I think there's a whole separate strand that has to do with African American engagements in this field that are teaching us a great deal about the haunting effects of a past that is not past. We've drawn on each other's thinking, but in many ways, these have been separate conversations.

We are having this conversation during the pandemic, at a moment that I think of as a suspended present, with a future that's being delayed all the time, and a past that does not seem particularly illuminating when it comes to understanding what we are experiencing now. I'm very interested in this suspension and where memory fits into that. Not so much only why are we not remembering the 1918 flu pandemic, but really this notion of a suspension of time and what its effects are and will be.

In this context of a suspended present, Ann, your work on activism, on the memory of activism, has been particularly important to me. I'm trying to think about how the inevitability of trauma and traumatic return might be reframed to think back to a time *before*, to the present and the future of the past, to the hopes and dreams that motivated those who later became victims of violence. Memories of activism and what inspired it are key here. That's where I am right now.

Jessica Rapson: Perhaps we could get a few more thoughts on how people think that these two areas, literature and memory, speak to each other in disciplinary and thematic terms, so why literature and why memory? We could perhaps move on directly to talk about "studies", the idea of a discipline and the idea of memory studies or trauma studies or literary memory studies and problematise that a bit, as I sense that there has been some appetite for some problematisation there.

Then perhaps, finally we could get a few words from you about the future of these disciplines. Is there a future of them, should there be a future of these disciplines and what that might mean?

Marianne Hirsch: I could start by just naming something that has come up in just about everybody's introductions, which is interdisciplinarity. I think one of the attractions of working on memory and trauma has been that it really needs disciplinary training in a number of different disciplines. All of us here have come out of literature or have engaged with literature, but I've never felt the need for the tools of other disciplines as much as I have in thinking about memory. Certainly history is really important and I've had the good fortune

to be able to co-write and study everything I've studied in the last 20 years with a historian, but lately I've worked much more with photography even than with literature.

If we think of the key works, some of the classic literary works that people interested in memory have gone back to (and I'm not thinking so much of Proust right now, for example, but of works that are congruent with this field of memory studies as it's grown up since the '80s, let's say), those have been works that are not purely literary, I guess I would say, or textual, that have inscribed images that have been graphic, that have been archival or that have brought in archival materials and have been intermedial.

I'm not sure how you're defining the literary here and I don't know if this is something we want to get into, but if there is such a thing as literary memory studies, then I'd hope that the literary and the memory and the studies will each remain open and capacious.

Jill Jarvis: I agree about the draw toward interdisciplinarity. I've noticed the way in which these questions and problems call for all kinds of different materials in order to think through them. So I use the term "literary" in a really open sense, or more "aesthetic works". I approach the novels, poems, notebooks, films, photographs I study and teach as *doing* theorising in crucial ways. Literature does an important epistemological work especially where it experiments with or touches on the genre of testimony, that troubling genre at the cusp of the verifiable, the historiographical and the unverifiable.

For some time I have been interested in how literature theorises testimony; or opens up a place to deal with what is absent, irretrievable, irrecoverable; or helps to think seriously about subalternity. Moreover, literature also creates space and time for mourning, for trouble, for haunting. I'm thinking here about how Avery Gordon distinguishes trauma from haunting in the sense that there's this insistence that a ghost brings—something must be *done* to right a wrong, to face an injustice. The ways in which literary works can create that kind of haunting trouble is also a crucial matter for memory studies.

I'm also interested, on the other hand, in these works as other kinds of archives, or experiments with archival forms—here I've been thinking about and learning from Lia Brozgal's book *Absent the Archive,* which is about the way that literary and other cultural works created memory of the police massacre of Algerians in Paris in 1961 when the state-controlled archives about this were closed. She picks up this term, "anarchive", from Derrida and runs with it. I've been trying to think about the ways that literary and aesthetic works actually can generate, qualitatively, other kinds of archives as other spaces for memory. Anarchives. This project I was just talking about that has to do with French nuclear imperialism, there really has not been historiography about that, or rather, it's *now* being written by scholars like Roxane Panchasi and Samia Henni. It's operated in this cloud of nuclear unknowing, an archival blank zone. It's aesthetic works, as far as I know—poetry and photographic projects and video projects and an installation that Henni is

currently curating—that have started to create an archive of the real material effects of those bombs for Algerians, rather for humans and non-humans in Algeria.

We could talk about what anarchive and archive have to do with each other, but I think those are some of the key things that have been important to me for thinking about the contact points between literature and memory.

Ann Rigney: There are three things I'd like to bring up in response. The first one has to do with the nature of our expertise. We began by talking about our training as literary scholars in close reading and critical reading. Looking between the lines in order to understand how meaning is created and subverted, and how affect is produced: that's what we're good at, right? I think this makes us uniquely qualified to study the dynamics of remembering and forgetting, of speaking and silence, in all sorts of memory carriers.

Secondly, I'd like to come back to the point that Jill made so very well about the ways in which the literary and the aesthetic create the anarchive—or what Michelet in the nineteenth century called the "silences of history". Literature in the traditional sense has had an extraordinary role to play in articulating silences and offering alternatives to document-based histories. Good writing *makes* things memorable and brings new perspectives on the past, present and future into circulation. The literary exploration of alternative histories, in novels for example, has figured a lot in my teaching,

Having said that, there's also a danger in overemphasising the distinctiveness of literature. This brings me to my third point and the crux of our whole discussion about literary memory studies. I wonder if we should even want to invent a new specialism given the fact that everything in memory studies suggests that literature operates within a constellation of different media and different carriers of memory. Exciting things are happening, precisely because we have extended the scope of our research beyond the textual into performance, into materiality, into aesthetics in all its forms.

So I'm actually quite uncomfortable with the very idea of literary memory studies. It seems to contradict the sense of memory studies as an interdisciplinary endeavour that looks at the interplay between different forms of storytelling. I'm concerned that we might end up fencing off literature and literary studies from this broader environment.

Cathy Caruth: I'm going to speak from my own intuitive sense, as I always have about the literary, because I think you're right, the literary is partly defined by not knowing its own boundaries, so we have to be careful with limiting its definition.

When I first wrote on the relation between trauma and literature, I talked about the entanglement of knowing and not knowing in traumatic experience, and of literature being a site where that can also occur. And as I mentioned before, one can also think of the language of trauma as raising problems of address—who speaks from the site of trauma? And who listens? That's not always certain. Of course, literary studies, for example in the study of

lyric poetry, has in different ways focused on the figure of address, sometimes through the problem of apostrophe. But this question of address is much broader than a literary problem, it's also an experiential and conceptual problem. I would also suggest that the problem of address, the need to address others in relation to traumatic experience, emerges in the nature of the language of trauma theory itself. I think the language of theory, when it's done well, is also a plea to listen. But literary language, and the language of trauma, and the language of the theory of trauma, are each trying to teach us to listen differently. That's one thing I would say that makes them cross over into each other: the question of listening. Listening to what hasn't been heard or can't be heard simply, or listening to something that has been erased. That seems to be one theme that has come across in a number of people's comments in this discussion.

As I was trained in literary criticism and theory, we learned to read literary texts as a challenge to certain normative ideas about representation based on visual, perceptual or mimetic models. I think the theory of trauma also forces to raise the question, not whether there is or isn't representation (a recurrent debate), but whether or not the *model* of representation (as it is frequently understood) is adequate to traumatic experience and testimony.

I think this may be related to the resistance of traumatic experience (and its theory) to being appropriated politically. In various countries to which I have travelled to speak about trauma, such as Russia and Japan, I have been asked about the attempt by leaders to use "trauma" as a political tool of oppression (claiming, for example, that the country has been traumatised by this or that event and thus needs to be saved by a particular leader). This has become a matter of concern for me as I have thought about what it has meant for *Unclaimed Experience* to be translated into different languages, such as Russian or Hebrew. In this context I have tried to argue that the language of trauma, like the language of literature—theoretical or otherwise—resists being assimilated to any particular political project. This language challenges our desire to claim the notion of trauma for political use. That may have a positive effect in so far as it could at times pose a challenge to totalitarian uses of the notion of trauma in the service of historical erasure, though this is, of course, not a guarantee, and, as I said, I would not want to reduce the idea of trauma to this particular political goal either.

Stef Craps: It seems to me that literature, memory, literary studies, and memory studies do indeed speak to one another in profound ways. Memory is at the heart of literature, both formally and thematically. Formally speaking, literature remembers itself, through rhyme and repetition but also through intertextual references to earlier texts. Literary texts borrow from individual literary texts and conform to or challenge genre conventions. Literature is a mnemonic practice; in fact, W. H. Auden coined the phrase "memorable speech" to describe poetry.

As for the thematic level, literature represents memory, most famously in Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Literature is able to represent processes of remembering through experiential modes of narration and focalization. It can juxtapose different perspectives and divergent memories. It can challenge hegemonic narratives and promote alternative, forgotten narratives. It allows readers to virtually experience the events being described and to incorporate them into their own memory of the past—this is what Alison Landsberg calls "prosthetic memory". Apart from constructing versions of the past, literature also makes the process of construction visible, allowing us to reflect on it. That's particularly obvious in the case of historiographic metafiction.

Apart from being a medium of cultural memory, something to which it is ideally suited, literature is also an object of remembrance. It's a form of heritage; it helps create a sense of shared history and identity. There are endless discussions about the literary canon and canon formation. Literary historiography is a thriving subfield of literary studies. In essence, these are debates about what should be collectively remembered and what can safely be forgotten. To a large extent, then, literary studies effectively *is* memory studies.

I share Ann's reservations, though, about whether there is or should be such a thing as literary memory studies. If it is indeed a field, it's a very heterogeneous one and one, moreover, that doesn't really identify as such. At least, I'm not aware of any research centres, journals, book series, etc. that are specifically dedicated to literary memory studies. The book that you're working on is perhaps calling that field into being, or at least making explicit what was previously implicit.

Like Ann, I worry that this could set back the movement towards greater interdisciplinarity in memory studies. The more widely recognized field of cultural memory studies is more capacious, more encompassing. It recognizes that narratives travel not just across space and time but also across different media and cultural practices, and that this is, in fact, a constitutive feature of cultural memory. Cultural memory is never carried by a single cultural object alone. For a story to be memorable, it has to be repeated, it has to be remediated. That can happen through literature, but that's only part of the picture. So there is a risk that promoting literary memory studies could make literary scholars who are interested in issues of memory feel as if they're supposed to limit their enquiry to literary texts instead of taking into account the larger cultural constellation of which literature is a part, which would be unfortunate. Literature is not an isolated phenomenon and should not be approached as such.

Strategically, though, it may be a good idea to recast, repackage, reframe, or reformulate the work of literary studies as a form of memory studies. Memory studies is on the rise, as witness the exponential growth of the MSA. Moreover, it's a field whose social relevance is widely accepted—more widely, anyway, than that of literary studies as such. Literary memory studies might be an

easier sell to the outside world and the powers that be than plain old literary studies these days. Positioning literature and literary studies as playing a key role in memory culture helps show the relevance of what we do and what we value without doing it a disservice.

Marianne Hirsch: I wanted to follow up a bit on what Cathy said about witnessing and listening and address, because I was wondering if we could think of the literary not as an object of study but as a process, a practice. I'm thinking about when we teach students how to read, we're also teaching them how to listen, we're teaching them how to interpret complex events and how to interpret history in complex ways. We're teaching them about truth and how it's not one thing and how it's not transparent.

In my work, I've argued that we can remember things that didn't happen to us ourselves, but that somehow events of the past have been transmitted to us in such a way that we feel as though we remember them. It's not a figure of speech. If we think of how we experience things and how especially traumatic or painful events are experienced, how are those embodied experiences transmitted to others? Well, through stories and narratives of the people we live with and encounter.

The literary is one way that those events are transmitted and received. I can see the literary as being a pedagogy of listening and reading. At Columbia, at the medical school there's a field of narrative medicine. It's really trying to teach medical students how to listen to their patients' stories. Rita Charon who runs it has a PhD in English literature and wrote her dissertation on Henry James. If you know how to read Henry James then you know how to listen to what's unsaid, what your patients are not telling you. That's exactly what they're trying to teach. That's where I see the literary as being a practice rather than an object.

Jill Jarvis: Yes, I really like this idea of the literary as a practice and a pedagogy. It's through literary close reading that so many of us learned to pay close attention, to closely look, to closely listen. An education in literary studies has absolutely shaped my approach to other kinds of materials and objects. I think it's a matter not of consolidating an idea of "the literary" or even, God forbid, a *canon* of literary memory texts that we all turn to, but rather for me it seems important to continue to radically expand those practices, to think about how boundaries get drawn around what qualifies as literary, or as worthy of close and sustained attention.

If I've learned anything from literary works it's that memory is always contested and always a site of struggle over who counts, what matters, what warrants the privilege of close reading. As a matter of pedagogical practice I find myself always thinking about which objects are getting attention; that figures into the way I decide what to teach, but also what to devote my own critical attention to. For me, continually giving attention to what is not present feels crucial.

Ann Rigney: I like this way of thinking about the literary as a practice of making sense, as a method that we use rather than as a particular object of research. This could be a productive way of rethinking the question of the literary at a time when literature no longer plays the same role in society it once did and when stories come to us in many different media and contexts. In those circumstances it could be fruitful to locate the literary in modes of reading and engagement rather than in pregiven objects.

Lucy Bond: I was going to say two things, one which is that we're not making a pitch for literary memory studies. What we are interested in, and where the question of method is really important, is what does the study of literature distinctly bring to memory? Memory has to be, and is most importantly, a trans-medial, interdisciplinary field, but even if all media are equal, they're not the same. Are there distinctive elements in literature and the study of literature, close reading and all of those things that literature does bring?

Secondly, I would like to move onto that question of futurity. I think we've all rightly got a scepticism towards institutionalisation of various fields or disciplines. Given that, do you see the future of literature and memory together or separately progressing? Are there areas that are still undervalued? Are there voices that are still being marginalised? If you look towards the future of these areas of study, where would you like to see them go?

Jill Jarvis: I am speaking from a perspective oriented by the Francophone-inflected trajectory of memory studies, where the paradigms of memory studies have retained a strong tendency to invisibly reproduce inbuilt eurocentrism. So I would really like to continue to see much more deeply multilingual work, work that is grounded by the multilingual realities of different places understood as centers in their own right. Here I'm learning a lot from Brahim El Guabli's thinking about mnemonic spheres and the ways in which collective memories move across and between languages (or *don't* move) in Morocco, but there are many scholars doing such work.

Cathy Caruth: From the point of view of the work on trauma, specifically, I think that's very important. With regard to the question of languages, I think that one thing literary study focuses on, or at least traditionally focused on, is language and linguistic specificity and linguistic difference. One of the interesting, important developments over the last decade in the work on trauma is to try to expand beyond a certain Anglo-European context. An important issue to address in from this perspective is the question of translation and the question of what happens to "trauma" in the movement between or among languages. If you want to use a word like "trauma" or a word like "memory" and you say, "Well, let's go find it elsewhere", you are still using the English (or French, or German) word and its conceptual range. What would it mean in this context to translate, to shift to other languages?

Of course "trauma", as it is used in English (and its cognates in German, French, etc.), is not simply, itself, definable within a single language. It came

originally from ancient Greek and passed into different languages from there, and shifted in significance as it did. So it is always on the move, and I think in that sense is also not limited to a particular conceptual field. But there is another set of questions when "trauma" moves from this cluster of languages and their cultural and historical and political contexts to other languages.

I would add one more question of another kind that I have found interesting, when it comes to thinking about trauma from different or not adequately considered perspectives. This arose for me most compellingly in a lecture I heard in South Africa by Achille Mbembe. He said that we have always thought of trauma from the point of view of the human. But that this is not adequate for thinking about slavery, and what it means when people are treated as non-human. There's something missing in our ability, in the study of trauma, to inhabit, or speak from, this position—he says we have to rethink histories of trauma from the perspective of those who have been "institutionally and juridically" turned into objects in racial capitalism. There is some thinking on this, but I think it should definitely be developed further in relation to the theory of trauma as such.

Stef Craps: Speaking of the need to move beyond the human, I think it is high time for an environmental turn in memory studies, including literary memory studies. I believe the field can be expected to make significant strides in its engagement with environmental issues in the years ahead, if for no other reason than that these issues will become harder and harder to ignore as our environmental predicament continues to deteriorate. For that to happen, the field would need to start thinking ecologically instead of merely socially, break with its persistent anthropocentrism, and take account of scale issues.

I'm very excited about the new EU-funded Slow Memory COST Action, which I think can help effect this turn. In fact, one of the working groups focuses on environmental memory. In a working group meeting last week, the Action chair, Jenny Wüstenberg, said that work on environmental memory had played a key role in the conceptualization of the project as a whole. The project aims to study the memory not of sudden, violent events but of different forms of slow-moving, more dispersed change, such as environment degradation, deindustrialization, or neoliberal restructuring.

The first conference will be held on the Isle of Portland, where a memorial is planned to be built to commemorate extinct species. I'm really excited about this, as I've been waiting for some time for environmental memory to receive more attention. I myself have been working on this topic for a while, as have Lucy and Jessica, but I was struck by the paucity of panels on environmental memory at the last few MSA conferences. I'm glad to see that there is growing interest in it. In fact, I've been told that the upcoming MSA conference in Seoul will feature a plenary panel on memory and climate change. This is the first time that the association will be highlighting and foregrounding this kind of research in this manner.

Anyway, that's just one trend, in which I happen to be particularly interested. There are other trends, obviously, that can be identified. For example, there is a lot of interest these days in issues of perpetration, responsibility, implication, and complicity. Think of the recent work of Susanne Knittel and Michael Rothberg, among others. For a long time, memory studies focused almost exclusively on the victim experience, but this has started to change. A considerable amount of attention is now also being paid to the experience of perpetrators of violence or those not directly involved in it but complicit or implicated, such as beneficiaries or descendants of perpetrators. Another burgeoning subfield is the study of memory and activism, which Ann can speak to. And, of course, interest in digital memory shows no sign of dying down.

Jessica Rapson: This also really ties to what Jill said, because a focus on the environment and climate change has to also be a focus on decolonisation and on empire and the legacy of empire as well and neo-empirical structures. I think those two things are happening in a timely way.

Jill Jarvis: Yes, and I think there's an important conjunction now that requires shifting the frame from human memory to something much larger, to human and non-human entanglements in the wake of colonisation and imperialism.

Marianne Hirsch: Thinking about planetary memory raises the issue of what memory studies can offer our anxieties about the planet. One of the reasons environmental memory studies has become so important is that it complicates ideas of temporality and of pasts and futures. I wanted to come to this through this incredible installation that Maya Lin did in New York called Ghost Forest, which was really about the memory of past destruction and the memory of future catastrophe, because she installed a number of dead cedar trees in Madison Square Park to show how cedars are dying exponentially all over the northeast. But the work is not about the trees that had already died, but it is looking forward to all the trees that will continue to die and will have died. The future conditional and the past conditional—these are the tenses and times through which we can think of what will have happened, but they are also helpful in thinking about the future, thinking about the "real future conditional", what will have had to have happened for something to happen. I'm playing with tense right now, thinking of how we can introduce change, which is why I came into memory studies in the first place, because thinking about the past became a way to critique and to intervene in an unacceptable present.

Why did this field come up in the '80s? Well, yes, we can think of the survivors of the Holocaust who were about to die, and we had to interview them and we had to think about that, but it was also the '80s. It was Thatcherism. It was Reaganism. It was a moment when the present became unacceptable and we turned to the past for guidance, for ways in which things might have happened differently. For me this is really important and I think the way the literary comes in is that we have to find a register through which

to talk about what is actually happening right now. We have to find a language, or perhaps a story, or a series of stories.

I just want to talk very briefly about the project in which I'm involved right now, which is the Zip Code Memory Project, a community engagement project in Northern Manhattan and the South Bronx dealing with what we thought would be the aftermath of COVID, but it's not yet aftermath of COVID, we're still in the midst of COVID. We called it Memory because we thought people would have to find ways to commemorate their losses, the losses of their communities and of loved ones, but we're still in the midst of loss.

Yes, we have to remember, but we also have to think about this moment in the present where we realise that things didn't have to have happened in this way. They could have happened differently. We still can intervene in what will happen next and it is in this spirit that as a group of artists, scholars and activists, we devised way of working with community members and organisations in this part of New York of City through a series of workshops, which are about performance, acting, trust building, embodiment and thinking about where the memory of COVID and these losses sit in the body.

All through, people have been writing and telling their stories to each other. Because of the ways our workshop leaders have been building trust among people that didn't know each other, within three or four hours we tell each other stories about how we've experienced the pandemic and things that we might not have been able to articulate otherwise. That's, for me, where the literary and the artistic comes in as a practice and an everyday activity that can be life-saving.

Lucy Bond: What an extraordinary project. I think one of the things we're really interested in is the difference between the literary as a canonical edifice, and the idea of storytelling as practice and as a process that enables both social and political agency.

Ann Rigney: Yes, we're aware more than ever that memory is not just about the past, but also about the present and the future. That's been a really important shift, whether it's framed in terms of how to deal with climate change or in terms of different forms of social injustice. We're thinking through the relationship of memory and the future in a much more explicit way.

This also means exploring more closely the link between memory and scenarios for the future. For that we need to focus on memory work beyond the context of war or catastrophe and to expand the repertoire of memory practices we analyse by looking to other periods, places and spheres of action. One can think here of the community activities that Marianne was referring to, but also of the transformations of working life. What has happened with the whole rich history of trade unions and their memory cultures? And could recuperating those memories help us to remember the modern period in a different, more future-oriented way? Our models of memory work don't line up easily with these slow-moving transformations.

Indeed, we don't have the vocabulary or the narrative models for capturing slow transformations and how they are remembered. As Amitav Ghosh says in his book on *The Great Derangement*, our narrative repertoire falls short when it comes to the slowly moving and the long term. Memory studies could help in extending that repertoire by uncovering other traditions and contexts of memory making.

Just a last point about slowness, coming back to our earlier discussions about practices of reading. As Viktor Shklovsky said way back in 1917, the literary is about slowing down perception. This means that the literary—as a practice of reading—might take on a new function in this whole discussion about slowing down things and creating new forms of attentiveness.

Stef Craps: To pick up on this point about slowing down, I'm wary of the restless yearning for novelty in memory studies, of all fields. It's a field that's supposed to be concerned with holding on to the past, but we seem to be obsessed with finding out what the next big thing is. It seems as if we're constantly trying to "make it new".

I think this hunger for novelty is largely driven by the demands of the academic publishing industry and the tenure and promotion system. Scholars are being incentivized to try to revolutionize or transform the field, as that's what gets you published, cited, hired, or promoted. Making more modest claims, looking backwards, and turning to older theories, concepts, and methodologies that perhaps haven't been used to their full potential yet doesn't get you anywhere. Much better to coin yet another fancy new concept to render obsolete the last one. We seem to be frantically pursuing innovation. I sometimes wonder if we shouldn't slow down a little and stick with what we have for just a little longer.

Susannah Radstone: Well, that's a very helpful intervention, Stef, in relation to the way I thought I would wind this up, because I was going to say that what I've been struck by listening to this wonderful conversation is that we haven't discussed what I thought would be at the base of our discussion. That for me is the specificity of what we think of as the literary, although that doesn't mean it's confined to literature and the synergies between that specificity and memory, so the associative, poetic, nonlinear, non-forward directed aspects of both memory and the literary, the metaphoric, the metonymic. I thought that's what we'd talk about and we haven't mentioned it. I just am so struck by that.

There are writers who have become canonical within literary memory studies. The canon includes works by W.G. Sebald and Toni Morrison. It includes Virginia Woolf, too. Hopefully, in the future, this canon will include more writers from regions outside of Europe and the US. What these writers do is place at the core of their work the mutual implication of the literary with memory.

Thank you, Stef, for helping me say that, and thank you to all of you for taking more than two hours out of your lives to give us these thoughts.