KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

CATHY CARUTH

After the End: Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History

In an essay of 1907, “Delusion and Dream in Wilhelm Jensen’s Gradiva,” Sigmund Freud analyses the novel Gradiva: A Pompeian Fantasy as a story exemplifying the principles of psychoanalysis laid out in The Interpretation of Dreams. In Jensen’s story, a young archaeologist becomes obsessed with the figure of a walking woman on a bas-relief he has seen on a trip to Italy. He names her “Gradiva” and convinced by a dream that the woman died in Pompeii during the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79, he travels to the ruined city in order to search for the singular traces of her toe-prints in the ash.

In this archaeological love story set amid the ruins of Pompeii, Freud finds an allegory for repression and the reemergence of repressed desire. In a later reading of Freud’s text, the twentieth century philosopher Jacques Derrida, in his book Archive Fever (Mal d’Archive), discovers, inside Freud’s figure of the archaeological dig, what Derrida calls an “archival” drive, a pain, and a suffering (mal) that bears witness to the suffering, and evil, of a unique 20th-century history. Derrida proposes that the history of the twentieth century can best be thought through its relation to the “archive,” a psychic as well as technical procedure of recording or of “writing” history that participates not only in its remembering but also in its forgetting.

At the heart of psychoanalysis, Derrida suggests, is the thinking of an archival drive that simultaneously yearns after memory and offers the potential for its radical elimination. Beginning from a general reflection, throughout the main argument of Archive Fever, on the nature of the psychoanalytic archive, Derrida’s writing, I will argue, ultimately enables – in my interpretation – a rethinking of the very nature of history around the possibility of its erasure. Moving beyond what Derrida explicitly suggests, I will also argue that these insights about history can ultimately be understood only from within the literary story of Norbert Hanold, the archaeologist, and in particular, the story of his dream. In my paper I will begin with Derrida’s general reflections on the archive and ultimately turn to the story of the dream, which is perhaps also that of psychoanalytic dreaming more generally, to ask: What does it mean for history to be a history of ashes? And how does psychoanalysis bear witness to such a history?

GORDON HENRY

To Be Seen To Say: Saginaw Chippewa People Speaking on Camera

Review and commentary on a segment of film

For my presentation at Beyond Trauma, I will show part of a film in progress. The film, titled Image Trap, is comprised, to this point, of a series of “screentests” and personal narratives spoken, on camera, by American Indian people who live on the Saginaw Chippewa Reservation, in Michigan. The greater project involves filming in a number of reservations and urban American Indian communities in the Great Lakes region. At each site, a team of filmmakers will conduct “screentests” with Native people, reading/acting parts from American movies. In addition, the filmmakers have asked (and will ask) the people who choose to participate in the film to speak to their own past, in their own words, in their own way. In many cases, people we’ve filmed so far have spoken of loss, of trauma and the
possibility of living a better life. Before viewing the film, I will outline the overall project, read a bit from the screenplay and provide context for the film.

**AVRIL HORNER**

**Apocalypses Now: Collective Trauma and Global Gothic**

In this paper I shall argue that the recent upsurge in apocalyptic fictions is a response to widespread fears concerning the possible impacts of globalisation, including the uncontrollable spread of disease, terrorist attacks, nuclear warfare, disastrous climate change and the increasingly spectral nature of money. Such fears can now be regarded as constituting a form of collective trauma, at least in the Western world. Use of the gothic mode in recent apocalyptic fictions intensifies the effect of horror, thereby vividly dramatizing the dangers of a risk culture and the fragility of societies in which faith in justice and the social order is gradually being eroded. Examining how the modes of horror and the gothic have migrated into apocalyptic fiction, I shall support the claim of critics such as Steven Bruhm and Kelly Hurley that – contrary to received wisdom in trauma studies – popular genres are uniquely positioned to mediate that sense of trauma for readers and audiences. This paper will examine recent examples of Western apocalyptic texts, including P.D.James’s *The Children of Men* (1992) and the film of the novel released in 2002; Chris Cleave’s *Incendiary* (2005), Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) and the film version released in 2009; Liz Jensen’s *The Rapture* (2009) and the films *28 Days Later* (2002), *28 Weeks Later* (2007). Central to my argument will be the claim that these works produce what we might call a ‘new gothic sublime’ and that the sense of pleasurable terror they evoke bears some relationship to Edmund Burke’s definition of the sublime in 1757 and to the experience of awe, fear and incomprehension originally associated with it. These recent apocalyptic fictions allow us, then, to work through our fears concerning threats to human safety and happiness in the twenty-first century in a manner that has its origins in the foundations of gothic.

**ROGER LUCKHURST**

**Novelizing Iraq 2003-2010**

This lecture will explore the various early attempts to put the Iraq War into fictional narrative form. Has there yet been a successful representation of the war? If there haven’t been striking interventions (as there have been for the punctual event of 9/11), does this say something about the specific difficulty of representing this war? There have been activist didactic fictions like Tony Christini’s *Homefront* and the painful self-consciousness of Jonathan Meek’s *Now We Are Beginning Our Descent*, or the highly elliptical reflections of Don DeLillo’s *Point Omega*. Given the diffuse and unclear boundaries of the war in Iraq, and the open-endedness and shifting nature of the encounter (moving from an allegedly symmetrical war, to asymmetrical occupation and guerrilla resistance), it has proved particularly difficult to find adequate forms to recount the experience of the war. My tentative suggestion will be that filtration through prior wars has been one solution to the immediacy of Iraq and I will look at Denis Johnson’s Vietnam novel, *Tree of Smoke* and Kathleen Ann Goonan’s Second World War science fiction *In War Times* to explore the thesis that the trauma of the Iraq war (if that is what it is) is best approached through the polytemporality of different instants of war overlaid.
A. L. Kennedy is another Scottish writer who has dealt with trauma in her writing. Her novel *So I Am Glad* (1995), winner of the Encore Award, focuses on the trauma of a woman, Jennifer Wilson, who had been sexually abused as a child by her parents, who died very soon, leaving her orphan. Besides the explicit dealing with the topic of trauma and with the consequences of those haunting events for the adult individual, we can find some techniques associated to the representation of trauma: a self-conscious and broken narration exposes the difficulties of the estranged homodiegetic narrator in her struggle to tell her strange or, rather, “impossible” story.

However, the novel shows that the narrator-character can re-establish her commitment to the world through the love and care she gives to a amnesiac stranger who knocks at her door, Martin. As he slowly regains his memory, he claims to be the writer and duelist Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac (1619 -1655), and Jennifer accepts this as an (unbelievable) truth. Therefore, readers must accept that Savinien results to be either a ghostly or supernatural entity —thus, “beyond breath”—, or the product of Jennifer’s deranged psyche —hence, “beyond reason”. Regardless of the paradoxical consequences of the fantastic encounter with such an extraordinary person, the fact is that this unusual love experience allows Jennifer to regain some hope, to overcome her own traumas and to reestablish a real connection with other individuals.

**MARC AMFREVILLE**

_H.D's Twice (Un)Told Tale_

Imagist poet and novelist, Hilda Doolittle spent about a year and a half c. 1933-34 in Vienna to undergo psychoanalytical treatment with S. Freud. She kept a diary at the time, and some ten years later wrote an elaborate account of that experience, later still to publish the two in a single volume that tends to blur the time distinctions. The book is widely acknowledged as offering first-hand material on Freud's technique, personality and technique.

However, in the gaps present in each of the texts, and those manifest between the two versions, one cannot help realizing how an underlying trauma informs the telling of more obvious shocks, however painful. This two-stage creating process offers alluring correspondences with the concept of _Nachträglichkeit_, while illustrating the narrative impossibility to write of an essentially infra-verbal primary trauma.

**BÁRBARA ARIZTI MARTÍN**

_“Welcome to contemporary trauma culture”: Ian McEwan’s Saturday_

Groping back to bed after a piss at four o’clock in the morning, the poetic persona of Philip Larkin’s “Sad Steps” parts the thick curtains and is startled by the rapid clouds, the moon’s cleanliness and the wedge-shadowed gardens. The scene is for him a reminder of the strength and pain of being young that cannot come again. Henry Perowne, the main character of
McEwan’s *Saturday* (2005), whose daughter’s favourite poet is Larkin, wakes some hours before dawn and similarly moves towards the bedroom window. He doesn’t immediately understand what he sees: a meteor burning out in the London sky? A comet? It is in fact a plane in flames approaching Heathrow. Set in London, some eighteen months after the September 9/11 attacks and only a month before the invasion of Iraq, the novel focuses on the way high-scale terrorism has deeply changed contemporary experience.

But trauma in *Saturday* does not exclusively come from historical sources. The traumas inherent to the human condition like aging or physical and mental illness are also a major concern, as are the personal traumas of Henry Perowne, a neurosurgeon whose Saturday routine is shattered by an unexpected event.

This paper intends to explore the issue of trauma both on a thematic and an aesthetic level. Dominick LaCapra has stressed the importance of working through traumatic experiences in order to fully re-engage in life. The figure of the protagonist will be analysed in this respect as an example of how to go on living meaningfully in the midst of personal and historical violence. I will also resort to the theories of Gary Saul Morson on the representation of narrative time and its ethical consequences in order to explore the paradoxical ways in which the novel both encourages and resists determinism in the face of traumatic events.

**SONIA BAELO ALLUÉ**

*From the Traumatic to the Political: The Representation of Cultural Traumas in Literature*

In this presentation I want to deal with the way cultural traumas are represented in literature. When theorizing about trauma, critics have chosen to focus either on the effects of cultural trauma on specific individuals or on the consequences it has for whole societies. The expectations of readers, critics and writers as to how should literature deal with cultural traumas have also divided between those favouring trauma novels, more concerned with the effects of traumatic experiences on the minds of ordinary people, and the political novel, interested in capturing the cultural experience of the events and their social consequences. In the second part of this presentation I will deal with these two types of novels and the way they have been used to reflect a cultural trauma like 9/11. In these last ten years, 9/11 novels have moved between the traumatic and the political: from novels concerned with domestic issues to narratives about global and transnational concerns; from the narrative focus on the days before and after the events to the social effects on the long run; from the critical rejection of 9/11 novels as a means of exploitation to the acceptance and celebration of this genre.

**GERD BAYER**

*History, Dreams and Shards: On Starting Over in Jenny Diski’s Then Again*

This essay argues that Diski’s *Then Again* discusses the legacy of the Holocaust as undergoing an especially difficult phase as the memory is passed on to later generations. The novel features a mother whose relationship to traumatic atrocities is formed by her own troublesome affiliation to her adopted parents and a daughter who suffers a mental breakdown as she probes into major questions about the nature of evil. By linking these two scenarios, *Then Again* implies that insufficient debate about the legacy of trauma can instigate mental pain and suffering in subsequent generations. In effect, Diski suggests that the scars of trauma
break upon even when silence protects later generations from direct exposure to painful memories. Faced with the torn core of trauma, the protagonists are finally able to acknowledge the lack of fixity in remembering horrific events. But – then again – the novel emphasizes the need to narrate that past.

**Zuzana Buráková**

Finding Identity through Trauma

The analysis of traumatized characters in selected works of contemporary Jewish American fiction has confirmed the assertion that identity can be divided or damaged by traumatic experiences. Furthermore, the disruption of identity caused by either surviving, witnessing or even perpetrating traumatic events can be transmitted onto other generations. In the analysis of three characters in J.S. Foer’s *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), it has been demonstrated how the traumas of witnessing, surviving and to some extent perpetrating events had been transmitted onto subsequent generations, and that this transmission caused a disruption in the formation of their identities. The role of postmemory has proved to be an extremely important tool in reinforcing repressed identity. The articulation of trauma through writing has shown the role which literature plays as a healing factor in trauma resolution.

**Francisco Collado-Rodríguez**

Narrative as Therapy? The Distrust of Story-Telling

in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*

Cormac McCarthy is now understood as a writer of universal and existential themes even if his fiction has been frequently associated also to the postmodern understanding of life as an inescapable text or prison-house of language. This proposal aims at linking the writer’s depiction of a traumatizing environment to storytelling as an ambiguous response to such condition, as experienced by his fictional protagonists in *The Road*. The mistrust of storytelling, the capacity for action vs. the grip of melancholia, and the understanding of life as a field of traumatizing events that demand meaningful narratives link *The Road* to McCarthy’s previous novel, *No Country for Old Men*, in a sole literary project that warns readers about the human capacity to generate violence and questions the role of storytelling to soothe traumatic pain, a notion already present in the writer’s earlier fiction and that seems to contradict current beliefs in Trauma Studies about the value of narrative to work through traumatized experiences.

**Katharina Donn**

“The Faultline where Personal History and World History collide”:

Networks of Trauma in Post - 9/11 Literature

This paper deals with the integration of other traumata into post-9/11 literature and the narrative oscillation between mimetic representation and indexical reference that this association implies, and which is exemplified in a reading of J.S. Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* and A. Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of no Towers*. Based on an
understanding of trauma as a structure of reception rather than a phenomenon essentially linked to specific events, it thus emerges as not only an interpretational framework for dealing with the aesthetics and psychology of post-9/11 fiction, but also as an intercultural and diachronic link that this literature experiments with.

JOCELYN DUPONT

Healing by falling: post-traumatic responses to 09.11

This paper investigates the motif of the fall in a selection of post 09.11 trauma texts. It begins with a discussion of Cathy Caruth’s discussion of de Man’s reflections on falling and “the impact of referentiality” in Unclaimed Experience, before connecting these remarks to the infamous picture of the “falling man” that stands for an icon of the attacks on 09.11. It seems that in a number of post-09.11 texts, the fall is artistically exploited in order to offer an alternative from the devastating impact of trauma. This paper deals with three of them in particular: J.S. Foer’s Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, Colum McCann’s Let the Great World Spin! and DeLillo’s Falling Man. In these novels, falling becomes a trope that is ultimately oriented towards the opposing of trauma, or least the suspension of the traumatic impact. The fall may thus appear as a therapeutic trope in a post-traumatic context in which its reality has been only too devastating.

MAITE ESCUDERO ALÍAS

“There’s that curtain come down”: The Burden of Shame in Sarah Waters’ The Night Watch

Set in the bombarded London of the 1940s during the Second World War, Sarah Waters’ novel The Night Watch (2006) constitutes an interesting locus of analysis for the exploration of war traumas not only in the display of experimental narratological devices but also in its thorough representation of individual traumas as veiled emotions that “effect displacement and effacement in its subjects” (Munt 2008: 80). Consistently associated with motifs of invisibility and secrets, the protagonists of this novel all share a sense of failure which is prompted both by the extraordinary events of the war and its aftermath and by a melancholic shame that lies beneath and is permanently attached to their queer identities. Not coincidentally, the plot is knitted through a burden of shameful secrets that turn out to be unbearable for all and each of the protagonists.

In examining the affect of shame as a narrative of (im)possibility within the field of trauma studies, the present paper will draw upon theoretical insights such as Silvan Tomkins’ theory of affects (1962-1992) or Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok’s concept of “introjection” (1994) as interpretative tools that can contribute to a better comprehension of shame as an insidious trauma that can be overcome. For this to be so, this shame needs to be theorized, recognized and read as such if we want to move beyond textual, epistemological and ontological limitations which often prevent texts from displaying alternative possibilities of reading.
ISABEL FRAILE
Seeing It Twice: Trauma and Resilience in the Narrative of Janette Turner Hospital

Ever since Freud formulated his famous dictum that you have to strike twice to produce a trauma, trauma theorists have insisted that trauma is an effect of the interplay between two moments (as seen in Cathy Caruth’s concept of “belatedness”, or in what Brenkman has called “retrodetermination”). The turn of the century, however, has also borne witness to the rise of the theory of resilience. One of its main representatives, Boris Cyrulnik, argues that this second moment takes place through the representation of the event and that, depending on how that representation is carried out, it may produce either trauma or resilience. It is the aim of this paper to explore the ways in which narrative itself may (or may not) contribute to attaining resilience in Janette Turner Hospital’s novels. To achieve this, I will analyse some of the types of representation/narration which are embodied by her characters and narrators, especially Charlie the photographer and his contention that he takes pictures “so that I’ll see what I’ve seen”.

JEAN-MICHEL GANTEAU
Of Ramps and Selections: The Persistence of Trauma in Julian Barnes’s A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters

This paper provides a reading of Julian Barnes’s narrative in the light of trauma criticism and theory. More specifically, it argues that beyond its apparently playful, witty tone it provides the reader with a historical allegory in which the rewriting of a central episode of Genesis (i.e. that of the Flood followed by the voyage of Noah’s ark) is but a way to circuitously re-inscribe the related themes of selection and genocide as perpetrated in the death camps of Nazi Germany. The persistence of trauma is predicated on the performance of a compulsion to repeat the original effraction that fragments the narrative and unhinges time, as direct application of the principles of Nachträglichkeit. Barnes’s narrative thus makes it clear that beyond trauma lies our inescapable, always already posttraumatic age.

EVA GIL CUDER
More than Words: Drama and Spectrality for the Articulation of Trauma

The anti-logocentric nature of traumatic memory has traditionally brought about the conclusion that there is an indestructible barrier separating trauma from understanding. The impossibility to find the right words to articulate the trauma or for the victim to come to terms with his traumatic experience has generated the assumption that neither witnesses, nor victims will be allowed to access their traumatic history due to its undecipherable nature. With this taken for granted belief in mind, this paper analyzes two works by British playwrights Sarah Daniels and Caryl Churchill in which the female characters suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I will argue that trauma finds a most appropriate means of expression in theatrical representation, as the genre allows for alternative means of articulation beyond language and words (which do not seem to be the best instruments to formulate traumatic memory due to their rational dimension). These authors evidence that theatrical language offers effective strategies to communicate the experience of trauma and that these anti-
naturalistic rhetoric seems to be the best response to the chaotic and irrational nature of traumatic memory.

MALGORZATA GODLEWSKA
Eva Figes’s Ghosts – A Poetic Representation of Trauma

The article offers the analysis of a prose poem *Ghosts* (1988) written by the contemporary British writer, Eva Figes, with a view to demonstrate an intriguing example of a poetic text expressing the post-war trauma. This highly autobiographic prose poem offers an insight into the inner world of an elderly German-Jewish woman whose identity is constructed upon the contradictions between the subjective and objective time dimensions, as well as the repressed Holocaust memories and a desire to reveal them.

The main motif of the protagonist’s journey to the places of her youth is accompanied by the character’s shifting past and present visions. The progression from the past to the present equals the processes of *acting out* and *working through* the past painful experiences.

NAFIZE SIBEL GÜZEL
Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* as Trauma Narratives

Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Adichie are two authors writing the sufferings of the same nation some fifty years or so in succession. Achebe’s dramatic and emotional accounts in *Things Fall Apart* deal with the clash of values during the colonial era of Nigeria. The protagonist of the text is so naïve in the process that his rational mind is in abeyance, and naturally an existential horror fills the vacuum of his reason. Meanwhile Achabe in the text relies heavily on the native oral tradition, a style which witnesses the incomprehensible history of natives.

Adichie on the other hand is a young female educated voice, never leaving the expected fictional forms to record the sufferings of the same region when Biafran elites wanted to break away from Nigeria in 1967 but when the starvation and violence took its toll they started to negotiate the armistice. Adichie in her narration heavily relies on symbols and dreams, radio broadcasts, memoirs, which is quite different from Achebe’s and proves the consciousness both the individuals and the Ibo tribe as a whole have reached, feeling the need to record their collective trauma for the future generation.

JOHANNA HARTMANN
Intermedial References and Trauma in Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*

Only a few images of the 9/11 attacks have gained the status of iconic images and as such entered the public consciousness. In the novel *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo, intermedial references to photography, television footage and paintings are realized on various narratological levels and in various aesthetic strategies that transfer specifics of these media into the narratological realm of the novel. Fiction and its representation of and dealing with iconic images that have become the symbols of the collective trauma after 9/11 can be an
adequate means of staging trauma itself. Furthermore, the novel has the power to advert instrumentalization and manipulation of visual references in contrary to their representations in the mass media.

M. DOLORES HERRERO GRANADO

The Phantom and Transgenerational Trauma in Elizabeth Jolley’s *The Well*

As one of the most celebrated examples of Australian female Gothic, much critical discussion of Elizabeth Jolley’s *The Well* has focused on issues of gender, but has rarely considered the novel as an allegory of the white-settlers ‘pain of unbelonging’. Although many critics have praised the author’s experimentation with narrative technique and genre, they have often regarded the novel’s conclusion in medias res as being faulty and disappointing. After reviewing issues of genre, gender and class, this paper tries to offer a postcolonial and post-traumatic reading so as to come to terms with this dilemma. Following Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s theories as developed in their seminal work *The Shell and the Kernel*, I will argue that the novel signals the impossibility of erasing the Native from the contemporary Australian land, whose Gothic articulation in the figure of the phantom of the male well-dweller haunts both female protagonists, although in different ways, while pointing to the coexistence of an individual and transgenerational trauma. *The Well* may be seen as inconclusive because it strives to deal with gender across race at a time of Aboriginal exclusion. Written in 1986, it subtly denounces an unacceptable situation, and paves the way for the Reconciliation process which was to gather strength in the following decades in Australia.

HANNAH HO

Depathologizing Racial Melancholia: Intergenerational Avenues of Transformation in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and Amy Tan’s *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*.

This paper examines the transforming and revisioning powers within communication. It aims to draw attention to the transmission of stories as a crucial strategy for the strengthening of identity and identification within the mother-daughter dyad. It discusses how the intergenerational, intersubjective communicative links are salient means of dealing with racial melancholia within America’s immigrant mothers and daughters. Both history and memory are channeled in the oral tradition of ‘talk-story’. The revisionist quality of story-telling inherent in talking-story thematizes the making available of depathologizing means of managing racial loss. By converting loss into gains, making suffering productive, and normalizing the psychic pain of mothers and daughters, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior* and Amy Tan’s *Bonesetter’s Daughter* function as literary pieces of ‘decolonizing writing’ in the Asian American canon. In short, these texts mobilize the process of decolonization, and nuances of social transformation and psychical liberation, are to be discussed in relation to mother-daughter depathologizing of identity.
At first glance, the problems faced by the protagonist of Junot Díaz’s award-winning novel have little to do with the private and public history of his progenitors in the Dominican Republic. Oscar is an overweight, self-loathing nerd whose fundamental dream is to become a science-fiction writer, “the Dominican Tolkien.” As a second-generation Dominican-American, he soon discovers that life in New Jersey is not as shiny as other members of the diaspora want him to think. In fact, Oscar realizes that, given his physical appearance and his bizarre interests, he could hardly pass for normal in the kind of context in which he lives now. The protagonist’s tragicomic story is further complicated, however, by a suggestion made by the narrator in the prologue concerning the idea that Oscar may be the victim of a family curse, or what he calls “a high-level fukú,” which will doom him to endless unhappiness. As it turns out, the longest sections of Díaz’s book are not devoted to Oscar’s sad existence in the New Jersey of the 1980s but, rather, to her grandparents’ and mother’s tortuous and violent-ridden lives during the “Trujillato” (1930-61) in the Dominican Republic. Sometimes it is not quite evident how the pains and horrors that his relatives experienced in the old country stretch themselves to have an impact on the protagonist’s life but, it seems clear that one of the author’s intentions is to have the harrowing history of the nation constantly throwing shadows on the protagonist’s current affairs. Many of these shadows reach Oscar through his mother, Belicia Cabral, but others derive from unexpected comments or even his readings: “What more sci-fi than Santo Domingo? What more fantasy than the Antilles?” In the end, the novel becomes a trans-generational immigrant family chronicle that straddles the protagonist’s anti-heroic existence in New Jersey and his progenitors’ decline from their grand origins to a tragic fate. As some reviewers have argued, Díaz’s novel may well be considered another instance of a new literary genre widely used by the sons and daughters of migrants, in which they manage to gain their footing on the host culture by re-membering the terrifying and incredible experiences their parents and grandparents went through in the old country. No need to clarify that traumatic memories and unresolved mourning play a critical role in this kind of narratives, nor that the survivors’ identity is indelibly marked by those memories and sorrow. The theoretical works of Jeffrey Alexander, Paul Antze, and Neil Smelser on cultural trauma offer invaluable tools to figure out how whole collectivities see their group consciousness marked by events that may have happened in a more or less distant past.

The present paper argues that the confrontation with the "unspeakable word" in Robbie’s explicit letter to Cecilia and the subsequent discovery of their sexual relationship have a traumatizing effect on Briony and her psychological development. Drawing on Frederic C. Bartlett’s concept of the so-called culture-specific schemes, it will be shown that Briony tries to overcome her traumatic experiences by (re)constructing them through various intertexts that function as epistemological frames of reference. In doing so, these intertextual references function secondly as a literary atonement for her false testimony involving Lola’s rape. The paper thus integrates a close reading of Atonement’s major intertexts with an examination of
their texturing, psychological, apologetic as well as self-reflexive functions. It will be argued that the novel is composed by several intertextual layers that coincide with Briony's literary and psychological development over the years. The intertextual working-through of her trauma as well as her intertextual atonement are therefore made up of a circular structure that constitutes, in the simultaneity of its different iterations, the very novel itself. In the end, it will be shown that these frames of reference ultimately fail to fully bridge the gap between Briony’s traumatic memory and its meaningful articulation within her narrative of the unspeakable, i.e. her fictional novel *Atonement*.

**MARIE-LUISE KOLHKE**

The Trace of the Body in Poetry, Fiction, and Visual Art on the Holocaust

The Holocaust has frequently been viewed as the conceptual 'limit case' of human suffering, which breaches the limits of language and representation, so that the 'reality' of the genocidal events can only be gestured at, but never fully realised - regardless of how or how often the victims' agonised suffering is narrated, fictionalised, or otherwise commemorated in word and image. Literature and art can do no more than depict the trauma's traces and after-effects, the confusion and unknowability surrounding it, or the inadequacy of the very attempt at representation. Yet the inscription within the work of art of this structural impasse and impossibility to represent is not viewed as a failure, so much as an integral part of ethical witness-bearing. As Jean-François Lyotard has argued: "What art can do is bear witness […] to this aporia of art and to its pain. It does not say the unsayable, but says that it cannot say it." In these terms, unrepresentability becomes an indicator of truthfulness rather than an evasion of painful truths, precipitating the aesthetic witnessing act, rather than defeating it. This paper explores how poets, writers, and artists confront this central paradox - the representation of unrepresentability - by figuring the trace of the body rather than its experiential suffering. Drawing on a selection of Holocaust poetry, Cynthia Ozick's novella *The Shawl* (1989), and recent works by the British artist Nicola Tucker and the Polish artist Maciej Hoffman, the paper also investigates potential ethical dilemmas surrounding this indirect approach. To what extent might the unrepresentable function as a potential 'get-out clause' for not having to look too closely? Can it be used to make trauma more readily digestible for the marketplace, serving as bait to 'hook' audiences on spectacles of terror and pain, while enabling them to maintain the 'virtuous' position of not enjoying them? How do writers and artists negotiate these potential pitfalls?

**STANISLAV KOLÁŘ**

Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma in Spiegelman’s *Maus*

This paper draws on the concept of inter(trans)generational transmission of trauma based on an assumption that the trauma can be passed on to descendants in spite of the fact that they have never been exposed to the original traumatic event. The paper analyzes Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel *Maus*. It follows how the traumatic experience of the Holocaust affects Art’s complicated relationship with his father Vladek whose testimony in its reenactment of the past transforms traumatic memories into narrative memories. Special attention is paid to Art’s personal trauma caused by his mother’s suicide and his sense of guilt for this family tragedy. The issue of the transmission of trauma across generations is relevant
to the question of the limits of the artistic representation of the Holocaust, an issue that is, for the post-Holocaust generation, a traumatogenic stressor in its own right. The paper focuses on the way in which Spiegelman addresses this problem. It shows that Spiegelman’s artistic doubts arise from the very nature of the traumatic accident and explains why he places an emphasis on the problem of authenticity which plays a crucial role in Holocaust literature.

BILYANA VANYOVA KOSTOVA

“Time to Write them off”? Impossible Voices and the Problem of Representing Trauma in *The Virgin Suicides*

With the resurgence of Trauma Studies two decades ago, its theories have been often linked to the modern era and the preoccupation with individual and collective psychic health in times of wars, economic crises, technological take-over, etc. The need to find a remedy for this “wound of the mind”, as Freud defined it in 1920, has led scholars to consider literature, and in particular story-telling, as a therapeutic means of working through trauma. In this paper, Jeffrey Eugenides’s debut novel *The Virgin Suicides* has been analyzed as a reflection of the problematic representation of trauma. It refers explicitly to situations related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder but what is even more appealing is that it exploits some experimental techniques resulting from the shock of bereavement originated in the witnesses of the overwhelming events. In other words, the book describes how the collective narrator approaches the unrepresentable from their adulthood as witnesses of the events that happened when they were still teenagers. My contention will be that the novel articulates a social critique of the US suburban ethos by using the Lisbon sisters’ traumatic events and their subsequent narration as a literary ground that demands an ethical response.

BARBARA KOWALCZUK

My Lai’s “Fucking flies!”: The Stigmata of Trauma in *In the Lake of the Woods*

The present article aims at apprehending how the erasure of history, the incomprehensibility and therefore the non-integration of trauma affect the subject of the diegesis in Tim O’Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*. It first investigates trauma's psychological impact on Vietnam War veteran John Wade and delineates the deferred side effects of the inner mayhem, which, despite elaborate constriction strategies, have phagocytized him since the My Lai massacre. It then comes to deal with the labyrinthine trauma narrative's stigmata by exploring the emblematic yet meaningful liminality of discourse. The passage into the *dit-mension* of textuality indeed uncovers the ultimate locus of the said, where the Other/Author has artistically woven a constructive post-traumatic world of possibilities. Finally, the reception of the *inter-dit* by each individual reader opens up aesthetic paths for a virtual text, giving the possibility for trauma to be communalized in endless acts of re-creation.
PATRICIA LÓPEZ PÉREZ

Haunted by the Past: Traumatic Memory in Joyce Carol Oates's “Haunted”

This paper aims to analyse Joyce Carol Oates’s “Haunted” as an example of “trauma fiction” rather than as “a tale of the grotesque”. Drawing from Cathy Caruth’s and Shoshana Felman’s critical approaches to trauma, the paper will study the literary strategies that Oates uses to explore the traumatic memories of the protagonist when evoking certain episodes of her childhood. Significantly, despite the protagonist’s attempts to face the crucial episodes of the past, she will be unable to do so, exemplifying the impossibility to overcome her trauma.

Mª JESÚS LÓPEZ SÁNCHEZ-VIZCAÍNO

Communities of mourning and vulnerability:
Zakes Mda’s Ways of Dying and Phaswane Mpe’s Welcome to Our Hillbrow

In Ways of Dying (1995), which deals with the period of democratic transition in South Africa, and in Welcome to Our Hillbrow (2001), focused on South African life under the new political dispensation, Zakes Mda and Phaswane Mpe respectively depict a society in which death and violence are omnipresent. In my analysis of these two novels, I would like to focus on the ways in which the traumatic event in the form of physical violence, death or AIDS is worked through the communal rite of mourning, or transformed into the basis for a new kind of community, given the fallacies and perversities of the community constructed along ethnic or national lines. Both Zakes and Mda are concerned, borrowing Judith Butler’s words in Precarious Life, “with our exposure to violence and our complicity in it, with our vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows, and with finding a basis for community in these conditions.”

ANA Mª MANZANAS CALVO

When Trauma meets Place: Camp logic in Miné Okubo's Citizen 13660 and W.G. Sebald's Austerlitz

“A century of Camps?” (1995) wonders Bauman as he ponders on how will the 20th century go down in history. That is actually a plausible possibility, for if the 20th century creates the acme of modernity, we have to be aware of the fact that “modernity ... is also about—it has been about—fast and efficient killing, scientifically designed and administered genocide” (267). If Pierre Norá coined the term “les lieux de mémoire,” it is possible to argue that camps, the repeated loci of modernity and postmodernity, are “sites of trauma.” I will inflect this “site of trauma” with two examples: one, W.G. Sebald’s Austerlitz, will hopefully set the tone to the repeatedness of incarceration and camp logic; the second, Miné Okubo’s Citizen 136600, will hopefully demonstrate how, to use Gilroy’s phrase, we find ourselves between camps, between the “epiphanies of catastrophic modernity” and the camps that “are being prepared” as we speak.
JOCELYN MARTIN
Freudian Repeating in Nick Joaquin’s Cave and Shadows

In this essay, I intend to examine the phenomena of Freudian “repeating” to indicate unresolved trauma in Filipino Nick Joaquin’s novel, Cave and Shadows (1983). In “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through” (1958), Freud explains how a patient, who substitutes remembering with repeating, should “work-through” repressed material (152). I would like to suggest the recurring corpses and caves to signify, not only a Philippine post/colonial history that calls for healing, but also the trauma caused by the Marcos dictatorship. Improper inscription of the dead into memory unfortunately creates a stranded present and a haunted collective memory (Mojares rmaf.org.ph, de Certeau 101). In spite of the “partial culture” (Bhabha 58) of Nenita Coogan, which presents an opportunity for a dialogue with history, the conclusion of Cave and Shadows remains pessimistic. I hence inquire whether Filipino writing on post/colonial history should be considered as a type of repeating or as the necessary time required in working-through.

PAULA MARTÍN SALVÁN
“Of childhoods and other ferocious times”:
The Reverberation of Trauma in Don DeLillo’s Underworld

Don DeLillo's Underworld (1997) has been recurrently read as a postmodernist encyclopedia of the Cold War. The novel may be said to deal with trauma at collective and individual levels, although critical attention has persistently focused on the historical aspects of traumatic experience. In this paper, I would like to focus on the individual, domestic side of trauma. I consider that the interpretation of the novel may benefit from an understanding of its main character, Nick Shay, through the pattern of post-traumatic behavior. My argument assumes Laurie Vickroy's statement regarding how trauma narratives "internalize the rhythms, processes and uncertainties of traumatic experience within their underlying sensibilities and structures" (3). My reading, therefore, focuses on the narrative and stylistic devices through which the text depicts traumatic experience. I contend that Nick's original trauma remains absent from the narration, inaccessible to the reader except through its reverberating effects at several narrative levels.

MARÍA JESÚS MARTÍNEZ ALFARO
Trauma and the Ghost Effect in Michèle Roberts’s Daughters of the House

Much of Michèle Roberts’s fiction is concerned with rescuing women or other “lost voices”, people who have been written out of history. In her novels, she uses her own experience as a woman of two cultures (English and French) as well as fictionalised histories of women and other intertextual strategies in order to blur and rewrite the borders of history, culture, and identity. Daughters of the House is no exception.

It is in connection with intertextuality that J. Hillis Miller coined the phrase “the ghost effect” to point out that meaning is constituted not by the new text nor by the old, but in the void between them, in the repetition with a difference of the two. In other words, intertextuality raises the phantoms of the text alluded to and the one in which the allusion occurs, in a general congregation of literary spectres. It is my aim to broaden the meaning of
Miller’s ghost effect in my analysis of Daughters of the House – a work that raises the spectres of many intertexts – in order to analyse the workings of trauma in the novel.

The belatedness that defines trauma points to an event that is not fully experienced at the time of its happening – its meaning delayed or deferred – but that resurfaces later on, often triggered by a second event with which it has certain similarities. Intertextual connections are likewise worked out by looking backwards from one text which resembles, with a difference, other previous texts. If intertextuality raises a ghost effect, trauma has been described as a haunting that rewrites the life of the trauma victim. In Roberts’s novel, trauma can be traced back to events that took place before the protagonists’ birth and that were kept secret, thus remaining suspended as a haunting spectre in the house of the title, and as an intertext in the text of the two main characters’ lives. These secrets of the past resurface as Thérèse and Léonie meet in the family house after a twenty-year separation, the narrative similarly advancing by moving backwards from the time they meet as adult women to crucial events in the summer they turned thirteen in order to finally return to the time when the story begins. In a strict sense, the ghost effect of intertextuality cannot be exorcised because that would amount to destroying the texts that the intertextual relationship connects. But can the ghost of trauma be exorcised? My analysis will focus on how the novel can be said to move towards the possibility of healing, even if this is a healing that leaves the protagonists suspended on a liminal space of sorts, which is, after all, the space of phantoms and spectres.

**Elisa Mateos-Pequerul**

“*I’d grown a tumor but I killed it with humor*”:

Disease, trauma and humor in Sherman Alexie’s “War Dances”

The aim of this paper is to analyze Sherman Alexie’s short story “War Dances” (2009), focusing on its narrative techniques and structural strategies, with the purpose of assessing the implications of the text within the scope of Trauma Studies. This semi-autobiographical account depicts the traumatic experience of a homodiegetic intradiegetic narrator who is diagnosed with a meningioma, and tries to cope with the situation by means of making use of humor. Thus, this paper tries to evaluate the validity of humor for acting out or working through traumatic events. It tackles the topic of structural trauma, but it also addresses the issue of individual and collective traumas, which have been repressed and arise in key moments in which the individual feels that his or her physical stability is threatened.

**Judith Misrahi-Barak**

Exploring Trauma through the Multidirectional Memory of Text:

Edwige Danticat listens to René Philoctète and Jacques Stephen Alexis

This paper will bring together three novels about the massacre of Haitians that was ordered by General Trujillo in 1937: Jacques Stephen Alexis’s Compère Général Soleil (1955), René Philoctète’s Le Peuple des Terres Mêlées (1989) and Edwige Danticat’s The Farming of Bones (1998). So as to understand how Danticat has read her predecessors and how her reading is contributing to the transforming of a narrative of impossibility into one of possibility, I will focus on the three following points: the (in)accessibility of trauma for generations who have not lived through the trauma directly but have inherited it from the
previous generations; the "multidirectionality" of memory through a "comparative" instead of a "competitive" approach; the "working through" that can only take place through repetition and listening.

**SUSANA ONEGA JAÉN**

*The Trauma of Anthropocentrism and the Reconnection of Self and World in J. M. Coetzee’s *Dusklands*

The self-reflexivity, thematic dispersion and structural fragmentation of *Dusklands* has often been interpreted as a refusal of political commitment. Opposing this view, the essay argues that the experimentalism of the novel is the necessary expression of Coetzee’s ideological engagement and ethical responsibility in the face not only of the need to represent the unspeakable horrors of the Vietnam War and the colonisation of South Africa but, most importantly, to deconstruct the discourse of modernity as endless progress that has led to the justification of capitalism, colonial domination, the subjugation of the other, and the exploitative annihilation of the earth.

**SILVIA PELLICER-ORTÍN**

*The Healing of Old Wounds in Eva Figes’ Autobiographical Works*

According to Suzanne Keen (2006, 167-183), the “historical turn” experienced in British fiction in the 1970s is still latent in many contemporary works. At the same time, critics like Roger Luckhurst have observed a “memoir boom” invading the literary panorama since the 1990s (2008: 117). Both features figure prominently in Anglo-Jewish literature, especially in autobiographical writings dealing with the experience of Jewish migrants, targeted at reconstructing their history and their Jewish identities, which have proliferated since the 1970s (Cheyette, 1998 and Brauner, 2001). The work of the German born British-Jewish writer Eva Figes can be placed in this trend. The aim of this paper is to analyse Figes’ autobiographical works *Little Eden. A Child at War* (1978) and *Journey to Nowhere. One Woman Looks for the Promised Land* (2008) in order to show the evolution from her original interest in modernist experimentalism towards a more realistic position characterized by the attempt at self definition against the backdrop of history. This evolution will be addressed from the perspective of Trauma Studies as the narrative strategies employed in these works are aimed at representing and assimilating the traumatic events of her childhood as a survivor of the Holocaust. The narration of her life as a refugee in a foreign country through the fusion of literary genres and the depiction of individual traumatic experiences which illuminate collective experiences of suffering are some of the elements used by Figes to “make peace with the country in which she was born” (2008: 82). Then, I will address the question of whether the turn to history and the memoir are the appropriate tools “to heal old wounds” (Figes, 2008: 84), or whether the possibilities of healing are never fully achieved in this writer’s work.
In the last decades, the narrative-iconical genre of the graphic novel has been prone to present intimate stories depicting the subjective mental unease of restless characters. Will Eisner, Art Spiegelman, Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, Alison Bechdel or Debbie Drescher, to name a few, have employed the narrative possibilities of the graphic novel to explore the mental intricacies of characters affected by potentially-traumatising events. In their search for narrative techniques, they seem to have found in the Modernist stream-of-consciousness novel a base from which to develop these intimate narratives. Paul Hornschemeier’s first graphic novel, *Mother, Come Home*, explores the mental restlessness of a character affected by a punctual trauma. Departing from the same tradition of American graphic novels such as Charles Burns’ *Black Hole*, Craig Thompson’s *Blankets*, Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan*, Daniel Clowes’ *David Boring*, or David Mazzucchelli’s *Asterios Polyp*, Hornschemeier’s text positions the topic of psychic trauma at the centre of the narrative. This paper aims to analyse the technical rendering of this individual, punctual trauma in *Mother, Come Home*, and how the text employs visual stream-of-consciousness techniques in order to truthfully report the traumatic contents of the graphiateur’s mind.

The philosopher/novelist Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) wrote twenty six novels and a large body of philosophy over a period of almost fifty years. Although the word trauma did not appear in either her novels or her philosophy and trauma theory did not emerge until after the mid 1990s when her career was at an end, current Murdoch criticism is suggesting that her work not only participates in but extends the boundaries of contemporary trauma theory. This paper will explain and illustrate the interconnections between Murdoch’s lifelong insistence on the relationship between art and ethics and the ideas of trauma theorists such as Roger Luckhurst, who suggest that trauma theory attempts to turn criticism back towards being an ethical, responsible, purposive dialogue. After explaining briefly how Murdoch’s fiction explores unavoidable traumatic experiences which lie outside the control of its victims, such as Holocaust survival or political deracination, it will look in more detail at Murdoch’s representation of what can be termed the ‘trauma of the quotidian’ – the kind of sudden life-changing experiences that intrude, often unremarked, into the day-to-day lives of ordinary people and which result exclusively from individual inner compulsions. The remainder of the paper will make a close reading of Murdoch’s 1973 Whitbread prize-winning novel *The Black Prince*, which focuses on one such individual yet universal experience – suddenly falling deeply and unwisely in love. Such an experience can potentially lead to tragedy as devastating as any caused by the cruelest exterior forces. The book catalogues the whirlwind affair between its fifty-eight-year-old first-person narrator, Bradley Pearson, and his twenty-year-old goddaughter Julian Baffin. The paper will look in detail at Murdoch’s attempts to describe the change in consciousness caused by the experience of falling in love, which is usually accompanied by a compulsive sexual attraction, and at how Bradley attempts to deal with the terrible and debilitating suffering caused by its loss. Murdoch’s ‘moral psychology’ attempts to distinguish between ‘demonic’ suffering, which is sado-masochistic and damages the self and others on to whom the pain is passed, and ‘glorified’ suffering, which holds the pain
within the self and has the potential to lead to some kind of moral and emotional redemption. What readers learn is that suffering purely is impossible, but that one is nonetheless under the obligation to try. Finally, the discussion will indicate how Murdoch further educates her readers in the psychology of suffering by means of a network of symbolism. The Post Office Tower (now the BT Tower) functions in the novel as a moral beacon, its intermittent appearances serving to indicate to readers at what points Bradley could have changed his behaviour to minimize his suffering and that of others - and thus avoided the multiple tragedies with which the novel ends. The Black Prince confronts the serious moral dangers inherent in any experience of trauma, provides a sustained meditation on how best to attempt to deal with such extreme pain and in so doing champions the role of literature as a practical means to educate and inform. Its focus is one of the most common but insidiously devastating human experiences that, in certain circumstances, can irrevocably damage or destroy individual lives.

MARÍA DEL PILAR ROYO GRASA

Tracking the Phantom in Gail Jones’ Sixty Lights

The phantom has been taken as a fundamental figure in the representation of trauma. According to critics such as Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, the phantom stands for the interpersonal and/or transgenerational consequences of secrecy and silence. It represents the unwittingly inherited tombs, traumas, gaps, phobias, secrets of others, which come back haunting the subject. In keeping with Abraham’s theory, my main aim in this paper will be to track and discuss the workings and function of the phantom in Gail Jones’ novel Sixty Lights. For this purpose I will elaborate on the function of storytelling and the novel’s recursive use of iconic symbols, which lead us to think of the existence of a transgenerational trauma. I will finally focus on the novel’s ambivalent ending and strategic use of the metaphor of the phantom as a tool to cancel and display unhealed secrets.

PILAR SÁNCHEZ CALLE

A Handbook of Trauma: Oryx and Crake, by Margaret Atwood

Oryx and Crake begins, as have countless science fiction novels and stories, by dropping readers into a vaguely familiar yet overwhelmingly hostile and alien world in which a viewpoint character is struggling to survive. Atwood makes use of contemporary popular fictional forms, including the dystopian and science fiction novel, the castaway-survivor narrative, the detective and action-thriller novel, and the romance story. My aim in this paper is to offer a reading of this novel as a catalogue of modern life traumas and fears. I will also concentrate on the figure of Jimmy/Snowman, and the way he faces and tries to overcome the primal trauma of surviving in the post-human, post-apocalyptic world which constitutes the setting of the novel.
ANGELIKI TSETI
Visualizing the Unspeakable, Working Through Trauma: Photography as Narrative Technique in DeLillo’s Falling Man

The need to respond to the trauma of September 11 brought to the fore once again the difficulties in the narrativization of collective trauma. The writers’ task to provide meaning as well as the necessity to bear witness to the extreme violence of the “singular event” lay alongside the inability to express the inexpressible, represent the unrepresentable, imagine the unimaginable or even find a form that would contain the uncontainable. How can traumatic memories resurface and how can they be articulated at a time when language is fragmented, vision is distorted and meaning is obliterated? I submit that the “narrative of the unspeakable” is a photo-textual narrative.

Following the recently developed scholarly interest in the combination of word and image in texts, Don DeLillo’s Falling Man is presented in this paper as a bimedial work employing the interface between literature and photography to explore the possibility of working-through trauma. I wish to argue that the writer employs the (narrative/hidden) photograph of the Falling Man as a kind of Benjaminian “dialectical image” that arrests the moment and creates the space necessary for the emergence of the traumatic memory. Simultaneously, the text complements the image by providing the familiar schema in which the traumatic memory can be integrated and witnessing can trigger the process of potential healing.

PIETER VERMEULEN
The Critique of Trauma and the Affect of Survival in Tom McCarthy’s Remainder

Recent trends in trauma studies have emphasized that trauma “violently opens passageways between systems that were once discrete” (Luckhurst), and cannot be understood as only a psychological phenomenon. Still, as the formal features of trauma fiction are still predominantly interpreted as a reflection of the psychological effects of trauma, the radical transitivity of trauma is often obscured. Tom McCarthy’s 2005 novel Remainder sets out to break with this psychological realism by removing every hint of emotional involvement and psychological depth. This paper shows that the novel’s strategy to frustrate our expectation of strong emotions (perhaps unwittingly) ends up generating an affective scenario in which our perception of the absence of such emotions triggers weaker, nonsubjective, dysphoric affects. As such, Remainder ends up figuring a notion of survival (as an affect unable to disappear, even after the death of the subject) that contributes to our understanding of trauma.

JOSÉ M. YEBRA
Ritualizing restraint and loss, the poetics of procrastination in Colm Tóibín’s The Master

Shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2004, Colm Tóibín’s The Master constitutes a revision of the classic concept of biography around the charismatic figure of Henry James. Much has been written on the author’s life: biographies and a myriad of personal letters make up a large bulk of restraint and loss. Likewise, James’ literary style is also informed by a poetics of undecidability, passivity and emasculation. In this light, my paper examines Tóibín’s novel as part of a re-surfacing of James as a recurring presence, a sort of tutelary spirit, in recent
literature. With this purpose, I delve into the Jamesian traits that fit the traumatic turn of the millennium. This is the thesis of Dennis Flannery in “The powers of apostrophe and the boundaries of mourning: Henry James, Alan Hollinghurst and Toby Litt” (2005), which, together with Richard Dellamora’s revision of Derrida’s concept of “apocalypse” (1994), proves to be useful for my analysis of The Master. James’ writing results from a handicapped identity, physically and psychically. Like patients suffering from a “phantom limb”, a neuropathic pain after having an extremity amputated, the writer’s discourse and identity are restrained, passive and at a loss, relying on a traumatic sense of absence. What is at stake, and this paper aims to answer, is whether this recurrent apostrophe towards James constitutes a postmodernist attempt at healing from trauma by sublimation. In other words, is a fictional biography of the writer —especially his poetics of inaction and postponement— a valid formula to renegotiate our own sense of loss?

NATALIA ZEMLIAK
Disconnected to the Real – Trauma and Postmemory in Jonathan Safran Foer’s Everything Is Illuminated

Telling the story of a young American Jew on his search for his grandfather’s story of survival during the Holocaust, Jonathan Safran Foer’s novel Everything Is Illuminated (2002) offers fertile soil for explorations of trauma narratives. Presenting the reader with third-generation narrators who cannot draw on their own experience of the Holocaust, it confronts the central concepts of trauma theory such as the “crisis of truth” and “belatedness” (Caruth 1995) with what Marianne Hirsch has termed “postmemory” (1997). In a provoking manner, the novel tropes the protagonists’ need to retrieve their traumatic family histories as a form of libidinous desire. This paper explores the promises and impasses of literary imagination summoned by the desire to recover one’s history, and examines the points of convergence between psychoanalytic trauma theory and the concept of postmemory.