

Editorial

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RoundTable 2.1 has attracted a diverse and thoughtful range of contributions to memory studies. The issue's content ranges from childhood and Young Adult literature, to memoir, memory plays, visual arts, archives, and trauma (both intensely personal and globally significant). In bringing together this collection of critical and creative explorations of memory, we hope that the current issue can spark fresh and further thinking about the ways in which our writing interacts with our remembered pasts.

In “For ever and ever”: the Nostalgic Appeal of *Swallows and Amazons*’ Elizabeth West considers the ways in which our memories of texts mingle with our memories of our own lived experience and what this means for our conceptions of childhood, of growth, and of ourselves. Self-construction through memory is also at the heart of Karina Lickorish Quinn’s creative work. From ‘Autoptes or An Eyewitness’: “it might be said that the individual ‘reads’ her Self into existence” through the continual work of interpreting her memories. In Lickorish Quinn’s piece, the reader is invited to create her own narrative from a collection of nonchronological moments, questioning the facticity of memory and prioritising instead individual agency. The writing of selfhood is considered also in the form of the memoir in Emily Corbett’s review of *Trans Mission: My Quest to a Beard*.

Forgetting, as much as remembering, has come to the fore in this issue, as in Nick Lavery’s review of Francis O’Gorman’s *Forgetfulness: Making the Modern Culture of Amnesia*, which highlights the central societal role of memory and of forgetting. In an excerpt from *May*, Naomi Kruger sensitively explores the rough

edges of dementia, the places where memory and words might fail us; and in her commentary on this creative work she considers the implications and responsibilities of representing the memories of others, as well as the artistic challenges of representing *in* language experiences that are beyond language: “How do you write about the disintegration of language when language is your only tool?” Adam Warne’s poems are drawn from and formed of memory work: from oral histories recorded in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the poet’s own family history. Like these histories, and like their reticent characters, the poems are as much about what is not said, what resists expression.

Alongside memory as self-construction and memory that slips into forgetting, the issue looks at literary expressions of how memory works after trauma. Aaron Day’s astute reading of *The Gifts of the Body* by Rebecca Brown suggests ways in which fiction can provide part of an (often absent) archive of experience, in this case as part of the record of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the USA. Traumatic loss is also central to Maya Caspari’s review of Han Kang’s *The White Book*, a novel which “positions itself as an incomplete act – or series of acts – of mourning.” *Comics, Trauma and the New Art of War* by Harriet E. H. Earle explores how comics present unique possibilities for the representation of traumatic memories, as discovered in Max Bledstein’s review.

In bringing visual and written art together, Earle’s exploration of the comic form can be read alongside Lynn Somers’ article on the sculptures of Louise Bourgeois, which sees visual art through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, framing memory not through clock time but through “a psychic time not unlike Freud’s remembering, repeating, and working through.” The visual artistry of Anne Malewski features on the issue’s cover, speaking so well to the issue’s themes. Cheryl Lee’s article continues the exploration of different forms in writing about a memory play which itself frames memory through the act of dance. ‘Dancing in Retrospect: The Redirected Gesture in Brian Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa*’ describes how “Friel radically redefines memory as an always self-conscious aesthetic act of remembrance, grounded in emotional experience [. . .] In doing so, he liberates memory from the chains of time and redeems it from being merely the detritus of the past.”

From this issue, memory appears as something shifting, subjective, and often beyond the grasp of language, but nonetheless central to and indeed constitutive of our lives. What we memorialise and what we erase, as well as how we record, perform, and share our memories, are essential markers of individual and collective experience. In her article, Lee says that, “Memory is something

alive. It is the work of life itself. We are asked to remember, not to plough old fields for worn-out meanings or to make monuments of our past, but in order that we might feel anew.” We hope that this issue of RoundTable will bring something new to your own literary memory work.