EDITORIAL

As has already been observed by our colleagues, Sylwia Borowska-Szerszun and Tomasz Sawczuk, in Volume One of *Remembering/Forgetting* (*Crossroads* 14), memory studies have been gaining increased and unwavering attention for the last few decades. Even if Roediger and Wertsch (19) argue that "unless and until proper methods and theories are developed to lead to a coherent field, memory studies as a proper discipline may still be awaiting its birth," it is impossible to deny their existence as a multi- or interdisciplinary field. Needless to say, the notion of memory has always lain at the heart of humanities and attracted the attention of philosophers, from Aristotle's *On Memory and Recollection* to Maurice Halbwachs' *La Mémoire collective* (1950) and Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2000), to mention but a few. After all, as Robin G. Collingwood (212) puts it, memory is "the mind's triumph over time" or, as Jeanette Rodriguez and Ted Fortier (8) promulgate, "[w]ithout memory, the living of life would have no coherence at all." Memory helps us survive as individuals, and also as groups or nations. As a repository of procedural knowledge, it guides us through the day without having to learn the already acquired skills anew, as is the case in Alzheimer's or other memory-loss patients. As a collection of personal remembrances, it participates in the continuous process of identity formation and self-definition. The following passage by Astrid Erll (6) supports this view:

> That memory and identity are closely linked on the individual level is a commonplace that goes back at least to John Locke, who maintained that there is no such thing as an essential identity, but that identities have to be constructed and reconstructed by acts of memory, by remembering who one was and by setting this past Self in relation to the present Self.

The term 'memory' opens up a wide range of interdisciplinary research, as it has been making its appearance in biology, psychology, and social, cultural, historical and literary studies. Literary texts provide valuable material for the classification of memory phenomena and play a crucial role in the representation of the past – from individual life experience to national history. Volume Two of *Remembering/Forgetting* discusses various aspects of literature and memory in literary works across genres and traditions, and yields a panorama of issues such as cultural memory, autobiography, herstory, female memoir, grief, mourning, trauma, amnesia, and voluntary and involuntary memory, among others.

Jadwiga Uchman demonstrates in her article in the current issue that reminiscing may be a distressing experience since some of the memories one cherished and wished to retain for future reference are inevitably lost or repressed by the later Self. In the retrospective view one's aspirations and dreams, though frequently immature and naive, often testify to one's failure and betrayal

of the past Self. As Samuel Beckett (13) proclaims, "There is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us." Therefore, to protect oneself from disillusionment and a sense of defeat, while simultaneously granting oneself a sense of uninterrupted continuity, the present Self will employ a number of techniques to belie remembrances. Ultimately, as Rodriguez and Fortier (1) affirm, "Memory is the capacity to remember, to create and re-create our past." Thus, to some extent every individual is their own writer/creator. The fact that "[n]ovelists also wrestle with issues of memory" for "characters in novels remember their past, so the memories created by the novelist must be realistic, neither too vague nor too specific" (Roediger, Wertsch, 13) is explored in the following issue by **Marek Pawlicki.**

Having mentioned individual memory, it is crucial to recall Maurice Halbwachs' (43) dictum that "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections." In other words, individual memory is always dependent upon collective memory. As Lena Steveker (82) elucidates Halbwachs' concept, "Although personal memory is always embodied by the individual, it is at the same time embedded in the individual's social frameworks." The way one experiences the world and views oneself is always conditioned by the social frameworks one is part of, whether through gender, religion, ethnicity, education, or economic status, among many. Drawing on Halbwachs' findings, in the late 1980s Aleida and Jan Assmann introduced two new terms, namely, 'communicative memory' and 'cultural memory' to denote the repository of society's recent and distant pasts, respectively (Steveker, 84). Jan Assmann (132) explicates the latter in the following terms:

> [t]he concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.

This notion seems to lie at the heart of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*, a novel investigated by two authors in this issue, **Sylwia Borowska-Szerszun** and **Edyta Lorek-Jezińska,** though from very different perspectives. Referring to earlier literary texts, exemplified by *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Ishiguro testifies to the fact that literature has a memory of its own. Embedded in cultural frameworks, both writers and readers inevitably refer to former literary traditions. Their knowledge of literary genres, conventions or topoi, stored in memory, determines their creation and/or reception of new narratives. Moreover, rereading a particular text, be it a novel or one's own memoir, engages the reader in the process of reminiscence, often enabling the present Self to gain access to the former Self, as is the case of Helen Macdonald's rereading of Terence Hanbury White's *The Goshawk*. The issue is widely discussed by **Anna Dziok-Łazarecka.** In *Affective Narratology* Patrick Colm Hogan (241) notes that readers may form "emotional memories" which are emotionally loaded remembrances spurred by the text itself. Interestingly, these second-hand literary experiences may prove to be useful in real life as they can actually affect one's response

to particular life situations. Emotionally-charged remembrances of vital moments in one's life are absolutely indispensable in memoir writing. These either auspicious or critical life events demarcate the line of a life narrative, enhancing its sincerity, for, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (270) emphasizes in *Confessions*, "I may make factual omissions, transpositions, errors in dates; but I cannot be mistaken about what I felt, nor about what my feelings led me to do." Despite the fact that "memoirs are written late in life, sometimes without the aid of diaries or notes, so their veracity (especially of distant recollections of complex events) may be questioned" (Roediger, Wertsch, 12), as a literary genre they are compelling examples of identity formation. Since it is nothing short of a narrative, a memoir's "power resides in its ability to create, form, refashion, and reclaim identity" (Rodriguez, Fortier, 7). It becomes even more significant a step in identity formation if a thus-far male-dominated genre itself needs to be reclaimed by female artists, the phenomenon discussed by **Tomasz Sawczuk** with reference to the rise of female rock memoirs.

Remembering, however, is just one side of the memory coin, of which the other is forgetting. The loss of memory is often an individual's inadvertent protective response to a traumatic event. The erasure of trauma is supposed to defend the Self from shattering. Nevertheless, as **Magdalena Łapińska** demonstrates in her analysis of Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*, without the affective memory of the deceased the process of mourning can neither cease nor even commence. Historical amnesia is yet another face of cultural mechanisms which allow certain groups or nations to co-exist peacefully, though forgiveness does not, and perhaps ought not, necessarily equate to forgetting.

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The articles collected in this issue beautifully exemplify the three approaches to the notion of memory within the field of literary studies proposed by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (2005), namely, 1) memory *in* literature, 2) memory *of* literature, 3) and literature as a medium of cultural memory. The articles by **Jadwiga Uchman, Marek Pawlicki, Edyta Lorek-Jezińska, Magdalena Łapińska** and **Tomasz Sawczuk** are primarily concerned with the first category, also referred to as the "mimesis of memory" (Erll and Nünning 2005, 265), as they focus on the ways in which memory, or its loss, are represented in literary texts. The essay by **Anna Dziok-Łazarecka** exemplifies how authors engage in a dialogue with other writers often on multiple levels, that of a reader, a scholar and a writer. Last but not least, the article by **Sylwia Borowska-Szerszun** consciously explores both the notion of "memory of literature" as well as "literature as a medium of cultural memory". Though the texts analyzed by the aforementioned authors seemingly differ, ranging from a play (*Krapp's Last Tape*), through a short story ("Envoy Extraordinary") and novels (*The Buried Giant, Fledgling*) to memoirs (*H is for Hawk*, three female rock memoirs), they all attest to the fact that "memories are not static representations of past events but 'advancing stories' through which individuals and communities forge their sense of identity. Or, to put it differently: memories offer heavily edited versions of the self and its world" (Caldicotts, Fuchs, 12-13).

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