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Winfried Fluck · Herbert Grabes

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21

**Literature, Literary History,
and Cultural Memory**

Edited by

Herbert Grabes

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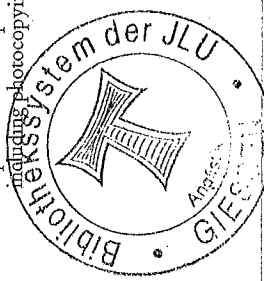
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Where Literature and Memory Meet: Towards a Systematic Approach to the Concepts of Memory Used in Literary Studies¹

Introduction: Concepts of Memory in Literary Studies

Ever since the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and the art historian Aby Warburg published their pioneering works on the significance of social frames and medial representations of cultural memory, demonstrating that memory always has a social component and that it ought to be understood as a cultural phenomenon, the interest in the social, cultural, and medial dimensions of individual and collective memory has significantly increased, reaching a peak point in the decade preceding the millennium. One might even go so far as Jan Assmann, who argues that a new paradigm of *Kulturwissenschaft* could well evolve around the concept of cultural or collective memory. The tremendously useful encyclopaedia on memory edited by Nicolas Pethes and Jens Ruchatz² and the wide-ranging eight-volume series *Literature as Cultural Memory*³ seem to bear Assmann out, testifying as they do to both the great amount of research on individual and cultural memory and to its interdisciplinary orientation.

Recent studies of collective memory have redirected scholarly attention to both the social, cultural, and political dimensions of 'memory cultures' (*Erinnerungskulturen*), re-examining the relationship and the links between the past and the present and illuminating the manifold

¹ We should like to thank Sara Young, who translated an earlier version of this essay: Astrid Erli & Ansgar Nünning, "Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft: Ein Überblick," *Literatur - Erinnerung - Identität: Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien*, ed. Astrid Erli, Marion Gymnich & Ansgar Nünning (Trier: WVT, 2003): 4-27.

² *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung: Ein interdisziplinäres Lexikon*, ed. Nicolas Pethes & Jens Ruchatz (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2001).

³ *Literature as Cultural Memory: Leiden, 16-22 August 1997*, ed. Theo D'haen (Proceedings of the XVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association; Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

forms and functions of memory cultures. Tellingly entitled *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, a recent volume on the subject serves to show that "cultural memorization" is to be seen "as an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and re-described even as it continues to shape the future": "The memorial presence of the past takes many forms and serves many purposes, ranging from conscious recall to unreflected re-emergence, from nostalgic longing for what is lost to polemical use of the past to shape the present."⁴

The cognitivist and constructivist understanding of individual and cultural memory as an activity situated in the present and embedded in present consciousness which has emerged in recent scholarship⁵ has far-reaching implications and consequences for the study of both individual memory and memory cultures. First and foremost, it emphasizes that a society's cultural memory is always a reflection of its present interests, needs, and current levels of experience. The latter determine both the way a society deals with the past and the forms that a given memorial culture takes, which is itself subject to historical change. Second, the use of the plural in the term 'cultural memories' refers to the central hypothesis of investigation developed by the collaborative research center on memory cultures in Giessen (SFB 434 Erinnerungskulturen): i.e. that the notion of cultural memory⁶ needs to be radically rethought in that there are different types of historical, regional, ethnic, and national memories. Third, the focus of investigation thus revolves around a social and historicized framework of cultural remembrance, exploring different genres, media, institutions, and sites of memory⁷ as well as the political functions that acts of memory serve to fulfil.

Because memory is made up of socially constituted forms, narratives, and relations, but also amenable to individual acts of intervention in it, memory is always open to social revision and manipulation. This makes it an instance of fiction rather than imprint, often of social forgetting

⁴ Mieke Bal, "Introduction," *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe & Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH & London: UP of New England, 1999): vii.

⁵ See Siegfried J. Schmidt, *Gedächtnis: Probleme und Perspektiven der interdisziplinären Gedächtnisforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), and Daniel L. Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

⁶ See Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992).

⁷ See Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (1984; Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

rather than remembering. Cultural memory can be located in literary texts because the latter are continuous with the communal fictionalising/idealising, monumentalising impulses thriving in a conflicted culture.⁸

Recent approaches to individual and cultural memory have tended to emphasize not only its socially constructed nature, but also its fictional (izing) aspects. In his seminal account of the creation of an autobiographical self, Paul John Eakin, for instance, illuminates the complex ways in which we remember and become who we believe to be by means of the stories of self we have learned to tell, the latter being as much based on socially constituted and fictional models of self and identity provided by the respective cultures we inhabit as on facts. Eakin emphasizes the constructive nature of autobiographical remembering and "the fact that our sense of continuous identity is a fiction, the primary fiction of all self-narration."⁹ On closer inspection, the notion of continuous identity thus turns out to be nothing but "a fiction of memory":¹⁰ i.e. an imaginative (re)construction resulting from a subtle interplay between past and present as well as between literature and memory.

* * *

The questions and objectives of the following overview of the concepts of memory in literary studies are derived from an interesting paradox: Concepts of memory are at once omnipresent in literary studies and yet have at the same time hardly been given theoretical consideration. What approaches are available for those who want to work on the topic of 'memory' within a literary studies perspective? Are there in fact concepts of memory specific to literary studies, or does the occupation with memory instead necessarily mean leaving the discipline - in the direction of cognitive psychology, ethnology or history? The goal of this article is to provide an overview of the spectrum of 'concepts of memory in literary studies', which extends from literary studies in the narrower sense to approaches which are strongly influenced by cultural studies and interdisciplinarity. Such an overview cannot, of course, claim to be exhaustive, and it must also be emphasized that today one cannot speak of *the* approach to literary studies and its area of interest nor of *the* concept of memory in literary studies. Instead,

⁸ Bal, "Introduction," xiii.

⁹ Paul John Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell UP, 1999): 94.

¹⁰ Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories*, 95.

what we are dealing with here is a wealth of research areas and sharply differing concepts of memory.¹¹

In the following text, a brief history of three basic concepts of memory in literary studies will be given, and their basic assumptions, methods and research perspectives introduced. From among the great variety of approaches to the relationship of literature and memory these three were chosen because they have been influential in academic discourses and have a significant potential for further development:

I. The Memory of Literature

The following three concepts accentuate the diachronic dimension of literature. Literary works and their aesthetic forms are understood as being 'remembered' by authors, readers and institutions; literature is even (metaphorically) ascribed a memory of its own.

1) *Intertextual mnemonics as 'the memory of literature'*: This concept refers to the idea of an inner-literary memory in the sense of a *genitivus subjectivus*, as a memory of the symbol system 'literature' which manifests itself in individual texts. Within literary works there is a memory of previous texts. This research on the intertextual 'memory of literature' extends from the study of literary topoi to poststructuralist concepts of intertextuality – and is always connected with concepts from the ancient tradition of mnemonics.

2) *Genres as repositories of memory*: Within the complex phenomenon of possible relations between genre and memory one must differentiate among several levels. (a) The memory of literary genres' is a phenomenon of intertextual relations and thus a further expression of intertextuality as 'the memory of literature'. The meaning of 'genres as repositories of memory', however, goes far beyond this traditional area of research in literary studies: (b) Firstly, genre schemata are important for autobiographical remembering ('genre memories'). (c) Secondly, 'memory genres' (such as the historical novel, memoirs or biography) play a significant role in shaping cultural memory.

3) *The canon and literary history as institutionalized memory of literary studies and society*: This concept refers to the idea of an inner-literary memory in the sense of a *genitivus obiectivus*. Through the writing of literary history and the formation of canons, the field of literary studies – and not just literature – is involved in the creation and maintenance of cultural memory. Through research into the formation of canons, the

¹¹ See the handbook *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Astrid Erli & Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

writing of literary history and the theoretical consideration of how literary history is written, the discipline observes and reflects on its own activity.

II. Memory in Literature, or Mimesis of memory:

A multitude of new studies deal with the presentation of memory in literary works. They are based first of all on the assumption that literature exists in a relationship to contemporary discourses of memory and illustrates functions, processes and problems of memory in the medium of fiction through aesthetic forms. The concept of the 'mimesis of memory' will be used here as a collective term for all forms of the representation of memory (individual and collective) in literary texts.

III. Literature as a medium of collective memory:

Research into the mediality of literary texts and their functions in the formation and transformation of collective memories is just beginning. Yet precisely such an understanding of the role that literary works play as media of memory in historical memory cultures holds great potential for the interdisciplinary applicability of literary studies to the new "paradigm for cultural studies" which, according to Jan Assmann,¹² "is growing up around the concept of memory."

I. The Memory of Literature

I.1 Intertextual Mnemonics: Warburg, Yates, Curtius, Bloom, and Lachmann

The concept of a 'memory of literature' as an inner-literary memory which manifests itself in individual literary texts is closely connected to the tradition of mnemonics of the ancient world and to concepts of rhetoric, which will thus briefly be summarized here. The founding myth of the concept of artificial memory is handed down to us in Cicero's *De Oratore*. It is the story of the Greek poet Simonides of Keos (557–467 BC), who was able to identify banquet guests who had died as the result of a catastrophe because he had previously committed their seating plan to memory. The discovery that spatially organized pictures in the imagination can serve as an aid to memory is supposed to have inspired the poet to invent the art of memory. The mnemonic system of the ancient world functions according to the principle of *loci*

¹² Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 11 (our translation).

et *imagines*: in the imagination, one attaches to a sequence of real or imagined places (*loci*) pictures, preferably vivid, intense pictures (*imagines agentes*), which refer to the things that are to be remembered. One can later walk along these places in one's mind and collect each picture and with it that which is to be remembered. Thus, the process is a sort of mental script, which was used in the ancient world primarily to memorize speeches. For this reason the mnemonics of antiquity has been handed down to us exclusively in writings on rhetoric, as one of the five elements of speech writing: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria* and *actio*.

In recent years there has been a noticeable increase in the interest in *ars memoriae* in literary studies, which is certainly in great part due to the literary historian Frances Yates. Her study *The Art of Memory* (1966) is a history of the art of memory from antiquity to the early modern period. Yates argues that art, the organization of knowledge, and also systems of thought of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance draw to a great extent on the mnemonics of the ancient world. Her remarks on the history of the art of memory from the mnemonics of the ancient world via the religious imagination of the Middle Ages to the magical-hermetic memory systems of Giulio Camillo, Giordano Bruno or Robert Fludd in the Renaissance and early modern period make clear that the art of memory was a quite adaptable tradition that was very much alive and which was not used merely for rhetorical purposes but also in the area of Christian thought, the cultural organization of knowledge or as a means of artistic expression.¹³

The close interweaving of literature and historical expressions of *ars memoriae* is based on the fact that in both cultural practices the inven-

¹³ In the last two decades, particularly those areas of literary studies which are closely connected to history and cultural studies have produced a great many studies on the art of memory and the organization of knowledge in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period. See Friedrich Ohly, "Bemerkungen eines Philologen zur Memoria," *Memoria: Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert literarischen Gedankens im Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Schmid & Joachim Wollasch (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1984): 9-68; Mary Carruthers (here also a critique of Yates's theories), "The Book of Memory": *A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990); *Ars memorativa: Zur kulturgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der Gedächtniskunst 1400-1750*, ed. Jörg Jochen Berns & Wolfgang Neuber (Tübingen: Carl Niemeyer, 1993). On the rhetorical concept of *memoria*, see Klaus Dockhorn, "Memoria in der Rhetorik," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 9 (1964): 27-35; on the development of the art of memory, see Stefan Goldmann, "Statt Totenklage Gedächtnis: Zur Erfindung der Mnemotechnik durch Simonides von Keos," *Poetica* 21 (1989): 43-66.

tion of images plays an important role: "The art of memory was a creator of imagery which must surely have flowed out into creative works of art and literature."¹⁴ Like Gothic architecture or pictures by Giotto or Titian, the impressive images in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for example, can also be understood as the expression of a medieval art of memory. They represent a Christian form of the Platonic memory (*amnesis*) - of heaven and hell, vices and virtues - by using the mnemonic technique of antiquity of combining locations with *imagines agentes*.

In the theoretical writings on the memory of literature, unlike in Yates's study, the interest is less in the historically exact examination of the relationship of the mnemonics of the ancient world to art and literature. Theoretical approaches in the fields of art and literature have instead used *ars memoriae* as a model - broadly interpreted and linked to various other concepts to form new theories - in order to be able to describe phenomena such as the recurrence and transformation of aesthetic forms. Four such attempts will be presented here: the concept of a 'social memory', associated with Aby Warburg (which, strictly speaking, should be assigned to the neighbouring discipline of art history, yet which is of such fundamental importance for literary studies that it absolutely must be considered here); the historical *Topik* of Ernst Robert Curtius; and finally Harold Bloom's and Renate Lachmann's theories of intertextuality. The recapitulation of these concepts will not only outline the history of nearly an entire century of research, but also cover the entire spectrum of fundamental theories in art and literary studies - from the German history of ideas and hermeneutics to poststructuralism. What connects the four approaches (Warburg, Curtius, Bloom, Lachmann) with each other is the fact that they explicitly return to the concepts of memory from the ancient world in order to describe in theoretical terms continuities and changes in art and literature - that is, a memory of art and literature.

Aby Warburg's interest was in a memory of art, in the reappropriation of vivid details in different epochs and cultures.¹⁵ Warburg observed a return of artistic forms - for example, motifs of classical frescoes in Renaissance paintings by Botticelli and Ghirlandaio or even on stamps of

¹⁴ Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1966): 91.

¹⁵ See: Aby Warburg, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, ed. Dieter Wuttke (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1979); Ernst H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Warburg Institute, 1970), and Roland Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm: Geschichte, Erinnerung und die Avidacht zum Unbedeutenden im Werk von Usener, Warburg und Benjamin* (Tübingen: Carl Niemeyer, 1987).

the 1920s – and instead of interpreting the re-use of these forms as the result of a conscious appropriation of the ancient world by artists of later epochs, rather attributed it to the power of cultural symbols to trigger memories. Particular importance is attributed to the so-called pathos formula ('*Pathosformeln*'), a kind of *imagines agentes*. Artists of the Renaissance, in their attempts to represent 'superlatives' of human expression (for example, passionate arousal in gesture or physiognomy), fell back on the symbolism of ancient models. According to Warburg, a pagan emotional intensity found expression in these pathos formulae.

In order to explain the power of cultural symbols to survive over time, the art historian appealed to the terminology of the psychologist Richard Semon: *Pathosformeln*, said Warburg, were cultural 'engrams' or 'dynamograms' which store 'mnemonic energy' which they are able to discharge even under changed historical circumstances or at distant locations. The symbol is a store of cultural energy. Art and culture are founded on the memory of the symbols. In this manner, Warburg developed a theory of the collective memory of images which he termed 'social memory'. In the mid-1920s he conceived of a project for an exhibit by the name of *Mnemosyne*,¹⁶ an atlas which was meant to illustrate the global memory of images, which crosses the chronological and spatial borders of epochs and countries. By bringing together apparently heterogeneous panels, the atlas presents an outline of a 'community of memory' which connects Europe and Asia.

The relevance of this concept of social memory for literary studies results from Warburg's focus on the repetition of motifs and structures in works of art. Warburg's concept is primarily applicable to theories of literature which understand literature and culture as a continual process of 'desemiotization and re-semiotization' (the de-ascribing and re-ascribing of meaning to signs).¹⁷ The memory of literature is based on a re-semiotization of signs, on a process which re-charges elements of old texts with meaning. The phenomenon which Warburg observed and which he termed social memory is conceived in literary studies as 'intertextuality' in the broadest sense – as a taking-up of traditional topoi or references to individual texts or to a genre.

¹⁶ See Aby Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, ed. Martin Warnke (Berlin: Akademie, 2000).

¹⁷ See Renate Lachmann, "Kultursemiotischer Prospekt," *Memoria: Vergessen und Erinnern*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp & Renate Lachmann (Poetik und Hermeneutik XV; Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993).

Members of the circle around Warburg and the Warburg Institute in London produced important literary historical studies which explain literary phenomena and traditions using concepts of *ars memoriae*, albeit in very different ways. One example is the previously mentioned study *The Art of Memory* by Frances Yates. More rooted in literary theory is Robert Curtius in his book *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948) (*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*). Curtius dedicates his book to Aby Warburg and thus locates his theory and method of the historical *Topik* within cultural-historical concepts of memory. Curtius sees Europe as a historical and intellectual unity: European literature "is coextensive in time with European culture, therefore embraces a period of some twenty-six centuries (reckoning from Homer to Goethe)."¹⁸ According to Curtius, a view of literature limited to certain epochs and nations means that important aspects are lost from sight. In order to demonstrate continuities and changes of literary forms, he focuses his attention on topoi: i.e. on the commonplaces of classical rhetorical theory or established patterns of thought and expression. Curtius includes in these categories rhetorical topoi such as the 'modesty topos, the topos of the inexpressible or the 'world upside down' topos, but in a broader sense also metaphors, such as 'the world as a stage'.¹⁹ Curtius pursues two goals with his concept of the historical *Topik*: First of all he is interested in a history of genres and forms, in the "knowledge of the genetics of the formal elements of literature."²⁰ Secondly, he is guided by an interest related to the German 'history of ideas', since the study of the recurrence of literary forms of expression contributes, according to Curtius, to an "understanding of the psychological history of the West."²¹

¹⁸ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. Willard Trask (*Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, 1948; tr. 1953; Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990): 12.

¹⁹ Curtius's vague topos concept has been as much criticized in literary studies as it has had an influence on the discipline. Peter Jehn, for example, wrote "The Curtian topos [...] is a Proteus whose identity is not truth, but rather the false result of ahistorical equations of different rhetorical terms"; Jehn, "Ernst Robert Curtius: Toposforschung als Restauration," *Toposforschung: Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Peter Jehn (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1972): x (our translation). On topos research, see *Topik: Beiträge zu einer interdisziplinären Diskussion*, ed. Dieter Breuer & Helmut Schanze (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1981).

²⁰ Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 82.

²¹ *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 82.

The memory of literature, as seen through Curtius' historical *Topik*, is characterized by the basis of literary *inventio* on *memoria*: Artistic activity is also always an act of remembering, as it must call upon traditional elements and images. Curtius' research also makes clear that literature has a diachronic and transcultural dimension. Just as *Pathosformeln* 'store' the energy of the collective memory of images, the literary memory finds expression in *topoi*.

The origins of poststructural concepts of intertextuality, as put forth by Harold Bloom and Renate Lachmann, and of their concepts of a memory of literature can be traced back to the 1920s – back to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism.²² Julia Kristeva, following Bakhtin's writings on "discourse in the novel," coined the term 'intertextuality'.²³ From the perspective of poststructuralist theory, the memory of literature appears to be a reference to cultural pre-texts which manifests itself on a text-internal level, actualizing and transforming them.

In *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), Harold Bloom is concerned with "intra-poetic relationships,"²⁴ also in the sense of a literary studies concept of a memory of literature. Using English Romantic poetry as an example, he shows that the "anxiety of influence" (used by Bloom in a Freudian meaning: the fear a young poet – *ephebe* – has of the works of an apparently over powerful "poet father") is what makes literary production possible in the first place: "Poetry is the anxiety of influence."²⁵ This anxiety of influence leads to literary defense mechanisms, in particular to misreading.²⁶ In *The Anxiety of Influence* he writes: "Every poem is a misinterpretation of a parent poem."²⁷ Bloom distinguishes among various expressions of such "revisionary ratios"²⁸ – forms of intertext-

22 For more on Bakhtin's concept of memory, see Rainer Grübel, "Zur Ästhetik des Wortes bei Michail M. Bakhtin," Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Die Ästhetik des Wortes*, ed. Rainer Grübel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), and Matias Martínez, "Dialogizität, Intertextualität, Gedächtnis," *Grundzüge der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold & Heinrich Detering (München: dtv, 1996): 430–45.

23 Julia Kristeva, "Wort, Dialog und Roman bei Bakhtin," *Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, vol. 3, ed. Jens Ihwe (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1972): 345–75. [Orig. *Semiotik: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).]

24 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford UP, 1973): 5.

25 Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 95.

26 See Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford UP, 1975).

27 Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 94.

28 *The Anxiety of Influence*, 14.

ual actualization and variation of elements of literary tradition which are recognizable in the text as rhetorical strategies.²⁹

In her book *Gedächtnis und Literatur* (1990) [*Memory and Literature* (1997)], Renate Lachmann provides a fundamental contribution to the poststructuralist concept of memory based on the concepts of intertextuality. Characteristic of the influential approach Lachmann takes is the consistent equation of memory with the category of intertextuality: "The memory of a text is its intertextuality."³⁰ Lachmann locates the literary phenomenon of intertextuality in a frame of reference structured by memory theory. With the concept of 'text as memory' she is interested in "interpreting the intertextuality of concrete texts as a mnemonic space that unfolds between texts, and of the space of memory inside concrete texts that is constructed by the intertexts registered in them."³¹ On the relationship of *ars memoriae* and literature, Lachmann writes: "For literary criticism, the crucial problem here is to define the ways in which mnemonic *imaginatio* and poetic imagination interact."³² Literary texts "construct an architecture of memory, into which they deposit mnemonic images based on the procedures of *ars memoriae*."³³ Literature thus proves to be intertwined with memory and culture in many ways: it is a

mnemonic art *par excellence*. Literature supplies the memory for a culture and records such a memory. It is in itself an act of memory. Literature inscribes itself in a memory space made out of texts, and it sketches

29 As early as 1919, T.S. Eliot developed a similar concept in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Eliot argues that the true newness and originality of a literary text can only be the result of a contested debate with tradition. Similarly, each new 'great' literary work has an effect on the existing structure of traditional classic or canonical texts: "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new"; Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber & Faber, 1975): 37–44.

30 Renate Lachmann, *Memory and Literature: Intertextuality in Russian Modernism* (Minneapolis & London: U of Minnesota P, 1997): 15.

31 Lachmann, *Memory and Literature*, xxiv.

32 *Memory and Literature*, 14.

33 *Memory and Literature*, 15.

out a memory space into which earlier texts are gradually absorbed and transformed.³⁴

The concepts of a memory of literature presented here display important common characteristics: In literary studies it is not only common to take up terms and conceptions from the discipline of rhetoric, but this appeal is also generally associated with a productive appropriation and an (often profound) change in the historical teachings on memory. Literary studies makes two important modifications in the *ars memoriae*. First, the abstract process of connecting *loci* and *imagines*, meant for the individual memory, gains a collective, medial and diachronic dimension: literary traditions and their changes are described with mnemonic concepts. Second, literary studies approaches conceive of the five steps of classical rhetoric as a circle. In the understanding of literary studies, *memoria* does not refer to the mere memorizing of something which already exists, but instead provides a basis for the creation of new literature. *Inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio* are based on *memoria*. Every new literary text is based on previous texts, on genre patterns, literary forms and tropes common to the culture.

In addition, the studies of Warburg, Curtius, Bloom and Lachmann show that the interest in memory in the areas of art and literary studies is itself strongly connected to the contemporary predominant theories of memory and discourses of the past: while Warburg explains his observations using the 'engram' theory of the psychologist Richard Semon and contemporary conceptions of involuntary memory, Curtius, in a era of world wars, calls on the conservative image of European continuity and unity. Bloom's and Lachmann's theories of intertextuality, finally, are based not only on elements of poststructuralist but also of psychoanalytic theories. Concepts of individual and collective memory as well as of organic memory and medial constructions of the past commonly flow into one another in art and literary studies approaches.³⁵

³⁴ Lachmann, *Memory and Literature*, 15.

³⁵ For a more recent conception of intertextuality that considers the study of memory, see *Intertextualität in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Wilhelm Kühlmann & Wolfgang Neuber (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994), and Oliver Scheiding, "Intertextualität," *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Eril & Nünning, 53-73.

1.2 Genres as Repositories of Memory:

'The memory of literary genres' - 'genre memories' - 'memory genres'

Genres - van Gorp and Musarra-Schroeder call them "repositories of cultural memory" - are a paradigmatic example of the variety and complexity of the relationships between literature and memory.³⁶ Genres can be understood as conventionalized repositories of memory in many different ways: They play a role in individual and collective, in literary and cultural memory - and represent an important interface in the connection and exchange among these different levels. One can roughly differentiate between three aspects of the relation of memory and genre: in the realm of literature we speak of 'the memory of literary genres' (as part of 'the memory of literature'), in the realm of individual autobiographical remembering of 'genre memories', and in the realm of social and cultural meaning-making of 'memory genres'.

a) The 'memory of literary genres'

The concept of 'the memory of literary genres' is another idea rooted in literary studies. The existence of genres is a phenomenon of inner-literary memory, which constitutes itself through inter-textual relations.³⁷ The concepts of genre, thus, which are focussed on the level of literary memory, are closely related to the assumptions of the topos and intertextuality theories discussed above. Particularly the strongly conventionalized genres are the result of fundamental processes of memory, namely continual repetition and actualization.

The close connection between the literary and individual level becomes particularly clear with the example of the memory of genres: Literary genres and their formal characteristics are closely related to conventionalized expectations (or, to use a term from cognitive psychology: schemata). Repertoires of forms specific to particular genres are elements of the collective memory and as such belong to the common knowledge of societies, which individuals acquire through socialization and culturalization. Based on the fact that readers are familiar with genre conventions (that is, they actualize collectively shared schemata), they assume when reading a detective novel, for example, that at the

³⁶ *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory*, ed. Hendrik van Gorp & Ulla Musarra-Schroeder (Literature as Cultural Memory 5; Amsterdam & Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000).

³⁷ See *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, ed. Ulrich Broich & Manfred Pfister (Tübingen: Carl Nie Meyer, 1985).

end of the book they will find the solution to the case. Characteristics of genres as elements of the literary memory and elements of the collective memory (shared by authors and readers), crystallized in schemata, guide the interpretative strategies and expectations along certain paths:

For the reader, genres constitute sets of expectations which steer the reading process. Generic repertoires may be regarded as bodies of shared knowledge which have been inferred from perceived regularities in individual literary texts. As sets of norms of which both readers and writers are aware, genres fulfil an important role in the process of literary communication.³⁸

b) "How our lives become stories":³⁹ Genre Memories

Genre conventions are not merely a retrievable element of the individual (semantic) memory, but also shape the process of individual autobiographical remembering.⁴⁰ They play a role not just in the reception of literature, but are also – as narrative psychologists have shown – an undeniable element in the (re)construction and interpretation of our own life experiences. Our autobiographical memory is thus as much an effect of 'genre memories' as it is a representation of past events.

Individual memories within the framework of autobiographical memory are founded on processes of "symbolic transformation."⁴¹ Narrative patterns play a particularly important role in this process, as Jerome Bruner emphasizes in his fundamental essay "The Narrative Construction of Reality": "we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative."⁴² Through narrative forms and genre patterns, previously pre-narrative and unformed experiences are symbolized, organized, and interpreted and thereby become memorable. Genres are a constitutive element of our memory. They (re)form individual memories and also play an impor-

³⁸ Elisabeth Wesseling, *Writing History as a Prophet: Postmodernist Innovations of the Historical Novel* (Amsterdam & Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 1991): 18.

³⁹ See Eakin, *Lives*.

⁴⁰ For more on the distinction among different systems of individual memory, see Schacter, *Searching for Memory*.

⁴¹ Donald E. Polkinghorne, "Narrative Psychologie und Geschichtsbewußtsein: Beziehungen und Perspektiven," *Erzählung, Identität und historisches Bewußtsein: Die psychologische Konstruktion von Zeit und Geschichte*, ed. Jürgen Straub (Frankfurt am Main Suhrkamp, 1998): 23.

⁴² Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991): 4.

tant role in the construction and transmission of life experiences within the framework of the communicative memory.⁴³

Recent research into autobiography concerns itself with the nexus of the individual and literary memory of genres. Work in this area emphasizes that although the autobiography is a paradigmatic genre for the formation of experience, it by no means produces an exact image of a past life. Rather, it represents a textualized retrospective construction, which draws a significant portion of its meaning from its narrative form (for example, the plot structure and other constitutive characteristics). Wagner-Egelhaaf shows that the autobiography as a genre of literary memory represents not just a connection to individual, but also to cultural memory when she writes that

first, the autobiographical text itself functions as a spatial construction of a memory pattern, which connects specific content to a textual topography, such as placing portraits of parents at the 'entrance' to a text; and, second, the individual autobiographical text calls up the *imagines* stored in the cultural memory and in this way the individual memory draws from the collective memory.⁴⁴

Texts belonging to the genre of autobiography take on forms that are typical of memory processes; that is, their processes of representation are similar to the forms used to encode individual memory (such as mnemonics), and they are embedded in the framework of the cultural memory, with its repertoire of topoi⁴⁵ – and, of course, of genres.

c) Making sense of history: 'Memory Genres'

Cultural memory is generated and transmitted by memory genres. Understanding historical processes, conceiving of shared values and norms, establishing and maintaining concepts of collective identity – all these (historically and culturally variable) activities of cultural remembrance are linked to (equally changeable) genres. Hayden White's studies of nineteenth-century historiography (esp. 1973) have made clear

⁴³ See Harald Welzer, *Das kommunikative Gedächtnis: Eine Theorie der Erinnerung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002).

⁴⁴ Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Autobiographie* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2000): 14 (our translation).

⁴⁵ See Stefan Goldmann, "Topos und Erinnerung: Rahmenbedingungen der Autobiographie," *Der ganze Mensch: Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schings (Stuttgart & Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 1994): 660–75; Frauke Berndt, *Anamnesis: Studien zur Topik der Erinnerung in der erzählenden Literatur zwischen 1800 und 1900* (Möritz – Raabe) (Tübingen: Carl Niemeyer, 1999).

that the very choice of genre is decisive for the nature of the message. White shows that the plot structures of romance, tragedy, comedy and satire can be found in European historiography of the nineteenth century and in addition correlates these patterns with ideological implications (anarchistic, radical, conservative, liberal).

In the area of literature, the epic was for a long time a central pattern used to envision the origin and individuality of cultural communities. In the nineteenth century, the historical novel became a dominant memory genre in England and Germany, and illustrated historical processes and helped to form concepts of national identity. For the French cultural memory, memoirs at this time fulfilled the functions of identity formation and transmission of values in France, as Nora has shown. In English war novels of the 1920s, pastoral genre patterns and elements of comedy took on the function of interpreting traumatic collective experiences and creating models of cultural memory.⁴⁶ At the end of the twentieth century, postmodern, fragmented images of history and concepts of identity as well as the understanding of the constructed nature of versions of the past found adequate expression in the genre of historiographic metafiction.⁴⁷

In literary genre research, concepts of memory are explicitly thematized primarily when the subject is "specific 'memory linked' literary genres."⁴⁸ But not just (auto)biography and the historical novel are memory genres. For example, the structures of the *Bildungsroman* are cultural models to encode life experiences. Travel reports, with their specific connection of *loci* (for example, stations of the journey through foreign lands) and *imagines* (ideas of national and cultural identity, for example) point to central characteristics of the concept of mnemonics.⁴⁹ Genre patterns for romances and adventure novels provide a form for the changes which arise as a result of the confrontation with new situa-

⁴⁶ See Astrid Erli, *Gedächtnisromane: Literatur über den Ersten Weltkrieg als Medium englischer und deutscher Erinnerungskulturen in den 1920er Jahren* (Trier: WVT, 2003).

⁴⁷ See Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), and Ansgar Nünning, *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metafiktion*, vol. 1: *Theorie, Typologie und Poetik des historischen Romans* (Trier: WVT, 1995). For all of the examples named here, the concrete individual texts in which these genres found expression became "media of collective memory in historical memory cultures" (cf. point 6).

⁴⁸ Van Gorp & Musarra-Schroeder, *Genres*, iii.

⁴⁹ See *Travel Writing and Cultural Memory*, ed. Maria Alziro Seixo (Literature as Cultural Memory 9; Amsterdam & Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000).

tions or tasks. Realities and pasts are formed and interpreted through a variety of genre patterns familiar in the culture, which are generally made available through the system of literature.

One can assume, however, that particularly strongly conventionalized genres are used (consciously or unconsciously) as familiar formulas to give a meaningful shape to collective experiences which are hard to interpret, or to encode values and norms. Thus the image described here of genres as 'repositories' of different systems and levels of memory comes full circle, as the genre as a part of the inner-literary memory (the memory of literary genres) is actualized in such cases and takes on a function in the cultural memory as an interpretive formula already filled in with meaning appropriate to the culture (memory genres).

I.3 Canon und Literary History as Institutionalized Memory of Literary Studies and Society

While theories of intertextuality and genres represent approaches from the field of literary studies with which a memory of the symbol system 'literature' can be considered, research into canons and the theory of literary historiography allows insights into the functioning of the social system 'literature'.⁵⁰ Canon formation and literary history are central mechanisms and media on the basis of which the memory of literature is upheld in societies. Institutions such as the field of literary studies are necessary to choose a corpus of texts to be remembered from the breadth of available literary texts, and to organize these texts and ensure their being handed down.

In addition to those involved in literary studies, it is primarily representatives of the fields of religious studies and ancient and modern history who occupy themselves with processes of canon formation as central processes in the formation and maintenance of a collective memory.⁵¹ The canon - a term that originally referred to the corpus of

⁵⁰ For more on the differentiation between literature as a symbol system and a social system, see Siegfried J. Schmidt, *Kalte Faszination: Medien, Kultur, Wissenschaft in der Mediengesellschaft* (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2000).

⁵¹ See *Kanon und Zensur: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation II*, ed. Aleida Assmann & Jan Assmann (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987); Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, and Begründungen und Funktionen des Kanons: Beiträge aus der Literatur- und Kunswissenschaft, Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Gerhard R. Kaiser & Stefan Matuschek (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 2001), as well as *Literary History/Cultural History: Forcefields and Tensions*, ed. Herbert Grabes (REAL 17; Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2001), and Ansgar Nünning, "On the Eng-

recognized holy texts – has a significant societal and cultural relevance. Included in the functions that literary historiography and canon formation can fulfil are the creation of collective identities, the legitimization of societal and political relationships as well as the upholding or undermining of value systems. Cultures use their corpus of frequently used texts⁵² to describe themselves, and as the concepts of identity and the value structures of cultures change, so also does their canon change. The memory of the social system 'literature' is thus culturally and historically variable.

The beginning of the 1970s saw growing criticism of the old-fashioned concepts of canon and history in the field of literary studies. In the wake of *Ideologiekritik* and feminist research, the criteria used in forming a canon were also considered. A revision of the canon was called for, one which would open up the intellectual and elite canon and which would also take into account previously marginalized authors.⁵³ Following the paradigm of poststructuralism, a complete renunciation of any sort of canon formation was even called for. These canon debates, which made waves in the press under the names "The Great Canon Controversy" (Casement) or "Culture Wars,"⁵⁴ developed an enormous effect, in America in particular.

In the German-speaking world, against the background of the 'linguistic turn' and the discussion about the possible representations of history,⁵⁵ a concept that grew out of the theory of literary historiography had a significant influence, namely that the canon and literary histories constitute the institutionalized memory of literary studies and a society. The theoretical interest of literary historiography was directed less towards the historical process of literature itself as the process of its

lishness of English Literary Histories: Where Literature, Philosophy and Nationalism Meet Cultural History," *Critical Interfaces: Contributions on Philosophy, Literary Theory and Culture in Honour of Herbert Grabes*, ed. Gordon Collier, Klaus Schwank & Franz Wieselhuber (Trier: WVT, 2001): 55–83.

⁵² "Wiedergebrauchs-Texte"; Jan Assmann, "Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität," *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, ed. Jan Assmann & Tonio Hölscher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 9–19.

⁵³ For more on the feminist canon, see Margaret J. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), and Ina Schabert, *Englische Literaturgeschichte: Eine neue Darstellung aus der Sicht der Geschlechterforschung* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1997).

⁵⁴ Gregory S. Jay, *American Literature and the Culture Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997).

⁵⁵ See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD & London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973).

insight, interpretation and representation through literary historiography. Starting from an understanding of the "constructed nature of each literary history,"⁵⁶ selection criteria and construction mechanisms of this form of historiography were examined.⁵⁷

Although the canon debate and the theoretical reflection of literary historiography are, in the end, memory-forming processes such as selection, weighting and excision (what should be chosen to be remembered, what should be forgotten?), there is nonetheless seldom explicit mention of memory in this context. An interesting and very controversial example for the use of the term memory in connection with canon formation is, however, Harold Bloom's 1994 book *The Western Canon* – a reaction to the heated debate in the USA about canon revision. Bloom not only discusses in a highly selective manner the works of twenty-six authors (such as Shakespeare, Goethe, Tolstoy, and Proust) but also responds to the canon-critical "School of Resentment" with a reading list which is included in his book.

Bloom consciously returns to concepts of mnemonics to explain and support the correctness and importance of canon formation and thus a memory of literature. Yet while in cultural studies the importance of the canon for cultural memory (religious, ethnic, national) is stressed, Bloom, interestingly, explains that the canon plays an important role on the level of individual memory (of author and reader):

The Canon, once we view it as the relationship of an individual reader and writer to what has been preserved out of what has been written, and forget the canon as a list of books for required study, will be seen as identical with the literary Art of Memory, not with the religious sense of canon.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Wilhelm Voßkamp, "Theorien und Probleme gegenwärtiger Literaturgeschichtsschreibung," *Literaturgeschichtsschreibung in Italien und Deutschland: Traditionen und aktuelle Probleme*, ed. Frank Baasner (Tübingen: Carl Niemeyer, 1989): 166–74 (our translation).

⁵⁷ See Herbert Grabes, "Selektionsprinzipien und Literaturbegriff in der anglistischen Literaturgeschichtsschreibung," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 38 (1988): 3–14; *Vom Umgang mit Literatur und Literaturgeschichte: Positionen und Perspektiven nach der 'Theoriendebatte'*, ed. Lutz Danneberg & Friedrich Vollhardt (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1992), and Ansgar Nünning, "Kanonisierung, Periodisierung und der Konstruktcharakter von Literaturgeschichten: Grundbegriffe und Prämissen theoretisierter Literaturgeschichtsschreibung," *Eine andere Geschichte der englischen Literatur: Epochen, Gattungen und Teilgebiete im Überblick*, ed. Ansgar Nünning (Trier: WVT, 1996): 1–24.

⁵⁸ Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994; New York: Riverhead, 1995): 17.

The canon thus takes on the function of a memory system ("the Canon as a memory system"). Just as in classical mnemonics, there is also a connection between the *loci* and *imagines* of the canon-supported memory of the individual reader:

[W]hat I believe to be the principal pragmatic function of the Canon: the remembering and ordering of a lifetime's reading. The greatest authors take over the role of 'places' in the Canon's theatre of memory, and their masterworks occupy the position filled by 'images' in the art of memory. Shakespeare and *Hamlet*, central author and central drama, compel us to remember not only what happens in *Hamlet*, but more crucially what happens in literature that makes it memorable and thus prolongs the life of the author.⁵⁹

Literary studies create and maintain cultural memory, as the debates about canon revision and the constructed nature of literary historiography have shown. Since literary historiography and the creation or changing of canons has always belonged to the central tasks of the discipline, the institutionalized memory of literature is a phenomenon that has – implicitly but with a lasting effect – shaped, and still shapes, literary studies. The mechanisms and the varied societal functions of the field's reference to the past have just in recent decades come to the forefront. As a result, the field of literary studies today is increasingly interested not only in the creation of canons and literary histories, but also with the critical reflection of such construction processes: The field observes its own activity – the bringing forth and passing on of cultural memory – from a cultural-historical and memory-theoretical perspective.

II Memory in Literature, or: Mimesis of Memory

All of the approaches discussed so far can be said to be based on a concept of a 'memory of literature,' since the theory of intertextuality and genre history largely deal with inner-literary processes, and canon research and the theory of literary historiography deal with system-internal processes. In contrast, in studies on the literary representation of memory, the dialogical relationship between literature and extra-literary discourses are more in the foreground. Such studies start with the premise that literature refers to the extra-textual cultural reality and

⁵⁹ Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 37.

makes it observable in the medium of fiction. Thus they are based on mimetic models of the relationship between memory and literature.

The concept of 'mimesis,' however, does not refer to a naïve concept of mere reflection, but rather to theoretical concepts regarding the active creation of realities ('poiesis') through literary texts, which, however, are simultaneously characterized by a reference to extra-literary reality, as emphasized unanimously, albeit with a basis in different concepts, by Ricœur, Iser and Link.⁶⁰ Ricœur makes clear that the creation of versions of reality through literary works rests on dynamic transformation processes – on an interaction among the "prefiguration" of the text: that is, its reference to the pre-existent extra-textual world (*mimesis* I), the textual "configuration" that creates a fictional object (*mimesis* II) and the "refiguration" by the reader (*mimesis* III). The literary process thus appears as an active constructive process, in which cultural systems of meaning, literary processes and practices of reception are equally involved and in which reality is not merely reflected, but instead first poetically created⁶¹ and then "iconically enriched."⁶² The symbolic order of the extra-literary reality and the worlds created within in the medium of fiction enter into a relationship of mutual influence and change. Ricœur's 'circle of mimesis' can contribute to a differentiation among different levels of the relationship between literature and memory: first, literary works are related to extra-literary memories; second, they represent their content and functioning in the medium of fiction; and third, they can help to form individual memories and memory cultures.⁶³

The relationship of literature to extra-literary memory discourses (Ricœur's *mimesis* I) and the specific literary forms of the representation of memory (*mimesis* II) have been a central area of interest in literary studies at least since Marcel Proust. Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913) is a novel in which the concepts of involuntary memory from the beginning of the twentieth century (for example, Sigmund

⁶⁰ See Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago & London: U of Chicago P, 1984); Wolfgang Iser, *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre: Perspektiven literarischer Anthropologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991); Jürgen Link, "Literaturanalyse als Interdiskursanalyse: Am Beispiel des Ursprungs literarischer Symbolik in der Kollektivsymbolik," *Diskurstheorien und Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Jürgen Fohrmann & Harro Müller (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988): 284–307.

⁶¹ Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 107.

⁶² Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, 127.

⁶³ On the concept of a three-step mimesis as a model for the relationship between literature and a culture of memory, see Astrid Erli, *Gedächtnisromane*.

Freud's concept of the unconscious and Henri Bergson's *mémoire involontaire* are represented with specifically literary means (particularly through a dominant narrating or remembering 'I'). A number of studies in recent years have been dedicated to the literary reference to memory discourses and to the representation of memory in fiction. Using examples from different epochs, genres and authors it has been shown that memory – individual and collective – plays an important role in literature, both thematically and structurally.⁶⁴

Literature can virtually be described as a way to represent individual memory. Narrative texts in particular demonstrate forms that show a special affinity to memory. Thus it is not surprising that the narrative distinction between an experiencing and a narrating 'I' already rests on a (largely implicit) concept of memory: namely, on the concept of a difference between pre-narrative experience on the one hand, and on the other hand a memory which forms the past through narrative and retrospectively creates meaning. The occupation with first-person narrators is thus also always an occupation with the literary representation of memory. The different processes used to represent consciousness are a further example of the ability of literature to represent memory, as it can bring conscious and unconscious processes of individual remembering to light through specifically fictional privileges.⁶⁵

Literature and collective memory have been closely interwoven ever since Homer's *Iliad*. Particularly in light of the increasing interest in the topic 'memory cultures' since the end of the 1980s there have been ever more publications in the field of literary studies devoted to the relationship between literature and collective memory. The pre-formation of literary texts, the representation and critical reflection of society's refer-

⁶⁴ Representatives of many other publications on the literary representation of individual and collective memory consider the volumes of the series *Literature as Cultural Memory* (general editor: Theo D'haen, 2000-). See also *The Poetics of Memory*, ed. Thomas Wägenbaur (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998); Martin Löschnig, "The Prismatic Hues of Memory...: Autobiographische Modellierung und die Rhetorik der Erinnerung in Dickens' *David Copperfield*," *Poetica* 31.1-2 (1999): 175-200; Philipp Wolf, *Modernization and the Crisis of Memory: John Donne to Don DeLillo* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2002); Suzanne Nalbantian, *Memory in Literature: From Rousseau to Neuroscience* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); *Fictions of Memory*, ed. Ansgar Nünning (= *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* 10.1, 2003); *Literatur – Erinnerung – Identität*, ed. Erll, Gynnüch & Nünning.

⁶⁵ See Dorothee Birke & Michael Basseler, "Mimesis des Erinnerns: Formen der Inszenierung von Erinnerungsprozessen," *Gedächtniskonzepte*, ed. Erll & Nünning.

ence to the past, the representation of intersections between individual and collective memory or the literary negotiation of competing memories all belong to the spectrum of topics addressed by a literary studies approach that is informed by theories of memory.

In *Erinnerungsräume* (1999) Aleida Assmann writes about cultural memory and forms of its literary representation, considering, for example, Shakespeare's historical dramas and their representation of the connection between memory and personal identity, as well as the relationship between concepts of history and nation – starting with the thesis "that the actual actors in these dramas are memories."⁶⁶ Assmann describes the change from a spatially organized mnemonic paradigm of memory to a time-oriented paradigm of memory around 1800 with the concepts *ars* and *vis*. Up until the eighteenth century, classical rhetoric strongly influenced literature. In the Romantic period, in contrast, with the "lessening prestige of classical mnemonics,"⁶⁷ a concept of memory develops that is no longer primarily dedicated to the storing of knowledge, but accentuates instead the forgetting and the construction of individual identity through the selective and constructive reference to the past. Assmann shows how this change and the competition among different concepts of memory can be illustrated with a poem by Wordsworth. Finally, Assmann considers forms of the literary representation of concepts of memory around 1900 by using a short story by E.M. Forster, in which the burden of historicism – "the burden of knowledge and the blessings of forgetting"⁶⁸ – is represented by an extremely heavy box of books which in the end falls into a gorge.

Literary texts are characterized by their references to other versions of the past and concepts of memory of other symbol systems – psychology, religion, history, sociology, etc. – and by their ability to illustrate cultural knowledge with specific literary means (for example, by verbal pictures, semanticized forms, or through the use of specific privileges of fiction such as the representation of inner worlds). On the basis of studies on the 'mimesis of memory' it can be shown how literary representations of memory exist in a dynamic relationship to and evolve along with societal concepts of memory.

⁶⁶ Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 64 (our translation).

⁶⁷ Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 89 (our translation).

⁶⁸ *Erinnerungsräume*, 128 (our translation).

III Literature as a Medium of Collective Memory

The influential studies done by Renate Lachmann, which in many circles today stand metonymically for the concept of memory in the field of literary studies, illustrate a central problem of the field's occupation with memory: Literature appears largely as a closed system. Despite Lachmann's concept of cultural memory, based on cultural semiotics, in *Memory and Literature* (1997) cultural media other than literary texts never really come into view. Questions about the relationship of literature to other symbol systems, about the historical contexts of literary acts of memory, or about the social function of those works which appear as an "echo chamber" (Barthes) of the past through processes of intertextuality are largely hidden by approaches which analyze the memory of the symbol system literature.

However, the chance for the field of literary studies to establish a connection with the cultural-historical study of memory depends precisely on the question of where literary texts can be located in the framework of collective processes of signification. How does literature function as a medium of collective memory? Which functions do literary texts fulfil in memory cultures?

Out of the research into cultural memory and processes of canon formation has come an approach that allows for a reception-oriented view of the relationship between literature and memory: Aleida Assmann's concept of cultural texts. Assmann distinguishes between two "frames of reception [...] in which texts constitute themselves as either 'literary' or 'cultural.'" These represent "different ways of approaching possibly identical texts." The particular way of reading a text, thus, is not a response to characteristics inherent to the texts. Instead, it is based on the "purposeful act,"⁶⁹ on the part of an individual or a collective, of assigning a text cultural or literary status. From the broad range of literary works which a society produces and saves, a few are chosen which are assigned canonical (and for Aleida Assmann that means 'cultural') rank. This changes the view of such texts fundamentally. With their entry into the area of the cultural functional memory, they acquire, as binding texts, an additional dimension of meaning: They transmit concepts of cultural, national or religious identity as well as

⁶⁹ Aleida Assmann, "Was sind kulturelle Texte?" *Literaturkanon – Medienereignis – kultureller Text: Formen interkultureller Kommunikation und Übersetzung*, ed. Andreas Poltermann (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1995): 234 (our translation).

collectively shared values and norms.⁷⁰ For Assmann, the "paradigm of the cultural text"⁷¹ is the Holy Bible. The concept of cultural texts limits the question about the social functions of literary works to the area of canonical literature. As a result, in Assmann's theory the effects and the functions of the majority of literary texts which function as media of collective memory in memory cultures are generally not illuminated.

If one wants to consider the role of literature in the process of collective memory formation within a society, it appears to be necessary to first consider the connection of the inner-literary memory to culture (which within the framework of intertextuality theory remains abstract) through the incorporation of historical contexts. Second, it is necessary to gain some distance from the limitation to canonical texts inherent in Assmann's concept of the framework of reception of '(high)-cultural texts' and to also direct attention to a way of reading in which literary texts are not considered binding, but nonetheless fulfil important functions within the specific culture of memory. This would include, for example, the critical reflection of collective memory, or of non-institutionalized memory formation, as in the case of popular literature, which transmits to its readers an understanding of history, concepts of collective identity and shared values. Literary studies approaches that consider the history of literary functions offer the methods and the terms for such a project.⁷² Third, it appears particularly useful to conceive of literature not only as a medium of cultural memory, but also to ask what functions literary texts can fulfil in everyday communicative memory.⁷³

However, the prerequisite for conceptualizations of literature as a medium of (individual as well as) collective memory is a useful understanding of the concept of media. Recently there have been attempts to

⁷⁰ On the difference between the "functional memory" (relevant for the whole society) on the one hand and the "storage memory" (as an archive and "resource for the renewal of cultural knowledge") on the other, see Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*.

⁷¹ Aleida Assmann, "Kulturelle Texte," 237 (our translation).

⁷² See Winfried Fluck, *Das kulturelle Imaginäre: Eine Funktionsgeschichte des amerikanischen Romans 1790–1900* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

⁷³ On Assmann's distinction between two frames of memory, see Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis; on literature as *cadre social**, see Astrid Erll, "Literatur und kulturelles Gedächtnis: Zur Begriffs- und Forschungsgeschichte, zum Leistungsvermögen und zur literaturwissenschaftlichen Relevanz eines neuen Paradigmas der Kulturwissenschaft," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 43 (2002): 249–76.

develop alternatives to Assmann's understanding of media.⁷⁴ Among these are Vittoria Borsò's concept, which draws on the writings of Walter Benjamin, deconstruction and Luhmann's systems theory. Borsò emphasizes the "constitutional mediality of memory"⁷⁵ and writes: "Storage techniques are not memory-external aids in the reproduction of pre-knowledge which is stored in the functional memory, but rather the knowledge about the past is first produced through the relationship of medium and form."⁷⁶

Only through the connection of a historical contextualization of literature with concepts from the history of literary functions and media theories can justice be given to the central role literary texts play as media of collective memory. Theories regarding the functions and effects of literature as a medium of memory form a central desideratum for a literary studies approach that allows for an interdisciplinary interaction with cultural-historical memory research.⁷⁷

IV Towards Literary Studies of Memory Cultures

The three basic concepts of memory named here belong to the most thoroughly developed approaches, but there are still others relevant to memory that should at least be mentioned: Metaphor studies, in which theories and methods of literary studies and concepts of memory are interwoven,⁷⁸ literary editions and literary translation, which also re-

⁷⁴ For example, *Körper – Gedächtnis – Schrift: Der Körper als Medium kultureller Erinnerung*, ed. Claudia Öhlschläger & Birgit Wiens (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1997).

⁷⁵ Vittoria Borsò, "Gedächtnis und Medialität: Die Herausforderung der Alterität: Eine medienphilosophische und medienhistorische Perspektivierung des Gedächtnis-Begriffs," *Medialität und Gedächtnis: Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur kulturellen Verarbeitung europäischer Krisen*, ed. Vittoria Borsò, Gerd Krumeich & Bernd Witte (Stuttgart & Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2001): 25 (our translation).

⁷⁶ Borsò, "Gedächtnis," 36 (our translation).

⁷⁷ See *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses. Historizität – Konstruktivität – Kulturspezifität*, ed. Astrid Erli & Ansgar Nünning, with Hanne Birk, Birgit Neumann & Patrick Schmidt (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2004).

⁷⁸ See Harald Weirich, "Typen der Gedächtnismetaphorik," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* (1964): 23–26; Aleida Assmann, "Zur Metaphorik der Erinnerung," *Mnemosyne: Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung*, ed. Aleida Assmann & Dietrich Harth (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1991): 13–35; Douwe Draaisma, *Die Metaphermaschine: Eine Geschichte des Gedächtnisses* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1999), and Hanne Birk, "Das Problem des Gedächtnisses [...] drängt in die Bilder: Metaphern des Gedächtnisses," *Literatur – Erinnerung – Identität*, ed. Erli, Gymnich & Nünning, 79–105.

present processes of reconstruction and storing of memory;⁷⁹ and, finally, approaches located on the border of literature, ideology and history which consider the possibilities and limits of literary works to create alternative memories and to transmit experience.⁸⁰

What contributions can the concepts of memory considered here make to the establishment of memory research within literary studies, which up to now has hardly been considered an independent research area? The quite heterogeneous approaches, operating against different backgrounds (from poststructuralist concepts of intertextuality to a cultural-historical media theory and a history of literary functions) can be fruitful for a further development of the occupation with the relationship between literature and memory. However, the reference to the different approaches should include various forms of interconnection and dialogue. Three desiderata for future memory research within literary studies should thus be named here at the conclusion of this overview:

1. A consideration of the traditional concepts of memory (such as *memoria* or *topos* studies) and their connection to newer developments in literary studies: goals and methods of a New Historicism or 'cultural ecology'⁸¹ could contribute to a historicization and contextualization of inner-literary phenomena.

2. New connections between theoretical approaches and objects of study: This article has shown in what important ways, for example, the 'memory of literature' (intertextuality and genres) on the one hand and 'literature as a medium of collective memory' on the other overlap. The connection of different approaches and methods within the framework of memory research promises to be fruitful because it opens several perspectives on the question at hand.

3. Interdisciplinary dialogue: An acknowledgement of approaches from cognitive psychology, history or art studies would mean not just

⁷⁹ See *Reconstructing Cultural Memory: Translation, Scripts, Literacy*, ed. Lieven D'Hulst & John Milton (Literature as Cultural Memory 7; Amsterdam & Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000).

⁸⁰ See Walter Benjamin, "Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows," *Illuminationen: Ausgewählte Schriften 1* (1955; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977): 385–410, as well as the study by Nicolas Pethes, *Mnemiographie: Poetiken der Erinnerung und Destruktion nach Walter Benjamin* (Tübingen: Carl Nie-meyer, 1999).

⁸¹ See Hubert Zapf, *Literatur als kulturelle Ökologie: Zur kulturellen Funktion imaginativer Texte an Beispielen des amerikanischen Romans* (Tübingen: Carl Niemeyer, 2002).

an enrichment of the questions and concepts in literary studies, but is also a prerequisite for the interdisciplinary applicability of research in the field of literary studies, for the 'export' of its concepts and, in the end, for a general understanding of literature as a constitutive element of memory culture.

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JÜRGEN SCHLAEBER

Ars Memoriae, Collective Memory and Neurobiology

I feel a bit like someone who is trying to hunt big game in dimly lit terrain. The target is huge, to be sure, but visibility is extremely poor, and as the available analytical technologies are not advanced enough to make up for my poor vision I will probably hit something without knowing for a while what it is. But since this volume is not only a place for presenting finished and published products but also one for exploring unusual avenues of research, I shall take the risk and move forward.

What I will offer for consideration is, in a nutshell, that cultural history does not first and foremost show us minds talking to and arguing with minds, but minds negotiating with brains and brains negotiating with minds. Culture is here understood as a process in which the human brain has produced extended networks of strategies and tools to optimize its own performance.¹ As a consequence and in view of the latest neuroscientific work, the traditional divide between matter and mind should be considered a thing of the past. We have to recognize that the discovery of the body as a mental and cultural construct only makes sense when we turn the equation around and recognize that mental and cultural constructs work only to the extent that they have used and shaped their physical substratum. And, finally, however much it hurts, we have to admit that our intelligence and the vast edifices of thought it has built over the centuries are as much an out-come of brain activity as our brains are the evolutionary product of our cultural intelligence.

My authorities for these sweeping and probably rather unexpected statements are, among others, Antonio Damasio, Gerald Edelman and Giulio Tononi, Vilayanur Ramachandran, Steven Pinker, the books and essays of the German neuroscientists Wolf Singer, Gerhard Roth and

¹ It is tempting to introduce here Susan Blackmore's concept of 'memplexes' and her wider theoretical notion of the coevolution of genes and memes, but would clearly take me too far a field and away from my more specific topic. See Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999).