

Modern French Identities

83

Peter Collier,
Anna Magdalena Elsner
and Olga Smith (eds)

Anamnesia

Private and Public Memory in
Modern French Culture

Peter Lang



Modern French Identities

Memory has always been crucial to French literature and culture as a means of mediating the relationship between perception and knowledge of the individual coming to terms with his identity in time. Relatively recently, memory has also emerged as the key force in the creation of a collective consciousness in the wider perspective of French cultural history. This collection of essays, selected from the proceedings of a seminar on 'Memory' given by Dr Emma Wilson at the University of Cambridge, offers a fresh evaluation of memory as both a cultural and an individual phenomenon in modern and contemporary French culture, including literature, cinema and the visual arts. 'Anamnesia', the book's title, develops the Aristotelian concept of *anamnesis*: recollection as a dynamic and creative process, which includes forgetting as much as remembering, concealment as much as imagination. Memory in this extremely diverse range of essays is therefore far from being presented as a straightforward process of recalling the past, but emerges as the site of research and renegotiation, of contradictions and even aporia.

Peter Collier is Emeritus Fellow in French at Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge. His books include *Proust and Venice* (1989). He has translated Zola's *Germinal* (1994) and Proust's *The Fugitive* (2002). He is the series editor of *Modern French Identities* and *European Connections* for Peter Lang.

Anna Magdalena Elsner is a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge and currently a visiting researcher at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. She is writing on the relation between mourning and creativity in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Apart from everything Proustian, she is also interested in French documentary cinema.

Olga Smith is preparing her PhD thesis, entitled 'The Erosion of the Real: Photography in France 1970s-2000s' at the Department of History of Art at the University of Cambridge. She is currently a visiting scholar at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris.

ISBN 978-3-03911-846-5



9 783039 118465

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

A catalogue record for this book is available from The British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Anamnesia : private and public memory in modern French culture / [edited by] Peter Collier, Anna Magdalena Elsner, Olga Smith.

p. cm. -- (Modern French identities ; 83)

ISBN 978-3-03911-846-5 (alk. paper)

1. French literature--20th century--History and criticism. 2. France--Intellectual life--20th century. 3. Identity (Psychology) in literature. 4. Memory in literature. 5. Memory in art. 6. Memory in motion pictures. I. Collier, Peter, 1942-. II. Elsner, Anna Magdalena, 1982-. III. Smith, Olga, 1977-. PQ307.J54A63 2009 840.9'353--dc22

2009023957

ISSN 1422-9005

ISBN 978-3-03911-846-5

© Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern 2009
Hochfeldstrasse 32, CH-3012 Bern, Switzerland
info@peterlang.com, www.peterlang.com, www.peterlang.net

All rights reserved.

All parts of this publication are protected by copyright.
Any utilisation outside the strict limits of the copyright law, without the permission of the publisher, is forbidden and liable to prosecution. This applies in particular to reproductions, translations, microfilming, and storage and processing in electronic retrieval systems.

Printed in Germany

Contents

Acknowledgements	ix
List of Illustrations	xi
EMMA WILSON	
Preface	xiii
PETER COLLIER, ANNA MAGDALENA ELSNER, OLGA SMITH	
Introduction	1
Part 1 Memory as a Poetic and Political Project	
MAX SILVERMAN	
Trips, Tropes and Traces: Reflections on Memory in French and Francophone Culture	17
IAN JAMES	
Death, Memory, Subjectivity: Perec's <i>W</i> , ou le souvenir d'enfance	29
ANNA MAGDALENA ELSNER	
'L'obscénité absolue du projet de comprendre': The Communicability of Traumatic Knowledge in Claude Lanzmann's <i>Shoah</i>	41
MYRIEM EL MAÏZI	
Marguerite Duras' Poetics of Diversion: Memory, Forgetting and Invention	57

JENNY MURRAY

'La mort inachevée': Writing, Remembering, and Forgetting in
Assia Djébar's *Le Blanc de l'Algérie*, *La Disparition de la langue française*
and *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*

71

PATRICK O'DONOVAN

Memory as Object: A Relation of Proximity?

85

Part 2 Staging the Spaces of Memory

CATHERINE CRIMP

Louise Bourgeois and Samuel Beckett:
Space and the Materials of Memory

101

OLGA SMITH

'A Hollow Image of the Person': Objects of Memory in the Art
of Christian Boltanski

117

FERZINA BANAJI

Rethinking Memory: The Violation of a 'lieu de mémoire'
in Marcel Ophüls' *Le Chagrin et la pitié*

131

JENNIFER BURRIS

A Landscape of Amnesia: The Loss and Attempted Reconstruction
of Memory in Artistic Representations of the Urban

145

ROSITZA ALEXandrova

Things of Art: A Photographic Thumbing of the Nose

159

Part 3 Identity and Subjecthood: Articulation of Private Memories

KATJA HAUSTEIN

'La vie comme œuvre': Barthes with Proust

175

MICHÈLE LESTER

Through the Looking Glass: Beckett's Monologues, Jacques Lacan
and the Role of Memory

193

ROGER CARDINAL

Joë Bousquet: Remembering a Wound

203

THANH-VÂN TON-THAT

Anna Moï's *Riz Noir*: A Feminine View of War,
between Two Cultures

217

AMALEENA DAMLÉ

Phantasmal Relics: Psychoanalytical and Deconstructive Ghosts
in *Moi l'Intervalle* and *Pagli* by Ananda Devi

229

Part 4 Flashbacks and Fast-forwards: Memory and Temporality in Cinema

JENNY CHAMARETTE

Memory, Representation of Time and Cinema

243

NADINE BOLJKOVAC

Intimacy and Prophecy: Marker and Resnais's Memories

257

RICHARD ARMSTRONG	
"Nevers" ... is just a word like any other: 'The Failure of Words and the Wandering Woman in <i>Hiroshima mon amour</i> '	271
ISABELLE MCNEILL	
Agnès Varda's Moving Museums	283
CAROL MAYOR	
A is for Alice, for Amnesia, for Anamnesis: A Fairy Tale called <i>La Jete</i>	295
Notes on Contributors	313
Index	319

Acknowledgements

This book originated in a graduate seminar, entitled 'Memory in Contemporary French and Francophone Culture' that was taught as a part of the 'European Literature and Culture' Masters course at the University of Cambridge. It was directed by Dr Emma Wilson, and our warmest thanks go to her for her enduring support and kindness. We would also like to thank the Department of Modern and Medieval Languages, Sidney Sussex College and King's College at the University of Cambridge for their generous financial aid. We are most grateful for their patience and expertise to Graham Speake, Shirley Walker Werritt and Mette Bundgaard at Peter Lang.

Illustrations

- 1 Louise Bourgeois, *Cell (Arch of Hysteria)* (1992–93). Steel, bronze, cast iron and fabric. Collection Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville. Photo: Peter Bellamy.
- 2 Louise Bourgeois, *Red Room (Parents)* (1994). Mixed media. Collection Ursula Hauser, Switzerland. Photo: Rafael Lobaro.
- 3 Louise Bourgeois, *Red Room (Child)* (1994). Mixed media. Collection Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal. Photo: Marcus Schneider.
- 4 Louise Bourgeois, *Cell (Chair)* (1990–93). Marble, metal and glass. Collection Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, Toronto. Photo: Peter Bellamy.
- 5 Christian Boltanski, *Inventaire des objets ayant appartenu à une femme de Bois-Colombes* (1974). Household objects. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2008.
- 6 Christian Boltanski, Page from 'Christian, Clown and Jew: Christian Boltanski Interviewed by Georgia Marsh revised by Christian Boltanski', in *Christian Boltanski – Reconstitution* exh. cat. (London, Eindhoven, and Grenoble: The Whitechapel Art Gallery, Stedelijk van Abbeuseum, and Musée de Grenoble, 1990), 3.
- 7 Christian Boltanski, *Canada* (1988). Second-hand clothes, lights. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2008.
- 8 Pierre Bourdieu, *Untitled, R. ro.* Photograph. © Pierre Bourdieu/Fondation Pierre Bourdieu, Geneva. Courtesy of Camera Austria, Graz.
- 9 'The coiled hair of Hélène Chancelain ... the coiled hair of Madeleine', Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1958). Film still. Chris Marker, *La Jette* (1962). Film still.

- 10 'like a porthole around a face.' Chris Marker, CD-ROM *Immemory* (1998). Film still.
- 11 'the unmemory hole that begins Alice in Wonderland.' Abelardo Morell, *Down the Rabbit-Hole* (1998). Photograph. © Bonni Ben-rubi Gallery (New York).
- 12 'like Disney's Snow White singing into the wishing well, her voice echoing as a ring in a ring.' Loukia Alavanou, *Wishing Well* (2005). Film still. Digital video projection with sound. © Upstairs (Berlin) and Galerie Haas & Fischer AG (Zurich).
- 13 'the boy loves this woman's magical face.' Chris Marker, *La Jette* (1962). Film still.
- 14 'de vrais chats.' Chris Marker, *La Jette* (1962). Film still.
- 15 'the Jet-man is licked in contentment.' Chris Marker, *La Jette* (1962). Film still.
- 16 'memories of her before she turned away.' Lewis Carroll, 'Alice Liddell' (Summer 1858). *Alice Liddell's Photographic Scrapbook* (c. 1856–63). Albumen Print. © British Library.
- 17 'Je viens de là ...' Chris Marker, *La Jette* (1962). Film still.

EMMA WILSON

Preface

In his volume, *Proust and Venice*, Peter Collier writes of Proust's novel as 'one of those privileged literary spaces which provide the reader with a complex labyrinth of imaginative experience and also the thread of consciousness with which to explore it'. *Anamnesia* charts the spaces, both literary and literal, of those texts, films and works of art which, in the latter part of the twentieth and start of the twenty-first century, have continued to explore recall of and reflection on lived experience, and so to extend the threads of Proust's immemorial text. The volume draws together some of the most distinctive voices in contemporary discussions of memory and forgetting, reflecting a range of work on memory currently being conducted in French and Francophone studies and beyond. Anna Elstner, a literary scholar working on Proust and mourning, and Olga Smith, an art historian specialising in works from contemporary France, have shown extraordinary acuity and sensitivity in their commissioning of essays which extend and amplify theoretical discussions of memory in the period, whilst also bringing us into deeply felt proximity with the artworks and texts under analysis. From Max Silverman's tracing of faltering steps and falls in Proust to £ and Mavor's virtuosic rendering, a prose poem itself, 'a Fairy Tale called *La Jette*', *Anamnesia* offers new ways of writing on and engaging with memory, commemoration, and forgetting.

Peter Collier was the first Course Director of the MPhil in European Literature founded in the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages in 1993. A number of writers in this volume will remember his inspiring and imaginative work with students on that course, and indeed his work over the years supervising very many PhD students in areas relating

to nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, modern French thought, critical theory, and visual culture. Many of us owe a great debt to Peter and have flourished working with him. In the late 1990s we set up an MPhil module on 'Memory: Contemporary French and Francophone Culture' and draw out questions arising from studies of trauma and testimony, and to examine issues relating to cultural memory, life-writing, theory, modern literature, film, and visual culture more broadly. Peter's involvement in the module was invaluable, in particular in his seminar presentations on the theoretical underpinnings of contemporary discussions of memory, and in his supervision of numerous essays relating to the topic. It is characteristic of Peter's vivid enthusiasm for the work of younger scholars and early career researchers that a number of the students who studied with us are now publishing here. *Anamnesia* may commemorate some of the discussions we enjoyed on that course, and the areas we explored, but it also demonstrates how such discussions should open onto a much broader arena in French and Francophone studies, and other areas of current, public, cultural debate.

PETER COLLIER, ANNA MAGDALENA ELSNER, OLGA SMITH

Introduction

Discourses of Memory: The Origins

From the beginnings of Western civilisation the theme of memory has been crucial to the relation between writing and consciousness, perception and knowledge. Aristotle's was the first major philosophical investigation of memory. He perceives all memories as essentially perceptual and visual and yet capable of leaving traces in the body and the soul: 'like a sort of picture, the having of which we say is memory. For the change that occurs marks in a sort of imprint, as it were, of the sense-image, as people do who seal things with signet rings'.¹ This analogy with an imprint in wax represents the first model of memory as inscription, which subsequently will be explored, among others, by Plato in his *Theaetetus*.² In this text Plato establishes a definition of consciousness as self-reflexive, which leads him to interrogate the mechanism of mind matching its perception of impressions in order to grasp knowledge. Plato teases us with problems arising from his treacherous model of memory as an imprint in wax: how is it that we *misremember*? How is it that we seem to recall things that haven't happened? How is it that we *forget*?³

Aristotle's model, essentially based on inscription, is and has remained one of the most formative models of Western thinking. It looks forward to

1 Richard Sorabji, *Aristotle on Memory* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 50.

2 Plato, *Theaetetus*, ed. with introduction by Bernard Williams trans. M.J. Levett, rev. Myles Burnyeat (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1992), 67.

3 *Ibid.*, 71.

the Freudian model of the mystic writing pad and even anticipates Derrida's rebuttal of the instinctual primacy of thought over writing in *L'écriture et la différence* (1967). The subsequent revisions of this model, however, abandoned the one-dimensional, static dimension of the wax block metaphor in favour of a more dynamic, active process of recollection. Plato, for one, becomes disillusioned with his early model for the relation between memory, knowledge and consciousness because he finds it unable to answer a key question, namely, whether it is possible to grasp and possess – yet not to have and to hold – knowledge. To explain his thinking he draws on the analogy of the aviary, full of all sorts of birds to be thought of as pieces of knowledge.⁴ Here the birds, pieces of knowledge, have to be hunted and caught, nurtured and seized, at the right moment. However as with the earlier memory model, Plato's preoccupation lies with the issue of misremembering and misrecognising, which arises in the notion of the 'false belief' and even ignorance: '[P]erhaps, Socrates, it wasn't a happy thought to make the birds only pieces of knowledge. Perhaps we ought to have supposed that there are pieces of ignorance also flying about in the soul along with them and what happens is that the hunter sometimes catches a piece of knowledge and sometimes a piece of ignorance concerning the same thing [...].'⁵ Subsequently Plato will suggest a different kind of answer to this problem in *The Republic*, where he develops his notion of memory as a kind of mental writing and rereading of perceptions, or as a hunt for fleeting, animated figures captured from the world around us, giving us a model that seems relevant to the way in which we consider memory today.

The wax impression metaphor, however, proved influential: the so-called founder of Modern philosophy, René Descartes, has recourse to it in his Second Meditation in *Méditations de prima philosophia* (1641) to explain how to attain the 'clear and distinct perceptions' by which knowledge of reality can be indubitably established.⁶ Descartes explains that

- 4 *Ibid.*, 75.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 6 René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff & D. Murdoch (eds), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. I–III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 1991).

only our sensory perceptions change, while the 'essence' of wax continues independently of these. A conceptualisation of memory as physical imprint in the mind is further developed in *Les passions de l'âme* (1649), where memory is explained as holes between fibres of a woven cloth.⁷ The accretion of these fibres creates *fold*s,⁸ a definition that evokes the thinking of the fold in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, to take a prominent example.⁹ Considering memory in terms of the effect of time on the body as marks inscribed from experiences leads Descartes, against rationalistic dualism, to initiate a subsequent thinking through the *body*. The dualism of mind and body, developed from Plato to Descartes, continues in Henri Bergson's philosophy, with one significant difference: he transposes the debate from the spatial to the temporal plane as he considers time in shaping our knowledge of reality. Key to his argument in *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889) is his distinction between what we call 'le temps', a linear and abstract notation, whether symbolic or scientific, as opposed to 'la durée', real lived time, permeated by space.¹⁰ Bergson argues that we only know time through the accumulation in memory of our moments of duration: every act of consciousness contains the entire flow of our past and present. The future is not determined by the past, but is actively created at every moment.

For Bergson, whereas language, reason, consciousness and science remain abstract symbols, the world of memory mediated through the body provides a more intuitive experience, with 'mémoire spontanée' continuing beyond our conscious experience. Sigmund Freud, another scientist of the mind and a contemporary of Bergson, also drew attention to the link between memory and unconscious. But whereas Bergson had argued

- 7 René Descartes, *Passions* § 42, in J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff & D. Murdoch (eds), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 343–44.
- 8 See John Sutton, *Philosophy and Memory Traces: Descartes to Connectionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 9 Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli: Leibniz et le Baroque* (Paris: Galilée, 1998).
- 10 Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1889), 55.

that it is memory that creates our awareness of the self, Freud introduced a new dimension of repression and forgetting to the constitution of the self. Following the tradition of Plato, Freud uses a model of inscription: the so-called mystic writing pad.¹¹ For Freud, this novelty gadget combines the receptive surface with the possibility of its erasure and retention of a permanent trace. The message appears on the transparent celluloid sheet of the pad but disappears as soon as its double sheet is pulled away from the wax. Freud compares the celluloid and waxed paper cover with the system *Pages* and its protective shield, and the wax slab with the unconscious behind them. The appearance and disappearance of writing is aligned with the flickering of consciousness in the process of perception: 'If we imagined one hand writing upon the surface of the Mystic Writing-Pad while another periodically raises its covering sheet from the wax slab, we shall have a concrete representation of the way in which I tried to picture the functioning of the perceptual apparatus of our mind.'¹² The dynamics of appearance and disappearance, capture and loss are equally crucial for Freud's model of memory outlined in his essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1925), where the child's control over the cotton reel in a game of 'for/da' is used to explain the mechanism of recognition and control of memory, particularly in relation to one's own image and possessions, which ultimately enables us to achieve full consciousness and successful interpersonal relationships.

11 Sigmund Freud, 'A Note upon the "Mystic Writing Pad"' (1925 [1924]) in Sigmund Freud, *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, The Penguin Freud Library volume 11 (London: Penguin, 1984).

12 Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1925), in Sigmund Freud, *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, The Penguin Freud Library, Vol. 11 (London: Penguin, 1984), 430.

Memory and Self-Writing

The most persistent of all memory models, that of inscription, explains the strength of ties that bind writing and memory. In literature, however, in the same way as in the in the philosophical discourses analysed here, far from presenting straightforward means of fixing and recording, memory emerges as the site of self-exploration, dynamic re-negotiation and a journey of self-discovery. This dynamic is particularly striking in the genres such as autobiography and the literary diary, whose distinguishing feature, according to Philippe Lejeune, is contained in the implicit promise that the author makes to the reader to relate his/her life-story *truthfully*.¹³ And yet even the earliest examples of autobiographic writing in France – the confession (Rousseau's *Confessions*, 1782–89), the epistolary novel (Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses*, 1782) or the 'mémoire' (Constant's *Adolphe*, 1816) – already contain some of the most problematic examples of 'self-writing'. *Les liaisons dangereuses*, for example, requires its fictional and actual readers to remember events conflictually recalled or omitted between letters. The form of autobiographic writing seemingly least problematic of all is the diary, but in André Gide's *La symphonie pastorale* (1919) it becomes a place for analysis not record, for a dialogue and a struggle with the self. This genealogy can be traced to modern literature: in Michel Butor's *L'emploi du temps* (1956) the protagonist lives and acts through his diary, which generates unpredictable events, confusing the character's and readers' memories. In *La modification* (1957), the interplay between the writing self and the remembered self initiates in Butor's character a self-conscious search. Albert Camus' protagonist of *L'Étranger* (1942), on the contrary, methodically records the amassed memories of the day, but fails to interpret his experience and inscription, exemplified by Roquentin's briefest diary entry: 'Mardi. Rien. Existe.'¹⁴

13 Philippe Lejeune, *Partir autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 36.

14 Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausee* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 133.

The force at work behind the dialectic of remembering and forgetting in 'self-writing' is often that of the unconscious, and Proust was one of the earliest French modern novelists to use the 'unconscious' as a noun. The process of decoding the desire in the sentient but ignorant body occurs when the mature Marcel drinks lime-flower tea in *Combray* (1914), an experience that unleashes in his mind's eye a sensual and visual extravaganza of intertwined images from the past. Dreams interrupt Proust's retrospective narrative, but his waking thoughts, too, often assume a dreamlike quality as he is haunted by the visions of past days spent with Albertine, or imagined scenarios of future days. It is above all these dynamics of remembering, forgetting, dreaming, hypothesising and imagining which drive the narrative, sometimes forward, sometimes backwards, and sometimes in spirals.

Diverse narrative strategies adopted for the task of 'self-writing' in modern and contemporary French literature form the focus of the articles gathered in the section *Identity and Subjecthood: Articulation of Private Memories* in this volume. The psychoanalytic framework, namely Abraham and Torok's work on haunting memories, is deployed by Analeena Danlé to discuss strategies open to the female subject in resisting a dominant epistemology of identity in the writings of contemporary Mauritian writer Ananda Devi. Thanh-Vân Ton-That's study of Anna Moï's novel *Riz Noir* similarly considers a specifically feminine perception of trauma, and the project to write as bearing witness to oppression. Michèle Lester's article considers the expression of the self in the use of monologues in Samuel Beckett's drama, drawing on Jacques Lacan's theories of language and Freud's notions of the analysand and analyst, applied to the theatre audience. The reconstruction of the self takes shape through a literary encounter in Katja Hausrein's article. Hausrein explores the relationship between memory, vision and affect in Roland Barthes, arguing that his conceptions of memory developed out of a dialectical conflict with a Proustian hypotext. Roger Cardinal's reconstruction of the self-image in the works of Joë Bousquet, disabled in action in 1918 when he was only twenty-one, similarly presents of an account of maturation through the world of writing.

Physical Marks and Spaces of Memory

Descartes' thinking of memory through the *body* leads him to radicalise the notion of a physical imprint by describing both memory and sensations as scars, or as permanent physical marks. He employs the persistent metaphor of wax imprint to describe it: '[We] must think of the external shape of the sentient body [the brain] as being really changed by the object in exactly the same way as the shape of the surface of the wax is altered by the seal'.¹⁵ The most recent investigation of the functioning of memory in terms of a material trace attempts to negotiate the Platonic dualism of matter and mind by expanding our thinking about memory as imprint to include such spatial notions as places, locations and sites. Pierre Nora's vast *Lieux de mémoire* (1984–92) is a landmark in contemporary memory studies, where memory is theorised as a cultural rather than an individual phenomenon. It uses the notion of 'lieux de mémoire' in its exploration of the ways in which figures, places and emblems become part of collective memory. Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember* (1989) similarly places a special emphasis on the convergence of bodily and social memory. Amongst the most recent interventions into this field is Marc Augé's *Non-Lieux, introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (1992). With this work, Augé revisits Nora's position in opposing the 'lieux de mémoire' with the 'non-lieux' of modernity, designating with this notion architectural and technological spaces designed to be passed through, or consumed rather than appropriated as living spaces. The 'non-lieux' thus retain little or no trace of our engagement with them, and as such, are unable to hold our memories of them.

This is the territory explored in Jennifer Butris's article, devoted to the examination of our experiences of urbanity, traced from the early twentieth century to the present, with reference to the works of two French

¹⁵ René Descartes, *Regulae* § 12, in J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff & D. Murdoch (eds), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 40–41.

contemporary artists: Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Pierre Huyghe. The article suggests that these artists offer a critique of a strand in contemporary urban design that favours fantasy of the past as its construction principle, thus contributing to the proliferation of the 'non-lieux'. Ferzina Banaji also draws on Nora's term 'lieu de mémoire' in her exposition of Marcel Ophüls' documentary film *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (1971), but to different aims. In her analysis of the film Banaji deploys Nora's term to test the Gaullist myth of a communal, shared history of the Résistance movement. The tangibility of the boundaries of the 'lieu de mémoire' and the impact of their violation implies an almost physical persistence of the spaces of memory, a theme that is further explored in Catherine Crimp's analysis of the examples of Samuel Beckett's prose fiction and Louise Bourgeois's *Cell* installations. This article posits the notion of the artwork as a physical and material threshold, which both promises public access to the artist or writer's private experiences and at the same time disallows such access by forcing the reader/viewer to negotiate his/her own subjective involvement. Returning to Aristotle's model of the wax imprint, Olga Smith treats the materiality of the trace as a negative space, not so much an empirical proof of presence, but a mark of absence. Smith traces the evolution of the technique of using clothes and material possessions as evocative marks of absence in the works of French contemporary artist Christian Boltanski, arguing for a troubling loss of specificity in his later works. Rositza Alexandrova's article concludes this selection of articles in the section entitled *Staging the Spaces of Memory* with a discussion of what she calls a 'sympatico category of the thing' in a mixed modality of what might be a characteristically Bourdieusian mitigated Marxism' in relation to the photographs made by Pierre Bourdieu in Algeria in the 1960s.

Introduction

9

The Project of Remembering

The rupture of European consciousness in the wake of the Second World War radically altered the expressions of cultural memory in post-war France, where public, collective forms of remembrance overlap with private memories. In Alain Resnais's film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), as the bodies and personal memories of the two lovers overlap, images of French collaboration and those of Hiroshima's nuclear victims succeed each other in a sequence of montage cuts. The hallucinations experienced by Sartre's protagonist in *Les séquestrés d'Altona* (1959) can be understood as a form of traumatic repression of memories of war crimes symbolic of Germany's post-war amnesia. The question of how the traumatic structures of remembering violence affect our experience has been first posed by Freud, who described trauma as located in the unconscious areas of the self where formative memories are blocked, but also distorted and revived, interfering with our conscious perceptions and feelings.¹⁶ The role of trauma in relation to memory and collective past in literature and art has been gaining a remarkable scholarly interest in the recent years. Cathy Caruth's, Shoshana Felman's and Dori Laub's work with holocaust survivors are just some of the most prominent examples of a vast field of traumatic memory studies.¹⁷ Marianne Hirsch's highly influential contribution to this field is the notion of 'postmemory'. In her *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (1997) Hirsch argues that trauma is transmitted to the second generation of survivors while examining the role of photography in mediating this postmemory. The problematic erosion of the distinction between private and cultural, individual and collective, and the normalisation of the relationships between

¹⁶ See Sigmund Freud, 'The Wolf Man' (1918) in Sigmund Freud, *Case Histories: Rat Man, Schreber, Wolf Man, Case of Female Homosexuality*, The Penguin Freud Library volume 9 (London: Penguin, 1984).

¹⁷ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992), Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996).

past and present forms the focus of Maxim Silverman's article as he analyses a broad range of examples of modern French and Francophone culture. The urgency ascribed by Silverman to the project of reconstruction of the past from the traces of the present and its significance served as inspiration for the ethos underlying the selection of articles for the section entitled *Memory as a Poetic and Political Project*. The spirit of Silverman's piece is echoed in Myriem El Maïzi's article where she analyses Marguerite Duras's multifaceted project of *writing of memory*, which includes understanding of memory as historical and political duty to record the trauma of past events for the future generations. Significantly, El Maïzi shows that for Duras, the gravity of this project is in no way compromised by the inclusion of fiction, which evokes once again the complex and fluid dialectic of remembering in the models of memory current since Plato. Patrick O'Donovan similarly stresses the importance of the temporal relation to the past (and by extension, present and future), arguing for a relation of proximity of memory in Michel de Certeau's dynamic model of memory and in the account of culture developed by Donald Winnicott based on a relation of proximity to the object field.

Cultural responses to the Second World War and more particularly to the attempted genocide of European Jewry in a specifically French context had a profound effect on thinking about remembering and remembrance. This explains why so many essays in this collection are preoccupied, in varying degrees, with this period in French history. Specifically within the framework of the section *Memory as a Poetic and Political Project* section, we felt it opportune to include two articles that focus directly on the difficulty, if not impossibility, of the project of remembering in this context. Ian James examines the manner in which the figures of memory, writing and absence are intertwined in Perec's *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* (1975) according to the logic of presentation and withdrawal, and its effect on the lived experience in the very moment it affirms that experience as an irrecoverable absence. Anna Magdalena Elsner focuses on Lanzmann's landmark documentary *Shoah* (1985), and the alleged 'obsécrité absolue du projet de comprendre'. Elsner contrasts Lanzmann's professed non-teleological basis of the filmic narrative with the means of articulating the unspeakable offered by Lanzmann's filmic technique. Literature, film and

visual art thus participate in the processes of shaping collective memories, engaging in subversive undermining of the culturally dominant memories by establishing counter-memories, often by considering gender-conscious or ethnic perspectives on past events. Colonial critique, approached via the concept of repressed traumatic memories in the nation's historical consciousness forms the focus of Jenny Murray's article. She uses the idea of the 'mort inachevée' as the symbol of the political crisis in Algeria in Assia Djebar's *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* (1995).

Memory, Visual Image and Temporality in Cinema

The importance of the visual image and the processes of visualisation for memory has been attested from Plato to Freud, with the arrival of photography and film activating further explorations of the relationship between recollection and image. The status of the still photograph as a record of an unrepeatable, unique event has been famously theorised by Roland Barthes as the privileged past tense of photography – 'ça a été'.¹⁸ The developments in contemporary photography led to a revision of this claim; T.J. Demos, for example, argues for a '[transformation of] this once-privileged tense into far less secure future perfect – the "that will have been" – which proposes documenting a potential reality to come, or a new prospective past. This new engagement playfully exchanges the seeming conclusiveness of history – the past as definitely captured – for an anticipatory memory or a future representation, by which photography reveals coming virtual realities, projects new possibilities back in time and forms emerging communities of viewers'.¹⁹ But it was cinema that actually

¹⁸ Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. V (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2002), 851.

¹⁹ T.J. Demos, 'Introduction: The Ends of Photography', in T.J. Demos (ed.), *Vitamin P* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2006), 9–10.

allowed us to *see* the past unfold *in real time*. Visual representations of the past now for the first time permitted the viewers to collectively share the same visual images of the past and re-experience other people's pasts. In relation to cinema's relationship to forms of temporality, Freud's research of human psyche and memory has been pivotal. Jenny Chamarette's article opens the section on memory and cinema entitled *Flashbacks and Fast-forwards* by exploring some of the key terms in this field. She engages with the indexical traces of cinema and its analogous relationship to subjectivity in the working of memory in relation to Freud and contemporary film theorists such as Mary Ann Doane and Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze's insistence on the affective powers of the cinema to produce sense experience is further explored in Nadine Boljkovac's article. Boljkovac reads cinematic and photographic works by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais through the prism of Deleuze's and Bergson's concept of impersonal memory and time that splits towards both past and always-yet-to-come. This property of the cinema, granted by the specifics of the medium itself, to constantly reinvent and re-inscribe the past in the present in an incessant movement of flashbacks and fast-forwards serves to negotiate art as a space where individual and collective memory overlap. Moving between moving and still images, between media, and between past and present, Isabelle McNeill's article focuses on the workings of cultural memory in Agnès Varda's 'gleaning' films from the early 2000s and her exhibition at the Fondation Cartier in Paris, *Ille et Elle* (2006). Drawing on an interdisciplinary range of theories of memory, from Bergson to Marianne Hirsch, this article demonstrates how experiences of death and mourning are negotiated through a 'filmic' approach to the dynamics of the museum. The theme of death also surfaces in Richard Armstrong's analysis of the cinema as a space for public mourning in a century of mass murder and mass communication. Armstrong argues that Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour*, a seminal modernist film, extended cinema's experimental potential to explore the interiority of a woman grieving over the loss of her lover in a city steeped in its own tragic legacy. Carol Mavor's text breaches the boundaries of media, time and space by treating Chris Marker's *La Jeteé* (1962) as a cine-poem that takes place in a u-topos (non-place) during a u-chronos (non-time), which she links to the dystopia of a fairy-tale. Mavor posits utopia as ways to

escape *both* anamnesis and amnesia by living not in the past or the future, but *impossibly* in the moment.

In this extremely diverse range of essays memory, far from serving as straightforward means of recording and preservation, emerges as the site of research and renegotiation, of contradictions and even aporia. In this sense our title, *Anamnesia*, elaborates the Aristotelian concept of anamnesis: recollection as a dynamic and creative process, which includes remembering as much as forgetting, concealment as much as imagination.