

TRAUMA AND LITERATURE

As a concept, “Trauma” has attracted a great deal of interest in literary studies. A key term in psychoanalytic approaches to literary study, trauma theory represents a critical approach that enables new modes of reading and of listening. It is a leading concept of our time, applicable to individuals, cultures, and nations. This book traces how trauma theory has come to constitute a discrete but influential approach within literary criticism in recent decades. It offers an overview of the genesis and growth of literary trauma theory, recording the evolution of the concept of trauma in relation to literary studies. In twenty-one essays, covering the origins, development, and applications of trauma in literary studies, *Trauma and Literature* addresses the relevance and impact this concept has in the field.

CAMBRIDGE CRITICAL CONCEPTS SERIES

Cambridge Critical Concepts focuses on the important ideas animating twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary studies. Each concept addressed in this series has had a profound impact on literary studies, as well as on other disciplines, and already has a substantial critical bibliography surrounding it. This new series captures the dynamic critical energies transmitted across twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary landscapes: the concepts critics bring to reading, interpretation, and criticism. By addressing the origins, development, and application of these ideas, the books collate and clarify how these particular concepts have developed, while also featuring fresh insights and establishing new lines of inquiry.

Cambridge Critical Concepts shifts the focus from period- or genre-based literary studies of a key term to the history and development of the terms themselves. Broad and detailed contributions cumulatively identify and investigate the various historical and cultural catalysts that made these critical concepts emerge as established twenty-first-century landmarks in the discipline. The level will be suitable for advanced undergraduates, graduates, and specialists, as well as to those teaching outside their own research areas, and will have cross-disciplinary relevance for subjects such as history and philosophy.

Published Titles

Time and Literature

Edited by THOMAS M. ALLEN University of Ottawa

Law and Literature

Edited by KIERAN DOLIN The University of Western Australia

Trauma and Literature

Edited by J. ROGER KURTZ Drexel University

Forthcoming titles

The Global South and Literature

Edited by RUSSELL WEST-PAVLOV Universität Tübingen

Food and Literature

Edited by GITANJALI SHAHANI San Francisco State University

Animals and Literature

Edited by BRUCE BOEHRER, MOLLY HAND, and BRIAN MASSUMI Florida State University and University of Montreal

Orientalism and Literature

Edited by GEOFFREY NASH University of Sunderland

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-17664-5 — Trauma and Literature
Edited by J. Roger Kurtz
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Terrorism and Literature

Edited by PETER HERMAN San Diego State University

Technology and Literature

Edited by ADAM HAMMOND University of Toronto

Affect and Literature

Edited by ALEX HOUEEN University of Cambridge

Climate and Literature

Edited by ADELINE JOHNS University of Surrey

Decadence and Literature

Edited by JANE DESMARAIS and DAVID WEIR Goldsmith College
and Hunter College

TRAUMA AND LITERATURE

EDITED BY
J. ROGER KURTZ
Drexel University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-17664-5 — Trauma and Literature
 Edited by J. Roger Kurtz
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107176645

DOI: 10.1017/9781316817155

© Cambridge University Press 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2018

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Kurtz, John Roger, editor.

TITLE: Trauma and literature / edited by J. Roger Kurtz.

OTHER TITLES: Cambridge critical concepts.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2017. |

Series: Cambridge critical concepts | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2017042293 | ISBN 9781107176645 (Hardback : alk. paper)

SUBJECTS: | MESH: Psychological Trauma | Psychiatry in Literature

CLASSIFICATION: LCC RC552.W74 | NLM WM 172.5 | DDC 616.85/21–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017042293>

ISBN 978-1-107-17664-5 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Preface</i>	xv
Introduction <i>J. Roger Kurtz</i>	I
PART I ORIGINS	19
1 The Psychoanalytic Origins of Literary Trauma Studies <i>Andrew Barnaby</i>	21
2 Modernity as the Cultural Crucible of Trauma <i>Karolyn Steffens</i>	36
3 Deconstruction: Trauma Inscribed in Language <i>Tom Toremans</i>	51
4 The Holocaust as the Ultimate Trauma Narrative <i>Anna Hunter</i>	66
5 PTSD: A New Trauma Paradigm <i>Lisa Diedrich</i>	83
PART II DEVELOPMENT	95
6 Trauma and Narrative <i>Joshua Pederson</i>	97
7 Problems in Representing Trauma <i>Marinella Rodi-Risberg</i>	110
8 Trauma in Non-Western Contexts <i>Irene Visser</i>	124

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
9	Trauma and Memory <i>Silke Arnold-de Simone</i>	140
10	Neuroscience, Narrative, and Emotion Regulation <i>William P. Seeley</i>	153
11	Trauma in the Digital Age <i>Allen Meek</i>	167
12	Feminist Interventions in Trauma Studies <i>Jennifer Griffiths</i>	181
13	Healing and Post-Traumatic Growth <i>Suzanne LaLonde</i>	196
PART III APPLICATIONS		211
14	Trauma and the Literature of War <i>Gerd Bayer</i>	213
15	Trauma and Sexual Violence <i>Emma V. Miller</i>	226
16	Postcolonial Trauma <i>Jennifer Yusin</i>	239
17	Trauma and the Visual Arts <i>Marie Kruger</i>	255
18	The Middle Passage and Race-Based Trauma <i>Luminita M. Dragulescu</i>	270
19	The Trauma of Displacement <i>Madelaine Hron</i>	284
20	Trauma, Truth, and Reconciliation <i>Erica Still</i>	299
21	Terrorism: Trauma in the Excess of Affect <i>Michael Richardson</i>	320
	Conclusion: After Trauma Studies? <i>J. Roger Kurtz</i>	334
	<i>Notes</i>	337
	<i>Bibliography</i>	349
	<i>Index</i>	381

Contributors

SILKE ARNOLD-DE SIMINE is Reader in the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies at Birkbeck, University of London. Her research is located at the interface of museum, memory, and cultural studies with a special interest in cultural memory, commemoration and identity politics, difficult heritage, and remediation/transmediality. Her book *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (2013) probes the shifts in exhibiting practices associated with the transformation of history museums and heritage sites into “spaces of memory,” with a particular emphasis on the role of different media and art forms in that process.

ANDREW BARNABY is Associate Professor of English at the University of Vermont. His research focuses primarily on English literature of the early modern period with attention to the overlap between literary representation and intellectual history. He is coauthor of *Literate Experience: The Work of Knowing in Seventeenth-Century English Writing* (2002) and has published articles on Shakespeare, Milton, Marvell, Francis Bacon, and John Locke, among other writers. His more recent work on psychoanalysis includes his study of the roots of Freud’s thought, *Coming Too Late: Reflections on Freud and Belatedness* (2017).

GERD BAYER is Professor and Academic Director in the English Department at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, having previously taught at University of Toronto, Case Western Reserve University, and University of Wisconsin–Whitewater. He is the author of a book on John Fowles and of *Novel Horizons: The Genre Making of Restoration Fiction* (2016), as well as the coeditor of seven essay collections, most recently of *Early Modern Constructions of Europe* (2016) and *Holocaust Cinema in the Twenty-First Century* (2015). He has published essays on

postmodern and postcolonial literature and film, early modern narrative fiction, Holocaust Studies, and heavy metal.

LISA DIEDRICH is Professor of Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Stony Brook University. Her research and teaching interests are in critical medical studies, disability studies, feminist science studies, and interdisciplinary feminist and queer theories and methodologies. She is the author of *Indirect Action: Schizophrenia, Epilepsy, AIDS, and the Course of Health Activism* (2016) and *Treatments: Language, Politics, and the Culture of Illness* (2007), and the coeditor of *Feminist Time against Nation Time* (2008, with Victoria Hesford).

LUMINITA M. DRAGULESCU conducts research at the interface of contemporary American Literature, Black American Literature and Culture, race and trauma/psychoanalytical theories, memory, and life-writing studies. She has published articles on Salman Rushdie, William Faulkner, James Baldwin, Art Spiegelman, John Edgar Wideman, Katherine Stockett, Philip Roth, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Boris Pasternak. She has also produced a DVD under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities, "Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker: Civil Rights Activist and Advisor to the Late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

JENNIFER GRIFFITHS is the author of *Traumatic Possessions: The Body and Memory in African American Women's Writing and Performance* (2010) and has published work in literary trauma studies in *Obsidian: Literature of the African Diaspora*, *Studies in the Novel*, *Contemporary Women's Writing*, and *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*. Her current book project focuses on representations of African American youth and the concept of "risk" in post-Civil Rights era performance and literature. She is Associate Professor of English at New York Institute of Technology's Manhattan campus.

MADELAINE HRON is Associate Professor in the Department of English and Film Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. She is the author of *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature and Culture* (2009), as well as of various articles related to human rights issues, African literature, trauma, and violence, in such varied journals as *Research in African Literatures*, *Peace Review*, *Journal of Literature and Trauma Studies*, *Forum in Modern Language Studies*, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *French Literature Studies*, and *Slavonic and East European Review*. Hron's current book project explores the literary, cinematic, and cultural representations of postgenocide Rwanda.

Contributors

xi

ANNA HUNTER is Senior Lecturer in Academic Development at the University of Central Lancashire. Her research interests include literary representations of the Holocaust, and her essays have appeared in *Modernism/Modernity*, the *European Journal of English Studies*, and *Holocaust Studies*.

MARIE KRUGER is Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Iowa, where she teaches courses in postcolonial and cultural studies. Her book *Women's Literature in Kenya and Uganda: The Trouble with Modernity* (2011) examines the relationship between modernity, gender, and the complex cultural and political networks in Eastern Africa. Her work has been published in *Research in African Literatures*, *Postcolonial Text*, *Swahili Forum*, and the *Nairobi Journal of Literature*. Her current project studies the representation and commodification of traumatic memory in South African visual culture, including film and memorial sites.

J. ROGER KURTZ is Professor of English and Head of the Department of English and Philosophy at Drexel University. His writing includes *Urban Obsessions*, *Urban Fears: The Postcolonial Kenyan Novel* (1998) and *Nyarloka's Gift: The Writing of Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye* (2005), along with essays in *Research in African Literatures*, the *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *ARIEL*, the *Nairobi Journal of Literature*, the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, and the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*.

SUZANNE LALONDE is Associate Professor at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley, where she teaches French and Spanish language and literature courses. Her area of research focuses on World Literature and especially postcolonial literatures from psychoanalytic and trauma studies perspectives. She is most interested in exploring non-Western definitions of trauma and researching how different cultures develop resilience and resistance in the face of traumatic experiences.

ALLEN MEEK is Senior Lecturer in the School of English and Media Studies at Massey University. He is the author of *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories and Images* (2010) and *Biopolitical Media: Catastrophe, Immunity and Bare Life* (2016). He is currently researching Walter Benjamin's conception of natural history as a frame for understanding the writings of W. G. Sebald and their influence on contemporary cinema and media arts.

EMMA V. MILLER is an independent scholar who previously taught English literature at the University of Durham. Having published on the topic of incest in literature, her research focuses on sexual trauma in the domestic literary space, with a particular interest in how literature may effect social change.

JOSHUA PEDERSON is Assistant Professor of Humanities at Boston University. His first book, *The Forsaken Son: Child Murder and Atonement in Modern American Fiction* (2016), uses trauma theory and theology to analyze depictions of infanticide in recent novels. His essays have appeared in *Contemporary Literature*, *Twentieth-Century Literature*, *Religion and Literature*, *Religion and the Arts*, and *Narrative*.

MICHAEL RICHARDSON is Lecturer in the School of the Arts & Media at the University of New South Wales, where he teaches media theory and political communication. He researches the intersection of affect and power in media, literature, and political culture and is currently working on a project about drone warfare and witnessing. He is the author of *Gestures of Testimony: Torture, Trauma and Affect in Literature* (2016) and coeditor of *Traumatic Affect* (2013). He was previously speechwriter to The Honorable Jack Layton MP, leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada.

MARINELLA RODI-RISBERG is an affiliated researcher with the Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä. She has published chapters and articles on the representation of trauma in contemporary North American women's fiction. Her most recent work has appeared in *Studies in the Novel*.

WILLIAM P. SEELEY is Visiting Scholar in Psychology at Boston College and Lecturer at the University of New Hampshire-Manchester. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from The City University of New York – The Graduate Center, an M.F.A. in sculpture from Columbia University, and a B.A. in philosophy from Columbia University. His research interests lie at the intersection of philosophy of art, cognitive science, and embodied cognition. His welded steel constructions have been exhibited in New York City and at a number of colleges and university galleries, including a solo show of outdoor works at Ezra Stiles College at Yale University.

KAROLYN STEFFENS is Assistant Professor of English at Lindsey Wilson College. She has been published in the *Journal of Modern Literature* and has essays in *War and the Mind: Ford Madox Ford's Parade's End*,

Modernism, and Psychology (2015) and *The Routledge Companion to Ford Madox Ford* (2018). Her book project, *Modernist Affirmation*, traces a genealogy of trauma as a prominent discourse of the twentieth century alongside the emergence of modernist aesthetics.

ERICA STILL is Associate Professor at Wake Forest University. Her book, *Prophetic Remembrance*, is a comparative study of African American and Black South African trauma narratives. She is currently working on a second project examining moral agency and authority in African American literature.

TOM TOREMANS is Assistant Professor at the University of Leuven, where he teaches European, English, and Scottish literature, as well as literary theory. He has published articles on trauma theory in the *European Journal of English Studies* (2003) and on deconstruction in *Encountering Derrida* (2007) and in *The Oxford Literary Review* (2011). Recent publications include “Killing What Is Already Dead: ‘Original Materialism,’ Translation, and Romanticism after de Man” in a special issue on Romantic Materialities (2015), and special issues on 19th-century literature and political economy for *Victoriographies* (2017) and on the Battle of Waterloo for *Studies in Romanticism* (2017). He is also Director of the Centre for Reception Studies (CERES).

IRENE VISSER is Senior Lecturer in Modern English Literature and Culture at the University of Groningen. Her areas of concentration are contemporary American literature and postcolonial literature and theory. Recent publications include “Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects” published in *Humanities* (2015) and “Fairy Tale and Trauma in Toni Morrison’s *Home*” published in *MELUS* (2016).

JENNIFER YUSIN is Associate Professor in the Department of English and Philosophy at Drexel University. She is the author of *The Future Life of Trauma: Partitions, Borders, Repetition* (2017). Her essays have appeared in *Textual Practice*, in *Culture, Theory and Critique*, and in *The Journal of Contemporary Literature*.

Preface

The things that go on between Tancred and Clorinda – they meet on a battlefield, they fall in love, they suffer tragically – are part of a larger story invented over 400 years ago by the Italian poet Torquato Tasso in his ambitious romantic epic, *La Gerusalemme Liberata*. Today's readers of this lively tale likely come away feeling a mixture of fondness and embarrassment. The story is compelling and fast-paced, and it is hard not to enjoy. Yet it is also melodramatic and at odds with present-day sensibilities, particularly in its assumptions about the interplay of love, honor, and martial glory. Tasso's thriller about the efforts of Christians to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim control during the First Crusade feels uncomfortable, given the fact that current geopolitical conflicts also pit the Abrahamic faiths against each other. Furthermore, some of it seems hackneyed: The moment when Clorinda pulls off her battle helmet to reveal long blonde tresses that tumble down her back has a certain B-movie flavor. Reading Tasso can be like listening to a dinner-table story recounted by a lovable but long-winded elderly uncle. We are fond of the teller, and we admire his ability to spin a compelling yarn, but we inwardly roll our eyes, privately glad that the worldview he expresses is now out of date.

Sigmund Freud saw something else in the story of Tancred and Clorinda. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he suggests that it offers a cautionary illustration of how people unwittingly repeat actions that hurt themselves or others. Tasso's tale contains what Freud calls, in Strachey's translation, "the most moving poetic picture of a fate such as this." This fate is what Freud came to label repetition compulsion, and it figures largely in our current understanding of trauma, in a manner reminiscent of how Freud plumbed the literary tradition for the example of Oedipus to illuminate what he considered another aspect of the human condition. As a result, the story of Tancred and Clorinda is now an entrenched part of our conceptual framework as we study and theorize trauma and its meaning. It also serves to remind us that literary language has a role to

play in our engagement with trauma, which is precisely the notion that this volume of essays explores.

Tancred and Clorinda, as recognized literary emblems of trauma, adorn the cover of this book in the photograph of a terra-cotta sculpture created by an anonymous Neapolitan artist in the mid-eighteenth century. The sculpture presents both characters, as well as the remains of the tree that also figures into their story. I am grateful to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for permission to use their image of this work, which is housed in their collection.

In completing this book, I am also grateful for the support and inspiration that I found in a number of settings. The groundbreaking work of the trauma awareness training program (“STAR”) at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Virginia, helped open my eyes to the complexities of trauma healing. The University of Iowa supported my work as a scholar in residence during a sabbatical leave, and my colleagues at The College at Brockport (State University of New York) both supported that leave and offered opportunities to discuss and deepen my understandings. I also appreciate the further encouragement I have received from my new colleagues at Drexel University. Ray Ryan, editor at Cambridge University Press, first proposed this volume to me; his vision for a Cambridge Critical Concepts series was timely and in tune with current developments in literary studies. The professional work of all the staff at Cambridge University Press was of top quality.

Finally, I want to thank all the contributors to this volume not only for their work on this project but also for their larger engagement with the important topics of trauma and trauma healing. This book is dedicated to all those who wish for the literary and other arts to play a role in creating more just and peaceful conditions in our world.