Despite a stated commitment to the promotion of cross-cultural solidarity, trauma studies—a vanguard area of cultural inquiry that emerged as a product of the “ethical turn” affecting the humanities in the 1990s—retains a firmly monocultural, Eurocentric perspective. Cathy Caruth’s claim, in her influential introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), that “trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures” is not borne out by the founding texts of the field, which tend to marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of currently subordinate groups both inside and outside Western society, and/or to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity. Instead of promoting solidarity between different cultures, trauma theory risks assisting in the perpetuation of the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities as a result of this one-sided focus.

My current research examines how trauma studies can break with monoculturalism and Eurocentrism. It considers the specificity of colonial traumas and of the act of postcolonial literary trauma representation in relation to the dominant trauma discourse, and explores alternative conceptions of trauma and of its textual inscription that could revitalize the field of trauma studies by helping it to realize its self-declared ethical potential. Theoretical argument is combined with case studies of a wide range of literary testimonies, including texts that bear witness to apartheid in the context of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission; to the Atlantic slave trade and African-American slavery; to the oppression of indigenous peoples in North America, Australia, and New Zealand; to the Partition of the Indian subcontinent; to the Irish Famine and the Troubles in Northern Ireland; and to the plight of African child soldiers.

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