

<p>Interview Summary Sheet  Project: <b>Memories of Fiction: An Oral History of Reader's Lives</b></p>
<p>Reference No.</p>
<p>Interviewee name and title: Angela Phelan</p>
<p>Interviewee DOB and place of birth: No DOB given, Waterford, Ireland.  Interviewee occupation: Various – office work/work with elderly/admin  Book group(s) attended: Putney</p>
<p>Date(s) of recording: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015  Location of recording: Putney  Interviewer: Amy Tooth Murphy  Duration(s): 02.10.26  Summariser: Alison Chand</p>
<p>Copyright/Clearance:</p>
<p>Key themes: Family, childhood, racism, school/education, work, books/reading, reading groups, confidence, TV adaptations, genres, children's books, leisure, relationships.</p>
<p>All books and authors mentioned (those discussed for &gt;20 seconds in bold):  <b>Enid Blyton, <i>Malory Towers</i></b>  <b>Richmal Crompton, <i>Just William</i></b>  <b>Anthony Buckeridge, <i>Jennings and Darbishire</i></b>  <i>Billy Bunter</i>  Joyce Lankester Brisley, <i>Milly-Molly-Mandy</i>  <b>William Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i>, <i>Twelfth Night</i></b>  <b>Bernard Shaw, <i>Pygmalion</i></b>  <b>Alex Haley, <i>Roots</i></b>  <b>Graham Greene, <i>Brighton Rock</i></b>  Thomas Hardy, <i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i>, <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i>  Brian Friel, <i>Translations</i>  <b>T. S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i>, <i>Prufrock</i></b>  <b>Charles Dickens, <i>Oliver Twist</i></b>  <b>Henry James, <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i>, <i>Washington Square</i>, <i>The Wings of the Dove</i></b>  <b>Emily Dickinson</b>  <b>Helen Macdonald, <i>H is for Hawk</i></b>  <b>Ruth Rendell</b>  <b>P. D. James, <i>The Children of Men</i></b>  <b>Agatha Christie</b>  Barbara Vine  <b>Ian Rankin</b>  Hilary Mantel, <i>Bring Up the Bodies</i></p>

Terry Pratchett  
 Irene Nemirovsky, *Suite Francaise*  
 Penelope Lively  
**Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens: A Life***  
**Donna Tartt, *The Goldfinch***  
**Iris Murdoch, *The Sea, The Sea***  
 David Lodge  
 Malcolm Bradbury  
**Martin Amis, *The Zone of Interest, Time's Arrow, Money***  
 T. H. White  
**Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland***  
 Angela Brazil  
*The Hotspur*  
*Bunty*  
*Judy*  
*The Hornet*  
 Lord Byron  
 William Wordsworth  
 William Blake  
 Alfred, Lord Tennyson  
 Emily Bronte  
**Blaine Harden, *Escape from Camp 14***  
**Colm Toibin, *The Testament of Mary, Brooklyn, Nora Webster***  
**Tan Twang Eng, *The Garden of Evening Mists***  
 Simon Mawer, *The Glass Room*  
**George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss, Middlemarch***  
 John Carey, *What Good Are the Arts?*  
 Maeve Binchy  
 Edna O'Brien  
**Martina Cole, *Goodnight Lady***

Interviewer/Summariser comments:

Part one of two

00:00:00	Introduction to interview, birth in Ireland, coming to London aged around five, going to school in London, father moving for work, remarks on initially living in hotel where father worked, comments on huge hotel garden, moving to small flat.
00.01.50	Remarks on parents' Irish origins, parents meeting in Ireland, parents' families, father's work in hotel, becoming hotel manager. Comments on parents not being educated, mother's work as cleaner after children grown up. Remarks on hotel where parents worked in Maida Vale.
00.03.10	Comments on lack of childhood memories of Ireland, anti-Irish feeling in England on arrival, racism in childhood England, changes in attitude towards Irish in England over time.
00.04.40	Comments on enjoyment of London, life in hotel, not fitting in in Ireland, restrictions of Irish life, returning to Ireland on visits, parents' plans to return to Ireland, mother establishing life in London, father being more of loner. Remarks on other Irish people in area returning to Ireland.
00.06.30	Remarks on having one sister and two brothers, difficult

00.07.30	relationship with sister, sharing room, getting on well with brothers, age gap with siblings. Comments on not going out together as family, father not being family oriented, mother's churchgoing, going on trips out with mother, not going on school trips.
00.08.00	Comments on not enjoying school, wetting pants, shyness.
00.09.10	Remarks on reading early at school, sitting on headmaster's lap to read.
00.10.00	Comments on lack of memory of reading at home, not having many books in house, lack of memory of learning to read, reading fluently from early age, lack of memory of reading being encouraged at school.
00.10.40	Comments on parents not appreciating education, not being educated themselves, parents not encouraging education, neutral attitude to education, not discussing options for future with parents, parents' desire to see children work in offices rather than shops.
00.12.00	Comments on lack of books in house, getting books from school library, siblings not being interested in reading as children.
00.12.50	Remarks on childhood reading, Enid Blyton, further comments on getting books from school library, remarks on <i>Just William</i> (Richmal Crompton), <i>Jennings and Darbishire</i> (Anthony Buckeridge), <i>Billy Bunter</i> , <i>Milly-Molly-Mandy</i> (Joyce Lankester Brisley).
00.13.50	Comments on going to public library in late teens, only going on visits with school.
00.14.40	Comments on not feeling different from other family members despite interest in reading, father's long working hours, mother being busy looking after family.
00.15.20	Further comments on dislike of school, hating cliques, teachers encouraging staying on at school, wanting to leave school, leaving school aged sixteen, returning to night school for qualifications.
00.16.40	Comments on work after school, undertaking office work, accounting, being careful with other people's money, working for Age Concern, working in very varied jobs. Further comments on studying English at night school, enjoyment of evening classes, being treated as adult, attending aged eighteen/nineteen, studying for A levels at night school, remarks on different colleges attended.
00.19.00	Remarks on not knowing future career path, studying to get more from self, enjoyment of studying, first experience of enjoying teaching/learning process.
00.20.20	Remarks on books read on night school courses, <i>Macbeth</i> , <i>Twelfth Night</i> (William Shakespeare), <i>Pygmalion</i> (Bernard Shaw), <i>Roots</i> (Alex Haley), <i>Brighton Rock</i> (Graham Greene), enjoyment of <i>Brighton Rock</i> , studying Thomas Hardy, <i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> , <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> , also reading <i>Translations</i> (Brian Friel), <i>The Waste Land</i> (T. S. Eliot), initial fear of length of poem. Extended comments on T. S. Eliot, mention of <i>Prufrock</i> , changing ideas of poetry, special nature of learning Eliot. Further comments on transformation of learning experience, enjoying languages at school, winning Italian prize, not enjoying other aspects of school, basic nature of school reading.
00.23.40	Remarks on books read at school, <i>Oliver Twist</i> (Charles Dickens),

	not reading Shakespeare, lack of memory of books read at school. Comments on writing poetry/stories at school, creative writing essays, subjects written about.
00.24.50	Comments on continued interest in creative writing, stranger nature of current creative writing.
00.25.40	Remarks on hard work of working/studying at same time, wanting to have rest, not knowing future career path, not studying for career purposes, not worrying about finding work, not being ambitious about career.
00.27.00	Comments on course influencing leisure reading, being open to all kinds of reading, further mention of Dickens, wide reading tastes.
00.27.50	Comments on lack of experience in writing essays at college, uncertainty about what was expected.
00.28.40	Comments on significant authors/titles, Henry James, love of Henry James characters, emotional level of female characters, continued enjoyment of Henry James, remarks on <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i> , <i>Washington Square</i> , reading books in early twenties.
00.29.50	Remarks on developing interest in Shakespeare, early difficulties, first reading <i>Macbeth</i> , early problems with material, re-reading material, persisting with reading it.
00.30.50	Remarks on jobs worked in after A levels, working with older people, nature of work done with Age Concern, other work with older people, remarks on studying for degree, description of studying as 'best years of my life', freedom of degree at London Polytechnic, meeting husband when studying aged twenty-five. Comments on gap between A levels and degree, fear of permanent work, working in temporary jobs, reasons for doing degree, wanting freedom to read, wanting to fill gaps in reading.
00.35.00	Comments on specialist areas in degree, Henry James, <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i> , moral issues. Remarks on studying Emily Dickinson, Thomas Hardy. Comments on not finding studying a burden, finding A level exams harder than university exams, having more time at university to write essays.
00.37.10	Comments on not working while at university, having grant, living on little money, having good social life, immersing self in university experience, increased pressure in modern day university.
00.38.10	Remarks on leaving home in teens, being independent of parents, parents not commenting on university attendance, brother also going to university, comments on brother's studies, brother's work in housing management.
00.39.30	Remarks on awareness of difference between self and younger students/students from different educational backgrounds, not always knowing what to do with essays, what was expected.
00.41.10	Remarks on leisure reading while studying, further comments on Emily Dickinson, trying to read outside course material, reading outside set texts. Further comments on <i>Jennings and Darbishire</i> .
00.42.00	Comments on re-reading, getting into re-reading habit during degree, comments on perceptions of <i>H is for Hawk</i> (Helen Macdonald) in reading group, not wanting to read book again, reasons for not wanting to read some books again. Comments on wanting to regularly re-read <i>The Wings of the Dove</i> (Henry James), complexity of book, desire to re-read some Thomas

	Hardy books.
00.44.20	Remarks on work after degree, going to teacher training college for a year, hating teacher training, feelings of reversion to childhood, dislike of theory, remarks on teachers/students, being given difficult classes, not teaching much literature, disillusion with teaching, not wanting to teach for work.
00.46.30	Comments on starting to work for council in domiciliary care, different areas worked in, Soho, Westminster, enjoyment of admin work, sense of responsibility, continuing to work with older people.
00.47.10	Remarks on living in Canada for eighteen months, returning and working for Hammersmith and Fulham Council, continuing in admin work, entering management, becoming disillusioned with Hammersmith and Fulham, disliking having to sign in, lack of receptiveness to asking questions, difficulties of working with some people, getting into trouble with management for asking questions.
00.49.45	Remarks on continuing to read for escapism during busy working times, enjoying detective fiction, mention of Ruth Rendell, P. D. James, Agatha Christie, remarks on reading any detective fiction from library, enjoying build up to denouement, plot, ease of reading, not being able to work out plot at times, comments on psychological nature of Ruth Rendell work, preference for Ruth Rendell over P. D. James, enjoyment of <i>The Children of Men</i> , remarks on Barbara Vine.
00.52.00	Comments on contemporary detective fiction, Ian Rankin.
00.52.50	Comments on lighter versus weightier fiction, reading heavier material for degree, wanting to read lighter material after finishing degree, difficulties of reading material outside reading group for time reasons. Remarks on prioritising reading group books, wanting to make contribution in group.
00.54.30	[G] comments on AP's creative writing, remarks on reading corresponding books to TV adaptations, further comments on Barbara Vine, watching <i>Bring Up the Bodies</i> (Hilary Mantel)]. AP comments on being led to authors/titles through TV adaptations. Comments on keenness to see TV/film adaptations of books, preference for reading books first, comments on adaptation of <i>The Children of Men</i> .
00.56.30	Comments on not reading much science fiction, wanting to read Terry Pratchett, not reading fantasy fiction, watching fantasy/spiritual material on TV, not reading many fantasy books, comments on interest in quantum/spiritual world, reading non-fiction, spiritual books about destiny.
00.57.55	Remarks on starting to attend reading group, group initially being busy, seeing poster in library, starting to attend by chance, initial fears of prescriptive nature, initial expectations of interesting people. Comments on reading group members, members often knowing what they like, sometimes showing lack of openness, further comments on <i>H is for Hawk</i> . Comments on distinct identities of two reading groups, greater openness of own reading group, attending reading group for relatively short period of time. Comments on reading books would not otherwise have read, mention of <i>Suite Francaise</i> (Irene Nemirovsky), <i>H is for Hawk</i> . Remarks on desire to read more Penelope Lively, other

	members finding books too light, reading some authors as one off.
01.03.30	Comments on reading non-fiction in group, reading <i>Charles Dickens: A Life</i> (Claire Tomalin), learning new things about Dickens, different aspect of Dickens's character. Remarks on not reading much biography.
01.04.30	Remarks on reading books as result of good reviews/hype, sometimes being disappointed with books, remarks on Donna Tartt, disappointment with length of <i>The Goldfinch</i> , too many tangents. GJ comments on liking <i>The Goldfinch</i> .
01.06.00	Comments on books dividing reading group, remarks on unidentified book about cancer, members' difficulties with theme. Comments on people not always finishing <i>The Goldfinch</i> . GJ expresses wish to have made notes on reading group material.
01.07.10	GJ remarks on keeping track of book titles read when student, comments on not keeping reading diary since then. AP comments on not keeping reading diary.
01.08.10	Comments on remembering less about books read, reading books too quickly, other reading group members taking notes on books, comments on memory getting worse with age.
01.09.20	GJ remarks on <i>The Sea, The Sea</i> (Iris Murdoch), division of opinion in reading group. AP comments on reading Iris Murdoch when younger then later in reading group. Further comments on Iris Murdoch, lack of interest in Murdoch. Interviewer remarks on Murdoch as dividing opinion.
01.12.20	Remarks on not changing much as reader over years, trying to read large range of material, being open to reading anything, mention of David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury, Martin Amis, looking forward to reading <i>The Zone of Interest</i> (Martin Amis), GJ remarks on masculine nature of books.
01.14.10	Comments on gendered perspectives on novels, AP description of GJ as more tolerant than many men, further comments on <i>H is for Hawk</i> , remarks on gendered views of characters, discussion of cruelty in <i>H is for Hawk</i> , remarks on symbolism/plot/characters in book, remarks on dislike of treatment of T. H. White.
01.17.45	Remarks on books polarising opinion making for good discussion in reading group. GJ comments wanting to read more Martin Amis, further comments on division making interesting discussions, further comments on <i>H is for Hawk</i> [brief conversation about drinks].
01.19.30	Remarks on not wanting to categorise self as reader, feeling emotions as reader, still being able to analyse books, further comments on <i>H is for Hawk</i> . Remarks on authors' lives having emotional impact, further comments on Emily Dickinson, Emily Dickinson's life, being moved by lives more than work. GJ remarks on being more moved by books/poetry than real life. Remarks not allowing person behind writing to distract from text, comments on T. S. Eliot's anti-Semitism, being able to maintain detachment from authors.
01.22.40	Further comments on childhood reading, Enid Blyton, <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (Lewis Carroll), enjoyment of <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> , Enid Blyton stories, enjoyment of magical nature of stories, reading for escapism as child, comparisons to lack of joy in own childhood life, interest in children having adventures on their

	own. Comparisons with modern childhood, reduction of freedoms. Remarks on not travelling much as child, limited nature of childhood world, not going on school trips. Comments on boarding school books, reading <i>Malory Towers</i> , reading books by Angela Brazil, reading boys' adventure stories, <i>The Hotspur</i> , <i>The Hornet</i> , <i>Bunty</i> , <i>Judy</i> , preference for boys' stories, further comments on <i>Just William</i> , <i>Jennings and Darbishire</i> , GJ remarks on children's books.
01.26.55	Remarks on reading for couple, shared interests in reading, creative writing, poetry, description of reading as shared 'core', other separate interests, bouncing ideas off each other, description of reading as big part of lives. Comments on different reading tastes, different poetry tastes. GJ remarks on own greater preference for Martin Amis, David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury than AP, reasons for liking Martin Amis. GJ remarks on not sharing AP's non-fiction interests, knowing less about Henry James, Emily Dickinson, taking different meanings from Emily Dickinson. GJ remarks on William Wordsworth, William Blake, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Lord Byron, AP comments on GJ's preference for male poets, remarks on Emily Bronte.
01.31.20	Comments on giving each other books as gifts at Christmas, giving books as surprises, AP comments on giving Martin Amis books, GJ buying Emily Dickinson, remarks on process of choosing books.
01.33.00	Remarks not reading same book at same time outside reading group, recommending books to each other, not often reading aloud to each other, preference for reading books alone. Comments on reading poetry to each other. AP remarks on reading own poetry to GJ.
01.34.40	Remarks on own creative poetry, description of work as other worldly, creative stories, intention expressed to give interviewer poetry, interviewer comments on <i>Escape from Camp 14</i> (Blaine Harden) [rustling of packet], remarks on concept of narrative, Western concept of narrative.
01.38.20	AP comments on concept of memory, uncertainty over difference between actual memory/imagination, memories from childhood. GJ further comments on Martin Amis, <i>The Zone of Interest</i> , remarks on Auschwitz setting, comments on humour in book, remarks on <i>Time's Arrow</i> (Martin Amis), also <i>Money</i> , GJ remarks on love of Amis's use of language/characters, rooting in reality, women's dislike of Amis, central male characters. Comments on desire for group to read more Martin Amis.
01.42.50	Remarks on recommending books to reading group, mention of Colm Toibin, <i>The Testament of Mary</i> , comments on reading <i>Brooklyn</i> , <i>Nora Webster</i> , members' pre-conceived ideas about religion in <i>The Testament of Mary</i> .
01.44.50	Comments on not getting to know reading group members, not knowing how other members think.
01.45.40	Remarks on non-Western books read, <i>The Garden of Evening Mists</i> (Tan Twang Eng), <i>The Glass Room</i> (Simon Mawer), reading European books, comments on unidentified German book.
01.47.20	Remarks on need to choose books libraries are able to access, limitations to library purchases. Comments on buying some books libraries cannot access, further comments on <i>H is for</i>

01.50.20	<p><i>Hawk</i>, description of book as page turner, comments on clever use of language [fluctuations in volume from here on].</p> <p>Remarks on authors turned to in difficult times, GJ comments on George Eliot, poetry, <i>The Mill on the Floss</i>, <i>Middlemarch</i>, Eliot's depictions of family relationships. Remarks on Wordsworth, Blake. AP remarks on not wanting to read when major events happen in life, times in life when reading fell away because of stressful jobs, leaving job enabling starting to read again, being unable to concentrate when stressed.</p>
01.53.50	<p>Remarks on leisure time, AP comments on interest in dancing, travelling to Japan, work sometimes getting in the way of leisure, depression about job. GJ remarks on reading routine, always reading fiction in morning, newspapers in evening, regular habit of reading in bed, post-retirement routine. AP comments on not being able to relax before going to work.</p>
01.56.30	<p>AP comments on reading at night, own reading routine, reading for at least an hour at night, being annoyed when friends ring during reading time, liking to finish books for reading group. GJ comments on always persevering with books, always reading to end, feeling of failure if not reaching end. AP remarks on always finishing books for interest in ending, never skipping to end to find out how books finish. GJ further comments on interest in TV adaptations of books, dislike of people who view TV as low brow, differing cultural views of books/TV.</p>
02.00.50	<p>GJ further comments on <i>What Good Are the Arts?</i> (John Carey). AP brief mention of Maeve Binchy, Edna O'Brien, comments on unnamed Irish author [G] goes upstairs to check name]. Remarks on liking strong, harsh, violent writing. Interviewer comments on experience of interviewing for Memories of Fiction project, differences in interviewees, reading groups, remarks on social activities of Putney group. Unidentified author named as Martina Cole, mention of <i>Goodnight Lady</i>. Further comments on reading group members not liking lighter material.</p>
02.06.10	<p>Comments on arbitrary line between literature and fiction, reading group members' perceptions on what is worth reading, comments on ideas of literature changing over time, Dickens being seen as low brow, becoming respectable, accessible material being seen as low brow. Remarks on receiving <i>Goodnight Lady</i> as present from sister, sister not being interested in reading. Comments on sister giving books/poetry as gifts, sister's greater interest in travel.</p>
02.10.26	<p>END</p>

