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**SPEAKERS**

Amy Schuman, Mary Hufford

**Amy Schuman** 00:00

This is Amy Schumann, a core faculty member of project narrative at The Ohio State University. And I'd like to welcome you to the project narrative podcast. In each episode, a narrative theorist selects a short narrative to read and discuss with a host. Today, I'll be talking with Mary Hufford on narrative memory and sensory experience. She'll be reading a narrative she collected at the headwaters of southern West Virginia's big Coal River Valley. Mary Hufford is Associate Director of the livelihoods knowledge exchange network, a link tank for sustainability to connect communities, organizations and scholars. After 20 years as folklife specialist at the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, she was on the graduate faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, where she directed the Center for folklore and ethnography. She has been a visiting professor at UC Berkeley, and the Ohio State University and an adjunct professor at Gaucho College. She's a Guggenheim Fellow and the author or editor of dozens of articles, monographs and books, including waging democracy in the kingdom of coal obec and the movement for social and environmental justice in Central Appalachia. 2002 to three, conserving culture, a new discourse on heritage, Chase world, fox hunting and storytelling in New Jersey's Pine Barrens, and the grand generation memory mastery legacy. By way of introduction, Mary and I are both folklorists who work on conversational narrative. And we study narrative as social interaction. Studies of narrative interaction take into account how participants in a storytelling occasion manage their relationships to each other, to their larger worlds, and to the events and characters within the narrative. Narrative is one cultural resource for negotiating meaning across these relationships in both local and larger cultural, historical social contexts. This is not to say that narrative does successfully negotiate meaning, but rather that it holds out this possibility. Mary, tell us why you pick this selection, and tell us what listeners should know to understand the story.

**Mary Hufford** 02:31

Well, thank you, Amy, for that wonderful introduction. And it's it's a pleasure to be here on the project narrative podcast. Well, for the past century and a half forest policy in the Appalachian region, has favored the interests of timber and mining companies, and more recently, tourism and recreation industries, leaving the needs of local vernacular world making, that is placemaking unaddressed on Coal River in southern West Virginia, concepts like dead trees, B trees, Wolf trees, hint at a local ontology or reality, within which, for a species have value beyond board feet of timber, in the sociality of women, for example, deeply hinged into the gathering of spring greens and morel mushrooms, like clues to the articulation of vegetal and more than vegetal networks within a gift economy. At the head of Drew's Creek on Coal River, Lafond, Petrie, whose passion for morel mushrooms earned her the nickname of Queen of the Molly moochers I should say here that Molly motors is the local name for morel mushrooms which are eagerly haunted in the coves and hollows of the hills surrounding the big hole River Valley. Each spring around, it's coming up in a few weeks actually. Anyway, the queen of the Molly moochers also known as Lafond. Patri once told me, We give away the Mali moochers we find two people who can't get out and get any. We just believe that if we give them away, we will keep finding more beautiful enunciation of a gift ecology as a folklorist in the 1990s, working for the American Folklife Center Library of Congress. I was interested in how such community perspectives could inform public recognition for an ethical treatment of forest communities. So public policy, I ended up doing a lot of work with environmental policy in projects that were associated with Usually often with the National Park Service and some of their, their needs for management of many different sites. So the story that I'm about to read is set in the context of, of actually a different project. The Park Service was not part of this. This was a citizen science forest monitoring project undertaken in the 1990s by the Lucy brown Association for the mixed mesophilic forest, on which the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress collaborated. The coordinator of that citizen science monitoring project was a science writer named John Flynn, one of the contract conversationalists, in the story you're about to hear at issue at that time, were certain claims being made by state and industrial foresters that justified a controversial form of timber harvesting and management. The clear cutting of multi aged diverse hardwood ecosystems and the replacement of those with even aged stands of species valued as timber, such as pine, Tulip tree, and maple, and very limited numbers of species, which could be harvested in 60 to 80 year rotations. This principle was called the principle on which this was based was called ready for harvest a naturalizing strategy that older people in forest communities with members have with memories of very large trees recognized as bogus. In conversation with an elderly man named Dennis Dickens, his wife, Ruby, and his neighbor Robert Allen, who lived at the head of peach tree Creek. John Flynn decided to test the forest is the Forest Service's definition of readiness for harvest. The Forest Service said Flynn is saying that trees are ready for harvest at 80 to 100 years old. What do you think of that? Well, the conversation then ranged throughout the hills in search of giant trees, which obligingly appeared in locations throughout the headwaters of marsh Creek. All of them hundreds of years old, the white oak at the mouth of Julie Haller six feet in diameter, the red oak five and a half feet in diameter on Joe L of sperm, which people called Big Red, the giant Sycamore that fell just five years ago. The poplar that they felt only to realize it was too big to move. And so they left it. The cat faced elm tree in Martin's fork, where Joe Webb kept his hogs penned up. Then Dennis Dickens asked us, did you ever hear anyone speak of a walnut tree that they cut in hazy once? We hadn't? There was a walnut tree, he said stood in hazy just on top of the mountain at the low gap in the head of Hiram fork, and it was curly walnut. Somebody got word out and some companies came in and bid on it. And that walnut tree sold for $1,000. It was 10 feet in diameter, and the walnut tree was hollow. Now I guess you've heard of Dr. Harvey Petri. John Flynn, then 56 had heard of heart doc Petri. Though doc Petri had died two decades before Flynn was born. He was a young man Dickens went on placing the event well before his own birth in 1909. And they hired him to climb up inside the walnut tree. And he went out up inside it 40 feet. And they said when he come out of there, he was just as wet as if you dipped him in the creek from sweat, and the moisture inside the tree. And they had grabbed that tree. Dickens continued, alluding to an arduous method of extracting the tree by the roots, using oxen or horses and skidded it up to the head of Hiram fork, and went down Farley's branch on palm pond fork and loaded it in log wagons there and hauled it to Davey in McDowell County. And there are 22 wagon loads of it. I saw the place where they grew up the tree been 25 or 30 years before and you could see See the big hole there in the ground. And I broke off a piece of the wall not root laying there and rode home with it, kept it for a long time. 10 feet in diameter. Now, in this story, Dennis Dickens curates what sociologist John O'Neill calls time his body. He's meticulously attentive to sensory details as they had come to him through the speech of elders when he was a boy. unfolding over many decades, this collaborative production of the living and the dead, catches all of us up in the trees, storied sensibility. Here, Dickens inserts a pair of witnesses to the credibility of those from whom he heard the story of the walnut tree and hazy gap, the wallow at the root of the walnut tree by its root and the size of its track, the tree bore witness not only to itself, but to the truth of what the elders had perceived and related to Dickens contesting forest service policy, the story illuminates the role of forest species in a narrative ecology, what I call a narrative that ecology that produces and renews multigenerational time. Dickens's story refutes the idea that readiness for harvest can be reduced to a number of years, or that trees have life expectancies similar to those of humans.

**Amy Schuman** 11:40

Thank you. Well, that's terrific story. Now that we've heard it, though, before we discuss it, I tell us a little bit more about your research in the Appalachian region and the kinds of narratives you collected.

**Mary Hufford** 11:52

Well, as a Folk Life Specialist at the Library of Congress in the 80s and 90s, I worked on the problem of how to bring environmental policy into dialogue with places paying special attention to how communities partake of what I call, narrative climax ecologies, that term narrative climax ecology stretches the classification of forests, as for example, systems that climax in particular associations and habitats like Beech maple or or oak hickory. An example of what I'm talking about would be the fire climax systems. Another example would be the fire climax system of the New Jersey Pine Barrens, where pine trees have developed serratus cones that depend on fires to open their cones so that their seeds can disperse, disperse. So that's a fire climax system. Narrative climax systems require a moment of narrative for renewal. These moments of renewal affirm collective identities of humans grounded in the recurring experiences shared among members of forest communities in the Appalachian Mountains. Without such moments, cohabitation of places is not possible. I remember my first few flights from Washington DC to Charleston, West Virginia, flying over the deeply dissected Cumberland Plateau, when can't help but marvel at the sheer number of wrinkles she didn't forest were what we call mountains are actually the effect of hundreds of millions of years of erosion, water cutting valleys through deposits of shale and sandstone. On my first flight, I wondered how in the world one could get inside of such places. A day later, I was sitting with an elderly man named Ben Burnside, at the head of the left hand, fork of Rock Creek. Burnside pointed to a hollow across from us named be hollow. I asked him whether all the other hollows had names. He disappeared into his house and reappeared, carrying a shard of drywall, onto which he had mapped all the side hollows in scribing, each with their name, for which he then told the origin stories. On the other side of the drywall was a penciled plan for his garden. flying back to DC, I realized that all those wrinkles in the hills passing below most likely had local names. In conversational storytelling, I would discover that such names would be given, along with an ENT etymology. Bear hollow for example, where a man left a bucket of honey, and on returning was chagrined to find that a bear had helped himself to the contents. Every rock has a name I was told every curve and straight stretch in the road. Every hole of water has a name, every little puddle. I realized that the place name etymologies were generously given when I was present by narrators who knew that I wouldn't know them, that the end that these etymologies function as time rites of initiation into the very rich multigenerational worlds made by mountain communities.

**Amy Schuman** 15:08

Amazing out an amazing world these stories are part of. So I know that will now turn to the story and I know that your research is has been very informed by phenomenology, in particular the work of Maurice Merleau Ponty. So what are the principles of Merleau Ponty is work that help you to understand sensory experience and its representation and narrative.

**Mary Hufford** 15:33

I wanted to understand how the landscape itself functioned as a medium for sociality between people. And for that I found Merleau Ponty his notion of what he calls the soil or flesh of sensibility to be the most helpful. He points out that never before and philosophy has that has has this thing. And he he asserts that it is indeed a thing. Never before has it been given a name. He described the flesh of sensibility as a kind of tissue or lining that spontaneously catches us up as reversible subjects and objects between us and what we perceive. This lining is animated by environmental cues that trigger sensory memory, and is sedimented. Over time. This lining is deposited by our first perception, and renewed by recurring perceptions that can be triggered either through direct perception or through narrative. Denis Dickens story illustrates these principles. It's an account of things that happened well before his birth in 1905, around the turn of the century, in the decades leading up to the turn of the century, when the virgin forest was being taken out, in what's known now as the big cut. He knew the tree from the stories told by old timers in his youth, and eventually those stories motivated him to search out the site where the tree had stood. A site haunted by that tree in the huge hole it left and this, this urge to go and see is, is is it's triggered by this kind of imperative to renew that flash of sensibility. Let's see. So it was that tree was, he found where the tree was, had stood. And he found the fragments of its roots, bundling together the sensory experiences of old timers, he tells us for example, this is another aspect of it, that Harvey Petrie dark Petrie was as wet as if they dipped him in the creek. This is a fragment of sensibility convey conveyed by old timers telling these stories when he was when he was young. He he hadn't seen it. And, and then he has his own sensory encounter many decades later, where what he's presented with is a big hole in the ground. His history conjures not only the sensory experiences, but the multiple points of view that we could say were orchestrated by that tree over many decades. And behind those points of view, or the viewers themselves, now aligned with our points of view in the setting of the story.

**Amy Schuman** 18:42

This way that narrative renews sensibility is really fascinating and that you've suggested, it's like the way the spores of a tree are given off rebirth after a fire really fascinating. I'm imagining that some of the listeners perhaps more familiar with literary examples or are thinking of how sensory experiences are represented narrative, most famously, of course, Proust's account of swans smell of the Madalyn after a very long time, though that was his own experience, not something that he that was passed on, but we do pass it on.

**Mary Hufford** 19:23

Yeah, the the tsunami of memory unleashed by the tastes of the matalin? Yes, I've seen that. And it's, it's actually really wonderful when you're in a room full of people who share those memories and they're participating with each other in this what we could call the labor of renewing that flesh of sensibility with each other. And they, they just contribute. It's just comment after comment. You know, I once was sitting with a group of duck hunters, interviewing them about decoy carving and duck hunting and sneak box making that's the name for a kind of a boat that they make a new jersey. And, and the is somebody mentioned Marsh mud and there is just a chorus of pew, oh my gosh, you know, I can just breathe it and they would say, but you know, that smell, it wasn't altogether unpleasant. It's our place and we love it. So yes, it was the occasion for celebration and renewal of not only of the sensory experience, but also of the bonds to the place and to and to the people.

**Amy Schuman** 20:35

So that's interesting, especially regarding conversational narrative. And today we're exploring in particular how conversational narrative might provide tools for describing the relationship between narrative memory and sensory experience. And you've talked about how the narrator weaves together world different worlds. I wonder if you'd say more about how the concepts of story round tail world and the structuring, of conversational narrative work here.

**Mary Hufford** 21:11

These are wonderful concepts that it's basically the idea. It's an idea that Bakhtin Mikhail Bakhtin, espoused with the author, he talked about the double groundedness of narrative narrative of all narrative, whether it's, it's the novel, or the story that's shared in conversation like this one. How is it doubly grounded, Katherine Young, who's a folklorist came up with a way of studying conversational narrative as doubly grounded by distinguishing between two worlds that are that must be constructed for any story to happen. And back to the notion of the architectonics of narrative is very, is a very useful way to label this story. So so her her terms story realm entail world before you can have a story, and you can think about this, you know, just the next time you're sitting around the Thanksgiving table after dinner, and somebody starts to tell stories. Basically, you have to first you have to have a moment in which the conversation takes a turn. And you realize, Okay, we are about to have an event in the conversation. And it's called a story. So somebody will say, Hey, did you hear the one about and that? And then if people say no, just as dentists stick and said to us? Did anyone ever tell you about a walnut tree? That's, that's sudden hazy. And of course, we're going to say no, even if we had heard it, we were going to say no, because every story is, is going to be different in the conversational setting. And it becomes very interesting to see how the teller is going to weave together the story that they're going to tell with the people who are present to it. So those that the people who are present to the occasion of the of the storytelling, they form an enclave that Katherine Young has called the story realm. So this is the realm in which a story is told. Now what is told, is set in an alternate realm, in a completely different time and space. Even if it's in the same space, it's still gonna be a different one, because it's in a different time. So So then, you know, and that world starts with, there was a walnut tree stood and hazy, and that's the beginning of that world. Well, then we immediately plunged back from the 1990s, to the world before the turn of the 20th century, when they were taking out all the virgin forests. So so then what happens in the course of this narrative, it Dickens ties, ties it, the narrator it has the task of making it meaningful to those who are listening. So John Flynn would have known a lot of those places that he mentioned, he mentioned a lot of places, and I would use those places as ways of engaging further information about this. storied forest, so ever, it's fork and Hiram fork, and you can find out how they got their names and and it takes you into family history and the history of of forest species in the area and interactions with those. So he would name those and if he thought, maybe you wouldn't know, he would ask. So now, have you ever heard of, of Harv Petrie? Well, John Flynn had and I hadn't been there. And I found I then I, I would hear other stories that people told were hard. Petrie figured he was a doctor. So he was weaving that story together with us. But he was also weaving. I mean, he was weaving the events set in that time and space, called the tail world. Together with the understandings that he felt we had in that, in that audience. Yeah, so anyway,

**Amy Schuman** 25:32

so it strikes me that there's multiple tail worlds even here, you know, because there's also the tail world of the big cut, right. And there's the tail world of the whole idea that, that trees should be cut, when they're 60 to 80 years old. And this story is set against that saying, Well, wait a minute, there's this 100 year old Are there many 100 year old trees? And so there's these multiple intersecting tail worlds that that he's navigating?

**Mary Hufford** 26:02

I mean, that's, that's a fabulous point. Well, that's exactly what we were doing. And that's exactly what, that's another way in which I found both Merleau Ponty and, and Katherine Young's work exceedingly important, because when, when you're dealing with environmental policy, you are dealing with contending modes of world making, often contending so. And, and, and what what may happen in the politics of world making is that some worlds are completely silenced. That the and, and so, as an as a civil service employee, I, I felt, I felt that it was important not not to lobby for a particular outcome, but to lobby, but to assist the visibility and the audibility of voices that were unheard in public discourse about environmental policy. So yes, they are different worlds. And that's yeah.

**Amy Schuman** 27:08

So that brings me back to questions about sensory experience, because I think we know that we get multiple voices and narratives that are registering different time periods, different spaces, but what really struck me about your work was this idea that sensory experiences are re invoked, and re experienced as sensory. It's not they're not just described, that was so and so's experience. It's not just that someone was all wet. But this this evocative re experiencing of the sensory that that you're talking about, and you discuss how memory produces these narratives. And it's not only the immediate sensory experience that it is, and we know that from Proust, I suppose, as well, that it's not only the immediate smell of the matalin, but that it can be reinvented, invoked much, much later. And so I wonder if you'd say more about how sensory experience unfolds in time through narrative?

**Mary Hufford** 28:12

Yes, well, first of all, when, when a comment that neuroscience has, its, I the names escape me at the moment, but but neuroscience has discovered that when people are reading or listening, and a sensory trigger goes off, the same part of the brain lights up that as lights up in the direct presence of the the, the perception, so, so perceptual activity ignites whether delivered through a narrative or through you know, just being out there in the presence of it. It lights up the same part of the brain. So, you know, in the conclusion would be that, that narratives about sensory experience would be ways to refresh, that lining of sensibility that we're talking about and it requires refreshment and it requires for place I would say that it requires collective refreshment it requires refreshment in the in the form of collaborative storytelling and exchange of perceptions exchanging of perceptual activity in conversation with Nadia Nadia seroma talk is called reflexive Coleman Salah T. And in here, she's she's extending, she's invoking the, you know, this, this idea that the sense Storium all of the all of the senses are actually connected within the sensorium as well and so, so it becomes important to expose yourself to triggers. If you want to refresh Do your own sensory, um,

**Amy Schuman** 30:04

but it's just so amazing to me to think that that someone who didn't experience it in the beginning experiences at a century later. Right? I mean, it's not he's not evoking his own smell of the tree, his own sense of, of a big walnut. He wasn't there, but rather somehow through narrative, this, this sensory experience is is becomes a memory that he can have as well.

**Mary Hufford** 30:35

Yes, yes. Okay. So that's part of what I call narrative ecology. So that the, the experience of something in narrative can motivate a search for to place oneself in direct the direct presence of what one heard about in the narrative. Or, or to come up with, you know, to encounter it, by accident. And with recognizing it, become very excited. So, yes, I would, I would hear about that. Well, the other thing, I mean, kind of related to that is. So, what what Dickens is doing, he's operating within a much larger unit of time. So, and the tree is orchestrating that in a way, not that he's intentionally having the tree orchestrated, I think I think he's demonstrating what hat can happen in communities where memories are tethered to so many different environmental cues. So so he's putting, we could say that he's putting flesh on time.

**Amy Schuman** 32:10

Also, the tree has a point of view or a role in this story. And it's it's not as if you're, it's not that it's not that there's ventriloquism grinding going on here. It's not that Dickens is suggesting that the tree speaks. But the but the tree has a really evocative role in this story, and has a kind of positioning and people are positioned in relationship to that to the tree.

**Mary Hufford** 32:43

Yeah. So So what Dennis Dickens is doing is he's retrieving, it's definitely I said earlier, that it was a collaboration of the living in the dead. He is, I mean, this is another aspect of Katherine Young's work with gesture and narrative, that that gesture, when when we we are gesturing as we narrate, gesture can can conjure up the presence of whatever it is of an object that is actually not present. So this, this is very much going on with this tree. And it is not only the tree itself, that he's conjuring he is conjuring when he says, they said, he was as wet as if you dipped him in the creek, who is the day and so we've got their perspective that's being conjured, but behind their perspective, and their point of view, we've got this marvelous multiplicity of point of views unfolding across a very broad stretch of time. And and so so when he's, he says that he's, he's actually also conjuring those they're not I'm not gonna call them objects, they're the people the the perspectives behind the points of view, behind the points of view, you have the viewers themselves, so that we are viewing way within the tale within the story realm, are viewing something in the same in the same way that people within the tail world are viewing it. And that in a way, that Bakhtin calls it the blossom, in which sleeps this the aesthetic of the narrative and, and that is where we not only behold ourselves from the point of view of a character, but we are sharing the point of view of a character in a very real way and it is mediated by the tree.

**Amy Schuman** 34:42

Yeah, I find that so much more helpful than than a ventral excising understanding of agency or something, and the use of your term conjuring, and the way that the story conjures the tree, or the way that the names of places When you were flying over them, they conjure the places. And, you know, that takes us back to that idea that the names for the wrinkles in the landscape.

**Mary Hufford** 35:13

Yeah. The names for the wrinkles in the landscape and the language itself. Again, this is a, this is a discourse that I noted was heavily saturated with quotation, people were always talking about what they said, or they heard or whatever, which has the effect of really populating the world with multiple perspectives. And there's also something that listeners may be very familiar with this. Often, often we may find ourselves stricken with a desire to go and see something that our ancestors may have seen, you know, even if it's the Rhododendron tree, outside the building that replaced the old homestead, but the Rhododendron tree is still there. And and you realize that you're looking at something that they they probably looked at, this is very common people, people will talk about just just trying to see something that people who are no longer with us can see. And

**Amy Schuman** 36:19

it but it's also, what's remarkable about it after hearing you talk about it, is the ways that people conjure things that aren't there anymore, not not imagining, and there's no rhododendrons. So people who go on tours of Holocaust sites where their families lived. And they go to a place where house no longer stands, or a village that no longer stands, or even a cemetery that's been mostly destroyed. And this feeling this lure, as you say, to go and visit and conjure the not even the things they saw, but the things they can no longer see. Yeah, like the tree, right? I mean, so he's he goes back in the story, he goes back to see the has to find the site of the tree that no longer stands, though he does find a remnant right, he finds a piece of it.

**Mary Hufford** 37:15

So we're inserting there's part part of this has could have to do with this effort to insert ourselves within a frame of time that Margaret Mead called the human unit of time, which would be if I can recap this, it would be the span of time represented between the memories of a young boy received from the oldest person he might know. And this would be Dennis Dickens in the story, that time span, and the end the span, that would be represented by the transmission of that memory to a great grandchild, for example. So it's, it's a time span that that kind of could cover about seven generations, the the human unit of time,

**~~Amy Schuman~~** ~~38:06~~

~~that's so important in slave narratives, right? So people who have never experienced slavery nonetheless, can reach back to a relative who did know, an enslaved relative, yes, right. Yes.~~

**~~Mary Hufford~~** ~~38:19~~

~~And so experiencing ourselves within a timeframe that exceeds our own can be very consoling. And it's not just, it's not just the timeframe, it's the perception we come to know ourselves. As Merleau Ponty says, as part of a seeing, and is saying, and we might say, I hearing a tasting, a feeling that is much older than, than and I would add much younger than ourselves. And knowing this, we might take care to tend the flesh of sensibility, as that lining within which we are especially connected to ancestors and future generations.~~ **~~And I found that elderly storytellers on Coal River, were especially attentive to that, modeling a practice that I call tending sensibility as a form of living heritage.~~**

**~~Amy Schuman~~** ~~39:23~~

~~Thank you so much, Mary. It's been such a pleasure to talk with you about this and explore this fascinating story has been my pleasure~~

**~~Mary Hufford~~** ~~39:33~~

~~entirely. Amy, thank you.~~

**Amy Schuman** 39:38

folklorists often talk about how the meanings of texts are context dependent. How do stories and their contexts interact? Or how does a phenomenological approach to conversational storytelling help us to arrive at meanings?

**Mary Hufford** 39:54

Well, you bring up a really important and interesting point, Amy and this is open vino hallmark of folklore, folklore has research since the 1970s, really. So these notions of text and context share the same route as textile, reminding us of metaphors for fit for tale telling, yarn, spinning, fabricating, and weaving. Like other elders we spoke with on Coal River, Dennis Dickens was masterful at weaving together. The worlds we've talked about earlier, the world of the weaving together those two worlds that that unfold. In the in the course of putting a story together in conversation, the story realm and the tale world he weaves those together, the world of the walnut tree at the head of hazy Creek at the turn of the 20th century. He weaves that into the world of his listeners in the late 20th century. He invokes John Flynn's knowledge of hearth Petri, a large man, a key player in the tail, who's very size supports the old timers reports that the walnut tree was 10 feet in diameter. Okay, this amplifies the authority of old timers on whose testimony Dickens himself is relying. And he does something characteristic of older, accomplished narrators. He constructs a mirror that supports his own authority to speak the tail world. off the tree standing at the head of AZ mirrors the story realm of us, sitting there listening to Dennis Dickens, where he himself is an old timer giving us vivid sensory accounts he'd heard as a boy, listening to just such old timers as himself, accounts that he was able to verify decades later, through his own encounter with an indentation 10 feet in diameter, haunted by the walnut tree that once stood at the head of hazy proving itself by remnants of what must have been a massive root wad. So Dickens is lobbing this, I went to eyewitness testimony of Luiza Alzheimer's, who would have actually seen the circumstances under which trees got to be much older than than trees that the Forest Service was steaming, ready for the harvest. And he's, he's loving that eyewitness testimony against the ready for harvest metrics of late 20th century foresters. Through his meticulous attention to essential details, Dickens is drawing on a flash of sensibility, memories sedimented between humans and forest species built up by the exchange of sensory memory over over hundreds of years really, to refute the the US Forest Service's narrative. So sociolinguistic William above identified this kind of mirroring as the strategy of blue collar workers, a narrative strategy. But we also of course, find it in literature in fret and very famous frame narratives. And, and, and it is used in very innovative ways by Angela Carter, for example, to create mirrors in her tales that track the transformation of a relationship between narrator and reader in in a fabulous restoration of what folklore is referred to as the fairy tale mirror.

**Amy Schuman** 43:31

So as you've said, these narratives are interactive, their interview interactive based and they produce shared sensory experiences. So say a little bit more about how this common salary this shared experience of sensory memory works

**Mary Hufford** 43:51

was really interesting. I said that these actually were working with what we would could could argue as this the soil or flesh of sensibility that really is between people who have exchanged these stories for generations. And so So what he's doing with that, that lining that flesh that soil of sensibility is is putting together times body he's opening up time his body for inhabiting times body as a term used by sociologist John McNeil to refer to something akin to Bach teens notion of the chronotope the idea of putting flesh on time. So any does it Okay, so it's so so he does with great attention to the specificity of sensory experiences throughout all of his narratives. And this walnut tree gives us an example of what Margaret Mead called the human unit of time. The human you If time is the space between an old man's memories of the things that the oldest old timer he knew, as a young boy told him and his and those memories, which he then relays to a very young child, it's a span of about seven generations. So, so what this accomplishes for us is that we can experience ourselves within a timeframe that exceeds our own. And this is consoling, it's not just time it's perception we are, we are able to access the perceptions of those who use the very same names for the things that we're looking at now. And that's how we may come to know ourselves as Merleau Ponty puts it as part of a seeing, and a saying, that is much older than and I would add much younger than ourselves. So knowing this, we might take care to tend to the flesh of sensibility as that lining, within which we are especially connected to ancestors and future generations**. Elderly storytellers and CO River were specially attentive to that, modeling a practice that I call tending sensibility as a form of living heritage.**

**Amy Schuman** 46:31

Thank you so much, Mary. It's been a pleasure to talk with you about this narrative and to learn about your work on narrative, your research on time, and memory and sensory experience.

**Mary Hufford** 46:43

Well, Amy, the pleasure has been been very much mine. And, of course, much of what I, what I've learned to appreciate about narrative I've learned through your writings as well. So thank you so much for having me here on project narrative podcast.

**Amy Schuman** 47:00

Thank you. I want to thank our listeners and say that we appreciate your feedback. And you can send it to us at Project narrative@osu.edu. Also, you can send it to our facebook page or to our Twitter account, which is at project narrative, Ohio State, and you can find additional episodes of the past of the podcast at at the project narrative website or on Apple podcasts. Thank you for listening