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Painting memory

In *The Memory Painting* (1997) (see Figure 1), the Cuban-American artist Xavier Cortada seeks to find visual means through which to dramatize the complexity of that faculty which we term 'memory'. The exercise of memory is an activity which renders mind and body inseparable. In Cortada's work, a thick shard pierces the subject's neck, shooting out from an enclosed space on the horizon's edge. This horizon is at once a metaphor for the infinitely receding past, and for that time-line which ensures the endurance of the shocking present moment into the future. When one considers that the painter is now domiciled in the USA, one may read it as



Figure 1 Xavier Cortada *The Memory Painting*, acrylic and mixed media canvas, 30" x 40", 1997 (www.cortada.com).

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forming the literal site of Cuban heritage, always over the immigrant's shoulder: a site of both personal and communal memory. Yet the body's spatiality in relation to memory is not only a matter of its interaction with the world outside it. The past is registered within the body, too, as the opening up of surfaces within this picture suggests. What the body has recognized through its senses in the past, whether consciously or simply as a matter of habit, has involved the co-operation of muscles and ligaments in the act of perception, enveloping knowledge under the skin.¹ Moreover, the depicted rupture of the individual's corporeal space may be seen to stand for the permeability and instability of memory; its vulnerability to outside influences. In addition, this painting makes one consider the techniques that have been developed as tools for remembering. Behind the man's head are a series of lit rooms: these may be read as individual chambers of memory, those architectural spaces into which particular points may be placed so as to facilitate their orderly recollection.² The man's indecipherable expression is indicative of the private nature of each person's narratives of recall. Overall, the painting is a concretization of what cognitive scientists Chris Westbury and Daniel Dennett have described as the condition of mentally reconstructing the past, as something 'computed by an organism under the constraints imposed by its built-in biological biases and the history of the interaction of those biases with the environment in which the organism has lived'.³

The volume in which Westbury and Dennett's paper appears, Daniel Schacter and Elaine Scarry's collection entitled *Memory, Brain, and Belief*, is symptomatic of the recent turn to, and in, memory studies: a turn which emphasizes the truly interdisciplinary nature of the field, bringing together neuroscience and cognitive psychology, literature and medicine, philosophy and physics. It forms a part of what David Lodge terms 'the current stir of scientific interest in consciousness', bringing materialist theories of mind into dialogue with an area which had long been 'considered the province of philosophy'.⁴ Lodge traces this development not only to Francis Crick and Cristof Koch's well-known essay of 1990, in which they 'announced that it was time to make human consciousness the subject of empirical study', but also to a number of factors which preceded this, including the ways in which quantum physics has undermined belief in science's capacity for absolute impersonality, the development of new brain-scanning techniques in medicine, and the materialist account of human nature promoted by the neo-Darwinian theories of the 1970s and 1980s.⁵ But as that term *neo-Darwinian* signals, this interdisciplinarity has a certain familiarity if we look back to the intersecting ways in which consciousness was approached in the mid- to late nineteenth century: something which notably holds true in the case of discussions of memory.

Remembering something – seeing it in the mind's eye – forms one

important category of what the physiologist and philosopher James Hinton called 'Seeing with the eyes shut', the title of his *Cornhill* article of July 1862. In this, he elaborates on a familiar mid-Victorian theme, that 'the first condition of insight is to see with closed eyes'.⁶ If this is self-evident in relation to the creative writer or artist, it needs wider recognition, Hinton claimed, in relation to the scientist – anticipating John Tyndall's well-known Belfast Address on the importance of the scientific imagination. The Victorians, as we have come to recognize, were intrigued not only by the visible world, but by the relationship between that which could be observed with the physiological eye and that which appeared to the eye of the imagination: that which lay out of sight, to be conjured up in verbal images, but not physically present to sensory perception.⁷ It was easy enough to convey a sense of this hovering presence lying beyond or outside the material world in writing, which relies on language's power to stimulate the reader's own internal faculties of visualization. However, what I want to consider here is the participation of Victorian artists in this process of representing the invisible, and, in particular, the implications of their attempts to paint the operations of memory. The challenge here lies not only with representing that which can now only be revisited 'in the mind's eye', but in conveying the sense of time's simultaneous passage and its collapse into the present, which constitutes the condition of memory. More than this, I want to explore how shifts within British painterly styles in the later nineteenth century were particularly well adapted to explore those different ideas concerning memory which were being developed in the more speculative scientific works of the time.

Lawrence Alma-Tadema's '*Her Eyes are With Her Thoughts and They Are Far Away*' (1897) is an ambiguous work. It shows, like so many of the artist's paintings, a woman in generic classical dress, sitting on a marble bench on a shady terrace overlooking the Mediterranean. She holds a hand to her forehead in an unmistakable gesture of pensiveness. Are we invited to regard the subject as peering into the future, her eyes shielded against its brilliance, or are her thoughts, like her eyes, shaded, pointing back into the past? What is more, one has to contend with the temporal collapse created by the fact that while the painting has an indeterminate classical, *passéiste* setting, it also represents the ennui of an under-occupied *fin-de-siècle* woman. This ambiguity, this elision of past and present, was, at the time when Alma-Tadema composed this painting, under scrutiny as being constitutive of the very nature of memory. F. H. Bradley was to assert, in his 1899 essay 'Some remarks on memory and inference', that we remember forwards, not backwards; that 'we have no memory until that which is reproduced is ideally separated from and is ideally connected with my present'.⁸ As Henri Bergson had already claimed in *Matter and Memory* (1896), in which the contemporaneous nature of past and present is a

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major theme, 'there is no perception which is not full of memories'.⁹ In other words, memory, in part because of the way in which it is bound in with the operation of the senses, had come to be seen as something different from simple recall. More a state of being than an action, it was something which could therefore be summoned up through a pose, a gesture, a gaze without any focus on an obvious external object; or, as we shall see below, it is a condition which may be evoked through stylistic manipulation, through, for example, playing upon certain effects of light. Or, the condition of remembering may be elicited by the depiction of deliberately empty spaces, inviting the projection of that which can only be seen in the mind's eye on to an inviting vacancy.

Yet it is important to reiterate the fact that for many Victorian scientists memory was, at least to a significant degree, physiologically determined, since the storing of images and experience, and their retrieval, was, as now, seen to be inseparably connected with the structure of the brain and the nervous system. While such a theory goes back at least as far as Bonnet's theories of the 1770s, it may be found in vivid, succinct form in the writings of Ewald Hering, translated by Samuel Butler in 1888, claiming that 'memory is due to vibrations of the molecules of the nerve fibres, which under certain circumstances recur, and bring about a corresponding recurrence of visible action'.¹⁰ Yet according to a different, developing tradition – one which was to feed into twentieth-century psychoanalytic constructions of memory – the faculty was much more wayward, unpredictable, hazy: less a process than a state of mind, unreliable and inconsistent. Frances Cobbe, in her piece of 1867 entitled 'The fallacies of memory', had already explored the distinction between the two viewpoints. For her,

memory is neither an impression made, once for all, like an engraving on a tablet, nor yet safe for an hour from obliteration or modification, after being formed. Rather is memory a finger-mark traced on shifting sand, ever exposed to obliteration when left unrenewed; and if renewed, then modified, and made, not the same, but a fresh and different mark.¹¹

Strikingly, these two versions of memory – on the one hand physiological, on the other, subjective and personal – correspond to the two co-existing versions of vision, both with their internal variables, which formed the centre of Victorian discussions of visuality, alternately (and sometime simultaneously) preoccupied by the variations in vision which are produced by the optical differences to be found between different people's eyes, and the subjectivity inherent in every act of processing one's visual impressions.

But memory's dualities go further. Memory is a concept which shifts

continually between the shared, and mediated, and the acutely personal. This oscillation between particular and communal is enacted in the ways in which we are invited implicitly to read a number of paintings which deal explicitly with moments of recall. In Spencer Stanhope's *Thoughts of the Past* (1858–59), we see a 'fallen woman' apparently transfixed by a moment of recollection as she combs out her long golden hair (the signs of 'fallenness' are unmistakable: there are male gloves and cane carelessly thrown on the floor, and money on the table). Stanhope's woman appears transfixed by recollection, very probably – we are made to infer – of a rural and more 'innocent' past, symbolized by the unhealthy straggling plants that try to bloom in the urban setting of her chamber. Looking out at the river, busy with an ostensibly less disreputable type of commerce than her own, she is a prettified version of Dickens' Martha in *David Copperfield* (1850), gazing at the Thames, saying that she knows she belongs to it: 'It comes from country places, where once there was no harm to it – and it creeps through the dismal streets, defiled and miserable.'¹² Similarly, a couple of years earlier, in Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*, the young woman starts up from her lover's music-making: a close reading of the painting reveals a narrative in which words have unleashed resonances of her past, pure life within her: Thomas Moore's 'Oft in the still night' tells how 'Fond memory brings the light/Of other days around me', while on the floor lies the setting for Tennyson's 'Tears, idle tears', suggesting the irrevocable nature of the past as the eyes fill, 'In looking on the happy autumn-fields,/And thinking of the days that are no more'. Here, the concept of memory on which the paintings' decodings depend is one of a library or archive, or an inscribed tablet, or even an undeveloped photographic negative – to borrow some images from mid-Victorian writers on the topic – a storage system, available for both purposeful and unbidden access.¹³ And as Annette Kuhn has noted, Ford Madox Brown's painting of emigration, *The Last of England* (1855), shows the process of storage actually taking place, the effect of the composition's focus on the sad, stoic faces of the couple compounded by the title's power to suggest what lies beyond our vision, whether in terms of point of view or futurity.

The painting's title refers not to what the spectator sees but to what the couple are looking – are looking *back* – at. In the reverse field of their gaze lies what they will remember as the last sight of their homeland, the familiar place they must now leave behind: the last of England. The promise is for them a *memory* of England which lies in a future which, being in another place, is also out of frame.¹⁴

One reason why early period Pre-Raphaelite, or Pre-Raphaelite-influenced paintings which deal with memory are so easy for us to decipher

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is precisely because of their reliance on a commonly held set of symbols, something which leaves little scope for our imagination of the individual and personal: it is as though they refer to a collective, or an archetypally imagined past on which many may draw. This is the type of memory that Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) was to elaborate upon in his theory of collective memory: that which exists within the social process, reconstructing ‘an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society’.¹⁵ Yet, as we have already seen, an alternative version of memory was starting to come into contestation, one hinted at by Henry Holland, in his notion that impressions may return ‘without control or direction of the rational will’,¹⁶ and mediated through G. H. Lewes, with his rejection of the commonly used metaphors of storage retrieval. Lewes complained, in the final volume of *Problems of Life and Mind* (a volume prepared for publication by George Eliot), that the idea that memory is ‘the retention of impressions’ is ‘only a materialistic form of the spiritualistic hypothesis that the revival of past feelings is the unveiling of veiled images’.¹⁷ Rather, Lewes suggested, memory is something continuous, fluid, dynamic: it does not consist in dredging up or reviving something already fixed.

The far-reaching shift in the visual depiction of memory that took place in the second half of the century may be gauged if we take not a deliberately experimental work, but a painting from 1901 by John Byam Shaw, an artist strongly influenced by his Pre-Raphaelite predecessors. *Boer War, 1900* shows a sombrely dressed woman standing on a river bank and gnawing her finger-tips, as though trying to relieve her anxiety, or hold back the onrush of nostalgia. The catalogue epigraph comes from Christina Rossetti’s ‘A Bird Song’: ‘Oh last summer green things were greener,/ Brambles fewer, the blue sky bluer’,¹⁸ suggesting – given the viridian intensity of this picture from the spectator’s point of view – how perception is charged by one’s state of mind. In her left hand, the solitary figure holds a hank of purple wool; a strand is looped to her belt. While in compositional terms this serves to link her to nature, picking up on the colours of the wild flowers, it also thematically weaves her into the best known of all women who wait in wartime, a Penelope hoping for the return of her Ulysses. The painting enacts both the introspection of an individual experiencing absence or loss, and represents an Everywoman, missing husband or brother, or lover. It foregrounds the idea of memory as process, both painful and as part of an individualized and social catharsis through mourning, that which, as Freud was to write some sixteen years later, during another war, ‘is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on’.¹⁹ Potentially, too, this painting mourns the passing of an era in art, as Tim Barringer hypothesizes when

claiming that the profusion of vivid foliage recalls Millais' *Ophelia*:²⁰ instead of demanding that we decode the iconographic layers, Shaw's work is geared towards evocation: emotional stimulus, rather than ratiocination. In its overlapping layers of different modes of memory, it is a far more subtle work than, say, Noel Paton's *In Memoriam* (1858), 'dedicated' – to quote the Royal Academy catalogue entry – 'to commemorate the Christian heroism of the British Ladies in India during the Mutiny of 1857, and their ultimate Deliverance by British Powers'. Certainly, despite its tenuous claims to historical accuracy,²¹ it is possible that this picture provoked raw memories, or associations, among those who had experienced the events of the mutiny at first or second hand. But more readily, this may be seen as public art, memorial, rather than memory: capturing popular sentiment as manufactured in the press, celebrating certain notions of English womanhood, and at the same time turning the idea of memory into a convenient formula. In its memorializing, it partakes of the anxiety expressed by James Young in his remarkable book *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. 'Once we assign monumental form to memory,' he writes,

we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember. . . . Under the illusion that our memorial edifices will always be there to remind us, we take leave of them and return only at our convenience. To the extent that we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we become that much more forgetful.²²

The title of Paton's painting, *In Memoriam*, very obviously exploits popular familiarity with Tennyson's poem. With its blatant nationalistic message, it contrasts forcefully with another work that makes use of the same elegy, a late Millais landscape, *Dew-drenched Furze* (c.1889–90). This painting shows a forest glade, luminous in the early morning light, dew beading on the green-grey foliage and spiders' webs, the eye led into a misty distance framed by the hazy bronze branches of autumnal trees. In its use of technique, rather than subject matter, to suggest state of mind, it represents the significant shift that took place in the creation of visual evocations of memory in the later part of the Victorian period. Throughout Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, memory is presented in a way which makes Paton's appropriation of the poet's title peculiarly inapt, given that his painting depends on iconic fixity. The poem shows how memory works upon the past – or the past upon memory – continually feeding into, and being transformed by the present. In other words, memory is something that happens in the here and now, as is implied by this Millais painting. The title comes, of course, from section xi of Tennyson's work: 'Calm and deep peace on this high wold,/And on these dews that drench the furze,/'

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And all the silvery gossamers/That twinkle into green and gold.²³ When Millais' son recalled that here the artist was attempting 'a scene such as had probably never been painted before, and might possibly prove to be unpaintable',²⁴ one must surely understand this not only in terms of the technical challenge offered by the natural scene, but – perhaps in the light of the conversation Millais and Tennyson had had thirty-five years earlier about 'the limits of realism in painting'²⁵ – as a painting which attempts to indicate how a landscape, empty of human form or symbolic object, can none the less be redolent of memory.

What I am working towards is the suggestion that the turn in painting in the later nineteenth century away from referential realism particularly benefited the depiction of memory – not so much the *object* of memory, but the *state* of remembering itself. Charles Baudelaire anticipated this shift when he wrote in the *Salon of 1846* that, while memory is the great criterion of art, 'Exact imitation spoils memory. There are some wretched painters for whom the least wart is a stroke of luck; not only is there no fear of their forgetting it, but they find it necessary to paint it four times as large as life. . . . A memory is equally thwarted by too much particularization as by too much generalization.'²⁶ Baudelaire's comments date from photography's first full decade: the medium around which discussion of memory and the visual in the nineteenth century has tended to cluster. Indeed, one might well go along with the idea that the late nineteenth-century increase in suggestive, indefinite styles of painting designed to evoke rather than to record is directly related to the exponentially increasing taxonomic, archival function of photography, establishing supposedly objective records in opposition to highly personalized impressions. As Elizabeth Edwards puts it: 'photographs belong to that class of object formed specifically to remember . . . [they] express a desire for memory and the act of keeping a photograph is . . . an act of faith in the future.'²⁷ And, as we know through Roland Barthes' formulation in *Camera Lucida*, the concept of the 'photographic referent' provides the crucial difference between painting and photography:

not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph. . . . The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star.²⁸

From its inception, the photograph promised a continuation of the past into the present, and encouraged the poignant hope of an impossible endurance. Thus in 1843, Elizabeth Barrett wrote excitedly about the

daguerreotype to Mary Russell Mitford: 'Think of a man sitting down in the sun & leaving his facsimile in all its full completion of outline & shadow, steadfast on a plate, at the end of a minute & a half!! – The Mesmeric disembodiment of spirits strikes one as a degree less marvellous.' She has, she says, lately seen several examples, and she is 'longing to have such a memorial of every Being dear to me in the world. It is not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases – but the association, & the sense of nearness involved in the thing . . . the fact of the *very shadow of the person* lying there fixed for ever!'²⁹ Historians of photography themselves are habitually haunted by the sense of the uncanny which adheres to the medium. 'The possibility of the photographic image,' comments Eduardo Cadava in the course of some highly suggestive observations about photography, bereavement, and the medium's lessons for the operations of history, 'requires that there be such things as ghosts and phantoms.'³⁰ 'Loss and its marker,' notes Jennifer Green-Lewis,

the will to preserve, are of course central to any consideration of photographs . . . every question about why a photograph is made, like every additional speculation about why it is displayed (or hidden away), concerns loss in its implication that a photograph has to do with some impending change in the status quo. A photograph is concerned with the way that things are but will not remain, or perhaps the way we wish they were, or the way we wish they might have been. The perceived threat that this stage will be lost is inherent to the act of photographing.³¹

Yet such comments as these, however, stressing the function and associations of the camera as a recording instrument, fail to take into account the potential of the photograph as an aesthetic medium.³² The emphasis falls – in Roland Barthes' well-known terms – on the denotative, rather than the connotative, function of the photographic text,³³ and its deictic demand that we look at *what* is represented, rather than attend to the means of representation. In the past two decades, photography's indexical relationship to the world has been significantly disrupted by the techniques of digital photography, and the boundaries between photography, painting, sculpture and performance have become increasingly porous, so that, as Geoffrey Batchen puts it, when writing of so-called 'post-photography':

Photography has become 'photography,' eternally framed by the quotation marks of historical distance and a certain awkward self-consciousness (that embarrassment one feels in the presence of the recently deceased). In short, for these artists, photography has taken

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on a memorial role, not of the subjects it depicts but of its own operation as a system of representation.³⁴

Yet this disruption of referentiality, if not occurring in such an absolute form as with the altered pixel, was no novelty in the nineteenth century, and not just found in relation to the obvious examples of the composite image or the faked photograph. Manipulation not only of soft focus techniques, but of types of paper, modes of printing, and such darkroom techniques as dodging and burning enabled the art photography of the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century to create scenes that evoked loss and pastness. Such representations of the *idea* of memory exploited the potential of visual indistinction, which could be combined with the creation of nostalgia through scene or subject matter, as we see in – to take an example which deliberately links the visual with the literary – the composition of the photograph which formed the frontispiece of *The Woodlanders* in the 1912 Wessex edition of Hardy's novels. Here, the lane curves to the left and downward, shaded by bare-branched trees, dropping away from any suggestion of an advance into the future: the grainy image, with its bleached foreground, emanating an uncanny emptiness as it mourns the passing of the rapidly changing rural life. The emptiness encourages our own projection on to it, whether of scenes from the novel or our own memories, or our version of cultural commonplaces, sometimes themselves already created through painting. The idea of the empty road and wintry branches echoes the formulaic series of canvases by Atkinson Grimshaw depicting suburban Leeds in the late 1870s and 1880s, with dimly lit gloomy mansions hidden away behind walls, fallen leaves in the damp lanes, and the occasional figure of a solitary female – all designed to stimulate a state of self-indulgently melancholy retrospection.³⁵

Despite having called on Barthes' well-known formulation of the referential nature of the photographic image, one must also note his sustained insistence on the personal nature of a photograph's impact – a stress on the importance of subjectivity that meshes with the developing theories about memory in the mid- and late Victorian period, and that, despite photography's differences from painting when it comes to representing the past, link the forms together in one crucial respect. 'Memory,' asserts William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), 'requires more than mere dating of a fact in the past. It must be dated in *my* past.'³⁶ This is what, for James, marks it off from any broader category of history. Such theories may be said to culminate in Bergson's formulation of subjective memory in *Matter and Memory*, where he maintains that memories constitute the human soul. With this in mind, I want finally to turn to a painting which tackles, head-on, the idea that the concept of memory has far more to do with a notion of the soul, and is far more evasive of language – or,

indeed, of any form of direct representation – than any of the works at which we have looked so far. It is notable, after all, that the more enigmatic of these – *Boer War 1900* and *Dew-Drenched Furze* – manifest a nervous dependency on the referential properties of the word when it came to providing a catalogue gloss to the emotions they were summoning up. Moreover, as an imaginative composition on canvas, the painting is freed up from that guarantee offered up by the technology of traditional photography that this is a depiction, in some way, of something that once had some material existence out there in the ‘real’ world and in a ‘real’ instant of time – however manipulated the captured image may be.

Elihu Vedder’s *Memory* (1870) (Figure 2) is the work of an American artist resident in Rome. It is an eerie painting – not at all dissimilar to a composition created using Photoshop’s Layer Mask tool – showing a band of stormy clouds rolling in above a darkening sea.³⁷ While there is enough reflected sunlight from behind the clouds to illuminate the waves – waves which seem to be rolling towards the artist/spectator with an unerring regularity – the eye is led into the storm-darkening horizon, and towards the strange, shadowy face of a young woman that hovers in the sky. It is surely no coincidence that the head is a female one: from the depictions of fallen women that I discussed earlier, through Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s portrayal of the goddess of memory (and subject of an 1868 photograph by Julia Margaret Cameron) *Mnemosyne* (1881), to Frank Dicksee’s rendering of the power of music to conjure up earlier moments in *A Reverie* (1894), the concept of memory is associated almost invariably with the feminine.³⁹ By cultural association, this emphasizes the equation of remembering with being in a state of passive receptivity, and, indeed, the correlation of memory with the irrational. At this early stage of his career, Vedder was influenced not only by second-wave Pre-Raphaelitism, and especially by Simeon Solomon, but by his own capacity for responding to the irrational and the mystical: by what he termed ‘the ease with which I can conjure up visions’.³⁹ This preternatural head which peers through the clouds is the culmination of a series of drawings in which he experimented with a visionary presence hovering above the waves. This painting of *Memory*, rather than *representing* a memory, like so many paintings which, rather crudely, attempt to compress past and present into one image, is a work in which Vedder tries to image the *state* of memory: to emphasize not only its necessary subjectivity, but its presentism.

Pierre Nora, in his influential article ‘Between memory and history’, has tried to separate out memory and history:

Memory and history, far from being synonymous, are ... in many respects opposed. ... History ... is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is always a

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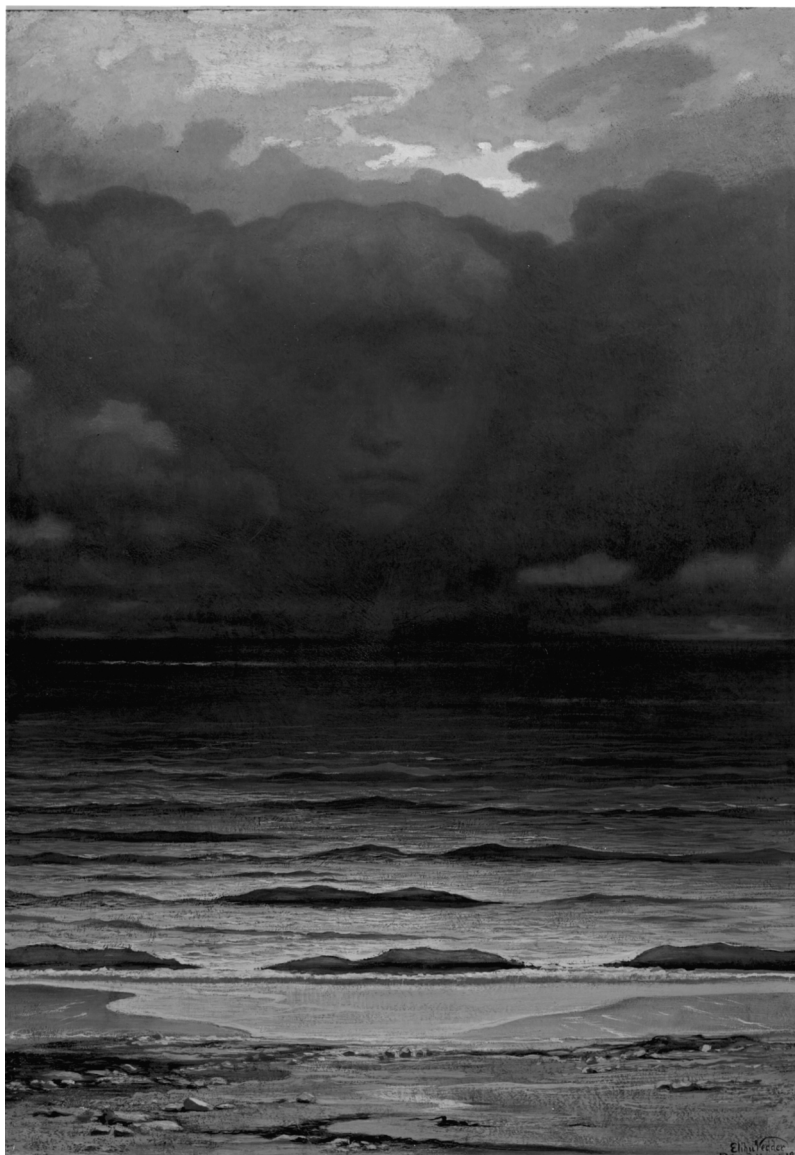


Figure 2 Elihu Vedder, US, New York, New York, 1836–1923, *Memory*, 1870. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Mr and Mrs William Preston Harrison Collection (no. 33.11.1).

phenomenon of the present, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, being a phenomenon of emotion and magic, accommodates only the facts that suit it. It thrives on vague, telescoping reminiscences, on hazy general impressions or specific symbolic details. It is vulnerable to transferences, screen memories, censorings, and projections of all kinds.⁴⁰

In itself, this seems almost too apt a gloss on Vedder's picture, with its emotive vagueness; its sense of something trying to break through into the present, yet not fully visible or understood. However, to separate memory and history neatly into present and past, or subjective and objective – for Nora's terms tempt such a reduction – is as false an enterprise as to assume that looking at the world is entirely a physiological matter, a question of vibrations in the nervous system; or, conversely, so entirely a question of individualized perception that no shared understanding is ever achievable. If memory is a concept which continually collapses distinctions, whether disciplinary, temporal or phenomenological, then this painting, like that of Cortada's with which I began my discussion, attempts to capture the work of imagination, figuration, and interpenetration of material and psychological worlds which the act of remembering entails. As nineteenth-century painting started to prise itself free from the differing strands of realism which emphasized the world's material aspects, and increasingly explored what was involved in the actual activity of perception, so, too, was it enabled to depict the complexity of the processes – both physical and metaphysical – involved in memory. More than this, Vedder's work is a depiction which intimates, like a number of later Victorian commentators on psychology, that memory is, in fact, both process and state of mind. What has been foregrounded is the *condition* of memory, rather than the thing remembered. In a way which the referential properties of verbal language and the traditional photographic medium make hard to achieve, it is, above all, a depiction of affect, without object.

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Acknowledgement

The ideas in this piece were first tried out in two earlier, and somewhat different versions, delivered as papers at the Victorian Literature and the Visual Arts Conference, University of Hertfordshire, November 2000, and the MLA convention, New York, 2002.

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Notes

- 1 Here I am drawing loosely on the discussion of proprioception and viscerality as different means of enfolding and retaining both one's perceptual knowledge and one's affective responses within the body that Brian Massumi has suggestively developed in *Parables for the Virtual. Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), esp. pp. 57–62.
- 2 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), provides a lucid explanation of such architectural mnemonic systems. The degree to which each period has developed its own metaphors for the retrieval systems involved in remembering has been interestingly discussed in Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 3 Chris Westbury and Daniel C. Dennett, 'Mining the past to construct the future: memory and belief as forms of knowledge', in *Memory, Brain, and Belief*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter and Elaine Scarry (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 19.
- 4 David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel. Connected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 7, 6.
- 5 Lodge, *Consciousness*, p. 7. The essay to which he refers is Francis Crick and Cristof Koch, 'Towards a neurobiological theory of consciousness', *Seminars in the Neuroscience*, 2 (1990), pp. 263–75.
- 6 James Hinton, 'Seeing with the eyes shut' (1862), reprinted in *Thoughts on Health, and Some of its Conditions* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1871), pp. 218–19.
- 7 I have written on this issue much more extensively in *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 8 F.H. Bradley, 'Some remarks on memory and inference' (1899), in *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), pp. 357–60.
- 9 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (5th edn 1908, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer) (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 33.
- 10 Samuel Butler, *Unconscious Memory: A Comparison between the theory of Dr. Ewald Hering, and the 'Philosophy of the Unconscious' of Dr. Edward von Hartmann* (London: David Bogue, 1888), p. 83.
- 11 Frances Power Cobbe, 'The fallacies of memory' (1866), in *Hours of Work and Play* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1867), p. 103.
- 12 Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850; New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co, 1990), p. 573.
- 13 Or, as Henry Holland put it more abstractly in his influential 1852 work, *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, there are certain 'assured facts':

there is a faculty of our mental constitution, by which the successive states of mind passed through, whether of thought or sensation, leave impressions behind of more or less clearness and persistence – that these impressions of former states or acts are dormant to the consciousness, until revived by some new, exciting cause – and that such causes are either associations independent of the will; or acts of recollection, in which volition is directly concerned, however we may define its manner of operation.

Henry Holland, *Chapters on Mental Physiology* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1852), p. 150.
- 14 Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets. Acts of Memory and Imagination* (1992; new edition, London and New York: Verso, 1992), p. 130.

- 15 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 40.
- 16 Holland, *Mental Physiology*, p. 29. While Halbwachs' discussion of dreams certainly acknowledged the involuntary and irrational operations of memory, he emphasized how these solitary operations of an individual's mind differ from all other types of memory since they lack organization and structure.
- 17 G.H. Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind: Third Series Continued* (London: Trübner & Co, 1879), p. 57.
- 18 Christina Rossetti, *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. R.W. Crump (3 vols; Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), pp. i, 213.
- 19 Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol.14, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 243.
- 20 Tim Barringer, *The Pre-Raphaelites: Reading the Image* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), pp. 168–9.
- 21 The painting is clearly heavily dependent on subsequently discredited accounts of rape and massacre, which would have been far more obvious in the original version: notoriously, critical revulsion made Paton replace the Indian sepoy with fixed bayonets who were originally heading down the steps with kilted highlanders. See M.H. Noel-Paton and J.P. Campbell, *Noel Paton. 1821–1901* (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1990), pp. 19–20.
- 22 James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 5.
- 23 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed. Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 46.
- 24 John Guille Millais, *The Life & Letters of Sir John Everett Millais* (2 vols; London: Methuen & Co, 1899) pp. i, 213.
- 25 Alfred Tennyson, quoted in Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: a Memoir* (2 vols; London: Macmillan, 1897), pp. i, 380.
- 26 *Art in Paris: 1845–1862. Salons and Other Exhibitions Reviewed by Charles Baudelaire*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1985), p. 80.
- 27 Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photographs as objects of memory', in *Material Memories. Design and Evocation*, ed. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999), p. 222.
- 28 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981), pp. 76, 80–1.
- 29 Elizabeth Barrett to Mary Russell Mitford, 7 December 1843, in *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford, 1836–1854*, ed. Meredith B. Raymond and Mary Rose Sullivan (3 vols; Winfield, KS: Wedgestone Press, 1983), pp. ii, 357–8. Contrast, however, George Eliot, who, after the death of George Lewes, deeply regretted buying an enlarged copy of his photographic portrait: 'It is smoothed down and altered, and each time I look at it I feel its unlikeness more. *Himself as he was* is what I see inwardly, and I am afraid of outward images lest they should corrupt the inward.' George Eliot to Elma Stuard, 24 December 1879, *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (9 vols; New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1954–78), pp. vii, 233.
- 30 Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light. Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 11.

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- 31 Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians. Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 17.
- 32 To be fair to Green-Lewis, she does go on almost immediately to write of the limitations of 'treating any photograph as either window or icon', and of the importance of attending 'to the historically contingent creation of the meanings of photography in the larger workings of culture, [which] restore language to photography . . . by reinstating its images in a complex network of discourses within which those images began, and continued, to acquire meaning' (*Framing the Victorians*, p. 19).
- 33 See Roland Barthes, 'The photographic message', in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), pp. 15–31.
- 34 Geoffrey Batchen, *Each Wild Idea. Writing Photography History* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2001), p. 111.
- 35 Such paintings by Grimshaw include *St Anne's Lane, Headingley* (c.1880–85); *A Yorkshire House* (1878), *November Morning* (1883) and *Sixty Years Ago* (1879).
- 36 William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (2 vols; London: Macmillan, 1891), pp. i, 650.
- 37 By way of example, consider Daniel Giordan's image 'Tomb of the Capulets', a reference to the process of forgetting, in which the image of a faded and dying rose is blended into a network of branches and leaves. The top of the work – analogous to the clarity with which the waves breaking on the shore is painted in Vedder's picture – is sharply focused, and marked off by a thin line from the remainder of the image: 'The horizontal division at the top of the image,' explains Giordan, 'calls our attention to the relationship between clear conscious thought and the vague and elusive realm of subliminal thought. The line represents a point of demarcation between recollection and the gradual decay of memory.' Daniel Giordan, *The Art of Photoshop* (Indianapolis: Sams Publishing, 2003), p. 47.
- 38 I would like to thank Rosemarie Bodenheimer for drawing this fact to my attention.
- 39 Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions of V. Written for his own fun and that of his friends* (Boston, MA, and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), p. 408.
- 40 Pierre Nora, 'General introduction: Between memory and history', in *Realms of Memory. Rethinking the French Past* (first published in *Representations*, 1989) (3 vols; New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. i, 3.

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