

RECLAIMING MEMORY: LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND THE
RISE OF MEMORY AS PROPERTY, 1860-1945

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To Janet Reeves Covington

and

In loving memory of J.S. Covington, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION

In a *New York Times* article in February 2011, the world-record holding memory champion Joshua Foer revealed his secrets for committing information to memory and observed: “For all of our griping over the everyday failings of our memories—the misplaced keys, the forgotten name, the factoid stuck on the tip of the tongue—our biggest failing may be that *we forget how rarely we forget.*”¹ Foer’s assumption that his readers expect to forget mundane details and even important information demonstrates how completely scientific findings about the fallibility of human memory have overcome initial cultural resistance and permeated our culture. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, scientists were first beginning to think about memory as an object of scientific inquiry and to contemplate ways to conduct memory experiments, and they found that they were challenging some of the most engrained and cherished beliefs about what it means to be human. An 1880 article entitled “Illusions of Memory” in *Cornhill Magazine* summarizes the common reaction to suggestions that memory is unreliable:

To challenge the veracity of a person’s memory is one of the boldest things one can do in the way of attacking deep-seated conviction. Memory is the peculiar domain of the individual. In going back in recollection to the scenes of other years he is drawing on the secret storehouse of his own consciousness, with which a stranger must not intermeddle....To cast doubt on a man’s memory is commonly resented as a rude impertinence. It looks like an attempt of another to walk into the strictly private apartment of his own mind. Even if the challenger professedly bases his challenge on the testimony of his own memory, the challenged party is hardly likely to allow the right of comparing testimonies. He can in most cases boldly assert that those who differ with him are lacking in his power of recollection. The past, in become the past, has, for most people, ceased

¹ Joshua Foer, “Secrets of Mind Gamer: How I Trained My Brain and Became a World-Class Memory Athlete,” *The New York Times Magazine*, February 15, 2011. Emphasis mine.

to be a common object of reference; it has become a part of the individual's own inner self, and cannot be easily dislodged or shaken.²

The author identifies the primary cultural hurdle confronting scientific investigations of memory: as philosophers such as John Locke have theorized, memory is not just something that the mind *does*, it is a fundamental part of who we *are*.

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century memory scientists did not set out to compromise faith in memory and identity based on memory, but they verified the existence of two hazards with the capacity to destroy this faith: forgetting and construction. Within the first twenty-five years of heightened scientific scrutiny of memory, scientists found sufficient evidence to suggest that forgetting, far from the exception to the rule, is the normal response to experience, and that imaginative reconstruction plays a significant role in how we remember past events. Of course, even John Locke, the reigning memory theorist until the late nineteenth century, acknowledged that forgetting will ensue “if [the memory] be not sometimes renewed by repeated exercise of the senses, or reflection on those kinds of objects which at first occasioned them, the print wears out, and at last there remains nothing to be seen.”³ Evidence gathered by the first memory scientists led them to suggest that forgetting happens much more quickly than Locke imagined and is liable to be altered in renewal. In 1886, Frances Power Cobbe neatly summarized the scientific findings to date: “Memory is a finger mark traced on shifting sand, ever exposed to obliteration when left unrenewed,

² J.S., “Illusions of Memory,” *Cornhill Magazine*, 41:244 (April 1880), 416-17. After assuring his reader that he will not “commit the sacrilege of questioning the veracity of memory in general,” the author proceeds to catalogue the many ways that memory fails to accurately reproduce the events of the past, drawing on scientific evidence to support his points.

³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 151.

and if renewed, then modified, and made not the same, but a fresh and different mark.”⁴

The implications of these findings for history, the formation of individual and collective identity, the judicial system, language, day-to-day existence, and many other aspects of life were overwhelming.

Rather than incorporating these theories into the cultural vocabulary, however, the overarching response after the first explosion of discussion about memory was to maintain previous notions about memory despite emerging evidence to the contrary.⁵ New scientific theories of memory were still a part of the cultural logic, but there was a concerted effort to avoid thinking about the consequences of these theories. Even Sigmund Freud, who was undoubtedly familiar with emerging theories and, in his role as a scientist, could not help but acknowledge them, bolstered the cultural amnesia about recent developments in memory theory by proffering his own theories, which aligned more closely with Locke than with new experimental psychologists.⁶ Consider Freud’s “A Note Upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad’: after admitting that only by writing down his experience can he be certain that “it will have remained unaltered and so have escaped the possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory,” Freud proceeds to theorize that memory is like the wax tablet of the writing pad, with all

⁴ Frances Power Cobbe, “The Fallacies of Memory,” *The Galaxy*, May 15, 1886.

⁵ Discussion about memory in the periodical press peaked during the 1890-1899 decade, and then declined swiftly. See Appendix A.

⁶ In demonstrating the Freud’s work responds to scientific works rather than joining forces with them, I am aligning myself with Harold Bloom’s argument that Freud is not a scientist but a cultural “mythographer” providing Western civilization with its most influential metaphorical lexicon. See Bloom’s *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (New York: Warner Books, 2002).

impressions permanently engraved upon its surface.⁷ Freud's influential theories of memory and repression dominated early twentieth-century discourse but did not consider the experimental evidence of empirical psychologists.

If Freud was one of the most influential thinkers about memory during the emergence of the sciences of memory, another was Marcel Proust.⁸ *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the seven-volume text about the Proust's memories begins with an overture in which he tastes a piece of the madeleine dipped in lime-blossom tea and suddenly finds that his memories of childhood have opened in front of his eyes, like the book in front of the reader:

But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection. And as soon as I had recognized the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me...immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage...and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.⁹

For Proust, and for his close friend the philosopher Henri Bergson, the problem with memory is not that it can disappear or change over time, but that it is involuntary; striving after memory is useless because it requires precise and usually physical stimuli. When you hit the magic

⁷ Sigmund Freud, "A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad,'" *Theories of Memory*, Eds. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 114.

⁸ Richard Terdiman's *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* identifies a "memory crisis" in Western literature, beginning with the French Revolution and extending through the early twentieth century. His two primary figures in this text are Proust and Freud, the two thinkers that define the crisis in which there is too much and too little memory. Proust's work is emblematic of "too much" memory, a hypermnesia that can ultimately burden the rememberer as Nietzsche explains in "The Uses and Abuses of History for Life" and Hayden White describes in "The Burden of History." Freud's work, on the other hand, describes the paucity of memory of important, particularly traumatic, events. According to Freud, these events, which are repressed and display themselves only in symptomatic expressions, cause mental illnesses and worrisome behaviors that always hint at a hidden cause.

⁹ Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, trans. C.K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 50-1.

combination, though, the past re-emerges, altered only from the first experience by the knowledge that it is a memory. While involuntary memory was only one of many counter-scientific memory theories swirling around in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century atmosphere, Proust's theory of memory—like Freud's—insists that original experiences are stored *as they were* and, under the right conditions, are available for recall.

Far from being a literary outlier, Proust's concept of memory as impervious to the ravages of time, manipulation, and suggestion exemplifies the literary response to the new scientific theories of memory. This dissertation demonstrates the ways that late Victorian and modernist literature was particularly resistant to contentions that memory is unstable and changeable, clinging instead to the Lockean theory of personal identity based on persistent and stable memories over time.¹⁰ While traditional wisdom dictates that Victorian literature would ascribe to unscientific ideas about memory, modernist memory models that diverge from the new scientific theories of memory fly in the face of accepted beliefs about the literature of this period. Ever since the British critic May Sinclair plucked the term “the stream of consciousness” from William James's *Principles of Psychology* to describe the prose of Dorothy Richardson and James Joyce, many critics have believed that modernist literary experiments attempting to capture in words the subjective experience of existing in the modern world do so in harmony with the scientific discoveries of the time. However, while modernist writers *did* annex certain scientific terms and theories, they avoided the most troubling theories dealing with memory—particularly for a community engaged in a devastating war. Instead, the modernists generally continued the Victorian tradition of presenting literature in which memory reproduces an

¹⁰ Locke's theory of personal identity depends on remembering past actions and recognize oneself *as* oneself in those past actions: “[a person] is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places...as far as any intelligent Being can repeat the *Idea* of any past Action with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present Action; so far it is the same *personal self*” (335-6).

unaltered past. As a result, modernist literature diverges from modern science at just the moment when it is typically understood that the two converge.

But asserting that modernist writers produced stable and unchanging models of memory appears to contradict more than the assumption that modernists wrote in harmony with radical scientific developments. What, for example, of the fleeting moment that, like the skywriting in *Mrs. Dalloway*, fades as soon as its meaning becomes apparent? Mrs. Dalloway wants to prioritize the present moment over the past or the future, as she thinks in a pregnant moment: “But every one remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her; the fat lady in the cab.”¹¹ The past is certain, unchanging, and available whenever she wants it, *Mrs. Dalloway* suggests, but the present is a pressing concern because it is escaping as quickly as it happens. I argue that the modernist preoccupation with presentness, such as we see in the interior monologue and the focus on everyday details, is an attempt to *capture* and *preserve* the present moment. Samuel Butler, one of the few Victorians that many modernists would admit as a literary forebear,¹² at times reduces all existence to the present moment: “strictly speaking the individual is born and dies from moment to moment that is to say he is never an individual at all except during the present moment.”¹³ However, by preserving these moments in language that is “tough as catgut & evanescent as a butterfly’s bloom,” modernists construct a fantasy of enduring presentness: a permanent and repeatable record of the present that reproduces even the

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1925), 9.

¹² Although Samuel Butler is no longer considered a significant—or at least canonical—literary figure, his work was indispensable to British modernists. May Sinclair, Virginia Woolf, Robert Graves and other figures were enthusiastic fans of his work.

¹³ Letter from Samuel Butler to E. J. Jones, 1885, British Library, Box 44030.

fleetingness of the passing moment.¹⁴ Modernists evince anxiety about memory not only by establishing the past as secure and unchanging, but also by recording the present, not as something that is past and must be remembered as such, but as something that is eternally present and doesn't require the help of memory at all.

Writers in the late Victorian and modernist periods also demonstrated their anxiety about memory by asserting that memory *belongs* to the rememberer. The author of the article in the *Cornhill Magazine* directly compares memory to a “private apartment” and indicates that questioning memories is the equivalent of criminal trespass and theft, and the writer Ellen Harcourt states explicitly, “A good memory is not everybody’s property.”¹⁵ Most writers during this period subtly suggest, quietly demonstrate, or work to ensure that memory belongs to the rememberer and, at times, is valuable to others. In general, writers indicate that memories are components of the rememberer’s identity and thus belong to him. This conception of memory holds with the theory of possessive individualism that, according to C.B. Macpherson, dominated nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought and advanced the idea that the individual is “owner of himself” and “proprietor of his person and capacities.”¹⁶ During the literary shifts during period, writers began to literalize the propertization of memory. Around the turn of the century, British writers increasingly turned to their own experiences in their literature. This trend intensified after the First World War, and not just for the many returning soldiers like Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves who produced literary memoirs that focused largely on their war experiences. The vast majority of the texts that included authorial memories

¹⁴ Virginia Woolf on Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Wednesday, April 8, 1925, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 3*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 7.

¹⁵ Ellen Harcourt, “Diaries,” *Bow Bells* (September 14, 1884), 163.

¹⁶ C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 3.

transformed into literature were not considered memoirs or autobiographies. Instead, slightly fictionalized personal memories became a mainstay for modernist fiction writers during the 1920s and 1930s. The literary shift from the primarily imaginative to the autobiographical during the late Victorian and modernist periods—not in terms of genre but the source of literary material—is more than what Fredric Jameson identifies as the hyperprivatized language and subjectivity of an isolating capitalist culture.¹⁷ In addition, by turning memories into literary commodities, the author's personal memories were preserved in perpetuity, protected as intellectual property from appropriation, and turned into money.

Of course, writers almost always draw on their own experiences to create literature, but the late Victorian and modernist turn to personal memories was an altogether new development. Whereas, for example, Emily Bronte based certain scenes in her novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847) on incidents from her own life, the story was predominantly the work of her imagination, and the incidents drawn from her own experience were heavily fictionalized. Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), on the other hand, is his life story barely disguised as fiction. A key change from Bronte to Butler is that at the beginning of the twentieth century, these lightly fictionalized memories began to be considered literature. Although the few autobiographies in the Victorian canon such as Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* are highly literary, Victorian autobiographies

¹⁷ See Fredric Jameson, "Beyond the Cave: Demystifying the Ideology of Modernism." *The Ideologies of Theory, Vol. 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1988) 115-132. Jameson argues that the paradox of modern writing is that experience is no longer generalizable and aesthetic expression unable to communicate modern conditions—as they could in the nineteenth-century realist novel—and so the writer finds that any story drawn from experience is necessarily untrue and any truth is necessarily uncommunicable. I do not take issue with Jameson's argument, but I would like to make two points: first, while we can apply Jameson's critique to British modernists, the historical arch of his argument suggests that this paradox grew over the course of the twentieth century, reaching its full expression in 1975 when he wrote the article; and, second, I assert that modernist writers, such as those discussed in this dissertation, do not discuss this paradox, and, indeed, writers like Joyce and Woolf were striving to express generalizable truths about the *process* (not content) of experiencing the modern world. By preserving the content of memories in literature, the writer was thus able to use the memory to make a generalizable point about process while still protecting the individuality of the memory because the actual experience is not generalized.

were not generally received as literature, and were simultaneously denigrated for their simple and unimaginative reporting of a life and revered for their authenticity during a time that valued realism and moral virtue. Around the turn of the century, writers turned more frankly to their own experiences, and by the modernist period were sometimes not even bothering to disguise the memory-source of their work. The transformation of the author's memories into art separated modernist writers from other people who were writing during the early part of the twentieth century. Hugh Walpole, a novelist in the tradition of John Galsworthy and a critic of modernism, summarized in 1933 the reactionary literary response to the aestheticized personal memory, saying that what he calls "the subjective autobiographical novel characteristic of the modernists... was very much easier *and* very much more modern than the weary old business of inventing a narrative and creating characters *outside* yourself."¹⁸

Although Walpole suggests that the autobiographical novel is part of degeneracy of the modernist movement, the roots of this kind of book stretches back into the middle of the nineteenth century. I call the sub-genre of the slightly fictional autobiography the fictionalized autobiography, which emerged with Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4) even though the sub-genre did not take hold until the early twentieth century, beginning with Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* and gaining cultural traction with Proust's oeuvre.¹⁹ This unabashed mixture of autobiography and novel deploys the authoritative voice that speaks, as if beyond the grave, and "implies objectivity and detachment and strongly reinforces the retrospective quality of the

¹⁸ Hugh Walpole, "Tendencies of the Modern Novel," *Fortnightly Review* 137 (October 1933), 413.

¹⁹ In *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Nicholas Dames discusses the rise and fall of the fictional autobiography (1847-1860) in which the author writes a fictional account in the style of an autobiography. I adopt and modify Dames's term because the fictional autobiography gives way in prominence to the new sub-genre, the fictionalized autobiography, which effects a genre chiasmus: instead of a fiction written like an autobiography, it is an autobiography written like fiction.

narrative,” but without the autobiographer’s claim to strict veracity.²⁰ The thrust of the fictionalized autobiography is to portray the truth of the author’s character rather than truthfully recounting all the events in the author’s life. Indeed, “Victorian autobiographers are assumed to be sincere in everything they report” even though they might leave out irrelevant details regarding their personal lives, but there is a shift in discourse about Victorian autobiography towards the truthfulness of character depiction in roughly 1870, right about the time that Butler began to conceive of and write *The Way of All Flesh*.²¹

The fictionalized autobiography, with its emphasis on character rather than events, is an indirect result of the discussions about memory occurring at the end of the nineteenth century. As distrust about the reliability of memory grew, the shift to a focus on character and a degree of resignation regarding the possibility or necessity of accurately reproducing life events fueled acceptance of the mixture of actual memory and fiction that is the fictionalized autobiography. Before 1860, reviewers and writers extolled the differences between “factual” autobiography and fiction, and rejoiced when a poorly executed autobiography enabled the reviewer to expose the writer as a fraud.²² An 1856 disquisition on autobiography in the *Scottish Review* asserts that no matter how unimportant or inferior the individual writing the autobiography, “a faithful record of

²⁰ Clinton Machann, *The Genre of Autobiography in Victorian Literature* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 4.

²¹ Machann 10.

²² For example, see the review for *The Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister* (1834) in the *Imperial Magazine* (4:48, December 1834), p. 569. The reviewer gleefully pronounces: “The book purports to be the autobiography of a dissenting minister; we say *purports* to be, because it must be most manifest to any reader, of ordinary sagacity, that all the author’s representations of having been educated in a dissenting community are as unblushingly false, as his professions of anything like religious experience are audacious and sickening.”

facts is never unimportant.”²³ For this author, the difference between fact and fiction is stark, and the record of facts always a worthwhile pursuit: “[if] the *graphy* be honestly done, no matter how shabby a morsel the *autos* may be.”²⁴ After 1860, the truthfulness of autobiography is questioned less frequently, although discussion about the unreliability of memory in popular periodicals skyrockets. Indeed, memory is described as “treacherous” almost twice as many times in the decade following 1860 as it was the previous decade.²⁵ As the possibility for writing a factual autobiography began to be called into question, the line dividing the autobiography and the novel naturally grew blurry, and the fictionalized autobiography simply blurred the line a little more.

By transforming personal memories into literature, the modernist writer preserved her memory-constituted identity, and also turned these memories into commodities. To ensure that a work of art is recognized as such—and that the artist’s memories will enter into cultural memory—the work must be mass-produced and sold. Without consumers to buy and read externalized memories, they lose the enduring reality and value promised by a place in the cultural memory. This view of art as valuable by *virtue* of reproduction complicates Walter Benjamin’s assertion that the authenticity of the art object depreciates with reproduction. To Benjamin, the reproductions increasingly available in the twentieth century destroy the aura of the work of art—namely the value of a one-of-a-kind original. Modernist writers implicitly counter this argument, declaring that instead of losing value through reproduction, memories gain value when they are externalized, sold, and mass-produced. To put it another way, memories acquire value only when they are divorced from the aura of the remembering

²³ “Autobiography,” *Scottish Review* (4:16, October 1856), 344.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 345.

²⁵ See Appendix C.

individual, that one-of-a-kind mortal body. Literary reproductions of memory, which do not alter or degrade over time, enact the cultural fantasy of enduring memory at the time when scientists were systematically dismantling cherished beliefs about how human memory works. With memory safely stored in literature, writers and readers can indulge in the illusion that there are endless reproductions of the past, all exactly the same, immutable, available for reference, with each reproduction etched more firmly into the collective memory.

In this dissertation, I am suggesting that the gradual emergence of the sciences of memory and the changes to the genre, content, and form of what was considered literary art are not a coincidence, but are the result of a literary—and indeed more broadly cultural—response to the disquieting theories of memory that scientists posed. While I have sought in vain for evidence of a feedback loop during this period, with literary and scientific theories of memory mutually informing one another, the evidence points to a linear relationship between these two discourses: scientists act and literary writers react.

A Short History of the Sciences of Memory, 1860-1945

Until roughly 1860, philosophers controlled the discussion about normally functioning human memory, and, in general, they concluded that most of the time the normal memory retains and accurately reproduces past events. From Plato's wax tablet into which impressions are etched—an idea that is echoed in Freud's mystic writing pad—to the Renaissance art of memory, which describes words, thoughts, or ideas as inscribed upon the memory, the idea prevailed that a perfectly functioning and trained memory would retain information exactly. By the Enlightenment, John Locke took his place as the principal memory philosopher, and he linked

memory to personal identity. The sense of personal identity is formed, Locke argues, from remembering events of the past over time. Locke and David Hartley are the fathers of the theory of associationism, which was the predominant memory theory up until the late nineteenth century. According to this theory, memories are formed through chains of association with other events, concepts or ideas. Remembering occurs when the person comes across an item in the associative chain, which activates a chain reaction leading to the memory. For example, a child forms a memory of losing his beloved yellow ball on the day when his mother was baking ginger snaps. In later life, the smell of baking ginger snaps can activate the associative chain that triggers the memory of the yellow ball. Empiricists like Locke argue that all these associations must be learned or acquired, and that memories include numerous irrelevant details (such as the baking ginger snaps) that are simply caught up in the associative chain. Locke's theory that the memory is the "storehouse of ideas" and his percipient descriptions of the way memory—and, usually in the case of illness, forgetting—works, established him as the most influential memory theorist in British cultural logic until the advent of the sciences of memory.

David Hume stands out as the philosopher proffering skeptical and, ultimately, scientifically supported theories of memory. *A Treatise of Human Nature* contains a fundamental contradiction about memory: first, he supports Locke's theory by asserting that memory retains its image over time; but he later revises this idea to explain that it is impossible to distinguish between memory and imagination, and that the only certainty existing about the veracity of a remembered event is the *belief* that it is a memory, rather than the work of the imagination, and accurate. Hume's theory extends to his conception of the self, and he suggests that personal identity is a mirage and can only be experienced during fleeting "successive perceptions." Although Hume's contributions to memory theory were significant in

philosophical circles, it was Locke's memory theory that formed the backbone of nineteenth-century thinking about memory.

After 1860, French, German, French, and English scientists theorized that forgetting rather than remembering is the standard response to most details and events, and that even the things that are remembered—and the delicate chains of association that Locke describes—are vulnerable to suggestion, modification, and change over time. There were two major types of scientific investigations of memory: one physiological and the other psychological. In 1874, one of the first scientists to approach memory as an object of scientific inquiry was William Carpenter, a physiologist concerned with thinking about memory as physical rather than spiritual or metaphysical. Carpenter suggests that the mind is capable of misremembering fiction as fact, and warns that events read about in books might be remembered as though they actually happened. In agreement with Locke, Carpenter theorizes that identity consists of memories repeated over time, but he also suggested that memories physically alter the brain and that alteration increases with the number of repetitions of the memory. Later in the century, physiologists began to focus on identifying where memory is located in the brain, an endeavor that did not really make serious gains until the end of the 20th century with the introduction of functional MRI. The new experimental psychologists, building off the work of Carpenter and other scientists, attempted to test the parameters of recall without physically manipulating the subject's brain.

In 1885, the psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus published his groundbreaking monograph, *Memory*, which won him the title of the “first scientific investigator of memory.” In this book, he details his systematic investigation of the predominant

theories of forgetting and his startling discovery that common wisdom about memory was mostly wrong: forgetting is swift and unavoidable. Ebbinghaus used nonsense syllables to test his memory in an attempt to isolate what he calls “pure” recall, which is free from the associations described by Locke and Hartley.²⁶ Ebbinghaus’s studies led him to formulate an equation describing how much memorized information will be retained over time, and it demonstrates that more than half of memorized information will be forgotten within the first twenty-four hours of the event. Ebbinghaus’s was the first of the “laws” of memory, which quickly came to dominate experimental memory theory. In 1887, the French psychologist Theodule Ribot published *Diseases of Memory*, in which he described the “laws which constitute the very basis of memory.” Of these, the two most significant are his assertion that forgetfulness is a condition of a healthy memory, which correlates neatly with Ebbinghaus’s data, and his most famous contribution, Ribot’s Law, which states that the most recent acquisitions to memory are, in the case of disease or injury, the first to erode.

By the time that William James published his compendious 1890 text, *Principles of Psychology*, there emerged two distinct kinds of scientific memory theory: first, those theories that assert the rules of remembering and forgetting, such as we see with Ebbinghaus’s and Ribot’s theories; and second, and perhaps more terrifying, those that describe the way that what we remember can change due to suggestion, manipulation, or time. Holding professorships in physiology, psychology and philosophy, James heralds the divorce of the developing discipline of psychology from philosophy, and nowhere is this so clear than in his chapter on memory.

²⁶ Ebbinghaus’s studies were not statistically significant since he was the only research subject, but all of his important findings were subsequently verified in large studies, and his theories served as the backbone for memory studies in the twentieth century. For a clear account of Ebbinghaus’s contributions to contemporary memory research, see Ian Neath, *Human Memory: An Introduction to Research, Data, and Theory* (New York: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1998).

James argues his theories in philosophical and psychological modes, asserting, for example, that memory cannot be an exact representation of a previous event because it is accompanied by the awareness that it is a memory (philosophical), and that a memory restimulates, deepens, and even expands associative paths between nerve-elements in the brain (psychological).²⁷ This argument leads to the suggestion that a remembered event is *not* a repetition of the past, but is a fresh reimagining of a previous event, possibly with significant alterations. His philosophical arguments and modes of thinking primarily support experimental psychological claims, and James rejects philosophical claims that contradict experimental evidence.

Perhaps the most influential psychologist to gather experimental evidence on the suggestibility and construction of memory was Frederic Bartlett. Bartlett was an experimental psychologist at the Applied Psychology Unit at Cambridge who conducted groundbreaking studies on perception and narrative recollection during the First World War. Unlike experimental psychologists since Ebbinghaus, Bartlett argued that the pursuit of “pure” recall is irrelevant to the way that memory operates in the real world, and he tested his research subjects using narratives instead of nonsense syllables. Surprisingly, Bartlett’s findings about forgetting did not deviate significantly from that of Ebbinghaus, suggesting that the mind creates associations and meaning for nonsense syllables just as it does for narratives. From his experimental data, Bartlett concluded that construction is an essential element of memory, and that stereotypes, biases, expectations, and context influence the way that the rememberer constructs a memory. Bartlett also demonstrated that perception, which is the first step to forming a memory, is based in part

²⁷ James denigrates the “extravagant opinion that nothing we experience can be absolutely forgotten” and asserts that “[i]n real life, in spite of occasional surprises, most of what happens actually is forgotten.” James quotes Sir William Hamilton’s truly extravagant version of this theory: “Hence it is that the problem most difficult of solution is not, how a mental activity endures, but how it ever vanishes.” Hamilton’s *Lectures on Metaphysics II*, 212. See James’s *Principles of Psychology, vol. 1* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 643.

on social prejudices and expectations, and thus what is stored as a memory is, to a certain extent, determined by social context.

Theories of forgetting and suggestible memory were not, of course, uncontested in the scientific community. Many physicians with clinical rather than experimental data theorized that the mind “records” memories exactly and eternally, even though most memories are not available to the conscious mind without some kind of external stimuli to remind the individual.²⁸ As I mentioned above, Freud was the most famous proponent of this kind of theory, and he took the additional step—bringing him closer to his scientific counterparts—of theorizing that there are *reasons* why certain things are temporarily forgotten or repressed, while others are not. While talk therapies derived from psychoanalytic techniques were used with some success for the treatment of shell shock during the First World War, experimental psychologists studying memory found that much of their data did not support or even contradicted many of the fundamental assumptions of psychoanalysis. Whereas psychologists such as Bartlett denounced as “unpleasant fiction” the description of memory as “fixed and lifeless,” some physicians and other members of the scientific community clung to the idea that past events are indelibly recorded.²⁹

²⁸ Of the clinical texts produced during this time, the most famous was Morton Prince’s *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1905), which presented the sensational case of the so-called Miss Beauchamp, a woman with multiple personality disorder. Prince notes that each personality is discrete, with a separate memory and identity, so that one personality cannot remember what another personality has done, but each personality’s memory is unchallenged by forgetting, suggestion or manipulation. Unlike other texts about memory, Prince’s book was written for a general audience and was enthusiastically gobbled up by the English-reading public, going through two editions, many printings, and inspiring more than five hundred plays, one of which played on Broadway.

²⁹ Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 311.

Literary Memory

As scientists threatened the Lockean concept of personal identity by undermining the possibility of accurate storage and recollection of past events and further endangered the uniqueness of individual memories by suggesting that remembering and forgetting are ruled by universal laws, literary writers made personal memory the source and topic of artistic enterprise. This dissertation investigates just a few of the ways that literary writers in the memory-steeped culture of late Victorian and modernist England rebelled against radically destabilizing scientific theories of memory. With the culture's growing faith in empirical evidence and the power of science to solve problems, writers sought to preserve the sanctity of memory and its accompanying sense of identity.³⁰ The dissertation situates major and minor writers alike in relation to the conflicting cultural logics about memory, and I construct a narrative of developing and escalating literary response to the implications of psychological memory theory.

The first chapter, "Samuel Butler's Cognitive Dissonance: Memory and Property in Late Victorian Science and Literature," traces the beginning of the divergence of science from literature in thinking about memory through the figure of Samuel Butler, novelist and one of the last of the "gentleman scientists." Butler's interest in the scientific concept of memory was primarily related to his evolutionary theory of unconscious memory, a Lamarckian belief that parents transmit to their offspring not

³⁰ By the early 1930s, writers such as Max Eastman, in his book *The Literary Mind*, were leveraging the "age of science" against literary pursuits and asserting that the great modernists such as T.S. Eliot wrote confusing and emotional prose because science didn't leave them anything else to do. The critic F.R. Leavis wrote a withering review of this book accusing Eastman of ignorance of modernist literature and overblown confidence in the power of science, but admitting that Eastman has correctly identified a cultural rift between science and literature. See Leavis's review, "Poetry in the Age of Science," *The Bookman* 82:487 (April 1932), 42.

only their personal memories but also a vast store of collective memories common to all of humanity. Adhering to the Lockean connection of memory to identity, Butler asserts that identity, like memory, is collective and inherited. As Butler elucidates his theory of unconscious memory in his scientific texts and his posthumously published fictionalized autobiography, *The Way of All Flesh*, he also betrays his own reservations about the division of memory into a collective and indelible unconscious memory and a fallible, finite personal memory. Evincing late nineteenth-century anxieties about intellectual property, ownership of the self, and control over memory, Butler is one of the last literary Victorians—and a proto-modernist—willing to address scientific subjects as peer and critic and as such, enacts in his writing the emerging cultural contradictions about memory. Ultimately, Butler’s desire to enter into the collective memory as an exceptional individual who owns extraordinary personal memories and ideas—rather than imagining himself, with all his experiences and theories, swept up in the mass of unconscious and anonymous memory—dominates his writings, and his desire for renown overwhelms all that he knows and believes about how memory works.

By the early twentieth century, scientific and literary modes of thinking about memory and intellectual property are more sharply defined. The second chapter, “Appropriated Memories: J.T. MacCurdy, Rebecca West, and the Case History,” traces the development of the genre of the case history and the increasing prominence of memory case histories in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the “curious” case to the “typical” case to clumps of cases intended to demonstrate the range of a condition or disease, the history of the memory case history displays the way that medicine and the sciences of memory transform the individual patient’s memories into

scientific property. With World War I and the advent of shell shock, memory case histories became increasingly prominent, and scientists and physicians appropriated soldiers' memories—and also their unremembered experiences—to describe and support theories of amnesia or persistent memory. I first make the assertion that memories are *appropriated* and become a kind of property when I discuss Rebecca West's 1918 novel *The Return of the Soldier* in which she imitates the genre of the case history and takes back those memories on behalf of the wounded soldier. Unlike the nameless sufferers in J.T. MacCurdy's *War Neuroses*, whose identity-forming memories are annexed to make general points about the mental diseases associated with warfare, West re-appropriates for her fictional soldier the long-distant past, the trauma of war, and even the experience of cure, withholding enough information so that neither the scientist nor the reader is able to reproduce the described cure for the soldier's amnesia. Using the genre of the case history, West reclaims personal memory from scientists and suggests that memories belong to the rememberer.

Continuing on a historical trajectory, the next chapter looks at the time after the war and the role of memory in the texts that exemplify a strand of British high modernism: Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In "The Modernist Day Novel: Storm Jameson Takes *A Day Off* from *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*," I argue that the modernist day novels, long discussed as texts about time, are deeply concerned with memory, specifically the Lockean connection between memory and identity. In each of the moments that make up the day in these novels, particularly those reporting the character's interior monologue, each character follows the associative chain into memories of the past, reliving those memories constitutive of her identity.

Storm Jameson's 1933 day novel, *A Day Off*, adopts the sub-genre of the day novel in order to critique what she perceives as a failing in not only these texts, but all of modernism: the role of *time* in the memories necessary to identity. Jameson's lower-class protagonist has lost years of her life to mind-numbing and back-breaking work, and Jameson's novel attempts to reclaim these memory-deficient lives on behalf of the poor and working class who are victimized by the conditions of modernity.

The next chapter takes a step back to survey the broad trend toward fictionalized autobiography and use of personal memories in early twentieth century and particularly post-War literature. Drawing on three examples—the Bloomsbury Group's "Memoir Club," Jean Rhys's *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, and Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That*—the chapter examines aestheticized memory as a modernist response to potential threats to memory. By transforming memories into art and commodities, modernists exerted the power of imagination over memory: memory is built into the creative process of composing fiction and the author has the power to distribute and even alienate herself from her memory-property.

The most extreme implication of memory as property—namely, alienation—is anticipated by the literary turn toward collective memory and identity in the 1930s. The final chapter, "Lyrical Memory: T.S. Eliot and the Shift to Cultural Memory Property in Late Modernism," presents later developments in scientific and literary memory models and notes that both develop the idea of memory as collectively shared. Drawing on Frederic Bartlett's work on the collective construction of memory, the percolating anxieties about narrative, propaganda, and advertising, and the devastation of World War II, the chapter describes the cultural atmosphere in which T.S. Eliot composed his last

great poem, *Four Quartets*. While the other literary texts in the dissertation deal with narrative records of memory, this chapter asserts that decreasing faith in narrative necessitated a new genre in which to record personal and cultural memories. Eliot's poem makes the case for a lyric memory model, suggesting that lyric encapsulates past experience and ensures their existence in perpetuity. Unlike previous narrative models, though, Eliot asserts that memories are cultural property, so that all members of the community share responsibility for and ownership of the past. By entrusting memory to a culture rather than to the individual, Eliot provides another layer of protection against the possible threats to memory.

The overall goal of this dissertation is not only to illustrate the differences between scientific and literary theories of memory, but also to demonstrate that the uncertainty over memory ushered in by experimental psychologists was artistically productive. While I do not claim that the aestheticization of memory, the rise of the fictionalized autobiography, the focus on the present moment in the modernist day novel, the turn to collectivity before the Second World War, or the infinite ways that writers insisted that memory belonged to the rememberer were due *solely* to the emerging memory sciences, they are an unexamined, and significant, influence on the literary developments of the period. The divergence of science and literature that I have described in this dissertation is just the beginning of the story. Indeed, scientists and literary writers alike turned to memory with hope that it might provide, in the words of Frederic Bartlett, "complete release from the narrowness of presented time and place."³¹

³¹ Bartlett 314.

CHAPTER I

SAMUEL BUTLER'S COGNITIVE DISSONANCE: MEMORY AND PROPERTY IN LATE-VICTORIAN SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

In his notebooks, Samuel Butler gives his reader a bewildering definition of “identity”: “To live a greatly changed life is near to living henceforward as somebody else; to live as somebody else is much the same as dying: indeed, there is no other death than this.”³² The meaning of identity pervades Butler’s autobiographical novel *The Way of All Flesh*, which was composed between 1872 and 1884, but was not published until after Butler’s death in 1902 because he feared the censure of his family and Victorian society. At the time of publication, critics asserted that the many oddities of the novel originated in Samuel Butler’s professed concern with enduring identity and true character rather than life events. R.A. Streatfield, who edited and published the novel, writes in the preface that the text was largely composed at the same time that Butler was writing his now little-known texts on science and evolution, and “may be taken as a practical illustration of the theory of heredity embodied in [*Life and Habit*]” and, indeed, Butler indicated that this was the case.³³ In this and his other scientific works—*Evolution, Old and New*, *Unconscious Memory*, and *Luck or Cunning?*—Butler formulated a Lamarckian theory of unconscious memory *contra* Charles Darwin’s “idea that life-forms have developed through ‘the accumulation of small, divergent, indefinite, and perfectly

³² British Library, Box 44046.

³³ R.A. Streatfield, “Note to the First Edition,” *The Way of All Flesh*, by Samuel Butler (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), iv.

unintelligent variations' in favour of the sense of need aided by memory."³⁴ To Butler, unconscious memory is the key to instincts and inherited traits, and he asserts that parents transmit their memories and habitual actions to their offspring. He claims that identity is permanent and inherited, while the events that call forth memories associated with this identity are of secondary interest and transitory importance. Even the arguably most important life events—birth and death—have little impact on fundamental identity because “we are one person with our ancestors” and identity thus belongs to the whole of humanity rather than to a single iteration of the human race.³⁵ His novel really is about the way of *all* flesh because, in his theory, the hero is identical with all people, past, present and future.

The novel does not open with a description of the protagonist, Ernest Pontifex, but with his great-grandfather, the admirable John Pontifex. This extended foray into a character inessential to the plot puzzled the first critics and led *The Athenaeum* reviewer to suggest that an “expert novelist” would not allow himself so much leisure in describing this wizened ancestor.³⁶ Avrom Fleishman argues that this focus on the accomplished great-grandfather is evidence not that Butler is amateur, but that “something strange is being said—or rather imaged—in the novel.”³⁷ Butler’s description of the old man demonstrates his theory that identity is reproduced, unchanged, from generation to generation, and that all humans—and all other living creatures—are actually one being.

³⁴ Peter Raby, *Samuel Butler: A Biography* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1991), 166.

³⁵ Samuel Butler, *Unconscious Memory* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1910), 52.

³⁶ Grant Richards, “Review of *The Way of All Flesh*, *The Athenaeum* (3944: May 30, 1903), 683.

³⁷ Avrom Fleishman, “Personal Myth: Three Victorian Autobiographers,” *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, ed. George P. Landow (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), 225.

John Pontifex is a craftsman, musician, artist, industrious laborer, caring parent, and sympathetic employer, and Ernest eventually develops these characteristics and thus returns to his ancestor's "originative seed."³⁸

The premise that all life is essentially one does not mean that all people are exactly the same. As Butler concludes in *Unconscious Memory*, "in the case of reproductive forms of life we see just so much variety, in spite of uniformity, as is consistent with a repetition involving not only a nearly perfect similarity in the agents and their circumstances, but also the little departure therefrom."³⁹ Taking the amoeba as the simplest example, he explains that despite the consistency across all amoeba, certain "families" are slightly different from others. This same principle applies to humans and the unifying single identity is augmented—or damaged—by the ever-growing store of unconscious memory that is localized in certain familial human strains. Butler even leaves room for fairly dramatic departures from familial characteristics, although he insists that these traits are often not passed on. In his description of Ernest Pontifex's grandfather, so unlike the estimable John Pontifex, the narrator sets him apart from the other members of his family:

A very successful man, moreover, has something of the hybrid in him; he is a new animal, arising from the coming together of many unfamiliar elements, and it is well known that the reproduction of abnormal growths, whether animal or vegetable, is irregular and not to be depended upon, even when they are not absolutely sterile.⁴⁰

³⁸ The most convincing evidence for the connection between Ernest and his great-grandfather Pontifex is that both men spend time gazing at and identifying with the sun. Fleishman argues: "[t]he association of this seminal source with the sun is nothing other than a late appearance of an archetypal myth...that we are children of the sun...Recovery of this progenitor is a recovery of oneself: it brings us to laughter and a comic insight into our condition; it helps us to recognize the other men around us who are true kin" (227).

³⁹ *Unconscious Memory* 173.

⁴⁰ Samuel Butler, *The Way of All Flesh* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 15.

These non-transferrable traits, although they differ from those of previous and future generations, do not alter the fundamental identity of the individual, nor do they alter significantly the unconscious memory that is inherited and reproduced. In *The Way of All Flesh*, Butler makes a subtle distinction between identity, which is permanent, and character, which is more distinct and temporary, although also inherited. Indeed, Ernest's character traits align him with his great-grandfather, who is a "pure" version of familial character that is sullied in subsequent generations until Ernest returns to it.⁴¹ To Butler, a pure character is one that accepts inherited traits rather than forcing itself to adopt a character that does not belong to it.

Even though *The Way of All Flesh* and his other literary works were relatively successful, Butler's scientific theories were not well received. Despite the many disclaimers in *Life and Habit* and his self-description as a man of "no very special ability," Butler "confidently expected to be taken seriously by Darwin and the scientific and intellectual community" and was consequently crushed when *Life and Habit* and his other scientific works sold very modestly and were either dismissed or ignored by many reviewers.⁴² Butler's anger at the lukewarm reception of his scientific contributions approached paranoia, and he became convinced that Darwin and the rest of the scientific community had banded together to silence him because his claims exposed the deep

⁴¹ Fleishman argues that Butler's opinion of identity is "subversive" because it argues that "certain men are not simply better but holier than others...they are closer to the sources of being and thereby more pure-bred incarnations of the human archetype" (227). In this critique, Fleishman conflates the theory of identity with that of character, arguing that "better" character is that which is closer to the fundamental identity. However, I assert that Butler holds identity and character distinct, thus allowing for very different character traits in the world. For example, there are some people who excel at art, while other excel at the practice of medicine. Although the two might overlap, neither is closer to the unifying identity; rather, the degree to which they follow their unconscious inclinations is what defines faithfulness to that identity. Character describes specific inheritable traits that are not the same as identity; the only degree to which they coincide is individual obedience to his or her inherited character.

⁴² Raby167.

flaws in Darwin's theories. Butler's insistent repetitions of his scientific theories in published letters and texts are evidence of his deep-seated conviction that persistence would eventually force the scientific community to capitulate and to admit that his theory was a substantial challenge to Darwinism. However, as the scientific community continued to denigrate his work, his paranoia about being shunned extended to his literary works, and he worried incessantly about whether or not he would be remembered after his death. *The Way of All Flesh*, the majority of which was composed during and after the publication of *Life and Habit* and *Unconscious Memory*, is Butler's portrait of himself as an exceptional man who deserves to be remembered as an individual, rather than as part of the mass of humanity. Throughout his composition of the novel, Butler became increasingly preoccupied with his personal ownership of himself and his ideas.

Although Butler is often touted as being counter-cultural—James Paradis's critical overview of Butler's work calls him a "Victorian Against the Grain"—in this chapter I will demonstrate that the discordance between Butler's scientific theories and his literary and personal desires is typical of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Facing the increasing specialization of the disciplines and the sudden awareness in the latter half of the nineteenth century of the divergence between science and letters, Butler was one of the last Victorian generalists who felt justified and able to turn his hand to almost any kind of artistic or academic endeavor.⁴³ As a painter, novelist, historian, and musician, Butler found relative success, but it was only when he focused his attention on the sciences that he met with scorn and silence. His attempts to participate in both scientific and literary conversations about memory and identity display contradictions in

⁴³ For an excellent and concise summary of the relationship between science and letters in the nineteenth century, see Joseph Slade's review of Peter Morton's book *The Vital Science* in *Isis* (76:3, 1985), 412-413.

his thinking that epitomize the emerging division between scientific and literary thinking about memory.

By reading Butler's little studied third scientific book, *Unconscious Memory*, alongside *The Way of All Flesh*, this chapter sketches the cultural concerns about memory, identity, and intellectual property that characterize the end of the nineteenth century. Unlike *Life and Habit*, *Unconscious Memory* contains a great deal of autobiographical information, rendering legible Butler's contradictory attitudes on the subjects of memory and identity in much the same way as *The Way of All Flesh*. In scientific discourse, Butler claims that enduring and infallible memory and identity are hereditary and collectively owned, while personal memories that are not passed to offspring are liable to be faulty and disappear at death. However, Butler's obsession with the ownership of ideas and his acute desire for perpetual renown belie his scientific theory of unconscious memory, which asserts that identity and reliably enduring memory belong to the whole of humanity. In Butler's work, the shift towards ownership of memory and identity as a kind of intellectual property is starkly contrasted with his scientific theories of universal identity and shared memories.

Habit, Darwin, and *Unconscious Memory*

The review of Samuel Butler's *Life and Habit* (1877) in *The Athenaeum* congratulates him for his "jeu d'esprit" while questioning the scientific backdrop against which, the author argues, Butler exercises his talent to amuse:

As a mere work of imagination, 'Life and Habit' may be accepted with some measure of thankfulness. But the scientific foundation on which the author

professes to build, and which so soon disappears as he disports among vagaries that recall the doctrine of metempsychosis, old ideas about the world being a living being, and a hundred and one other extravagances of the ancients and the Middle Ages, lends to the book that element of seriousness which makes it so perplexing and bewildering.⁴⁴

Despite his self-deprecating gambit in which he “[disclaims] for these pages the smallest pretension to scientific value, originality, or even to accuracy of more than a very rough and ready kind,” Butler was indeed serious in his analysis, his theoretical claims, and his criticisms of Darwin and “the Victorian’s scientific Bible,” i.e. *The Origin of Species*.⁴⁵

With a jocose tone and amusing style, Butler attempts in *Life and Habit* to prove that instincts are inherited memories and that identity persists from parent to child, such that they can be considered to have the *same* identity. To Butler, evolution is teleological, with each successive generation expanding upon the bulk of inherited knowledge found in instincts and identity. While acknowledging that Darwin had thankfully popularized—though not invented—the theory of evolution, Butler rejects his theory of natural selection, arguing:

The weak point in Mr. Darwin’s theory would seem to be a deficiency, so to speak, of motive power to originate and direct the variations which time is to accumulate...I cannot think that ‘natural selection’ working upon small, fortuitous, indefinite, unintelligent variations, would produce the results we see around us. (261)

Butler wishes to demonstrate that “need, faith, intelligence, and memory” or in other words “mental ingenuity, and of a moral as well as physical capacity” drive the variations that flourish and are passed down through reproduction (272).

⁴⁴ “Book Review, *Life and Habit*,” *The Athenaeum*, 2622 (1878: Jan. 26), p. 118.

⁴⁵ Samuel Butler, *Life and Habit* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1910), 1. All further references will be parenthetical. Peter Raby calls *Origin* the “scientific Bible” and points out that Butler attacked it in the same way that he attacked the Christian Bible, even referring to it as “The Book” and considering it “just as fallible” (161).

In this first—and clearest—explanation of his theory of heredity and memory, Butler perpetuates the Lockean connection of continuous memory over time with personal identity, a move that leads him to the conclusion that a child’s identity is identical to that of the parents. Instincts are inherited memories that are activated by familiar stimuli, like any other kind of memory. Since almost every member of the human species has the same kind of instincts and thus the same kind of inherited memories, they are to all intents and purposes the same person:

it is not easy at first to break the spell which words have cast around us, and to feel that one person may become many persons, and that many different persons may be practically one and the same person, as far as their past experience is concerned; and again, that two or more persons may unite and become one person, with the memories and experiences of both, though this has been actually the case with every one of us. (94)

Butler acknowledges the difficulty to an individualistic society in his theory of memory and identity. However, he insists that unconscious life, or the whole of the inherited memories that is stored in each individual’s unconscious and is added to and carried on through reproduction, is, in the words of one of Butler’s greatest modernist admirers, May Sinclair, “complete and perfect and worthy to be lived.”⁴⁶ This theory, which Butler critics have seized upon as a kind of pan-psychism, downplays the importance of the individual in favor of that of collective humanity.

Spiritualists among his Victorian readership hoped that his work, despite its pronounced physiological bent, promised reincarnation. In November of 1880, Mary Anne Savage, whose intellectual circle included spiritualists at whose expense she was mercilessly witty, wrote exultantly to describe the reception of his text:

⁴⁶ May Sinclair, “The Pan-Psychism of Samuel Butler,” *A Defense of Idealism: Some Questions and Conclusions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 3.

I can't resist writing to tell you that you are spiritualist, and preach the doctrine of re-incarnation!! Mrs. Lowe says so, and she knows. She has been reading 'Unconscious Memory,' or possibly also has received suggestions from unincarnate spirits (spirits on the spree) on the subject. I have no objection to personal identity with an amoeba, but I object to being a sort of second hand person. Besides, the spirits contract such bad habits when they are out of a situation that I should like to repudiate all connection with those vagabonds. However, if you preach reincarnation I will accept it.⁴⁷

With this short anecdote, Miss Savage describes clearly the difference between Butler's theories and spiritualist dogma. Butler contends that all life shares an "essential identity," which he traces back to the primordial cell "which has differentiated itself into the life of the world, all living things whatever being one with it, and members one of another."⁴⁸ Thus, Butler would argue that while Miss Savage does share identity with the amoeba, she is not a recycled soul, but one of an incalculable number of individual constituents that make up this identity. In her Butlerian critique of the spiritualists, Miss Savage amusingly demonstrates her knowledge of Butler's theory by suggesting that roaming spirits "contract bad habits" because they do not share the unconscious memories that, according to Butler, make up all living things and ensure survival. Butler's teleological theory of memory and heredity requires some degree of differentiation from person to person over time; it is through these individual experiences that unconscious memory grows and perfects itself.

So what, to Butler, is "individual" memory other than an infinitesimal collection of personal experiences from birth until death that pale in comparison with the vast stores of unconscious memory? Even to the extent that some of those experiences can enhance

⁴⁷ November 14, 1880. British Library, Box 44028.

⁴⁸ Life and Habit 70. Quoted in Peter Morton, *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1900* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 161.

the unconscious memory by surviving a new and potentially dangerous situation and forming habits that can be passed down, the majority dies with the individual. Butler points out in one of his pithy sayings: “THE EXPERIENCE OF OLD MEN: Can hardly become hereditary, for few old men, and no old women, have children. Later average age of reproduction will not only tend to longevity, but also to more hereditary good sense.”⁴⁹ Although Butler approaches the topic of memory from the biological—and specifically evolutionary—perspective, he engages extensively with the medical works of men like the physiologist William Carpenter and the French psychologist Theodule Ribot. However, Butler views all kinds of memory through the lens of heredity. For example, in response to descriptions of disorders of the memory such as fixations, phobias, and obsessions, Butler posits a theory of atavism, or the re-emergence of long-obsolete unconscious memories.⁵⁰ He discusses faulty memory in his texts and correspondence, but always returns to mistaken associations between memories and circumstances or, as with atavism, *overremembering* and thus misjudging circumstances. With either misremembering or reaching too far back into the memory to be able to address a situation, however, it is the individual’s memory that is at fault, not the shared unconscious memory.

To Butler, memories of individual experiences operate in precisely the same way as the unconscious memory. Allying himself with Immanuel Kant against the empiricists, he embraces the associative chain of memory described by John Locke and David Hartley, but insists that most associations are inherent: the inherited unconscious

⁴⁹ Samuel Butler’s Notebooks, The British Library, Box 44045.

⁵⁰ Morton 161.

memory. Without these associations, the external stimuli that trigger the memory, memories are inaccessible to the individual. Butler writes in 1882:

We can remember a great many things if we want to do so, but we can only want if one or more of the associated ideas has come across to us to put us in mind of wanting—till a wave (perhaps) of similar characteristics has run into a wave already feebly coursing in our brains. If we try to remember “something” or “anything” indefinite, we remember nothing. If a man says to himself “now I will remember something” without knowing what, his first effort is to find something which shall suggest something to him to remember.⁵¹

This lack of power over the faculty of recollection and dependence on external stimuli resembles Proust’s later theory of “involuntary memory” in *La recherche du temps perdu*, when the narrator describes his vain attempts to remember his childhood until he tastes the madeleine and the scenes burst forth in front of his eyes.

Despite the scientific implications of Butler’s thoughts on heredity, identity, collective memory, and natural selection, and his nascent theories on individual memory and identity, reviewers and readers of *Life and Habit* were confused and sometimes angry because the purpose of the text is unclear. As the reviewer from *The Athenaeum* remarks, the humor running through the book provides entertainment, but also perplexes a reader seeking a serious scientific work. The fact that the reviewer finally determines that this work is “too flighty to be of much real value” suggests that Butler’s attempt to challenge the genre of scientific writing and to infuse it with cleverness and wit backfired in a community unprepared to accept Butler’s breezy style of handling serious biological theories. *The Athenaeum* reviewer’s confusion regarding Butler’s intention in writing *Life and Habit* derives in part from the fact that he does not produce new evidence to support his theories of heredity and memory; the facts that he cites are all second hand. Peter Morton argues that Butler’s greatest failing in the eyes of the Victorian scientific

⁵¹ Samuel Butler, *The Notebooks*, British Library, Box 44046.

community was his “gross insensitivity” to the kinds of questions and methods of testing that biology was in the course of adopting. Butler’s speculative, almost theological, method of addressing the unanswered questions of evolution and natural selection was an affront to “the core of science itself: the amassing of facts, the disinterested testing of potentially disprovable hypotheses, and the expunging of personal beliefs.”⁵² Indeed, by the time *The Athenaeum* reviews Butler’s third published iteration of his scientific theory, *Unconscious Memory*, the reviewer impatiently exclaims,

[t]he general and *a priori* reasons he has given for his views are no doubt plausible, and are certainly sufficient to gain him a hearing; but he has no right to expect general acceptance of his views till verification by induction and experiment has at least been attempted.... Why does not Mr. Butler set to work in order to determine this question by observation and experiment?⁵³

In part, Butler took pleasure in his lack of scientific training and, by leaving the proof to those who wished to discredit his theory, fashioned himself as the brilliant amateur who has stumbled on a momentous discovery.⁵⁴ However, Butler also professed to be frightened by the enormity of his claims, explaining to Mary Anne Savage that “[t]he theory frightens me—it is so far reaching and subversive—it oppresses me, and I take

⁵² Morton 163. See also the review of *Evolution, Old and New* in *The Athenaeum*, in which the reviewer claims: “Mr. Butler has formed his new theology, with a deity who resembles very remarkably the Great Unconscious of Von Hartmann.” (1878: July 26), 115.

⁵³ “Recent Works on Philosophy—Review of Samuel Butler’s *Unconscious Memory*,” *The Athenaeum*, 2773 (1880: Dec. 18), 810.

⁵⁴ Peter Morton writes: “[Butler’s lack of scientific training] is partly romantic defiance of professional scientism; the pawky cheek of the amateur who has bumbled his way to great discovery. It is a potent myth in English scientific history. Even Francis Darwin, publishing his reminiscences of his father in 1887, dwelt lovingly on the slovenliness of Darwin’s practical work—the inaccurate micrometer, the use of the household’s ruler, the unreadable gradations on the dirty measuring-glass—and rightly assumed that these details could only enhance his portrait of the greatest biologist of the day” (164).

panic that there cannot really be any solid truth in it...[but] I really cannot see that I have a leg to stand upon when I pose as an objector.”⁵⁵

Butler’s 1880 book on evolution, heredity, memory and identity, *Unconscious Memory*, is a further refinement of Butler’s theories. The text also offers his English-speaking audience the translation of an 1870 lecture by the Viennese physiologist Ewald Hering, which anticipates his own work, and an excerpt from Von Hartmann’s *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, to whose work Butler’s had been compared. In this text, Butler does not “[go] into the question of what memory is,” but prefers not to speculate beyond asserting: “whatever memory was, heredity was also” (54). However, memory is more than just heredity to Butler because, at the time of death, a human’s conscious memory no longer exists, although the unconscious memory lives on in offspring and other humans.⁵⁶ The excess of memory—the difference between unconscious memory and conscious memory—remains unaccounted for in Butler’s scientific theory. In his quest to define unconscious memory, he overlooks personal memory from a scientific standpoint and blames personal memory for perceived failings of unconscious memory.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Samuel Butler, *Letters between Samuel Butler and Miss E.M.A. Savage 1871-1885*, Eds. Geoffrey Keynes and Brian Hill (London: Jonathan Hill, 1935), 136.

⁵⁶ In his notebooks, Butler says: “DEATH AND IDENTITY: We retain our identity after death as much as we retain it from day to day while we are going through the embryonic stages. If identity survives these it should survive death. We do not really retain our identity from day to day, and this enables us to say that we retain it after death. In this sense we continue to live beyond the grave as bona fide as before it only we change our habits and reconsider ourselves more rapidly and completely than we have been doing lately.” British Library, Box 44047.

⁵⁷ Butler attributes mistakes in unconscious memory to the conscious memory: “But if a man was a fish once, he may have been a fish a million times over, for aught he knows; for he must admit that his conscious recollection is at fault, and has nothing whatever to do with the matter” (*Unconscious Memory*, 18). In an 1885 letter to E.M. Jones, he writes: “As for memory and mistakes, mistakes occur mainly in two ways: one when the circumstances have changes but not enough to make us aware of the fact...friendly mistakes occur through your memory not returning in full force though the circumstances are unchanged. But in either case it is the memory that is at fault.” British Library, Box 44030.

Even so, in his personal reflections and scientific writings, Butler explains that the reliability of detailed memories, such as those he reports in *Unconscious Memory*, relies on small changes or variations, while exact repetitions of events can erase details, as one finds when one follows the same routine day after day and then discovers that all days seem the same. If the difference grows too great, however, memory also fails. Butler writes:

MEMORY: vanishes with extremes of resemblance or difference. Things which put us in mind of others must be neither too like nor too unlike them. It is our sense that a position is not quite the same, which makes us find it so nearly the same. We remember by the aid of differences as much as by that of samenesses. If there is no difference there can be no memory, for the two positions become absolutely one and the same, and the universe will repeat itself for ever and ever as between these two points.⁵⁸

As with the personal memory he describes here, unconscious memory also operates through small variations. He acknowledges that “there is some slight variation in each individual case, and some part of this variation is remembered, with approbation or disapprobation as the case may be” (167). Thus, habitual action is never the same from instance to instance, and each successive exercise of a habit changes it slightly. Butler proposes that inherited habit is not circular—by which he means static—but that the teleological development of unconscious memory proceeds in a not linear but a spiral—or cyclonic—fashion: “in the case of reproductive forms of life we see just so much variety, in spite of uniformity, as is consistent with a repetition involving not only a nearly perfect similarity in the agents and their circumstances, but also the little departure therefrom” (173). These small variations and differences, through which the theory of unconscious memory itself progresses, set off one theory from another, one day from

⁵⁸ Samuel Butler, *The Notebooks of Samuel Butler*, ed. Henry Festing Jones (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1917), 62.

another, and create a traceable history of each individual and the unconscious memory of all living things.

With Butler's emphasis on how memory *works*—in heredity, through association, constitutive of identity—he avoids dealing with the issue so pressing to Carpenter and Ribot, whom he was reading, regarding the *nature* of memory. For Butler, memory is something that has happened before and is recognized as such, even if that recognition is not conscious as with an instinctive response. Memory, divided into infallible unconscious memory and conscious, personal memory that is, on occasion, mistaken, is guaranteed. Much of the past is not erased but preserved in unconscious memory, awaiting the appropriate circumstances to reemerge. To make this claim, however, Butler has to sacrifice uninherited personal memories that die with the individual, and his anxiety regarding this point manifests itself in his insistent return to his own memories even in his scientific writings. Indeed, Butler writes in his notebooks: “The souls of [some] men migrate into books, pictures, music or what not, and every one's mind migrates somewhere whether remembered and admired or the reverse.”⁵⁹

Butler's insistence on the validity of his scientific theory flows from his reading of the “acknowledged leaders of the scientific world,” namely Charles Darwin and Theodule Ribot (*Life and Habit* 107). Butler quotes from Darwin's theory of Pangenesis, which describes the organism as a series of autonomous parts functioning together for the survival of the whole organism. In addition, Butler describes Ribot's use—and approval—of scientific theories claiming that “every organic element of the body” has a memory, and these two theories support Butler's claim that “each cell in the human body

⁵⁹ Butler, *The Notebooks*, 357.

is a person with an intelligent soul...[and we] are but the *consensus* and full flowing stream of countless sensations and impulses on the part of our tributary souls or ‘selves’” (L&H 108-109). From this position, it was a short step to Butler’s overall position that each human being is one of the many elements in the whole of the human species working together for survival, and that every living thing is a part of the living whole.

While Butler acknowledges Darwin as a major contributor to evolution and a necessary building block for his theory, much of *Unconscious Memory* is devoted to exposing what he perceives as Darwin’s knowing suppression of his theoretical progenitors. The first chapter heading pronounces itself as “Introduction—General ignorance on the subject of evolution at the time the ‘Origin of Species’ was published in 1859,” and while it is indeed an introduction that sketches out the general lack of familiarity with the theory of evolution before 1859, Butler spends the majority of the chapter censuring Darwin’s relationship with previous thinkers. To Butler, Darwin’s Victorian readership was “very ready to take Mr. Darwin’s work at the estimate tacitly claimed for it by himself” (6) although he claims that the “blame of our errors and oversights rest primarily with Mr. Darwin himself” (7). As the result of the dearth of public knowledge about evolution, Darwin’s dazzling display of easily overcome objections to his work, and the scientific community’s unanimous homage to Darwin, *Origin of Species* “came out as a kind of literary Melchisedec, without father and without mother in the works of other people” (7).

Charles Darwin’s greatest sin in Butler’s eyes, other than not taking seriously his critiques of Darwinian evolutionary theory, is that Darwin insinuates that the theory of evolution by natural selection was entirely his own idea rather than resulting from a

concerted effort by generations of scientists. Butler is scathing on this point, particularly with regards to Darwin's apparent disregard of his family: "the whole thing was an original growth in Mr. Darwin's mind, and he had never so much as heard of his grandfather, Dr. Erasmus Darwin" (8). Indeed, Butler's second scientific book, *Evolution, Old and New*, deals extensively with the work of Erasmus Darwin, and Butler congratulates himself on introducing Erasmus Darwin's work to the British public and forcing Charles Darwin to acknowledge his debt to his grandfather:

[I]n the first edition of the "Origin of Species," Dr. Erasmus Darwin had never been so much as named, while [in later editions] he was dismissed with a line of half-contemptuous patronage, as though the mingled tribute of admiration and curiosity which attaches to scientific prophesies, as distinguished from discoveries, was the utmost he was entitled to. "It is curious," says Mr. Darwin innocently, in the middle of a note in the smallest possible type, "how largely my grandfather, Dr. Erasmus Darwin, anticipated the views and erroneous grounds of opinion of Lamarck"... "this was all he had to say about the founder of "Darwinism" until I myself unearthed Dr. Erasmus Darwin, and put his work fairly before the present generation in "Evolution, Old and New." Six months after I had done this, I had the satisfaction of seeing that Mr. Darwin had woke up to the propriety of doing much the same thing, and that he had published an interesting and charmingly written memoir of his grandfather." (27)

Although this memoir does not, in Butler's opinion, sufficiently undeceive the public of their conviction that Charles Darwin was the independent inventor of the theory of evolution, it does gesture towards the essential acknowledgment of previous contributions to this theory.

Butler's mania for Darwin to admit the influence of his predecessors on his evolutionary theory is a direct application of Butler's theory of memory and heredity. What Butler depicts as Darwin's pretence of originality defies the unity of familial identity and universal unconscious memory. Butler argues that the child *is* the parents and all ancestors: "the baby may just as fairly claim identity with its father and mother

and say to its parents on being born, 'I was you only a few months ago.' By parity of reasoning each living form now on the earth must be able to claim identity with each generation of its ancestors" (17). Darwin's implicit claim that he alone discovered the theory of evolution when there is strong evidence that he was spurred to his conclusions by exposure to his grandfather's theories and by a strong familial inclination for—and perhaps, for Butler, inherited knowledge of—the biological sciences made it appear to Butler that Darwin's repudiation of Butler's theory of unconscious memory was selfishly motivated. By proving to the rest of the world that Darwin desired to hide all previous evolutionary theorists from the public, Butler hoped to discredit Darwin's sacerdotal status that, he felt, kept other scientists from taking his theories seriously. Indeed, Butler felt that Darwin's biography of Erasmus Darwin, although warmly written, only served to demonstrate Darwin's opinion that Erasmus Darwin's theories were far from precursors to Darwin's own. Upon the publication of *Unconscious Memory*, Butler writes in one of his notebooks: "This has gone round the press to reviewers this day (Nov. 5, 1880). I do not know whether it will help me to get the 'Life and Habit' theory ventilated, but if I do get a hearing it will be almost solely due to Mr. Darwin's blundering. If he had not done what he did in 'Erasmus Darwin', I might have written all my life to no purpose."⁶⁰

Butler was certain that Darwin's hold on the scientific community was so strong and his acolytes so devoted that, without evidence of his elision of previous thinkers and his personal interest in erasing the theory of unconscious memory, no one in the scientific community would take him seriously.

⁶⁰ Samuel Butler, British Library, Box 44046.

Scientific Autobiography and Intellectual Property

In his literary and scientific works, his correspondence, and his personal writings, Samuel Butler carefully constructed the image of the man he wants to be remembered as after his death. He returns repeatedly to the subject of whether or not he will be remembered, and he is preoccupied with his personal fame. Butler composed the following saying about his overmastering desire not only to be famous during his lifetime but also to be remembered after his death, and in response to critics accusing him of amateurism:

IF I DESERVE TO BE REMEMBERED: It will be not so much for anything I have written or for any new way of looking at old facts which I may have suggested, as for having shewn that a man of no very special ability, with no literary connections, not particularly laborious, fairly but not supremely accurate as far as he goes, and not going far either for his facts nor from them, may yet by being perfectly square, sticking to his point, not letting his temper run away with him, and biding his time, be a match for the most powerful literary and scientific coterie that England has ever known. I hope it may be said of me that I discomfited an unscrupulous self-seeking clique, and set a more wholesome example myself. To have done this is the best of all discoveries.⁶¹

In his quest for acknowledgement, Butler became increasingly obsessed with ownership of ideas and his literary and scientific legacy. Friends and colleagues with whom he discussed the book that was to become *Life and Habit* were quick to point to the similarities in Butler's theories with those of Lamarck and Ewald Hering, and Butler defended the originality of his ideas—even if they had been independently conceived by others—in letters and, eventually, in *Unconscious Memory*. While justifying his ignorance of existing theories of memory and heredity, Butler attacked Darwin for what he perceived as the misappropriation of the theory of evolution from earlier thinkers such

⁶¹ Butler, *The Notebooks*, 369.

as Buffon, Lamarck, and Darwin's own grandfather, Dr. Erasmus Darwin. Butler's anxiety about the ownership of ideas grew, and he accused several members of the scientific community, including Darwin himself, of plagiarizing or condoning the plagiarism of his work. Butler was tortured by the idea that scientific and literary writers borrowed his work freely, even going so far as to suspect George Eliot of plagiarism: "[s]he cribbed her chapter on machines in 'Theophrastus Such' [Eliot's final book, published 1879] from *Erewhon*. I ought to be highly flattered...I see myself cribbed continually, but never named, and my books, I am told, can hardly be mentioned in scientific circles without making people lose their temper."⁶²

Butler's preoccupation with the ownership of ideas reached its height with the publication of *Unconscious Memory* in 1880. The text details his painfully unmethodical thought process as he conceived and wrote *Life and Habit* and *Evolution, Old and New*, and he reiterates his theory of identity and heredity. Also, the text serves as a vast apology for Butler's scientific oeuvre that explains in minute detail how he came to formulate his biological theories. The highly autobiographical flavor of this book, together with Butler's indignation on behalf of previous thinkers whose work, he claims, was hijacked and erased by Darwin and others, underscores Butler's reclamation of scientific renown on behalf of himself and the long-dead precursors to evolutionary theory.

Butler's concern with the ownership of ideas indicates that he was following the debates regarding copyright and intellectual property that persisted throughout the Victorian period and reached a critical point in the four years prior to the publication of *Unconscious Memory*. In an 1878 letter that Butler writes regarding appropriate citations

⁶² Samuel Butler, British Library, Folder 44046

and plagiarism in scientific works, he describes himself as a defender of the intellectual property of the deceased: “living people can take care of themselves, but if I catch any one robbing the dead, especially the dead that have fallen honorably in battle, poor and neglected in their own day, after having borne the burden and heat, I will rob them of every stitch of clothing they have on their backs, so far as the law will allow me.”⁶³ He engaged in his one-man war against what he perceived as the unethical appropriation of the progenitors of the theory of evolution at a pivotal moment in the late-Victorian discussions about intellectual property. Clare Pettitt points out that while early Victorian debates focused on *establishing* intellectual property laws, the late-Victorian period was dedicated to extending those laws.⁶⁴ In *Unconscious Memory*, Butler is concerned with two kinds of transgressions: hijacking ideas and outright copying. Patent law protects ideas, but copyright protects original expression only, not “ideas, procedures, processes, systems, methods of operation, concepts, principles, facts, discoveries, or preexistent expression incorporated in the [copyrighted] work.”⁶⁵ Patented work led the field in legal protections, with copyright straggling behind. For example, British patents received international protections, but this was not extended to copyright until 1891. Butler’s concern with protecting the ideas and writings of deceased thinkers relates to limitations on copyright law. Before 1842, copyright lasted twenty-eight years or until the death of the author, but with the passage of Talfourd’s Bill, copyright was extended to forty-two years “or the duration of the author’s life plus seven years, whichever was longer. For

⁶³ Jan 2, 1878 letter to Mr. Clodd, British Library, Box 44028.

⁶⁴ Clare Pettitt, *Patent Inventions—Intellectual Property and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁵ Paul K. Saint-Amour, *The Copywrights: Intellectual Property and the Literary Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 54.

the first time, a piece of literary property could explicitly outlive its progenitor.”⁶⁶

Between 1876 and 1878, the Royal Copyright Commission hotly debated intellectual property rights, ultimately suggesting in their report to extend copyright protections to “the length of the author’s life plus thirty years.”⁶⁷ It was in this atmosphere of negotiation and ballooning protections that Butler began to assert acknowledgement of long-dead theorists and thus the history of groundbreaking theories such as evolution.

Although Darwin published a biography of Erasmus Darwin describing his debt to his grandfather, this did not quell Butler’s anxiety about intellectual property. It did, however, partially redirect that anxiety, causing Butler to fear that his own work was under attack. Butler found evidence that a German author, Dr. Krause, whose work Darwin cites in the biography of his grandfather, had helped himself to certain portions of *Evolution, Old and New* without acknowledging his source. Butler confronted Darwin and demanded an explanation, but Darwin sidestepped the issue and, when Butler sent a scathing letter to *The Athenaeum* describing this perceived intellectual misconduct, Darwin refused to engage in a public battle on the issue.⁶⁸ Darwin’s silent refusal of

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 55.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 54.

⁶⁸ In chapter four of *Unconscious Memory*, Butler provides all the details of the case. In brief, Darwin’s *Erasmus Darwin* includes a description of Erasmus Darwin’s work and describes it as a precursor, albeit misguided, to Charles Darwin’s discoveries. Much of the information included here is quoted from a German article by a Dr. Krause, who published the article before the appearance of *Evolution, Old and New*. Butler found that many of the passages quoted in the article were identical to those published in his book and grew suspicious that Krause had plagiarized him. Further, the end of the article implicitly insults Butler and his theories by stating that “to wish to revive [Erasmus Darwin’s system] at the present day, as has actually been seriously attempted, shows a weakness of thought and a mental anachronism which no one can envy” (quoted in *Unconscious Memory*, 39). Suspecting that Krause had altered his article after the publication of *Evolution* and that the altered article was that which Charles Darwin had quoted in his text, Butler wrote to Darwin demanding an explanation. Darwin’s response, which Butler includes in his book, claims that the translation of the essay was arranged prior to the publication of Butler’s text and that modifications to the original German version was a “common practice” because the author planned to republish the text in German. Darwin indicates that the supposed plagiarism is not possible, and Butler was

Butler's cry for acknowledgement compelled Butler to group himself with Darwin's disregarded scientific forebears: "When I thought of Buffon, of Dr. Erasmus Darwin, of Lamarck, and even of the author of the 'Vestiges of Creation,' to all of whom Mr. Darwin had dealt the same measure which he was now dealing to myself...[I] resolved that I would do my utmost to make my countrymen aware of the spirit now ruling among those whom they delight to honor" (49). Butler felt that cultural reverence for Darwin and his theories had transformed good science into bad religion, and he seeks to reinstate Darwin as a human capable of error and misdeeds and his theories as subject to attack.

Of course, Butler's own theories are not without scientific precursors. The connection to thinkers such as Lamarck, Buffon and Erasmus Darwin were not as exigent as that with Dr. Hering and his 1870 lecture that presents almost exactly Butler's argument. *Unconscious Memory* is a dance between asserting the originality of Butler's thought process and promoting a theory of unconscious memory that *would* logically occur to any thinker seriously considering the topic of evolution. Butler seems only too willing to allow that others might have thought of his theory before him, as he writes in a letter in 1878: "If any one thinks I have taken any of their property they shall have it back whether it is theirs or no; on the first chance I get of saying that they said it before me, I will call attention to their having said it. This is the only system on which one can have a quiet mind."⁶⁹ Out of fear of being perceived as appropriating or not recognizing other theorists' work, Butler declares that he will relinquish claims to the originality of his theories to save himself from accusations of theft.

outraged, even though his attempts to air their disagreement in public was met with silence from Darwin, scientific writers, and literary writers.

⁶⁹ Jan 2, 1878 letter to Mr. Clodd, British Library, Box 44028.

Unlike his first two books on evolution, *Unconscious Memory* is so thoroughly devoted to exculpating Butler of plagiarism and establishing his place in the history of thinking about unconscious memory that he provides complete translations of two previously published essays dealing with this theory: Hering's lecture and an extensive excerpt from Von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*. Butler writes introductions to both pieces in which he aligns himself with Hering and demonstrates the way that Hering's theory has augmented his own, and then ensures that his readers do not associate him with Von Hartmann's theory, going so far as to apologize to the reader for a text that is "as distasteful to read [as it was] to translate" (87). In both introductions, and in the many footnotes to these texts, he inexorably draws the reader back to his own theories until, although this was not his professed intention, the reader begins to see Hering and Von Hartmann's work as, respectively, ancillary and perverted versions of Butler's work.⁷⁰ Thus, even in acknowledgement of his intellectual predecessors, Butler constructs the connection so that previous theories of unconscious memory pave the way teleologically to his theory.

In addition, even though Butler divests himself of claims to originality, *Unconscious Memory* is an extended autobiography of how he came to conceptualize and write his first two books on evolutionary theory. Beginning with his trip to New Zealand, which delayed his first encounter with *Origin of Species* for roughly two years, Butler covers the publication of his semi-dystopian novel *Erewhon*, the thought process and

⁷⁰ For example, the introduction to Hering's lecture does not simply sketch out Hering's theses and interesting points, but connects Butler with Hering: "We both of us maintain that we grow our limbs as we do, and possess the instincts we possess, because we remember having grown our limbs in this way" (53). The footnotes also revert endlessly to Butler: "Here, however, as frequently elsewhere, I doubt how far Professor Hering has fully realized his conception, beyond being, like myself, convinced that the phenomena of memory and of heredity have a common source" (note on 71).

reading that led him to write *Life and Habit*, including the trip to North Italy that prevented him from reading about Hering's 1870 lecture that coincides so perfectly with his own ideas, and ending with the process of writing, publishing, and quarreling with Darwin over issues related to *Evolution, Old and New*.⁷¹ In the course of this explanation, the reader learns a great deal of irrelevant personal information about Butler, such as the fact that he wrote the first lines of *Life and Habit* on a summer evening in Montreal and "the bells of Notre Dame... began to ring, and their sound was carried to and fro in a remarkably beautiful manner" (19). These details lend credence to his declaration that the ideas, although not necessarily original, occurred to him independently of any other influence. By reporting where and when he had these autonomous realizations, Butler attempts to convince his reader that he is not guilty, as Charles Darwin and Krause were, of stealing other thinkers' ideas, but is part of the human movement towards the truth. Indeed, Butler claims that: "if a theory has any truth in it, it is almost sure to occur to several people much about the same time" (20-21).

Despite his reported reluctance to "being supposed to claim originality" (20), Butler also states that, at the time of finishing the first proofs of *Life and Habit*, he was relatively certain that his claims were original. He describes discussing his thoughts with his friends and declares that: "to them, as to me, it seemed an idea so new as to be almost preposterous" (20). Peter Raby argues that Butler's plea of originality through the

⁷¹ Butler's concerns about plagiarism first emerged with the publication of *Erewhon* in 1872. This somewhat dystopian novel was published anonymously and was sufficiently similar to the 1871 utopian novel *The Coming Race*, also published anonymously, that Butler's sales were inflated because the public assumed that Butler's text was a sequel. Indeed, *The Coming Race* was rightly attributed to Lord Bulwer Lytton, and the general belief that this was Lytton's second offering helped to make *Erewhon* a success (sales fell off when Butler was announced as the author). Butler was outraged at implicit allegations that his novel was derivative or even plagiarized. He protested in the preface to the second edition that *Erewhon* had been almost complete before *The Coming Race* was even advertised. This early misattribution of his work fueled later anxieties about plagiarism. See Raby 119.

ignorance of his friends is “revealing both about the intermittent, hit-or-miss nature of Butler’s researches, and about the restricted knowledge of his closed circle of friends.”⁷² However, the fact that his friends were unaware of the theory of unconscious memory, and indeed found it “preposterous,” suggests that Butler considered his friends, who were not biologists, as a cultural barometer when he consulted their knowledge. The desire to find out what was *generally* known is unlike the researches of a trained scientist, and Butler’s approach to his scientific theories is characteristic of a gentleman scientist who wishes to communicate with the public at large instead of a small, specialized community.

Butler’s intricate use of personal details, humor, and accessible examples indicates that he is not only trying to reach a wide audience, but he is also suggesting that scientific truth is something that any reasonable person, with sufficient time and inclination, can reach through sustained meditation. The perceived accuracy of the autobiographical particulars are guaranteed by Butler’s ready admission of items that he does not remember, such as when he explains that he has been thinking about life, death and mechanism for twenty years and thus he “cannot...remember exactly how I stood in 1863” (15). However, Butler’s memory on the subject of the development of his theory of unconscious memory seems remarkably acute. Despite a few times when he is not able to remember, on the whole he implicitly claims that his memory recorded details of how, when and where he first thought of the strands that combined to form his scientific theories. Butler’s personal memory, he seems to say, retains large quantities of information and is, on the whole, perfectly reliable.

⁷² Raby 162.

Butler edited his own work obsessively, working throughout his life to refine his image for posterity. He comments directly on his desire to be famous in one of his notebook entries, complete with his later commentary:

“Shall I be remembered after death: I sometimes think and hope so, but I trust I may not be found out, if I ever am found out and if I ought to be found out at all before my death. It would bother one very much, and I should be much happier and better as I am. [This note I leave unaltered. I am glad to see that I had so much sense thirteen years ago. What I thought at ten I think now, only with greater confidence and confirmation.]”⁷³

Butler claims not to want fame until he has died, but his bitterness and resentment at Darwin’s fame, which he feels has precluded his own, and his numerous attempts to create great works of art and science indicate that this claim is disingenuous. After fame eluded him for so many years, however, Butler did turn his attention to his letters and papers, seeking to collect and edit as many of his writings as possible in preparation for his death. Also, Butler returns to many of his writings, including his notebook entries, and painstakingly edits them, sometimes noting the fact, but often simply changing them. In the example of his thoughts on his own fame above, he comments on the fact that he does not alter this one, except to the extent that he points out how much he hasn’t changed. Unlike most of the adults in his life—and in *The Way of All Flesh*—Butler is convinced that he has retained access to his unconscious memories and will throughout his life, and his comment makes that point in a way that revision would not.

Butler’s role as editor of his own life extends to the correspondence that he sent and received, and his intrusive editorial work suggests that Butler is claiming ownership of not only all the material included in these letters, but also the image of himself that these letters create. Indeed, after the death of his good friend Miss Savage, he wrote to

⁷³ Butler, *The Notebooks*, 367.

her father asking for him to return to Butler the letters that Butler wrote to her.⁷⁴ Butler carefully recopies many of the letters that he and other people exchanged, editing out aspects that he doesn't want to be part of the public record of his life and destroying originals. In those letters that he does not recopy and destroy, Butler censors aspects by writing over the words, in heavy black ink, an excerpt from Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "Hail holy light, offspring of heaven first born of the eternal, coeternal beam," thus rendering the words underneath completely illegible. The things that he elides are often the aspects that a literary critic finds the most interesting, such as Miss Savage's criticism of the manuscript that would become *The Way of All Flesh*. Butler hides the degree to which this text was a collaborative effort, producing instead the idea that it was a product of his mind only. Also, by providing extensive commentary on the parts of the letters he does not censor, Butler filters even the thoughts, reminiscences, and ideas of other people. t. For example, Butler returns to Miss Savage's letters after her death, writing in foreshadowing commentary and his guilt that he was unaware of her illness. Through his commentary, his guilt at her sickness and eventual death eclipses the death itself, refocusing attention from that on Miss Savage and her tragically truncated life to Butler and his guilt at being an unsatisfactory friend to such a generous person.

The care with which Butler prepares his papers for his eventual death and the control over the version of his identity that he plans to bequeath to the world amounts to a distribution of property, a systematic and carefully considered deployment of his identity and his ideas once he is no longer around to own them. By censoring his correspondence

⁷⁴ Although Butler and Miss Savage were good friends, their friendship cooled considerably between 1875 and 1877, and their letters became less and less frequent until her death in 1885. She did not tell him that she was ill, and he heard of her operation and subsequent death from one of her friends. He was not invited to her funeral, but he went anyway.

and papers, Butler claims not only his identity and his ideas as his property, but also others' perceptions of him, so that the "private" Samuel Butler, which is available in his personal papers and intimate relationships, is a coherent picture of Butler as he wishes to be known.

Butler's concern with shaping his identity and loudly declaring his ideas as his own is also a response to the growing perception in the last two decades of the nineteenth century that ideas exist in the "ether" and do not, in a meaningful sense, originate with or belong to any one person. As with Butler's theories of unconscious memory, by the end of the nineteenth century there was the growing distrust in the "possibility of thinking original thoughts" rather than just expressing ideas that are available to everyone.⁷⁵

George Eliot, Rudyard Kipling, and Thomas Hardy were similarly concerned about the originality of ideas, the possibility of intellectual property, and the role of machines and electricity in undermining the individual creative spirit.⁷⁶ Given Butler's theoretical precursors, whom he is at such pains to acknowledge, together with his ether-like theory of the unconscious, Butler's work would appear to be an excellent example of the lack of originality in late-Victorian intellectual life. However, by falling back on his personal experiences, Butler asserts his individuality and his possession of his ideas, thus both embracing and rejecting the intellectual collectivity of the period.

In *Unconscious Memory* and *The Way of All Flesh*, Butler secures his hold on his intellectual property with his own memories, thus doubling his claim to ownership. By

⁷⁵ Pettitt 274.

⁷⁶ Interestingly, Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race*, which Butler was implicitly accused of plagiarizing in *Erewhon*, describes a source—like electricity—through which "the thoughts of one brain could be transmitted to another." Butler's anxiety about his original thoughts seems to have been anticipated by the man who also—according to Butler—anticipated the story he would tell in *Erewhon*. See Pettitt, 277.

bringing together scientific and literary intellectual property through his published reminiscences, Butler ensures that the ideas in his work are propagated under his name and under the particular auspices of his life. Tying his theories to his memories creates the contradictory, and yet durable equation: Samuel Butler's theory of unconscious, collective memory is communicated and proved through his highly individual personal memories. While his insistence that his opponents recognize intellectual precursors is consistent with his theory of identity, his anxiety regarding his own ideas indicates a desire for control and ownership that is at odds with his scientific theories. To return to his saying about himself, Butler's concern during this period revolved around whether or not *he* would be remembered by future generations, not as a part of the universal human identity, but as an individual.

The Two Memory Models in *The Way of All Flesh*

Ever since the publication of Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, critics have agreed that the novel is a direct application of his scientific theories of memory and heredity and disagreed about the genre of this new kind of book. The reviewer from *The Athenaeum* warned that the book might be "unattractive to the ordinary novel-reader" and contains "hints of autobiography."⁷⁷ In 1928, A.E. Zucker argued that Butler's novel is the British version of the genealogical novel, a genre of "fiction ruled by science" that deals with evolutionary theory and became famous in France thanks to the novelist Emile

⁷⁷Richards 683.

Zola.⁷⁸ Avrom Fleishman contends that Butler's novel is "autobiographical fiction"—and thus distinct from the contentious genre of autobiography—that "is not so much an accurate record nor a fictive exposition of his life as it is a manifestation of himself as a man of wisdom."⁷⁹ Building on Fleishman's work, I assert that *The Way of All Flesh* is a fictionalized autobiography, a fictionalized account of Butler's own life, which provides an explanation for why Fleishman chose to include this work in an essay titled "Personal Myth: Three Victorian Autobiographers."⁸⁰ Indeed, despite the seemingly major diversions from Butler own life, the hero of the story, Ernest Pontifex, is Butler's autobiographical self, and the description of Ernest's family is so accurate a sketch of Butler's own that he did not publish the book in his lifetime for fear of their response. Butler wrestled with the ethics of portraying himself and his family so mercilessly, writing to Miss Savage in 1874: "Yet my novel will at last go ahead: but it must be quite innocent, for I am now reconciled to my father. I must be careful not to go beyond skepticism of the mildest kind. I shall have to chance the schema that shall try to keep the earlier chapters."⁸¹ As his troubles with his father continued, however, Butler returned to his previous attempt to create a scathingly honest depiction of his family and

⁷⁸ A.E. Zucker, "The Genealogical Novel, A New Genre," *PMLA* 43 (1928): 551.

⁷⁹Fleishman 228.

⁸⁰ In *The Art of Scandal: Modernism, Libel Law, and the Roman à Clef* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Sean Latham argues that *The Way of All Flesh*, like Proust's test, is a roman à clef. Although Butler's work—and all fictionalized autobiography—does share some characteristics with the roman à clef, it is a distinct category because the required "key" is simply to realize that the text is autobiographical rather than purely fictional. Unlike a well-concealed roman à clef, such as D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, which requires extensive knowledge of the author and his associates to discover the key, the fictionalized autobiography is barely hidden.

⁸¹ Samuel Butler, letter to E.M.A. Savage, August 2, 1874. British Library, Box 44028.

their life together.⁸² The resulting text records what Butler perceives to be the salient facts of his own history without identifying the “narrator, the ‘I’ of the text, with the historical author, with the ‘implied’ author in the text, and with the protagonist” and without providing a strictly accurate account of Butler’s life.⁸³

At the time of publication and in subsequent scholarly writing, critics do not identify a contradiction in this autobiographical text that simultaneously promotes Butler’s theory of unconscious memory. Indeed, Butler’s description of the coexistence of unconscious and personal memories appears to inspire and support the genre of the Victorian realist novel—autobiographical or not—in which the experience of a single character can be generalized to encapsulate the whole of human existence. In this section, however, I will demonstrate that there are two different theories of memory operating in the novel: the first is Butler’s overt theory of unconscious memory in which indelible memories belong to the whole of human existence, while most specific individual memories fall away; and the second asserts perpetual individual ownership of permanent and generally infallible personal memories. Recording his own memories in his novel is another of Butler’s frantic attempts to ensure that his personal memories and ideas are his property and will last forever.

Butler adopts a biographical narrator who tells the story of Ernest Pontifex, the fictional incarnation of Samuel Butler. This narrator is a cantankerous 70-something-

⁸² Fleishman makes the point that Butler writes *The Way of All Flesh* from a “need to establish the author’s own identity, for when he was at peace with his family, he let it lie, but took it up again after scenes of intense wrangling. *The Way of All Flesh* may be seen not only as Butler’s means of mercilessly satirizing his family’s religious hypocrisy and crimes against himself as a child, but also as his way of objectifying the being that he struggled to make of himself against such odds” (224).

⁸³ Clinton Machann’s definition of the autobiography. See *The Genre of Autobiography in Victorian Literature* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 8.

year-old man, Mr. Overton, who acts as Ernest's financial and moral guardian and provides an additional patina of authority to the truth-claims about Ernest's—and Butler's—character. From correspondence with Miss Savage regarding the manuscript of *The Way of All Flesh*, it appears that Butler honestly attempts to reproduce his own character in Ernest, right down to his character flaws. When Miss Savage hazards criticism of the text, such as when she suggests that Ernest is “priggish” by the end of the book, Butler responds: “I have no doubt Ernest becomes priggish—for as I have told you I am very priggish myself.”⁸⁴ Although Ernest is the primary repository for Butler's character, it also emerges in the figure of his narrator, Overton. The end result is that Ernest is the Butler-in-progress, while Overton is the “finished” version, which accounts for the fact that, by the end of the book, the narrator and his subject are virtually identical, Ernest having adopted all of Overton's opinions, lifestyle habits, and friends. Miss Savage remarks on the resemblance between Overton and Butler and warns Butler to ensure that he doesn't conflate Overton with Ernest and himself: “I think you must also remember that though you adopt pretty much your own character, and speak your own feelings and convictions, yet that you have chosen the disguise of an old man of seventy three and that you must speak and act as such.”⁸⁵ The presence of a single character in the text, which is described both in and by the narrator, underscores Butler's belief that inherent character is immutable, regardless of the specific circumstances in which it lives.

Despite Butler's focus on character and his interest in heredity and unconscious memory, the contradictions between hereditary and personal memory are apparent in the

⁸⁴ Samuel Butler, November 19, 1883 letter to E.M.A. Savage, British Library, Box 44029.

⁸⁵ E.M.A. Savage, September 9, 1873 letter to Samuel Butler, British Library, Box 44043.

extra-diegetic moments in the text, which preach Butler's doctrine of unconscious memory over against personal memory, while the fundamentals of the story, including the hero's character, unequivocally rely on personal memory. Butler indicates that his—Ernest's—personal memories are accurate and enduring reproductions of past events, and evidence for those scientific reflections also depends upon these personal memories. And, of course, as correspondence and Butler's own notes indicate, the text is a record of Butler's memories of the way he thought, as an inimitable individual, although the circumstances that elicited these thoughts are, in some situations, altered from his remembered account. As he does in *Unconscious Memory*, Butler turns to his own reminiscences for what he assumes to be unassailable evidence for his claims, thus undergirding his scientific and literary work with confidence in the veracity of his memories.

The narrator Overton's commentary about Ernest, the Pontifexes and human existence pivots on the supremacy of unconscious knowledge and the incontestability of inherited traits. Overton muses: "How little do we know our thoughts....I fancy that there is some truth in the view which is being put forward nowadays, that it is our less conscious thoughts and our less conscious actions which mainly mould our lives and the lives of those who spring from us" (17). This sly reference to the theory that Butler himself was in the process of putting before the Victorian public holds that conscious thoughts and actions account for little of an individual's character; thus it is the instinctual, habitual, or otherwise unconscious thoughts and actions with which a biographer of character ought to concern himself. Indeed, Overton dwells on Ernest's

natural proclivities that do not require conscious effort, particularly with those regarding memory. Butler writes:

[Ernest] wanted to remember [the Athenian constitution and manner of voting] very badly; he knew he did, but he could never retain them; in spite of himself they no sooner fell upon his mind than they fell off it again, he had such a dreadful memory; whereas, if anyone played him a piece of music and told him where it came from, he never forgot that, though he made no effort to retain it, and was not even conscious of trying to remember it at all. (149)

Although Ernest's family and schoolmasters look on his inability to retain certain kinds of information as failings—and this is one of Butler's most stinging rebukes of his family and the British educational system—Overton indicates that conscious attempts to remember inevitably fail, while unconscious retention is not only infallible, but also indicative of the individual's true character.

Not only does the mind retain information that is unconsciously interesting to it but unconscious desires shape the development of the individual and the species. In describing the inability of Ernest's Cambridge-trained theology to answer simple but well-reasoned agnosticism, Overton highlights Ernest's wonder that he was not prepared to parry this elementary attack. Overton provides the answer: "they did not develop [a response] for the same reason that a hen had never developed webbed feet—that is to say, because they did not want to do so" (200).⁸⁶ The unconscious will is something that is occluded, rather than exposed, over time and influence from other people. Ernest, who is ordained, goes to prison, marries an alcoholic and works as a second-hand clothes dealer, finally inherits his aunt's fortune and becomes a writer, has to lose everything he has accumulated in the world—his money, status, reputation, ability to make a living, belief

⁸⁶ Overton goes on to say: "but this was before the days of Evolution, and Ernest could not as yet know anything of the great principle that underlies it" (200). Of course, this great principle—that unconscious desire is at the root of all alterations and thus driving progress teleologically—is the heart of Butler's quarrel with Darwin.

in God, and confidence in his education—before he can hear again the unconscious will that his parents and educators silenced in him from an early age. Overton comments: “it is the young and fair who are the truly old and truly experienced, inasmuch as it is they who alone have a living memory to guide them; [it has been said that when] we are getting old, we should say rather that we are getting new or young, and are suffering from inexperience” (109). The young have uninhibited access to their unconscious memories, will and desires, while the old, in general, are lost and rudderless because they have shut off access to the voice of experience from times past.

Overton is aware of his dependence on his memories to tell Ernest’s story and to make his general observations about human existence. Although he admits to his memory’s occasional deficiencies, he believes, in accordance with his theory of the unconscious that, by virtue of being remembered, what he remembers is not only accurate but also important. Even his earliest childhood memories of John Pontifex, which are no longer activated by external stimuli since so much has changed, are intact; describing the Pontifexes and their house, he writes: “All has long since vanished and become a memory, faded but still fragrant to myself” (2). Overton does admit to some memory decay, wistfully describing his childhood play with the little girl who would become Ernest’s Aunt Alethea: “We were very merry, but it is so long ago that I have forgotten nearly everything save that we *were* very merry” (8). Overton’s implicit assertion regarding his memory is threefold: first, that he knows when he has forgotten something, although he can’t say what it is; second, that the vast majority of his past is retained in his memory; and third, that what he does remember is an accurate reproduction of the past.

In only one situation does Overton open the door to the possibility that he has altered or misremembered past events. When Overton tells the story of Ernest's pompous headmaster at school, Dr. Skinner, explaining to Ernest's father his recent pamphlet attacking the Catholic church for placing the letters "A.M.D.G." on the side of a chapel, he claims that Skinner translates the acronym to mean "*Ad Mariam Dei Genetricem*."

Overton then writes:

I am told, by the way, that I must have let my memory play me one of the tricks it often does play me, when I said the Doctor proposed *Ad Mariam Dei Genetricem* as the full harmonies, so to speak, which should be constructed upon the bass A.M.D.G., for that this is bad Latin, and that the doctor really harmonized the letters thus: *Ave Maria Dei Genetrix*. No doubt the doctor did what was right in the matter of Latinity—I have forgotten the little Latin I ever knew, and am not going to look the matter up, but I believe the doctor said *Ad Mariam Dei Genetricem*, and if so we may be sure that *Ad Mariam Dei Genetricem* is good enough Latin for ecclesiastical purposes. (91-92)

While Overton makes a show of doubting his memory, his ultimate denial of his memory lapse together with the excessive repetitions of the incorrect Latin reverse any doubt the reader might have in his reminiscence. Instead, Overton's accurate memory, which other readers might want to discount in view of Dr. Skinner's reputation and position, underscores Overton and Ernest's critique of the educational system as redundant and operated by intellectual frauds.

The overall accuracy of memories in *The Way of All Flesh*, together with the level of detail and the very fact of this autobiographical account suggest that Butler's interest in personal memories is far greater than his scientific theories might indicate. Neither mistaken nor unimportant, particularly in comparison with unconscious memory, Butler's tacit conception of personal memories asserts that memories, at least *his* memories, are both reliable and valuable. It is these memories that Butler chooses to record under the

title *The Way of All Flesh*, elevating his personal memories to the role of spokesperson for all living creatures even though, under his own theory, it is guaranteed that they will not be inherited since he does not have children. Although Butler can disavow the importance of personal memories on a grand scale, when it comes to his own memories, he does everything he can to control and perpetuate them. Hoping to capture in his books his soul and his memories that the childless he cannot hope to pass on through reproduction, Butler attempts to circumnavigate his own pronouncement that most personal memories evaporate upon death and that the only truly important memories are those shared by the living whole.

CHAPTER II

APPROPRIATED MEMORIES: J.T. MACCURDY, REBECCA WEST, AND THE CASE HISTORY

In a letter to the editor of *The Observer* in 1928, the British essayist and author Rebecca West gave an account of how she was inspired to begin her first novel about shell shock and memory loss in World War I:

[I]n 1914, I heard of one of the first cases of amnesia the war produced; this reminded me of a paper in a medical journal I had read before the war in which a factory doctor had recorded without comment the case of an elderly factory hand who fell down a staircase on his head and came to himself under the delusion that he was a boy of twenty; and later gave great pain to his wife by repudiating her and demanding a sweetheart from whom he had been separated for many years.⁸⁷

West's claim that her novel emerged from medical reports is fortified by an unidentified newspaper article that was found in her papers after she died in 1983. The short article, titled "Man Who Forgot Ten Years," suggests that damage to the frontal bones of the skull may cause a patient to forget important moments in his or her life, including pivotal life events such as marriage and the birth of children. The article discusses several cases to support this theory and concludes with a case that is strikingly similar to her popular 1918 novel, *The Return of the Soldier*:

The most remarkable instance of the kind within my own knowledge was that of a man who, after an injury to his head, began his life as it had been about ten years prior to his accident. He was thus left entirely without knowledge of his wife and

⁸⁷ Rebecca West, "To the Editor of *The Observer*," *The Observer*, June 24, 1928.

two children, and began a search for a former fiancée who had been dead for some years.⁸⁸

West's wartime novel is set in 1916 and tells the story of Chris Baldry, a prosperous British landowner serving in the trenches during World War I. After a shell explodes, Chris awakens in the hospital with partial amnesia; he has forgotten the past fifteen years of his life, including his ten-year marriage and his son who died in infancy. Believing that he is twenty-one years old and unmarried, Chris returns home determined to reconnect with Margaret Allington, the woman to whom he had been briefly engaged fifteen years before. Margaret, a poor, lower-class girl, has married an unsuccessful man, and lives a life of near-poverty a few miles from Chris's sumptuous estate. Margaret and Chris are briefly reunited while medical professionals stream through Chris's house, attempting and failing to cure him with every known and experimental treatment for amnesia and shell-shock. Finally, Margaret takes it upon herself to cure him by reminding him of his son—and the wife and duties signified by the dead child—and Chris's cure ensures that he will return to the front.

West's novel does not stray far from the medical case or the genre of the medical case history that apparently prompted it. A medical case history, which by the 1890s was an established genre, is a detailed narrative about an individual's disease or condition that provides information about the disease or condition in general and, by contrast, the healthy body. A complete case history, such as those that were published in the medical journal *The Lancet*, is a linear narrative that describes symptoms, treatment, and outcome, and West's novel closely adheres to this genre. The text revolves around Chris's illness,

⁸⁸ The newspaper clipping is part of Rebecca West's papers at the Beinecke Library at Yale University. However, the clipping does not include any identifying information such as author, date or title of the journal. The archivist marked this fragment "not identifiable".

with emphasis on descriptions of his condition and treatment attempts, and ends at the very moment that he is cured. The novel appears at first glance to be no more than a fictionalized account of an amalgamation of medical case histories about partial amnesia, and, indeed, the 1918 review in the *New Age* claims that the book “ makes no pretensions to literature, is, in fact, nothing more than a skilful report of the cure of a case of ‘shell-shock.’”⁸⁹ However, despite the fact that the novel’s form adheres to the conventions of the case history, the novel differs widely from the early twentieth-century case history because medical interventions fail and Chris is cured through Margaret’s unschooled and unscientific, but loving, ministrations.

By invoking the form of the medical case history, West’s novel joins a long line of literary texts that utilize the conventions of the case history, including such works as George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* and Robert Lewis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In her book *Revising the Clinic*, Meegan Kennedy argues that during the nineteenth century there was a fluid relationship between medical and literary narratives, which borrowed from and mutually enhanced one another. Contrary to these nineteenth-century texts, *The Return of the Soldier* is a commentary—rather than a literary integration—of the genre of the case history. Specifically, West’s novel is a commentary on the *memory* case history, a type of history that became increasingly prominent in the late nineteenth century and reached an all-time high during the First World War. Rather than merely incorporating aspects of the case history about memory, West’s text is emblematic of the early twentieth-century literary movement to reclaim stories about memory from scientists.

⁸⁹ Anonymous Reviewer, *The New Age* 23:11, Thursday, July 11, 1918.

In this chapter, I argue that early twentieth-century literary and scientific texts that specifically deal with human memory did not engage in mutuality and reciprocity as they did in the nineteenth century. Instead, I demonstrate that scientific case histories about memory appropriate individual memories for the benefit of the general knowledge and the reputation of the individual scientist. In response, literary texts attempt to reappropriate memory on behalf of the individual, implicitly asserting that the true owner and beneficiary of any memory is the rememberer. By comparing two 1918 texts on the subject of memory—the first a scientific text, J.T. MacCurdy’s *War Neuroses*, and the second Rebecca West’s novel *The Return of the Soldier*—I claim that the struggle over memory ownership in part takes place through the genre of the case history.

Mechanical Objectivity and the Memory Case History

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, there was a seismic shift in the way that scientists conducted their work. Mechanical objectivity, which requires the scientist to conduct research in as unmediated a way as possible by identifying and eradicating personal bias, became the leading method for scientific inquiry. Until that point, the “truth-to-nature” method reigned supreme, requiring the scientist to identify the essential features of any object under scientific consideration and eliminate any “accidents” of nature that detracted from these essential features. With the rise of objectivity, the “truth-to-nature practices of selecting, perfecting, and idealizing were rejected as the unbridled indulgence of the subjective fancies” of the scientist.⁹⁰ The mid-century fear that the

⁹⁰ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 43. Daston and Galison submit that the emergence of objectivity “did not abolish truth-to-nature any more than the turn to trained

scientist would idealize or regularize observations to fit theoretical expectations prompted what Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison call the “scientific subject” or the disciplined and restrained subject capable of carrying out impartial scientific inquiry.⁹¹ This passively observant scientific subject aimed to record mechanically the variations and details of nature. Instead of arguing from theory or gathering information with an eye on the ideal, the scientist records precisely what his unbiased, self-denying senses perceive in the same way that a camera takes a photograph.

At approximately the same time that scientists began to pursue objectivity rather than truth-to-nature in their research, they also began to consider human memory as an object of scientific inquiry. While it was not until the 1885 publication of Hermann Ebbinghaus’s influential text, *Memory*, that investigations about memory gained more than anecdotal treatment, physicians began to turn an objective eye on human memory roughly two decades earlier. The history of medical cases is anecdotal from the beginnings, starting with the eighteenth century paradigm of the “curious” case. In Meegan Kennedy’s terms, the “curious discourse” of the eighteenth-century case history “highlights a rhetoric of extremity, asserting the rarity, value, secrecy, difficulty, or oddity of the phenomenon under study.”⁹² Unlike the mechanical objectivity of the mid nineteenth century, these cases relied on the physician’s subjective view of the case as “curious”; in other words, the interest of the curious case is the degree of deviation from “nature,” which is determined by the reporting physician.

judgment in the early twentieth century eliminated objectivity” (18), but that each new theory is born from the previous and exists alongside it.

⁹¹ Ibid. 198.

⁹² Meegan Kennedy, *Revising the Clinic* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2010), 36.

Eighteenth-century psychological case histories revolved around the highly bizarre singular case, and those specifically about memory focused on extraordinary or unusual memory deficits or capacities. In 1929, Aldous Huxley writes:

The curious thing about eighteenth-century psychology is that its falsity was gratuitous and novel...The men of the eighteenth century invented (or rather deduced from existing metaphysical postulates) a new and fantastic psychology which they could only reconcile with the observable facts by means of a specially contrived casuistry.⁹³

For example, John Ferriar's 1795 *Medical Histories and Reflections* discusses hypermnesia due to inflammation of the brain in insane patients as a curious deviation from the norm:

[E]very past idea is recollected with great accuracy, and the patient repeats long trains of occurrences, or of arguments, either in soliloquy, or in reply to something said by attendants. I have often witnessed astonishing exertions of memory, carried on in this manner, for several hours without interruption.⁹⁴

As with other eighteenth-century case histories, Ferriar's curious case of overactive memory is driven by spectacle and pre-existing theory. The case is an incredible performance of memory that "astonishes" even a man such as Ferriar, who has witnessed many of the extremes of human ability. However, Ferriar is ready with the theory behind this exceptional performance. By lumping this capacity together with other symptoms of lunacy due to brain inflammation, Ferriar highlights the strangeness of the hypermnesia and eliminates the anxiety that accompanies such strangeness by identifying the cause.

While the medical case history continues to this day to incorporate some of what Laura Miller calls the "illicit allure of the sideshow," by the middle of the nineteenth century the anecdotal case histories about memory de-emphasized the freakish and wildly

⁹³ Aldous Huxley, *Proper Studies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1929), xiii-xiv.

⁹⁴ John Ferriar, *Medical Histories and Reflections* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1795), 86.

abnormal, and instead focused increasingly on reports dealing with the range of normal and abnormal memories.⁹⁵ In response to the theory-driven case reporting of the eighteenth century, empiricist medical writers sought to create a “standardized, impersonal and unmediated process of report.”⁹⁶ By the 1890s, the order and prominence of the case presentation in medical charts and published case histories was regularized to include three factors in the following order: the patient’s description of his or her symptoms, signs of physical disease identified by the physician during the physical examination, and laboratory and other findings.⁹⁷ The standardized form of the medical case history created the necessary distance between the reporting physician and the patient by transforming the patient into an object of knowledge about which only certain kinds of information were relevant. The ideal of mechanical objectivity in the standardized case history was to eliminate the subjectivity not only of the physician but also the patient.

Jason Tougaw argues that the medical case historian must walk a delicate line between objectivity and sympathy, demonstrating both the unbiased distance necessary to turn a patient into “knowledge” and compassion for a suffering human.⁹⁸ Indeed, by the late nineteenth century, the medical case histories are deftly written narratives that simultaneously communicate complete transparency, giving the illusion of unmediated

⁹⁵ Laura Miller, *The New York Times Book Review*, calls the case history “that unsung genre inhabiting the borderland between art and science...[that] combines the illicit allure of the sideshow...[and] the edifying aura of the lecture hall.” Quoted in Jason Tougaw’s *Strange Cases: The Medical Case History and the British Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

⁹⁶ Kennedy 61.

⁹⁷ Julia Epstein, *Altered Conditions: Disease, Medicine and Storytelling* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 31.

⁹⁸ Tougaw 2.

access to the facts of the case, and hints of sympathy for the patient. For example, an 1884 case history in *The Lancet* about concussion and memory loss in a twelve-year-old boy illustrates the way that the patient is wholly objectified, and yet perceived sympathetically: “He was one of the unfortunate persons picked out from amongst the debris at the Newlands Mill chimney disaster. The accident occurred about 8:15 A.M., and the lad was brought to the infirmary some two hours later in a state of complete unconsciousness.”⁹⁹ By using exact times and medical terms, the case appears to be an unmediated recitation of facts, while the use of words such as “unfortunate” and “lad” solicits a degree of sympathy in the “objective” reader.

The mid-to-late nineteenth-century case history incorporates a degree of detail that produces in the reader the impression that he or she is experiencing exactly what the reporting physician experienced. The case history knits together small details to form a realistic causal narrative that denotes control over the sick or injured body. Maria Frawley argues that medicine tells a “narrative of promise, a trajectory marked by diagnosis, treatment, and cure,” and it is this promise that alleviates the concerns raised by the detailed and realistic descriptions of injury and disease.¹⁰⁰ The narrative conventions of the case history, and indeed the illusion of mimesis, are intimately related to those same conventions in Victorian fiction. Lawrence Rothfield asserts that Victorian realist authors imitated the mechanical objectivity of physicians by recording mundane details in precise, disinterested, and accessible prose, while Jason Tougaw and Meegan Kennedy claim that this interchange between the medical case history and the novel was

⁹⁹ *The Lancet*, April 19, 1884, 705.

¹⁰⁰ Maria Frawley, *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 5.

a two-way street.¹⁰¹ For the case history about memory, the omnipresence of the physician-narrator is embedded in the same details that create the impression of realism, because, like the narrator in the realist novel, the physician knows both what is remembered and, more importantly, what has been forgotten.

The move to mechanical objectivity in the case history about memory involved not only detailed descriptions about injuries and illnesses related to memory, but also the clustering of cases to suggest theories about memory. As with the unidentified newspaper article containing several cases of dramatic memory loss that inspired West to write *The Return of the Soldier*, the 1884 case cited above is one of three suggesting that memory loss accompanies cranial injury. The three cases reported in *The Lancet* are similar but not identical, and they are not written as “curious” or freakish cases. Rather, the presence of multiple examples indicates that the loss of memory in response to cranial injury is not abnormal, even in patients with ordinarily functioning memory. These reports stress the relative normality of the patients, stating that they are intelligent and generally enjoy “excellent” or “accurate” memory faculties. The number and similarity of these cases advances a tacit theory that an otherwise normal patient can suffer memory loss after cranial injury, which is described as a “complete blank” or “total loss” for a period of time before and after these three injuries.

Any anxiety about memory loss attending these cases is mitigated by the fact that the reporting physician specifically describes what the patient does and does not remember. Although the patient is unable to remember events that explain how the

¹⁰¹ Lawrence Rothfield, *Vital Signs: Medical Realism in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992). Tougaw’s claim is that the relationship between the case history and the novel is paradoxical with regards to realism. He states: “[w]hile the novel relies on the conventions of realism to signify its fictionality, the case history relies on the conventions of fiction to create the illusion of total mimesis” (15). Also see Kennedy, 2.

injury to the skull occurred, the reporting physician in each case provides extensive details about the accident. In the third case, in which a female teacher suffers memory loss after falling from a carriage, the report includes gratuitous detail about the accident that does not have any bearing on the patient's medical condition:

[The patient and her friend] drove into the country for several miles, and stopped at a roadside inn to give the horse a drink. To enable the horse to get at the water better the blinkers were removed. Just at this moment something frightened the animal, and it bolted with the carriage containing the young lady (the friend had previously alighted). It had not gone far when the carriage came into collision with a wall, and the young lady was thrown to the ground.¹⁰²

This attention to non-medical detail not only contributes to the impression of transparency and realism in the case history, but it also reassures the reader that although the patient does not remember what caused the injury, the reporting physician possesses that knowledge. The case is written in such a way to suggest that the patient continues to be ignorant of the circumstances surrounding this important medical event in her life, but that the reporting physician knows and publishes these circumstances.

This kind of memory appropriation increased in the early twentieth century as trained judgment began to replace mechanical objectivity. Trained judgment rejected the indiscriminate detail of mechanical objectivity, instead focusing on patterns and connections, often at the expense of the mimetic representation of the case.¹⁰³ By the 1920s, scientists began to describe scientific endeavor as the result of painstaking observation and bolts of illumination. Daston and Galison explain that “discovery and insight depended on hunches that erupted suddenly from the inaccessible mental depths” of unconscious cerebration, the deep, unconscious mental work that scientists had been

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 706.

¹⁰³ Daston and Galison, 46.

describing since the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ With the hypothesis as the acknowledged guide to research, failed hypotheses were an accepted part of the scientific landscape and the necessary corollary to intuition-driven science.¹⁰⁵

Trained judgment in memory case histories decreased the anecdotal nature of case histories and highlighted similarities between cases and possible theories. The clustering of cases became increasingly prominent in the early twentieth century, and the move towards groups of cases undercut the value of the individual case. Further, trained judgment transferred more of the knowledge about patient memories to the reporting physician. The physician or scientist with the knowledge or “hunch” of what to look for in the individual case sifted the scientifically important memories from unimportant memories. As I shall discuss in the section on J.T. MacCurdy’s 1918 text, *War Neuroses*, trained judgment enabled the objective scientist to act as the editor of memory case histories.

The Memory Case History as Common Knowledge and Professional Property

Mid-to-late nineteenth-century case histories about memory were both heavily recycled and highly proprietary. In this section, I will argue that while it was not uncommon for a case to be used in support of conflicting theories of memory, authors were always careful to cite the name of the physician who first recorded the case. One of the most often quoted cases didn’t originate with a physician at all, but with the poet

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 311. In 1874, William Carpenter’s book *Principles of Mental Physiology* discusses unconscious cerebration at length, crediting the physician Oliver Wendell Holmes (Senior) with this concept.

¹⁰⁵ Daston and Galison, 312.

Samuel Coleridge. In his autobiographical 1817 *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge recounts an “authenticated” memory case that became pivotal for memory theorists for the next eighty years:

In a Roman Catholic town in Germany, a young woman of four or five and twenty, who could neither read, nor write, was seized with a nervous fever; during which, according to the asseverations of all the priests and monks of the neighbourhood, she became possessed, and, as it appeared, by a very learned devil. She continued incessantly talking Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, in very pompous tones and with most distinct enunciation. This possession was rendered more probable by the known fact that she was or had been a heretic. Voltaire humorously advises the devil to decline all acquaintance with medical men; and it would have been more to his reputation, if he had taken this advice in the present instance. The case had attracted the particular attention of a young physician, and by his statement many eminent physiologists and psychologists visited the town, and cross-examined the case on the spot. Sheets full of her ravings were taken down from her own mouth, and were found to consist of sentences, coherent and intelligible each for itself, but with little or no connection with each other. Of the Hebrew, a small portion only could be traced to the Bible; the remainder seemed to be in the Rabbinical dialect. All trick or conspiracy was out of the question. Not only had the young woman ever been a harmless, simple creature; but she was evidently labouring under a nervous fever. In the town, in which she had been resident for many years as a servant in different families, no solution presented itself. The young physician, however, determined to trace her past life step by step; for the patient herself was incapable of returning a rational answer... [he learned] that the patient had been charitably taken by an old Protestant pastor at nine years old, and had remained with him some years, even till the old man's death... [I]t had been the old man's custom, for years, to walk up and down a passage of his house into which the kitchen door opened, and to read to himself with a loud voice, out of his favourite books... Among the books were found a collection of Rabbinical writings, together with several of the Greek and Latin Fathers; and the physician succeeded in identifying so many passages with those taken down at the young woman's bedside, that no doubt could remain in any rational mind concerning the true origin of the impressions made on her nervous system.¹⁰⁶

With the painstakingly recorded description of the freakish spectacle of an uneducated servant woman reciting learned texts, this case exists on the cusp between the curious case of the eighteenth century and the move to mechanical objectivity. In a philosophical

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1947), 54-55.

rumination on memory, Coleridge recounts this case in support of his theory that “all thoughts are in themselves imperishable; and, that if the intelligent faculty should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and apportioned organization...to bring before every human soul the collective experience of its whole past existence.”¹⁰⁷ For Coleridge, this case serves as evidence that the mind records experience—later in the century he would have compared this faculty to the camera—and that no memory is ever absolutely lost, even though it might be temporarily unavailable to the rememberer.

Sixty years later, the physiologist William Carpenter cites this case in his 1874 *Principles of Mental Physiology*. Carpenter quotes the case exactly, giving credit to Coleridge as the first person who “mentioned” the case, but does not quote Coleridge’s theory of memory that accompanies this case. Instead, Carpenter uses the case to prove his own theory of permanent memory, which he bases in physiology: “Now there is very strong Physiological reason to believe that this ‘storing up of ideas’ in the Memory is the psychological expression of physical changes in the Cerebrum, by which ideational states are permanently registered or recorded.”¹⁰⁸ Carpenter annexes the concept of the photograph that was unavailable to Coleridge to compare the recorded experience to the “invisible impression left upon the sensitive paper of the Photographer” that requires the appropriate chemicals to become visible. However, Carpenter does not make the sweeping claim about memory that Coleridge advances. For Coleridge, the case is evidence that *all* experience is mimetically stored, although not always readily available;

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 56.

¹⁰⁸ William B. Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology*, 4th Ed. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1877), 436.

but Carpenter asserts only that *some* experiences can physically alter the brain and thus be permanently recorded.

The difference between these two conclusions based on a single case is further complicated by a subsequent theory citing this case as evidence. William James's highly influential 1890 text, *The Principles of Psychology*, quotes this text as part of James's overall argument that forgetting is, paradoxically, an essential aspect of memory.¹⁰⁹ James writes: “[i]f we remembered everything, we should on most occasions be as ill off as if we remembered nothing. It would take as long for us to recall a space of time as it took the original time to elapse, and we should never get ahead with our thinking.”¹¹⁰ James quotes the case—again giving credit to Coleridge, but not mentioning Coleridge's theory—as one of the “irregularities in the process of forgetting” for which psychology has yet to account (641). Without indicating that this is Carpenter's analogy, James compares certain latent experiences to “pictures sleeping in the collodion film” that require only the photographer's chemicals to be visible.¹¹¹ However, James implicitly

¹⁰⁹ James doesn't cite Friedrich Nietzsche's 1887 *Genealogy of Morals* or his 1873 “Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” which make approximately the same claim. In *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes: “a little quietness, a little *tabula rasa* of the consciousness, to make room for new things, above all for the nobler functions and functionaries, for regulation, foresight, premeditation...that is the purpose of active forgetfulness...forgetfulness represents a force, a form of *robust* health.” Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 57-58. He makes it even clearer in “Uses and Disadvantages of History”: “[I]t is completely and utterly impossible to live at all without forgetting.” In *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans., R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 62. Although James cites many philosophers in his text and, indeed, is himself one of the greatest American philosophers, his decision to cite primarily psychological texts in his section on memory suggests that he is aware that philosophy and psychology are diverging in the way that they theorize and test memory.

¹¹⁰ William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. 1* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), 640.

¹¹¹ While James does not mention Carpenter's theory when citing this example and discussing memory as a necessary corollary to forgetting, he acknowledges that Carpenter includes this case in *Principles of Mental Physiology* and refers to his theories at other points in the text. In relation to Carpenter's use of this case, James states in a footnote that the case is “unfortunately deficient...in the evidence of exact verification which ‘psychical research’ demands” (642, note 40). This ambiguous treatment of Carpenter, together with James's theory of forgetting, suggests that James is obliquely challenging Carpenter's use of this case.

rejects Coleridge's original theory associated with the case, arguing that "the sphere of possible recollection may be wider than we think" but that the facts "give no countenance, however, to the extravagant opinion that nothing we experience can be absolutely forgotten. In real life, in spite of occasional surprises, most of what happens actually is forgotten" (642-643).

These three theories calling on the same case for evidence represent the range of theories about memory in the nineteenth century, flowing from the philosophical to the objective to the evidence-generated theory characteristic of trained judgment. From Coleridge's assertion that everything is remembered, to Carpenter's observation that some things are remembered permanently, to James's claim that most things are forgotten, each theorist uses the case of this young woman to promote his own concept of how human memory works. While the general usefulness of the case history—the fact that it can be used to support diametrically opposed arguments—is significant to historians of science, I am most interested in the way that these cases are cited when they are passed from theory to theory. Specifically, there are two nineteenth-century trends of case citation that are vital to this chapter: first, the case is ascribed to the first person recording it in support of a theory of memory; and second, the theory itself is, more often than not, completely disregarded.

In terms of property, the case history thus functions in two modes: personally owned professional property and communal or collectively owned property. The recording physician or scientist (or poet) claims ownership of the case history, and subsequent uses of the history acknowledge the owner. The case history is an anonymous genre in which all patient identifiers are expunged, but by attaching his name

to a particular case, the reporting physician re-identifies the case with himself as a professional rather than with the patient as a private individual.¹¹² By appropriating a patient's medical experience as his professional property, the reporting physician establishes or bolsters his career, ensuring that each time the case is quoted in a scientific text, his name will be featured prominently.¹¹³

In the case history dealing with patient memory and forgetting, the reporting physician's appropriation expands to include not only the medical experience—the face-to-face contact with the patient—but also other experiences in the patient's past. In the case reported by Coleridge and reproduced by Carpenter and James, the bulk of the case is devoted to a description of the patient's childhood and adolescence, rather than to the physician's encounter with the patient as a young adult with brain fever. With many memory cases, the physician reports past experiences that the patient is no longer able to remember; in these cases the reporting physician appropriates both patient memories and patient experiences that are forgotten. The physician's superior knowledge of the individual strikes at one of the fundamental operating assumption of possessive individualism, namely the individual's ownership of the experiences that comprise her “self” or her identity. By claiming intimate knowledge of the patient beyond what the

¹¹² The case described by Coleridge is a perfect example. The physician who treats the young woman and conducts the investigation into the possible causes for her ravings is *not* the reported “author” of the case—indeed, his name is not even mentioned. Ownership belongs to the first person to write down and publish the case, as Coleridge did in this instance.

¹¹³ Psychological texts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries pullulate with the attribution of a case to the recording physician or scientist. As an example, Theodule Ribot's 1887 *Diseases of Memory* derives most of its evidence from second-hand cases, but he neatly catalogues them according to the recorder: “[one] form of periodic amnesia is that of which Dr. Azam gives an interesting description in the case of Felida X., and of which Dr. Dufay found a parallel in one of his own patients. The original records may be easily consulted, and a brief summary will suffice for our purpose.” Trans. William Huntington Smith and Ed. Daniel N. Robinson, *Significant Contributions to the History of Psychology 1750-1920* (Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, 1977), 102. Ribot insinuates that the reader should contact the reporting physician as the owner of the case if she wishes to view the entire history.

patient can claim, the physician commandeers the patient's memories and experiences as his professional property.

While the reporting physician appropriates the narrative of the case history, the case history as evidence for any theory becomes collective scientific property. As evidenced by the Coleridge case, each theorist quotes the case to support his own unique theory. By annexing the case without the original—or subsequent—theory, the theorist transforms the case history into collective property that can be used however the scientist in question needs to use it. Indeed, the range of possible interpretations is what early twentieth century and contemporary scientists perceive as one of the pitfalls of using the individual case as evidence.¹¹⁴ However, the use and reuse of a single narrative about memory serves as the constant against which changing theoretical models of memory are measured.

The exception to this model of the case history as both professional and collective property is also the most famous theorist using case histories as his primary evidence: Sigmund Freud. Freud recorded five major case histories, all of which are inextricable from the psychoanalytic theories that they support. Unlike previous and subsequent scientists using the case history, Freud's work fuses every aspect of the case history and the theory to his own name, rendering it impossible to discuss the case without also addressing the accompanying theory. Freud's appropriation of his patients is consummate because every reported aspect of their lives, memories, and treatment refers back to Freud. Indeed, his first case, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" (1901) is the story of a patient that he calls Dora, and even now the name "Dora" signifies Freud's

¹¹⁴ In *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1934), Karl Popper demonstrates that the only foolproof use of the case history or case study is to falsify a theory.

work. Steven Marcus argues that, although the goal of psychoanalysis is to create a narrative that allows the patient to appropriate her own experiences, Freud himself is the central character in his case histories and the primary action of those histories is his “elicitation” of his patients’ stories.¹¹⁵ Freud’s cases are exceptional, not only in the intimate details they record and the groundbreaking theories they propose, but also because they are the only case histories that defy the property model of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century case history.

Throughout the “Dora” case, Freud reflects on the conventions, strengths and weaknesses of the case history. In describing the limitations of his analysis and why he titles it a “fragment,” he writes:

a single case history, even if it were complete and open to no doubt, cannot provide an answer to *all* the questions arising out of the problem of hysteria. It cannot give insight into all the types of this disorder, into all the forms of internal structure of the neurosis, into all the possible kinds of relation between the mental and the somatic which are to be found in hysteria. It is not fair to expect from a single case more than it can offer.¹¹⁶

Freud’s acknowledgement of the limitations of the case history in promoting a particular theory operates as a commentary on the misuse of case histories to “prove” any theory—such as is evident in the Coleridge case—and the increasing tendency of scientists to cluster cases in order to describe the range of an illness or injury and attempt to answer all the questions about it. Freud’s move to accept the case history as something that offers finite knowledge, while a little ironic considering the all-encompassing reception of Freud’s cases, is indicative of the early twentieth-century move towards complexity in

¹¹⁵ Steven Marcus, “Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case History,” *In Dora’s Case: Freud—Hysteria—Feminism*, Eds. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 85.

¹¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. VII*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), 13. All subsequent quotations will be parenthetical.

scientific description, which can only be accomplished with a critical mass of cases or data. Although Freud is the exception to this rule, he is all too aware that ownership of a single case history—or even a few—is no longer sufficient for any other scientist to establish his professional reputation or to support his theories.

Freud's rumination on the method behind the case history also exposes the illusion of realism that characterizes the genre of the case history:

The case history itself was only committed to writing from memory after the treatment was at an end, but while my recollection of the case was still fresh and was heightened by my interest in its publication. Thus the record is not absolutely—phonographically—exact, but it can claim to possess a high degree of trustworthiness. (10)

The nineteenth-century case history generally gives the appearance of immediacy, as though the reader is seeing through the eyes of the physician examining the patient. Although the case history was (and is today) written primarily in the past tense, the overwhelming sense in the case history—as it is in the realist novel—is that events happened *exactly* the way that the reporting physician describes. However, Freud draws attention to the fact that the history is not a mimetic representation of what transpired, but that it has “a high degree of trustworthiness.” For case histories dealing with memory, particularly those like Freud's that focus on the psychological role of forgetting, the admission that a case history has been committed to memory and only written down months later opens the door to accusations of inaccuracy. Further, Freud claims that his memory is “heightened by [his] interest in its publication,” a confession that indicates to the reader that Freud is *not* a disinterested observer or recorder of this history, but that he has a professional stake in its reception. Freud's exceptional status as a case historian is underlined by the fact that by calling attention to the unspoken conventions of the genre,

he breaks with those conventions, exposing the physician's role in the recording process, publication, and ownership of this case history.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, case historians—other than Freud—began to expand the patterns of case history reporting evident in the late nineteenth century. Scientists presented theory-driven clusters of cases, and scientific ownership shifted from ownership of the individual case to ownership of the theory about a wide array of similar but not identical cases. Although cases were still considered the professional property of the recording physician, real scientific value increasingly accrued to the description of the depth and breadth of possible symptoms and outcomes for any illness or injury. In cases dealing with memory, scientists clustered compelling case histories together in an attempt to describe normal and diseased memory. The individual patient's memories reported in these case histories were simultaneously invaluable to the scientific endeavor and simply one of many accounts that demonstrate a particular scientific point. Patterns of memory and forgetting illustrated by grouping numerous histories replaced the centrality of the unnamed individual's memories that held sway in early and mid nineteenth century.

With the onset of World War I, memory studies and memory case histories increasingly addressed the strange and terrifying accounts of memory loss and persistent traumatic memory suffered by the soldiers fighting in the trenches. The British media swiftly made shell shock a household term, and as early as November of 1914, the Chairman of the London Hospital appealed to donors for funds to treat “our gallant soldiers...suffering from severe mental and nervous shock due to exposure, excessive

strain, and tension.”¹¹⁷ Public awareness and medical response to the memory symptoms related to shell shock provided a new visibility for temporarily or permanently damaged memory and for the case history as the standard vehicle for reporting medical information. As the everyday citizen became more familiar with the anonymous case history dealing with “memory” war injuries, the stage was set for the literary backlash against the memory appropriation of the typical case history.

J.T. MacCurdy’s “Typical” Case

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the American physician J.T. MacCurdy traveled to England to study the psychological effects of war. In the resulting book titled *War Neuroses*, MacCurdy organizes scientific and military thinking about war-induced mental illnesses. He notes the “general ignorance as to the essential nature” of war neuroses in Britain during the early parts of the war and claims that physicians tended to adopt “hypotheses concerning the essential nature of these conditions, which were more strongly held than scientific accuracy would justify.”¹¹⁸ With an aim to capture the “desired latitude” of a description of war neuroses while at the same time eliminating the “chaos” produced by the large body of literature about war neuroses, MacCurdy’s stated intention is to “make a survey of these cases...in order that their relative importance might be gauged as a basis for the further study and treatment of

¹¹⁷ “Lord Knutsford’s Appeal,” *The Times*, November 4, 1914, 5b. Quoted in Peter Leese’s *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 58.

¹¹⁸ J.T. MacCurdy, *War Neuroses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), 2. All further quotations will be parenthetical.

these conditions as they arise in the American expeditionary forces” (2-3). MacCurdy selects twenty-seven case histories that will, he believes, contribute to a relatively comprehensive description of “functional nervous conditions arising in soldiers” and that will consequently aid American—and all other—physicians in the identification and treatment of soldiers suffering from these conditions (1). Ultimately, MacCurdy hopes to eliminate the occurrence of war neuroses by the careful recruitment and training of fighting men.

In keeping with the early twentieth-century standard of the case history, the cases that MacCurdy includes are not “startling rarities” but are “characteristic straightforward cases such as may be met with by the score in any hospital especially devoted to functional nervous disorders.”¹¹⁹ MacCurdy describes these nervous conditions resulting from “modern warfare” as a part of his theoretical push to reclassify war-related nervous conditions that the British define as “shell shock,” which is, he argues, too restrictive in both etiology and symptomatology. Shell shock implies a single cause—“the physical effects of high explosive shells on those subjected to bombardment”—and a rather small, discrete group of symptoms (1). MacCurdy insists on the term war neuroses, a plural term, to describe the wide range of pre-existing and war-related causes and symptoms that create sufficient mental disturbance to incapacitate the soldier. By surveying these disorders with broad strokes and specific details, MacCurdy compiles under a plural heading the range of mental disorders that physicians and military personnel can expect to come across in the conduct of war.

¹¹⁹ This description of the cases is found in the preface by W.H.R Rivers, iii.

In this text published two years before Freud's formulation of the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, MacCurdy hypothesizes that the many categories of war neuroses are fundamentally caused by an obsession with war memories so painful that they create in the patient a desire to die.¹²⁰ The healthy soldier, MacCurdy claims, is able to put aside his civilian repugnance for cruelty and embrace a primitive instinct and delight in "brutality and savagery for themselves alone." War neuroses arise when the soldier's civilian repugnance for war-related cruelty and bloodshed returns and he becomes "increasingly obsessed with the horror of warfare" (11) and longs to die in action so that he is able to discharge his duty and yet avoid the sights, sounds and smells of war. In civilian life, healthy soldiers rechannel the primitive desire for bloodshed in physically dangerous sports, but in war, the desire for blood coupled with allegiance to his community produce the effective and appropriately violent soldier.¹²¹ The man who adapts poorly or not at all to warfare fails to sublimate this primitive desire into the socially acceptable form of warfare because of the presence of a habit of mind—an over-learning of the mantras of civilization that prevent bloodshed—or a predisposition to feel for and with all creatures. While the former can be unlearned with sufficient training, the latter suggests that certain men are fundamentally unable to fight.

¹²⁰ MacCurdy writes, "It would be impossible to discuss with any completeness the mental mechanisms which result in this astonishing change in character [the transformation from a cruelty-hating civilian into a remorseless soldier]. It is, however, extremely important to develop some hypothesis, no matter how briefly, to account for this" (11). MacCurdy professes to a reluctance to theorize about this transformation and its relationship to war neuroses, but acknowledges the necessity of a supportable theory in understanding, treating and preventing these disorders. Unlike the hypotheses from early in the war that "were put forth with as much enthusiasm and as little accuracy as the importance of the problem" (2), MacCurdy feels that his hypothesis is justified by the sheer range of cases he is surveying.

¹²¹ MacCurdy notes that William James was the first to suggest that sublimation occurs through physical exercise and contact sports (11).

The “mental make-up” of those men unfit for soldierly duty has two components: a predisposition to fearfulness and to repugnance to cruelty. If the soldier has childhood memories of night terrors or fear of thunderstorms, he is likely to develop war neuroses in the event of war. More crucially, the child who has a “[g]reat sensitiveness to cruelty, horror of bloodshed and accidents, discomfort at the sight of animals being killed, unusual sensitiveness to pain, either in himself or other” is far less likely to sublimate successfully during war (33). MacCurdy stresses the abnormality of the men who are not able to fight in an effort to cordon them off from the “normal” men who were mischievous as children, bold with women, and untroubled by the suffering of animals, and thus can be transformed into successful fighting men.

MacCurdy’s method of diagnosing war neuroses relies almost completely on the patient’s memories of his life before the war. MacCurdy writes: “one makes inquiry into a patient’s past life...not only to discover what there may have been in his previous character which would directly affect his capacity as a soldier, but also to gain some rough idea of how resistant he had previously been to the most disturbing influences of life” (16). Memory thus serves as both the subject of and the evidence for these cases; the war neuroses are a disease *of* the memory—a disease of exaggerated and repetitive memory of the “horrible sights” the patient has seen—and a disease diagnosed by taking as primary evidence the patient’s memories of the war and of himself before the war. MacCurdy’s case studies, which assert that the “normal” man will not be seriously affected by war neuroses, raises the question of whether the predisposition causes the neurosis or the neurosis alters the patient’s memory of his life before the war.

The emphasis on normality, which pervades every case history that MacCurdy reports, demonstrates the extent to which he appropriates the patient memories that support his general theory. MacCurdy's theory relies upon the normalcy of sublimation of the primitive instinct for bloodshed, and the bulk of his text describes those men who are physiologically unfit for military duty. While this insistence that the majority of men—or all men wanting to be perceived as normal—are willing and able to commit acts of cruelty in the name of the State is militarily advantageous, to establish this standard of normality MacCurdy must abandon the precepts of mechanical objectivity and insert a significant amount of commentary about his patients in his case histories. In Case III, MacCurdy insists that the patient is “abnormally sensitive to the sight of blood, and more sympathetic than is usual” (34). In Case IV, he goes beyond adjectival commentary and includes his own response to the patient's memories:

[W]hen on a road back of the lines, a shell landed in the engine of a passing automobile and mangled the occupants horribly. This upset [the patient] a great deal and for a few weeks after the experience he stammered. (He gave a long and unnecessarily lurid account of this incident; in fact, in all his recitals there was evidence of a morbid fascination for him in the carnage of war.) (38)

MacCurdy's appraisal of the patient's remembered account demonstrates that the memories are abnormal and thus not reliable. The account of the mangling is “unnecessarily lurid,” not because the recounted events didn't happen, but because MacCurdy insists that a certain degree of detail, or a fascination with that detail, is not within the normal range. Lingering on “morbid” details, which might appear to be a successful sublimation of the primitive instinct for cruelty, is in a patient who in all other ways fits the profile of a sufferer of war neurosis, branded abnormal. Although MacCurdy provides specific details for many of his case histories, he does not include

these “lurid” details in his discussion of the case. By editing the patient’s account and removing the “abnormal” aspects, he transforms the patient’s memory into his own professional account of what level of detail a normal memory includes.

This “survey” approach anonymizes and generalizes his patients’ experiences, even though the case histories overflow with specific details about each individual patient. All of the included cases are “representative” cases, beginning with the general introduction intended to “orient the reader” with anxiety and hysteria, the two primary types of war neuroses (4). In his chapter on the effect of fatigue on the development of war neuroses, MacCurdy presents the case of a soldier who “[f]rom the standpoint of adaptation...might easily be called a perfect soldier” (50). This soldier began to lose sleep because he was stationed in an area “where mining was the chief form of attack, and he would frequently hear the Germans digging beneath his dugout” (50). The case history describes in detail the soldier’s fight with insomnia instigated by the German mining threat:

[h]e would lie for a long time, trying to get to sleep, his head aching, seeing dugout being blown out, and the men being bowled over, and imagining himself in the way of shells. Occasionally he could feel these things as well as see them, but could always by an effort of will convince himself that they were only imaginations. (51)

This detailed chronicle of a soldier’s desperate struggle with fear, sleeplessness due to incipient threat, and suicidal thoughts brought on by the desire to “finish up quickly what was going to happen anyway” (52), is both highly specific to the individual patient and denominated as a representative account of all other soldiers in similar circumstances.

By grouping case histories and selecting the most “typical” account, MacCurdy simultaneously presents his theories of war neuroses and suggests that subsequent case

histories will have to address his normative examples. Like other practitioners using the techniques of trained judgment, MacCurdy considers a case representative if it supports his overall theoretical claims about the nature and treatment of war neuroses. In the example above of the “perfect” soldier, MacCurdy writes that the

case shows how incapacitating pure fatigue without the development of any marked neurotic symptoms may be. Judging from what one gathers in taking the histories of many patients, it might be safe to say that had this lieutenant’s superiors not sent him back to the hospital...he would have developed a typical anxiety state, for all the symptoms were potentially present. (53)

Calling on his experiences with other patients, MacCurdy demonstrates in this explanation that war neuroses result from either a fundamental inability to fight or from external and avoidable factors like fatigue. In this one case, he presents evidence to support the whole of his military and scientific theory of war neuroses: military personnel can eliminate war neuroses by weeding out the unfit soldiers and cultivating the natural soldiers. The interwoven case and explanation of its representative function illustrates the way that MacCurdy transforms wholesale the patient’s case history into his professional property, while also indicating that future theorists of war neuroses related to fatigue will need to address the elements of this “typical” case. Since the case is not simply a report of a single patient’s history, but is a description of a subset of disease, the patient’s experiences, memories, and symptoms are subsumed in the larger theoretical project.

Theoretical claims not only anonymize and generalize experience but they also neutralize emotionally powerful memories, reducing patient memories to categories of experience. MacCurdy’s first case history is “typical of the development and symptoms of an anxiety state” and involves a 27-year-old soldier suffering from nightmares,

lassitude, depression, and persistent ruminations on things he had witnessed during the war (4-5). After a rest cure in a country hospital, he was well on his way to recovery when he received news that his best friend had been killed in France, which provoked a severe and irreversible relapse. In his comprehensive theory, MacCurdy states, “the death of a close friend or comrade may be the signal for the stress of warfare to make its effects known” (20). For the patient described in the case history, the clinical report of the death of a friend so beloved that his death causes complete collapse and the physician’s subsequent theory take possession of the memory of the friend and his death by repackaging them as features of disease. The de-personalized and mechanical account of both the friendship and its horrifying conclusion elide all those aspects of the patient and his friend that constituted the friendship. By eliminating all but the facts of friendship and death, MacCurdy seizes and expurgates the patient’s memories.

MacCurdy’s appropriation of patient memories and the theories that they support are not uncontested. In the preface to the book, the British psychiatrist W.H.R. Rivers claims that MacCurdy’s theories, such as that of “re-education” about predispositions towards war neuroses, belong to the physicians at the psychiatric hospitals Craiglockhart and Maghull. Rivers, whose distinguished history of treating shell-shocked soldiers lends credence to MacCurdy’s work, insists that MacCurdy’s text is derivative rather than primary. Rivers writes that the “merit” of the text is not “in the nature of its material, but in the skill with which this material has been treated and the clearness with which the essential facts have been set down and utilized to illustrate the special problems presented by the neuroses of war” (iii). On the one hand, Rivers echoes MacCurdy’s own description of his project: MacCurdy acknowledges that he is not the first to write about

these neuroses, but claims to shift emphasis from war neurosis to war neuroses and to suggest scientific and military applications for his theory of predisposition and external factors for war neuroses. On the other hand, however, Rivers retains the rights over this material and MacCurdy's theories, maintaining that MacCurdy is little more than a clever organizer of material rather than a theoretician. By describing MacCurdy as a mechanical observer without rights to the cases he reports, Rivers prevents the visiting American from a full-scale appropriation of British war memories while keeping these memories within scientific hands.

Literary Re-appropriation of the Case History

Rebecca West also wishes to prevent the appropriation of memory and memory loss, but it is appropriation by scientists that she fights against.¹²² In *The Return of the Soldier*, countless doctors unsuccessfully attempt to cure Chris Baldry's fifteen-year memory loss through methods such as hypnotism and suggestion. The narrator of the story, Chris's cousin Jenny, mocks the futility of these medical professionals who are

¹²² Interestingly, West's story appears to be a partial appropriation—or at least commentary—on Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915), which she reviewed on April 2, 1915 in the *Daily News*. Branded by critics for the *Saturday Review* as “a chronicle of sordid treachery and vice,” Ford's novel received very few favorable reviews other than West's. She writes of this story of betrayal, adultery, and love: “this close and relentless recital of how the good soldier struggled from the mere clean innocence which was the most his class could expect of him to the knowledge of love, can bear up under the vastness of its subject.” West's review sympathizes with the adulterer Edward Ashburnham, discovering in his final affair with his own ward a description of the guiltlessness of true love. West's own story about a good soldier committing blameless adultery composed right after Ford's text is too similar—and too dissimilar—for coincidence. Ford's later work, *Parade's End*, returns to the subject of soldiers and memory in the protagonist Christopher Tietjens whose remarkable memory is grievously damaged in the war. Even though West lauds Ford for *The Good Soldier* and apparently annexes certain of his ideas for her own novel, in later years she grew to dislike him privately and professionally. Indeed, in 1939 Olivet College asked her to write a tribute to Ford which she refused “fully and frankly” to do. See Box 14, Folder 631 of the Rebecca West Archive at the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

“sleek as seals with their neatly brushed hair and their frock-coats” but can only look at Chris with the “consequenceless deliberation of a plumber.”¹²³ The doctors discover that Chris’s memory is unyielding, even after they briefly cure his amnesia under hypnosis.

West writes,

[h]e had submitted to [the hypnotism] as a good-natured man submits to being blindfolded at a children’s party, and under its influence had recovered his memory and his middle-aged personality...But as his mind came out of the control he exposed their lie that they were dealing with a mere breakdown of the normal process by pushing away this knowledge and turning to them the blank wall, all the blanker because it was unconscious, of his resolution not to know. (138)

Chris’s happiness in his lost memories, which reconnect him with Margaret and return to him his lost youth, is impervious to the meddling of science. Describing Chris as “saner than sanity,” Jenny explains the significance of his loss of memory as a revelation of his innate intelligence: “this choice of what was to him reality out of all the appearance so copiously presented by the world, this adroit recovery of the dropped pearl of beauty, was the act of genius I had always expected from him” (58). His control—albeit unconscious—over his memory, and the doctors’ inability to diagnose or treat his disease, reasserts the rights of the patient over his memory and the identity constituted by that memory.

By discarding fifteen years worth of memories, Chris’s unconscious mind chooses which memories will constitute his identity. At the age of 21, after breaking off his engagement with the lower-class girl Margaret in a fit of jealousy, Chris accepts a life of responsibility and industry, a life in which “nothing and everything was wrong” (167).

By taking over his father’s business and marrying the beautiful, but shallow and

¹²³ Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (London: Daily Express Fiction Library, 1918), 138. Further quotations will be parenthetical.

unspiritual Kitty, Chris profitably spends fifteen years amassing a fortune, improving his childhood home, and establishing himself as a successful and typical Englishman. However, when the bursting shell provides his unconscious with the opportunity to reconfigure the memories constituting his identity, he rejects the profitable, typical years—indeed, those years in which his life looks like a case history of the average wealthy Englishman’s life—in favor of his earlier years when his love defied class and status boundaries and he lived in hope of a life “rich with an inextinguishable joy” (20). Chris’s control over his memories and his identity confounds the physicians that attempt to treat him; unlike the patient whose memories can be appropriated through diagnosis, therapy such as hypnosis, and scientific theories of disease—such as we find in MacCurdy’s work—Chris’s memories resist scientific intrusion.

Although Jenny ascribes “genius” to Chris for his condition and his resistance to the attempts to cure him, Jenny is not able to clarify the degree of his control over or at least complicity with his illness. She describes the failed hypnotism treatment as a “turning to them the blank wall, all the blanker because it was unconscious, of his resolution not to know” (138-9), thus declaring that Chris is both accountable for and helpless to control his memory loss. The content of the central chapter of the book—Chris’s memories of Monkey Island and his engagement to Margaret—and the topic of all other chapters deal with Chris’s memory, but what and how he remembers is questioned throughout the text. Indeed, when Chris tells Jenny about his engagement to Margaret, she narrates the most unlikely memories imaginable:

[Chris] lifted [Margaret] in his arms and carried her within the columns, and made her stand in a niche above the altar. A strong stream of moonlight rushed upon her there; by its light he could not tell if her hair was white as silver or yellow as gold, and again he was filled with exaltation because he knew that it would not

have mattered if it had been white. His love was changeless. Lifting her down from the niche, he told her so. And as he spoke, her warm body melted to nothingness in his arms. The columns that had stood so hard and black against the quivering tide of moonlight and starlight seemed to totter and dissolve. He was lying in a hateful world where barbed-wire entanglements showed impish knots against a livid sky full of blooming noise and splashes of fire and wails for water, and the stretcher bearers were hurting his back intolerably. (85-6)

Although Chris reports that Margaret's body melts away and he finds himself in a trench, this conflation of events is apparently a trick of the memory, a knitting together of unrelated events to form a cohesive account of the past.¹²⁴ However, this "dissolve" method suggests that Chris—or Jenny—might be remembering a film, or augmenting remembered events through memories of a film, rather than reporting events that actually occurred in the past. Debra Rae Cohen argues that this moment in the text is a version of misplaced memory that enables Chris to forget the ugly history that followed the romantic engagement. Chris's memories of Margaret and the "pastoral-classical pastiche in which he moves from idyll to war passively, without agency" elides the quarrel between Chris and Margaret, in which he accuses her of flirting with another man and she accuses him of not trusting her "as he would trust a girl of his own class." His forgetting, Cohen suggests, is a kind of "'imperialist nostalgia'—the nostalgia for what one has destroyed."¹²⁵ Nostalgia, like the elaboration of memories to fit cinematic expectations, is a *constructed* memory that has been altered to adhere to the pattern of the genre of romance, which indicates that the wounded Chris lacks control over what he remembers.

To the dismay of the scientific professionals, Kitty, and Jenny, Margaret is the only person who has any influence over Chris's memory. Margaret, whose physical

¹²⁴ Contemporary psychologist Daniel Schacter calls this a "misplaced memory." See *The Seven Sins of Memory* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2001).

¹²⁵ Debra Rae Cohen, *Remapping the Home Front: Locating Citizenship in British Women's Great War Fiction* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 78.

appearance has dramatically deteriorated during the fifteen year separation, is however unchanged in her spiritual essence. As such, she is the only person able to reach and affect Chris, and it is she who tells the last, most celebrated physician how to cure Chris's amnesia. She says: "I know how you could bring him back. A memory so strong that it would recall everything else—in spite of his discontent" (168), and she suggests that the memory of Chris's son, who had died five years previously, would be strong enough to jolt him back into reality. The physician, "swelling red and perturbed" (170), accepts Margaret's advice, but by explaining that he does not understand *why* this technique will work and by acknowledging that Margaret herself will have to be the one to remind Chris of his son, he admits that the case and the cure are beyond the reaches of science.

Margaret's insistence that a reminder of the dead child will cure Chris depends upon her remarkably unscientific theory about Chris's dead son, Oliver. Margaret happens upon a photograph of Oliver and presses Jenny for information about his life and death. Upon discovering that Oliver died at the same age, in the same year, and from a similarly inconsequential disease as Margaret's dead child, Dick, Margaret concludes "they each had half a life" (160). Jenny is caught up in Margaret's "mystic interpretation" (160), and also ascribes the death of these children to the "cruelty of the order of things. Lovers are frustrated; children are not begotten that should have had the loveliest life; the pale usurpers of their birth die young. Such a world will not suffer magic circles to endure" (161-162). In this interpretation, Margaret and Chris were not merely thwarted lovers, but they were somehow *meant* to be lovers, to the extent that their children with other partners are not able to survive. To Jenny, the cruel world defies its own fate, leading to inconclusive and aborted experiences such as Margaret and

Chris's engagement and the brief lives of their children. Chris's memory loss is an attempt, brought on by the "hateful world where barbed-wire entanglements showed impish knots against a livid sky" (86), to return to his last happy moment and relive the years as they were supposed to be remembered.

Throughout the text, Kitty represents the falsehood exercised upon the soul by physical controls such as sexual desire and science, and it is she who declares Chris "cured," indicating that the scientific desire to normalize and control memory denies the individual soul in favor of producing "ordinary" people. Margaret tearfully confronts the final doctor to visit Chris with the inadequacies of science in an imperfect world, saying: "[y]ou can't cure him...make him happy, I mean. All you can do is to make him ordinary" (168).¹²⁶ For Margaret, a true cure entails restoring Chris to his intended fate as her happy husband, but all that science offers is to "bring people from various outlying districts of the mind to the normal" (168). By returning Chris to his lawful, although not rightful, wife and the life that he created to support her, science demonstrates that it is part of the "hateful world" that forbids the "magic circles" that signify happiness.

When Margaret "cures" Chris by taking him physical reminders of his dead child and "using words like a hammer" (186) to remind him of reality, the narrator—and therefore the reader—is not privy to the conversation. Instead, and this is remarkably unlike a scientific case history, the actual moment of the cure is obscured and thus unrepeatable—either as narrative or as scientific technique. Chris's cure, like his

¹²⁶ In Margaret's speech to Dr. Gilbert Anderson, West is paraphrasing Freud's 1895 *Studies in Hysteria*: "I do not doubt that it would be easier for fate to take away your suffering than it would for me. But you will see for yourself that much has been gained if we succeed in turning your hysterical misery into common unhappiness." Trans. Nicola Luckhurst and Rachel Bowlby (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004). Indeed, this paraphrase does much to damage West's claim, which I will discuss below, that her novel is not drawing on psychoanalytic sources.

memory, belongs to him; although Margaret has a degree of control over his memory in that he allows her to cure him, his transformation back into his 36-year-old identity is private. His jolt back to reality takes place in the woods, away from the prying eyes of science and civilization, and his return to the house wearing “a dreadful, decent smile” and walking “not loose-limbed like a boy...but with the soldier’s hard tread upon the heel” (187) incites his wife to pronounce “with satisfaction” that he is “cured” (188). By hiding Chris’s cure from all but Margaret, West ensures that no one, not his wife, the doctor, the narrator, or the reader, can appropriate his memory of returning to reality.¹²⁷

Although this story is about Chris and his memory, he is not the narrator, and even the chapter of directly reported memories about Monkey Island and Margaret is filtered through Jenny. In the critical reception of the text, West’s use of a female narrator for Chris’s story is generally ascribed to her overtly feminist politics. The 1918 reviewer in *The New Age* remarks: “[i]t is a proof of Miss West’s modesty of aspiration that the woman’s point of view is so clearly stated and remembered, while the man is merely a lay figure whose psychology Miss West does not attempt to explore. He is merely the provider of the story, just as he is the provider of the setting; and what he really thinks or feels is a matter of interest only to himself.”¹²⁸ This reviewer insists that male psychology is uninteresting—and out of reach—to the feminist author, which explains

¹²⁷ In 1928, John van Druten dramatized *The Return of the Soldier*, and it was produced on the stage and then in 1952, his play was adapted for BBC broadcast by Peggy Wells. The Druten version of the story lifts the veil from Chris cure, with Margaret reporting to Jenny the words she said to jolt him out of his amnesia. The screenplay for the 1982 film version of *The Return of the Soldier* starring Alan Bates, Julie Christie, Glenda Jackson, and Ann-Margret was written by Hugh Whitmore with the help of Rebecca West and retains the secrecy surrounding Chris’s cure. The discrepancy between these two dramatized versions suggests that West purposely conceals the cure, not because she was incapable of convincing her reader of such an improbable cure but because she wants it to remain private: the shared experience of Chris and Margaret.

¹²⁸ Anonymous Reviewer, *The New Age* 23:11, Thursday, July 11, 1918. P. 174.

the novel's female narrator.¹²⁹

The presence of the female narrator serves two primary functions: she clarifies and critiques the narrative role of the case historian. The presence of a necessarily outside observer, or one who lacks access to the patient's experiences because of her gender and can only access thoughts and feeling when the patient volunteers them, is identical to the narrative voice of the case historian. Unlike the omniscient narrator of the realist novel, the case historian holds himself separate from the patient, reporting only medical details and the patient's words.¹³⁰ Jenny entices memories from Chris with the promise that she will "never tell," but breaks this trust to tell the story, just as the physician breaks the trust with his patient in a case history. As with the case historian of the early twentieth century such as J.T. MacCurdy, Jenny constructs theories about Chris and his mental state based on behavioral evidence, instead of the inside knowledge of his thought process that would belong to the omniscient narrator. Jenny's theories are proven wrong through the course of the novel, such as when she describes what she "knows" about Chris from his actions when he departed for France:

¹²⁹ Not only does this reviewer insult West by suggesting that she, as a woman, is not able of the kind of psychological novel that would investigate Chris's conscious and unconscious mind (even though this is disguised as a compliment for recognizing her own limits), but the reviewer also seems to have missed, in part, the point of the book. The reviewer does not recognize the tone of mourning that pervades the book or the sadness that human institutions and pursuits such as war and marriage can end up impeding human happiness. Instead, the reviewer suggests that West champions the rights of the lawful wife over against those of Margaret, the spiritual wife: "No idylls for the returned warrior, no remembering of the days when he was young; there is work to be done, there is a wife to be compensated for the mental and spiritual damage she has suffered by his absence. There is rest in heaven, for in heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage; but Miss West represents the English wife as meeting her husband at the docks with the command, "Take up your cross and follow me.""

¹³⁰ The substitution of the omniscient narrator for an unreliable "outsider" narrator who is not able to communicate the climax of the story (the cure) is another aspect that resonates of West's review of Ford's *The Good Soldier*: "Mr. Hueffer [Ford] has used the device...of presenting the story not as it appeared to a divine and omnipresent intelligence, but as it was observed by some intervener not too intimately concerned in the plot. It is a device that always breaks down at the great moment, when the revelatory detail must be given; but it has the great advantage of setting the tone of the prose from the beginning to the end" (MacShane, 46).

Then he got into the car, put on his Tommy air, and said: 'So long! I'll write you from Berlin!' and as he spoke his head dropped back, and he set a hard stare on the house. That meant, I knew, that he loved the life he had lived with us and desired to carry with him to the dreary place of death and dirt the complete memory of everything about his home, on which his mind could brush when things were at their worst, as a man might finger an amulet through his shirt. This house, this life with us, was the core of his heart. (7)

In the course of the novel, Jenny discovers that her theory is false and that Chris had long been suffering from a "subtle discontent" with his home, his family and his life (169).¹³¹

The prominence of Jenny's theories and the fact that Jenny is forced to acknowledge to herself how little she knows about Chris serves as a commentary upon the "glib assurance" of the medical case history that smoothly assumes it can grasp a patient's soul (169). According to Ian Hacking, the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century sciences of memory regarded memory as "a scientific key to the soul," and West's text challenges the belief that harnessing knowledge about memory in general and the patient's specific memories provides the case historian with access to the patient's soul.¹³²

This literary case history is troubled by the fact that the narrator, Jenny, is obviously unreliable. Her excessive love for Chris, which is communicated through her jealousy "as ugly and unmental as sickness" (132) of Margaret and Chris's temporary

¹³¹ Chris's and Jenny's sexual identities are implicitly and explicitly discussed and shaped throughout this case history. Whereas Chris's sexuality is made appropriately masculine (Margaret destroys his unmanly "dependence" on her), Jenny goes from desiring Chris to desiring to *be* Chris, as when she kisses Margaret "as lovers do" before Margaret goes out to cure Chris. John Edward Toews suggests that Freud's pre-World War I case histories are attempts to help his patients construct appropriate masculine and feminine identities and are also Freud's attempt to "work out his own struggle to establish a satisfactory masculine identity" (35). Although Jenny's case narration differs from that of a masculine voice, there is a hint that she grows increasingly masculine throughout the course of the novel and that the history is her way of thinking through her own sexual identity. See Toews, "Refashioning the Masculine Subject in Early Modernism: Narratives of Self-Dissolution and Self-Construction in Psychoanalysis and Literature, 1900-1914," *Modernism/Modernity* 4.1 (1997), 31-67.

¹³² Hacking argues that "by investigating memory (to find out its facts) one would conquer the spiritual domain of the soul and replace it by a surrogate, knowledge about memory." See *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 198.

happiness, is the primary indicator that she is not the disinterested observer that the reader expects from the narrator of a case history. Jenny's desire for Chris, hatred for Kitty, and jealous admiration for Margaret color her narration, lending it a romantic or a sinister air according to Jenny's feelings at the time. Jenny's hyperbolic descriptions of Margaret range from the harshest condemnations of her poverty and self-neglect to an idealized image of Margaret as a beautiful saint or an archetype of the female lover/mother. Indeed, Jenny shifts descriptive gears so quickly that the reader is dazzled; in the space of two paragraphs, Margaret is described alternatively as a hunched woman who makes "a squalid dodging movement like a hen...she was not so much a person as an implication of dreary poverty" (141) and "my dear Margaret who sat thus englobed in peace as in a crystal sphere...[in] the most significant as it was the loveliest attitude in the world" (143). The variance of these descriptions is centered in Jenny's perception of Margaret's body, which is first denied humanity and compared to a hen and "not so much a person" and then transforms into a "dear" person with a name who eclipses all other women in the world. Jenny's perception changes so drastically that Margaret's humanity—what should be fundamental and unchanging—is under debate from moment to moment.

Jenny's protean narrative underscores the deep uncertainty that pervades the text. Objects, people and events lack substance or absolute value, and are instead defined at Jenny's whim, and the focus on variance in impression in the text does not occur from person to person, but within a single person. Jenny's mercurial perceptions demonstrate that subjective bias, which was the dreaded foe of mechanical observation, is not stable within the subject; in other words, subjective bias is additionally dangerous because the

individual's bias itself changes rapidly. This narrative casts doubt on the possibility of an unbiased narrator not only because Jenny is changingly biased, but also because she portrays every other character, including the medical men, as biased. Jenny depicts Gilbert Anderson, the final doctor who fails to heal Chris, as a plump, self-satisfied man who is enamored of dream interpretation and suppressed wishes as the root cause of the illness. Wishing to support a theory of the unconscious as that over which the conscious has no control without the help of a medical professional, Dr. Anderson rejects the idea that Chris can, through effort, cure himself: “[t]he mental life that can be controlled by effort isn't the mental life that matters” (163). Margaret's assurance that the memory of his child is strong enough to return Chris's memory nettles the famous doctor, and the unscientific cure demonstrates that Dr. Anderson's diatribe against effort is not scientific knowledge, but is the prejudice of a doctor with a theory.

Jenny's narrative of Chris's memories and memory loss is, foremost, an attempted appropriation of these memories. Like the case historian who commandeers his patient's memories for professional gain, Jenny uses Chris's memories to tell her own story, and her varying interpretations of events chart not Chris's disease but her own life as it relates to Chris's disease. By appropriating Chris's memories through her own narrative, Jenny seeks to imitate Chris and to demonstrate to him that she is “devoted and intimate” (86): the woman who loves him best. While Jenny does not suggest that she repeats, word for word, Chris's memories as he relays them to her, she claims that they are true: “I have lived so long with the story which he told me that I cannot now remember his shy phrases. But this is how I have visualized his meeting with love on his secret island. I

think it is the truth” (70).¹³³ Jenny acknowledges that Chris’s memories have been filtered through her own, but she stands by the veracity of her memory—and his diseased memory—because she is able to “visualize” the scene. This visual access, she implicitly contends, supports the truth of her version of the story. Also, she ascribes a clinical tone to the Chris that she imaginatively understands, explaining that his rejection of Kitty and Jenny is a rejection of certain “types” of women: “in Kitty he had turned from the type of woman that makes the body conqueror of the soul and in me the type that mediates between the soul and the body and makes them run even and unhasty like a well-matched pair of carriage horses” (135). By reverting to his love for Margaret, “whose bleak habit it was to champion the soul against the body” (135), Chris has identified and selected the “type” of woman with whom he wishes to spend his life. Assigning this clinical calculation to Chris, Jenny portrays her own clinical tone as a reproduction of what she perceives as his chosen method of understanding and communicating.

Like the case historian, the narrator Jenny is aware of her position both inside and outside of the patient’s memories. When Chris tells Jenny of the last day he remembers before awakening, wounded, in the trench, “[h]is lips told me [Jenny] of its physical appearances, while from his wet, bright eyes and his flushed skin, his beautiful signs of a noble excitement, I tried to derive the real story” (79). Jenny regards her position as that of an expert who can extract the “real” or factual story from the patient’s emotional version. Despite this ability to discern reality indicative of the trained judgment of the early twentieth-century scientist, Jenny remarks that she is “barred out of that day” (79).

¹³³ Interestingly, the serialized and American versions of this text, both published in 1918 by The Century Company, do not include this pivotal passage. Instead, these versions encourage the reader to believe that these words are Chris’s: “Chris told the story lingeringly, in loving detail.” See Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (New York: The Century Company, 1918), 64.

Because Chris does not love her, the hopelessly lovelorn Jenny is of course excluded from the day that Chris becomes engaged to the woman he loves. Jenny is also recognizing that she, as a clinical observer attempting to extract the “real” story, is prohibited from entering into or even comprehending the memories that Chris is attempting to impart. By banishing the observer from the memory, just as she banishes the narrator from Chris’s eventual cure, West cordons off memory from appropriating clinical eyes. These memories that are so integral to Chris’s identity are, like Chris, inaccessible, even to the most sympathetic recipient.

Although in many ways Jenny is aligned with the case historian who appropriates memories, advances theories, and breaks the patient’s trust, her narrative also serves as a commentary upon the medical case history because, unlike the typical case historian, she views the patient with loving, in addition to clinical, eyes. She compares Chris in her company to “a patient when tiring visitors have gone and he is left alone with his trusted nurse” (68). Even with Jenny’s clinical observation of Chris’s condition, her primary role is to nurture rather than to diagnose or treat. Margaret is the physician—with Jenny’s assistance—who determines and executes Chris’s cure, and his cure is not treatment for the sake of treatment or from the desire to make him “ordinary.” In discussion with Jenny, Margaret explains that treatment and normalcy must be weighed against a higher requirement of happiness: ““If my boy had been a cripple...and the doctors had said to me, ‘We’ll straighten your boy’s legs for you, but he will be in pain all the rest of his life,’ I’d not have let them touch him’” (179). However, Margaret and Jenny agree that, in Chris’s case, the happiness requirement is outweighed by the demands of reality, which Chris’s memory loss attempts to circumvent. The decision to

end Chris's happiness emanates from "the first concern of love to safeguard the dignity of the beloved" (182), and putting this dignity above all other requirements, even that of bodily normalcy, is a direct rebuke of the medical practitioners who "bring people from various outlying districts of the mind to the normal" without consideration for human dignity.

When case histories were written and published by men, the female narrator and her loving care of the patient form the crux of the novel's critique of the case history. Jenny's mistaken theories, her clumsy appropriation of Chris's memories and illness, and her respect for the mystery of "the divine essential of his soul" (183) construct her as the negative image of the case historian. The novel's feminist intervention unveils the memory appropriation and proof of scientific theory at the expense of the individual patient as the dark underbelly of the case history, and offers in its place a female narrator who, above all, values the wellbeing of the patient. By positioning Jenny as the narrator, West protects the patient, Chris, from a too-intrusive omniscient or first-person narrative that would attempt to capture his memories and thoughts on the page and publish them for the world to see. Instead, Chris's memories, thoughts and, ultimately, his identity are shielded from prying eyes by Jenny's surmises and self-inflected narrative.

Just as West's text reclaims memory from scientists, she had to reclaim her text from science, or more specifically, critics who accused her of echoing or implementing psychoanalytic theories of memory. In 1928, Rebecca West wrote a letter to the editor of *The Observer* refuting claims that *The Return of the Soldier* implements Freudian theory, or even that she was influenced by psychoanalysis when she wrote the text. She writes:

the story was complete in my mind in the middle of 1915 and complete in typescript, except for a few corrections, not very much later; and at that time not

one per cent of London's intellectuals or any other class had heard of psychoanalysis...[s]econdly, my novel has fundamentally nothing to do with psycho-analysis. I introduced a psycho-analyst as an unimportant device.¹³⁴

Although her documented fluency in psychoanalysis and other theories of memory dates back to 1911, West's angry denunciation of these claims illustrates the way she thinks of her work as diverging from scientific theories of memory and the spreading scientific appropriation of narratives, both fictional and nonfictional.¹³⁵ However, the contradictory logic of West's statement—she claims that she was not writing about psychoanalysis because it was virtually unknown, and that psychoanalysis is an insignificant plot device—suggests that while her text is not simply an application of psychoanalytic tenets, but that it is also not as unimportant as she claims.¹³⁶ West's engagement with psychoanalytic theory *is* little more than cursory, but the case found among her personal papers and quoted at the beginning of the chapter, for example, suggests that she engages with the practice of medical reporting found in psychoanalytic and other kinds of scientific case histories. West's novel is an imitation and an indictment of the way that medical professionals annex patient memories, and it is a literary attempt to recapture individual rights to memory from the acquisitive eyes of science.

¹³⁴ Rebecca West, "To the Editor of *The Observer*," *The Observer*, June 24, 1928.

¹³⁵ In September 1911, West reviewed the play "Married by Degrees" and refers to Morton Prince's 1910 book about multiple personality, identity, and memory in a patient known as "Miss Beauchamps," *The Dissociation of a Personality: A Biographical Study in Abnormal Psychology*.

¹³⁶ Rather ironically, West's refutation of these claims is itself an example of "kettle logic," Freud's famous explanation of contradictory explanations that lead to the same end. Freud uses the example of a neighbor who borrows a kettle and when accused of returning it damaged, argues that it was damaged when it was first lent to him and that he never borrowed the kettle at all.

CHAPTER III

THE MODERNIST DAY NOVEL: STORM JAMESON TAKES *A DAY OFF* FROM *ULYSSES* AND *MRS. DALLOWAY*

Rebecca West's literary confrontation with the genre of the case study was not the only attempt to reclaim memories on behalf of the powerless. Her contemporary, Storm Jameson, attacked the bastion of literary modernism to reclaim the memories of the poor from culturally influential champions and critics of modern existence. In 1933, Jameson published a novel titled *A Day Off* in the manner of *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, but with a significant twist: her protagonist is a nameless woman on the verge of destitution who spends a day looking back over her hard-working life and finding how little of it she remembers. In this character, Jameson illuminates two essential, but relatively unremarked, aspects of Woolf's and Joyce's novels: first, the two modernist "day novels" are books about memory; and, second, they represent characters capable of the *luxury* of memory.

To Jameson, these literary representations of modern existence elide the memories of the poor and the working class, both by not including them and by promoting modernity and its anonymizing forces. *A Day Off* is a socialist critique of the modernist—and bourgeois—assumption of homogeneity regarding the prominent role of memory in everyday life and identity formation. Jameson asserts that modernity creates a stark division between those who have time to remember and those who do not; James Joyce and Virginia Woolf's novels presuppose the kind of sustained time for reflection

that the poor and working class know only when work prospects have vanished and the individual faces starvation. The process of remembering and constructing a coherent personal identity is controlled by economic necessity, Jameson asserts, and those closest to destitution are doomed to retain fewer experiences and have, in literary representations, less nuanced identities. In addition, Jameson reveals that the leisure essential for remembering relies on the memory-and-identity destroying labor of the poor.

Jameson confronts the modernist unawareness of the effects of economics on memory and identity through the subgenre of the day novel, specifically these three novels, which I am calling the “modernist” day novels. *A Day Off* teems with references to Woolf’s and Joyce’s novels, linking and criticizing them by imitating—and calling attention to—the similarities shared by all three texts. While day novels, by virtue of their structure, are ruminations on time, *A Day Off* highlights the prominence of stable, identity-forming memories in the modernist contributions to the subgenre. The emphasis on enduring memories in the modernist day novels provides a contending cultural logic to the prevailing ethos of uncertainty about the reliability of human memory. Jameson’s critique of the earlier modernist day novels demands inclusion for the poor and working class in the modernist pantheon of stabilized memories. By incorporating the incomplete memory and, by comparison to the characters in the other two novels, the relatively unexamined identity of the forgotten, hard-working individual in the modern world, Jameson simultaneously retrieves these lost lives and rebukes modernity and its literary proponents.

In this chapter, I scrutinize the subgenre of the day novel, particularly the modernist incarnations of this form, as a group of texts about memory. By charting the

similarities in these three novels, I sketch Jameson's critique by illustrating the integral role of memory in modernist literary representations of personal identity. Reading *A Day Off* as a socialist critique of Joyce and Woolf, I argue that Jameson fights against the effacing pressure of normative identity formation to reclaim the relatively memory-deficient identities of the poor and working class.

The Day Novel, Modernist Style

Despite the widespread perception that James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) are the first day novels, the day or "circadian" novel originated with Victor Hugo's 1829 *Dernier jour d'un condamné* and today the subgenre includes more than one hundred texts.¹³⁷ In structure and content, day novels are about time and identity, and Joyce's and Woolf's texts have been taken to occupy the position of "father and mother of the form" because they most completely represent the wholeness

¹³⁷ In his 1992 article, "A First Census of the Circadian or One-Day Novel" (*The Journal of Narrative Technique* (22:1, 1992)), David Leon Higdon attempts to chart the history of the day novel from inception to the late 20th century. Higdon identifies four "rhythms" or categories into which all day novels fall: the day novel that attempts to "[capture] the multiplicity and complexity of events which surround one during an ordinary day" (60); the "death-day" novel in which the protagonist reflects on his or her life and cultural milieu; the novel in which one individual deals with another individual's death; and finally, the novel that revolves around a significant day such as a wedding or a birthday and "probes how this significant public event rivets attention on that crucial moment of identity crisis when the old self and the new self struggle with one another" (60). While Higdon's schema is useful for sorting through the hundred-odd day novels that have been published since 1829, the three novels that, I claim, comprise the category of the modernist day novel fall into different or multiple groups, and this classification system fails to distinguish what it is about these novels that sets them apart as the most visible incarnations of the subgenre. I contend that one of the most striking characteristics of the modernist day novel is that it collapses these categories, containing the key elements of each. Robert Weninger argues that *Ulysses* is a "foundational literary text" that performs as a "text-function," or the textual equivalent of Foucault's "author-function": "The one-day aspect of *Ulysses* functions precisely as Foucault specifies, namely as a 'classificatory function [that] permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others'" (207). Unlike Higdon, with whose article he seems unfamiliar, Weninger avers that the first day novel is the 1919 Swedish text, *Markurells I Wadköping* by Hjalmar Bergman. See Weninger's "Days of Our Lives: The One-Day Novel as Homage à Joyce," *Bloomsday 100: Essays on Joyce*, eds. Morris Beja and Anne Fogarty (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), 190-210.

of a character's identity without collapsing identity into what a character experiences in a single day.¹³⁸ In other words, the modernist day novels do not indulge in an Aristotelian "unity of time" that "implies that the truth about existence can be as fully unfolded in the space of a day as in the space of a lifetime."¹³⁹ Instead, they depict the ever-escaping present moment, which contains reminiscences of the past, observations about the present, and plans for the future.¹⁴⁰ The present moment in these novels breaks from the traditional literary perception of time, recasting it as the "'always now' rather than as a linear and causal process, as a room rather than a road."¹⁴¹ Each present moment is a moment of truth, when the character's identity is revealed in its fullness, only to be swept away and replaced by another saturated moment. The multiplicity of moments gathered together in a single day reinforces both the fragility of human existence and the endurance of personal identity over time.

¹³⁸ David Leon Higdon calls these texts the "father and mother," 58. The three texts I have identified as the modernist day novels were not the only day novels written during this period by modernist authors. Frank Swinnerton's *Nocturne* (1917) preceded *Ulysses* and challenged the day novel form by beginning in the evening and tracking characters until morning, while Liam O'Flaherty's *The Informer* (1925) was published the same year as *Mrs. Dalloway* and is indebted to Joyce's depiction of the streets of Dublin. Mulk Raj Anand's 1935 book, *Untouchable*, is one of the finest examples of the late modernist quest to represent marginalized people who are slowly becoming visible in the rapidly changing societies of the first half of the twentieth century.

¹³⁹ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 23. Watt argues that Aristotle's perception of character as universal "is really a denial of the importance of the temporal dimension in human life."

¹⁴⁰ Critics such as Morris Beja assert that memories in *Mrs. Dalloway* are not a part of the present moment, but rather take the character away from the present moment. In contrast, I assert that the past is a part of the present moment in these texts because the present moment is frequently given over to rumination on or connection to the past. For Joyce, Woolf, and Jameson, the present moment includes the character's thoughts, even if those are of the future or the past.

¹⁴¹ Higdon 57. Higdon argues that the modernist relationship with time as always present was essential to changing the day novel from an "occasional sport" (57) to the kind of literary event that is *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Joyce's and Woolf's day novels approach the present moment in different ways. While Woolf compresses the events of the day, reflecting in her journal, "the design [of *Mrs. Dalloway*] is so queer and masterful. I'm always having to wrench my substance to fit it," Joyce's lengthy text attempts to record every thought and sensation that Leopold Bloom, Stephen Dedalus, and Molly Bloom have during specific blocks throughout the day.¹⁴² Both, however, represent the present moment in dizzying detail. During the stream-of-consciousness interior monologues for which these novels are so famous, Woolf and Joyce attempt to capture a character's sensations, half-thoughts, impressions of her surroundings, and the associations with the past that these stimuli summon. Indeed, the monologues record thoughts and feelings of which the character might not be aware because they pass too quickly. Steven Connor has argued that the modernist day novel is "less and more at once: less than the world in its concentration and condensation...and yet containing more than the world in its accumulation of allusion and interconnection."¹⁴³ These novels totalize experience through everyday details that are simultaneously excessive and circumscribed, although Joyce's text tends more towards the former and Woolf's the latter.

This fascination with the present moment and all the forgotten or unnoticed facets of each second of the day is part of the modernist quest to record modern life in all its

¹⁴² Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume Two: 1920-1924*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 249. For a comparison of technique in these two texts, see David Daiches's description *Mrs. Dalloway* as what he considers a simpler, less ambitious, more limited version of *Ulysses* in "Virginia Woolf," *The Novel and the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), 202-212.

¹⁴³ Steven Connor, "Postmodernism and Literature," *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Steven Connor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 68. Quoted in Laura Marcus, "The Legacies of Modernism," *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. Morag Shiach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 85.

mundane, cacophonous, and confusing detail.¹⁴⁴ The desire to document every thought and physical sensation, which dominates *Ulysses* and appears, to a lesser extent, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, is a fantasy of control over the chaos of modern existence, specifically a fantasy of control over memory. By recording everything that *can* be remembered and *how* memory works, the modernist day novel stabilizes both the process and the content of memory. In the fantasy world of the day novel, the reader finds the process of remembering revealed: it is spontaneous, generally effortless, and an essential part of the fabric of everyday life. Further, the reader is presented with a version of reality in which the things that are remembered and experienced throughout the day, no matter how insignificant, endure.

Yet the move to stabilize memory ultimately serves a much larger purpose than simply that of creating a fantasy of enduring memory. These character-focused novels reinforce the concept of coherent identity that is threatened by faulty memories, passing time, and, ultimately, death. By choosing a manageable unit of time in which to represent comprehensive but ever-changing characters and by revealing during that single day all the memories crucial to each character's identity, these authors nurture the Lockean fantasy of personhood—the “whole train of our past Actions before our Eyes in one view”—that Locke regretfully admits is impossible.¹⁴⁵ Although these texts do not operate in accordance with Aristotle's view of character as a universal, they posit the

¹⁴⁴ Liesl Olson writes, “A reader of *Ulysses* can no more catch every textual detail than he or she can be cognizant of every element of everyday life. The desire to impose meaning, to give everyday life a narrative structure, or to give significance to banal moments, is a desire that often gives rise to complex works of art. But *Ulysses* also suggests that this desire cannot always be fulfilled; the everyday is often a foil to the very act of interpretation itself.” In *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 35.

¹⁴⁵ See Book II, Chapter XXVII of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975), 336.

structure of the present moment with its temporal shifts, emphasis on the past, and construction of identity as universal to all people. It is this assumption of a universal experience of the present moment that provokes Storm Jameson's critique, and she demonstrates that the structure of the present moment in the modernist day novels, specifically the preponderance of personal memories, requires leisure that the poor and working class lack.

The modernist day novel's preoccupation with the past, memory, and identity emerges in three principal ways: the character's rumination on her past, primarily through the stream of consciousness; repetition in the novel's structure and content; and an exaggerated emphasis on intertextuality. The stream of consciousness interior monologue, a method of writing first widely practiced by Dorothy Richardson in her series of novels, *Pilgrimage*, creates the perception of access to the character's thoughts that is unmediated by the narrator or even language.¹⁴⁶ In the essay "Modern Fiction," Woolf writes:

The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms. . . . Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Elizabeth Drew describes Richardson's method of "creating character" and "interpreting life" as that "by which we never pass out of the realm of one person's immediate experience, and one person's consciousness is the standard of reference for the whole of existence." Of course, *Ulysses* is not limited to this method, but uses it extensively. See Drew's "A Note on Technique," *The Modern Novel: Some Aspects of Contemporary Fiction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), 254-62. Quoted in Harold Bloom, Ed. *Clarissa Dalloway* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990), 12-13. C.S. Lewis claims "the moment you put [the true stream of consciousness] into words you falsify it." *A Preface to "Paradise Lost"* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 2. Quoted in Erwin R. Steinberg, *The Stream of Consciousness and Beyond in Ulysses* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 7.

¹⁴⁷ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1925), 212-13.

Many of these myriad impressions are associations with and thoughts of the past expressed through the words, sensations, images, and perceptions that characterize the stream of consciousness.¹⁴⁸ For instance, in response to the many stimuli that arise during the day, Stephen Dedalus mulls over the possibility of an enduring identity over time. In the “Telemachus” episode, he remembers carrying the incense boat at Clongowes and contemplates the continuity of his identity that is yet always changing: “I am another now and yet the same.”¹⁴⁹ And in the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode, Stephen consults his memory and identity as he considers paying a debt to A.E. On the one hand, he argues that his identity alters with physical substance: “Molecules all change. I am other I now. Other I got pound.” On the other hand, he asserts that the faculty of memory preserves a fundamental identity: “But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under everchanging forms.” Ultimately, Stephen reasons that by virtue of his memory that records all his previous forms of the “I” (“I, I and I.I.”) he owes the debt (“A.E.I.O.U.”).¹⁵⁰

The stream of consciousness also provides the reader with the ability to distinguish one character from another. Erwin Steinberg argues that the “thoughts Stephen has and the way they relate to one another help to establish for the reader Stephen’s identity and personality,” and this argument extends to all the characters that express themselves through the interior monologue in the modernist day novels.¹⁵¹ While

¹⁴⁸ Steinberg 44-54.

¹⁴⁹ Joyce 11.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 189-190.

¹⁵¹ Steinberg 38. In *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*, trans. Quintin Hoare (New York: Verso, 1996). Franco Moretti quotes a later paper of Steinberg’s—“Characteristic Sentence Pattern in Proteus and Lestrygonians,” *New Light on Joyce from the Dublin Symposium*, Ed. F.

the basic structure of the interior monologue is uniform across all characters—the temporal shifts and emphasis on the past—the content and thinking patterns are unique to each character. Clarissa Dalloway’s thoughts are wholly different from Septimus Smith’s, and not only because the narrator has provided the reader with sufficient background to identify the thinking character. The reader constructs the character’s identity from the information and trends in thinking by using past and present events to stitch together a coherent personality. The idiosyncratic nature of each character’s interior monologue also places the stamp of originality on the memories recounted, designating those memories as belonging to the identity that they constitute.

The interior monologue is the place where modernist authors reconstruct *how* humans remember without sacrificing the uniqueness of individual memories. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf illustrates the way a person remembers painful truths that contradict habitual ways of thinking. In a moment of doubt, thinking that “[i]t was all over for her,” Clarissa Dalloway mentally calls out to her husband: “Richard, Richard! she cried, as a sleeper in the night starts and stretches a hand in the dark for help. Lunching with Lady

Senn (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976)—to support his theory that the interior monologue is not individual or idiosyncratic, but is instead anonymizing. Moretti argues that the stream of consciousness offers “simple, fragmented sentences, where the subject withdraws to make room for the invasion of things”(135) and stimuli to which all individual respond similarly. Moretti and other recent critics such as Jennifer Wicke rightly point out the many ways that the interior monologue appears to streamline characters and limit identifiable subjective experience, but I don’t propose that we discount Steinberg’s exhaustive demonstration that the interior monologues of individual characters *are* distinguishable and one of the ways that Joyce develops his characters. (Indeed, Moretti’s point about stream of consciousness stimuli is troubled by the “Penelope” episode in which Molly is lying in a darkened room, deprived of most stimuli.) However, recent cognitive theorists support the idea that the interior monologue, which was originally intended to externalize the psychological process of thinking, as that which indicates social affiliations and individual characteristics, such as level of education, interests, and mental illnesses. For example, see Jerome L. Singer, “Researching Imaginative Play and Adult Consciousness: Implications for Daily and Literary Creativity,” *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 3:4 (2009), 190-199.

Bruton, it came back to her. He has left me.”¹⁵² And in *Ulysses*, Joyce demonstrates Leopold Bloom groping after a name: “What was the name of that priestlylooking chap was always squinting in when he passed...Pen something. Pendennis? My memory is getting. Pen...?”¹⁵³ After a long period during which Bloom eats lunch, his rumination about the blind man he has helped across the road brings him back to the forgotten name: “Bloodless pious face like a fellow going in to be a priest. Penrose! That was that chap’s name.”¹⁵⁴ While content of these memories and forgettings is integral to the character’s identity, the way that they are forgotten and remembered is not. John Rickard argues that Bloom forgets Penrose’s name because the man is a sexual threat, and, indeed, the reasons *why* Bloom forgets are similarly personal, although the fact that painful things are temporarily forgotten is similar for Clarissa and Leopold.

Within the stream of consciousness, the sense of time as “always now” dominates, with moments from the past interspersed seamlessly and just as present-ly as perceptions in the present. For example, Mrs. Dalloway’s opening interior monologue smoothly incorporates thoughts of the distant past with the freshness of the morning: “What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air” (3). On the morning of her party, Mrs. Dalloway can hear hinges squeaking thirty years ago, and her memories, observations of the beautiful June morning, and anticipations of her evening party blend together in one fluid experience of the present moment that defies the shifting verb tenses. The “always now” of the

¹⁵² Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1925), 47.

¹⁵³ Joyce 155-6.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 181.

modernist day novel allows the past to exist as both familiar *and* new; it is relived in a new context.

In structure and content, the modernist day novels deal with memory as a concept and as a literary technique. From Woolf's "leaden circles" of Big Ben's chime that tick off the hours in *Mrs. Dalloway* to the repeated meetings of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*, these novels are famous for repetition and recurrence. Critics have extensively discussed time in these two novels—Wyndham Lewis calls *Ulysses* a "time-book"—with emphasis on the role of memory and specifically trauma.¹⁵⁵ Septimus Smith's shell-shock and the death traumas of mother and son that haunt Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, respectively, have fueled critical debates about the influence of the psychoanalytic tradition on both of these texts.¹⁵⁶ On a structural level, repetitions of past events renew the past so that it is always present and suggest that the future will not be wholly unfamiliar territory. However, the recurrence of past events also calls into question the possibility of a future free from the past, which proves impossible for characters like Septimus Smith. These novels contend with the problem of a present moment haunted by the past and all end with the hint that the future includes a resolved past, as when Sally Seton and Peter Walsh attend Clarissa Dalloway's party, neatly folding the past into the future. In the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom's hallucination of his grandfather suggests that the future is available through the past; his grandfather advises

¹⁵⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), 81.

¹⁵⁶ See, for example: Mark Shechner, *Joyce in Nighttown: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry into Ulysses* (Berkeley, the University of California Press, 1974); Jean Kimball, "Growing Up Together," *Joyce Through the Ages: A Nonlinear View* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 25-45.; Elizabeth Abel, *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Karen DeMeester, "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 44.3 (1998), 649-673.

him to “Exercise your mnemotechnic” or to go back in time so that he can then free himself to go forward.¹⁵⁷ The repetitions and recurrences in these novels communicate a sense of hope; the past is not done, but can be repeated, relived, and repaired in the future.¹⁵⁸

Although repetition is generally a hopeful feature of these novels, there is also a sense that dwelling on the past in the present moment is dangerous or stultifying. Leopold Bloom is sexually crippled by his guilt and grief over his son’s death, and the traumatized Septimus Smith commits suicide. Even for characters like Clarissa Dalloway, who is not so much haunted as accompanied by her past, the continuous recurrence of the past in the present moment spurs her injunction to focus on the present. Mrs. Dalloway reads memoirs alone in her bed when she can’t sleep, but pushes herself to focus on the present during the day rather than lingering in the past. Woolf’s distinction between the memoir, a genre that is composed of memories, and the day novel, a subgenre that demonstrates the way that memory intrudes upon and partially constitutes the present moment, highlights the modernist desire—and inability—to break with the past.

¹⁵⁷ Joyce 514.

¹⁵⁸ The memories that constitute identity in these novels are sometimes shared, such as Clarissa Dalloway’s and Peter Walsh’s memories of Bourton, even though the words used, and of course the significance of the memories, are different for each of them. When the memories are told in almost identical language, such as we see in Leopold and Molly Bloom’s interior monologues as they think about making love on Howth, both remembering how she passed chewed seedcake to him when they kissed, the memories become shared property that unite characters. In *Joyce’s Book of Memory: The Mnemotechnic of Ulysses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), John S. Rickard argues that metapersonal memory in *Ulysses*, which is shared or universal memory, brings characters “closer together and [suggests] the possibility of an atonement with the past” (91). These intersections of memory when for a moment the interior monologue could belong to either character serve the dual function of briefly converging characters through the memory and repeating the memory within the text.

The three modernist day novels are internally linked by reference of the subsequent novel to the previous. Although each novel is new and different, the modernist day novel is a text that remembers—and critiques—its progenitors. *Ulysses* is famous for its intertextuality; Joyce’s use of allusion and quotation testifies to *Ulysses* as a memory storehouse for the Western intellectual tradition. Critics have long surmised that Woolf’s text is responding to or at least referencing *Ulysses*, and this theory is in part supported by Woolf’s diary, which juxtaposes her first responses to Joyce’s text—she called it an “illiterate, underbred book”—with her own thoughts on the short stories that later became *Mrs. Dalloway*.¹⁵⁹ *A Day Off* flagrantly references Woolf’s and Joyce’s novels to expose the relationship between economic exigency and memory that Jameson believes is denied by those texts. Of course many novels, particularly modernist novels, are intertextual and thus “remember” previous texts, but these three texts are bound together by Jameson’s socialist critique, transforming texts *about* memory into those that *struggle* over memory.

A Day Apart

Storm Jameson defined her literary approach in 1937, four years after the publication of *A Day Off*, as “socialist literature.” Her fiction is devoted to unemotional and factual accounts of the changing world, enveloping urbanity, life in the collective, and the human need for individuality—within the confines of a socialist economy—in the modern world. She believed passionately in the preservation of the individual, and

¹⁵⁹ See Hilary Newman’s article, “Echoes of *Ulysses* in *Mrs. Dalloway*,” *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* Issue 11 (2002) for a detailed comparison between the two texts.

argues that the predominance of the machine, urbanization of small towns, and the myth of human equality contribute to the destruction of the limits dividing the self from society, the small society from the country, and the country from the world. Jameson was an outspoken critic of authors, including many of the modernists, who simplified human experience or covered over the harsh realities of modern life with beautiful words. The modern conditions that threatened the fragile and precious English culture also damaged its literature, and Jameson feared as early as 1930 that the end result of these depredations would be another war. As she argues in her essay “In the End,” the dehumanizing effects of modern conditions and the literature that champions or ignores them makes the horrors of war more attractive than peacetime existence to the mass of lower-class people: “war can seem more decent than to be living in the purlieus of a mechanical civilisation with its trail of half-fed children and men ‘economised’ into misery.”¹⁶⁰ Literature celebrating the modern condition is, to Jameson, fundamentally political, and authors must account for the political implications of their work.

Jameson’s critical and literary position is characteristic of what Jed Esty calls the “anthropological turn” of late modernism. Imperialist contraction and the metaphor of lost totality peculiar to modernism paved the way for literary endeavors focused on cultural repair.¹⁶¹ Throughout her literary work, Jameson pleads for “a sense of wholeness...respect for the simply human, and an appreciation of simple everyday life” that she feels has been sacrificed to modernity and will, she fears, soon be further

¹⁶⁰ Storm Jameson, ed. *Challenge to Death* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd, 1934), 329. Quoted in Jennifer Birkett, *Margaret Storm Jameson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 124.

¹⁶¹ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

sacrificed to war.¹⁶² By pointing out the destructive and anonymizing consequences of modernity, Jameson hopes to inspire a return to simplicity and the various different small communities that make up traditional English culture.

Eight years after the publication of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Jameson revisits the form of the day novel by closely imitating the style of Woolf's and Joyce's novels and, in the process, demonstrates the harmful effects of modernity and modern literature on the lower-class individual. Although Jameson's text is not generally considered in the company of *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, what critical notice she has received bills her as a "much-needed counterbalance to Virginia Woolf and the high modernists."¹⁶³ All three novels take place on a warm, beautiful day in June, and the protagonists are middle-aged people who go about their days in busy cities—London and Dublin—observing the world around them, remembering the past, and planning for the future. Unlike *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, Jameson's *A Day Off* announces itself in the title as a day novel, thus calling attention to the temporal dimensions of the text and class of the protagonist. The novel tells the story of a day in the life of a nameless middle-aged woman, recently abandoned without a word by her lover and sole source of financial support. Over the course the day, the woman remembers her childhood and girlhood in a mill town, her young adulthood as a mill worker and a servant in London, her ersatz marriage to a German man that is truncated by British anti-German sentiment during the first World War, and the string of lovers and disappointments leading up to George, the lover who has left her unemployed, almost penniless and alone at the age of forty-six. The woman decides to

¹⁶² Birkitt 116.

¹⁶³ Elizabeth Maslen, "The Case for Storm Jameson," *British Fiction after Modernist: The Novel at Midcentury*, eds. Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 33.

take a day “off” from waiting for her lover to return, and she travels to Richmond in a determined effort not to sit at home in the hopes that he might write or visit. In the course of the day, the woman reflects upon her life and interacts with acquaintances and strangers, including a pathetically lonely elderly lady whose purse the woman steals. Throughout the day, the woman’s thoughts travel backwards and forwards in time, and she remembers her past selves and envisions improbable futures while the horror of her actual future of poverty-stricken middle age slowly works itself into her consciousness.

The unnamed woman bears more than a little resemblance to Mrs. Brown, Virginia Woolf’s heroic, poor, and frightened character who is waiting for her “rescuers” to swoop down and tell her story to the world. Mrs. Brown, who is on a train from Richmond to Waterloo, is elderly—Woolf makes the point that people over forty are “elderly”—and operating on the very edges of respectability: “she was one of those clean, threadbare old ladies whose extreme tidiness—everything buttoned, fastened, tied together, mended and brushed up—suggests more extreme poverty than rags and dirt.”¹⁶⁴ Mrs. Brown “had nobody to support her; that, having been deserted, or left a widow, years ago, she had led an anxious, harried life” although she puts on airs, such as making a comment about her grandmother’s maid, and the unnamed woman is similarly proud, yet destitute. However, the unnamed woman is not the tragic, quietly suffering creature who “came of gentlefolks who kept servants” but comes from a mill town, stands loudly on her rights, chooses comfort over true respectability, and will do anything to survive. The unnamed woman is the character whose story Jameson chooses to tell, but by fundamentally altering the primary character from that of Woolf’s renowned essay,

¹⁶⁴ Virginia Woolf, “Mrs. Brown,” *The Captain’s Deathbed and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), 98.

Jameson suggests that a person who is somewhere between genteelly poor and clothed in rags and dirt is the victim of modernity who needs to be “rescued” through literary exposure. Indeed, the unnamed woman is radically alone, isolated from non-transactional human contact, and incapable of the heroics and pride to which Mrs. Brown clings.

As in all novels, the modernist day novel explores the connection to and exclusion from the social body. Leopold Bloom is Jewish, but well connected to his community; Mrs. Dalloway gives a society party even as she fears the loneliness of age and illness. The interior monologue signifies unabridged access to the character’s most independent and solitary thought patterns. However, as Joyce and Woolf demonstrate through the stream of consciousness of multiple characters, the thinking patterns are similar in each character and all deal to a greater or lesser extent with the character’s contemplation of his or her separateness from and connection to other people. Even Woolf’s Septimus Smith, the shell-shocked former soldier whose illness creates in him the feeling of extreme isolation, ruminates on his interactions with the dead and living, although they seem to him far away and beyond the reach of communication. In Jameson’s text, the focus on a single character underscores the woman’s solitude, and her fantasy life, lack of meaningful human relationships, and abrasive personality display the modern condition as an isolating nightmare that makes the individual feel as though she is the only consciousness in the world.

For the woman, the passage of time throughout the day is marked by clear juxtapositions between the past and various imagined futures interrupted by the discomfort of the present and the probable future. The woman’s present situation is so uncertain and intolerable that the present moment in the novel is given over to dreaming

reveries that make the present moment bearable, but also illustrate the hopelessness of her aging body and dimming prospects. Bodily discomfort and her own insignificance are reconfigured as romantic dreams, as in her train journey to Richmond when the unpleasant reek of onions and a “middle-aged gentleman’s” monosyllabic response to a question she poses is interpreted as a romantic meeting between a “keen” man and herself as “[t]he handsome reckless young woman” (205).¹⁶⁵ Alternatively, the woman employs her imagination to efface her awareness of the ways that her body and situation fall short of her romanticized version of her life. Sitting alone in Richmond Park, she speaks aloud and is “abashed by the shrill loudness of her voice” so she “began hurriedly to imagine her new life” (260). While characters such as Peter Walsh and Leopold Bloom engage in fantasy to escape or mitigate the discomforts of the present, the unnamed woman’s fantasies are portrayed as completely impossible. Indeed, in the “Nausicaa” episode, Bloom’s masturbatory interaction with Gerty MacDowell is not completely one-sided, while the unnamed woman’s fantasies are ridiculous in her perception of herself and her imagined impact on others.

Throughout the day, the woman fluctuates between feeling “young and gay” (205) or “happy as a child” (197) and a panicked fear of aging and death. Assuring herself that she is “not old yet” and that, unlike younger women, she is capable of seeing through men “to their mean dirty bones,” the woman suddenly is overjoyed that

[t]here was a knowledge she had forgotten, a body of which she was a member, a connection not yet broken between her and the grass she pressed, the clouds, big and tumbling, the moist earth. She felt this, but only in her blood, and when the momentary thrill faded she was more than ever aware of her thickened body and the pain of now.

“Oh God,” she said quietly. (261)

¹⁶⁵ Storm Jameson, *A Day Off* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1933), 205. All further references will be parenthetical.

The woman's awareness of her relationship with all living things underscores her growing certainty that she, like all living things, will decline and die. In her life as a scrambling worker always on the verge of poverty, she has set herself and her interests apart from those of others, and the necessity for survival creates economic relationships out the most intimate bonds with other humans. This feeling of connection to others that briefly illuminates her unhappy existence is extinguished when she recalls that her forgotten "knowledge" of her place in the social body will not prevent others from isolating her from intimate relationships, due primarily to her aging body, nor will this knowledge stave off the certainty of her solitary death. On this day apart from other days, the woman recognizes that she is also apart from other humans and that, despite her memories and dreams of the future, her present consists of solitude, regret, and despair of the future.

Although the woman's isolation induces self-pity, she creates an environment of pitiless solitude by aggressively standing on her rights and by surrounding herself with people who increase, rather than mitigate, her loneliness. When approached by strangers, the woman assumes a truculent attitude towards what she anticipates will be disrespect. Indeed, when walking down the sidewalk and confronted with two women walking abreast, the woman expects that they will expect her to move for them: "and I won't step off the flags into the gutter for anyone, man or woman, I'm as good as anyone. She adopted a harsh expression, prepared to return rudeness by rudeness, and when she came close to the women she looked them full in the face with an insolent smile" (206). The woman's friendships and intimate relationships are similarly isolating. Her romantic relationships are economic transactions, so when her lovers tire of her, they leave her

without remorse, certain that they have paid their debts. Even in her relationships with other women, the woman despises potential friends who are caring or kind and gravitates towards uncharitable and selfish friends: “[The woman] knew that when she came to her last penny, Lily would help her once or twice (even if she then tired of it) but Mrs. Gapalous would let her starve in her room. Yet she disliked Lily and thought of Mrs. Gapalous as her only friend” (276). With her lack of meaningful connection to other people coupled with her highly imaginative visions of the future, the woman is virtually separated from human society.

Although in the text the woman appears to be abandoned by all others, the narrator, who periodically interjects opinions or statements of fact, accompanies the woman throughout the day and demonstrates knowledge about the woman’s past and future that is not always available even to her. For example, against the woman’s assertion to herself that she has valuable life experience, the narrator contradicts her saying: “[her eyes have] seen everything and nothing, so that behind them were stored innumerable copies of the same object, of no further use, collecting dust” (212). The narrator’s superior knowledge prevents the reader from taking the woman at her own valuation, and indeed encourages the reader to distrust the woman’s reminiscences, opinions and evaluations of other characters. By sowing seeds of doubt through the knowledgeable narrator, Jameson achieves the effect of multiple consciousnesses that is essential to the modernist day novel: despite the veracious appearance of a character’s stream of consciousness, her account of events and emotions might be biased or might not be perceived the same way by another character. With multiple competing accounts,

the truth of an event or the meaning of a series of events becomes personal rather than factual, and each individual character creates her version of her life.

In the final two sentences of the novel, the narrator reveals the reader as an additional consciousness in the text: “Look once more and you can see how beautiful she is. Poor woman, let her sleep” (293). By instructing the reader how to feel about the woman whose innermost thoughts and most reprehensible actions have been revealed to the reader in the course of the novel, the narrator demands pity, admiration and kindness for the angry, impatient, rude woman who proved herself relatively undeserving of these emotions. The narrator asks the reader to allow the woman to sleep because in her sleep “her mind [is] a meeting-place for every kind of event. A multitude of the quick and the dead exist in it. It is exquisitely poised to make her laugh, cry, speak, exult, suffer, and dream. Exactly as the separate parts of her body are held fast in equilibrium until an instant in a not unguessable future” (293). For the woman, connection to other people and a sense of wholeness happen in fantasy, sleep and, the narrator hints, in death. It is just when the woman is incapable of forming meaningful connections and when her thoughts are hidden even from the narrator and the reader that she feels as if she were in community.

In neither Joyce’s or Woolf’s text does the narrator acknowledge the reader, much less instructed her how to feel. Jameson invokes both narrator and reader to draw attention to the most poignant kind of separation peculiar to this particular woman: that between the character and her receptive audience. The woman, who “could not walk down Charing Cross Road without wondering whoever thought it worth while to write, let alone to buy and read so many books” (198), is divided even from those people who

find her interesting as a literary character. The self-absorption that cannot understand another person's interest in anything but his or her own life is a declaration of a radical separation between people and a denial of the interconnectness of the "body of which she was a member."

Identity After the Last Day

The modernist day novel revolves around everyday details: Leopold Bloom's breakfast, Elizabeth Dalloway's bus ride, an unnamed woman's morning toilette. As Liesl Olson argues, despite the modernist emphasis on "moments of transcendent understanding," modernism is characterized by an "aesthetic of the everyday" in which writers strive to portray the ordinary as significant in life and literature.¹⁶⁶ Ordinarity or everydayness is not synonymous with a lack of importance; rather, the day novel seeks to demonstrate that every day is an unrepeatable whole that is somehow apart from all others. Jameson highlights the magnitude of the single day through her protagonist's mostly unrecognized sense of an ending:

A reluctance to move seized her. It was partly the serenity of the place fingering her senses and partly the knowledge, unrealized except as a pressure on her mind, that never again would she feel the impulse or courage to break a day off from the rest. After this she would go on, doing what seemed the easiest or next thing, but with a deepening disbelief. Her life would become too humiliating. It would wither her emotions, until a moment enclosed all she felt. (261)

The woman's day off is—in the sense of the day novel—her *last* day, and she will be henceforth trapped in the sensory experience of the moment. The present moment in the day novel, although replete with sensory experience, draws on memories of the past,

¹⁶⁶ Olson 3-5.

anticipations of the future, and the meditations and considerations that link the past, present and future to construct a coherent and seamless narrative. Facing poverty and the kinds of extreme actions—such as stealing—that defy the woman’s sense of herself as “respectable” (208), she will no longer engage in the luxury of considering her life as a whole, and an unreflective necessity will commandeer all the moments of every day. For the woman, the experience of the present moment is about to change, and Jameson lingers on this last day in the present moment to illustrate the value and fragility of this kind of self-thinking.

While the single day in the modernist day novel does not constitute a temporal Aristotelian microcosm in which the meaning of any character’s life is revealed, it serves as the fundamental unit of self-analysis. Within the confines of the day—*every* day—each character stitches together the story of his or her life, revisiting moments from the recent and distant past in order to make sense of them in light of his or her present circumstances. The day novel’s insistence on the individual’s diurnal need to construct and reconstruct the story of his or her life suggests that the day provides a framework within which a character or group of characters can organize self-narration. The day—like the story—has a beginning, middle, and an end during which characters excavate what they deem the significant moments of their lives. All the present moments that make up the day are sensory experiences of the present, vivid remembrances of the past, or imaginings of the future overlaid with meaning-making.

For the unnamed woman, her memory of her life as a worker is significant because of all the things she simply doesn’t remember. The mind-numbing and ceaseless work necessary simply to survive in London has erased all memories of her life during

that time. Indeed, she finds that her memory has not recorded so many details that would enable her to relive those experiences, such as when she and her German lover ran a café and she posed as his wife:

She felt as though something in her had broken. There was no way back for her to the young woman who comforted Ernst, tied his parcel up for him, spoke to him. She had forgotten too much...She felt like she had remembered what was no use, the last day or two but not any of the other days when she was wholly Mrs. Groener and without thought of any other life. She could not remember a single dress she had worn as Mrs. Groener, nor where the wardrobe stood in their room, nor their dinner service—all, all had gone. (246)

One of the most critical moments of the woman's life, a double suicide in the hotel in which she worked that affected her so violently that she consented to leave the hotel and live and work as Ernst Groener's wife, is remembered only as her inability to remember. After being present at the discovery of the bodies, the woman cries, feels as though she will faint, and realizes that she "would never feel safe now" (238), but her memory of the conversation she has with Ernst about the dead pair revolves around her anger that, even at the time, she couldn't remember the color of the woman's hair. These two episodes of forgetting suggest that Jameson's theory of "worker's memory" is two pronged: first, workers do not have the leisure to notice sufficiently many of the details that could become memories; and second, without the leisure time to remember and strengthen memories, experiences of the past fade more quickly for these workers.

As the woman recounts to herself the sparse narrative of her life, she repeats events and experiences with different emotional inflections, incorporating multiple facets of particular memories into her story. She returns again and again to her childhood, her lovers, and, most persistently, to the thought of George, the lover who has abandoned her, first with feelings of dread, then with anger, and finally with affection and bewilderment

at his desertion. Through the repetitions, the woman circles around the story of her life, providing more information or additional inflections with each iteration. As such, the woman's life story is not a linear progression of events, even though her first thoughts upon awakening are of her childhood home, nor does the woman arrive at a definite interpretation of any one event. This repetition with difference and the lack of a conclusive version of major life events serve two seemingly opposing purposes. First, the differing versions or interpretations of the same events emphasize modernist repudiation of the Aristotelian unity of time, asserting instead that impressions of formative experiences change from moment to moment, day to day, and year to year. Second, the reminder of change over time and the impossibility of capturing a character's "essence" in any one day is also an assertion of relatively fixed personal identity. In the repetition of remembered events over even a very brief period of time, the modernist day novel endorses Locke's theory that identity consists of rumination on the same events over time.

The suggestion that identity is simultaneously fixed and fluid attempts to solve one of the predominant problems with any day novel: the dual requirement for complexity and compression. "Last day" novels, such as Victor Hugo's *Dernier jour d'un condamne*, deal with this issue by announcing that the final day encapsulates and ruminates upon a finished life.¹⁶⁷ For day novels that are not explicitly the "last day in the life" of the character, the author, as Virginia Woolf remarks, has to "wrench" the substance to fit it all in while including only those events that can conceivably occur

¹⁶⁷ Other day novels, such as Carlos Fuentes's *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962) achieve this result without the same kind of finality that pervades Hugo's text. Hugo's protagonist knows without a doubt that the day is his last, while Artemio Cruz merely suspects as much, although they both take stock and attempt to make sense of their lives.

within a single day. Without resorting to a theory of character as innate or independent of experience, the modernist day novel uses the “always now” of the present moment to create the effect of finality specific to “last day” novels. In other words, bringing the past and the future into the present moment results in an ephemeral sense of a complete or finished character.

The implicit comparison of the unnamed woman with Leopold Bloom and Clarissa Dalloway conveys Jameson’s critique of modern life and its potentially detrimental effects upon less privileged inhabitants. Unlike Leopold and Clarissa, the woman is nameless and thus lacking specificity. In the bustling city of London, the woman lives anonymously, and the details of her life, such as her past, her character, and her daily activities, are invisible to all but herself. In both Joyce’s and Woolf’s texts, the narrator’s observant eye and careful report of the protagonist’s stream of consciousness demands that the reader respect and value the protagonist as she would herself; in Jameson’s text, the woman is consistently divided from the reader, and the overwhelming impression of her as she struggles through a day of middle-aged life is embarrassment tinged with pity. The woman insists on giving offense before she can be offended and demanding the visibility that everyone—even the narrator who refuses to name her—denies her:

At first sight she thought there was no room anywhere [in the tea room], and then she made out a table for two. One of its chairs was occupied by an elderly lady who looked up and smiled at her when she put her hand on the second chair. She had not expected to be smiled at and the deliberate rudeness of her glance was wasted. She felt annoyed. She put her bag down in the middle of the tea things, to assert herself and to give as much trouble as possible to the other woman. (265)

By repaying kindness with rudeness, loudly and vulgarly demanding to be treated with respect while not treating others with respect, and valuing her comfort so far above that

of others that she goes so far as to steal the elderly woman's purse with all her money, the woman estranges herself from other people, including the reader, and induces the reader to regret any resemblance he might find with her.

All the primary characters in these novels are haunted by the fear of old age and death, which Mrs. Dalloway describes as "icy claws" (36), Leopold Bloom as "grey horror" (61), and the unnamed woman as something so terrible that she must close her mind against it: "Think of something. I am thinking. Think. I am not old yet" (198). Unlike Clarissa Dalloway and Leopold Bloom, however, the unnamed woman's horror is not imparted eloquently or with beautifully descriptive language, but is instead truncated through her mental exercises to block it out. Many of the unnamed woman's experiences are abortive repetitions of those found in *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*: she attempts to eat a longed-for kidney for breakfast, but, unlike Leopold Bloom, whose breakfast kidney is first almost sold out from under him and then nearly burns, she is sorely disappointed; the long-time friends and acquaintances she thinks she sees as she goes about her day turn out, for the most part, to be complete strangers, while Leopold Bloom and Clarissa Dalloway reflect on their friendships as longstanding parts of their lives; all of her romantic encounters are unfulfilled promises ending in separation rather than lasting relationships; and her last unfaithful lover leaves her without compunction or apology, unlike Molly Bloom who remains with Leopold, despite her infidelity.

Compared with Clarissa and Leopold, the woman is a shell of a human being without education, lacking interests beyond the gratification of her physical needs, and deficient of almost anything to compel the reader's attention. The seemingly virginal Clarissa, who prefers to read about the retreat from Moscow in Baron Marbot's *Memoirs*

rather than sharing her husband's bed, has in her past a kiss with Sally Seton that is "infinitely precious" (35). Leopold's strong appetites for food and sexual gratification are anything but simple, and his precise and oftentimes beautiful observations of Dublin and descriptions of his desires are conspicuously intelligent. The unnamed woman daydreams about being "fascinating" or a "handsome reckless young woman" (205), but her thoughts revolve drearily and uninterestingly around money, her departed lover, her insistence on "respectability," and her angry claims to the respect of others. The woman, with her "poor head, never to be relied on since the days when she could not remember the capitals of Northern Europe (as if their names were going to make any difference or be of the least use to her then or ever) as helpless and baffled as a calf at a gate" (207), is not intelligent, nor does she see the need for intelligence. From moving from man to man for more than twenty-five years, she knows "everything that could happen to women in this world" (207-8), by which she means that she knows about happiness in love, suffering, abandonment and loss.

In the woman's romantic relationships, physical desires and comforts eliminate the possibility of an intellectual or spiritual connection with her lovers. On the evening of her first sexual encounter, the young man she loves talks to her of his future and aspirations:

"[My uncle's] always telling me London's the right place for a man like me, and with his connections and so on I daresay I'd do well; I'm going to learn French this winter and I've been reading Ruskin—you ought to read more, you know."
"Aren't we going to sit down soon?" she asked. Her shoes, new and high-heeled, pinched. (231)

The woman's desire to be physically attractive according to cultural standards cripples her ability to connect meaningfully with her lover because the hazards of the physical

role that she must play occupy all of her attention. After her first and many other lovers leave her, the woman is reduced to a virtual prostitute who no longer conceives of a relationship with a man as being anything more than a physical connection, which she offers in exchange for money. Her feet, after twenty-five years of being crammed into shoes that are considered sexually attractive, are swollen and painful with varicose veins, and they obstruct her plans and capacity to live without a lover to support her. Lacking an education, the jobs for which she is qualified require her to stand for hours each day, but her painful feet—and habitual laziness—deter her from seeking this kind of work. At the age of forty-six, the woman’s mind revolves primarily around her physical needs; as the narrator notes, “[the woman’s] eyes saw no further than the surface of her eyes” (228), and thoughts of food, drink, rest, and fatigue consume the her thoughts.

Storm Jameson’s bleak portrayal of her protagonist is part of her systematic campaign against the loss of personal individuality and social distinctiveness, such as that found in small towns rather than bland cosmopolitan cities, engendered first by the Industrial Revolution and continued into the twentieth century. Jameson’s nameless protagonist is shaped by the factory in which she worked as a young girl, her eventual move to London from the small town of her birth, and her attempts to conform physically and mentally to increasingly general standards of appearance and manner. Indeed, the unnamed woman is little other than a product of these identity-destroying forces. When she first goes to work in the mill at the age of fifteen, her developing body is regulated and stimulated by the noise of the looms: “every vibration of the machines repeated itself in her body, until she was nearly crazy with excitement. The other young girls felt it the same way” (227). The rhythm of the mill and the absolute lack of privacy of the mill

town produces young women with lewd humor and impatient bodies, so that they jump at the first opportunity for sexual experience: “[h]er body, possessed by an energy which the machines wearied without satisfying, so that it was renewed each morning, asked to be used” (230). However, her physical desires are far from simple or clear:

[her thoughts and desires] were muddled and confused by the thinking of other people, her mother, the young women who as she was had been debauched by the machines, the men and women and children street on narrow street of them, heaped together in rooms much too small for them, scarcely separated by walls too thin to keep back a sound, forced to abandon privacy, to deny the decencies, like animals penned together, and their souls a burden to them. (230)

Through the monotonous, intellect-killing labor of the mill, sexual acts are the only kind of self-expression that the girls know, and these expressions are prescribed, confined, and jumbled by living conditions, standards of both morality and immorality, and the soul-destroying nature of poverty.

Upon her arrival in London, the woman is further anonymized by the need to work hard to earn sufficient money to live. Toiling in hotels and cafes where “[a] tear in the eiderdown was infinitely more interesting than the people who slept under it” (234), the woman learns to see people as virtually interchangeable. Her labor and her love affairs, even the four-year relationship with the German man who eventually abandons her in response to anti-German sentiment accompanying the beginning of the world war, end without leaving her any financial or emotional security for the future:

Something in her cried that these endings were vile, cruel...It was horrible; it made out that you were nothing—she struck her breast—you, you here, nothing. She felt a deep—not grief exactly—confusion, a dull misery, as though all she did had been useless. You worked, cried, made plans, got up morning after morning in the dark, scrubbed the shelves—but it was nothing, it tailed off...Her fingers dug, quivering, into her flesh, seeking assurance. (246)

The woman's unidentifiable body, which could be any middle-aged woman's body, is all that remains after forty-six years of life. Her early concerns to force her physical body into a sexually desirable mold have resulted in a life limited to the superficial, with nothing but her ageing body to define or support her. Even when she rails against the world that "made out that you were nothing," the woman's "you" does not connote anything other than the nameless rage of any human against depersonalizing forces. Unlike Leopold or Clarissa, this woman is almost characterless, a victim to what Storm Jameson views as the anonymizing effects of modern life.

Although the woman is featureless and indistinct, she is not completely lacking in identity. Even with the anonymizing influences that first limit the woman to physical concerns and then rob her of the specific memory of her experiences, her earliest—and strongest—memories provide her with a bedrock identity that modern life cannot alter. Even though many of the experiences and details of her life are inaccessible, the woman's early childhood is not only readily available, but dominates her reminiscences. The details about her more recent experiences that escape her saturate her early memories, and she remembers the plan of the house of her childhood, the color of the cloth on the kitchen table, and feeling of the wallpaper in the front room. From the moment she awakens in the morning until the time she falls asleep at night, the woman repeatedly recreates memories of her childhood with the sensory specificity necessary to relive the experiences. While later events in the mill and in London, even her memories of her lovers, lack the intricate physical details, her earliest memories, and the delights, disappointments, sadness, and happiness of her childhood, are immediately and physically available to her.

The woman's repeated childhood memories, following the Lockean tradition, provide her with an identity, however meager, capable of withstanding the depersonalizing influences of modern life. Elizabeth Maslen argues that Storm Jameson's concept of identity is that "consistency of consciousness and a sense of continuity between the actions and events of the past, and the experiences of the present," and this continuity and sense of coherence is fueled by these early memories.¹⁶⁸ In childhood, before the effects of poverty and labor had dulled her senses, the woman laid down memories that, by reliving them daily, sustain her through disappointment, abandonment, and despair. Even her painful feet, which symbolize the toll of modern life, benefit from childhood memories; when their painful throbbing forces her to sit down, she spots some dock leaves growing and, "remembering from her childhood that docks were good for nettle-stings," she wraps the painful feet in leaves and continues on her way (265). These memories keep the woman moving—literally and metaphorically—by soothing the ache of modern existence.

Storm Jameson's decision to join her novel with these two modernist novels as a kind of capstone suggests that the work is both a continuation of and commentary on the modernist project. By repeating key elements of these two novels, Jameson conveys that each novel and each day retain elements of the past while changing over time. The next step in the representation of modern existence is, Jameson indicates, consideration of the *loss* of personal identity for the vast number of victims of modernity. These nameless, faceless, shapeless people cling to the few moments of life before they are trampled by work, care, and fear of starvation. Like the unnamed woman, they are robbed of their

¹⁶⁸ Nicola King, *Memory, Narrative and Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 2. Quoted in Maslen 33.

experiences, and their mutilated memories provide them precious little information about who they are and how they find themselves in such dire situations. As with the woman at the end of the day who trudges home “drawing with her hours of memories freshly re-lived, and new events fast becoming memories, dead shells sunk in the sand” (289), memories of all except the distant past are “dead shells” rather than living experiences.

Splitting the Husk

Of all the references to the previous modernist day novels in Jameson’s text, the one that summarizes Jameson’s critique of modernist memory hearkens back to an interaction between Rezia and Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*:

The word “time” split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to time; an immortal ode to Time. He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. (69-70)

In this passage, the traumatized Septimus, for whom all words carry hyperbolic consequence and all experiences are laced with memories of the past, particularly those related to his friend, Evans, who died during the war, the word “time” ripens suddenly for him, splitting the dry husk in which it has been confined as it matures, and shows its fruit. The sudden ripening of time brings the past into the present: Septimus sings the words that the dead answer, and the dead are discovered to be not gone, but living in flowers in Greece. The mention of Thessaly, which might be a reference to *The Odyssey* and thus to *Ulysses*, is the island of Aeolia, home of the “master of all the winds.” When Odysseus is blown back to the once friendly island through his men’s mischievousness, his cruel

reception suggests the impossibility of return and increases anxiety about his ultimate reception at Ithaca.¹⁶⁹ In this allusion to the dangers of moving back in time, Septimus alters the negative connotation of return and reawakening the past as something simultaneously new and “imperishable.” Septimus repeats the phrase “ode to time” with the difference that the second iteration is capitalized, thus raising “Time” to the hypostasis of everyday, uncapitalized “time.” The ripe concept of time is one in which the eternal meets the quotidian, and the experience of the present moment is not lost when the moment expires, but continues forever.

Woolf calls this kind of sudden revelation in her work a “moment of being,” an intense moment “of recognition and then revelation—the value of which is independent of the object that is catalyst.”¹⁷⁰ In a moment of being, reality, from which most people protect themselves assiduously, bursts through the protective covering and shocks the individual into recognizing her participation in the whole of existence.¹⁷¹ By annexing this concept, Jameson’s text underscores that what is immanent in the moment of being is *memory of the past*, and she demonstrates both the paucity of memory for the working poor and the pain of awareness of this fact. The woman, remembering the evening that she met George and agreed to be his lover-for-hire, attempts to summarize the experience as “not bad” when “suddenly the memory of the evening *split its husk*, and something infinitely weak and young showed through, trembling in the light” (218, my emphasis).

¹⁶⁹ Aeolus, King of Aeolia, entertains Odysseus for a month before capturing for him in a sack all the winds except the west wind, which will push him home to Ithaca. However, Odysseus’s men think that the sack contains treasure, so they open it and cause a storm so great that it pushes the boat back to Aeolia. Aeolus curses Odysseus and refuses to help him a second time.

¹⁷⁰ Jeanne Schulkind, “Introduction,” *Virginia Woolf: Moments of Being* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), 19.

¹⁷¹ Woolf describes people as “wrapped in cotton wool” that protects them from the spreading depths of existence.

Using Woolf's exact words, Jameson summons Woolf's reference to Joyce's reference to the *Odyssey*, demonstrating through intertextuality that the splitting of the husk is about the memory of the past. A single memory ripens, and the mature fruit is not a fresh or more detailed version of the evening, but is a wholly different memory of childhood. In the memory, the woman is a young girl going on a visit with her mother to her aunt's farm. Unlike the small, ugly, sooty town in which the girl lives, the farm is clean and seemingly timeless, with "days [that] were immensely long, mornings that winked and glittered through a complete roll of the slow earth, afternoons let slackly down across a warm sleeping valley" (221). Upon returning home, the woman remembers that her little-girl self "felt that she had been tricked" (222) that the end of her sunny holiday was the return to the dreary house and dirty town that "smells of beer and closets" (221). This memory is the only indication the woman gives that her life has been stunted by modern living conditions. Repeatedly, the woman tries to convince herself that she "[hasn't] done so badly," except in this memory where she admits to feeling "tricked" when she is forced back into the reality of her poverty-stricken life (222).

As she relives the memory of this visit, the woman recalls riding in a cart towards the farm next to a long hedge filled with flowering convolvulus:

[A]s soon as the cart stopped for a few moments she leaned out to pull one. It lay in her hand. She had barely admired it when it died suddenly. The pale delicate cup went limp and flat and hung down as if it had breathed its last. She let it fall and pulled another and the same thing happened. "Convolvulus won't live in your hand, child." She pretended to laugh, but she pulled flower after flower, hoping secretly that one of them would decide to live. A curious excitement filled her when the frail flowers lay across her palm. It made her feel light and blown-out. (219)

The flower, like the present moment, expires just as one tries to possess it, and the child's desire to find the flower that will live beyond the moment fills her with excitement,

driving her to pluck flower after flower. Overwhelmed with the evanescence of the flowers, the child feels that she is less substantial and, like the flower, ephemeral. This moment, in which the woman remembers trying to capture the necessarily fleeting presence of existence, is part of the memory that split its husk, opening up a dry encounter with one of many tepid lovers to reveal the inner richness of this childhood memory. The ripeness of the memory, referring back to Woolf's text, revives the dying convolvulus by holding their brief moments of life forever in the memory in an eternity of presentness.

The woman's memories in this interlude perform two literary functions: first, they indicate that the present moment can be captured and preserved in the novel; and, second, they are a literary resurrection, an example of intertextual repetition that brings an earlier work of literature into the historical moment of *A Day Off*. In Woolf's use of the phrase, the moment when time "split its husk" is the moment when the linear concept of time breaks open to reveal a simultaneous immortality. Jameson writes of a single memory, a moment in the woman's past that splits its husk, but the import of the metaphor is the same: at the moment of ripening, the experience breaks out of the protective covering to reveal it in the glory of fresh newness. In the splitting of the husk, both authors refer to an instant when the past and future converge in the present moment; it happens within the texts, but also *to* the texts when Jameson makes present Woolf's and Joyce's texts in the moment of her novel.

When Virginia Woolf was writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, she was reading not only Joyce's *Ulysses*, but also Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Similarly, Joyce had met Proust and was well versed in Henri Bergson's theory of "spontaneous memory" that

Wyndham Lewis argues is the “little seed” that inspired Proust and Joyce.¹⁷² This Bergsonian concept, which Proust develops into his concept of involuntary memory, is concretely illustrated when the narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu* describes the famous moment when memories of his childhood wash over him, unbidden, at the taste of the madeleine steeped in lime-blossom tea. This moment of involuntary memory that exposes deep memories is almost identical to Woolf and Jameson’s concept of the splitting of the husk.¹⁷³ Neither the unnamed woman nor Septimus Smith have control over the sudden ripening; indeed, the woman was attempting to relive an unrelated and much more recent memory when her childhood memories burst through. The involuntary nature of the splitting of the husk underscores the lack of individual control over identity-forming memories. Identity, for Proust, Woolf and Jameson, is not the result of personal inclination or desire; throughout *A Day Off*, the unnamed woman tries and fails to locate and relive her memories of life at the mill and her many lovers. Rather, identity emerges in the involuntary memories that swim through the character’s head during moments of rest or emerge, unsought, as the result of a physical stimulus. The technique in the day novel of representing a character’s stream of consciousness on a day of reflection rather than arduous labor, which records the many thoughts and associations that rush through the mind as a character goes about her daily activities, demonstrates the reflexive and unconscious nature of the memories fundamental to identity.

The concept of splitting the husk resonates with Joyce’s aesthetic theory of epiphany, first explained in *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and

¹⁷² Lewis 87.

¹⁷³ See the “Overture” in Proust’s *Swann’s Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 50-51.

exemplified in *Ulysses*. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen describes epiphany as “a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself.”¹⁷⁴ While the *Stephen Hero* definition seems to lend itself more towards revelations in everyday events, in *Portrait*, he describes an epiphanic moment as aesthetic: “[t]he instant wherein that supreme quality of beauty the clear radiance of the aesthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony is the luminous silent stasis of aesthetic pleasure, a spiritual state very like that cardiac condition...called the enchantment of the heart.”¹⁷⁵ The sudden appearance of the epiphany, together with the sense of wholeness it endows upon the moment and the epiphany’s observer, bears a striking resemblance to the revelation of identity-forming memories that characterize the splitting of the husk. By breaking open the moment to reveal the eternal identity within its temporal manifestation, Joyce, Woolf and Jameson seek to demonstrate that there is an unchanging core that characterizes each person and, in Joyce’s case, each thing.

For the unnamed woman in Jameson’s novel, the moment of identity-revelation is particularly noticeable because, unlike Clarissa and Leopold, she is bereft of almost all the accoutrements of modern life. Without money, friends, lovers, family, property, or a job, she has nothing more than some sagging, dirty clothes, a few acquaintances, and a rented bed-sittingroom. Although the woman lacks material goods and is essentially a social outcast, her internal monologue is not significantly different from Clarissa or Leopold’s. Jameson’s decision to create an almost completely unattached protagonist is

¹⁷⁴ James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, eds. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon (New York: New Directions, 1963), 210-211.

¹⁷⁵ James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1992), 213.

itself a splitting of the husk: on the day apart from the others, the trappings of the woman's life split open to reveal the enduring character that inhabits it. By drawing attention to the unconnected and unadorned character, Jameson reveals that, in representing a character's thoughts and actions in a single day, the modernist day novel discloses the enduring character that exists in the present moment.

When the woman realizes that she has been stripped to her bare self, which occurs as she mulls over the memory of an acquaintance's funeral the week before, she experiences a moment of panic in terms reminiscent of the splitting of the husk:

Suddenly the surface of her life split across and its days poured out in an untidy crumpled heap, like clothes emptied from a drawer. She could not tell one from the other. All she knew was that something terrible had happened, something she couldn't have prevented—(she thought confusedly, I might have done something, kept the room cleaner and tidier, I could have taken a course in book-keeping at that college, they say they guarantee a good post, nothing grand I daresay but better than nothing)— (210).

The fear at being abandoned by her lover and sole source of financial support terrifies the woman and prompts a momentary confusion in which the details of her current life lack coherence or narrative: “she felt herself falling, falling, and the other things fell cruelly on top of her, the trees, the walls of houses, people, the manager of The Swan, waiters, broken plates” (211). The woman's surroundings and details of her current existence are jumbled together in her fear for her future, but within moments memories of the past swoop in and, as she thinks over past wrongs, “[r]esentment flowed smoothly over her mind, hardening into a crust on which she could move in safety” (211). By returning to the past, the woman's identity reasserts itself, providing structure for the present and hope for the future.

The distant memories that define the unnamed woman are the only secure things within her life. Her clothes are so stained and misshapen that an acquaintance offers to lend her a dress because she “can’t bear the sight” of the woman in her old clothes (274). She is in danger of losing her bed-sittingroom, to which she clings with increasing terror, if she cannot find the money to pay the rent. These essential memories that calm and focus the woman, while providing her with a superstructure to understand her life, are all that is left to keep her alive. Jameson’s text suggests that, when stripped of all assets and companionship, the human being is a mass of memories and past-inflected observations of the present, nothing but flesh and memory.

The woman’s stripped-down, memory-focused existence only brings into sharper focus the bleakness of her prospects. Although her memories comfort her in her moment of panic, it is the time to relive and take comfort in these memories that are so fundamental to her identity that she will forfeit as she goes about the difficult business of staying alive. The woman is caught in an impossible choice: either she sacrifices her time to a mindless job or she sacrifices her ability to remember with comfort to a life of crime. Either way, she loses the ability to look back at her life in the present moment, take stock of her life, and narrate to herself the story of her life. The luxury of time in the modernist day novel is, Jameson indicates, a fantasy of modern life that the same modern conditions have rendered increasingly scarce. To return to Woolf’s essay, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Woolf’s claim that the Georgian cook, unlike the dungeon-dwelling Victorian cook, is “a creature of sunshine and fresh air” who reads the newspaper and cares about the hats she wears, is precisely the claim against which Jameson is contending. The hardworking servant doesn’t have the luxury of time to construct and

reconstruct her own identity, a point that Woolf makes implicitly through Clarissa Dalloway's maid, Lucy, whose interior monologue is not made available to the reader. For Jameson, the writer of socialist literature, a realistic view of the mind-set required of the characters in a modernist day novel means that they are either relatively affluent or on the verge of ruin. Time is an asset of the wealthy, and, as the modernist day novel makes quite clear, time is the key ingredient of a fully developed personal identity.

CHAPTER IV

MEMORY AS ART, MEMORY AS ASSET: THE POST-WAR MODERNIST AESTHETICIZATION OF REMINISCENCE

In March of 1920, Molly and Desmond MacCarthy hosted the first meeting of the Memoir Club, a gathering of the thirteen original members of “Old Bloomsbury” who met periodically each [week, month, millennium?] to read aloud a chapter of what was planned to be a full-length autobiography.¹⁷⁶ The predecessor for the club, with almost identical format and members, was the “Novel Club,” and both were, as Anne Olivier Bell remarks, “invented by Molly MacCarthy in the hope of inducing Desmond MacCarthy to write something other than journalism.”¹⁷⁷ However, the substitution of the Memoir Club for the Novel Club is more than Molly MacCarthy’s systematic march through the book-length options available with which to tempt her husband, but indicates a larger trend in modernist writing. The post-war shift towards memory writing is in part a function of a culture responding to the horrifying loss of millions of young men and a whole way of life. In addition, the gradually increasing importance of the author’s memories in the literary works of the 1920s and 1930s indicates that memory, once

¹⁷⁶ There is some disagreement about the actual members present at the first meetings of the Memoir Club. In *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918*, Leonard Woolf claims that the original members of Old Bloomsbury, namely Leonard and Virginia Woolf, Vanessa and Clive Bell, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, Adrian Stephen, John Maynard Keynes, E. M. Forster, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant, Saxon Sydney-Turner, and Lytton Strachey, were present. However, in his book *Bloomsbury*, Quentin Bell does not mention Saxon Sydney-Turner or Adrian Stephen as part of the club. See the editor’s note on the Memoir Club in Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 139.

¹⁷⁷ Anne Olivier Bell, Ed. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 2* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 23n.

confined to the genre of the memoir or autobiography, became a legitimate source of literary material.

In this chapter, I will examine the aestheticization of memory in literary modernism through three different manifestations of this trend. The first is the Memoir Club and Virginia Woolf's rhetorical strategies in navigating the genre of the memoir. Woolf's primary concern with her work for the Memoir Club relates not to the difference between fact and fiction but to the *degree* of disclosure that will capture the sense of the remembered events while still holding the reader in thrall. By carefully balancing the narrator's ownership of memories with the reader's interest and participation in those memories, Woolf forges a memoir-specific narrative strategy that maximizes authorial ownership of memories while ensuring that they are still attractive to a paying reading public. The second example, Jean Rhys's novel *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1931), is a fictionalized autobiography that draws heavily on her personal relationship and ultimate break with the writer Ford Madox Ford. Although Rhys's text does not make claims to autobiography, her rhetorical strategy is similar to Woolf's in that she delicately draws the reader into her memories while retaining absolute ownership of them. Rhys's text is both an example of and rumination on the aestheticization of memory, questioning the fate of personal identity in a culture of aestheticized memory. The final text I will consider is Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929), a purported memoir of his life until just after the war, which critics continue to attack for its fictional elements. This disputed autobiography is Graves's attempt to free himself from his past by selling his memories, and his perception of memory property as alienable underscores the extreme limit of the propertization of memory.

Intellectual Property and Memory Property

At the end of the nineteenth century, ideas about the ownership of intellectual property underwent a significant transformation. Under the influence of proponents of collective and unconscious thinking, including figures such as Samuel Butler, authors began to worry about the possibility of having original ideas or producing original works. Ether, or “the mysterious imaginary space from whence [artistic] inspiration came,” was beginning to be understood as universally accessible, perhaps even transmissible through the newly discovered electric and radio waves, and literary works of the period address the problems surrounding ownership of artistic creations.¹⁷⁸ Clare Pettitt succinctly describes the ownership conundrum brought on by theories of unconscious communication: “[i]f creative ideas were available to everyone through the ether, then it became difficult to claim individual ownership of them.”¹⁷⁹ Anxiety about the ether did not stop at original ideas but also extended to original expressions, as in Rudyard Kipling’s 1904 short story “Wireless” in which a young pharmacist exposed to radio waves rapidly recreates Keat’s laboriously composed poem, “St. Agnes Eve,” believing it to be original.¹⁸⁰

In this atmosphere of creative uncertainty coupled with the expanding literary marketplace at the end of the century, authorial claims of ownership grew increasingly

¹⁷⁸ Clare Pettitt, *Patent Inventions—Intellectual Property and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 272. Literary examples of anxiety of ownership of artistic work include George Eliot’s “Shadows of the Coming Race” (1878), which discusses the loss of individual consciousness and intellectual property and Marie Corelli’s *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self* (1889), which correlates electricity and creativity.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 274.

¹⁸⁰ Discussed in Pettitt, 272.

tenacious, with a significant decrease of anonymous publication in favor of signed pieces, and authors began to ensure ownership of intellectual property by focusing not only on ideas and original phrasing but also by turning inward “to ideas of selfhood and self-expression.”¹⁸¹ While certain literary genres such as autobiography had always dealt with the author’s self-expression, personal writing became more prominent in genres such as the essay and the novel. This shift towards the author as a person sparked a renewed celebrity authorial culture that eventually grew to be even greater than that of the Romantic period, and reached its climax with the high modernists such as Joyce and Woolf. Aaron Jaffe, developing Fredric Jameson’s claim that “great modernisms... were predicated on the invention of a personal, private style, as unmistakable as your fingerprint,” asserts that the notable modernists were “imprimaturs” or persons fused to texts “as a reified signature of value.”¹⁸² The creation of a literary technique that the reader immediately identified with the author produced a culture of inescapable author function, with the personality of the author guaranteeing the significance and value of the text.

Modernist writers in the early twentieth century began to incorporate their own memories more or less explicitly into their literary work. Heavily influenced by fictionalized autobiographies such as Marcel Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, writers as various as James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, and Djuna Barnes employed personal memories in their literary masterpieces, blending memory and invention in purportedly fictional texts. Sean Latham explains that the roman à clef, ostensibly despised by

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 292.

¹⁸² Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend: Bay, 1983), 114. Quoted in Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 20.

modernists, flourished during this period and the preponderance of modernist romans à clef amounts to a modernist “obsession” with the genre.¹⁸³ At the same time, modernists unequivocally embraced the narrative of personal memories as a legitimate artistic pursuit.

Increasing reliance upon personal memory at the exact time when scientists and physicians were investigating—and doubting—the overall reliability of human memory poses profound genre questions for modernist writers. With the emphasis on self-expression and the personal, early twentieth-century writing often blurred the line between fiction and nonfiction, creating an epistemological uncertainty that suffuses modernist writings about memory. If memory is as unstable, impressionable, and mutable as scientists were suggesting, what is a memoir but a partially fictional story that the author tells about herself? Yet modernist writers clung to the definition of memory as a reproduction of past events and evaded the literary problems—and opportunities—created by the new sciences of memory. By elevating memories to the realm of art, modernist reify claims of past events, providing a strong counter-narrative to scientific theories of the instability of memory, and transforming memory into intellectual property. Artistic ownership, however, carries with it the additional burden and benefit of being alienable, even during the owner’s lifetime, leading to tricky ownership situations—such as the possibility that an author can sell the copyright for her work and thus no longer have control over her memory-property—that were previously associated only with autobiography.

¹⁸³ Sean Latham, *The Art of Scandal: Modernism, Libel Law and the Roman à Clef* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

The modernist reluctance to acknowledge the literary problems raised by the sciences of memory was part of a cultural trend of increasingly familiarity with—yet decreasing conversation about—the startling findings of memory scientists. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the initial concern about the emerging sciences of memory was over. Discussions about memory in the periodical press, which topped out at roughly ten percent of all the articles produced during the last forty years of the nineteenth century, gradually subsided to six percent in the first forty years of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁴ Essayists familiar with scientific and medical texts on memory were primarily responsible for promulgating information about memory, but the widespread initial response was not the result of a critical mass of readers rushing to read Hermann Ebbinghaus's *Memory*. Instead, the cultural—and particularly literary— atmosphere was steeped in thinking about memory, and uncertainty about memory became part of the environment.

The focus on memories and the cult of authorial celebrity during the literary movement known for its insistence on the autotelic art object and doctrines of impersonality is not, despite apparent contradictions, a serious aesthetic problem for modernist writers. Scholars generally agree that Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is based, to a greater or lesser extent, on the first twenty years of Joyce's own life, yet it is also a piece of “serious” and autonomous art.¹⁸⁵ Regardless of the source of literary art the final product was considered both the “fingerprint” of the artist and yet

¹⁸⁴ See Appendix B.

¹⁸⁵ For example, see Harry Levin, *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction* (Norfolk: New Directions, 1941) and Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Dublin* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955). Jaffe gives a good description of the debate between Stephen-as-Joyce and Stephen-as-ironic-Joyce, 34-36.

independent of its creator, and not even the use of subjectively remembered past events could tip the balance towards a wholly autobiographical reading of the text.

While modernist writers muddled the difference between fact and fiction, they neatly avoided the potential genre crisis by ignoring the literary problems inherent in the scientific challenges to factual accuracy in human memory. By insisting on the factuality of remembered events, modernists sidestepped the uncertainty about the reliability of memory, yet jumble these “facts” with fictions, thus producing exactly the same epistemological effect.¹⁸⁶ The modernist aestheticization of memory contains two crucial elements: first, an assumption of the accuracy—however subjective—of individual memories; and second, the exaltation of memory to the place of art, usually through integration with fictional components in a traditionally fictional or “creative” literary genre. By raising memories to the status of art, modernists protected memory as fact and as an essential ingredient to modernist literature that promised to change English-language literature forever.

Although the use of memories does not affect the autonomy of literary work, this period of literary production is punctuated with extreme claims—and disavowals—of ownership. Just as writers were digging into personal experience, they were also insisting that the art object does not refer to anything beyond itself, even the creator whose memories have produced it. Paul Saint-Amour argues that a fundamental aspect of modern texts is a copyright metadiscourse or “a self-awareness about their status as

¹⁸⁶ Indeed, it was not until the 1950s that the literary use of memories—namely the autobiography—began to be theorized as a true genre. In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye claims a degree of fictionality for the autobiography, arguing that “[m]ost autobiographies are inspired by a creative, and therefore fictional, impulse to select only those events and experiences in the writer’s life that go to build up an integrated pattern.” (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 287. As with the modernists, Frye here equates memory with fact and fiction with the arrangement or selection of facts.

literary property,” and I will argue that the propertization of memory plays a key role in the modernist incarnation of this metadiscourse.¹⁸⁷ By turning the intensely private realm of memory into a rich source for literature, modernist writers reflect upon, struggle with, and sometimes capitalize on the property implications of aestheticized memory.

The three texts that I read in this chapter contend with the modernist desire to break with the past. Although critics such as Fredric Jameson argue that this “rupture” with the past was anything but, modernist writers believed and attempted to demonstrate through experiments with form and content that they had dropped the weight of history.¹⁸⁸ These three examples indicate that the modernist break with the literary and even intellectual past ushers in a new emphasis on personal history as the past that forms the basis of literary production. Major and minor literary figures openly draw on personal memories as inspiration and content for their work, and, on a functional level, the texts don’t question the validity of these memories: the memories simply *are* and the author reports them, usually as part of what is generally perceived as a fictional work. Simple reporting of past events and the language of rupture yield what critics and writers then and now consider literature.

¹⁸⁷ Paul Saint-Amour, *The Copywrights: Intellectual Property and the Literary Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 13. Although Saint-Amour does not suggest that the described self-awareness corresponds precisely to the modernist period, it is a prominent feature of modernist texts.

¹⁸⁸ In “Beyond the Cave: Demystifying the Ideology of Modernism.” *The Ideologies of Theory, Vol. 2*. (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1988), Fredric Jameson argues that the nature of modernism is “very far from a break with that older overstuffed Victorian bourgeois reality, it simply reinforces all the latter’s basic presuppositions only in a world so thoroughly subjectivized that they have been driven underground, beneath the surface of the work, forcing us to reconfirm the concept of a secular reality at the very moment when we imagine ourselves to be demolishing it” (130-131).

The Memoir Club

In her diaries, Virginia Woolf describes the seven papers read during the first meeting of the Memoir Club, some of which were “objective” or “matter of fact,” and others “literary” or “fantastic.”¹⁸⁹ Two of the women reading became overwhelmed or excessively nervous at the prospect of reading their papers, including Vanessa Bell, who, “overcome by the emotional depths to be traversed,” was unable to continue. Woolf’s unspoken response to the papers is that she feels the overly objective pieces miss the point of the exercise, while those that provide a subjective or imaginative take on the events of the past carry a real value. Describing Sydney Waterlow’s reading as “a dream—in reality a parable to explain the seeming obtuseness of daylight Sydney by the imaginative power of dreaming Sydney,” Woolf declares it “a queer, self-conscious, self analytic [sic] performance, interesting to me.” Simple reportage of events of the past are not interesting to Woolf, but the “interesting things” that people “can’t prevent...coming out” are the subjective and creative impressions that the rememberer ascribes to events of the past.

According to Woolf, the anxieties provoked by the readings at the Memoir Club occurred because of the connection between memory and the rememberer’s soul. Of her first presentation at the Club she writes:

Leonard was objective & triumphant; I subjective & most unpleasantly discomfited. I dont [sic] know when I’ve felt so chastened & out of humour with myself—a partner I generally respect & admire. “Oh but why did I read this egotistic sentimental trash!” That was my cry, & the result of my sharp sense of the silence succeeding my chapter. It started with loud laughter; this was soon quenched; & then I couldn’t help figuring a kind of uncomfortable boredom on

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 23.

the part of the males; to whose genial cheerful sense my revelations were at once mawkish and distasteful. What possessed me to lay bare my soul!¹⁹⁰

Woolf feels that her insistence on the value of the subjective, which provokes a gendered response in her audience, falters in practice. The substitution of the triumphant objective voice, which creates distance between the events and the narrator, for a subjective voice, which brings those events—and the reader—ever closer to the narrator, challenges the listener to see the identity those events have shaped. Woolf connects memories not just with her identity but with her soul—a move that Ian Hacking argues first appeared with the emerging sciences of memory—and equates an emotion-laden rendition of the events of her life with baring her soul.¹⁹¹ To Woolf, it is not simply the events that make the individual, but the emotional ownership of those events that constitute the soul.

Woolf's designation of "interesting" and "subjective" as opposed to "objective" narratives of past events is, in part, indicative of the genre difficulties and longstanding debates in the history of autobiography. Her audience's uncomfortable response to subjectivity and embarrassing closeness to the narrator mirrors the mid-nineteenth-century response by critics such as Carlyle to the Romantic mode of "subjective" self-confession.¹⁹² Northrop Frye clumps autobiographies together under the heading of "confession" and indicates that this genre includes both the dry recitations of life events and the subjective and highly emotional disclosures first found in Augustine. However,

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 26.

¹⁹¹ Ian Hacking asserts: "[In the latter part of the nineteenth century], [m]emory, already regarded as a criterion of personal identity, became a scientific key to the soul, so that by investigation memory (to find out its facts) one would conquer the spiritual domain of the soul and replace it by a surrogate, knowledge about memory." *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 198.

¹⁹² David DeLaura, "The Allegory of Life: The Autobiographical Impulse in Victorian Prose," *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, ed. George Landow (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), 335.

Woolf—and the history of reception of autobiographical works—suggests that these two kinds of memory writing do not sit easily with one another.¹⁹³ Both exist between the categories of “literature” and “history,” but the nature and extent of the personal revelations contained therein can vary significantly.¹⁹⁴ For example, feminist theorists have discerned an andocentric bias in autobiography, which, they claim, results from the representative status of male experience and the male’s “self-reflection as a self-making which can stand for the terms of identity of his culture and epoch...[while] women’s self-writings [are] seen as ‘merely’ autobiographical, subjective and personal, failing to ramify beyond their immediate context.”¹⁹⁵ To Woolf, the narrator who calls on this universal subject, humorously and starkly portraying facts as if they could have happened to anyone rather than depicting his own highly specific responses, keeps his innermost soul—the inimitable part—hidden from the reader. Serious reflection on memory, or the baring of the soul, can drive away the audience, while the successful aestheticization of memory requires a strategic degree of distance from the soul constituted by those memories.

Unlike the romanticist aestheticization of experience that heightens meaningfulness, modernist memory aestheticization banishes sentimentality and excuses itself from meaning-making. Woolf’s implied theory of aestheticized memory, which can be discerned from her diaries and her contributions to the Memoir Club, dances between subjective and objective descriptions of memories. On the one hand, aestheticized

¹⁹³ Northrop Frye, “From *Anatomy of Criticism*,” *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy Hale (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 101.

¹⁹⁴ Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 229.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 230.

memory brings the reader close to the narrator's soul, but ensures that the reader is not tempted—or afraid that he is required—to take those experiences as his own. On the other hand, objectively narrated memory events can inspire the reader to identify with the narrator as a universal subject and thus feel, subjectively, a temporary ownership of those memories.¹⁹⁶ The modernist writer who aestheticizes her memories does so by proffering ownership of those memories to create the effect of literature without relinquishing control of her experience of the past. Woolf's memoir-writing method complicates Fredric Jameson's assertion that the modernist emphasis on the subjective and the particular undermines the possibility for a generalizable literature for a modern audience.¹⁹⁷ However, Woolf's rhetorical strategy in her memoir walks the line between possessive subjectivity and liberal generality, accomplishing each strategically at different points in the text.

Woolf's approach to memory writing blends what critics of autobiography consider the gendered aspects of the writing and reception of this kind of work. However, each modernist writer strikes his or her own balance between the subjective and the objective, with clear gender trends emerging over time, particularly on the reception of these texts. In the first meeting of the Memory Club in 1920, Woolf perceives a gender discrepancy in her audience's response to her chapter, and these

¹⁹⁶ Woolf's rhetorical strategy ensures that the reader enters into what David Herman calls the "storyworld" by identifying with the narrator, but that the narrator's subjective rumination prevents the reader from over-identifying with the narrator or otherwise appropriating those memories. The storyworld is a cognitive literary theory term for as the story as a parallel, fully functional, and independent mental representation of a story that is "ecological": it is self-contained and *makes sense*. Readers of the storyworld actively interact with the world by not merely accepting those world events passively, but by industriously considering possibilities, including potential past and future events, within the framework of that world. The storyworld is what enables humans to understand stories from a cognitive standpoint. See Herman's *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

¹⁹⁷ See Fredric Jameson, "Beyond the Cave: Demystifying the Ideology of Modernism." *The Ideologies of Theory, Vol. 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1988), 115-132.

differences persist throughout the modernist period. As I will demonstrate in subsequent sections, the humorous distance that Woolf's male audience first enjoyed and then missed as she delved into serious reflection is that which male authors, such as Robert Graves, employ when they openly call on their memories, no matter how painful those memories may be. Many female writers, such as Jean Rhys, bring the reader uncomfortably close to their reminiscences, provoking through subjective revelations an almost unbearable sense of nearness to the author. Woolf's anxiety about the male response to her work, which she calls "uncomfortable boredom," incites her "revulsion" to her own disclosures and prompts her to alter her future contributions to the club.

Although this first chapter that Woolf read at the Memoir Club is almost certainly lost, the first preserved chapter, which was presented to the club at some time between March 1920 and May 1921 and appears to be a continuation of that first offering, is an essay titled "22 Hyde Park Gate" about Woolf's relationship with her half-brother, George Duckworth. Far from being either mawkish or egotistic, her chapter strikes a balance between objective and subjective revelation, providing both remembered events and remembered—and contemporary—ruminations on those events. The essay begins with general memories of her mother's drawing room and the people that frequented it, moving on to a mishmash of impressions of George, and ends with the narrative of a very specific evening, one of the first evenings that George begins to "bring out" Woolf in society. Woolf tells her story as fact, interspersing these events with her own reactions to them, many of which are contradictory or confusing to a reader expecting a simple story of a young girl's first evening out in real society.¹⁹⁸ The incongruity between blissful

¹⁹⁸Although Woolf tacitly insists on the factuality of the events in her memoirs, Jeanne Schulkind, the editor of this collection, maintains that Woolf's memory fails at times. In a note to this portion of this essay

coming-of-age stories and Woolf's disastrous evening, in which she offends two austere ladies by talking—and of Plato!—at dinner, is taken to and then hurried out of a risqué French play, and ends up at a tedious party, is largely the basis for its humor. She describes the process of undressing after that long evening, and amid the litany of stockings and undergarments, she illustrates her mental state: “I felt old and experienced and disillusioned and angry, amused and excited, full of mystery, alarm and bewilderment.”¹⁹⁹ This constellation of emotions manifests not a “universal” or expected reaction to the events of the evening, but *Woolf's* highly subjective response. By sharing her idiosyncratic reaction to the events of her life, Woolf claims these memories as her own and demonstrates that the events and her response to them are constitutive of her identity—or her soul.

The essay culminates in a shocking and, as she states, previously unknown revelation about what happened that night:

Sleep had almost come to me. The room was dark. The house silent. Then, creaking stealthily, the door opened; treading gingerly, someone entered. “Who?” I cried. “Don’t be frightened”, George whispered. “And don’t turn on the light, oh beloved. Beloved—“ and he flung himself on my bed, and took me in his arms.

Yes, the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia never knew that George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also. (155)

Critics have traditionally interpreted this moment through the lens of trauma theory, but Woolf's presentation of the event resists a “traumatic” label. Unlike most of the other narrated events, such as the proceedings surrounding the indecent French play, Woolf

in which Woolf describes an evening party at the Hunts' house, Schulkind assures the reader that Woolf “appears to have confused the Moorish Hall in nearly Leighton House with the Moorish decorations in Hunt's house” (154n) and directs the reader to a book by Diana Holman-Hunt that is factually accurate.

¹⁹⁹ *Moments of Being*, 155

does not share her response to her half-brother's sexual advances. By baldly providing facts, including his and her words, Woolf abandons her reader without an interpretive framework through which to view the sudden disclosure of incest. Woolf steps back from her own narrative at this moment to allow the reader to feel the horror of this revelation. This powerful rhetorical move in which Woolf shifts suddenly to objective narrative underscores the aura of factuality surrounding the text—and specifically this almost unbelievable claim of incest—and compels the reader to partake in a limited fashion of the shock and dismay of the abrupt disclosure of George's intentions.

Woolf's memoir strategy carefully juggles ownership of memories in a way that maximizes the economic potential for a narrative of what she claims are actual past events. Although this essay was not published during her lifetime, her sensitivity to audience response during the composition process suggests that she hopes to attract a wide audience—consisting of women and men—if the chapters presented at the Memoir Club are published as a complete memoir, as the Club hoped each member would. By straddling the line between simply owning memories and turning them into an asset, Woolf's memoir-writing technique illustrates the very fine line that the modernist writer must walk to aestheticize her memories.

Jean Rhys and the Art of Aestheticized Memory

In 1928 and 1931, Jean Rhys published two novels based on her two-year affair with Ford Madox Ford from 1924 to 1926. The first, *Quartet*, describes her life as an

impoverished married woman in Paris whose husband is in jail. Ford and his long-time lover, Stella Bowen, attempt first to help her and then, as Ford realizes that he is attracted to her, to exploit her. The second novel illustrates Rhys's physical and psychological state after Ford discards her and she sinks into poverty and alcoholism. *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* tells the story of Julia Martin, a 36-year-old woman who has lived her whole life off her beauty, as a model and a lover, and in the wake of her disastrous affair with Mr. Mackenzie realizes that her way of life is threatened by encroaching age and her own fatigue at the incessant stream of demanding and cold-hearted lovers. Julia lives in a cheap hotel in Paris, subsisting on a weekly allowance from Mr. Mackenzie and doing little other than reading and drinking herself to sleep every night until Mr. Mackenzie stops her allowance. Eventually, she drifts to London, visits her dying mother, attends her mother's funeral, reconnects with an old lover and half-heartedly forms a new connection with another man, drifts back to Paris, and at the end of the novel is re-ensconced in the same cheap hotel, reading and drinking every night.

The majority of criticism on this text deals with its autobiographical roots and also delves into Ford and Bowen's responses to Rhys's barely veiled accusations of abuse. Indeed, Ford's 1930 text, *When the Wicked Man*, tells the story of the affair with Rhys from his perspective and appears to be revenge for Rhys's portrayal of him in *Quartet*.²⁰⁰ Despite the fact that Rhys claimed in later life that *Quartet* and *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* were not autobiographical and that she was "astonished" that so many people considered it an autobiography, literary criticism of these two books revolves

²⁰⁰ Lesley McDowell writes "[c]ritics have tended to pretty much ignore Ford's novelistic account of the affair itself, and one Ford biographer considers it little more than 'revenge for Rhys's portrait of him as Heidler in *Quartet*.'" *Between the Sheets: The Literary Liaisons of Nine 20th-Century Women Writers* (New York: Overlook Press, 2010), 144.

around the autobiographical elements in the text. Vivian Gornick argues that Rhys's letters and biography support an autobiographical reading, and yet she asserts that Rhys's novels are partially inventions rather than straightforward reportage of her life.²⁰¹

Despite Rhys's many protestations to the contrary, scholars generally agree that although Rhys changes many aspects of her personal story, Julia Martin is very similar to Rhys, the relationship with Mr. Mackenzie maps almost exactly onto the one that Rhys shared with Ford, and other characters correspond to the men and women in Rhys's life.

However, as Luisa Flora argues, the often "painful closeness between Rhys's troubled existence and her unsettling texts [does not justify the reduction of] the complexity of the writer's plight to an unequivocal depiction of her life."²⁰²

In agreement with Flora, I view the text as a fictionalized autobiography, which allows for the resemblances with Rhys's own life and her contention that her work is "made up." Like Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, her fictionalized autobiography draws from life but changes details, not to attempt to mask the truth, but to express psychological truths more accurately by altering facts. As such, many of the memories depicted in this ostensibly fictional text are self-conscious half-truths, and, unlike the goal of an autobiography to honestly report memories, the goal of the novel is to tell a partially fictional story that contains honestly reported memories. While the reader is aware that the ethos of the story describes Rhys after her break with Ford, no one event in the story is a guaranteed memory.

²⁰¹ Vivian Gornick, *The End of the Novel of Love* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 55.

²⁰² Luisa Maria Rodrigues Flora, "Jean Rhys: Composition in Shadows and Surfaces," *Recharting the Thirties*, ed. Patrick J. Quinn (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 267.

Like Virginia Woolf, Rhys engages in a narrative structure that manages to involve the reader and yet preserve ownership of her memories, but the balance between ownership and reader investment in the text is far more complicated. Whereas Woolf is concerned with subjective and objective modes of narrative expression that allow the reader a greater or lesser degree of interaction with the remembered events of the narrator's life, Rhys's fictionalized autobiography masks the difference between truth and falsehood, real and fabricated memories. As such, the reader is never certain which memories belong to the fictional Julia and which are common to both the real and the fictional woman. By presenting memories behind an ambiguous fictional façade, the reader lacks sufficient knowledge to engage with any aspect of the text as either fact or fiction. Thus the subjective claim to memories that Woolf describes as the author's "soul" is concealed within the epistemological uncertainty of the text.

Rhys emphasizes the readerly dance of alternatively observing and experiencing with the characters by employing a narrator who draws the reader into the text by shifting pronouns from third to second person. The pronoun shift also makes clear how ownership of experience operates in the text: certain experiences are owned jointly between Julia and the reader, while Julia solely owns others. Before the narrator does anything more than introduce Julia and her move to the hotel on the Quai des Grands Augustins, the reader is asked to imagine himself as Julia, checking into the cheap hotel. The narrator assures the reader that "the rooms were cleaner than you would have expected" and inserts Julia's thoughts about the landlady into the reader's mind: "you thought: '[The landlady] can't possibly be a French-woman.' Not that you lost yourself in conjectures as

to what she was because you didn't care a damn anyway."²⁰³ As we see with Woolf's objective narration, the move to the second person summons the reader as the universal subject and inserts him into the proceedings of the text.

By shifting back and forth between Julia's thoughts as Julia's, and Julia's thoughts as the reader's, the narrator involves the reader in Julia's story, but only to a limited extent. The reader is commanded to take Julia's position as she checks into the hotel, but when the narrator matter-of-factly describes the contents of the hotel room, she includes only Julia's subjective response to the furnishings:

[S]he hated the [unframed oil-painting]. It shared, with the colour of the plush sofa, a certain depressing quality. The picture and the sofa were linked in her mind. The picture was the more alarming in its perversion and the sofa the more dismal. The picture stood for the idea, the spirit, and the sofa stood for the act.
(11)

The reader is shown, but not invited to share, Julia's metaphorical musings about the connection between the sofa and the picture. Instead, her opinion of these pieces of furniture sets her apart from the reader, who might think that the picture is a still life with wine and cheese and the sofa is red plush. To Julia, the picture of the half-finished meal, which is depicted as "slightly distorted and full of obscure meaning" (10), represents the warped physical pleasures that are possible in this kind of environment. Although the cheese and the wine and the gay red of the plush sofa ought to signify abandonment to appetite and satisfaction, both the objects of desire and their achievement are twisted and slightly horrifying. The obscure meaning of the objects in the picture, which is never explained to the reader, masks the reason behind Julia's dread of the picture and the sofa and, thus preventing the reader from taking any pleasure from what is, at first glance, a

²⁰³ Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 9. All further references will be parenthetical.

carefree and easy life in Paris after the First World War. Julia herself is distorted, the good-time girl who has never had a good time. However, the narrator withholds the reasons why the picture and sofa are depressing, why Julia's life is depressing, and why, after leaving Mr. Mackenzie, she hides in a hotel room for six months rather than taking control of her life. Hidden from the reader, her reasons, like her fears, are securely hers.

The narrator guards aspects of Julia's experience—like her response to her hotel room—but invites the reader to partake in other kinds of highly personal memories. The most significant shift from the third to the second person occurs when Julia, sitting at her dying mother's bedside, begins to think about her earliest memories of her mother:

Julia sat there remembering that when she was a very young child she had loved her mother. Her mother had been the warm centre of the world. You loved to watch her brushing her long hair; and when you missed the caresses and the warmth you groped for them... And then her mother—entirely wrapped up in the new baby—had said things like, 'Don't be a cry-baby. You're too old to go on like that. You're a great big girl of six.' And from being the warm centre of the world her mother had gradually become a dark, austere, rather plump woman, who, because she was worried, slapped you for no reason that you knew. So that there were times when you were afraid of her; other times when you disliked her.

Then you stopped being afraid or disliking. You simply became indifferent and tolerant and rather sentimental, because after all she was your mother. (106-107)

In this collection of memories, the narrator changes the subject pronoun three times, alternating between second and third person. Although it is not until the end that "her mother" becomes "your mother," the reader is included in the hair brushing, the warmth and caresses, the mother's rejection through the harsh words and the slap, the fear and dislike, and the eventual indifference to the formerly nurturing mother. As Julia's mother is transformed from the warm center of the world into a cold, arbitrary, and ultimately unnecessary force, she is also transformed into the reader's mother. While the narrator shares Julia's memories with the reader, Julia retains sole ownership of the mother until

the mother is no longer maternal, but is someone about whom the reader feels sentimental in accordance with cultural expectations, because she is “your mother”.

In this instance of shared memories, the reader’s experience of the mother is that of a hollow shell or an empty signifier, whereas Julia experiences a real maternal presence. The discrepancy between rememberer and observer suggests that there is an inherent limit to the transmission of remembered experience; the reader is aware of what the mother ought to be and in fact was, but can’t possess the actual experience of the mother as the warm center of the world. Julia, on the other hand, not only possesses the initial experience but can, through her memory, return to that place: “It was strange sitting there, and remembering the time when she was the sweet, warm centre of the world, remembering it so vividly that mysteriously it was all there again” (107).

Although the reader knows that “it was all there again,” only Julia can go to that place because the memory belongs to her.

In addition to Julia, the narrator reports the thoughts and experiences of many of the characters in the novel, but primarily those that relate to Julia or to aspects of the person’s character that most affect Julia. Mr. Mackenzie, Julia’s sister Norah, and her new lover, Mr. Horsfield, report on Julia’s appearance, her situation, their feelings about her, and their thoughts about helping her financially and emotionally. Although each character belongs to different economic and social circumstances, their responses to Julia all run along the same lines: Julia is threatening and yet somehow pitiful. Mr. Mackenzie considers her “a dangerous person” who is nonetheless worth some pity (33); Norah feels a “fierce desire to hurt [Julia] or to see her hurt and humiliated” (102) and yet pities her because she knows she needs money; Mr. Horsfield feels that “her sorrows were nothing

whatever to do with him” (44) and she horrifies and embarrasses him, but he feels that ““one can’t leave this unfortunate creature alone to go and drink herself dotty”” (54). All take note, repeatedly, of Julia’s age, fading beauty, and general air of shabbiness. Despite their sporadic sympathy, all three characters are notable for their pitilessness thoughts and actions towards Julia. Mackenzie despises the sight of her and doesn’t bother to hide it from her, Norah’s anger with her sister leads to a horrible scene on the day of their mother’s funeral, ending with Julia’s expulsion from the family’s apartment, while Horsfield is incessantly annoyed that Julia is not the charming and carefree companion that he wants her to be.

As with Julia, the reader is periodically invoked in these ruminations by the shift to the second person pronoun, but, with Julia, the reader is enabled to feel along with her, while with other characters the shift to the second pronoun indicates how the reader—along with that character—*ought* to perceive and treat Julia. Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Horsfield, both of whom worry about Julia’s ability to inspire pity and tenderness, have similar feelings about how to manage people like her:

[Mr. Mackenzie] soon stopped asking intimate questions, because he knew that it was a mistake to be too curious about people who drift into your life and must soon inevitably drift out again. That wasn’t the way to live.

The secret of life was never to go too far or too deep. And so you left these people alone. They would be pretty certain to tell you lies, anyhow. And they had their own ways of getting along, don’t you worry. (26)

Impersonal and yet imperiously helpful, Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Horsfield’s “you,” instructs the reader how to think about Julia. As I discussed in relation to Virginia Woolf, Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Horsfield are anxious about these threats to their autonomy and advise the reader to erect similar boundaries. Just as the reader knows these characters only by their formal names, their second person reflections aim to protect

the reader's autonomy from the danger of Julia's dangerous thoughts and memories. Julia's first-name, highly personal and yet inclusive reflections threaten the reader's individuality because she pulls the reader into her own memories, and this access to her past opens the reader up to the danger of pity that Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Horsfield fear and counsel themselves—and the reader—against.

Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Horsfield's tacit admonitions to the reader not to "go too far or too deep," along with the way that access to many of Julia's memories is denied to the reader, underscores one of the fundamental assertions of the text: the impossibility of simply communicating remembered experience. During her first evening with Mr. Horsfield, Julia tells him of the time that she attempted to tell the story of her life to an artist, a sculptor for whom Julia was a model. Julia explains:

I wanted [Ruth] to understand. I felt that it was awfully important that some human being should know what I had done and why I had done it. I told everything. I went on and on.

And when I had finished I looked at her. She said: 'You seem to have had a hectic time.' But I knew when she spoke that she didn't believe a word." (52-53)

When Julia tries to tell the truth about her life and to defend her actions as "the only possible thing to do" in her circumstances, she realizes that Ruth cannot even consider her defense because she simply doesn't believe that the things Julia claims to remember actually happened (52). Ruth's resistance to Julia's story is mirrored in Mr. Horsfield, who simply doesn't care enough about Julia to question whether or not he believes her stories; instead, he thinks irritably to himself: "'Well, go on, get on with it. If it's going to be the story of your life, get on with it'" (50).

Julia's decision to tell her life story to the artist who is sculpting her body into a piece of art is a failed endeavor to merge her memory-produced identity with her

artistically pleasing body. Indeed, she finds herself describing her life not only to Ruth but also to Art itself:

And all the time I talked I was looking at a rum picture she had on the wall—a reproduction of a picture by a man called Modigliani....This picture is of a woman lying on a couch, a woman with a lovely, lovely body. Oh utterly lovely. Anyhow, I thought so. A sort of proud body, like an utterly lovely proud animal. And a face like a mask, a long, dark face, and very big eyes. The eyes were blank, like a mask, but when you had looked at it a bit it was as if you were looking at a real woman, a live woman....all the time I was talking I had the feeling I was explaining things...to the woman in the picture. It was as if I were before a judge...” (52)

At first glance, the artistically rendered woman is a blank or an identity void, but then Julia begins to see the authentic woman rather than just the physical body. This reality effect in the painting is what Julia wishes to see reflected in Ruth’s response and in the art that Julia’s body makes possible. She hopes that if she can explain herself to the judging Art, her identity and reality will be captured in the sculpture just as that of the model comes through in the Modigliani painting. The fact that the woman in the painting bears a physical resemblance to Julia underscores her desire to communicate a coherent identity to herself—and to herself as a work of art.

The impulse to share her memories and her identity, despite the risks, with the artist and with the work of art demonstrates the enduring importance of the work of art and anticipated security of the memories that Julia hopes will become a part of it. When Ruth—and thus the woman in the picture—rejects Julia’s autobiography, she “felt as if the woman in the picture were laughing at me and saying: ‘I am more real than you. But at the same time I *am* you. I’m all that matters of you’” (53). Unlike the fleeting essence of Julia, which can be destroyed with a single skeptical audience, the woman in the picture claims an indestructible and fixed reality. Julia also recognizes that value comes

from the transformation of the physical body, experience, or memories into the work of art, and that actual or enduring identity rely on the artist's aesthetic metamorphosis of raw material into something "utterly lovely." While talking to the artist who is transforming her physical body into a work of art, Julia understands that her actual body and her memories of her life lack *matter*—in both senses—but that the work of art matters in the way that an individual never can. Unlike the fleeting essence of Julia, which can be destroyed by a single skeptical audience member, the woman in the picture claims a reality that demands recognition from even an incredulous audience. In this moment of realization, Julia becomes aware that value comes from the transformation of something impermanent—like the physical body or a memory—into the work of art, and that actual or enduring value relies on the artist's aesthetic metamorphosis of raw material so that the "utterly lovely" body or experience is preserved.

This narrative within a narrative frames the moment when Rhys herself realizes that she must become an artist to tell her story and that she must communicate her memories *as art* to ensure that they will matter and survive. It also calls attention to what Rhys is doing in this autobiographical novel: she is protecting her memories by externalizing them in art. Let me point out that she is not protecting her memories from *herself*, meaning that it is not that she is worried that her memories will degrade over time or change with suggestions from others: she insinuates that her memories are stable and permanent. Instead, she protects her memories from the skepticism of *others* because their skepticism leads her to doubt the veracity of her memories. Casting doubt is enough to make Julia think that her memories are false and that the things she remembers never happened. After the sculptor makes it clear that she doesn't believe Julia, she goes home

and pulls out “all the photographs I had, and letters, and things. And my marriage-book and my passport. And the papers about my baby who died and was buried in Hamburg. But it had all gone, as if it had never been. And I was there, like a ghost” (54). When they are doubted, memories of her life disappear as if they had been stolen, even though she still possesses evidence that that they are true.

At the same time that Rhys externalizes and protects her memories in her art, she also protects herself. Julia imagines the painting saying to her: *I am* you, as if to say that identity is what is captured in the representation of the body. This line echoes one of Proust’s most famous moments from the overture in which he equates his memories with his identity: “this new sensation [from the taste of the cake in the tea] having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it *was* me.”²⁰⁴ Rhys perpetuates the Lockean conception of personal identity, with its assumption of the static nature of memory, and preserves her memories in literature to ensure that she, as an artist who transform memories into beauty, and as a person with memories, will not be forgotten, but will exist in cultural memory long after she has gone. This reflection on the relative value of art and identity mirrors Rhys’s project in this text; by transforming her own memories into a work of art and raising it to the plane of the aesthetic, Rhys ensures the reality and endurance of her own identity. At the same time, however, her modifications to her memories for narrative and artistic purposes enable her to claim that “she made it all up.”

²⁰⁴ Marcel Proust, *Swann’s Way*, Trans. C.K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 48.

Memory and Money in Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That*

Robert Graves famously commences his bestselling autobiography with his three reasons for writing it at the young age of thirty-three: “an opportunity for a formal good-bye to you and to you and to you and to me and to all that; forgetfulness, because once all this has been settled in my mind and written down and published it need never be thought about again; money.”²⁰⁵ Critics have extensively discussed these three stated motives, noting that Graves, under the influence of the poet Laura Riding’s claim to have cast off her historical existence, desired a dramatic physical and psychological break with his past. Indeed, the money that he earned from this book helped fund his relocation to Majorca with Riding and ushered in a new and more productive era in his literary career.

This blunt, amusing, and sad introduction to his life story suggests that Graves writes to break with his memories by *selling* them. By linking forgetfulness with the act of writing and selling his autobiography, Graves posits his autobiography, which closely follows Rousseau’s confessional form, as a memory purge with three distinct parts: “settling” it in his mind, writing it, and then publishing or selling it, thus divesting himself of it as his exclusive memory property. Graves meditates on the category of life writing, biography and autobiography, in terms of geography: “For while maps are the biographical treatment of geography, biography is the geographical treatment of chaps. Chaps who are made the subject of biography have by effort, or by accident, put themselves on the contemporary map as geographical features” (5). This geographical metaphor transmutes amorphous, personal memories into commodifiable entities first by

²⁰⁵ Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That: An Autobiography*, Ed. Richard Perceval Graves (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1995), 6. All further references will be parenthetical.

making them physical, like land or a book, and also by converting them from private to public knowledge. Unlike the private person, the “geographical” individual is mapped out, meaning that a member of the public will know where to find him. By mapping his past in his autobiography and making it available to the public, Graves hopes to inscribe his past self indelibly so that he can abandon it and go on to lead a wholly new life as a private individual.

Even before the book was available to the public, however, Graves and his publishers were dogged by claims that many of the events described in the text were not completely accurate, or even seemed to be outright fabrications. A few months after the book was published, Graves defended his book and his memories in an essay published in the *Times Literary Supplement*, in which “he suggested that a ‘test of historical accuracy’ should not be strictly applied to the personal memoirs of a combatant.”²⁰⁶ In 1931, Graves published an essay titled “Postscript to *Goodbye to All That*” in which he explains that his intent was to publish a book that would sell because he “needs a lump of money,” so he was careful to include the memories that would interest the majority of people.²⁰⁷ He writes, “I have more or less deliberately mixed in all the ingredients that I know are mixed into other popular books. For instance, when I was writing, I reminded myself that people like reading about food and drink, so I searched my memory for the meals that have had significance in my life and put them down.”²⁰⁸ Paul Fussell quotes this and other passages from this essay to demonstrate what he calls the “staginess” or

²⁰⁶ Richard Perceval Graves, “Introduction to *Goodbye to All That*,” xvii.

²⁰⁷ Robert Graves, “P.S. to *Goodbye to All That*,” *But It Still Goes On* (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1931), 3.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 3.

theatricality of Graves's book, and also to undermine claims of critics such as J.M. Cohen who laud the accuracy of the book and consider it a "documentary autobiography."²⁰⁹ Instead, Fussell asserts that Graves is "a tongue-in-cheek neurasthenic farceur whose material is 'facts' and who heightens the humor, sometimes through the use of invention, of the most painful subjects and events."²¹⁰

Fussell and other critics reject the autobiographical claims of Graves's text and his subsequent publications such as "Postscript" that maintain that the book contains his memories. Fussell asserts that Graves's book is actually "a satire, built out of anecdotes heavily influenced by the techniques of stage comedy" and goes on to say that "[i]f it really were a documentary transcription of the actual, it would be worth very little."²¹¹ Steven Trout argues that Graves's "myths...ingeniously mask themselves in rhetoric that constantly pressures the reader to accept the imaginary as the factual, the creative as the documentary."²¹² Fussell and others have attempted to salvage Graves's book from the challenges to its accuracy by changing its genre. Trout argues that Graves employs "factual rhetoric" using "fictive strategies," and Deborah Core agrees that "[u]nderstanding Graves as the author of a meta-memoir, we can dismiss questions of documentary truth and appreciate instead his creation and appropriation of myth."²¹³ By leaving behind autobiographical claims, critics assert, readers will be able to appreciate

²⁰⁹ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 203-4.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* 206.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 207.

²¹² Steven Trout, "Telling the Truth—Nearly: Robert Graves, Daniel Defoe, and *Goodbye to All That*," *New Perspectives on Robert Graves*, ed. Patrick J. Quinn (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1999), 176.

²¹³ Trout 175-176. Deborah Core, "Goodbye to All That? Graves and the Genre," *Kentucky Philological Review* (21:3-4, 2006), 10.

Graves's book for its creativity and understand it as a *commentary* on the genre of the memoir.

Before discussing this critical call to view Graves's book as metamemoir, however, I would like to investigate more fully the critical uproar regarding Graves's claim to autobiography and Graves's own rhetorical strategies that bolster and destabilize these claims. Graves insists throughout his book that it consists of actual memories or "history." At the beginning of the seventh chapter, Graves explains that he had first written about the events contained in the chapter as a novel, and that he had to "retranslate it into history" for his autobiography (90). Fussell's critique of Graves is no more than that of cherry-picking memories that he feels will be appealing to the general audience and lightening the tone of the most somber subjects. Indeed, in his 1931 essay, Graves doesn't admit to fabrication, but to directed memory, which he describes as a kind of litany of popular items that he included in the book:

[People] like reading about murders, so I was careful not to leave out any of the six or seven that I could tell about. Ghosts, of course. There must, in every book of this sort, be at least one ghost story with a possible explanation, and one without any explanation, except that it was a ghost. I put in three or four ghosts that I remembered...[a]nd kings...[and] other people's mothers...[and] T.E. Lawrence...[and] the Prince of Wales. And racing motorists and millionaires and pedlars and tramps and adopted children and Arctic explorers.²¹⁴

Despite the furor over the genre categorization of this book, Graves's autobiographical strategy does not seem to be any more fictional than any other autobiography. As Northrop Frye argues, "[m]ost autobiographies are inspired by a creative, and therefore fictional, impulse to select only those events and experiences in the writer's life that go to

²¹⁴ *But It Still Goes On*, 4.

build up an integrated pattern.”²¹⁵ Reading the scholarly call to alter the genre of this book through the lens of Frye’s theory, it appears that Graves’s primary sin was to admit that his integrated pattern was not “the coherence of his character and attitudes” but his pursuit of a best-selling book about the memories that he wishes to leave behind that could fund his relocation to Majorca.²¹⁶

Graves’s “Postscript” continues his “break” with himself because, although he is writing about his autobiography, he seems uncertain as to the specifics of the content. He writes that his book contains “three or four” ghosts and “six or seven” murders, a vagueness that can only have fueled the accusations of inaccuracy or downright dishonestly. However, this essay, written two years after the book’s publication, is a continuation of Graves’s stated project at the beginning of *Goodbye to All That*. In the foreword to the “Postscript,” Graves acknowledges that “though I have said my goodbye to all that...it still goes on, behind my back, so to speak, with every appearance of variety and experiment; and on and on.”²¹⁷ While the reader might expect any person to remember the exact number of ghosts and murders he has witnessed, Graves discusses his life before the move to Majorca as though it is a story he had read, rather than lived and written, and about which he is uncertain on the details. To return to his geographical metaphor, having placed his past self on the map, making it available and attractive to all, Graves then gets off the map by heading to a little-known city on a less-well-known

²¹⁵ Frye 287.

²¹⁶ Ibid. 287.

²¹⁷ *But It Still Goes On*, “Foreword.”

island and surrendering to encroaching forgetfulness about that person, those events, and what he wrote about them.

Graves's fogginess about what he remembers and what he wrote seems particularly unexpected in light of the hypermnnesia that characterizes his autobiography. The degree of detail in his reminiscences, including names, exact conversations, attire, exhaustive accounts of his feelings on a certain day, and particulars about the food that was consumed suggest that Graves possesses what is now commonly known as a "photographic" memory, even though by 1938 scientists had theorized that this capacity is virtually unknown in adults.²¹⁸ Steven Trout explains that the literary environment in which *Goodbye to All That* was published and, indeed, written in such a hurry so that it could take advantage of the spiking interest in war memoirs, valued a "perceived fidelity to historical 'facts'" over imaginative or creative writing.²¹⁹ For the critics of the war writing of this period, "most of them veterans," Trout writes, "the representational or 'photographic' value of a war book was everything."²²⁰ In line with this tradition, Graves provides filmic accounts of each scene, filling in all details, and helping the reader to feel as though she were present.

²¹⁸ Photographic memory, which psychologists call eidetic imagery, is so rare as to be impossible in adults. Ian Neath describes the stringent criteria for determining eidetic imagery and defines this phenomenon: "[e]idetic images are more vivid and contain more detail than normal visual images do, they have a far longer duration than do afterimages or iconic memory, and they are found almost exclusively in preadolescent children." The eidetic quality of Graves's recollections suggests that he augments them extensively. Eidetic imagery was first consistently evaluated and discussed in 1938, almost ten years after the publication of *Goodbye to All That*, so Graves's audience would not have scientific reason to believe that this level and quality of recall is highly unlikely to occur in a man of his age. Neath, *Human Memory: An Introduction to Research, Data, and Theory* (New York: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1998), 298.

²¹⁹ Trout 177.

²²⁰ *Ibid.* 177.

Graves's account includes numerous incidents and stories about other people, many of which emphasize the horrors of war and the dark sense of humor that pervaded the trenches. Graves tells the story of a new officer who enters his dug-out to find "two rats on his blankets tussling for the possession of a severed hand. This was thought a great joke" (130). As with this story, many of the anecdotes he relays are manifestly trench lore rather than historical fact, leading critics to theorize Graves's "mythological" approach to the war as the inclusion of stories that "lend a sense of order to experience and arguably achieve a different kind of authenticity."²²¹ Graves himself distinguishes four classifications of war books based on their "truthfulness": "the history of a unit or of a campaign; the personal memoirs of a combatant; the propaganda novel; the *genre* novel."²²² Strict historical accuracy, Graves claims, is a characteristic only of the first classification, while the second, to which *Goodbye to All That* belongs, is understandably riddled with inaccuracies:

It was practically impossible (as well as forbidden) to keep a diary in any active trench-sector, or to send letters home which would be of any great post-War documentary value; and the more efficient the soldier the less time, of course, he took from his job to write about it. Great latitude should therefore be allowed to a soldier who has since got his facts or dates mixed. I would even paradoxically say that the memoirs of a man who went through some of the worse experiences of trench warfare are not truthful if they do not contain a high proportion of falsities. High-explosive barrages will make a temporary liar or visionary of anyone; the old trench-mind is at work in all over-estimation of casualties, 'unnecessary' dwelling on horrors, mixing of dates and confusion between trench rumours and scenes actually witnessed.²²³

²²¹ *Ibid.* 176.

²²² *But It Still Goes On*, 32-33.

²²³ *Ibid.* 33.

Graves protests that memory itself is what was sacrificed and damaged in the trenches, and one of the results of the war is the blurring of the lines between fact and fiction, witnessed events and second-hand tales, one day and another.

By weaving apocryphal stories in with his own memories, or by honestly misremembering these stories as fact, Graves produces a mimetic response in his reader in which the truth value for every anecdote and detail in the book appears to be the same. The fantastic and commonplace stories cast an aura of unreality over every aspect of his story, even those particulars as his birth date and the dates of the battle of the Somme, which are historical facts. Ironically, this uniform unreality bolsters the truth-claims of the text, particularly since he supports his account of his personal activities with extracts from his letters and, as on the occasion when he was mistakenly reported dead, snippets from the *Times*. Steven Trout denounces the use of these documents as a “ploy of establishing credibility” because the external documentation helps present Graves as a trustworthy narrator.²²⁴ The tone of the text regardless of the “believability” of the individual story requires the reader to believe or disbelieve, not pick out the stories that she chooses to believe. While this could have lent itself to wholesale disregard of the text, given its popularity and the enthusiasm of the public and critics alike who claimed it is “harshly actual,” it reinforced the aura of veracity that surrounds Graves’s book.²²⁵

Graves writes as though even the most insignificant detail reported is an actual memory, rather than an act of embroidery or invention, going so far as to point out the few places where there are things that he doesn’t remember. He describes a dinner he attended with his father in April 1916 where one of the speakers was Lloyd George, and

²²⁴ Trout 175, 182.

²²⁵ J.M. Cohen, *Robert Graves* (New York, Barnes and Noble, 1967), 68-70, 75. Quoted in Fussell 204.

Graves had to struggle to keep the power of Lloyd George's rhetoric from stupefying him: "I knew that the substance of what he was saying was commonplace, idle and false, but I had to fight hard against abandoning myself with the rest of the audience....Afterwards I was introduced to him, and when I looked closely at his eyes they were like those of a sleep-walker" (181). This precise and thorough account of Graves's emotional and intellectual response to Lloyd George is fortified by his admission, earlier in the account, that he cannot remember if this dinner occurred before or after a painful operation on his nose. This is one of the few places where Graves takes the time to point out something that he can't remember, and, indeed, it makes no difference to the story if the dinner was before or after the nose operation. However, this declaration of a lack of memory suggests that the previous and subsequent accounts are—at least in the author's mind—accurate, right down to the most insignificant details.

In one case, Graves couples his own forgetfulness with a prophecy of forgetfulness, and this move again supports the idea that the few things Graves forgets are inessential. After describing in excruciating detail the abuses he suffered at the public school Charterhouse, he recounts a conversation he had with another miserable student at the prospect of graduation from Charterhouse and the move to Oxford:

But, when we had said our very worst of Charterhouse, I said to him or he said to me, I forget which: "Of course, the trouble is that in the school at any given time there are always at least two really decent masters among the forty or fifty, and ten really decent fellows among the five or six hundred. We will remember them...[a]nd in another twenty years' time we'll forget this conversation and think that we were mistaken, and that perhaps everybody, with a few criminal exceptions, was fairly average decent...and we'll send our sons to Charterhouse sentimentally" (40-41).

Of course, Graves wrote this sixteen—not twenty—years after he left Charterhouse, but he claims to remember everything about the conversation except which person said the

words that both men were thinking. Not even his anticipated forgetfulness, which he points out is essential to the continuation of the Charterhouse tradition, is able to erase those memories.

Graves's confessions of faulty or absent memory also bolster some of the more outrageous claims in the book, transforming the fantastic into the possible through memory. The memories of ghosts that Graves was so careful to include in his story are stark, factual accounts, again buttressed with many details:

I saw a ghost at Bethune. He was a man called Private Challoner who had been at Lancaster with me and again in F company at Wrexham. When he went out with a draft to join the First Battalion he shook my hand and said: "I'll meet you again in France, sir." He had been killed at Festubert in May and in June he passed by our C Company billet where we were just having a special dinner to celebrate our safe return from Cuinchy. There was fish, new potatoes, green peas, asparagus, mutton chops, strawberries and cream, and three bottles of Pommard. Challoner looked in at the window, saluted and passed on. There was no mistaking him or the cap-badge he was wearing. There was no Royal Welch battalion billeted within miles of Bethune at the time. I jumped up and looked out of the window, but saw nothing except a fag-end smoking on the pavement. Ghosts were numerous in France at the time. (114-5)

With Challoner appearing a month after his death, the skeptical reader is inclined to think that Graves misremembered either the date of the dinner or of Challoner's death, but the details of the feast, Challoner's behavior, Graves's reaction to the sighting, and the ways that he knew that the apparition was a ghost rather than a wandering Royal Welch soldier give the appearance of truthfulness to this improbable account.

Graves's lapses of memory and even the one time when he accuses his memory of completely fabricating a particular event do not seem to trouble him, and, indeed, he describes in characteristic detail his aversion for war souvenirs that might remind him of

his life during the war.²²⁶ Unlike many of the other fighting men, Graves reports that he was “superstitious” about collecting souvenirs of the war from the bodies of the dead and did not allow himself to collect these fascinating objects, with a few exceptions. One such exception, a German trench periscope that a sniper managed to shatter from four hundred yards away, Graves sent home to his mother without a single word of explanation, and she mistakenly exchanged it for a new periscope. Thus, Graves emerges from the war without the memory-laden objects that he has acquired for the purpose of remembering. Other objects with memory value, such as letters and the unfinished novel about his life at the front that he began in 1916, are included in his autobiography and the story they tell is sold with the book. All the details, documents, and anecdotes that Graves knows the reading public likes are memory triggers of which he has divested himself.

Although Graves claims to be giving the public what it wants, he also explains that he has to “rob” his readers of a comfortably “bookish” ending: “to end [the story] with the return from Egypt would be to round it off too bookishly, to finish on a note of comfortable suspense, an anticipation of the endless human sequel. I am taking care to rob you of this. It is not that sort of story” (317). There will not be a sequel to this story, and the reader is denied the luxury of waiting to hear what happens to Robert Graves. Instead, he warns, they are hearing the last of him as an autobiographical subject. To drive this point home, Graves collapses his account of 1926-1929 into the space of three

²²⁶ The original text was published with an erratum slip care of an advance reading by Edward Marsh. Graves reports that, after the war, one of his sources of income was the Rupert Brooke Fund, and he claimed that Marsh was the administrator for that fund. In response to Marsh’s horrified declaration that there was no such fund, Graves included the following erratum: “the facts are not quite as I have stated them, and...there is not really any “Rupert Brooke Fund” administered by Mr. Marsh. I much regret this error which arose from an imperfect recollection.” *Grave* 288*n*.

pages, asserting that the events of these years lacked “autobiographical pertinence” (317). As he draws closer to his break with his historical past, he indicates, his autobiographical self begins to break down, and the events that occur in those four years do not contribute to his memory-produced identity.

The items that Graves omits from his book are the salacious items of most possible interest to the public: his affair with Laura Riding. The odd amorous relationship shared by Graves, his wife Nancy, Geoffrey Phibbs, and Laura Riding came to a near-violent end in April 1929 when Riding said, “Goodbye, chaps” and threw herself from a fourth story window.²²⁷ Graves, in an attempt to join her in death, jumped out of the third story window. Both survived the fall, although Riding’s injuries were significantly worse than Graves’s, but the event led to Graves’s ultimate break with his wife, who became Phibb’s lover. However, in *Goodbye to All That*, Graves summarizes his break with Nancy in very few words: “On May 6, 1929, Nancy and I suddenly parted company” (319) and more or less ends his autobiography in the summer of 1926, writing: “From a historical point of view [this story] must be read...as one of gradual disintegration. By the summer of 1926 the disintegration was already well-advanced. Incidents of autobiographical pertinence became fewer and fewer” (317). For Graves, autobiographical “pertinence” comprises all the events about his life unrelated to Riding.

Laura Riding’s name is not mentioned in the book at all, except for the “Dedicatory Epilogue to Laura Riding” in which he opaquely describes events such as her suicide attempt and explains his silence regarding events related to her:

²²⁷ For a detailed account of the *ménage à quatre* and Riding’s suicide attempt, see Richard Perceval Graves, *Robert Graves: The Years with Laura: 1926-40* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1990), 71-100.

by mentioning you as a character in my autobiography I would seem to be denying you in your true quality of one living invisibly, against kind, as dead, beyond event. And yet the silence is false if it makes the book seem to have been written forward from where I was instead of backward from where you are. If the direction of the book were forward I should still be inside the body of it, arguing morals, literature, politics, suffering violent physical experiences, falling in and out of love, making and losing friends, enduring blindly in time; instead of here outside, writing this letter to you, as one also living against kind—indeed, rather against myself. (321)

Graves indicates that Riding—and Graves after completing his autobiography—lives outside of or “against” the autobiographical and outside of history. Graves plans to live “against” the identity that the memories that comprise his autobiography has constructed, and he asserts that he has entered into a new relationship with the world in which he does not accrue personal or historical memories, but lives “disintegrated” in every sense of the word: he has been broken up into his simple components, lacking a cohesive identity, and removed from the integrated whole of human existence.

To join Riding, Graves uses the epilogue as an opportunity to tell the story of the two of them in as personal a way as possible, meaning that without the kind of knowledge about Graves and Riding that only became available many years later, the reader was unable to understand the autobiographical narrative. He writes of his first meeting and early years with Riding: “[t]hat was the beginning of the end, and the end and after is yours. Yet I must relieve your parable of all anecdote of mine” (322). The time after “the end” belongs to Riding, and it is also a move from autobiography to parable. By divesting himself of his memory property, Graves cedes himself and the story to Riding. Riding’s story, however, is not one based on memory, either personal or historic, but is both fictional and instructive. Paul Valéry writes: “History will justify anything. It teaches precisely nothing, for it contains everything and furnishes examples

of everything.”²²⁸ In line with Valéry’s antihistoricist thoughts, Graves views history—personal or general—as pedagogically worthless, while instructional fiction, he believes, promises to have an effect on the reader. To Graves, memory is a story that must be told and discarded, opening the way for a narrative that, he believes, can actually teach something.

²²⁸ Paul Valéry, *Selected Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1964), 138.

CHAPTER V

LYRICAL MEMORY: T.S. ELIOT AND THE SHIFT TO CULTURAL MEMORY PROPERTY IN LATE MODERNISM

The preoccupation with the nature, content, and ownership of an individual's memories in early twentieth-century literature echoes the importance of the individual in the developing field of psychology. In the 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910), the psychologist James Ward defined "Psychology" as fundamentally individual:

The standpoint of psychology is individualistic; by whatever methods, from whatever sources its facts are ascertained, they must—to have a psychological import—be regarded as having place in, or as being part of, *someone's consciousness or experience*. . . . Psychology then is the science of individual experience.²²⁹

Ward points out that the field of psychology focused, historically, on individuals rather than members of a group, and this emphasis is evident in the research methodologies and theories about memory. By the middle of the politically and culturally tumultuous 1930s, this began to change. English experimental psychologist during this period, particularly Frederic Bartlett at Cambridge, began to investigate issues of collective or cultural memory and the way that individuals interact with other members of a community to construct group identity through shared memories.²³⁰ Memory scientists in the decade leading up to the war expanded on individual studies of memory to advance concepts of shared narratives that are common to a

²²⁹ James Ward, *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 11th Edn., Vol. XXII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 548). Quoted in George M. Johnson, *Dynamic Psychology in Modernist British Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4.

²³⁰ Before Bartlett, most of the experimental psychologists investigating memory were French or German. Two significant memory researchers in the early twentieth century were British: W.H. Winch, who conducted studies on immediate memory and intellectual proficiency, and P.B. Ballard, who studied the way that recall relates to the material learned. See Alan J. Parkin and Nicola M. Hunkin, "British Memory Research: A Journey through the 20th Century," *British Journal of Psychology* 92.1 (Feb 2001).

family, group, culture, or country. Further, scientists began to theorize that memory is a *construction* rather than a *reproduction* of past events. With the growing sophistication of psychological research techniques, the sanctity of memory as accurate and stable was seriously challenged.

During the 1930s, English literature also began to emphasize the representation of collective experience. Many literary works of this period buttress a unified English culture with a shared past in an attempt to counteract the cultural threats of imperial contraction, commercialism, potential war, and atomized modern existence. In previous chapters, I demonstrated that literature in the early twentieth century increasingly portrayed memory as the personal property of the rememberer. Memory models in literature asserted ownership rights over memory, and authors literally turned their memories into property by transforming them into art and selling them. While the aestheticization and ownership of personal memories in narrative literary works did not cease during the late 1930s and 1940s, many literary treatments shifted to represent memory as collective and non-narrative. Even though literature kept pace with scientific memory theory in this move to the collectivity of memory, the difference between the two discourses was growing. Unlike scientific theories of this period that focus on the way that memories are shared and crafted by the community, literary memory models rejected the idea of constructed memory. Instead, literary treatments of memory tended to portray memory as collectively *owned*, and they continue assertions of memory as unchanging over time and resistant to suggestion.

In this chapter, I will begin by outlining the shift toward collectivity in scientific memory studies as English scientists became crucial contributors to the experimental and theoretical psychological conversations in the memory sciences. The discussion will concentrate on

Frederic Bartlett, specifically his 1932 monograph, *Remembering*, which served as one of the foundational texts for the mid twentieth-century development of cognitive psychology. With the cultural disillusionment from the devastation of World War I and concerns about the future of narrative emanating from the British propaganda machine and the persuasive language of advertising, these emerging theories of memory played a part in the cultural logic of the years leading up to and during the Second World War. I then read T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, which were published between 1936 and 1942, in relation to this cultural logic. The poem has been widely discussed as Eliot's most autobiographical poem as well as a rumination on the importance of ancestral culture to England's future. My reading of Eliot's poem reveals that it also posits a model of memory as permanent, non-narrative, and collectively owned. Unlike previous modernists, Eliot's memory model does not establish personal memory as private property, but heralds the advent of cultural memory as communal property that exists in perpetuity.

Cultural Psychology and Narrative Memories

Frederic Bartlett's work on memory was the first major scientific challenge and revision to that of Hermann Ebbinghaus, the German memory scientist whose 1885 monograph *Memory* ignited modern memory studies. In Ebbinghaus's classic studies, he memorized lists of nonsense syllables and charted his ability to recall them accurately over time. Ebbinghaus's choice of nonsense syllables rather than stories or poetry is part of his overall project to isolate "pure" recall, untainted by mnemonic devices, logic, and conscious or unconscious associations. To Ebbinghaus, the problem confronting an experimental investigation of memory was the fact that

it is impossible to control for individual experience and establish a “remembering” baseline. In other words, because memory operates in part through associations with other things in a person’s experience, no two people remember things in exactly the same way. Nonsense syllables, although Ebbinghaus calls them “far from ideal,” offer a “simplicity and homogeneity” because they do not activate possible associations in the test subject.²³¹ His research technique led him to his discovery of the “forgetting function,” an equation describing how much memorized information will be retained over time. Ebbinghaus determined that the bulk of forgetting occurs immediately after the information has been committed to memory, with most occurring within the first twenty-four hours and then slowing dramatically. As other memory scientists had suspected, memory degrades over time, only much more quickly than expected. In Ebbinghaus, psychologists felt that they had found the key to exact method and a degree of control that ensured that the investigator had isolated pure memory.²³²

The quest for constants to describe uncontaminated human memory propelled much of the experimental psychological research on memory during the early part of the twentieth century. However, Bartlett saw significant errors in Ebbinghaus’s use of nonsense syllables to test recall because they do not consider the complexity of the human brain. Despite all the attempts to drain test material of meaning and possible associations, Bartlett argues, stimuli “capable of arousing any human response” will take on meaning and create associations. The

²³¹ Hermann Ebbinghaus, *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*, trans. Henry A. Ruger and Clara E. Bussenius (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1913), 23.

²³² Other researchers imitated his approach to memory studies, and experimental memory studies relied heavily on the use of nonsense syllables. C.S. Myers, Bartlett’s friend, teacher, and predecessor at the Applied Psychology Unit at Cambridge, approved this method: “we have been able to eliminate associations by meaning, and to arrive at the conditions affecting the sheer retentivity and reproducibility of a presentation, and to determine the number and course of the associations which are formed among the members of a series of such objects” C.S. Myers, *Text-Book of Experimental Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 144. Quoted in Frederic Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 5.

brain's reaction to the ostensibly meaningless stimuli ultimately defeats the purpose of their use: "[the nonsense syllables] force this organism to mobilise all its resources and make up, or discover, a new complex reaction on the spot. The experimental psychologist may continue the responses until he has forced them into the mould of habit. When he has done that they have lost just that special character which initially made them the objects of his study."²³³ To Bartlett, Ebbinghaus intended his methodology to isolate pure recall, but his data actually explains task-specific habits.²³⁴ In addition, Bartlett felt that the overall artificiality of Ebbinghaus's studies, which was necessary to achieve the desired degree of control, was irrelevant to the way that memory operates in the real world. Bartlett claims: "[r]emembering is not a completely independent function, entirely distinct from perceiving, imaging, or even from constructive thinking, but it has intimate relations with them all" (13). Thus, Bartlett argues for what is now called the "ecological validity" of memory studies, or the requirement for experimental tasks to simulate the real-world phenomena that the psychologist is investigating.²³⁵

In his reaction against Ebbinghaus and nonsense syllables, Bartlett chose to test his research subjects using pictures, ink blots, and text passages, and he drew conclusions about individual and group or "social" memory. He observed five significant experimental phenomena: first, an individual fills in the gaps in perception of memory based on what she has experienced before; second, the individual consciously and unconsciously exerts "effort after meaning," by which he means that an individual constructs memories that make sense in terms of other memories and circumstances; third, attitudes, stereotypes, and conventions strongly

²³³ Bartlett 6. All further references will be parenthetical.

²³⁴ Parkin and Hunkin 37.

²³⁵ William F. Brewer, "Bartlett's Concept of the Schema and Its Impact on Theories of Knowledge Representation in Contemporary Cognitive Psychology," *Bartlett, Culture & Cognition*, ed. Akiko Saito (London: Psychology Press, 2000), 70.

influence the content of what is recalled; fourth, the first recollection of an event shapes subsequent recollections, regardless of its relation to the actual event; and finally, the past is an “organized mass” rather than disparate fragments. From these experimental results, Bartlett concluded that construction is an essential element of memory, going so far as to suggest to his reader that she reconsider the nature of memory: “our memories are constantly mingled with our constructions, [and] are perhaps themselves to be treated as constructive in character” (16). While Bartlett is not the first psychologist to suggest that memories are not reproductions of the past but involve reconstructions that change over time, his findings demonstrate the startling degree to which biases, other memories, and a cognitive desire to construct a coherent worldview determine the content of memory. Most importantly, his findings suggest that other people have direct influence on how and what a person remembers.

Bartlett theorizes that memory is social in nature: “the manner and the matter of recall are often predominantly determined by social influences” (244). His first experiments reported in his book deal with perception, or the way that the individual picks out significant information from the world around her that she can then remember. These experiments indicate that previous experiences, social mores, and cultural categories predispose the individual to perceive certain things and to overlook others. Similarly, recall is colored or even directed by social forces shaping expectations and an overall worldview that the individual works to maintain. Indeed, much of memory construction draws from shared narratives about the way people act and the world operates, leading to a degree of uniformity in individual memories.

Bartlett’s theory of the social determination of memories threatens the singularity of personal memories and, by extension, the identity constituted by those memories. Previous thinkers such as Theodule Ribot and William James suggested that there were laws dictating *how*

but not *what* the individual remembers and forgets, and later thinkers such as Sigmund Freud gave universal reasons why information might be repressed or forgotten, but retained the position that the content of memory is peculiar to the rememberer. Bartlett goes further to suggest that a significant portion of memory content is not personal but is shaped by the individual's social group. In his discussion of the influence of the social group on individual memory, Bartlett takes on two of the most persuasive psychologists advocating collective memory: Carl Jung and Maurice Halbwachs. Bartlett applies his experimental results to these more speculative theories and determines that, in line with Halbwachs, "[s]ocial organization gives a persistent framework into which all detailed recall must fit, and it very powerfully influences both the manner and the matter of recall" (296). However, Bartlett is not able to distinguish from his experimental data or from his observations of social groups in Africa that the social group possesses a memory in common as Jung suggests in his theory of the collective unconscious. He declares that this theory can be neither proved nor disproved: "a literal memory *of* the group cannot, at present at least, be demonstrated. Equally it cannot be disproved, and consequently must not be dogmatically denied" (298).

Bartlett's conclusions undermine cherished beliefs about the individual nature of memory content. As I demonstrated in chapters three and four, modernist writers such as Jean Rhys and Virginia Woolf insist that although methods of remembering might be uniform, the content is so idiosyncratic and fundamental to the individual's identity as to be personal property. Indeed, even Bartlett's inability to disprove the theory that memories are literally shared increases the apprehension about the uniqueness of individual memory and identity. While Bartlett is not able to determine who owns the memory—is it the individual or the group?—he avers that values, stereotypes, and broad concepts about reality held by the group direct the content of each

individual's memory. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, psychologists such as William James and novelists such as Marcel Proust suggest that the rememberer often cannot access memories unless confronted with outside stimuli, and Bartlett goes further to state that the social group has unconscious power over what information is available to be remembered.

Bartlett's work is more than just another step in unseating cultural assumptions about the security and individuality of personal memories. By using text passages to test his research subjects, Bartlett's experimental results also reflect on the nature of the relationship between narrative literature and memory. Ebbinghaus dismissed the use of literary works in his experimental studies because, he claimed, they encouraged recall through meaning, associations, and mnemonic devices such as rhythm and rhyme, and Bartlett's ecologically valid studies indirectly tested Ebbinghaus's assumption of the memorability of literature. His most famous study involved recall of a Native American folk story titled, "The War of the Ghosts." Bartlett selected this story because it was not only unknown to his highly educated research subjects but also drawn from "a level of culture and a social environment exceedingly different from those of [his] subjects" so that they did not have pre-existing associations with the story (64). Each subject was asked to read the story, reproduce it fifteen minutes after reading, and then again after additional intervals with some reproductions occurring years later. His findings suggest that narratives are no more likely to be remembered accurately than anything else,²³⁶ and that the rememberer modifies the story to fit his expectations and cultural context by constructing, importing, forgetting, or elaborating certain elements. The lapse into stereotype occurs early on

²³⁶ I had the opportunity to replicate Bartlett's findings in a class I taught at the Vanderbilt Summer Academy in 2010. The students learned a list of thirteen nonsense syllables (each student had a different list) and an unfamiliar narrative. Over the three-week course, they tested each other at intervals, and we charted the results. While it took less time to memorize the narrative rather than the nonsense syllables, we discovered that recall was approximately the same for both.

in the process, with the first reproduction often reflecting these changes, and subjects repeating the story years later continued to modify it so that it made sense in the world around them.²³⁷

Bartlett's findings have significant consequences both for the literary aestheticization of personal memories and for what Jed Esty calls the emerging "anthropological turn" to national culture characteristic of late modernism.²³⁸ As I discussed in chapter four, the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a notable increase of authorial memories in literary works, a shift that redoubled the author's intellectual property claims. Bartlett's theory of the social determination of perception and memory narrows the range of subjective experience of events and challenges intellectual property claims to personal memories. Indeed, Bartlett's findings support Georg Lukàcs's ominous prediction that the modernist obsession with subjectivity or "abstract particularity" leads to "the destruction of literature as such" because denial of the outside world renders the individual essentially meaningless.²³⁹ Moving away from the individualism characteristic of the literature and memory sciences of the high modernist period, scientists such as Bartlett drew attention to the social interconnection and collective constitution of personal identity and demonstrated that psychologists were aware of the social nature of memories that had long been perceived as individual.

²³⁷ Bartlett is one of the acknowledged precursors to the "cognitive revolution" of the 1960s, and his experiments with narrative and memory anticipate cognitive literary studies. Indeed, the concept of "effort after meaning" in narrative memory is a key element of the theoretical concept of the storyworld, best described by David Herman in his book *Story Logic*. The need for a story to make sense, which is part of what makes a storyworld so engrossing, is exactly what encourages the rememberer to fabricate elements in support of meaning.

²³⁸ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

²³⁹ Georg Lukàcs, "The Ideology of Modernism," *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy Hale (Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing: 2006), 394-412.

Eternal Memory in Time

Although there is not any evidence that modernist writers were familiar with Bartlett's work, his theories are part of the cultural logic of memory during the period leading up to World War II. For writers like T.S. Eliot who championed universals and collectivity against the liberal humanist focus on the individual, conclusions such as Bartlett's suggest a scientific basis for cultural cohesion. At the same time, however, Bartlett's work undermined the possibility of accurate memory—collective or personal—and his theory is particularly troubling for the memory-obsessed modernists. The literary trend of providing memory models contradicting scientific theories of impressionable and fallible memory continued and even escalated during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Eliot's *Four Quartets* proffers a theory of memory in which the past that is stable and unchanging while allowing that the *meaning* of a past event changes over time. Eliot designates memory as a fundamental element in the central theme of the poem: the paradox of time and eternity described by Helen Gardner as two kinds of time, “the time we feel in our pulses, in our personal lives, and the time we become aware of through our imagination, stretching behind us, beyond the record of the historian, and continuing after we have gone.”²⁴⁰ By elevating memory to the eternal and divine realm, Eliot protects memory from the incursions of time, war, death—and science.

Each of the *Four Quartets* was published separately, and they were not published together in England until 1944, two years after “Little Gidding” first appeared in pamphlet form. At the time that Eliot began publishing the quartets, his fame—while nothing close to what it would be in the 1950s—ensured a large audience for the poem. While some critics disparaged

²⁴⁰ Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (London: The Cresset Press, 1949), 37.

the overt influence of Christianity of the poems and others bewailed their difficulties with discerning the poem's meaning, the overall public response to Eliot's final major poem established him as the figure who stood for "the entire civilized order of the West."²⁴¹ Indeed, the *Four Quartets*' stable memory model must have been reassuring in the face of the devastation of the Second World War, with the destruction of lives, property, and enduring cultural landmarks. Eliot's heartening, if somewhat opaque, assurance that the past lives on, unchanged, in the eternal memory provided hope to a culture confronting the prospect of annihilation.

Eliot establishes a stable memory model from the very beginning of the poem series, beginning with his map of time in "Burnt Norton." Each of the five sections of this poem describes a different part of a complete temporal and imaginative spectrum: past, present, future, what might have been, and the waiting place, a past-less and future-less present.²⁴² At the same time, each section breaks down these temporal distinctions, beginning with the time-confounding introductory lines: "Time present and time past/ Are both perhaps present in time future/ And time future contained in time past" (BN, 1-3).²⁴³ Eliot commences "Burnt Norton" with the most wistful of these states, the "might have been" that persists in an imaginary parallel world: "What might have been is an abstraction/ Remaining a perpetual possibility/ Only in a world of speculation" (BN, 6-8). The "might have been" endures through echoes that loop back

²⁴¹ E.W.F. Tomlin, *T.S. Eliot: A Friendship* (London: Routledge, 1988), 156. Quoted in John Xiros Cooper, *T.S. Eliot and the Ideology of Four Quartets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 29.

²⁴² The speaker describes the "waiting place," which I will not discuss in detail here, as the twilight of the Underground where the point of origin is identical to the destination and the present is reduced to a functionality lacking past or future. Unlike individuals in the previous two sections, waiting people lack anything other than dim memories of what was, what might have been, or what will be; they are instead "Filled with fancies and empty of meaning" (106). The unhealthy atmosphere of the waiting place is neither light nor dark, before nor after, here nor there; it is wasted time.

²⁴³ T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1980), 117. All further citations will be parenthetical.

repeatedly to the moment in the memory right before the rememberer made the significant decision, because at that moment the “might have been” was indistinguishable from what became the future. This section metaphorizes the “might have been” as a “door we never opened/ Into the rose-garden” (BN, 14-15), describing in detail the rose-garden that could have been, but is not, part of memory, a non-memory that haunts the rest of the *Four Quartets*. The relationship between the past and what might have been the past is uncanny, in the sense that the juxtaposition of the actual world and the parallel imaginary world renders them both familiar *and* strange. The present is composed, in part, of the memories of the past that was and the past that might have been, and the intertwining of actual and imaginary produces a model of the past in which everything—even the imagined and unrealized futures—are accessible to memory.

In “Burnt Norton,” the actual past and memory is a part of the paradox of eternity and temporality. The past is certain and everlasting, thus lacking in context: “I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where./ And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time” (BN, 71-2). Memory, however, exists both within and outside of time. The process of remembering occurs in time: “But only in time can the moment in the rose garden,/ The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,/ The moment in the draughty church at smokefall/ Be remembered” (BN, 89-92). Indeed, memory *requires* temporality—hearkening to William James’s definition of memory as “the knowledge of an event, or fact...with the additional consciousness that we have thought or experienced it before”—but both the past event and the memory of that event are unaltered by the passage of time.²⁴⁴ Only in the present—“the still point of the turning world...Where past and future are gathered” (BN, 64-67)—can the individual reconcile the past with the future. The speaker suggests that unconsidered memories

²⁴⁴ William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. I* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 648.

of past experiences can hamper or slow movement towards the future: “Garlic and sapphires in the mud/ Clot the bedded axle-tree” (BN, 49-50). The obscured past—whether beautiful or lingeringly unpleasant—will eventually impede forward motion if it is not addressed in the present. Reconciliation of the past at the moment when the past and future meet (the still point of the turning world) provides a continuing understanding: “both a new world/ And the old made explicit, understood/ In the completion of its partial ecstasy,/ The resolution of its partial horror” (BN, 78-81). Even the reconciliation of the past in the present doesn’t modify the past, only the way it is understood.²⁴⁵

“The Dry Salvages” advances beyond the future-oriented aims of reconciliation to advocate that the process of reviving and understanding the past produces happiness and dynamism in the present. The speaker avers that sensual pleasures, such as “a very good dinner” (DS, 95), and more abstract feelings of well-being, such as “Fruition, fulfillment, security or affection” (DS, 94), do not even approximate the level of happiness provided by “the sudden illumination—/We had the experience but missed the meaning,/ And approach to the meaning restores the experience/ In a different form, beyond any meaning/ We can assign to happiness” (DS, 95-9). Meaning about events emerges sometimes long after the fact, and the revelation of meaning infuses a refulgent and significant past into the present. Reemergence of the past,

²⁴⁵ Michael Levenson argues that Eliot asserts the “constitutive and generative powers of the present tense,” or that events in the present can actually alter events in the past. He draws this claim from Eliot’s 1919 essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in which he describes the reciprocal relationship between the new work of art and its artistic predecessors: “The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.” *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950), 5. Eliot’s historical sense does not, however, change dramatically from *The Waste Land* to *The Four Quartets*; it is simply fleshed out: the past itself doesn’t change in the present, but the *perception* or *meaning* of the past exists in time and itself has a history. See Levenson, “The End of Tradition and the Beginning of History,” *Words in Time: New Essays on Eliot’s Four Quartets*, Ed. Edward Lobb (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 161.

which could bring the simple happiness of recognition, is not what reinstates the past experience “in a different form”; rather, it is the glimpse of meaning that alters the experience, suddenly endowing it with previously unrealized magnitude.

In all of the *Four Quartets*, experiences in the past—agonizing, uninteresting, or exhilarating—are permanent. Even the sudden revelation of meaning does not alter the experience, merely the individual’s understanding. Meaning of past experience can be traced historically because it changes over time, but the experience is preserved:

Like the river with its cargo of dead Negroes, cows and chicken coops,
The bitter apple and the bite in the apple.
And the ragged rock in the restless waters,
Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;
On a halcyon day it is merely a monument,
In navigable weather it is always a seamark
To lay a course by: but in the somber season
Or the sudden fury, is what it always was. (DS, 119-126)

Neither the past nor the memory of the event changes even as their significance is reconsidered and explored in time. However, crucial pieces of information can emerge later in time that inflect or inform the way an event is remembered. The Mississippi River was a heavily traveled route for the slave trade, but what many people did not know was that the humans-made-cargo on these ships were often chained and confined below deck without food, water, or enough air. Few non-slaves were aware that the slave ships on the Mississippi were floating chambers of horror, and the gradual revelation of these facts inflected memories of the slave trade in the United States without changing the content of the past or of the original memory. To put it another way, the significance of the memory changes according to context, which includes new information about the past, but the memory itself remains unaltered. This memory model denies theories of memory scientists such as Bartlett and his experimental findings that suggest that the particulars of a memory, not just its significance, alter in such a way as to make sense in a

changing world. For Eliot, the memory is both static and dynamic because the past event is stable and accessible via memory—although it might be temporarily obscured from memory due to conditions such as the metaphorical waves and fog or augmented by emerging facts about the past—while the way that it is used and its implications change over time.

The speaker in the *Four Quartets* insists through the use of metaphor that the persistence of the past and memory is part of the natural world, even though the past and memory defy natural cessations or endpoints, such as death, and resist human attempts—from willed forgetting to active destruction—to erase the past. In “The Dry Salvages,” the sea serves as the primary metaphor for the periodically intrusive and ever-present nature of the past. The sea is neither alive nor dead, and its live-sustaining force counterbalances its destructive force and the way it gruesomely preserves the lives it once supported. The speaker asserts that evolutionary history surrounds the cultural body like the sea so that past life forms and experiences are neither forgotten nor totally discarded. Indeed, the speaker rejects the amnesia made possible by evolutionary theory, instead positing a non-linear theory of time and development:

It seems, as one becomes older,
That the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere sequence—
Or even development: the latter a partial fallacy,
Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution,
Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past. (DS 88-92)

The popular desire to forget the past or to view creation teleologically while disparaging and erasing earlier incarnations misunderstands the past as finished and the present as static. Instead, “There is no end, but addition” (DS 58) to previous forms, and erasure of the past drains the present from of the bulk of its significance. Linear thinking is simplified thinking, and experience in life complicates rather than simplifies the patterns that define human existence. The sea, a treasury of early evolutionary species and remnants of long-dead creatures and

humans, surrounds, attacks, and protects the cultural body, and it serves as a metaphor for the repetitive and ever-present force of the past that incessantly sprays a seemingly random array of previous forms over present existence.

In “Burnt Norton,” although the speaker describes the whole temporal spectrum, the majority of the poem is devoted to recurrence of the inviolable past—either the actual past or the past that might have been—in the present. Indeed, not even the future distracts the speaker from this task, and he devotes a mere ten lines to the section on the future, hurrying towards the final section that concentrates on the past in the present when “all is always now” (BN, 153).²⁴⁶ In the present, the relation of rumination on the meaning of a memory and the memory itself is that of the iteration to the pattern: “Below, the boarhound and the boar/ Pursue their pattern as before/ But reconciled among the stars” (BN, 61-3). The pattern doesn’t change, but the iteration can carry with it a new understanding of its significance. “East Coker” goes further in establishing the importance of the past in the present and future by declaring that the only discernable pattern is that of the re-evaluations of the past in the present: “The pattern is new in every moment/ And every moment is a new and shocking/ Valuation of all we have been” (EC, 86-8). The pattern, which is too complicated for any individual to understand, regardless of age or experience, does not help in anticipating the future, but it does assist in understanding the past. In addition, while experience will not enable individuals to predict future events (as a pattern would suggest), it provides certainty that, whatever else happens, they will need to reconsider the past in the light of fresh incidents. The newness of each moment of the pattern is, in part, a novel way of

²⁴⁶ A. Walton Litz, discussing patterns across the quartets, asserts that the fourth section of each poem is “always a short lyric that uncovers the mystery of the quartet” (185). While the fourth sections are always short lyrics, I contend that the fourth section serves a different function in each quartet. “Burnt Norton,” for example, devotes the shortest, most lyrical section to a vision of the future that must be read with the other four sections to uncover, to the extent possible, the “mystery of the quartet.” See Litz’s article, “Repetition and Order in the Wartime Quartets,” *Words in Time*, 179-188.

conceiving the things that have come before. As such, the meaning of the memory of the past has a history, with changing significance that can be traced over time, and the temporality of meaning depends on the constant nature of the past and memories of the past.

Communal Memory Property

Ritual language and ritual practices are deliberate cultural efforts to summon memory as something both eternal and temporal. *Four Quartets* is most concerned with ritual—specifically religious—language. The ritual of scripted prayer, which establishes continuity and community over time with past and future supplicants, invokes levels of meaning that reinforce and exceed the words themselves. Ritual language is static and dynamic, eternally unchanging and bearing a history that can be traced over time. Communication in prayer, the speaker asserts, is *more*: “prayer is more/ Than an order of words, the conscious occupation/ Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying” (48-50). Communication in the ritual overflows the gestures, words, and ceremonial trappings, filling in the gaps of language, but in different ways each time it is exercised. Similarly, the past has communicative powers that again transcend the capacity of language: “what the dead had no speech for, when living,/ They can tell you, being dead: the communication/ Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living” (51-3). Interaction with the past and the previous generations, the speaker suggests, create a community with understanding that surpasses that of reason and language, and speaks to the deep meaning that evades those who live merely in the moment, believing themselves unencumbered by culture or history.

By aligning memory with ritual, Eliot emphasizes shared memories and relegates the individual memory—comparable to the iteration of the ritual—to a place of secondary importance. Contrary to the reigning literary milieu that I discussed in the previous chapters, in which personal memories dominate fiction and nonfiction alike, *Four Quartets* minimizes the importance of individual recollections in favor of sweeping cultural memories. However, Eliot draws on the literary precedent of personal memories and continues the modernist project of aestheticizing memory by establishing cultural memory as something that is *owned communally*. Cultural memories are not merely shared, nor are they an unacknowledged but abiding element of living in community; instead, they are cultivated, cherished and protected by the members of a community like priceless works of art. These memories are owned by the culture that produces them because, although they are nontransferable, they can be stolen, tainted or destroyed. As we see in works such as Orwell's *1984*, cultural memories are vulnerable to manipulation and theft, and the cultural incentive to prevent memory destruction goes to the heart of culture as an identity and individual identity within a culture.

To the extent that it is owned and can be destroyed, cultural memory in *Four Quartets* is what Jordanna Bailkin calls cultural property: “a finite, irreplaceable, depletable, scarce, and nonrenewable resource, like an endangered species.”²⁴⁷ To Bailkin, cultural objects like works of art, historically significant locations, rituals, and even dialects are cultural property, which can be accessed but never replaced once they have been tainted or eliminated. Although memory is eternal in *Four Quartets*, the temporal iteration of remembering and the continuing history of a memory's significance in time is finite and can slip away, fall into disrepair, or be harmed by outsiders unless members of the culture are careful. Memory is not in danger of being depleted

²⁴⁷ Jordanna Bailkin, *The Culture of Property: The Crisis of Liberalism in Modern Britain* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 5.

in the sense of being used up—indeed, iteration is the way to cultivate cultural memory—but it can be diminished through malicious exploitation and falsification that challenges the veracity of true memories and the possibility within that culture of holding cultural memories. Shared memories, the foundation of cultural identity, are the most vulnerable of all cultural property and require care and protection from the members of the culture that own it jointly.

Eliot's memory model agrees with Bartlett's in that they both emphasize the significance of social groups in the formation and cultivation of memory, but Eliot rejects Bartlett's implicit conflation of personal and communal memories. For Bartlett, social categories and expectations shape perception and thus memory, suggesting that people in a single social group would perceive and remember roughly the same things about a specific event. Eliot does not surrender the possibility of personal and idiosyncratic memory—namely, the kind of highly stylized memory that other modernist writers imply is their literary property—but suggests that the shift from personal to communal memory is ethical rather than a scientific fact. By cultivating cultural memory property, Eliot argues, the individual participates fully in the world and gains access to the eternal realm.

Four Quartets does not merely replace the previously all-important personal memories for cultural memories but also promotes collective ownership of memory by describing the danger of radical individualism to the concept of property. The “twittering world” of the waiting place described in “Burnt Norton” is, at its extreme, self-centered sterility ravaging a world that is, the speaker indicates, necessarily social:

Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude,
World not world, but that which is not world,
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Desiccation of the world of sense,

Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;
This is the one way, and the other
Is the same, not in movement
But abstention from movement; while the world moves
In appetency, on its metallated ways
Of time past and time future. (BN 118-130)

Extreme solitude does not isolate, simplify, or facilitate explanation of experience in the world; instead, it drains the world of its constitutive elements. When the individual denies her part in the communal whole, imagination, the senses, and the spirit—the eternal component of the individual—cease to function. Indeed, *Four Quartets* asserts that the perpetually solitary individual no longer functions either eternally or temporally, existing instead in an ahistorical and yet not eternal no man's land.²⁴⁸ In my analysis, the most significant of the deprivations of solitude, however, is the “destitution of property”: the paradoxical inability to own physical and intellectual property in the absence of other people. While solitude might suggest unfettered enjoyment of property, Eliot reminds readers that property necessitates more than one person, otherwise the concept of ownership is meaningless. Grouping property together with intangibles—imagination, sensory perception, and spiritual life—makes two sweeping claims: first, property is fundamental to human experience and, second, the significance of property goes far beyond simple enjoyment or ownership, but itself exists in a theoretical as well as physical plane. More than just the presence of other people, the shared memories of a community about property as an abstract concept and specific things that can be owned are what make property possible. The solitary life of sole ownership—of experiences, memories, objects or land—is an impossible and dangerous fantasy.

²⁴⁸ Many readers of *Four Quartets* consider Eliot's preoccupation with the eternal as evidence of ahistorical thinking. However, this passage suggests that ahistoricity is the fate of the perpetually solitary, and that participation in time and in the eternal require community. Interaction with the world, moving “on its metallated ways” with desire and instinct, is essential to the experience of the past, present, and future—and to the eternal.

Personal memory is dangerous in *Four Quartets*. Part of the treachery of old age and its ostensible wisdom is that it isolates the person from the community building “Valuation of all we have been” (EC 88) and makes him think that memory is individual rather than collective. In “East Coker,” the speaker rejects “the wisdom of old men,” asking to hear instead “of their folly,/ Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,/ Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God” (EC 95-8). In old age, with its wealth of memory and experience, the individual fears relationship with others, engaging in “deliberate hebetude” (EC 79) rather than interaction with others and the world. Community is formed, the speaker suggests, by questioning “the darkness” together, and experience blinds the old to humility—a partial rejection of the importance of the self—the “only wisdom we can hope to acquire” (EC 98). To put it another way, the tendency of an aged person to transform collective memories into memories that belong to him makes further experience impossible because experience occurs *in community*.

Communal products such as music and art attempt to prevent the mistaken overemphasis on personal by providing a deep cultural communication able to “reach/Into the silence” (BN 143-4) and form bonds through shared words and shared memories. In the first stanza of the first quartet, the speaker creates poetic community by including the reader in remembering the “might have been” through his words: “My words echo/ Thus in your mind” (BN 14-15). While the poet-as-speaker claims the words as his own, he also claims that repetition of the words (echo) happens in the minds of his audience, converting an experience of personal memory into a collective memory. By acknowledging the reader’s participation in his words—and the memory of an imagined future that they are describing—the speaker asserts that poetry enables the social

bonds of the past, present and future, effectually preventing descent into “the world of perpetual solitude.”

Many critics have focused on the autobiographical elements of the *Four Quartets*, with special emphasis on “East Coker.” By invoking the sparse details that can be mapped onto Eliot’s life, readers and critics have read this quartet—particularly the first and fifth sections—as evidence of a rare look at Eliot’s own life. Without even considering Eliot’s scathing denunciation of the “personal” in poetry from his 1919 essay “Tradition and Individual Talent,” I would like to suggest that these seemingly autobiographical forays are deliberately bland, by which I mean that they could be applicable to many English-born (or bred) individuals who have achieved adulthood. While it is easy to consider these sections as little more than Eliot’s autobiography, they are also a unifying account of the distant and recent past for the majority of English people. The autobiographical mood of this quartet is not *personal* autobiography, but *collective* autobiography, intending to communicate English life experience. Neither old nor young men have more or less significant experience under this memory model; instead, all experience is roughly identical, and it is uniform—not distinctive—experience that carries cultural value. Take, for example, the first section of the poem, which traces Eliot’s ancestral roots back to a village near Somerset and explains his loyalty to his adopted country: “In my beginning is my end” (1). Despite the repetition of this line with its autobiographically alluring “my,” the speaker includes the reader in the cultural memories of the long-ago past that are buried in the land. “In that open field/ If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,/ On a Summer midnight, you can hear the music/ Of the weak pipe and the little drum/ And see them dancing around the bonfire” (24-8). As in “Burnt Norton,” the use of the “you” forges community with the reader, creating a sacrament of remembering by witnessing the

ancient sacrament of marriage and establishing the inescapable nature of the bond of cultural memory.

Despite the shift away from individual memories in the rest of the quartets, the speaker in “The Dry Salvages” attempts to differentiate between the easily perceived dynamism of the memory of personally experienced events and the seemingly more static nature of events that are experienced by others:

For our own past is covered by the currents of action,
But the torment of others remains an experience
Unqualified, unworn by subsequent attrition.
People change, and smile: but the agony abides. (DS 114-17)

Although the use of the word “attrition” could suggest a theory of gradual loss or weakening of memory of events from the individual’s life over time, when read in the context of the rest of the quartets “attrition” indicates that personal memories are worn down with use, thought over and thought through so that the first response and newness of the event gradually wears away and gives over to subsequent interpretations. Thus, memory of things that occur to others—for example, historical memory—is easily recognized as “what it always was” (126), while personal memory fortifies the actual event with additional memories of its significance over time. Unlike the numerous elegant arguments for essential communal memories in the quartets, this awkward distinction between the self and the other undermines earlier efforts to invoke communality through the shortcomings of extreme individualism. After establishing that “the past experience revived in the meaning/ Is not the experience of one life only/ But of many generations” (DS 100-2), the speaker sabotages the claim to community by describing the seemingly insurmountable gulf in memory between individuals.

Although ungainly in attempting to separate the individual from the other, Eliot does not want to collapse individual memory into collective memory, and instead demonstrates that the

individual uses memory to participate in and relate to her community. In “Little Gidding,” the speaker describes the “three conditions” that erroneously appear to be similar and “flourish in the same hedgerow” (LG 153):

Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between
 Them, indifference
Which resembles the other as death resembles life,
Being between two lives—unflowering, between
The live and the dead nettle. This is the use of memory:
For liberation—not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country
Begins as attachment to our own field of action (LG 154-163).

When attached “to self and to things and to persons,” the individual loves the past and the people of her community *through* herself, as aspects of her personal identity. The gradual transformation to detachment reconfigures the self until it is part of a community with a collective memory and identity. By integrating the self in the community and shifting the focus from personal memory to collective memory, the speaker suggests that eternity belongs to the community and that the temporal obsession with the self is what obscures the vision—and prevents experience—of the eternal. The *use* of memory, however, is dialectical, requiring first extreme individualism before moving on to extreme community-love and finally arriving at a community filled with individuals. The individual—and her memories—is not erased in the focus on community, but prospers as an individual and an integral part of the larger community. By participating in and cultivating communal memories, the individual is one of many responsible owners of the culture and its property.

From Narrative to Lyric Memory

Narrative of all kinds, with its internal logic and causal relationships, was the form in which many modernists chose to record memory. However, Bartlett's experimental results threatened modernist reliance on narrative to preserve memory by suggesting that the rememberer inadvertently changes memories to *create* the sense of narrative coherence that provides confidence in the memory. Regardless of Eliot's familiarity with Bartlett's work or even the theories of collective memory from such authors as Maurice Halbwachs, the cultural atmosphere of the mid-1930s was one in which narratives were viewed with increasing suspicion by authors and by the reading public. With narrative under attack from so many different sources, modernist writers such as Eliot proposed new literary ways to record memory.

Part of the distrust of narrative was due to the 1930s "propaganda boom," with modernist writers such Virginia Woolf and George Orwell participating in—and critiquing—the manipulative concatenation of facts to create narratives that promote ideology and call into question the very possibility of telling a balanced story.²⁴⁹ The ubiquity of propaganda during and after the First World War is integral to the modernist literary movement, so much so that Mark Wollaeger argues: "modernism and propaganda are two sides of the same coin of

²⁴⁹ In *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Vincent Sherry argues that post-war modernism—from the stylistic experimentation to the representation of individual—is responding to the contradictions inherent in the ideology of liberalism through which the war was declared, conducted, and communicated to the British population. Sherry asserts that "the discrepancy between the intellectual principles and the practical actualities of British Liberalism" brought about a crisis of language from which British modernism was born. The contrast between action and principle sowed the seeds of distrust in the power of narrative to justify actions in terms of sweeping ideological claims.

modernity.²⁵⁰ The beginning of the twentieth century saw a dramatic increase in sheer volume of information and propagandistic narratives that communicated “true facts” in service of ideological projects, and the modernist reading public responded with a voracious appetite for ostensibly unmediated narratives of experience, such as the interior monologue, and self-consciously hypermediated narratives that foreground the methods through information is manipulated. In this atmosphere, stringing together bits of information to tell a story simply for the sake of literature became dangerously similar to narratives that use facts to convince the audience to think a particular way.

Fear of the simplified causal relationships in propaganda narratives, contestation over autobiographies such as Robert Graves’s *Goodbye to All That*, and the professionalization of propaganda with the emergence of public relations experts contributed to a growing distrust of narrative as a vehicle for truth. In an extreme conservative attack that demonstrates contemporary anxiety about the manipulative power of advertising, F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson declare in their 1934 book *Culture and Environment* that the major threat to narrative fiction is the predominance of advertising and its capacity to imitate, influence, or weasel into fictional narratives.²⁵¹ Leavis and Thompson assert a connection between advertisements and best-selling fiction, arguing that these narratives are little more than a glorified pitch for products

²⁵⁰ Mark Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative From 1900-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.

²⁵¹ F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950). This text is more like a workbook than a piece of criticism and was designed for use in Teachers’ Training Colleges, adult education, and in the university. Like T.S. Eliot, Leavis and Thompson felt that the “art of speech” is something that belongs to “the organic community with the living culture it embodied. Folk-songs, folk-dances, Cotswold cottages and handicraft products are signs and expressions of something more: an art of life a way of living, ordered and patterned, involving social arts, codes of intercourse and a responsive adjustment, growing out of immemorial experience, to the natural environment and the rhythm of the year” (1-2). Unfortunately, Leavis and Thompson state, this way of life has been lost with the influx of modernity, along with the linguistic habits common to this organic way of living. The book attempts to identify and, ideally, disempower the language-destroying forces of modernity.

that degrades not only narrative but also the overall quality of human life: “It should be brought home to learners that this debasement of the language is not merely a matter of words; it is a debasement of emotional life, and of the quality of living.”²⁵² Ultimately, this infiltration of advertising into fiction debases the health of national life, rendering even the most stalwart declarations and demonstrations of patriotism trite. Indeed, when advertising language infects narratives about national past—personal or collective histories—the damage to the community and implicit threat to the survival of that community increase. Leavis and Thompson suggest that the emotionally manipulative language of advertising, which the audience *recognizes* as manipulative, threatens the utility of language itself. Narrative, which is the common vehicle for words that make the audience feel a certain way, began to be viewed as a less effective tool for influencing public opinion and storing cultural knowledge. They quote D. H. Lawrence:

It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead. Therefore the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life... But the novel, like gossip, can also excite spurious sympathies and recoils, mechanical and deadening to the psyche. The novel can glorify the most corrupt feelings, so long as they are *conventionally* “pure.” Then the novel, like gossip, becomes at last vicious, and, like gossip, all the more vicious because it is always ostensibly on the side of the angels.²⁵³

Posing Leavis as one of the most influential spokespeople for the detrimental effects of advertising on “pure” narrative, Jennifer Wicke argues that advertising and the novel are mutually constitutive and that the novel became the major literary genre through relationship to advertising.²⁵⁴ For Leavis and others, however, narrative, through the novel, is a powerful tool to

²⁵² Ibid. 48.

²⁵³ Ibid. 56.

²⁵⁴ Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, and Social Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

store cultural memories and communicate cultural values, and discourses such as advertising pose a direct threat to the integrity of the form.

Four Quartets emerged during this time of increasing skepticism about narrative, and the poem demonstrates Eliot's meditation on non-narrative cultural memory. By expressing memory in lyric, he attempts to avoid narrative pitfalls and stakes a claim for a new way of representing memory. In 1936, the same year that he published "Burnt Norton," Eliot published an essay on Tennyson's poem that defined the Victorian period, *In Memoriam*, a series of poems discussing the death of Tennyson's close friend Arthur Hallam. Unlike poets and storytellers who use exciting narrative to force readers to "swallow the most antipathetic doctrines," Eliot asserts that Tennyson lacks the gift of narrative and "could not tell a story at all."²⁵⁵ Instead, Eliot argues, Tennyson created great poetry about his memories through *lyric*: "it is a long poem made by putting together lyrics, which have only the unity and continuity of a diary, the concentrated diary of a man confessing himself. It is a diary of which we have to read every word."²⁵⁶ The last great poem of Tennyson's oeuvre—at least according to Eliot—is a lyrical record of his memories that expresses the totality of the speaker *without telling a story*. Eliot, as he composed his last major poem, employed Tennyson's poetics of memory but on a cultural rather than an individual scale. Writing to his adopted country and culture, Eliot captures a few representative communal memories in lyric, such as the ancient marriage ceremony in "East Coker," and indicates throughout the poem that lyric is a more trustworthy repository for memory than narrative.

As I discussed above, *Four Quartets* begins with a description of temporal states, and although each section of "Burnt Norton" primarily discusses only one temporal state, the sections

²⁵⁵ T.S. Eliot, "In Memoriam," *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950), 289.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 291.

also demonstrate the interdependence of these states and their collision in the present moment. The speaker concludes the first section with a statement of temporal interconnection: “Time past and time future/ What might have been and what has been/ Point to one end, which is always present” (BN, 46-8). The confusing logic of temporal states prohibits simple, causal, or linear representations of time and experience, thus calling into question the possibility of narrative by disturbing the sequence of events in any story and setting. The paradoxical linguistic requirement to express events that take place across the temporal spectrum in verbs that connote a single temporal state urges the speaker in “Burnt Norton” to doubt the capacity of words to communicate: “Words strain,/ Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,/ Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,/ Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,/ Will not stay still” (153-7). Words can approximate, but never adequately capture, experiences or emotions; or as A. David Moody puts it, the design of the *Four Quartets* “is to so use words as to make them mean what is beyond words.”²⁵⁷ In terms of memory, the unchanging past is not always accessible through language with its dependence on verb tenses, linearity, causality, and other concepts related to time. Narratives of the past can communicate “pastness” but they cannot communicate the way that the past is expressed in the present and seeps into the future.

“Little Gidding” considers the problem of the insufficiency of language by musing on the relative benefits of lyric and narrative in memory and mourning. The second section begins with three lyric stanzas memorializing the death of air, earth, water and fire as a way to mourn the wartime sacrifices of life, property, and the ordered beauty of England. Each six-line stanza rhymes regularly, including such common rhymes as “house” with “mouse” and obscure rhymes as “mouth” with “drouth,” ending with the refrain to the memorialized element: “This is the

²⁵⁷ A. David Moody, “*Four Quartets*: Music, Word, Meaning and Value,” *The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot*, Ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 147.

death of -----.” The stanzas detail destruction—“parched eviscerate soil” (68); “Water and fire shall rot/ The marred foundations we forgot” (76-7)—without engaging in narrative; indeed, the first stanza “Marks the place where a story ended” (59). The regularity of the poetry, and the absence of narrative, creates a memorial of effects rather than causes and encourages the reader to remember was without a linear progression of the past to the present.

The second part of this section is a prose narrative about the narrator meeting a somehow familiar stranger in the street before dawn. Eliot claims in *To Criticize the Critic* that his intention with this stanza was “to present to the mind of the reader a parallel, by means of contrast, between the Inferno and the Purgatorio which Dante visited and a hallucinated scene after an air-raid,” even though there is also the sense of the narrator meeting, in Biblical fashion, with an angel in disguise.²⁵⁸ This stanza lingers on descriptive details leading up to the encounter, setting the stage for the uncanny appearance of the stranger who is yet familiar:

The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
I caught the sudden look of some dead master
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
Both one and many; in the brown baked features
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
Both intimate and unidentifiable. (93-98)

In the remembered stranger, the past and the future meet uncertainly, compelling the narrator to “[assume] a double part” (99) and address the stranger as if he knows him, thus instigating a like response from the stranger. Although the two men are unknown to one another, the narrator urges the stranger to speak, elliptically referencing past discussions that the narrator claims not to remember. Referring to the past that didn’t happen, the stranger refuses to “rehearse/ My thought and theory which you have forgotten” (113-14) and entreats the narrator to let go of the ideas of the past: “These things have served their purpose: let them be” (115). The stranger

²⁵⁸ T.S. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 128. Quoted in Ronald Schuchard, “‘If I think, again, of this place’: Eliot, Herbert and the Way to ‘Little Gidding,’” *Words in Time*, 70.

continues his monologue until the break of day, cryptically describing language as something that exists only in time so that its ability to communicate ideas fades: “last year’s words belong to last year’s language/ And next year’s words await another voice” (120-21). Granting to the narrator “the gifts reserved for age” (131), the stranger proffers three horrors: the loss of the body through age and sickness, rage, and re-enactment of the past. Of the three, the last is described in greatest detail, and the stranger transforms the joyful “sudden illumination” of meaning in the past into “the shame/ Of motives late revealed, and the awareness/ Of things ill done and done to others’ harm/ Which once you took for exercise in virtue” (141-44). After the horrors that lead “From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit” (146), the stranger ameliorates this message of doom with a note of hope that the spirit might be “restored by that refining fire” (147), and leaves the narrator in “the disfigured street” (149).

Ronald Schuchard argues that this section parallels Dante to demonstrate that “the poet cannot seek redemption or immortality in art” and that poetic fame is fleeting.²⁵⁹ Although Eliot claims only the connection to Dante in writing the passage, this prosy stanza calls attention to itself as a narrative—rather than a more lyrical—piece of writing. The story of the narrator meeting an aged and officious stranger is evidently metaphorical rather than realistic. The stranger is a repository of thoughts and experiences that he refuses to share, but instead preaches forgiveness of the past. This walking memorial to language and literature, although bearing the look of “some dead master,” warns against the “re-enactment” of the past, even perhaps, re-enactment of the literary past. By cautioning against the unpleasant revelations that may result from keeping the past alive both in the words that he says and the words that he refuses to utter, the stranger insinuates that the purpose of the memorial is to recognize its own inutility and to encourage others not to linger on the things that have gone before.

²⁵⁹ Schuchard 71.

Both past and future are painful in the lyric and narrative parts of the section, but the speaker in each spends more time memorializing—or abjuring memorials—than in anticipations of the future. This section places side-by-side lyric and narrative efforts at memorial to demonstrate that lyric memorials effectively capture the indescribable nature of the past and the continuing influence of the past across the temporal spectrum, while narrative can do little more than encourage a willed amnesia. Prose narrative is an ideal vehicle for describing the past-ness of an event, but, Eliot indicates, a memory confined only to the past is not an accurate description of memory in general. Lyric poetry, which communicates an event through words that “slip” and “slide” across the temporal spectrum, is the genre that can contain and express the events of the past.

The final section of *Four Quartets* makes a bold statement about the relationship between memory and poetry that hearkens back to Eliot’s essay on Tennyson and the emphasis on non-narrative memorialization: “Every poem is an epitaph” (LG 228). To Eliot, poetry is engaged in memorializing even as it describes the present and points towards the future. This emphasis on memorial—*every* poem cannot help but be an epitaph—demonstrates Eliot’s conviction that poetry is by nature concerned with memory and thus is a natural memory repository. While Eliot does not assert the converse proposition that all epitaphs are poems, the link between memory and poetry, together with the lyricism of the poem and prose demonstrations of the failure of narrative to communicate memory, suggests that memories and memorials are best described in poetic language without telling a story.

Memory Mimetics and the Use of Poetry

The content of *Four Quartets* describes a poetic memory model as stable, communal, and non-narrative, and the form of the poem demonstrates the way that poetic language compensates for the limitations of words, communicates the patterns beyond human comprehension, and displays the way that memory works. The language of this famously opaque poem performs what it describes by laying bare the mental processes of the individual and the community seeking after meaning in a rapidly changing world where the past is disappearing and the prospect of the future is terrifying. Interestingly, in the poet's quest to help the reader live the content of the poem is similar to Bartlett's memory experiments that attempt to simulate real-world experience. Eliot, like Bartlett, eschews the merely theoretical and describes the actual experience of remembering in the real world. *Four Quartet* enacts the processes of remembering, showing the reader how memory works through the structure of the poem, to persuade the reader that lyric poetry is the best way to communicate cultural memories.

Throughout the poem, Eliot emphasizes the community-building aspects of the eternal patterns that defy human understanding. Although humans are aware of these patterns, he argues, the content of the patterns is hidden and communities come together as they contemplate the ever-unfolding eternal pattern and attempt to make sense of it. As such, the danger of old age with its long-cultivated experience and rich memories described in "East Coker," is that it is not a time of knowledge of life's overarching patterns, but is merely exhaustion or a deliberate refusal to understand masquerading as knowledge. The secrets of the aged are "knowledge of

dead secrets” (EC 80), which are either useless as they attempt to understand the world around them or an excuse for no longer questioning and seeking:

...There is, it seems to us,
At best, only a limited value
In the knowledge derived from experience.
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies
For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been. We are only undeceived
Of that which, deceiving, could no longer harm. (EC 83-89)

The knowledge available from memories of past experience creates a false sense that the rememberer knows what to expect, when in reality the continually emerging pattern of life is too large to be discerned by even a long-lived human. What is at stake in this deceptive trick of experience, however, is not the future but understanding of the past. Every passing moment introduces a “new and shocking/ Valuation of all we have have been,” and the uncertainty of the future is its effect on continuing identity over time. Experience, or memory that has formed itself into patterns of expectation, threatens memory-produced identity by lulling the individual into thinking that nothing can change the way he assesses the past.

Eliot demonstrates mimetically the newness of the eternal patterns through meter, rhyme, and the shifts from lyric to prosaic verse. In the first three sections of “East Coker,” each hint of a pattern—the couplet, an emerging expectation of a shift from lyric to prose, a briefly formal passage—is invalidated in subsequent sections, leaving the reader yearning to understand but still unable to anticipate the structure of the poem. Even repetition is inconclusive and unfulfilled, coming either at unexpected moments or not at all. Indeed, the speaker prepares the reader for repetition that never transpires: “You say I am repeating/ Something I have said before. I shall say it again./ Shall I say it again?” (EC 138-40). Section three concludes with the speaker instructing the reader to resign herself to contradiction, paradox, and lack of

understanding: “In order to possess what you do not possess/ You must go by the way of dispossession./ In order to arrive at what you are not/ You must go through the way in which you are not./ And what you do not know is the only thing you know/ And what you own is what you do not own/ And where you are is where you are not” (EC 145-51). While some of these lines are flat contradictions (“what you own is what you do not own”), others are confusing (“to arrive at what you are not/ You must go through the way in which you are not”), and still others almost nonsensical (“To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,/ You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy” [EC 141-2]). The reader is primed to abandon logic and anticipation, learning that “the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting” (EC 130) rather than the realization of expectation.

Just when the reader has resigned herself to poetic pattern and content beyond her comprehension, the fourth section emerges in regular iambic tetrameter and continues its metric and rhyme scheme until the end of the section. The content is likewise predictable and common: it is the analogy between the human condition and that of a sick person, which leads to reference to the story of the crucifixion. The sudden shift into a recognizable, even cliché, pattern and subject matter serves two functions: first, it illustrates the speaker’s point that the newness of the pattern compels re-evaluation of what has come before; and second, it forces the confused and overwhelmed memory, which had given up seeking patterns, to recollect and anticipate once again. Compared with previous and subsequent sections, this regular and predictable section illustrates that, though baffling, the indiscernible pattern of the poem stretches comprehension rather than merely repeating according to expectations. Contradictory to theories such as Ebbinghaus’s assumptions about mnemonic techniques, the rhyming section that fulfills expectations is *less* memorable than those that confound understanding and challenge logic by

virtue of the fact that it does not stand out in the mind but blends with all the other known and possible variations on this predictable pattern. By contrast, the other sections redefine poetry as a form that approaches the indescribable pattern of existence, elucidating aspects of the deep structure that is beyond human comprehension.

The other quartets also convey the message that poetry overcomes the limitations of language and the individual bias that most language communicates. The communal practice of considering the meaning of the past in light of new events is not a realization of meaning within the context of a single life but reaches back into the distant past. In “The Dry Salvages,” the speaker describes the way that even experiences that appear to affect only one life ripple back into the past and into the future:

...I have said before
That the past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only
But of many generations—not forgetting
Something that is probably quite ineffable:
The backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history, the backward half-look
Over the shoulder, toward the primitive terror. (99-106)

A sudden illumination of meaning affects an entire community with its intermingled generations and distant relations, casting the whole history of a group of people into a new light. In my focus on memory and its relation to the scientific memory research of the period, however, the most significant aspect of this passage is the “Something that is probably quite ineffable” or the indescribable meaning that colors past experiences freed from their official historical position. Revived and revamped memories include aspects that are not communicable, but are there—and have been there—regardless of whether the rememberer realizes or can tell anyone else about its meaning. Eliot’s emphasis on the unspeakable, and his insinuating lyricism that leaves spaces

for the things which cannot be expressed in words, suggest that true poetry captures and communicates the indescribable past.

The shortcomings of language are on display in “Little Gidding,” prompting the reader to search for a solution. The majority of the first section is written in the subjunctive mood with wistful convergence of uncertainty and eternity in the repetition of the lines: “If you came this way...it would be the same.” By invoking the subjunctive without resolving the uncertainty and hopeful desire that characterize two of the three stanzas, the speaker demonstrates the unfulfilled promise of language. Failure of language to express the depth of meaning of experience is mirrored in the hypothetical journey to Little Gidding, which always exceeds intention, expectation, and perception:

...And what you thought you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all. Either you had no purpose
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured
And is altered in fulfillment. (LG 31-6)

Meaning overflows the possibilities of expression, defeating its stated aims and changing over time. The hypothetical nature of language, which always approaches but never fully grasps experience, becomes a problem in this final quartet.

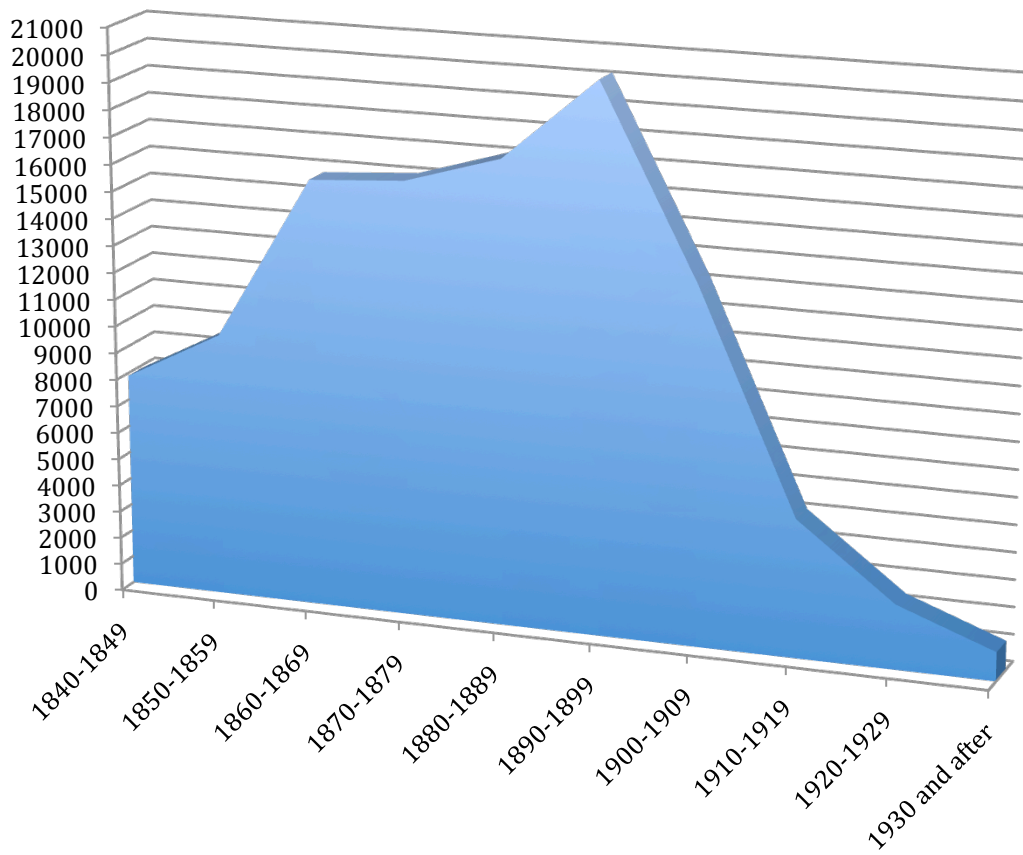
The prose narrative in the second section, which describes the speaker’s meeting with the familiar stranger, belabors the limitations of language. The stranger’s words are confined to the past or the future, but never to the present in which he speaks. He describes a life-long endeavor “To purify the dialect of the tribe/ And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight” (LG 129-30), which led him to discern the three horrors of past mistakes and future obliteration. The stranger’s narrative recurs to speech or language as a “concern” (128), and the words he “never thought to speak” (LG 125) about the insufficiency of language to communicate the agony of the

past and apprehension about the future. The past and the future are concerns of the present, and although they are the goal of “pure” dialect, they are also the source of “rending pain” (LG 140). While the aged stranger advises the narrator to leave the past alone, he does so by admitting that his life was devoted to purifying language so that it can attempt, and yet always fail, to capture the past and the present.

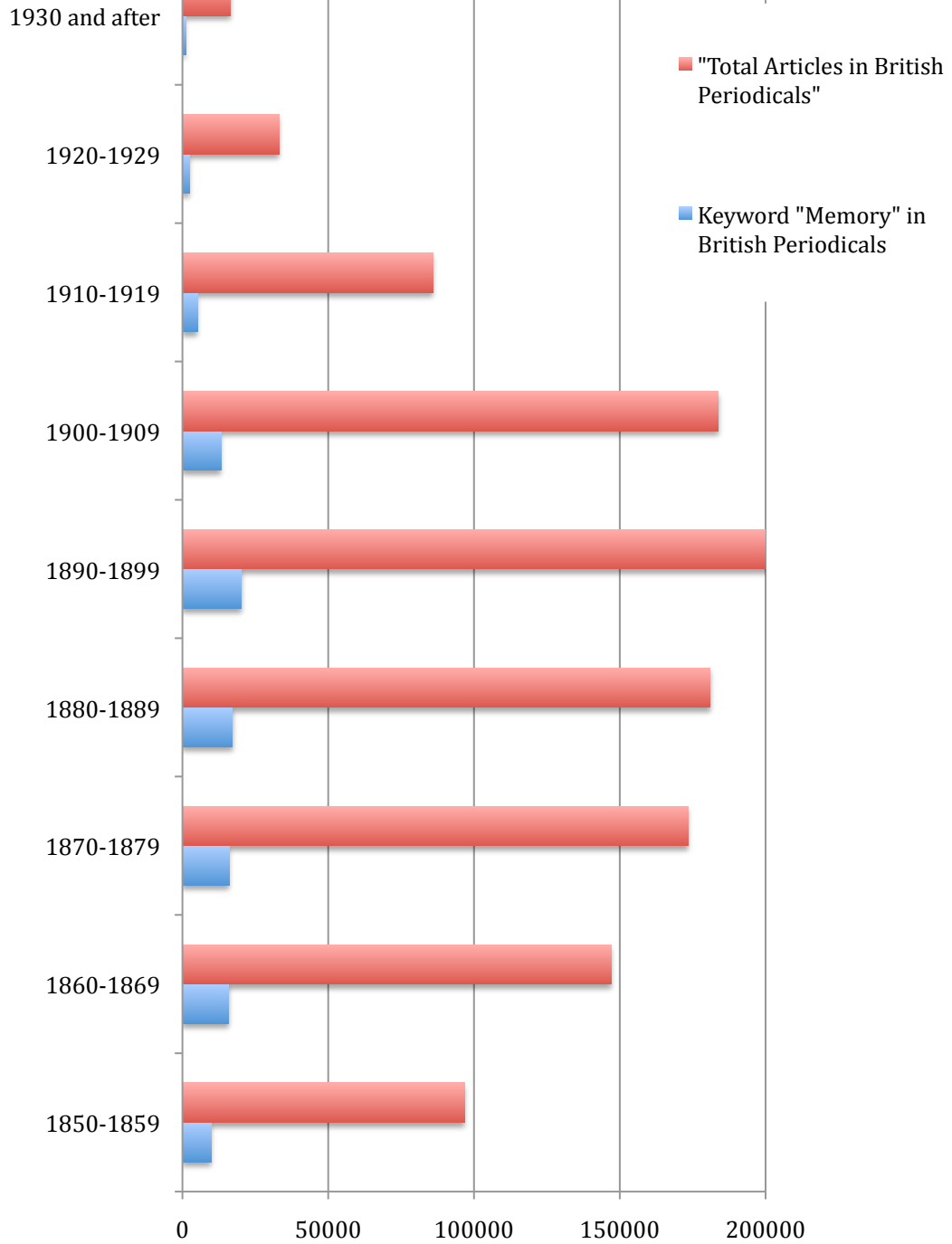
In Eliot’s view, even “pure” language is fundamentally flawed, and his poem suggests that replacing narrative with lyric will mitigate the limitations of language, and, moreover, the destabilization of memory associated with the memory sciences that permeated the cultural logic of the period. An imperfect language fosters imperfect communication, but *Four Quartets* indicates that lyric poetry is a use of language that approximates precise communication. In Eliot’s attempt to solidify English culture through his poetry, bringing the population together through the repetition and preservation of shared memory property, the danger of unstable memory becomes an issue of national concern. By using lyric poetry to communicate a few of these shared memories along with the exhortation to communicate memories through lyric, Eliot proffers a stable memory model that is safe from the incursions of science, time, and death.

Appendix A

Keyword "Memory" in British Periodicals, 1840-1940

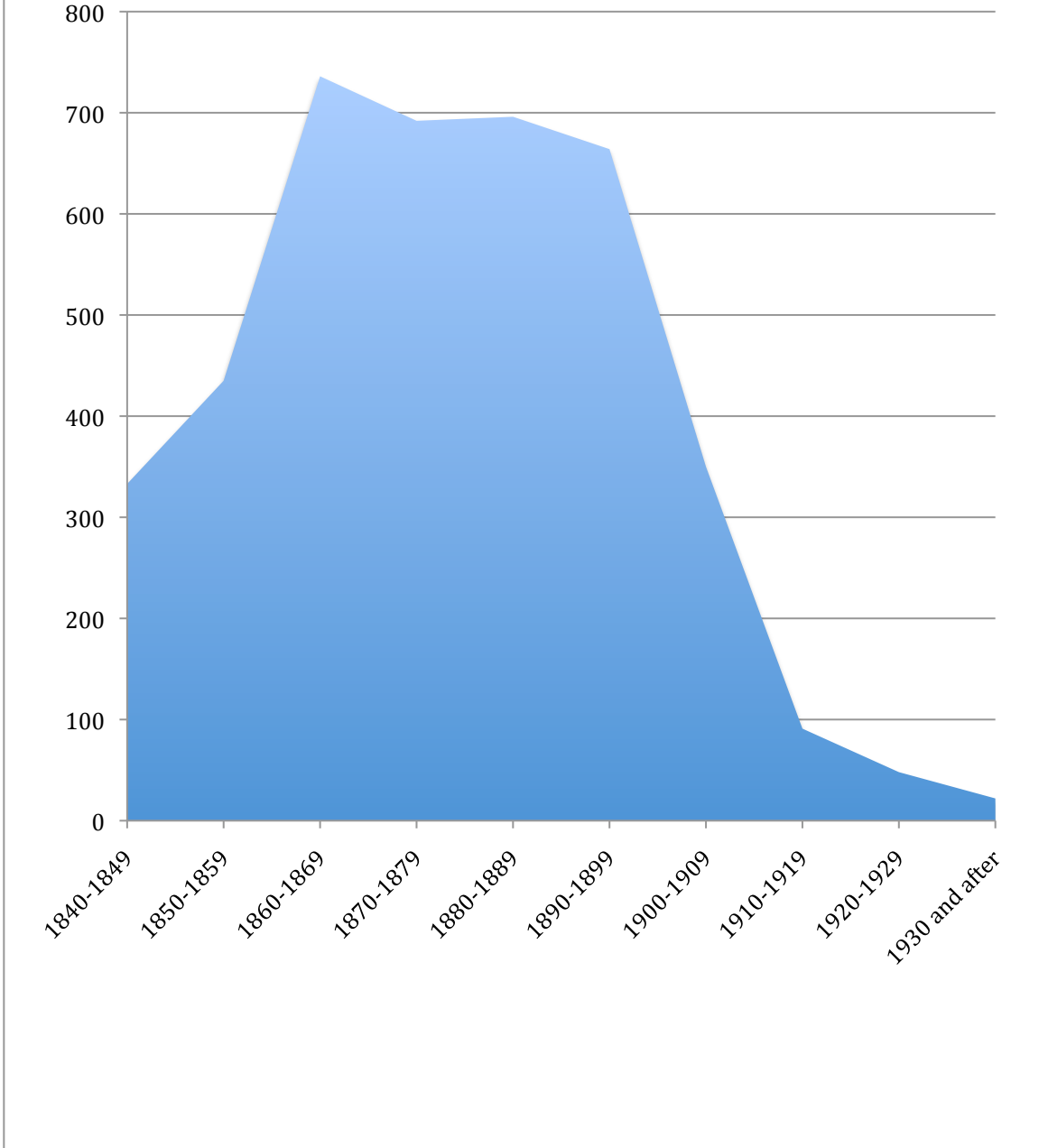


Appendix B Percentage "Memory" Articles in British Periodicals



APPENDIX C

Keywords "Memory" and "Treacherous" in British Periodicals



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