

Dickens, Victorian Mental Sciences and Mnemonic Errancy

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In 1880, the American utopian writer Edward Bellamy published a short novel, entitled *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process*, in which the eponymous doctor offers his patients an innovative 'Thought-Extirpation Process', whereby unpleasant recollections can be removed from their minds. In a crucial philosophical passage of the text, Dr. Heidenhoff thus celebrates the curative effects he attributes to his invention for the mechanical extirpation of disturbing memory – what he defines as 'merely a nice problem in surgery, and not more complex than many which my brethren have solved in lithotomy and lithotripsy, for instance'¹:

I deem it only a question of time when science shall have so accurately located the various departments of thought and mastered the laws of their processes, that, whether by galvanism or some better process, the mental physician will be able to extract a specific recollection from the memory as readily as a dentist pulls a tooth, and as finally, so far as the prevention of any future twinges in that quarter are concerned. Macbeth's question, 'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased; pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow; raze out the written trouble of the brain?' was a puzzler to the sixteenth century doctor, but he of the twentieth, yes, perhaps of the nineteenth, will be able to answer it affirmatively. (*HP*, 101)

While Bellamy's novel partakes of the *fin-de-siècle* faith in the endless resources of scientific advancement, it is significant that his exploration of utopia in this text focuses not on the traditional themes of social equality, political stability or technological innovation, but rather on a fantasy of selective memory extirpation. The idea that painful recollections may be harmful and that science may contribute to the happiness of humankind by finding the means to erase these memories has inspired a fantasy strikingly similar to Dr. Heidenhoff's 'process' in the recent movie *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (fig. 1), where the protagonists Joel and Clem (Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet) become intrigued by the surgically-induced oblivion performed by a medical institution aptly named *Lacuna*.² However, as readers of Dickens will have already recognized, we can find an illustrious precursor of Dr Heidenhoff in the spectral 'double' who, in Dickens's Christmas story 'The Haunted Man' (1848), offers Mr Redlaw the opportunity to have his disturbing memories removed from his mind.³ For Redlaw, memory is a 'curse' (*HM*, 140), and in bestowing to him the power not only to have his sorrowful memories erased

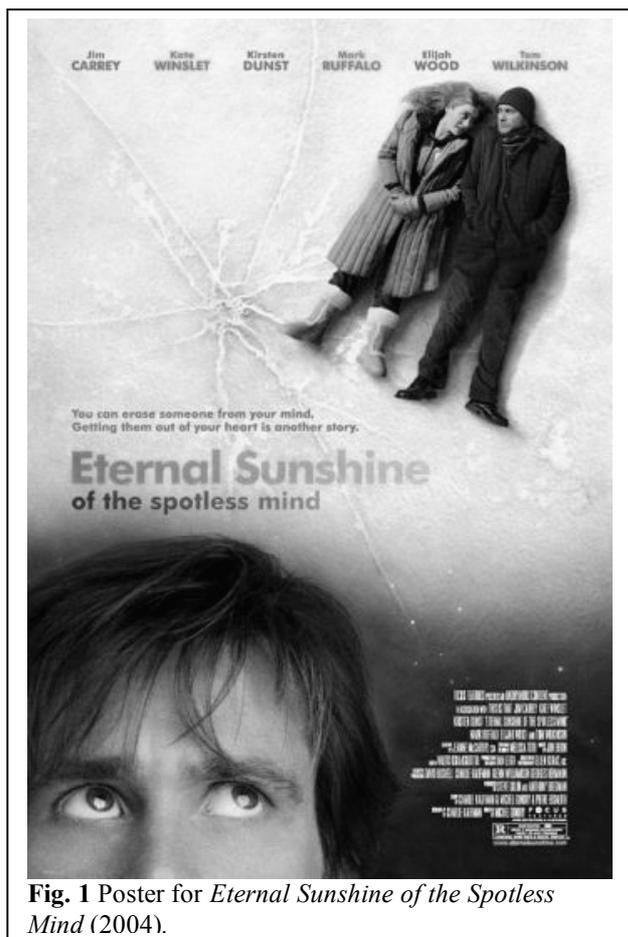


Fig. 1 Poster for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004).

but also to extend this ‘gift’ to people around him, the Ghost appeals to the same utilitarian goal that moves Dr. Heidenhoff:

‘Your wisdom has discovered that the memory of sorrow, wrong, and trouble is the lot of all mankind, and that mankind would be the happier, in its other memories, without it. Go! Be its benefactor! [...] Be happy in the good you have won, and in the good you do!’ (HM, 142)

Although, to my knowledge, it is not known whether Bellamy read Dickens’s short story, I would argue that Bellamy’s dream of blotting out memories invites us to look back on Dickens’s writing on memory, and to illuminate the extent to which

Dickens’s fiction was engaged with (and perhaps contributed to shape) a range of psychological and philosophical discourses on self and memory which represented the erasure of painful recollections as an increasingly desirable operation. If this operation is rendered especially evident in the Spectre’s sinister ‘gift’ in ‘The Haunted Man’, the fantasy underlying the discourses of the scientific writing on memory will be revealed as functioning, to different extents, also in other texts by Dickens, and particularly in *Nicholas Nickleby*, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*.

Through the construction of deviant or disturbing recollections (what I will call ‘mnemonic errancy’) as a pathological mental process, the discourses of Victorian science (and especially of mid-Victorian mental sciences) seemed to intrigue Dickens’s own thinking about memory, and to stimulate in his fiction a variety of creative reactions. If the connection between the process of recollection and pathology may seem unexpected in the case of Dickens’s novels, which often demonstrate a strong interest in the positive value of memory and in its almost sacred role, this article will show how the evaluation of memory

in Dickens stems from his attentiveness (and reaction) to the scientific theories of memory circulating in his time.

Moreover, it is significant that *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process*, nineteenth-century scientific writing on memory as well as some of Dickens's major works of fiction all reflect on a fantasy that continues to be powerful even today: namely, the belief that the extirpation of disturbing memories can preserve not only one's well-being but also one's sanity. While the focus of this article will be on Dickens's engagement with the scientific contexts of mid-century, the analysis of the representations of memory in science and fiction may also help us shed some light on the role that Victorian culture played in the construction of the contemporary conception of memory as problematic.

After nearly a century of Freudian psychoanalysis, and after the profuse flourishing, over the past two decades, of trauma studies, we are accustomed to the idea that memory, and especially mnemonic errancy, can make trouble.⁴ It has been widely recognized that there are memories that can be highly disruptive, if they are not accommodated appropriately within consciousness. On the other hand, we know that memories can also be destroyed and effaced from the brain (as happens with some distressing neurological diseases, such as Parkinson's, or Alzheimer's), and that the deprivation of personal memory amounts to much the same thing as the deprivation of personal identity. In other words, memory is so easily recognized in our culture as a possible source of pathology that it sometimes seems difficult to decide whether there is more danger in remembering or in forgetting. This is an awkwardness that is somehow reproduced also in memory studies, where the value placed on remembering as an individual or collective act is systematically paralleled by the vast critical emphasis laid on oblivion and forgetfulness.⁵ Perhaps Pierre Nora had this paradox in mind when he famously stated that '[o]n ne parle tant de mémoire que parce qu'il n'y en a plus'⁶ ('we talk so much about memory only because it no longer exists'): although ours may really be defined as an age that is 'obsessed with memory',⁷ the proliferation of works devoted to recollection may reflect the fact that memory does not exist if not as a problematic concept, constantly in need of being clarified, and incessantly redefined.

This tendency to view memory as problematic has affected also the study of Victorian culture: as Jill Matus's recent study on Victorian theories of shock and memory shows, the contemporary inclination to recognize memory as the most important cause of trauma has become so influential that critics are often blinded to the fact that 'in

nineteenth-century discourse, disturbance of memory [...] is only one aspect of a network of related ideas that later cohere (albeit uneasily) as the concept of trauma'.⁸ While accepting Matus's thesis that the equation of Victorian disturbing memory with traumatic experience is a projection of the contemporary interest in trauma, my emphasis will be on the exploration of the cultural construction of memory as possibly disturbing and deviant, and on the invention of the disremembering self as a suitable object of scientific discourse. If dysfunctions of memory have been noticed since antiquity, the act of remembering was traditionally associated with the definition of personal identity, and the acceptance of the pathological quality of memory is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Thus, this article will illuminate an important epistemological shift that overtook the representation of memory in the nineteenth century, transforming mnemonic errancy into a novel form of pathology that scientists like Bellamy's fictional doctor would seek to restrain and control (if not literally extirpate). This may still seem far from Dickens's 1848 Christmas story, in which the elimination of memory is an operation fantasized about but ultimately rejected. Indeed, Bellamy's novel seems to be a neat reversal of the message conveyed by Dickens's Christmas story. In 'The Haunted Man', Redlaw's oblivion turns him into an amoral and abject being, deprived of the ties of affection and familial duty on which humanity and morality are grounded. In contrast to this view, in *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process* the scientist gains a positivistic if slightly hubristic power from his mastery over the detrimental effects of recollections: 'You have no idea of the glorious satisfaction I take in crushing, destroying, annihilating these black devils of evil memories that feed on hearts. It is a triumph like a god's.' (*HP*, 117). Although the end of the novel will reveal that Dr. Heidenhoff's process was nothing but the dream of a fatigued, overexcited and intoxicated mind, the text ends with the woman obsessed with her memories actually committing suicide. Thus the reader is left with the impression that this conclusion does not so much demystify as reinforce Heidenhoff's point that, in striking contrast to Redlaw's experience in 'The Haunted Man', remembering is less a constituent of one's morality than, on the contrary, 'the principle of moral degeneration. Remembered sin is the most utterly diabolical influence in the universe' (*HP*, 120). Despite this notable difference in the manifest treatment of memory to be found in *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process* and 'The Haunted Man', however, these texts demonstrate to accept and represent the idea that memory can seriously hurt and be disrupted. This is an idea that would ambivalently fascinate Dickens throughout his life and writing, leading him to formulate a conception

of memory that often preferred to insist not so much on the psychological aspects of recollection as on its moral and social function. Moreover, Dickens also reacted to science's devaluation of unbidden memories by recognizing the creative resources implicit in the combination of memory and imagination.

Dickens's alertness to the scientific investigations of the mind has been the subject of a number of critical investigations, especially with respect to his interest in mesmerism and his friendship with John Elliotson.⁹ In an article on Victorian psychology, Athena Vrettos has shown how Victorian culture's 'pervasive fascination with (and multiple theories of) eccentric habits and repetitive behaviours'¹⁰ may shed important light on the well-known tendency of Dickens's fiction to 'jar the reader with repetitive character patterns, displaying eccentric personalities through their verbal, gestural, and sartorial tics'.¹¹ Typically overlooked by critics or, on the other hand, celebrated as potentially postmodern, the Dickensian universe of habit-obsessed characters gains new significance if put into relation with the discoveries of nascent psychology. In the wake of Vrettos's reflection, this article investigates the ways in which Dickens's fiction comes to terms with the new nineteenth-century 'dis(re)membering self': a self that finds out that mnemonic errancy can be a process of real dis-membering.¹²

I.

Science and the Extirpation of Memory

Dr. Heidenhoff was not alone in his appreciation of the virtues of the waters of Lethe, where 'memories could be cleansed and disinfected' (*HP*, 11) with the aid of science. Rather, the fantasy that gives life to Bellamy's novel arguably epitomises one circulating in nineteenth-century scientific discourse on memory and focusing especially on the question of aberrant associations. Associationist models of cognition and memory, dominant until at least the mid-century,¹³ became increasingly concerned with the pathological effect of the aberrant associations brought about by painful recollections. In his *Observations on Man* (1749), David Hartley posited that the associative process could leave a material trace in the brain, as the 'vibrations' coming from the external environment and registering on the nerves trigger analogous vibrations in the medullary substance of the brain.¹⁴ Under the influence of repeated exposure to the sensory data or of

repeated associative connections, the vibrations could persist in the brain as ‘dispositions’, thus establishing privileged paths in the trains of thoughts.

Hartley’s model for the material persistence of repeated associations within the brain provided a fundamental inspiration for early-Victorian accounts of the cognitive processes involved in remembering. If the associations of memory were not carefully controlled, the traces they would reiteratively leave on the brain could prove harmful to the organism. Using a strict syllogism, in 1838 mental pathologist Thomas Mayo demonstrated that persistent brooding over one’s past deeds may be conducive to insanity:

If, as I have above suggested, a loss of the regulating power of the will over the trains of thought is a characteristic of insanity; if, again, a ceaseless pondering over a painful impression tends to shake this supremacy of the will; and, finally, if regretfulness implies this process; it may be fairly expected that the presence of regretfulness in any given individual should contribute to the production of the insane state.¹⁵

This argument leads Mayo not only to denounce those educators who insist on conceiving of regretfulness as a moral virtue, but also, perhaps more interestingly, to instruct his readers on the necessity of rationally mastering their ‘regretful feelings’ by supplying them with ‘motives’ and, above all, by reducing them into sound ‘principles’¹⁶. If Mayo does not go so far as to propose the utter eradication of memories, underlying his text is a crucial assumption that qualifies Victorian culture: namely, the belief that some memories can operate as a kind of ‘monomania’, thus deviating from and disrupting the normal mental processes of association. Thus, in his notebook ‘M’ (identified as ‘[t]his Book full of Metaphysics on Morals & Speculations on Expressions’), young Charles Darwin clearly conceives of disturbing memories as examples of the material persistence, within the brain, of a ‘whole train of thoughts, feelings & perception separate from the ordinary state of mind’¹⁷ which can initiate a process of disruption in the organism.¹⁸ Using this materialistically-grounded notion of the persistence of traces in the mind, Thomas Laycock put forward, in an 1875 article for *The Journal of Mental Sciences*, the provocative hypothesis that the fixed ideas that are typical of insanity may derive from some mnemonic traces stemming from dreams that are no longer recognizable as such and thus project into the insane’s waking consciousness.¹⁹ It is therefore not surprising that the transformation of the eighteenth-century concept of ‘fixed ideas’ into this form of ‘mnemomania’ results in the new emphasis laid on the need to limit and ultimately eliminate memories: as we read in the early metaphysical notebook of Darwin, who quotes in this case his grandfather Erasmus, ‘the only cure for madness is forgetfulness’.²⁰

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More than forty years after Mayo's reflections on regretfulness – and one year after the publication of Bellamy's novel – mental physiologist James Sully expanded on the danger inherent in painful recollections by proposing their actual banishment from the mind:

In states of insanity brought about by some great shock, we see this morbid tendency to resuscitate the dead past fully developed, and remote events and circumstances becoming confused with present ones. On the other hand, in more healthy states of mind there presents itself an exactly opposite tendency, namely, an impulse of the will to banish whatever when recalled gives pain to the furthest conceivable regions of the past.²¹

Clearly sharing similar assumptions about the healthy erasure of painful recollections, in the same period Pierre Janet hypnotized in France hysteric patients – who, as Freud and Breuer would state in 1894, 'suffer mainly from reminiscences'²² – in order to cancel their memories. Young women such as Marie, whose case and successful treatment feature in Janet's thesis *L'Automatisme psychologique* (1889), apparently recovered from their ailments simply because, under hypnotic suggestion, they had been deprived of their traumatic recollections.²³ Though not involving any surgery, Janet's initial therapeutic method came close to Dr. Heidenhoff's galvanic annihilation of the 'diseased corpuscles' produced by memories and by their related 'class of morbid ideas' (*HP*, 97). The fact that Freud was soon to dismiss Janet and his hypnosis should not obscure the extent to which, at the end of the century, sanity seemed to rely on science's excision of the disturbing quality of recollection.²⁴

Although Dickens's Christmas story was written at mid-century, and despite the evident contrast in the value attributed to painful recollections in *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process* and 'The Haunted Man', it can be argued that Dickens's work reflects the radical transformation in representations of memory that took place in the nineteenth century. For centuries before, memory had been regarded as a faculty strengthening identity, and had been crucially involved in the definition of the self; during the nineteenth century, instead, it increasingly became a potential source of disorder. In this process, a major role was of course played by the 'sciences of memory' of *fin-de-siècle* France, in whose discourses Ian Hacking traces the origins of the modern attempt to appropriate scientifically and colonise what he defines 'the realm of the soul'.²⁵ For Hacking, since the late nineteenth-century accounts of multiple personality in France memory has been accepted as an object of scientific inquiry precisely for its privileged relationship with psychic life, the secularized version of the soul. In the wounds brought about by recollection, science

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envisaged the possibility of gaining access to and controlling the territory of the modern soul. However, the discourses of British mental sciences also contributed to this important epistemological change: a glance at the bibliography of the foundational text of the ‘sciences of memory’, Théodule Ribot’s *Les Maladies de la Mémoire* (1880), reveals that the French delineation of the pathological aspects of recollection relied heavily on earlier British treatises on the physiology and the pathology of the mind.²⁶

Within the discourse of Victorian mental sciences, the interest in memory arises out of its proximity to the unconscious states of the mind, and to the problematic form of agency that these posit. Whilst criticizing in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) Hartley’s associationist theory of vibrations as mechanistic and reductive, Coleridge presents the case of an illiterate peasant girl suddenly speaking, in her delirium, the classical languages she had overheard in her childhood.²⁷ Coleridge’s anecdote will provide the model for an impressive number of subsequent case studies, demonstrating a fascination on the part of Victorian physiologists and novelists alike. What the countless examples of involuntary recovery of memories especially illuminate is the existence of some hidden activity and life going on in the mind, which is now recognized as being able to store some traces and impressions in its ‘obscure recesses’, where they remain unavailable to consciousness.²⁸

The emphasis on the latent rather than conscious processes of the mind reveals that associationist models fail to account for the complexity of mental activity and human will: to use a metaphor Coleridge applies to Hartley’s system, associationist philosophy reduces ‘a broad stream, winding through a mountainous country with an indefinite number of currents, varying and running into each other’ to the ‘main current of the moment’.²⁹ While this mysterious life of memories inspires the powerful Victorian metaphor of the brain as a palimpsest – most notably divulged by Thomas De Quincey’s image of the ‘mysterious handwritings of grief or joy’³⁰ stamped on the brain and not always legible – the inability to account rationally for the recovery of the traces and the fact that the retrieval of memories is always dependant on some alteration of consciousness (such as fever, intoxication, somnambulism or proximity to death) result in a profound reconfiguration of the relationship between memory and identity.

It is especially the Lockean belief that personal identity is founded on personal memory that undergoes a radical redefinition: whereas Locke claimed that the ‘person’ extends as far as their memories are recognizably their own³¹ – celebrating good memory in men as the microcosmic reflection of the ‘greater Perfection of it in superior ranks of

Spirits'³² – Victorian psychologists tended to emphasize the need to confine the domain of memory, and to hold it back. As Henry Holland, the eminent physician of Queen Victoria, puts it, 'we feel the memory to be a less integral part of ourselves than the reason', because

[e]ven when expressly using the powers of recollection, the mind seems almost consciously to be exerting itself on something *without*, which is imperfectly submitted to the will. It courts rather than coerces the instrument, which yet minister so largely to all its higher functions.³³

It is true that in the 1830s John Abercrombie seems still to draw on Locke when he claims that recollections are crucial to what he defines 'a belief in our personal identity'³⁴, and that, later in the century, William Benjamin Carpenter expands on this conception in his famous formulation of the dependence of identity from the 'consciousness of agreement between our present and our past Mental experiences'.³⁵ However, it is not coincidental that Carpenter turns Abercrombie's 'belief' into an act of consciousness, as this has the merit of highlighting the imperative of the conscious mastery over the potentially destructive action of mnemonic errancy. Remembering thus becomes the site for an incessant negotiation, the symbol of the everyday struggle between the conscious self and the mysterious other forces that inhabit the mind.

As is well known, to illustrate the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious self Carpenter turns to the image of a 'skilful rider' controlling the locomotive force of a powerful horse,³⁶ the same metaphor that Freud later used to describe the problematic relationship between the ego and the id.³⁷ The British physiologist is very clear about the de-evaluation of the self that surrenders to the unconscious processes of thinking, degrading it to the level of a mere 'thinking automaton' which, in the edition of 1874, is not even granted the ontological status of the person and is referred to as 'it'.³⁸ Carpenter contrasts this demeaning mental life with the power of the 'Will', which is called to subjugate and regulate 'unconscious cerebration'.

In a similar way, in the discourse of memory a distinction is drawn between 'recollection' and 'simple memory', the former being the rationally governed (and thus superior) form of remembering. Nevertheless, as happens within the discourse on unconscious cerebration, the hierarchical subjection of the inferior mental process to a conscious act is often demystified. Writers seem to be aware that the slightest anomaly in the associative process may bring about destruction in the organism, as in this extract from Forbes Winslow's treatise of mental pathology:

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A look – a word carelessly and thoughtlessly spoken; the sight of some trivial object, perhaps, token of affection; the melancholy wail of the wind among the trees; murmur of the ocean’s dash upon the beach; sound of distant village bells floating upon the evening breeze; the strains of plaintive melody associated with the sad reminiscence of the past, ‘strike the electric chain’, which so mysteriously encircles, and binds the mind, and suggests a long forgotten succession, it may be, of agonising, burning, and, alas! maddening thoughts!³⁹

The self that is dominated by memory is a self deprived of superior control, a disremembering self that seems to be actively dis-membering itself, as Winslow demonstrates by his recourse to the climactic series ‘agonising’, ‘burning’, and ‘maddening’. It is hardly surprising that, as the century progresses, the increasingly pathological conception of mnemonic errancy leads to an ever stronger emphasis on science’s need to extirpate disturbing memory. In 1877, a commentator wrote on the pages of the renowned journal *Mind* that ‘our memories are like gardens, and the richer they are the more they require weeding’.⁴⁰ This lapidary condemnation of retentive memories is perhaps the best indicator of a significant change in the paradigm of memory. Whereas in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* the Queen’s inability to remember (and mourn) King Hamlet is pictured as ‘an unweeded garden / That grows to seeds’,⁴¹ in Victorian culture well-tended minds require a new – and antithetical – form of weeding: the extirpation of memory.

II

Dickens and the sciences of memory

Although memory is undoubtedly a major theme of Dickens’s fiction,⁴² the context of the scientific writings about memory proves useful especially to illuminate the extent to which Dickens’s evaluation of the mental operations involved in remembering is the result of a process of negotiation with the unsettling aspects of recollection, and with the threat they pose to the rational, conscious self. Dickens himself seems sometimes intrigued by the excision of the painful errancies of memory. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer argues, in the 1840s Dickens repeatedly articulated ‘a wish to erase bad memories, or to replace them with good ones’.⁴³ Thus, looking back on his marriage after his wife’s estrangement, Dickens stresses his success at cancelling the traces of memory connected to a part of his life that has now become unpleasant: ‘a page in my life which once had writing on it, has become absolutely blank.’⁴⁴ In his fiction, the temptation of memory extirpation can be

traced not only in ‘The Haunted Man’, where the gift of oblivion is offered to a man of science who has fallen prey to a reverie perilously close to an altered state of consciousness, but also in other works, in which the sanity of the main character and of the narrative as a whole relies on a programmatic exclusion of the disturbing aspects of memory.

In his famous letter of 1847, Dickens clearly presents the biographical account of his childhood experience at Warren’s blacking warehouse in accordance with a psychological concern about the dangerous resurrection of his past: while dreaming – which was one of the most unsettling if ordinary examples of Victorian altered mental states – these associations make him ‘wander desolately back to that time’ by disrupting especially his (as Carpenter would call it) ‘consciousness of agreement’: the past physically intrudes upon the present, as ‘[i]ts wainscoted rooms, and its rotten floors and staircase [...] rise up visibly before me’. Unsurprisingly, such involuntary recollection entails the diminishing, de-humanizing action that competes to the ‘thinking automaton’ of unconscious cerebration: ‘I often forget in my dreams [...] even that I am a man’⁴⁵.

On the other hand, in *David Copperfield* (1849-50), when Dickens’s fictional hero has to deal with the associations related to his similarly disturbing past, we are confronted with a very different mental process. In Chapter XI, the emotionally destructive power of recollection is softened: memories no longer ‘rise up visibly’, undermining the distinction between recollections and perceptions, between the self as subject and the self as object; rather, they parade in front of a viewing subject who is able to recognize their belonging to his past: ‘[t]hey are all before me, just as they were in the evil hour when I went among them for the first time’.⁴⁶ Significantly, the protagonist bearing Dickens’s inverted initials makes no mention of dreaming or of any other diminishing altered state, and this is perhaps the factor that grants a secure closure to David’s treatment of his problematic past, even on the face of his claiming that this period returns ‘without my invocation’ (*DC*, 146). At the end of the chapter, he can be sure that the past will cease to haunt him with its unconscious force: ‘I only know that it was, and ceased to be; and that I have written, and there I leave it’ (*DC*, 210).

Published between 1849 and 1850, only a couple of years after Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and contemporaneous with Tennyson’s ‘In Memoriam’ and Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, David’s fictional autobiography shows, like all these contemporary masterpieces, the importance of putting willed and carefully selected memories at the service of the

autobiographical project. David's tale, and the model of controlled recollection it puts forward, seems to anticipate Sully's later recommendation that we should regulate the dangerous return of the associations of the past by banishing them. This is true of Dickens's fiction not only to the extent that memories should be recalled only insofar as they are manageable, but also because his texts often display the 'banishment' of various dis-remembering selves, such as Mr Dick in *David Copperfield*, Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* (1860-61), and Mrs Clennam in *Little Dorrit* (1855-57). Notably, their memory disorders confront us with the unsettling fixation of memory – in other words, with the excess of some unhealthy mnemomania that unceasingly blurs their present with their past and thus demystifies their 'consciousness of agreement'. While Bodenheimer shows that David's problematic and humiliating past is 'parceled out among many characters in the novel',⁴⁷ I would argue that in Dickens's fiction eccentric characters suffering from the return of unbidden memory have the function of lingering at the margins of the text, just as the unconscious life lingers in the recesses of the conscious mind. These characters are certainly, as Nicholas Dames argues, 'counterexamples to healthy remembering',⁴⁸ and yet what is at stake in Dickens's treatment of memory is precisely the visibility of the unremitting negotiation between conscious (and willed) memory and unbidden recollections rising up from their marginal mental life.

Perhaps the text in which the fantasy of actual banishment of mnemonic errancy is most prominent is Dickens's third novel, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39).⁴⁹ More than other texts by Dickens, this novel continually struggles with the threat posed by aberrant associations – a threat that is splendidly epitomised by the absurd and comical digressions of the hero's mother, whose 'curious association of ideas' (NN, 502) is a paroxysmal exploration of Locke's admission that the associative process always exposes 'Civil Conversation' to 'a degree of madness'.⁵⁰ With its plot afflicted, as Jenny Bourne Taylor puts it, by stories that are 'continually recycled'⁵¹ and by an impressive number of minute and often insignificant characters, situations, and details, *Nicholas Nickleby* shows nothing of the mastery over its subject demonstrated by *David Copperfield*, where the autodiegetic narrator skilfully selects only those facts that are relevant to David's *Bildungsroman*, and where even the episodes of *déjà vu*, as Dames argues, are less a disruption in chronological linearity than the evidence of the absolute consistency of David's story.⁵²

In *Nicholas Nickleby*, instead, the ideal of the healthy and impeccably associated self is limited only to the eponymous hero, who embodies a supreme mastery over both

internal and external reality. However, what is particularly intriguing about Nicholas's extreme self-control is that it is built on the extirpation (metaphorical and literal) of the disturbing mnemonic errancy displayed by Smike, a character haunted by a past of abused childhood, which has brought about arrested development. Significantly, in the course of the novel Nicholas explicitly sets out to cure Smike's memory disorders, but whereas he manages to cure Smike's inability to remember and indeed even helps him become for a moment a successful actor, his attempt to cure the involuntary return of Smike's painful memories is crucially fallible, as the past continually intrudes into the present: 'I have never forgotten that room [...]; it comes back just as it was' (*NN*, 268).

Towards the end of the novel there is one passage that exemplifies the extent to which the suppression of Smike's disremembering is utterly necessary to Nicholas's healthy remembering. Wanting to lead his sick friend away from the frenzy of the city, Nicholas decides to move to the country, near the places where he grew up. Here Nicholas revisits, together with Smike, some spots linked to his past:

Nicholas, yielding almost unconsciously to the interest of old associations, would point out some tree that he had climbed a hundred times to peep at the young birds in their nest, and the branch from which he used to shout to little Kate [...]. There was the old house, too, which they would pass every day, looking up at the tiny window through which the sun used to stream in and wake him on the summer mornings – they were all summer mornings then [...]. There were the hedgerows where the brother and sister had so often gathered wild flowers together, and the green fields and shady paths where they had so often strayed. There was not a lane, or brook, or copse, or cottage near, with which some childish event was not entwined, and back it came into the mind as events of childhood do – nothing in itself: perhaps a word, a laugh, a look, some slight distress, a passing thought or fear – and yet more strongly and distinctly marked, and better far remembered than the hardest trials or severest sorrows of but a year ago. (*NN*, 711-12)

While strolling around the countryside of his childhood, Nicholas progresses from an initially passive attitude toward memory – 'yielding almost unconsciously to the interest of old associations' – to a process of active and fully-mastered re-writing of his past. Recollections are diluted into the calm rhythm established by anaphors ('There was', 'there were') and by recourse to verbal tenses that insistently construct the past as reassuringly iterative ('he had climbed a hundred times', 'he used to shout', 'they would pass every day' and so on). The result is a contemplation of the past that is not only deprived of any disturbing connotations ('they were all sunny morning then'), but that is recognizably a form of domesticated return of memories. In the long sentence at the end of

the extract, the final remark about the retentiveness of the mind-as-palimpsest is paratactically combined with the nostalgic past of the first clause, thus removing the potentially destructive action of the return of childhood memory. Also in an earlier passage of the text, Nicholas's 'pleasant sorrow' (*NN*, 602) in remembering the distressed scenes of his past emerges out of a similar domestication of the psychological accounts of unbidden memories:

[E]very little incident, and even slight words and looks of those old days, little heeded then, but well remembered when busy cares and trials were quite forgot, came fresh and thick before him many and many a time, and, rustling above the dusty growth of years, came back green boughs of yesterday. (*NN*, 602)

By combining the potentially destructive representation of the vivid return of memories with the secure distance granted by nostalgic contemplation, the disquieting psychological aspect of recollection is annihilated. It is then clear that in the former passage the presence of Smike as formal and yet invisible addressee of Nicholas's words is emblematic of the process whereby Nicholas's healthy remembering simultaneously requires and suppresses Smike's pathological memory.

As it approaches conclusion, the novel further thematizes Nicholas's suppression of Smike's aberrant associations, as Smike claims that he has just seen beside him the man who first took him to Mr Squeers's school. Nicholas significantly tries to manage what he considers the return of Smike's unbidden memories by firmly eradicating it. After unsuccessfully trying to reduce Smike's deviant associations to the 'sound principles' of logical reasoning by explaining that '[Smike's] imagination ha[s] deceived him, and that this close resemblance between the creation of his dreams and the man he suppose[s] he ha[s] seen [is] but a proof of it' (*NN*, 715), the protagonist decides to firmly deny the possibility of this return of memory. However, as Smike and the readers know that Smike was telling the truth, the text ultimately exposes Nicholas's rational and associated method as an operation that is not only functional to the hero's need to exorcise the spectres of disturbing memory but also, implicitly, inadequate to account for the complexity of mental activity. This process culminates in the last illustration of the novel ('The children at their cousin's grave', fig. 2), in which Smike's erasure from the text (symbolized by his tomb) is displayed in its function of effective closing move both of the hero's story (with his children at his own birthplace happily linking his past and future) and of the narrative's successful culmination in '[t]he whole summed up', as the last chapter would aptly be

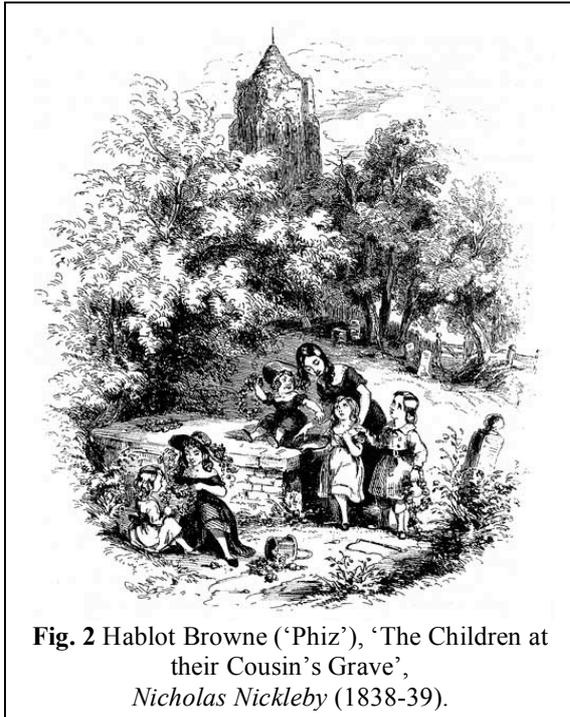


Fig. 2 Hablot Browne ('Phiz'), 'The Children at their Cousin's Grave', *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39).

titled in later editions of the novel. Because Smike's absence allows Nicholas to control consciously the associations of his past and thus to contemplate it, memory loses its disturbing connotations, and is turned into the morally edifying image of the children mourning their dead cousin.

Also in the story 'The Haunted Man' Dickens gradually shifts the attention from the psychological representation of memory to its universally recognizable humanizing function. However, there is more here than the mere 'banishment' of problematic memory. If we compare the last illustration of *Nicholas*

Nickleby to Tenniel's frontispiece of 'The Haunted Man' (fig. 3), it becomes clear that what is at stake in the short story is not so much the erasure of pathological memory as its dissemination, a process that will become more evident in *Great Expectations*. In the illustration from the Christmas story we have not simply the representation of Redlaw's spectral double but also the framing of this image within a series of fighting demon-like figures so arranged as to form a holly wreath. This is of course one of the most powerful of Christmas symbols, but in the story the holly is specifically connected to memory, not only because Redlaw's barren self immediately withers it but also because it is related to the refrain of the story, 'Lord, keep my memory green'. Ironically, the metaphor of the 'green' or fresh quality of memory is frequently used in the texts of mental sciences, when physiologists comment on the extraordinarily vivid nature of involuntary memory, and we have seen a hint of this even in *Nicholas Nickleby*, in the representation of the return of the protagonist's memories as 'fresh and thick [...] green boughs of yesterday'. Thus, the image of the holly resonates with continually conflicting connotations: on the one hand, it is a symbol of the social and moral imperative of remembering that is put forward in the story but, on the other, a closer look reveals that the wreath is in fact composed out of aggressive battle scenes. Whereas in the last illustration of *Nicholas Nickleby* the social function of memory (with, again, the children making a garland of flowers) relies on the absence of the disturbing connotations of memory (epitomized by Smike's grave), in

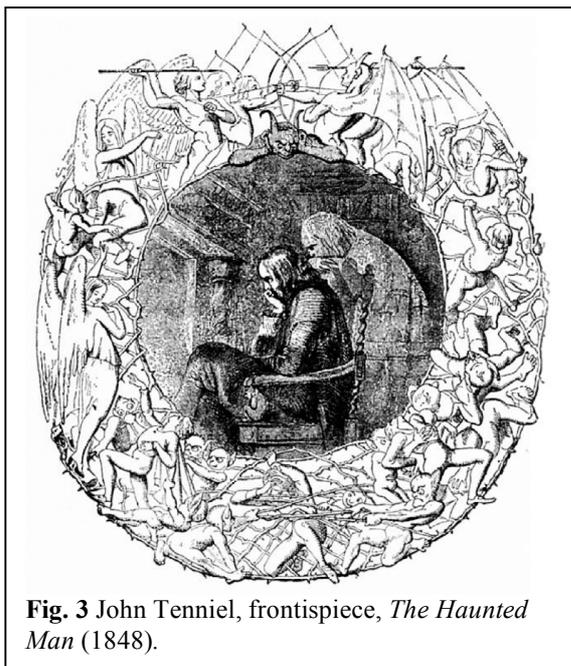


Fig. 3 John Tenniel, frontispiece, *The Haunted Man* (1848).

Tenniel's picture an already problematic image of memory encircles the depiction of Redlaw's pathological brooding over his past. From this perspective, we may argue that Dickens's story reverses Bellamy's dream of memory extirpation not simply because it manifestly views the spectre's gift as de-humanizing, but also because it fundamentally rejects the reduction of memory to its fully masterable aspects.

In 'The Haunted Man', Redlaw finds out that the deprivation of unpleasant memories is more detrimental than the

aberrations they cause in the associative process. If his spectral double – who has come '[u]nbidden' (*HM*, 137) – is the projection of the degrading self presiding over Redlaw's unconscious return of recollections, the erasure of such recollections engenders a similarly diminishing alteration of consciousness. Thus, those who unknowingly received Redlaw's sinister 'gift' look back on that experience as a mysterious altered state,⁵³ while Redlaw discovers to his horror that he has become like the 'wild thing' (*HM*, 165), the savage boy 'who might live to take the outward form of man, but who, within, would live and perish a mere beast' (*HM*, 143). What grants this transformation in the relations of memory to alteration of consciousness is a fundamental change in the focus of the story, which (especially in the last section, when the gift is 'reversed') shifts from the representation of the psychological aspects of memory to its social and moral function. By so doing, Dickens's text becomes an exploration of the relations memory entertains not so much with 'identity' as with 'humanity'. This process allows for the transformation of the unbidden memories of psychological discourse into the recollections of sorrow, wrong and trouble which have a pivotal role in the prevention of selfishness and ingratitude. While unconscious memory can destroy Redlaw's sanity, the removal of painful recollections involves the removal of the social ties on which the self's duty towards others relies. This is why the suppression of memory, while epitomizing a fantasy that seemed intriguing at the beginning, is exposed as a monstrous operation in the story.

But a further recognition is moreover discernible in ‘The Haunted Man’. In this Christmas story, Dickens confronts us with something different from Nicholas’s or David’s skilful management of their recollections. Indeed, what this short story implicitly suggests is that the ‘excess’ of memory may enable the narrator and the reader alike to discover new creative possibilities in the involuntary return of recollections and, above all, in the unsettling intermingling of imagination and memory that this return entails. Although ‘The Haunted Man’ is a sternly moral tale, it is not coincidental that, as Helen Groth has demonstrated, Redlaw’s confusion between his recollections and the projection of his unconscious activity in the form of the spectre inspired John Pepper’s spectacular theatre of illusion, which was in turn influential on the proto-cinematic work of the Lumières in Britain.⁵⁴

Mnemonic errancy and the ‘shadows’ that the unconscious life of the mind produces seem in this case to be conducive not only to disruption but also, interestingly, to the unexplored realms of the imagination. In a letter of January 1849 Dickens wrote that ‘the heaping up of that quantity of shadows, I hold to be absolutely necessary, as a preparation to the dark shadow of the Chemist’.⁵⁵ The shadows produced by the fire, which have the power of ‘showing the children the marvellous shapes and faces on the walls, and gradually changing what was real and familiar there to what was wild and magical’ (*HM*, 200), reveal that the combination of mnemonic impressions and imaginary projections possess fascinating potentialities for works of fiction.

If this reading might seem far from Dickens’s own experience, we need only to recall that the Dickensian connections between mnemonic errancy and creativity are recognized also by no less authority than Carpenter himself, who mentions Dickens when dealing with the peculiar mental state which, following some intense concentration of thought, allows the ‘ideal creations’ of imagination to be ‘reproduced with the force of actual experience’, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish among recollected and imagined faces and events.⁵⁶ Bodenheimer notices that in Dickens’s *Book of Memoranda*, containing some notes for the novels, the identification with the characters becomes at times absolute, as ‘Dickens sometimes slides from the third to the first person as he becomes invested in the mind he is inventing or parodying’.⁵⁷ Drawing on the special nature of Dickensian imagination, Walter Benjamin in his *Arcades Project* seems to be fascinated with the *flâneur*-like attitude of Dickens, who walks through London haunted by its countless impressions and in turn haunting the city with his own traces⁵⁸ – a ‘seer of

visions', as G.H. Lewes wrote, adding that 'in no other sane mind [...] have I observed vividness of imagination approaching so closely to hallucination'.⁵⁹ As the mental sciences progressed towards an increasingly pathological and medicalized conception of involuntary memory, Dickens's fiction became more prone to recognizing the creative insights granted to the mysterious workings of unconscious memory.

Thus, in *Great Expectations*, where Dickens turns again to autodiegetic narration (ten years after *David Copperfield*), we are confronted not only with the evaluation of the imaginary aspects of recollection, but also with a more effective merging of the psychological and the social value of memory.⁶⁰ Significantly, the corruption of the name 'Philip' into 'Pip' mimics the treatment that the 'good memory' of Old Philip (the octogenarian character of the Christmas story) undergoes in this novel. For if it is true that Pip displays good mnemonic skills, this is depicted as a mental activity that is not infrequently excessive and disturbing, unlike Old Pip's celebrated ability to reconnect every Christmas with the preceding ones. Indeed, Pip's sanity is threatened from the very start by the uncontrollable return of his memories of the convict and of Satis House, and his inability to master such associations triggers his disturbingly embodied responses – his tremblings, his 'constitutionally faltering' (*GE*, 260), his nervous tics – as well as his, as Pip puts it at one point, 'division of mind' (*GE*, 166).

Also his narrative is affected by the disorder brought about by memory, for, beside the many instances in which the narrator orders his recollections according to the principle of relevance, this text is replete with some irreducible moments, expressed through Pip's uncanny intuitions or 'visions', such as his imaginary vision of Estella looking at him through the windows of the forge (*GE*, 122-23) or his seeing Joe in the faces and objects surrounding him (*GE*, 531). Pip's visions are examples of the mental process whereby memory blends with imagination and impresses to the narrative the 'haunted' quality that has attracted the attention of so many critics. With its repetitions and multiple distortions, the uncanny narrative of *Great Expectations* is viewed by Julian Wolfreys as epitomising the duplicity of the comic-gothic narration, and is in turn a figure of the multiplicity of the self.⁶¹ And yet, what is intriguing about this novel is that the text does not suppress, as in *Nicholas Nickleby*, nor manages rationally, as in *David Copperfield*, the threatening aspect of memory, which is so vividly present to Pip through the example of Miss Havisham's 'master mania' (*GE*, 458).

Here, Pip's sanity does not rely on David's or Nicholas's fantasy of associationist control, but rather on a form of moral and social memory that comes to acknowledge and accept the unconscious aspects of remembrance. Pip's circular journey makes a gentleman of him because, by conquering his horror of his childhood recollections and thus learning to recognize Magwitch's benevolence, by forgiving Miss Havisham's cruel behaviour and by going back to Joe's simple but earnest affections, he demonstrates that the moral and the psychological conception of memory are not incompatible, and that the acceptance of the disturbing aspects of memory is crucial not only to one's 'humanity' (as in 'The Haunted Man') but also to one's 'identity'.

We know that after the Staplehurst railway accident Dickens lost his voice for a while; and yet, even in this more than literal example of the effects brought about in the organism by disturbing recollections, the unconscious life of the mind proves a powerful source of creativity, inspiring one of the most uncanny of Dickens's short stories, 'The Signalman' (1866).⁶² In contrast to the refrain of 'The Haunted Man', which invokes the 'green' freshness of one's memories, we have a more sinister if trivial refrain, with the words 'For God's sake, clear the way!' disturbingly shifting from one self to the other and hovering between the spheres of past recollection and future anticipation.

Here Dickens could not be farther from Dr. Heidenhoff's positivist excision of the painful memories of his patients. Dickens seems to acknowledge that the disremembering self may be not only (or not simply) dis-membering itself, but, rather, an 'excess' of memory can also provide a privileged access to the creative work of imagination. Matus shows that in 'The Signalman' the literary possibilities of the ghost story, combined with Dickens's attentiveness to the unconscious manifestations of the mind, enabled him 'to articulate more about the relations of memory to cataclysmic event than was available to him in the current discourse on psychic shock', thus anticipating later psychological theorizations on traumatic experience.⁶³ Dickens thus demonstrates that the evaluation of memory does not depend on the dream of perfect mastery over – via the elimination of – its disturbing aspects. Rather, his treatment of memory shows that, as Vrettos argues, the analysis of the scientific context provides us with an important means to overcome the tendency to view some of Dickens's characters as 'isolated bundles of eccentricity in a larger Victorian trajectory toward the complex psychological rendering of interior life'.⁶⁴ By tracing the complex attitudes to memory to be found in the texts we have considered,

Dickens's fiction can be revealed as not only witnessing but also, perhaps, shaping, the Victorian interest in (and concern with) the unconscious activity of the mind.

I wish to thank Ben Winyard and the anonymous referee, whose perceptive responses to the early version of the paper helped strengthen the scope and argument of this article. I am also grateful to Alessandra Violi for her valuable comments, and to Sara Damiani and Loreta Gandolfi for their precious help with images and bibliography.

¹ Edward Bellamy, *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process* (New York: Appleton, 1880), p. 104. Subsequent references to this edition are given as *HP* in the text.

² *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. by Michael Gondry (Focus Features, 2004).

³ Charles Dickens, 'The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain', in *Best Ghost Stories* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1997), pp. 124-200. Subsequent references to this edition are given as *HM* in the text.

⁴ Trauma was given official recognition as a psychological category (in the form of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder) in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association. Since then, scholars have been interested in trauma from a variety of perspectives, ranging from the investigation of collective and individual traumas to the cultural history of the idea of trauma and the psychoanalytic and cultural-critical exploration of trauma and literature. The bibliography of trauma studies is now immense, and forms a great part of memory studies; for literary scholars, of particular interest are Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008) and the earlier article 'Traumaculture', *New Formations*, 50 (2003), 28-47; David Aberbach, *Surviving Trauma: Loss, Literature, and Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995); Geoffrey H. Hartman, 'On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies', *New Literary History*, 26:3 (Summer 1995), 537-563; Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000); Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge [Mass.]: Harvard University Press, 2002); Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fictions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

⁵ See Harald Weirich, *Lethe: the Art and Critique of Forgetting*, transl. by Steven Rendall (Ithaca-New York: Cornell University Press, 2004) and Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Forgetting plays a fundamental role also in the philosophical approach to the question of memory, most notably in Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, transl. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), and Marc Augé, *Oblivion*, transl. by Marjolijn de Jager (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2004). The analysis of literary texts too has witnessed a tendency to highlight models of forgetting, rather than of remembering: among the many possible examples, see *Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture. Lethe's Legacy*, edited by Christopher Ivic and Grant Williams (London: Routledge, 2004); Yolande Jansen, 'The red shoes: Walter Benjamin's reading of memory in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* in the light of the Dreyfus Affair', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 3:1 (2003), 29-43;

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Erik Gray, 'Forgetting FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat*', *Studies in English Literature*, 41: 4 (Autumn, 2001), 765-783.

⁶ *Les Lieux de la mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-92), I, p. xxvii.

⁷ *Inventing the Past: Memory Work in Culture and History*, ed. by Otto Heim and Caroline Wiedmer (Basel: Schwabe, 2005), p. iii.

⁸ Jill L. Matus, *Shock, Memory, and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 60.

⁹ The seminal text is of course Fred Kaplan, *Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), but even the major recent works on mesmerism devote considerable attention to Dickens: see Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998) and Daniel Pick, *Svengali's Web: The Alien Enchanter in Modern Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). Also Louise Henson draws on Dickens's interest in mesmerism to account for the mental origin of many of the supernatural effects found in his ghost stories: Louise Henson, 'Investigations and fictions: Charles Dickens and Ghosts', in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 44-65. See also Steven Connor's article, 'All I Believed is True: Dickens under the Influence', in this issue of 19.

¹⁰ Athena Vrettos, 'Defining Habits: Dickens and the Psychology of Repetition', *Victorian Studies*, 42 (Spring 1999 / 2000), 399-426, p. 421.

¹¹ Vrettos, 'Defining Habits', p. 414.

¹² I have investigated the trope of the dis(re)membering self in an article focusing on pathological memory and Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: Greta Perletti, "'One of a Long Row Only": Organic Memory and the Trope of the Dis(re)Membering Self in Victorian Literature and Science' in *The Knowledge of Literature. La Conoscenza della Letteratura VII*, ed. by Angela Locatelli (Bergamo: Bergamo University Press, 2008), pp. 91-109.

¹³ Nicholas Dames, 'Wave-Theories and Affective Physiologies: The Cognitive Strain in Victorian Novel Theories', *Victorian Studies*, 46:2 (Winter 2004), 206-16.

¹⁴ David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations*, (London: Tegg, 1749; repr. 1834).

¹⁵ Thomas Mayo, *Elements of the Pathology of the Human Mind* (London: Murray, 1838), p. 21.

¹⁶ Mayo, *Elements*, p. 22.

¹⁷ Charles Darwin, *Metaphysics, Materialism and the Evolution of Mind. Early Writings of Charles Darwin*, ed. by Paul H. Barrett (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), p. 6.

¹⁸ 'In Mr. Hardinge [insanity] was caused by thinking over the misery of an illness at Rome, when by accidental delay of money, he was / only / NEARLY thrown into a hospital. – My father was nearly drowned at High Ercall, the thoughts of it, for some years after, was far more painful than the thing itself', Darwin, *Metaphysics*, p. 8.

¹⁹ Thomas Laycock, 'A Chapter on Some Organic Laws of Personal and Ancestral Memory', *Journal of Mental Sciences*, 94 (July 1875), 155-187 (p. 168).

²⁰ Darwin, *Metaphysics*, p. 9.

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- ²¹ James Sully, *Illusions: A Psychological Study* (London: Kegan & Co., 1881), p. 260.
- ²² Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, 'On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955), 24 vols., II, *Studies on Hysteria*, pp. 3-17 (p. 7).
- ²³ Pierre Janet, *L'Automatisme Psychologique: Essai de Psychologie Expérimentale sur les Formes Inférieures de l'Activité Humaine* (Paris: Masson, 1989), pp. 411-12.
- ²⁴ I owe to an insightful essay by Ruth Leys the recognition of the similarities between Janet's method and Bellamy's fantasy. See Ruth Leys, 'Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory', *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1994), 623-62.
- ²⁵ Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- ²⁶ Théodule Ribot, *Les Maladies de la Mémoire* (Paris: Baillière, 1880). William Carpenter, Herbert Spencer and G.H. Lewes are among the British authors Ribot quotes most frequently.
- ²⁷ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria: Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, 2 vols. (London: Rest Fenner, 1817), I, pp. 115-116.
- ²⁸ The phrase is taken from one of the most influential texts of Victorian mental sciences: William Benjamin Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology* (London: Kegan, Trench, Trübner, 1874; repr. 1896), p. 430. Jenny Bourne Taylor also uses this phrase as the title of a perceptive article: see Jenny Bourne Taylor, 'Obscure Recesses: Locating the Victorian Unconscious', in J.B. Bullen, *Writing and Victorianism* (London: Longman, 1997), pp. 137-79.
- ²⁹ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, I, p. 115.
- ³⁰ Thomas De Quincey, 'Suspiria de Profundis', in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater, Suspiria de Profundis and the English Mail-Coach* (London: Macdonald, 1956), pp. 445-551 (p. 512). On the palimpsest in Victorian imagination see Roger Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives: The Shaping of Influence in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 416-19.
- ³¹ For Locke, the definition of the person is grounded on an act of self-recognition in which memory plays the pivotal role: '[the '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', John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 335.
- ³² Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 154.
- ³³ Henry Holland, *Chapters on Mental Physiology* (London: Longman, 1852), p. 152 (emphasis in the text).
- ³⁴ John Abercrombie, *Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth* (Edinburgh: Waugh, 1831; second edition), p. 16.
- ³⁵ Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology*, p. 455.
- ³⁶ Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology*, p. 24.
- ³⁷ 'One might compare the relation of the ego to the id with that between a rider and his horse. The horse provides the locomotor energy, and the rider has the prerogative of determining the goal and of guiding the movements of his powerful mount towards it'. Sigmund Freud, 'The Dissection of Personality', in *The*

Standard Edition, XXII, *New Introductory Lectures to Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, pp. 57-80 (p. 77).

The roots of the metaphor of the horse/rider are probably to be found in Plato's image of the soul as a Charioteer governing two horses (*Phaedrus* 246a-254e).

³⁸ Carpenter's *Principles of Mental Physiology* revises and extends the fifth edition of his *Principles of Human Physiology* (London: Churchill, 1855). Here Carpenter compares the selves undergoing an alteration of consciousness to 'mere thinking automata, puppets pulled by directing strings' (p. 549). In his *Principles of Mental Physiology*, where we find no reference to the metaphor of the puppets, Carpenter insists again on the depiction of the 'Biologized' self as a 'thinking automaton', some 'it' and a 'subject' that can be defined as such only through the use of inverted commas: 'the Mind of the Biologized 'subject' seems to remain entirely dormant, until aroused by some suggestion which it receives through the ordinary channels of sensation, and to which it responds as automatically as a ship obeys the movements of its rudder' (p. 469).

³⁹ Forbes Benignus Winslow, *On Obscure Diseases of the Brain, and Disorders of the Mind: their Incipient Symptoms, Pathology, Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prophylaxis* (London: Churchill, 1860), p. 450.

⁴⁰ R. Verdon, 'Forgetfulness', *Mind*, 8 (October 1877), 437-52 (p. 451).

⁴¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition* (New York and London: Norton, 1997), I, 2, 135-36.

⁴² On Dickens and memory (with reference to *David Copperfield* in particular) see Rosemary Bodenheimer, *Knowing Dickens* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 57-84; William Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 119-32; Kerry McSweeney, 'David Copperfield and the Music of Memory', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 23 (1994), 93-119.

⁴³ Bodenheimer, *Knowing Dickens*, p. 58.

⁴⁴ Bodenheimer, *Knowing Dickens*, p. 59.

⁴⁵ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (London: Dent, 1966), 2 vols, I, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 149. Subsequent references to this edition are given as *DC* in the text.

⁴⁷ Bodenheimer, *Knowing Dickens*, p. 79.

⁴⁸ Nicholas Dames, *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 141.

⁴⁹ Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (London: Penguin, 1999). Subsequent references to this edition are given as *NN* in the text.

⁵⁰ Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 395.

⁵¹ Taylor, 'Obscure Recesses', p. 162.

⁵² Dames, *Amnesiac Selves*, pp. 144-48.

⁵³ Thus the Tatterbys: 'I – I have been in a state of mind [...] that I can't bear to think of, Sophy'. 'Oh! It's nothing to what I've been in, Dolph' (*HM*, 187). And thus also Redlaw's student: 'I was not myself [...], I don't know what it was – it was some consequence of my disorder perhaps – I was mad' (*HM*, 90).

⁵⁴ Helen Groth, 'Reading Victorian Illusions: Dickens' *Haunted Man* and Dr. Pepper's "Ghost"', *Victorian Studies*, 50 (Autumn 2007), 43-65.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Bodenheimer, *Knowing Dickens*, p. 12.

⁵⁶ Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology*, p. 456.

⁵⁷ Bodenheimer, *Knowing Dickens*, p. 21.

⁵⁸ ‘The undying scenes we can all see if we shut our eyes are not the scenes that we have stared at under the direction of guide-books; the scenes we see are the scenes at which we did not look at all – the scenes in which we walked when we were thinking about something else – about a sin, or a love affair, or some childish sorrow. We can see the background now because we did not see it then. So Dickens did not stamp these places on his mind; he stamped his mind on these places’. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, transl. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge [Mass] and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 438.

⁵⁹ Quoted in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. by George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 60.

⁶⁰ Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London: Penguin, 2006). Subsequent references to this edition are given as *GE* in the text.

⁶¹ Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny, and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 53.

⁶² Charles Dickens, ‘The Signalman’ in *Best Ghost Stories*, pp. 262-73. On this story see Jill L. Matus, ‘Memory and Aftermath: from Dickens’s “The Signalman” to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*’, in *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction*, pp. 83-120. See also Matus’s earlier article: ‘Trauma, Memory, and Railway Disaster: the Dickensian Connection’, *Victorian Studies*, 43 (2001), 413-36.

⁶³ Matus, *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction*, p. 98.

⁶⁴ Vrettos, ‘Defining Habits’, p. 421.