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Andrew Hiscock  
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## READING MEMORY IN EARLY MODERN LITERATURE

'He who remembers or recollects, thinks', declared Francis Bacon, drawing attention to the absolute centrality of the question of memory in early modern Britain's cultural life. The vigorous debate surrounding the faculty had dated back to Plato at least. However, responding to the powerful influences of an ever-expanding print culture, humanist scholarship, the veneration for the cultural achievements of antiquity and sweeping political upheaval and religious schism in Europe, succeeding generations of authors from the reign of Henry VIII to that of James I engaged energetically with the spiritual, political and erotic implications of remembering. Treating the works of a host of different writers, from the Earl of Surrey, Katherine Parr and John Foxe, to William Shakespeare, Mary Sidney, Ben Jonson and Francis Bacon, this study explores how the question of memory was intimately linked to the politics of faith, identity and intellectual renewal in Tudor and early Stuart Britain.

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*For Stephen*

SOCRATES: But I've forgotten to mention your artful technique (as it seems) of memory

Plato, *Lesser Hippias*

Remembering is merely safeguarding something entrusted to the memory

Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*

We are naturally prone to applaud the times behind us and to villify the present

Sir Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia or Observations on Queen Elizabeth, her times and favourites* (1633?)

If anyone should feel inclined to over-estimate the state of our present knowledge of mental life, a reminder of the function of memory is all that would be needed to force him to be more modest.

Sigmund Freud, 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life' (1901)

**Scientists discover way to reverse loss of memory. Patient recalls forgotten events after accidental breakthrough in surgery.**

Scientists performing experimental brain surgery on a man aged 50 have stumbled across a mechanism that could unlock how memory works. The accidental breakthrough came during an experiment originally intended to suppress the obese man's appetite, using the increasingly successful technique of deep-brain stimulation. Electrodes were pushed into the man's brain and stimulated with an electric current. Instead of losing appetite, the patient had an intense experience of *déjà vu*. He recalled, in intricate details, a scene from 30 years earlier. More tests showed his ability to learn was dramatically improved when the current was switched on and his brain stimulated ... The treatment for obesity was unsuccessful.

*Independent*, 30 January 2008

## *Contents*

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
Introduction: ‘the dark backward and abysm of time’	i
1 ‘To seke the place where I my self hadd lost’: acts of memory in the poetry of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey	37
2 ‘Remembre not (lorde) myne offences’: Katherine Parr and the politics of recollection	65
3 ‘Better a few things well pondered, than to trouble the memory with too much’: troubling memory and martyr in Foxe’s <i>Acts and Monuments</i>	90
4 Text, recollection and Elizabethan fiction: Nashe, Deloney, Gascoigne	113
5 The Doleful Clorinda? Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and the vocation of memory	138
6 ‘Tell me where all past yeares are’: John Donne and the obligations of memory	165
7 ‘Of all the powers of the mind ... the most delicate and fraile’: the poetry of Ben Jonson and the renewal of memory	192
8 ‘This art of memory’: Francis Bacon, memory and the discourses of power	219
<i>Notes</i>	246
<i>Select bibliography</i>	286
<i>Index</i>	314

## *Figures*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1 <i>An Allegory of Prudence</i><br/>       By Titian © The National Gallery, London. Oil on canvas,<br/>       c.1550–65. This image is reproduced by kind permission of<br/>       The National Gallery Picture Library, London.</p>   | <p style="text-align: right;"><i>page</i> 19</p> |
| <p>2 Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey<br/>       By unknown artist © National Portrait Gallery, London.<br/>       Oil on canvas, c.1546. This image is reproduced by kind<br/>       permission of The National Portrait Gallery, London.</p>  | <p style="text-align: right;">46</p>             |
| <p>3 Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke<br/>       Early seventeenth-century engraving by Simon de Passe<br/>       © National Portrait Gallery, London. This image is<br/>       reproduced by kind permission of The National Portrait<br/>       Gallery, London.</p>  | <p style="text-align: right;">141</p>            |
| <p>4 Francis Bacon, <i>Historia Ventorum</i><br/>       From <i>Historia Naturalis et Experimentalis ad Condendam<br/>       Philosophiam siue, Phenomena Vniuersi: Quæ est Instaurationis<br/>       Magnæ Pars Tertia</i> (1622), pp. 51–2. These items are reproduced<br/>       by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino,<br/>       California.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">235</p>            |
| <p>5 Francis Bacon<br/>       By Nicholas Hilliard © National Portrait Gallery, London.<br/>       Watercolour and bodycolour on vellum laid on card, 1578.<br/>       This image is reproduced by kind permission of The National<br/>       Portrait Gallery, London.</p>   | <p style="text-align: right;">244</p>            |

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xi

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