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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

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