



# Memory and Affect in Shakespeare's England

Jonathan Baldo and  
Isabel Karremann



## MEMORY AND AFFECT IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

This is the first collection to systematically combine the study of memory and affect in early modern culture. Essays by leading and emergent scholars in the field of Shakespeare studies offer an innovative research agenda, inviting new, exploratory approaches to Shakespeare's work that embrace interdisciplinary cross-fertilization. Drawing on the contexts of Renaissance literature across genres and on various discourses including rhetoric, medicine, religion, morality, historiography, colonialism, and politics, the chapters bring together a broad range of texts, concerns, and methodologies central to the study of early modern culture. Stimulating for postgraduate students, lecturers, and researchers with an interest in the broader fields of memory studies and the history of the emotions – two vibrant and growing areas of research – it will also prove invaluable to teachers of Shakespeare, dramaturges, and directors of stage productions, provoking discussions of how convergences of memory and affect influence stagecraft, dramaturgy, rhetoric, and poetic language.

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# MEMORY AND AFFECT IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

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From start to finish, this book has been a collaborative endeavor in many respects, and we are grateful to all the people who have played a role in its development. It originated from an SAA seminar entitled “Washed in Lethe: Renaissance Cultures of Remembering and Forgetting” in Washington, DC, where the lively discussion among participants made clear the need for a sustained exploration of the connections between memory and affect. The idea for the volume did not precede the seminar, but rather grew organically from it. We are indebted to our seminar participants for revising their essays in such a way as to foster dialogue between the study of memory and affect, and we are delighted that other colleagues followed our invitation to contribute their current work to the publication. Our editors at Cambridge University Press, Emily Hockley and George Paul Laver, have been supportive throughout. We are especially grateful for their readiness to accommodate changes to the production process, necessitated by the constraints of the pandemic. Our thanks go to the anonymous readers who enthusiastically embraced our idea of bringing the fields of memory studies and affect studies together and whose thoughtful responses helped shape the volume. Ann-Sophie Bosshard and Isabelle Koch have done a wonderful job at copy-editing and hunting down quotations, and we are grateful for the diligence and care with which they helped turn this volume into a book.



## Introduction

*Jonathan Baldo and Isabel Karremann*

### Memory Studies and the Affective Turn

In a recent book on “the new science of memory,” Charles Fernyhough reminds us of a familiar fact about memory: “that emotional events are remembered more clearly and in greater detail than neutral ones. They may also stick in our minds for longer.”<sup>1</sup> Far from a new discovery, the intimate relation between memory and affect has been widely appreciated since at least the ancient world. Their relation was fundamental to the memory arts, whose classic texts – Cicero’s *De oratore*, Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*, and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* – all advocated the use of emotionally compelling imagery on the grounds that it would be longer retained in the memory. A survey of contemporary research in memory studies and affect studies, however, reveals surprisingly little interaction between them. Each area has its own journals, associations, and conferences.<sup>2</sup> There are signs of change, however. They include a recent online, interdisciplinary conference entitled “Memory, Affects and Emotions,” which advises, “We are particularly interested in exploring the potential of [an] affective turn in memory studies.”<sup>3</sup> And Harriet Phillips writes in her recent monograph, *Nostalgia in Print and Performance, 1510–1613: Merry Worlds*, of the “rich affective legacy of pre-Reformation memory in the later sixteenth century.”<sup>4</sup> Our volume seeks to add to what we hope becomes a sustained, productive trend by exploring potential pathways between these two areas of inquiry, as well as their relationship to questions of individual personhood and collective identity in the analysis of culture and its expression in literature. It is the premise of this collection of new essays that the study of memory and affect stand in need not of uniting but of reuniting.

In his account of *memoria*, Aristotle stressed memory’s emotional dimension. For Aristotle and his medieval Islamic proponent Averroes, according to Mary Carruthers, “recollection was understood to be a re-

enactment of experience, which involves cogitation and judgment, imagination, and emotion.”<sup>5</sup> Memory for Aristotle “is a *state* or *affection* . . . that follows on perceiving, apprehending, experiencing, or learning.”<sup>6</sup> Deeply influenced by Aristotle, medieval thinkers held that the close connection between memory and affect was crucial for the “shaping of moral judgment and excellence of character,” and hence for granting memory its “central place in medieval ethical life.”<sup>7</sup> Carruthers writes, “Pre-modern psychologies recognized the emotional basis of remembering, and considered memories to be bodily ‘affects’.”<sup>8</sup> In medieval scholastic philosophy, “there is no such thing as an emotionally detached memory.”<sup>9</sup> Memory was held to be composed of a visual aspect (*simulacrum* or *similitudo*) and an emotional one (*intentio*). The former “serves as a cognitive cue or token to the ‘matter’ or *res* being remembered”; the latter is the “‘inclination’ or ‘attitude’ we have to remembered experience”<sup>10</sup> and “serves to ‘hook’ a particular memory into one (or perhaps more) of a person’s existing networks of experience.”<sup>11</sup> *Intentio* does not merely correspond to the emotional state of the person who remembers; it refers also to that person’s “attitudes, aims, and inclinations . . . , as well as to the state of physical and mental concentration required.” Without *intentio*, memories would be “tossed into storage at random,” rather than put in “places” and “‘colored’ in ways that are partly personal, partly emotional, partly rational, and mostly cultural.”<sup>12</sup> For some modern researchers, the way in which a medieval model of memory took into account emotional and motivational aspects in addition to cognitive ones has prefigured “modern ideas about memories as inherently emotionally coloured.”<sup>13</sup>

The age of Shakespeare that is the focus of this collection shared with the Middle Ages the related beliefs that remembering has an emotional basis and that the mind is essentially embodied. As the essays in this volume confirm, for the early modern period as well as for the medieval, “each memory involves some kind of emotion; each memory is thus to an important degree a physiological, bodily phenomenon.”<sup>14</sup> The extensive and foundational work on the humors by Gail Kern Paster and others has demonstrated the degree to which mind and body were connected in the medical and psychological thinking of the period. Emotions were conceived not as private mental events but as “visibly written on the body.”<sup>15</sup> In spite of these widely held assumptions, in early modern studies memory and affect have largely been treated as distinct areas of inquiry. This volume aims to remedy that situation by helping to open new lines of inquiry between the study of memory and affect in the early modern

period. While “emotion” tends to be employed as an umbrella term for the linguistic and nonlinguistic expression of feelings – for instance, in literature and the arts – we follow Lauren Berlant in conceptually privileging the term “affect” in order to highlight that feeling has not only a personal but a sociopolitical dimension as well: an insight that has long been acknowledged with regard to the interplay of individual and collective memory.<sup>16</sup> This is particularly relevant with regard to the study of early modern culture and literature, as the early modern understanding of selfhood is much more overtly social and draws on memory as well as affect – alongside reason – as sources of individual and communal senses of self.<sup>17</sup>

The study of memory and of affect has been siloed not just in research on the early modern period, but more generally. Two of the most flourishing and broadly interdisciplinary trends across the humanities, social sciences, and neurosciences, affect studies and memory studies have developed concurrently since the mid-1990s. The rise of the “affective turn” is often traced to political philosopher Brian Massumi’s influential essay “The Autonomy of Affect” (1995),<sup>18</sup> which draws heavily on his work of translating Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. According to Ruth Leys, author of *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* (2017), the widely shared interest in affect among scholars in the humanities and social sciences represents a reaction against a perceived overvaluation of “the role of reason and rationality in politics, ethics, and aesthetics.”<sup>19</sup> In her introduction to the volume *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Patricia Ticineto Clough observes that the turn to affect across a number of disciplines coincided with “a time when critical theory is facing the analytic challenges of ongoing war, trauma, torture, massacre, and counter/terrorism.” She speculates that the affective turn constitutes a “shift in thought,” one that registers “a change in the cofunctioning of the political, economic, and cultural.”<sup>20</sup> For Michael Hardt, too, attention to affects, besides shifting attention to emotions and to the body, promises syntheses of various kinds, “because affects refer equally to the body and to the mind; and . . . because they involve both reason and the passions.”<sup>21</sup>

At about the same time as the growth of affect studies, the study of memory across an equally broad range of disciplines gained momentum from the culture wars in the United States in the 1990s and the proliferation of new digital technologies for recording and preserving the past, as well as from the inevitable tendency to look backward at the end of a

century and a millennium. Alison Landsberg postulates about the explosion of memory studies near the turn of the century:

It should come as no surprise that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, memory has once again emerged as an urgent topic of debate for scholars in a wide variety of disciplines. As in the past, this interest in memory might be attributable to ontological insecurity at the start of the new century or anxiety about the shape of the “new world order.”<sup>22</sup>

The fast-rising interest in memory across cultural studies has been driven in part by the foundational work of Jan and Aleida Assmann, whose concept of “cultural memory” has been transformative, hailed by some as a new paradigm for cultural studies. Building on the work of Freud and especially of the philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs’ concept of collective memory in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925) – the idea that a society may possess a group memory beyond that of any individual memory, though an individual’s memory is influenced by and in turn may influence the collective memory – Jan and Aleida Assmann demonstrate how what they call cultural memory serves as the foundation of shared identities.<sup>23</sup>

Like twins separated at birth, the two fields of research known as memory studies and affect studies have had comparatively little influence on or communication with one another.<sup>24</sup> While the role of affect for the constitution of individual subjectivity and collective identity in the early modern period has been frequently addressed,<sup>25</sup> the specific links between affect and memory have gone largely unnoticed. It would be misleading to suggest that study of the literature and culture of early modern England has witnessed absolutely no traffic between affect studies and memory studies. In particular, studies of the impact of the Reformation on rituals of commemoration, most notably Stephen Greenblatt’s *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2001), demonstrate how powerfully the two areas are connected. Recent work by Alexandra Walsham, Alison Shell, Gillian Wood, and Harriet Phillips likewise explores the intimate connections between personal recollection, social memory, and nostalgia in the aftermath of the Reformation.<sup>26</sup> But there has been no widespread and systematic communication between studies concentrating on either memory or affect in the period; independently, each represents a growing and immensely fertile area of research into the literature and culture of early modern England.<sup>27</sup> Memory studies in the early modern period, for the most part, have focused on epistemological and cognitive issues, on questions of belief, evidence, skepticism, confirmation, and perception.<sup>28</sup>

We often forget that, in the view of early modern faculty psychology, the faculty of memory powerfully governs and is governed by affects such as suffering, pain, or shame but also laughter and love, and by actions with strong causal ties to affect, such as revenge or forgiving. Mnemonic phenomena like trauma or nostalgia cannot be separated from their affective impact on the individual and collective psyche.

Reviving as well as revising Halbwachs' oppositional distinction between memory and history, Pierre Nora distinguishes "between real memory – social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies – and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past."<sup>29</sup> Commenting on the now familiar distinction, Alison Landsberg concedes that, while agreeing with Marita Sturken's assertion that memory and history are "more entangled than oppositional," they "have different modes of address. Memory always implies a subjective, affective relationship to the past, while history strives to maintain a sense of distance from the past."<sup>30</sup> In this sense, Shakespeare's plays about England's medieval past are not "history plays" but rather "memory plays," whose intent was to enhance an affective relationship between audiences and their collective, national past. They are among the period's most indelible demonstrations of the close working relationship between memory and affect. By contrast, in our own time, the recent global rise of populist politics has only seemingly reunited affect with memory by harnessing a rhetoric of emotion to a nostalgic invocation of the geopolitical world of yesteryear that, however, aims at consigning to oblivion the lessons of history: caught up in the here and now of anxieties, fears, and resentments, populist rhetoric privileges affect over memory, to the exclusion of memory's cognitive fellow, reason.

### **Memory and Affect in the Early Modern Period: Conceptual Frameworks**

We take our cue for uniting the study of memory and affect from Shakespeare. When Shakespearean characters speak of "hateful memory" (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 4.10.9) or "sad remembrance" (*Twelfth Night*, 1.1.31; *Richard III*, 4.4.252), they suggest a deep connection between memory and affect that has been neglected so far by students both of cultural memory and of the history of the emotions. Hamlet's exhortation of Queen Gertrude to remember her first husband is so cruelly effective because it instills in her feelings of shame and self-loathing. Henry's St.

Crispin's Day Speech casts its spell by forging patriotic pride with the ritualized remembrance of military triumph into a national holiday. Sorrows often take root in the fertile soil of memory, as Macbeth suggests when he challenges the Scottish Doctor, "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, / Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow . . . ?" (5.3.43). Shakespeare also casts memory in the part of rescuer, a bringer of joy rather than sorrow, as an astonished Prospero suggests when he questions Miranda about a childhood memory, "how is't / That this lives in thy mind?" (1.2.49). Miranda's memory serves as prototype for all the play's subsequent acts of recovery, restoration, and redemption.

Specific states of feeling that are inherently intertwined with memory, such as mourning, vengefulness, or nostalgia, drive the plots of many Shakespearean tragedies and problem plays. The number of examples that can be found not just in Shakespeare but in the literature of his contemporaries suggests that this conjunction of memory and affect is more than a rhetorical conceit that forges two distant concepts through the power of poetic language; rather, it is a conjunction made possible and familiar by early modern notions of human physiology, psychology, and philosophy which suggest that memory and affect, while in themselves different, were thought of as related modes of embodied knowledge.<sup>31</sup> This becomes particularly evident in texts that warned against the perilous influence of each on the other. The stenographer John Willis, for instance, warned in his handbook on the memory arts that "natural memory," that is, the brain's disposition for retention, can be harmfully impaired by emotional disturbances such as "anxious care, fear, grief, too much bashfulness, covetous hope, Jealousie, &c." or by "Filthy desires, as avarice, envy, thirst of revenge, lust, love of harlots and the ardent Passion, *Love*."<sup>32</sup> And clergyman William Perkins' theological-rhetorical manual on *The Arte of Prophecyng* warned that the striking nature of memory images, which made them memorable in the first place, could too easily lead to an "impious" arousal of the passions: "The animation of the image, which is the key of memory, is impious, because it requireth absurd, insolent, and prodigious cogitations, and those especially which set an edge upon and kindle the most corrupt affections of the flesh."<sup>33</sup> These warnings, we do well to note, do not speak to an opposition between mind and body, between intellect and emotion, but are rather a testimony to the entanglement of memory and affect.

The premodern perspective thus provides a more holistic understanding of cognitive processes as grounded in the body and influenced by its sense perceptions and passions. Such an understanding can be approached

through the three conceptual frameworks of faculty psychology, Galenic humoralism, and, in modern parlance, distributed cognition. The first framework located the human psychological faculties of imagination, judgment, and memory in three different “ventricles,” or regions, of the brain. As such, these cognitive faculties are linked to the material disposition of the brain, as the standard metaphor for the memory also suggests: like a wax tablet, the brain must be of the right kind of material quality – moist but not too moist, warm rather than cold – in order to receive a lasting imprint.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, imagination, judgment, and memory as the higher faculties of intellection were also affected by the passions of the soul, which, in the Aristotelian tradition, was thought of as an embodied entity.<sup>35</sup> The Jesuit Thomas Wright signaled this in the title of his *Passions of the Minde* (1604), a treatise which explains the complex entanglement of the faculties and the passions. What emerges from his description is, primarily, that both are kinds of embodied cognition:

First, then to our imagination commeth, by sense or memorie, some object to be knowne . . . the which being knowne (for *Ignoti nulla cupido* [we do not know what we do not desire]) in the imagination which resideth in the former part of the braine, (as we proove) when we imagine any thing, presently the purer spirites flocke from the brayne, by certayne secret channels to the heart, where they pitch at the doore, signifying what an object was presented. . . . The heart immediately bendeth, either to prosecute it, or to eschewe it; and the better to effect that affection, draweth on other humours to help him . . .; and not onley . . . the heart draweth, but also the same soule that informeth the heart residing in other partes, sendeth the humours vnto the heart.<sup>36</sup>

Wright describes here a multi-tiered communication between sense perception, material brain, the heart as seat of the passions, and the soul as the seat of imagination as well as judgment and memory. The overall effect is “affection,” a psychological or physical change happening in the body or involving the body;<sup>37</sup> or, in Wright’s own words borrowed from Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*, a knowledge born of passion: “we do not know what we do not desire.” The passions thus are not unmediated responses to external sense perceptions but constitute a kind of cognitive processing, as Benedict Robinson points out: passions are “ways of seeing, and therefore also perceptions and modes of cognition.”<sup>38</sup> According to Wright, passions may also be aroused by “memorie,” another indicator that the embodied nature of knowledge in faculty psychology made the conjunction of memory and affect familiar. When Wright describes the imagination, drawing on “sense or memorie,” as the operative faculty that sends outs

“spirits” which affect both heart and soul, he formulates a key principle of the arts of rhetoric and of literary creation that is also acknowledged, for example, in Sidney’s *Defense of Poesie* and especially the many contemporary defenses of as well as attacks on the theater.<sup>39</sup>

The second conceptual framework through which memory and affect were understood as related in the early modern period is Galenic humoralism. The pioneering work by Gail Kern Paster, begun in *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (2004), has firmly established the centrality of the material body for a “premodern ecology of the passions” that connected the body and affect. In Paster’s “psychophysiological” account, the early moderns understood “the passions and the body that houses them in ecological terms – that is, in terms of that body’s reciprocal relations to the world.”<sup>40</sup> Paster explains that, for early modern individuals, “the passions actually were liquid forces of nature, because, in this cosmology, the stuff of the outside world and the stuff of the body were composed of the same elemental materials.”<sup>41</sup> The humors also feature in Wright’s description quoted above, where they have the role of a medium through which passions are transported and communicated through the body. Humoralism thus goes a step further than faculty psychology by linking embodiment to the environment in reciprocal relations, thereby adding a dimension to the holistic notion of embodied perception and experience as not only embodied, but also embedded.<sup>42</sup>

Modern scholarship on Galenic humoralism, however, tends to neglect the subject’s agency in favor of the passivity of sense perceptions and somatic experiences. Yet if “the passions are what connects our minds to the world outside us,” as Cummings and Sierhuis argue,<sup>43</sup> then this insight urges us to understand early modern emotions as intersubjective: they allow us to connect with the other human beings who inhabit the world. This is where the philosophy of the passions in the early modern period can usefully complement the psychophysiological understanding provided by Galenic humoralism to help us see the political and ethical dimension of the emotions. As such, the passions are necessarily more than bodily impulses. They form one of the many kinds of embodied knowledge about ourselves and our relations to the environment, as Miranda Anderson remarks: “physical processes and wider environments play manifold cognitive roles, including enabling or constituting phenomena now identified by terms such as mind, thought, reasoning, experience, emotions, memory, imagination, and perception.”<sup>44</sup> The framework of ‘distributed cognition’ as “an activity that is always both embodied and extended into the world”<sup>45</sup> is particularly relevant for linking memory and affect with the



environment the embodied subject inhabits. Although “the term originates in our own period,” Anderson affirms that “distributed cognition was more widely manifest in the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century early modern belief system than it has become in current times.”<sup>46</sup> Both memory and affect were conceived of as modes of cognition extending beyond the individual body, which was embedded in a material, social, and cultural environment. Thus, the memory arts encouraged the imaginative creation of “repositories,” spatial environments through which the orator might walk in his mind to retrieve memorized facts, sentences, or names. These repositories were typically imagined as built environments, rooms, galleries, palaces, or – particularly relevant for our collection – theaters. Put into practice, especially by professional play-actors, the art of memory also relied on material artifacts like textbooks, plots, and props and on the material environment constituted by the other players and the playhouse itself, which extended the working field of recollection beyond the brain to material, tangible objects.<sup>47</sup> Importantly, material objects could become “triggers and sites of cognitive activity in their own right,” as Sophie Duncan has recently shown in a study of props and cognition in early modern plays, actively forcing memories on figures: the handkerchief in *Othello* or the miniature portraits in *Hamlet* would be examples.<sup>48</sup> From the perspective of distributed cognition, memory thus not only functions *like* emotion: as externally stimulated modes of embodied knowledge, both are entangled in meaningful ways.

Early modern scholarship has been pushing toward a rapprochement between affect and memory not only from the perspective of the history of the emotions and historical phenomenology. Memory studies, too, have recently begun to shift their focus to “the affective, experiential and immanent aspects of memory, attending, in particular, to the way they foreground questions about gender and embodiment,” as the authors of a review article in *Memory Studies* point out.<sup>49</sup> Attention to the physiology of memory itself is not new, of course: the early modern memory arts typically included quasi-medical regimens with dietary recommendations designed to improve the retentive faculties of the brain, and this has been part of scholarly discussions of the *ars memoriae*. When Amanda Bailey and Mario DiGangi state in the introduction to *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts* that “[humoralism] understood the interrelated components of mind, psyche, soma, climate, food, and air,”<sup>50</sup> then something very similar can be said about the memory arts. While ostensibly focused on intellectual cognition and its training, the memory arts combined the disciplines of ancient rhetoric and humoral medicine in order to effectively manage

the process of recollection by manipulating the disposition of the material body which enables it. Looking on the reception side, the memory arts were in the service of rhetoric that aimed at both cognitively persuading and affectively touching the audience, often at the same time. The recent affective turn within the field of memory studies expands this notion of embodied memory from “practices of memory cultivation” and “written and printed documents . . . to objects and places, to religious discourses and to a wide range of embodied, sensory and emotive experiences.”<sup>51</sup> Prominent examples of such scholarship include Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass’s *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (2000), which reconstructs the ability of clothes to “mold and shape [subjects] both physically and socially . . . through their power as material memories”; Alexandra Walsham’s *The Reformation of the Landscape* (2011), which examines how religious assumptions influenced contemporary perceptions of the physical environment, and how in turn the reformed landscape shaped and commemorated the theological, political, and cultural transformations of the Reformation; or Patricia Phillippy’s *Shaping Remembrance from Shakespeare to Milton* (2018), which explores textual, visual, and material forms of commemoration, often as gendered practices, including manuscript and printed memorials, portraits, jewelry, textiles or ‘rarities.’<sup>52</sup>

This scholarship is interested in the individual and collective forms of cultural memories and affects, and in their transmission through various media and artifacts. If, in such studies, “[m]emories are formed and expressed by means of intersubjective social interactions,”<sup>53</sup> what must be acknowledged and conceptualized more systematically is the role that affect plays in shaping those intersubjective social interactions which produce cultural memory. Garrett A. Sullivan has shown how memory is “an embodied process that presupposes involvement with the environment” and that is also impacted by socially proscribed affects like shame or honor; hence, remembering must be understood not only as a cognitive act but as a social performance determined at least in part by affect: “Remembering is not recollection; it is instead an action or set of actions that arises out of the subject’s response to specific social circumstance and a particular imperative to remember (that is, the imperative to behave in a certain way).”<sup>54</sup> The collection of essays edited by Cummings and Sierhuis examines the role of the passions for both subjectivity and intersubjective relations, ethics, and politics, although the only example of emotional collective memory touched on is the phenomenon of nostalgia. Nostalgia is indeed the best-studied intersection of memory and affect in early

modern culture to date.<sup>55</sup> More recently, Amanda Bailey and Mario DiGangi have acknowledged the sociopolitical dimension of affect, arguing that “affect can illuminate the role of embodiment in early modern representations of political subjectivity and agency,”<sup>56</sup> a role which becomes particularly interesting when we consider the politics of memory. Patricia Cahill’s chapter in that volume, for instance, reads Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris* (1592/3) as an affective immersion in the past and its atrocities. Investigating contemporary eyewitness accounts and political pamphlets on the historical event alongside the play-text and props used to activate somatic responses, she reconstructs the affective intensity of violence enacted on stage through which Marlow’s play “simulates” and reenacts rather than represents the past.<sup>57</sup> Exploring how history is apprehended in affective rather than merely cognitive or intellectual terms allows for a new approach to the links between trauma, memory, and history. [Part II](#) of this volume, “The Politics of Memory and Affect,” pursues these links in a systematic fashion but adds reparative affects like laughter to the range of emotions through which collective memories, in particular of potentially traumatic experiences, were negotiated.<sup>58</sup>

### **This Collection: Topics, Issues, Questions**

Comprising four parts, each with a particular thematic focus, our volume seeks to demonstrate the range of issues, concepts, and readings made possible by the partnership of memory and affect studies. [Part I](#), situated at the intersection of the *ars memoriae* and the *ars amatoria*, considers the emotionally inflected interplay of remembering and forgetting. Love and desire feature significantly in classical theories and practices of memory, which are in turn allied to the art of rhetoric. Rebeca Helfer examines the poetics of memory in Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* in dialogue with Plato’s *Phaedrus* and *The Symposium*. She argues that the sonnets at once ruin and remember the ideal that Platonic love leads to recollection, with the paradoxical twist that Shakespeare’s poetry likewise embraces an aesthetic of willful forgetting and pleasurable oblivion. Like Engel’s and Holland’s chapters in later parts of this volume, Helfer’s is interested in the ways in which the devastating emotional impact of the traumatic ur-scene of the art of memory – the poet Simonides naming the dead by remembering seating arrangements in the collapsed banquet hall – both is and is not contained in the practice of memory itself. Brian Cummings’ contribution, too, builds on a classical theoretical framework – the “term *anamnesis*, or ‘recollection,’ familiar from Plato and Cicero”<sup>59</sup> as well as Erasmus’

rhetorical handbook *De copia* – that is central to his exploration of both Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter’s Tale*. Remembering love, Cummings points out, is always bound up with the experience of loss, with saying goodbye, with the danger of forgetting love: a danger that is both imagined and countered through the recuperative deployment of rhetoric and poetry, embodied in the ancient myth of the poet Orpheus and his wife Eurydice. The final chapter in [Part I](#) takes the paradoxical imperatives of remembering love to the extreme by examining the ways in which desire may induce oblivion. Reading Marston’s *The Insatiate Countess* alongside medical, moral-philosophical, and religious texts, Grant Williams shows how female corporeality – much as in the “Dark Lady” sonnets – disturbs hegemonic notions of masculinity. The depiction of Isabella invokes the seductress Circe, one of Odysseus’ lethal adversaries who in the early modern period is held up as a source of forgetting oneself; her interactions with men are figures of an ‘emotional contagion’ that affects their powers of recollection, a major prop of selfhood in early modern culture. Williams’ analysis thus complements Helfer’s examination of the Trojan mythos underpinning the affective power of love on Shakespeare’s mnemonic poetics.

The chapters in [Part II](#) are connected by a shared focus on the ethical challenges posed by the politics of memory. Together they explore how language and literary form can both express and contain painful memories. They confirm that limits placed on what can be said led to innovative uses of conventions in genres as diverse as hagiography, complaint, and jestbooks. Moreover, the chapters in this part demonstrate how the suppression of an individual’s affective memories is often linked to political power structures: the twinned energies of memory and emotion were charged with political meaning in an England that ceaselessly reread, and remade, its past. The authors of the first two chapters in this grouping further the conversation around the study of memory and emotion in the early modern period by unmooring trauma from a purely individual, psychoanalytic context. They also explore ways in which trauma puts pressure on form and language. [Part II](#) opens with Devori Kimbro’s chapter on Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. Turning hagiographical tradition into a traumatic historiography, Foxe paradoxically but nevertheless effectively draws on a decidedly Catholic form in order to construct a traumatic origin narrative that serves as a rallying point for Protestant resolve and communal identity. The presentation of accurate historical information is here secondary to a desire to remember affectively and remember selectively in order to create a lasting impact. Traumatic historiography

memorializes the mutual grieving of individuals *and* the nation in the wake of tragedy or near-tragedy. A similar dynamic informs William Kerwin's chapter, although he sees a stronger tension at work between national memory and individual trauma, one that troubles the state's memorial apparatus. In a mid-Tudor collection of complaint poetry, George Cavendish's *Metrical Visions*, affect and memory are intertwined in what Kerwin terms "the imagined testimonies of trauma victims, speaking from the grave."<sup>60</sup> Modeled on older narratives of confession and penance, complaint offers a poetic tradition for articulating memories of loss, shame, guilt, and fear, which are here filtered through a recorder and an author-figure. The structure of complaint both replicates and overcomes the strictures of memory-oppression under censorship in the Protestant nation. Giving us memories entangled with both individual and collective experiences of ruin and its repercussions, complaint poetry can take on different affective and political functions, ranging from release and consolation to curse and political critique. In the final chapter in this part, Indira Ghose explores the interaction between memory and the affect of pleasure in the early modern culture of jesting. In our own time, the political force of jokes has become glaringly apparent. Did jokes have a similar dimension in the Renaissance? Ghose helps us answer that question by exploring ways in which the genre of the Renaissance jestbook tapped into the collective memory of pre-Reformation festive culture. Jestbooks, Ghose observes, were frequently "marketed as vehicles of nostalgia"<sup>61</sup> for an illusory "Merry England" of supposed unity and amity. She emphasizes the power of jestbooks not to divide further a people whose collective memory was fractured by the Reformation but to transpose antagonism into a shared and pleasurable competition. Jests, with their sometimes anarchic spirit and energy, become advocates of civility in Ghose's thoughtful and attentive reading.

The chapters in [Part III](#) consider the relation of memory and affect to time and space, respectively. Drawing on recent affect theory, Johannes Schlegel discusses the workings of affect on temporality in *Hamlet* and *Othello*: guilt and melancholy, jealousy and disgust dilate time, just as they tend to twist the remembrance of the object eliciting these emotions. His chapter examines disgust as the affective response to the conflicting and paradoxical temporalities of the two tragedies, enacted through the plays' fundamental dramatic conflicts. Katharine A. Craik's discussion of the "London plot" of Yarrington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies* examines onstage acts of memorialization that add up to a portrait of emotional life in the early modern city. Oddly, this affective cityscape is characterized by an

emotional indifference, a detachment from one's affective responses that signals disordered personhood. Instead, emotions are projected onto the city, which emerges as a prosthetic version of the self. In particular, the River Thames figures as a site of local memory-making and as a model for a 'fluid memory' that acknowledges the transformative forces of both remembering and forgetting. The river's mnemonic ambivalence is invoked in the plot about Beech's murder, as the emotional catharsis the murderers experience is constantly undercut by traces of the crime washed up by London's waterways. The affective temporality of nostalgia occupies the center of Daniel Normandin's chapter on *Cymbeline*. He reads the memory of ancient British settlement as an uncomfortable topical engagement with early seventeenth-century colonial expansion. Remembering Britain's past offers a point of affective identification with indigenous peoples that sits in uneasy tension with the future promise of imperial greatness. Mapping ancient Britain onto Jacobean colonies like Virginia, nostalgia weds memory and emotion in not just a temporal but also a spatial dimension.

Part IV considers the ways in which stagecraft produces particular configurations of memory and affect. William Engel's chapter discusses the uses of emotion for mnemonic dramaturgy: affect-laden allusions and mnemotechnical cues in the playworld evoke an experiential world outside the play. Engel examines how certain moments in *Henry V* particularly invite audiences to imaginatively recreate a memory – be it based on historical events or on collective memory encapsulated in proverbial sayings – to come up with a plausible "backstory" that informs the affective actions and behavioral patterns of a character enacted on stage. He coins the intriguing phrase "tug of memory"<sup>62</sup> to describe the way in which plays guide audiences' memories and thereby their affective responses. History plays are a particularly productive genre for this approach, due to their characteristic temporality that encourages analogies between memories of the past and their emotional as well as topical and political significance for the present. That this topicality always already constitutes a selective memory is demonstrated by the [next chapter](#). Rory Loughnane's contribution explores the tensions between historical narrative and a mythology of dynastic contestation that is highlighted through emotionally affective dramaturgy: in this case, the dramatic rendering of Duke Humphrey's death in two different versions (the quarto of *The First Part of the Contention* and the folio of *2 Henry VI*). By doing so, Loughnane persuasively demonstrates the importance of textual scholarship to the interpretation of memory and affect in early modern drama. The subsequent

chapter, by Evelyn Tribble, continues the consideration of “backstories” and alternative dramatic narratives by examining the affect-laden recollection and return of characters from the second tetralogy in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, most notably the figure of Falstaff. Working with the concept of the multiverse as a “set of mutually incompatible story-worlds,”<sup>63</sup> Tribble argues that the generic shift to comedy amounts to a deliberate amnesia, a desire to forget the painfully violent (back)stories of the history plays, which are nevertheless kept in the audience’s mind through recurring moments of recollection within the play. Lived and remembered affective experience becomes a source of resistance in the [final chapter](#) on the entanglements of pain, love, and memory in *Macbeth*. Focusing on the figure of Macduff, Lina Perkins Wilder traces the silences and “linguistic loops” generated by trauma. This phenomenon has received attention in the field of affect studies, on which Wilder draws to explain how Shakespeare’s play carves out a space of individual affective-memorial responses to traumatic loss that cannot be subsumed under narratives of national healing, one of the aims of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. As Macduff’s individual grief calls the play’s narrative conclusion into question, affect in combination with memory wins out over politics, if only momentarily.

In the [Coda](#) to the volume, Peter Holland traces both the trauma of individual victims, whose voices Cavendish and Shakespeare allow to be heard, and the broader cultural trauma of the martyrology that Foxe so extensively charts. Its focus, however, is not on the standoff between affect and politics, but rather on how forgiveness and forgetting act as negotiations with the trauma detailed in plays like *The Winter’s Tale*. Starting from the insight that forgiveness and forgetting share linguistic roots that have made them proverbial twins, the chapter revisits occurrences of the phrase “forgive and forget” in a range of Shakespeare plays to consider how it intersects with structures of political power. Like Wilder, Holland draws on trauma studies rooted in contemporary scenarios of oppressive political regimes, contributing in turn a historicized critical perspective onto the conjunction of remembrance and trauma.

Readers will no doubt already have noticed that in spite of several chapters on nondramatic texts, drama is particularly well represented in our collection. This, we believe, is a sign of the degree to which the composition of plays and their performance grant a centrality and prominence to questions of both memory and affect. Our contributors have seized upon the particularly rich opportunities afforded by drama for studying the interplay of memory and affect. Might drama have a special

relationship to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, one that makes it particularly hospitable to the critical analysis of memory and affect? Czech novelist Milan Kundera reflects on the difference that genre makes to this dialectic: “each art has a different relation to forgetting.” Contrasting lyric poetry with the novel, he observes that lyric poetry’s relation to memory is “privileged”: “A person reading a Baudelaire sonnet cannot skip a single word.” Indeed, a reader who falls in love with the sonnet may “read it several times and perhaps aloud” and even “learn it by heart.” Lyric poetry is a virtual “fortress of memory.” By contrast, the novel is a “poorly fortified castle.”<sup>64</sup> Often read over the period of a week or more, a novel contains thousands of details that are already erased by the time reading is complete: “Someday, years later, I will start to talk about this novel to a friend, and we will find that our memories have retained only a few shreds of the text and have reconstructed very different books for each of us.”<sup>65</sup>

Although Kundera refers only to the polarized examples of lyric poetry and the novel, and not to drama, we might observe that in terms of remembering and forgetting a play occupies an intermediate position. Experienced over a stretch of two or three hours and lacking the mountainous details that test the memory of the reader of novels, a play offers many more opportunities for forgetting than a lyric poem, but far fewer than a novel. A play is even more hospitable than the novel to those aspects of composition that counteract forgetting: “the echoes of phrases already pronounced, themes already set out,” which “will multiply and, brought together into chords, . . . will resonate from all sides.”<sup>66</sup> In addition, live performance, with its engagement of so many of a spectator’s senses, makes an enormous difference to the retention of the details of a play. Visible, tangible elements such as stage properties, especially because they were relatively few on uncluttered early modern stages, as well as costumes bore the potential to serve as powerful aids to memory. In drama, therefore, the forces of remembering and forgetting are somewhat equalized, more comparable and competitive than they are in either the fortress of memory that is lyric poetry or the poorly fortified castle that is the novel: one reason, perhaps, that both remembering and forgetting are regularly cast in such dynamic, variable, and contested roles in early modern plays. Live performance boosts affective responses as well as memory.<sup>67</sup> The collective experience of theatergoing, which allows responses to spread contagiously through an audience, as well as the bodied presence of actors and the use of music and sound effects, also give theater certain advantages in both the conveyance of emotions and the work of recollection. For all these reasons,



drama strikes us as particularly hospitable to the analysis of memory and affect and their interactions.

Our contributors consider a broad but certainly not comprehensive range of affects and states of emotion that impact on individual and collective memory and notions of selfhood. Affects not given prolonged attention in this volume include frustration, boredom, aggression, anger,<sup>68</sup> compassion,<sup>69</sup> admiration, happiness, pleasure, amazement, bafflement, disapproval, anticipation, disappointment, and shame. But exhaustiveness has not been our aim. Rather, through this collection we hope to open new pathways and help foster further dialogue between the study of memory and affect in the literature and culture of the early modern period.

### Notes

- 1 Charles Fernyhough, *Pieces of Light: How the New Science of Memory Illuminates the Stories We Tell about Our Pasts* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 176.
- 2 For example, the Memory Studies Association ([www.memorystudiesassociation.org/](http://www.memorystudiesassociation.org/)), the International Conference on Memory Studies series, or the journal *Memory Studies* (since 2008); the Society for the Study of Affect (<https://affectsociety.com/>), the Conference of the International Society for Research on Emotion ([www.isre.org/](http://www.isre.org/)), and *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry* (<https://capaciousjournal.com/>) as well as *Emotions: History, Culture, and Society* (<https://societyhistoryemotions.com/journal/>), the latter two established in 2017.
- 3 Fourth “Memory, Affects and Emotions” International Interdisciplinary Conference Online; <https://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/cfp/2022/02/03/4th-memory-affects-and-emotions-international-interdisciplinary-conference-online>.
- 4 Harriet Phillips, *Nostalgia in Print and Performance, 1510–1613: Merry Worlds* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 16.
- 5 Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 70 (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 60.
- 6 *Aristotle on Memory*, ed. and trans. Richard Sorabji (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1971), 1.
- 7 Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 68, 122.
- 8 Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 34 (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 14.
- 9 Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski, “General Introduction,” in *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 8. See also Janet Coleman, *Ancient*

and *Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

- 10 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 14.
- 11 Carruthers and Ziolkowski, "General Introduction," 8.
- 12 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 15.
- 13 Corinne Saunders and Charles Fernyhough, "The Medieval Mind," *The Psychologist: Journal of the British Psychological Association*, 29.11 (November 2016), 881. Citing a news article on recent developments in neuropsychology, Carruthers also observes, "This link of strong memory to emotion is, interestingly enough, also emphasized by at least some contemporary observation" (*Craft of Thought*, 14). On similarities between medieval *memoria* and modern neuroscience, see Fernyhough, *Pieces of Light*, 123.
- 14 Carruthers and Ziolkowski, "General Introduction," 8.
- 15 Saunders and Fernyhough, "The Medieval Mind," 881.
- 16 Lauren Berlant and Jordan Greenwald, "Affect in the End Times: A Conversation with Lauren Berlant," *Qui Parle*, 20 (2012), 71–89. See Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry*, 37 (2011), 434–72, for an extended discussion of "why many of the new affect theorists make a distinction between affect and emotion and why I think the distinction cannot be sustained" (434, n. 2).
- 17 Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., for instance, argues in *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) that memory and forgetting were "central to the dramatic depiction of subjectivity" (2), while the volume of essays edited by Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis, *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), explores the "connections between embodiment, selfhood and the passions" (6).
- 18 Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique*, 31 (1995), special issue on "The Politics of Systems and Environments," 83–109. That same year saw the publication of Joseph M. Jones' *Affects as Process: An Inquiry into the Centrality of Affect in Psychological Life*, vol. 14 in the Psychoanalytic Inquiry Book Series (Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press, 1995). Jones argues that Freud marginalized the constitutive role of affects in early childhood development through his emphasis on "primary process." *Freud and the Passions*, ed. John O'Neil (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), is an intriguing collection of essays on the role affect plays in Freudian psychoanalysis. For a study disputing the perception that Lacan neglected the study of affect in his work, see Colette Soler, *Lacanian Affects: The Function of Affect in Lacan's Work*, trans. Bruce Fink (London: Routledge, 2016).
- 19 Leys, "The Turn to Affect," 436.
- 20 Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds., *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.
- 21 Michael Hardt, "Foreword: What Affects Are Good For," in *ibid.*, ix.