Memory Studies

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Article

MEMORY STUDIES

Memory texts and memory work: Performances of memory in and with visual media

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Abstract

This essay focuses on re-enactments of the past through performances of memory both *in* and *with* visual media*,* and looks at how these may embody, express, work through, and even unpick, interconnections between the private, the public and the personal. It explores some questions around visual media/visual discourses, memory and collective identity by looking at filmic and photographic examples from England, Scotland, Canada and China. It also raises some questions around appropriate research methodologies and about how institutions such as museums and archives may figure in some of these collective activities, practices and performances.

The basic premise of this article is that memory is a process, an activity, a construct; and that memory has social and cultural, as well as personal, resonance. As the sociologist Barbara Misztal argues: 'while it is the individual who remembers, remembering is more than just a personal act' (Misztal, 2003: 6). Remembering is institutionalized through cultural means – in objects, material culture (monuments, books, and suchlike) as well as through practices and rituals of commemoration that may involve, but are not confined to, what participants actually remember from their own experiences. Material culture and acts of commemoration may reference and construct a commonly shared past, and thus also communities of remembering. Furthermore, these cultural means also frequently involve places, including – indeed perhaps above all – archives and museums, places whose very *raison d'être* is social memory. There can, of course, be – and there commonly are – limits, broad and narrow, to communities of remembering: family, tribe, ethnic group, nation, for example.

It is impossible to overstate the significance of *narrative* in cultural memory – in the sense not just of the (continuously negotiated) contents of shared/collective memory-stories, but also of the activity of recounting or telling memory-stories, in both private and public contexts – in other words, of *performances of memory*. The question, then, is: how may the past be re-enacted in the present through performances of different kinds? These re-enactment processes are dynamic,

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interactive, and therefore potentially changing, in flux – contested even: there is memory, and there is counter-memory. Performances of memory, moreover, can be – and are – enacted across a range of activities, places, rituals and media. The central concern here, however, is with re-enactments of the past through performances of memory *in* and *with* visual media*,* and with the ways in which these may embody, express, work through, and even unpick, interconnections between the private, the public and the personal.

Some questions around visual discourses, memory and collective identity are explored here through examples both from cinema and from family photographs and photographic albums. In relation to cinema, I shall set out a brief consideration of performances of memory *in* films (through 'mediated storytelling'), looking at how the past can be referenced through cinematic means, and how the 'structure of feeling' of memory or the process of remembering may be performed or enacted cinematically. Here the key focus is on what I call the *memory text*. Acts of memory performed *with* family photographs and family albums will then be explored at somewhat greater length as embodiments, as sites of construction and negotiation, of memory. How do photographs and albums figure in this way in private, interactive, collective and public contexts? Here the emphasis is on *memory work*. Finally, some questions about how public institutions such as museums and archives may figure in some of these latter activities, practices and performances will be addressed.

Cinema and the memory text

As a cultural genre or mode that has expressions across a range of media, both visual and non-visual, the memory text presents a number of characteristic formal attributes, above all a highly distinctive organization of time. In memory texts, time rarely comes across as continuous or sequential: for example, events may have a repetitive or cyclical quality ('we used to ...'), or may telescope or merge into one another in the telling so that a single recounted memory might fuse together a series of possibly separate events, or follow no obviously logical or temporal sequence. The memory text is typically a montage of vignettes, anecdotes, fragments, 'snapshots' and flashes that can generate a feeling of synchrony: remembered events seem to be outside any linear time frame or may refuse to be easily anchored to 'historical' time. In the memory text, events often appear to have been plucked at random from a paradigm of memories and assembled in a mode of narration in which causality is not, if apparent at all, a prominent feature.

Delivering, as they tend to do, abrupt shifts of scene and/or narrative viewpoint, memory texts have more in common with poetry than with classical narrative. In the memory text, in other words, structure and organization seem to be of greater rhetorical salience than content. The metaphoric quality, the foregrounding of formal devices, the tendency to rapid shifts of setting or point of view all feed into the characteristically collagist, fragmentary, timeless, even the 'musical', quality of the memory text, which by and large possesses an imagistic quality that aligns it more closely to unconscious productions like dreams and fantasies than to, say, written stories (Kuhn, 2002: Ch. 8). Significantly, all of these attributes have to do with *performance*: the memory text embodies a particular approach to, or type of, performances of memory.

These ideas can be further explored with reference to the opening shots of the second part of Scottish filmmaker Bill Douglas's *Trilogy*, comprised of *My Childhood* (1972), *My Ain Folk* (1973) and *My Way Home* (1978).[1] The opening sequence of *My Ain Folk*, just over two minutes in duration, provides a good sense of the 'feel' of all of the three films, and as such repays close scrutiny (see Table 1).

Table 1. Opening sequence of *My Ain Folk*

Shot/shot sequence	Description
1.	Black screen. Film music.
2.	Technicolor: two shots of Lassie, the second a view over lake (from the dog's point of view). Music rises to crescendo.
3.	Cinema auditorium, showing film on screen and audience in foreground. (Figure 1).
4.	b/w CU Tommy, watching. Music continues. (Figure 2).
5.	Four b/w shots of Newcraighall: (a) Establishing shot showing road to pit. Music fades. (b) Mine machinery. (c) Men waiting at pithead. Silence. Lift arrives and they get on, silently. (d) View of countryside from inside lift: framed inside film frame (cf. shot 2). Sounds of lift machinery. Lift starts descending and view gradually obliterated.
6.	Black screen. Lift sound continues. MY AIN FOLK. Three captions appear, one by one: 'Granny died leaving Tommy and me to fend for ourselves' 'Tommy had no idea where his father was but I knew where to find mine' 'As things turned out I wasn't sure about anything'
7.	LS high angle Jamie's house. Man (undertaker), on steps, another (a miner – Jamie's father) paces the street below.
8.	Film music starts again. CU Tommy peers through hole in curtain. (Figure 3).
9.	Tommy's POV: cinema box office ('admission 2d') and poster on easel for 'Lassie Come Home'.
10.	MCU woman in box office, dozing. Jam jars on counter in front of her.
11.	As 8.
12.	CU five empty jam jars.
13.	CU hand (Tommy's?) pulling curtain aside.
14.	Jamie's father on street outside house from high angle. Film music merges into bang of mine lift.

The sequence can, of course, be read as making a commonplace enough point about cinema as a temporary escape from grim daily reality. However, attention to its visual and cinematic qualities deepens and complicates such a reading. This little story of cinema-going, set out extremely sparely in a series of virtually static images, appears to be narrated backwards: we first see the film itself and then the boy Tommy inside the cinema auditorium (Figures 1 and 2); but the boy is next seen as he appears to be about to enter the cinema (Figure 3). Whose story, in any case, is this? It soon becomes apparent, for instance that the 'I'/'me' of the three captions is not in fact Tommy, the boy who appears in the extract; and yet it is Tommy whom we see looking at the film within the film, not 'I'. Jamie, Tommy's younger brother, is actually the central protagonist throughout the *Trilogy.* Is 'I' therefore Jamie? Or is 'I' the director, Bill Douglas? Is the character, 'Jamie', Bill Douglas? The titles of the films in the *Trilogy* suggest that they are about the director's life: but if this is so, in what sense is the Bill Douglas *Trilogy* autobiographical?

Writing about the *Trilogy*, the film historian Guy Barefoot considers the peculiarities of autobiography as a cinematic, as opposed to a literary, genre, concluding that Douglas's work 'is autobiographical rather than an autobiography' (Barefoot: 2006), 16. This distinction stems in part from cinema's inherently impersonal enunciation: a sustained first-person 'voice' is difficult, even

Figure 1. *My Ain Folk* (Bill Douglas, 1973)
Copyright British Film Institute

Figure 2. *My Ain Folk* (Bill Douglas, 1973)
Copyright British Film Institute

Figure 3. *My Ain Folk* (Bill Douglas, 1973)
Copyright British Film Institute

impossible, to maintain through filmic means (see, for example Metz, 1982). As a consequence of this, as Elizabeth Bruss points out, the 'I' of literary autobiography does not translate to cinema:

> The unity of subjectivity and subject matter – the implied identity of author, narrator and protagonist on which classical autobiography depends – seems to be shattered by film. (Bruss, 1980: 297)

To which it might be added that, to the extent that they recount an early life of class exclusion, poverty and even trauma, as it were, from the inside, the films in the Douglas *Trilogy* are autoethnographic as much as autobiographical. They speak from a place of otherness that sits well with the impossibility of cinema's point of enunciation being 'pinned down with any certainty' – an attribute exploited to the full in those forms of 'personal' experimental cinema (marked by a fragmentary, montagist quality and a non-linear temporality) characterized by Catherine Russell as autoethnographic (Russell 1999: 311).

The opening sequence of *My Ain Folk* is in effect a memory text. As Guy Barefoot observes, it is a montage of mostly static shots, and its portrayal of cinema-going is not located in any specific time or place. He also notes that (again, very much in the mode of the memory text), across the *Trilogy* as a whole, different experiences and occurrences are repeatedly condensed into a few, minimalist, images and 'there is little concern with providing a clear sense of duration or explanation' (Barefoot, 2006: 24). There is, as we have seen, arguably no real cinematic equivalent to autobiographical writing, largely because (as the 'I' conundrum in the *Trilogy* points up) the merging of author, narrator and protagonist that characterizes such writing cannot be achieved or sustained cinematically. On the other hand, memory – in the sense of both the substance or content of what is remembered and also, more significantly, the process of remembering (its phenomenology, its

'structure of feeling') – seems to sit well with filmic modes of expression. So, for example, the fragmented 'narrative' throughout Douglas's *Trilogy* – and specifically, as in the opening passage of *My Ain Folk*, the uncertain relation between protagonist and narrator and its imagistic, back-to-front narration – place the work closer to memory text than to autobiographical writing.

With its affinity to cinematic expression, as a performance of memory the memory text (as opposed to autobiography or the autobiographical) appears to be capable of feeding readily into collective forms of consciousness, and thus of engaging social memory. This is precisely because of the very absence of an identifiable, singular 'I', an 'I' that combines author and protagonist. This, in conjunction with the memory text's characteristic vignettish, imagistic narration, shifts of standpoint and indefinite temporality, aligns it with a form of engagement characterized by a sensation of *recognition* on the viewer's part. Such recognition is not necessarily, nor even very importantly, of the *content* of the memory-story; it is rather a recognition of remembering's distinctive structure of feeling; and it is enabled by the space that the memory text gives the viewer. The gaps in the story, the fluctuating or uncertain enunciative source, the 'aesthetic distance' (Caughie, 2008: 7) all provide non-identificatory points of entry for the viewer, spaces inside which her or his own memories and processes of remembering may be activated, in a process of gathering the film-maker's particular, even personal, memory-images and memory-stories into a broader seam of collective, shared remembering.

Cinema, in other words. is peculiarly capable of enacting not only the very activity of remembering, but also ways of remembering that are commonly shared; it is therefore peculiarly capable of bringing together personal experiences and larger systems and processes of cultural memory.

Photographs, photographic albums and memory work

Among the material forms in which cultural memory is institutionalized are objects that in themselves commemorate, or serve as reminders of, a past event or situation. Perhaps the archetypal memory-object is the souvenir, a dictionary definition of which is: 'A token of *remembrance*; something …which reminds one of some person, place, or event; a *keepsake*.' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, emphasis added; see also Stewart, 1993).

As repositories of memories, reminders of persons, places or events in the past, family photographs and family albums may certainly be regarded as souvenirs. Indeed, while family photos and albums can function prosthetically as substitutes for remembering, they are also used by their compilers and owners as prompts for performances of memory in private, interactive, collective, and sometimes even public, contexts. The performance or enactment of memory in these instances takes place *with* (as opposed to *in*) the photographs and albums. As with all performances of memory, this is an interactive, even a dynamic, activity. A photograph or an album can be approached in various ways: at one extreme, it can be treated simply as 'evidence'; at the other, it can be interrogated for non-overt/non-obvious meanings, producing 'counter-memories': *memory work*. As I have noted elsewhere, memory work is an active practice of remembering that takes an inquiring attitude towards the past and the activity of its (re)construction through memory. Memory work undercuts assumptions about the transparency or the authenticity of what is remembered, taking it not as 'truth' but as evidence of a particular sort: material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined, for its meanings and its possibilities. Memory work is a conscious and purposeful staging of memory (Kuhn, 2000: 186).

Importantly, memory work calls into question the taken-for-grantedness or the transparency of memory in relation to the past, and takes all forms of remembering, memory accounts, including memory texts, as material for interpretation. The past may of course be narrated, re-enacted, or performed across a range of media, both visual and non-visual; and the interpretive procedures

used in memory work are necessarily shaped by the nature and the medium of the performance or the text. While the objective may be the same in either case, 'reading' a visual medium involves a set of procedures rather different from those for interpreting an oral reminiscence. Likewise, if only because of the different temporalities involved – the contemplation of a 'frozen' past moment as against the flow, the continuous present, of the moving image – 'reading' a still photographic image is not quite the same as 'reading' a film.

Aside from this, photographs and photographic albums enjoy a kind of material existence that films generally do not. Until very recently, moreover, all photographs were tangible objects, and were therefore assimilable to a material culture. Moreover, one of their key features as cultural artefacts is that they are regarded not only as repositories of memory, but also as aids to remembering a personal or a shared past; though in terms of cultural significance and instrumentality there is perhaps a distinction (to which I shall return) between individual photographs and photographs collected together and mounted in an album. However, we may perhaps assume for the time being that what the Canadian art historian and curator Martha Langford says about the album is also true of the individual photograph: 'A photographic album is a repository of memory. A photographic album is an instrument of social performance' (Langford, 2006: 223). As repositories of memory, family photographs and albums work, in cultural terms, very much as souvenirs. As with the souvenir as both token of remembrance and keepsake, value is placed on keeping – preserving – family photographs and albums, even (and perhaps especially) if they are rarely looked at. As instruments of performance, their contingency and flexibility as to meaning is made more apparent given the potential interactivity and contextual variability of the performance situation.

For example, readings of family photographs may in some circumstances deploy memory work to engage counter-memory, unlocking levels of meaning that are not necessarily apparent on the surface – as in *Family Secrets* (Kuhn, 2002), a book written as an experiment, to see what might emerge from a scrutiny of my own, apparently entirely personal, 'souvenirs', from taking them as a starting point for an interpretive endeavour of possibly wider than personal interest or value. The book's performances of memory with personal photographs allowed for the unravelling and exploration of sequences of links between the personal contents, contexts and meanings of the photographs themselves and broader aspects of shared, social, memory and national identity.

Memory work of this kind can be effectively conducted as well with other people's family photographs. Figure 4 shows a photograph belonging to a man in his early thirties, Yu Zhun (Jack Yu) who grew up in the People's Republic of China and moved to Britain several years ago to take up a post with the British Council. It is a very small black and white snapshot with a deckle edge and some writing on the reverse, showing a young woman holding an infant, with a building and some trees in the background. In a 'performative viewing' (Langford, 2006), the photograph's owner explained that the picture was taken in China in 1979, almost certainly by his father; that the woman in the picture is his mother and the child is himself at the age of two. The writing on the back gives the date and the subject: 'Our Zhun and mummy' (Kuhn, 2007). As he spoke it became clear that for its owner the photograph embodies myriad meanings about his own origins and the period immediately preceding his own arrival in the world – a moment that appears to fascinate everyone. For him, this conventional-looking snapshot is at one level about the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution that came to an end just before he was born, about his parents' roles in the drama and trauma of that time, about the paradox that he owes his very existence to the Cultural Revolution, and above all about himself, aged two, as a marker of hope and talisman of an as yet uncertain redemption – for his family and for his country.

But this photograph carries a further – and perhaps more intensely felt – set of meanings for its owner. These it acquired only after he had left home for university. At the age of 19 or 20, he

Figure 4. Yu Zhun with his mother, 1979
Copyright Yu Zhun

recalls, he went back to his home city and spent some time at his parents' house. He offers a vividly expressed recollection of being 'captured' during that visit by this particular photograph out of all the many others in the photographic albums kept by his parents. As Yu Zhun tells it, it is as if the picture reached out and seized him, so that 'I immediately said yes I need to get this one'. He removed it from the album and has carried it around ever since. He says that he hates to be parted from it, even though he rarely looks at it. For its owner, this photograph is clearly as much about his life now, far from where he was born and grew up, as it is about his own, his family's, or his country's past; though in a way these pasts and the present are folded together in his account, his 'performance of memory'. He says on behalf of his mother as she was in the photograph, as she is now perhaps, that the two-year-old boy is her 'treasure'. And speaking for himself now, he says that the photograph is *his* 'treasure'. At several levels, then, for its owner this talismanic photograph embodies something of immeasurable and almost incommunicable value, and it speaks of a present as well as a past, or pasts. Souvenir and keepsake it certainly is, then; but the words seem too weak to convey the depth of its meaning and degree of its value.

The performative viewing conducted with this photograph and its owner combines three methods for conducting autoethnographic memory work with family photographs: first, the interpretive approach developed in *Family Secrets*; second, an extension of this approach developed for family photography and memory workshops in which participants bring along photographs of their own and work on them with others; and, third, an 'oral-photographic method' devised by Martha Langford for work on family photographic albums. In her book *Suspended Conversations*, Langford proposes that, both as repositories of memory and as instruments of social performance, photographic albums are somewhat different from individual family photos. She does acknowledge that individual photographs may operate as props and prompts in verbal performances of memory, and that 'our photographic memories are used in a performative oral tradition' (Langford, 2001: viii; see also Chalfen, 1987). But importantly, she argues, the album figures as the compiler's 'expression of autobiographical and collective memory through *image selection, annotation and*

organisation' (Langford, 2006: 227, emphasis added). In addition to this, says Langford, as a repository of memory the collection of photos that emerges through the compiler's editorial input follows an 'oral structure': 'An album is a classic example of a horizontal narrative shot through with lines of both epic and anecdotal dimension' (Langford, 2001: 175). That is, as an instrument of social performance the album's organization not only constructs a story but dictates ways of telling it as well; and people's uses of family photographs and family albums are governed by the same underlying structures as those of broader oral traditions such as oral memories and life stories.

Langford has worked extensively with family photograph albums deposited in the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal, initially developing her oral-photographic method as a variant of autoethnography: by conducting performative viewings of archived albums with members of the families that donated them, she has explored relationships between orality, culture and community in a particular social and historical setting, English-speaking Montreal in the first half of the 20th century. More recently, she has tested her earlier conclusions about the interpretive performances that accompany displaying and looking at photograph albums by conducting performative viewings of family albums with informants who have no connection with or knowledge of the families who figure in the albums (Langford, 2006). Her findings suggest that even here, people will weave stories around the album, stories that embody precisely that epic, anecdotal quality that, as noted above, distinguishes orality.

Figure 5 shows a single page from an album of 40 or more pages deposited in the McCord museum. In this instance, its original owner/compiler (captioned 'Me' throughout the album) was unknown, though it was clear from the contents that the photographs showed aspects of Quebec family life in the 1930s and 1940s, a way of life marked by a 'languid prosperity' somewhat at odds with the then prevailing economic conditions in North America. The page shown here contains a group of six snapshots of 'six or seven high-school seniors' converging on a summer cottage 'to loaf around, sunbathe and listen to 78rpm records' (Langford, 2006: 234). Langford interviewed five women who were unconnected with the people in the album, but who did have connections with Montreal and knew the places depicted in some of the photographs. All of the interviewees read the album (as a whole) as a young woman's coming-of-age narrative, and all, interestingly, came up with memories 'in common' with the compiler's 'story'. While the subsequent discovery of the compiler's identity allowed an additional narrative to emerge from the album, Langford's experiment offered further evidence of the sequencing and links between performance, orality and community. It confirmed that family albums figure as occasions for communication, cross-cultural exchange and cultural continuity, and that there is something distinctive and culturally shared about the discursive features of these image-based communications, of the kinds of talk, the modes of telling, that accompany viewings of family photographs and albums.

Langford's concern is with the photographic album as it survives as an artefact beyond the family, beyond its original production and reception contexts, and with what happens to the album as a repository of memory – a *souvenir* – and an instrument of social performance when it is translated from the private or semi-private domain of the family to the public space of the archive and the museum. This raises the wider question of how museums and archives may figure in memory work – in activities, practices and performances of memory that involve family photographs and albums.

Museums and archives, photography and cultural memory

From an archival standpoint, the family albums deposited in the McCord Museum are of value because of their relationship with the 'collective memories of the communities for whom the Museum has traditionally mattered and functioned as a meeting point' (Langford, 2006: 229) – in

Figure 5. Family album detail, McCord Museum, Montreal
Copyright McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal

this instance communities based not only on place (Montreal, and the province of Quebec) but also on linguistic culture (Anglophone Montreal). As noted earlier, communities of remembering may also be grounded, *inter alia*, in ethnicity: Kirsten Emiko McAllister, for example, has conducted memory work with a photographic archive set up by Japanese Canadians in the aftermath of their internment during the Second World War (McAllister, 2006). There is a dynamic tension here between, on the one hand, a kind of broadly shared, if not universal, 'code' underlying performances of memory and photographs/photographic albums and, on the other, the contextual knowledges and affiliations that also feed into and inform the substance of performances of memory. For museums and archives that collect family photographs this tension can present both challenges and opportunities.

Figure 6 shows a page of photographs copied from a family album and deposited in the Documentary Photography Archive (DPA) housed at the County Record Office in Manchester, UK (Linkman and Warhurst, 1982). It is part of a large collection of family photographs inaugurated in the 1970s, when the city had begun its process of de-industrialization, with the objective of locating and preserving the records of Manchester's working people. The archival method deployed by the DPA differs from the McCord's, in that there are no original photographs or albums in the collection. The Manchester researchers made copies of individual photographs so that the owners could keep the originals, and contact prints were preserved and catalogued: in the first instance according to the donors or families who deposited the material, and then chain indexed by content keywords such as 'Celebrations: Coronations'. When collecting the photographs, researchers interviewed their owners and recorded background information on donors' families and donors' own descriptions of the photographs and their subjects. These written records are also kept in the DPA: Figure 7 shows part of the record kept for the donor of the photographs in Figure 6, Marjorie Robinson.

Figure 6. Marjorie Robinson's family photographs, DPA, Manchester
Copyright Greater Manchester County Record Office

Depositor	Project	Deposit Number
Mrs. M. Robinson.	Via School Talk	941

Address	Field Officer	Tape Number
38, Denison Road, Hazel Grove, Poynton.	A.E. Linkman	

	Date of Visit	Library Deposit
	2nd June 1981.	

	Related Archives	
Telephone Number 7 - 872479.		

Background Information   Mrs. Majorie Robinson, the donor, was born on 21st February, 1937, and her sister, Maureen, on 29th December, 1939. Majorie Robinson is a teacher and her husband, Robert Cavill Robinson, a local government officer. They have two children, Jeanette and Francine. Majorie Robinson's parents are Percy and Annie Davies. Percy Davies, born in 1913, served his apprenticeship as an electrician. During the 1930's he became unemployed and went to Hyde Technical College to retrain as a welder. Percy lived with his grandparents, John Davies, a grave digger at Hyde Cemetery, and Elizabeth Davies, a mill worker. Annie Davies, nee Mottershead, was born in 1916 and was a former at Oldham and Fogg's Hat Factory in Hyde before she married. Annie was the only daughter of Joseph and Martha Ellen Mottershead. Joseph was a collier and died in 1919. His family paid special attention to Annie because of this. Martha Ellen remarried after his death.

Negative Sheet Number	Item	Details about contents of photograph, date, when taken, why etc.	Original Size (cms)	B & W	Sepia
B26/1	1	Harriet Higgins (donor's great grandmother) with her daughter Martha Ellen (donor's maternal grandmother), in 1898. Harriet Higgins originally came from Halifax. She married Alfred Higgins, reputed to have a bad temper and be given to drink. Harriet and Alfred had eight children. The family lived in Hyde.	13.4 x 9.6		☆
B26/2	2	Martha Ellen Higgins (donor's maternal grandmother) and her sister, Ethel. In a temper their father, Alfred Higgins, threw a knife at Ethel which left her with a scar on her throat. She regularly wore a scarf around her neck to hide this. Her father was taken to court for this act. Ethel married James Skirvin, a hatter from Hyde, and they had three children.	13.6 x 8.7		☆
B26/3	3	Martha Ellen Higgins and Joseph Mottershead (donor's maternal grandparents) on their wedding day on 29th May, 1915. Martha's dress was grey. Joseph was a collier. He died in 1919 following an accident in the pits where he received head injuries. The doctor, however, put meningitis on his death certificate and so Martha could not claim compensation. Martha worked in the planking shop of a hat factory. They had one child, Annie (donor's mother), born in 1916. Martha Ellen married Edward Leech, a weaver, in 1920.	13.3 x 8.3		☆
B26/6	4	James Victor Mottershead with his wife Jane, nee Smith, and their son, James Victor, who later became a mechanic. James Victor senior owned a garage in Sheffield. He was the brother of Joseph Mottershead (donor's maternal grandfather). Photographer: Lytton & Co., 93, Pinstone Street, Sheffield. On reverse in manuscript: "Mrs. Jennie Mottershead, 125, 125, Devonshire Street, Sheffield."	11.8 x 8		☆
B26/7	5	Rose Mottershead (sister of Joseph Mottershead, the donor's maternal grandfather) and her husband Alfred Shaw. Taken during the First World War. The couple had four children. Photographer: T. Walker, Station Studio, Hyde.	13.5 x 8.3		☆
B26/8	6	Percy Davies (donor's father) in 1913. As a child he contracted polio which left him with a lame hand and arm.	13 x 7.9		☆
B26/10	7	Albert Green (left) during the First World War. Albert is thought to have been the father of Percy Davies (donor's father). Albert's father, Ivie Green, ran a dairy business. Photographer: Geo. J. Leech, Market Place, Denton.	13.2 x 8.2	☆	

Negative Sheet Number	Item	Details about contents of photograph, date, when taken, why etc.	Original Size (cms)	B & W	Sepia
B26/11	8	John Beswick (left), Percy Davies (centre, donor's father) and William Beswick (right) in c.1917. John and William were half brothers to Percy. Percy was the son of Jane Davies (donor's paternal grandmother) born before her marriage to William Beswick. Percy lived with his grandparents, John Davies, a grave digger at Hyde Cemetery, and Elizabeth, a mill worker. Jane Davies was a ring spinner. She married William Beswick, a sailor, and they had five children, John, William, Tom and twins who died quite young. William ran away to join the circus, entered the army and later became a miner, John became a mechanic and Tom a steel erector for a car firm.	13.4 x 8.6		☆
B26/4	9	Percy Davies (left, donor's father), aged 14, and his friend, Freddie Chandler. The friends had this photograph taken in great excitement because they were wearing their first pair of long trousers. It was taken at Whitsuntide in 1927. Percy at that time worked at Asthon Brothers, Hyde, as an electrician.	20.6 x 15.6		☆
B26/12	10	Annie Mottershead (donor's mother) with her aunt Elizabeth Mottershead in a studio in Blackpool. Annie is wearing her Whit Friday dress. Annie's father, Joseph Mottershead, died when she was very young and his family paid special attention to her because of this. Annie worked as a former at Oldham and Foggs Hat Factory in Hyde before she married.	8.1 x 5		☆
B26/15	11	Annie Cavill with her son Robert Cavill Robinson (father of the donor's husband) in 1909. Annie married Albert Mellor Robinson, a hatter. They had six children, two of whom died when young. Robert, the baby in the photograph, was born in Denton in 1908, but the family moved house frequently. Consequently very few family photographs have come into the donor's possession. Robert worked as a grocery manager but later became a signalman on the railways. Photographer: Wray Studios, 40, St. Petersgate, Stockport.	7.3 x 4.7		☆
B26/16	12	St. Mark's Football Team, Bredbury, in 1929. Robert Cavill Robinson (back row, third from right), the father of the donor's husband, trained and managed the team. He qualified as a first class football referee. Albert Mellor Robinson, Robert's father, is standing on the far left of the back row. Photographer: Searle, Market Place, Hyde.	15.3 x 10.5	☆	
B26/20	13	Robert Cavill Robinson (father of the donor's husband) holding the banner during a Whit Walk in Bredbury.	13.6 x 8.6	☆	
B26/19	14	Majorie (right) and Maureen Davies in 1942. A studio portrait by Taylor and Wain. Mr. Wain was the art master at Hyde Grammar School and hand painted the portrait.	27.6 x 20.3	coloured	
B26/21	15	Majorie Davies (donor) aged 5, cycling in Talbot Road, Hyde.	8 x 5.4	☆	
B26/23	16	Majorie Davies (left, donor) and her friend, Margaret Bond, at Peter Pan's Playground in Southport in 1948. Margaret went on holiday with the donor's family.	8.4 x 6.3	☆	
B26/24	17	Class 3E of Flowery Field Junior School, Hyde, in 1947. Majorie Davies (donor) is in the second row from the front, second from the left.	12 7	☆	
B26/22	18	Majorie Davies (donor), schoolgirl swimming champion of Hyde and member of the Hyde Seals. Studio portrait with her cups and medals including the Leadbetter Knott Cup and the Aspland Cup. Mounted in a card folder and inscribed: "With love to Grandma from Majorie. 1950 xxxx."	12.4 x 7.5	☆	
B26/25	19	Probably a Rose Queen "At Home" in the schoolyard in Green-field Street in 1942. Featured here is the Hyde Juvenile Rose Queen. Majorie Davies (donor) is third from the right on the front row. Her mother paid for Majorie and her sister to have dancing lessons with Winifred Seddon, who organised a dancing troupe. Sunday Schools and dance troupes such as those run by Winifred Seddon, would appoint Rose Queens and their retinues. One Rose Queen would stage an "At Home" and invite the other Rose Queens in the area to attend.	12.3 x 7.2	☆	
B26/30	20	Majorie Davies and Robert Robinson on their wedding day, 1960.	7 x 4	☆	

Figure 7. Archival record for Marjorie Robinson, DPA, Manchester
Copyright Greater Manchester County Record Office

Mrs Robinson's photographs cover the period from 1898 to 1960 and are arranged in chrono-
logical order. They were collected, and the record was compiled, in 1981, and the photographs
appear in the illustration exactly as they are stored in the archive. There is no indication of
whether they were ever kept in a family album nor, if they were, is there any information as to
their organization, captioning, and suchlike. The DPA's record treats them in fact as separate,
individual images. For example, for one of them (941/9) the researcher records the donor's des-
cription as follows:

> Percy Davies (left, donor's father), aged 14, and his friend Freddie Chandler. The friends had this photo-
> graph taken in great excitement because they were wearing their first pair of long trousers. It was taken
> at Whitsuntide in 1927. Percy at the time worked at Ashton Brothers, Hyde, as an electrician.

Photograph 941/13 shows, according to the DPA record sheet, 'Robert Cavill Robinson (Father of
the donor's husband) holding the banner during a Whit Walk in Bredbury'. A little background
knowledge is required in order to understand the references to Whitsuntide. Photographs of Whit
Walks and Whitsuntide outfits figure recurrently throughout Marjorie Robinson's, and indeed most
of the other family photograph, collections in the DPA, and constitute a record of the cultural sig-
nificance of a seasonal and religious ritual once devotedly observed, and clearly obsessively
recorded, by workers in industrial cities across the north of England. As the traditional time of year
for acquiring a new summer outfit, Whitsuntide was as strongly associated with public displays of
clothes as it was with religious observance. This remarkable testimony to a now defunct tradition
offers an intriguing potential subject for memory work and cultural memory analysis that explores
a culturally and historically specific set of interconnections between the personal, the public and
the ritual as these are expressed in family photography.

In relation to the potential uses of collections and records of family photographs of the sort
housed in museums and archives, the question of the auratic nature of family photographs and
photographic albums raises itself. The DPA, unlike the McCord, keeps copies rather than original
photographs and albums. How do such different practices of collection, storage, preservation and
cataloguing impact on the nature and potential of museum and archive photography collections as
research resources? In the case of the DPA it is clear that autoethnographic work, via performative
viewings, took place during the fieldwork that was conducted when the photographs were ori-
ginally collected. Moreover, as noted, this information is carefully documented in the archival
notes that accompany each collection. As source materials these copies of family photographs and
the notes accompanying them, taken together, open up research possibilities rather different from
those offered by the albums of original photographs archived in the McCord museum – a point that
must have implications for research methodology.

Inquiry into personal and domestic photography and memory can, as we have seen, unlock
doors to understanding not only the ethnography of everyday memory talk but also the workings
of cultural memory across wider social-historical spheres. This it achieves through activating a
range of potentially interlocking methodological approaches towards a set of similar phenomena:
first of all, by a concern with orality and memory as a form of storytelling prompted by the en-
semble and sequencing of images in photographic albums that belong to neither researcher nor
informants; second, through an ethnographic tracking of people's practices centring around the
content, the production, and the everyday uses of their own family photographs; and, third, through
a practice of memory work that makes close attention to singular family and personal photographs
the starting point for inquiries that may radiate outwards from the image, eventually to embrace
ever broader cultural, social, and even historical, issues.

Conclusion

This article has focussed on re-enactments of the past through performances of memory both in and with visual media, and has considered how these may embody, express, work through and unpick, interconnections at the level of remembrance between the private, the public and the personal. Through an exploration of questions around visual media, memory and collective forms of remembering through filmic and photographic examples from England, Scotland, Canada and China, it has also explored approaches to reading memory texts and proposed a set of research methodologies for memory work. Finally, it has touched on the role that public institutions such as museums and archives might play in these collective activities, practices and performances.

The memory texts and performances of memory discussed here indicate some of the ways in which visual media – and especially everyday visual media such as film and photography – engage, produce and embody distinctive kinds of memory-stories and narrative discourses. They also suggest how research into such acts of memory may benefit from the development of new and distinctive methodological protocols. Through the interpretive, interactive, intersubjective, ethnographic and autoethnographic methodologies set out in this article, sequences of relations between the personal and the collective may be unravelled and examined in a manner that is both scientifically robust and, crucially, meaningful to those involved.

Acknowledgement

Note

1   After many years of unavailability, the Bill Douglas *Trilogy* was reissued by the British Film Institute as a DVD in 2008.

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