Zohar, then an eccentric game of "jinx" Dow used to play with his brother, then to a story about a subway drummer named Bongo, then to Nicholson Baker's *The Anthologist*, then to the *Bay Psalm Book*, then back to Cotton Mather, then on to reproducing a letter Dow's mother sent to him "when an ex-girlfriend's mother died," then to Kierkegaard's discussion of inner voices, before concluding by saying, "Often we have something to say. Most of the time we just want to be heard."

The Memory Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology. Eds. William E. Engel, Rory Loughnane and Grant Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xviii + 377 pp. $99.99. Review by Anita Gilman Sherman, American University.

The Memory Arts in Renaissance England is a wonderful compendium of excerpted texts ranging over two centuries, from 1509 to 1697. Its distinguished editors—William E. Engel, Rory Loughnane and Grant Williams—have divided the collection thematically into six parts: the art of memory, rhetoric and poetics, education and science, history and philosophy, religion and devotion, and literature. Each part and excerpt comes with a helpful introduction, as does the volume as a whole. The book is unusual on at least three counts: its focus on England as an intellectual sphere separate from Europe, the wide variety of texts sampled, and its inclusive sense of what constitutes the memory arts. It also makes interesting claims, declaring, for example, that "the art of memory as understood in England was much different from the continental tradition [Frances] Yates describes" in her seminal 1966 work, *The Art of Memory* (4). The editors disagree with Yates's view that "after the 1580s in England the art of memory can be understood as a Brunian phenomenon, infused with occultish energies of Neoplatonism and hermeticism, and innately related to the Italian tradition." They argue that Yates's focus on Bruno implies a "univocality" about the memory arts in England that "simply does not accord with the facts" (4). But if Yates errs by engaging with "outliers … writing on the Rosy Cross" and thereby narrowing her focus, this volume may over-compensate by offering a definition of the memory arts so capacious that it encompasses all manner of ways

of thinking about the past. That said, the volume's strength may well lie in its commitment to "the radial, rhizomatic pathways of memory, recollection and commemoration through the early modern archive." As if selected to prove Yates wrong, the seventy excerpts demonstrate "the extraordinary religious, epistemological and social diffusion of the memory arts" in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (16).

The book is not so ecumenical, however, that it extends its purview to contemporary theoretical frameworks for discussing memory. While it incorporates modern vocabularies like circuitry, mentalité, episteme, heteroglossia, and even terms like collective or cultural memory, it resists forms of presentism by insisting that the purpose of the volume is corrective, designed so that scholars and students acquire a "mnemonic literacy" particular to the Renaissance (17). The editors state at the outset that the volume "endeavors to preserve the historical and cultural difference of premodernity, a difference that contemporary memory studies threatens to collapse with its distinctly post-Enlightenment orientation around trauma, repression and political protest as well as issues of cognitive philosophy and evolutionary psychology" (10). However, the emphasis on Renaissance difference and on the memory arts as a distinctively Renaissance *techne* itself threatens to collapse when English mnemonic culture is described as touching on, well, just about everything: "the liberal arts; the art of rhetoric; the art of logic; *ars poetica*; the arts of genre; *imitatio*; memoir; Ramism; the art of printing; iconographic arts including emblematics, painting and allegory; *ars historia*; antiquarianism; the scriptural arts such as typology and numerology; the art of meditation and devotion; *ars notaria* and the occult arts; alchemy; Lullian *ars combinatoria*; horoscopic astrology; *ars moriendi;* the funeral arts, burial rites and monuments; the architectural arts; the juridical arts, the medical arts; etc." (11). Oof! What's left? Still, this global approach, colonizing every territory in its sights, is instructive and produces the mnemonic literacy the adventurous editors intend.

The book does an excellent job imparting the visual literacies involved in mnemonics, thereby improving us as readers of images. Arguing that the emblem is "fundamentally mnemonic in nature," the editors construe the various ways it was "conceptualized and discussed"

(27). For example, the standard tripartite structure popularized by Andrea Alciato—motto, picture and explanatory poem—could be read in "incarnational" terms, meaning that the picture operated as the body and the words as the soul. "Paralleling in secular terms the religious notion of the word made flesh," they explain, "the soul of the device, the word, animates or quickens the body or picture" (27). Emblems could be read allegorically, their symbolic attributes signifying in specific ways designed to organize knowledge and recollection. Emblems also operated as thought-images (*Denkbilder*) capturing memory traces of what Ernst Cassirer describes as a mythological consciousness (32). Yet the book's goal of improving our visual literacy goes beyond decoding emblems. It coaches us on interpreting frontispieces, for example, as mnemonic instruments—from the architectural niches illustrating Thomas Lodge's translation of Seneca (1614) to the self-reflective depiction of Hermes delivering the "ars memoriae" in Marius D'Assigny's *The Art of Memory* (1699). An engraving of a busy landscape populated by diverse creatures and figures turns out to be a visual catalogue of chapter highlights in George Sandys's englishing of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1640). Hans Holbein's title page for Strabo's *Geography* illustrates the so-called *Table* of Cebes (1523). Initially overwhelming in its intricacy and apparent clutter, the image displays a visual itinerary through various allegorical tableaux, leading the viewer towards the highest good (110). The editors describe it "as a kind of graphic reversal of the rhetorical trope of *ekphrasis* upon which the narrative itself is based" (25). Cumulatively, then, the volume achieves its purpose, offering multiple close-readings of diagrams, charts, figures and representations that together teach us to see and understand how mnemonics functions as an informing principle for visual representations of all kinds.

I am glad the editors recognize the element of fantasy involved in some of these mnemonic schemes. Peter of Ravenna, for example, is explicit about the way a woman's body serves as a handy perch for his to-remember list. He recommends the alphabetization of images as a way of ensuring orderly recollection, but then he adds: "And I do set by the letters some fair maidens, for they excite greatly my mind and frequentation. When I was young I did collocate Juniper Pistoia or of Pisa which I loved greatly" (49). Juniper reappears in the treatise,

"once 'giving a harp to a Florentine' and once saying a confession to Peter for 'her light sins'" (50). Aware that this "secret" might lend itself to prurient interpretation, he says defensively that he "set[s] the fair maidens most facilely and decently," which prevents any "fear of blame or shame" regarding "a remembrance incontinent," a phrase the editors footnote as a memory "incapable of storing, retaining" (49). Shifting to the offensive, he elaborates that "this behoveful precept cannot profit to them that have women in hate and despoil them" and only benefits "good and chaste men." That he protests too much emerges in the double negative: "I ought not to hide saying that I desire," speaking of the mental images he invents of fair maidens (49). Most writers on memory are not as frank as Peter of Ravenna in praising the mnemonic advantages of sexual fantasy. Yet many use the human body as a background for their exercises in memorization. In Filippo Gesualdo's *Plutosofia* (1600), there is a picture of a naked man in a loincloth with 42 numbers keyed to different parts of his body. D'Assigny's treatise makes it clear that it was standard practice to "fix the ideas of things to be remembered on his head, forehead, eyes, mouth, chin and so downwards on all his members" (96). Although John Brinsley warns that "we never help the mind by any filthy object" (165), most writers believe that in order for mental images to be memorable, they need to be extravagant and a little wild—preferably in motion and in vivid color. They encourage creativity even at the risk of being "fantastical" (97).

Among my favorite selections in the volume were those that captured emotions attached to forgetfulness and evinced skepticism about mnemonic efforts. William Basse, for example, has one of the characters in his dialogue wax poetic in his bitterness: "our knowledge is always in the autumn, withering, and decay." Noting its "brittle and slippery footing," he adds, "I know all memory to be *infida & labilis*, untrusty to keep, and trusty only to deceive" (70-71). In *The Unfortunate Traveller* Thomas Nashe opines that "as it is not possible for any man to learn the art of memory, whereof Tully, Quintilian, Seneca and Hermannus Buschius have written so many books, except he have a natural memory before, so is it not possible for any man to attain any great wit by travel, except he have the grounds of it rooted in him before" (322). So much for the value of training! Francis Bacon

also takes a dim view of mnemonists, dubbing their feats no more than "the tricks of tumblers, funambuloes, baladines, the one being the same in the mind, that the other is in the body—matters of strangeness without worthiness" (201). Thomas Hobbes folds memory into imagination, showing how "the imagination of the past is obscured and made weak" (219). He continues, "When we would express the decay, and signify that the sense is fading, old and past, it is called memory. So that imagination and memory are but one thing, which for diverse considerations hath diverse names" (220). With regard to memory's fallibility, the editors observe that Hobbes supplies "a physical rationale for what previously had been taken merely as a metaphor" (219).

The book's attention to the material basis for memory emerges in a few fine scientific excerpts. Robert Hooke, for example, "situates Aristotelian recollection and the Ciceronian storehouse within the context of mechanistic philosophy," describing memory as "a continued chain of ideas coiled up in the repository of the brain" (180). Sir Kenelm Digby uses charming similes to convey his atomistic view of memory, mentioning beads and a "beaderoule," inhabitants in a "numerous empire," and floating bodies that "are in the caves of the brain wheeling and swimming about (almost in such sort, as you see in the washing of currants or of rice, by the winding about and circular turning of the cook's hand)," not to mention "a tuned lute string" with its vibrating "curlings and folds in the air," a comparison that prompts him to cite Galileo (216-17). The point, according to the editors, is that the scientific revolution did not spell the demise of the memory arts although they "underwent revisions according to materialist assumptions" (147).

The collection more than fulfills its aim of surveying enough texts related to memory to provide a starting point for further research on the topic. The list of recommended readings after each excerpt accomplishes this. While occasionally startled—for example, by the claim that "the cento is a memory art" and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* implicitly a cento because it is "a patchwork" of quotations—I now see these surprises as one of the volume's virtues. It's an excellent thing to have one's preconceived notions challenged and suddenly to view the anthology in one's hands as itself a cento of sorts. To all the

memory experts and aficionados out there, this book is one to own and keep nearby.

Sarah C. E. Ross. *Women, Poetry, & Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. xiv + 249 pp. + 6 illus. $90.00. Review by Lissa Beauchamp Desroches, St. Thomas University.

In *Women, Poetry, & Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain*, Sarah Ross employs a variety of manuscript sources written by women to "redress the unrepresentative prominence of printed texts in our critical narratives of seventeenth-century women's poetic history; at the same time, the manuscript culture(s)and practices explored here are multi-layered and variant" (218). In other words, Ross very deliberately addresses our critical biases regarding printed vs. manuscript sources, and in doing so "it [becomes] very clear that identifying a female political poetic and a coherent grouping of women political poets is no longer a matter of looking for those who speak in an assertively proto-feminist voice, or those whose work appeared in print" (218). This interesting correlation between the emerging importance of both manuscript culture and the differences among feminine voices is a refreshing and much-overdue correction to our critical approaches; it recovers otherwise "lost" material, while at the same time redefining the notion of female voices in such a way that masculine values do not continue to determine them.

Ross organizes her book into five extensive treatments of lesser known texts by women writers, without neglecting to trace the varieties of influences on them including other male authors in both manuscript and print. Notably, and interestingly, each chapter concludes with a brief overview of the material history of the manuscripts and their traceable transmission, along with commentary, that extends our sense of the contemporary reading of the work just discussed. The varied works of Elizabeth Melville, Anne Southwell, Jane Cavendish, Hester Pulter, and Lucy Hutchinson are all treated as components of networks, both literary and social as well as familial, and what emerges is the defining significance of families as the basis for networks—as