

# Resemblance to Other Animals: Dispossessed Beings, Recounted Journeys and Other Memories

## *Semelhança a Outros Animais: Seres Despojados, Viagens Recontadas e Outras Memórias*

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### Abstract

*Resemblance to Other Animals* (16 mins, HD, 2019) is a memory work that considers locational effect and its recollection. Its key elements, images of encased taxidermy and a traveller's voice, offer different temporal plains and positions. The images were shot in the Horniman Museum's, London, natural history gallery and the recordings were inspired by work related travel, time away from home. These combined sensory streams, conjoined by narrative's reason, suggest temporal and spatial complexity and the partialness of remembrance. The Horniman Museum is a testament to the Victorian mania for collecting, which was also the time of the 'memory crisis' when Bergson, Freud, Proust and later Benjamin were proposing a new intuitive, individuated, understanding of memory. A museum collection creates history, a vision of the past, that is in itself a product of history. *Resemblance to Other Animals* juxtaposes this site with personal recollection, which relates a sense of place to identity and can challenge institutionalised positions, examining how this correlation can be conceptualised and represented.

This examination considers whether the artistic engagement with form and content can formulate a place of creative reckoning, were an imaginative exploration can occur and a *different* past can be discovered, and if these sensory and conceptual elements can create a memorable investigation that generates new readings.

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**Keywords**

Film and Memory | Museology | Optical-Unconscious | Practice-Based-Research | Experimental Film

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**Resumo**

*Semelhança a Outros Animais* (16min, HD, 2019) é um projeto de memória que considera o efeito da localização e a sua recordação. Os seus elementos-chave, imagens de animais empalhados e a voz de um viajante, oferecem diferentes planos e posições temporais. As imagens foram gravadas na galeria de história natural do museu *Horniman*, em Londres; e as gravações sonoras foram inspiradas em deslocações relacionadas com trabalho, tempo longe de casa. Esta junção de correntes sensoriais, juntamente com a razão narrativa, sugerem complexidade temporal e espacial, e a parcialidade da lembrança. O museu *Horniman* é um testemunho à mania Vitoriana do colecionismo, que foi também a era da “crise de memória” e quando *Bergson*, *Freud*, *Proust* e mais tarde *Benjamin* propuseram um entendimento novo, intuitivo e individual sobre a memória. Uma coleção de museu cria história, uma visão do passado, que é, em si, um produto da história. *Semelhança a Outros Animais* justapõe esta ideia com lembranças pessoais, que relacionam um sentido de lugar a identidade e conseguem pôr em causa posições institucionalizadas, examinando como esta correlação pode ser conceptualizada e representada. Esta investigação questiona se o envolvimento artístico com a forma e conteúdo podem formular um lugar de cômputo criativo, onde uma imaginação explorativa possa acontecer e um passado *diferente* possa ser descoberto, e se estes elementos sensoriais e conceptuais poderão criar uma investigação memorial que poderá gerar novas leituras.

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**Palavras-chave**

Filme e memória | museologia | inconsciente-ótico | investigação baseada na prática | filme experimental

## Memorious forms

“Language has unmistakably made plain that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil.” (Benjamin, 2007 a, Introduction)

*Resemblance to Other Animals* (16 mins, HD, 2019) is a “work of [related] memory”, (Dubois, 1995, p.154) in which moving images, of the Horniman Museum’s historic taxidermy, and audio, narrated memories of travel’s navigation, offer different temporal plains and conceptual positions. These juxtaposed sensory streams suggest the partialness of recollection, how it oscillates and alters according to experience, and is ordered by narrative’s reason. This understanding poses a number of related questions: how can audio/visual work be imbued with something of this mental and visceral process and realisation; how does this search impact our understanding of memory’s invocation; furthermore, how can the experience of displacement be communicated, and what does autobiographical material contribute to this exposition?

*Resemblance to Other Animals* frames the Horniman Museum’s dioramas, in relation to spoken reflections, as memory sites. What is seen is found in one location, whereas what is heard ‘wanders’ aboard through experiential associations, interweaving remembrance and relationalism.

The traveler’s address suggests the complexity of individuated recollection. The creatures, when they inhabited their original realms, also had their own *temporal resolution*, a sense of time and place. In this there is a tension between spoken word and image, one that generates combined meaning, that reimagines the exhibits and the audio journey, and in doing so creates an imaginative space.

Memory is created in time and takes on different meanings at different times, as the historian E. H. Carr contends, “The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past.” (1961, p.55) History, Foucault writes, is the “most erudite, the most aware, the most conscious, and possibly the most cluttered area of our memory; but it is equally the depths from which all beings emerge into their precarious, glittering existence.” (1974, p.219) It has been posited that this interpretation suggests that History “has provided a way of thinking about what is in that particular place [memory]”, (Steedman, 2001, p.67) and to interrogate it we should not be “concerned with History as *stuff*”, but focus on its “process, as ideation, imaging and remembering.” (Ibid) This is a ‘place’ populated by people and their ideas and thoughts.

In considering “the collapsing of [twentieth century] History into personal, subjective memory,” R. J. A. Kilbourn proposes that it can be seen “via the photographic



Figure 1  
The Horniman Museum, *Resemblance to Other Animals* (2019) © A. Vallance

image — an image that prompts the memory of another image, in an endless vista of *petite madeleines*.” (2012, p.28) Through invoking Proust’s memorious catalyst Kilbourn draws us back to this now essential articulation of memory, indicating its continuing relevance, and positions the image as a palimpsest, part of a sequence of related recollections. Remembrance implies personal relations with what has been, and as time draws an event away, and its direct actuality decreases, memory evolves and alters with each recollective context and this process of reiteration contributes to the rationalisation and narrativizing of past experience.

In ‘Picturing Proust’ Benjamin observed that “an event remembered has no bounds, being simply a key to all that came before and all that came after it.” (2008, p.128) Furthermore, he writes that “most of the memories we seek come to us as visual images. And even the things that float up freely from *mémoire involontaire* [which is “much closer to forgetting than what is usually referred to as memory” (Ibid, p.127)] are largely isolated visual images — as well as being somewhat mysteriously present;” (Ibid) he contrasts this with *mémoire volontaire*, “the memory of the intellect.” (Kilbourn, 2012, p.215) In Benjamin’s thesis, as with Freud’s conception of the unconscious, that which settles upon us unexpectedly and is unbound by time and exists “beyond the reach of the intellect, but can enter consciousness as a result of a contingent sensuous association”, (Ibid) is prized and is the key to accessing all that cannot be forgotten.

The museum shows what has been deemed worth remembering and endeavours to

offer answers to related historical questions, whereas, Robert. A. Rosenstone states, “Historians are people who spend their lives answering questions that nobody has asked.” (1995, p.267) Film also has this potential and through reflexive means, can suggest an “*intransitive middle voice*”, one that can operate between scholarship and poetry. (Ibid, p.225) This idea positions filmmakers as active interrogators, who potentially can challenge history’s affirmation, re-imagine the archive’s composition, distilled memory and intervention, facilitate a place of thought, in which “experimental films help to re-vision what we mean by history.” (Ibid, p.64) This ability, to show and encounter occurrence suggests that film is *imbued* with memory and cannot be understood without considering it as an essential part of its affect.

Film’s continuously moving frames, particularly when accompanied by sounds, are compelling and persuasive and appear to be the ideal medium for relating experience, revisiting all that has been, as Ben Brewster observes, “film has functioned as a machine to produce and reproduce what is outside the cinema as a set of memory images. These images are retrospective, but they are insistently immediate.” (1977, p.48) All films relate to memory, in its cultural form, but not all films seek to *consciously* invoke it. The ability to convey what has been, suggest meaning, through form and content, more often than not *just* indicates a representation of another time and struggles to realise the nuance of memory, for example, the turns of tense and address that writing can offer.

Film has a controllable temporal and spatial facility, and when a film cuts into continuous durational time a radical displacement occurs, and all film plays with, in one way or another, this division. Film and memory’s generative affiliation is founded in films’ potential to propose multiple temporal and sensory plains, and when this consciously occurs, we are in the presence of *memory film*. Also, when a film is viewed, received, memory is also being experienced on more than one plain — Maya Deren states, “as we watch a film, the continuous act of recognition in which we are involved is like a strip of memory unrolling beneath the images of the film itself, to form the invisible under layer of an implicit double exposure.” (1985, p.56) This duality can be actively acknowledged through reflective engagement, an awareness of memory’s affect and film’s process.

### **Interwoven thought**

Benjamin, in ‘On the Concept of History’, writes that, “Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad.” (2003, p.396) He believed history must be challenged, its linear advance contested, there was an implicit desire to forsake that which has passed for History and to establish a new causal agency that declares “knowledge within the historical moment is always knowledge of the moment. In drawing itself together in that moment — in the dialectical image — the past becomes part of humanity’s involuntary memory.” (1999, p.403) This has redeeming purpose that is bound up in aspirational emancipatory progress, and the arbiter of this, the historical materialist, must uncover

that history which is *mostly* hidden. It also suggests that memory is changeable, that it can be shaped by contextual parameters that service external imperatives.

The concept of the dialectical image juxtaposes visible occurrences to produce liberating effect. Benjamin did not attach creative example to his description, it is a matter for conscious appropriation, therefore it seems most apt to seek elaboration in contemporaneous and politically aligned work, such as Vertov's. This notion has continuing appeal and is still sought and applied, for instance to Hollis Frampton's (*nostalgia*) (1971) and Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962).<sup>1</sup> In time, ideas, like images, take on complimentary reference, producing different approaches and interpretations. The idea of questioning form's accepted progress, is still an inspiring one, even if this occurs in a minor register, and appears to be more personal than revolutionary. The residing connection is the desire to arrest thought — asking what occurred and why — to engender active engagement.

A critical sensibility is a means to think through (consciously and unconsciously) experience, and are a way to reencounter the world. Adorno, in 'Essay as Form', writes, "thought does not advance in a single direction, rather the aspects of the argument interweave as in a carpet" (1984, p.160), a notion that chimes with Benjamin's advice, in 'One-way Street', that, "Work on a good piece of writing proceeds on three levels: a musical one, where it is composed, architectural one, where it is constructed, and finally a textile one, where it is woven." (2009, p.65) Benjamin also brings a multifarious past into the present, a time denoted by the author, his or her work, and those who may encounter it. Adorno and Benjamin's compositional thinking, with its imagistic and expansive bent, its spatial and temporal dexterity, also offer insight into film's relationship with, and ability to convey, the process of thought.

Showing actuality, seeing serendipity run its course, suggests a form of reflective documentary, but *Resemblance to Other Animals* is also a work of reflexive remembrance. It is an experimental work, as indicated by its mode of address and conceptual orientation. For instance, reflexive documentaries, according to Bill Nichols, prompt "the viewer to a heightened consciousness of his or her relation to the text and to the text's problematic relationship to that which it represents." (1991, p.60) He connects his formulation to 'counter-narrative' films, "'texts' that embody palpable contradictions that engage us diversely [by] dislodging the notion of an origin or center" (Ibid, p.256) — a contextualisation that originated in Wollen's essay *Godard and Counter Cinema: Vent d'Est* (1972). Such works express hybridity, the coming together of different, but related elements, that together offer a perspectival encounter. This accounting for the past, can be understood as a work of imagination, one that presents a reflexive, relational and critical relationship between what is seen and heard.

<sup>1</sup> Rachel Moore suggests that Benjamin's "definition [of the dialectical image] articulates an apt description of Frampton's burning, then quivering, images." (2006, p.57) Janet Harbord (2005) and Catherine Lupton (2017) also claim the dialectical image for Marker.



Figure 2  
The Horniman Museum, *Resemblance to Other Animals* (2019) © A. Vallance

*Resemblance to Other Animals* is comprised of three ‘chapters’, that relate a traveller’s exploration. As it proceeds it becomes apparent that the image and sound ‘narratives’ are not *directly* synchronised. There is an apparent disconnectedness between what is seen and heard; the audio is not illustrative, as the recounted places are not seen, and being uncoupled from imagistic description the utterances develop their own exploratory impetus — neither the audio or visuals are overly privileged, an ‘equality’ that queries linear expectation. Also, their temporal frames differ, the images<sup>2</sup> show the museum before it is opened to the public, whilst its exhibits are being cleaned, whereas the duration of the traveller’s journey is lengthier, a matter of days rather than hours.

The form demands interpretation. The visuals and sounds may not seem to have *natural* affinity, the *mystery* of their assemblage requires investigation, but in time associative affiliations do present themselves. Of course, there will always be receptive variance, but *narrative intuition* searches for ‘sense’ and will determine some kind of complimentary reckoning. For instance, museum’s cleaner introduces another presence, she is a manual phantom gone before the museum opens, an external reminder, if one where needed, that the collection is not simply a site of display and learning,

<sup>2</sup> The film’s cinematographer, Babak Jani, shot its images on a Huawei Mate Pro 10, which has a Lecia lens system. On a pre-shoot recce, we observed that if the gallery’s visitors wanted to record their experiences they largely did so on mobile phones. Therefore, this mode of camera was chosen for its experiential correlation and material register.

that it is also connected to all that happens beyond the galleries. Her movement, which is seen to optically divide, at times emphasises the non-diegetic words, as both exist outside of the collection's still perimeters and represent other temporal frames. The structural formulation alludes to remembrance's elasticity, how it produces its own cadence and attendant reason, allows space for ideas to adhere and engenders the necessity for active enquiry.

### **The museal window**

“Understanding dioramas as devices imbued with educational intentions allows us to consider them as products of *museographic transposition*, a transformative process in which content from the domain of scientific research is transformed and adapted to become embodied in the final installation of the physical exhibit in a museum.” (Marandino et al, 2015, p.255)

Memory's related formulation, the acceptance of subjective reckoning, of different experiential plains, emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, just as the Horniman Museum's exhibits started to be accumulated. Prior to this, Alison Landsberg writes, “Whether in the form of ‘organic memory’ or national history, memory in the nineteenth century was commonly imagined as collective, handed down from one generation to the next.” (2004, p.7) The development of a different (more individuated and therefore contemporary) understanding of history, one imbued with interpretation and preference, arose out of the nineteenth century's ‘memory crisis’ in which “the perceived discontinuities between the past and the future were questioned.” (Radstone, 2000, p.7) This was a conscious, even antagonistic, demarcation, (McQuire, 1998, p.121) one that was most distinctly expressed in the observational and intuitive models of memory and time, those created by Proust, Freud, Bergson and later Benjamin. As the twentieth century progressed a new understanding, in which history was seen as a “social process” formed of individuals (Carr, 1961, p.55), became accepted.

The memory crisis had partly occurred due to a mismatch between technological developments, societal changes and a historical narrative, which was perceived as being independent from such matters — Benjamin characterised this situation thus: history “displays its Scotland Yard badge”, a procedural tendency “that showed things ‘as they really were’ was the strongest narcotic of the century.” (1999, p.463) Steedman suggests that that by the nineteenth century History had ‘usurped the functions of memory’, and that it ‘might be understood as just one more technology of memory, one of a set of techniques developed [by the academy] in order that societies might remember.’ (2001, p.66) This debilitating acceptance of history's inevitability often leads to the seeking of solace in the past, but as E. H. Carr cautions this is ‘a symptom of loss of faith and interest in the present or future.’ (1961, p.25) This foregrounds memory's subjective nature, the inference that it influences any reading, that history's record is the product of interpretation.

The Museum's Natural History Gallery first opened in 1901. Many of its original displays of taxidermy and skeletons, specimens that were accrued during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, are still on show. They are offered for the purposes of perusal, education and research, as dioramas are conceived as being a window to see nature through. (Kamcke & Hutter, 2015, p.13)

The images of the museum are located at the inception between the advent of 'subjective' memory, (Radstone, 2000, p.7) lens-based capture and the Victorian mania for collecting and mapping the world; Kenneth E. Foote states, artifacts are "important resources for extending the spatial and temporal range of human communication. This view implies attitudes toward the past, as well as visions of the future." (1990, p.392) The exhibits appear to be suspended in time, but on closer inspection their temporal deterioration, anthropomorphised melancholy, becomes apparent.



Figure 3  
The Horniman Museum, circa  
1930 © Horniman Museum

The display cases, which are the original models, may seem cramped, compared to more modern iterations, but this antiquity suggests an evocative relational history. For instance, one of the few surviving photographs of the natural history gallery, taken in the 1930s, shows a familiar layout; a few of the visible creatures are now gone, as taxidermy was not a priority during World War II. For instance, a polar bear and moose were sold to a Southend photography studio and then devoured by moths. However, despite these absences it is still recognisable, as most of the details remain seemingly untouched.

The gallery may have a familiar appearance but, of course, it is not the same place it once was. Its stately fixtures and fittings, contents, may be unchanged, but their

presence has different connotations. Much can still be gleaned from visiting the Horniman's collections, but its dialogue with natural and cultural history, social place, has evolved, as have our expectations and the questions we would ask.

### **Transformative navigation**

The museum is situated in the vicinity of the traveller's neighbourhood — it is been a well-known local attraction for more than a century now. The audio journey begins with the familiarity of home, before travelling, for the purposes of employment, into lesser known territories, alighting in a provincial coastal town.

Travel and home, and the connection between them, creates a space, between familiarity and all that lies beyond its known limits — Giuliana Bruno writes, “As with any travel effect, a nomadic archive of images became a touching map of personal views. A museum of emotion pictures. A haptic architecture. A topophilic affair.” (2002, p.354) No journey is ever purely geographic, all travel throws into relief all that has proceeded it and even the most work bound journey has the possibility of chance encounter and imaginative intervention.

The text's inspiration is autobiographical, born out of curiosity, the desire to process and relate all that was encountered — for history is known in reflection, as “All history is the history of thought.” (Carr, 1961, p.21) Reflecting on autobiographical intent, the polymath Hollis Frampton observed, “I understand the word autobiography to mean: writing one's own life. But perhaps, as with so much Greek, our text is corrupt. I would rather understand it to mean: life, writing itself.” (2006, p.255) This suggests that reflective existence is located in the relationships that accrue with time, often seemingly incidental incidents, which have personal resonance, whose interest is focused and developed through narrative appreciation.

Journeys can produce a sense of displacement and discontinuity, has the creature's fixity attests to, but for an individual this is also an opportunity for discovery. According to Benjamin flâneurs and gamblers can locate the potential, the “intoxication” that is to be found “in the city of opportunity.” (2005, p.146) He may have been relating the excitement of the urban environment, but traces of this encounter can also be located, all be it in a reduced form, in other places.

The featured destination is not directly mentioned in the text. However, if the viewer really desires to know its location, Bournemouth, there are obvious *clues* that can provide the answer. The related experience may be inspired by this town, but all it suggests is not unique to just one place — the sense of being displaced, with the implied reflection on being, is a unifying sensation, that is provoked by leaving home.

Provincial destinations may share national proximity, but they can feel the most disconcerting, particularly when the capital is your home. On visiting, there is a realization that all that has become familiar is in fact not a national standard, that habitual knowledge is regionally informed, that the semblance of recognizability, coupled with linguistic

awareness, can feel alienating. This sense of being out-of-alignment emphasizes difference and requires cultural and social recalibration. Seaside towns have their own particular constitution, which alters according to the time of year, the ‘rock-pool’ effect being visible out-of-season, when its indigenous inhabitants are truly exposed. The forsaking of ‘easy’ recognition throws our sense of self into relief, invokes a perception of being *out* of time, which summons and refocuses seemingly unrelated memories.

On arrival, after you have orientated yourself — developed an embryonic sense of the streets and who loiters there — accommodation needs to be sought. Over-night travel requires a temporary berth and the hotel room was conceived to address this need and offer a degree of standardised comfort; details may differ according to location and budget but the desired basics remain the same. These are neutrally appointed spaces; whose very *characterlessness* defines their appeal. They are a space apart, liminal places, distinctly separate from the omnipresence of work and the insistence of home. And even the rudimentary, without obvious estimable comforts, can be a refuge and offer space for thought.

Within this field of production, the travelogue or psychogeographic investigation invariably features an omniscient narrator, usually male, who is commenting on all he encounters, offering an *academic* critique of social and cultural conditions, which emphasises his analytical disconnectedness, whereas *Resemblance to Other Animals* adopts a different, altogether more individual register.<sup>3</sup> Benjamin writes, that “the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story’s claim to a place in the memory of the listener, the more completely is it integrated into his [or her] own experience.” (2007 c, p.91) He also suggests that ‘storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when stories are no longer retained.’ (Ibid) He believed that the distracting post-Great War clamour meant that story reception and retention was “unravelling”. This notion reiterates that memory is founded in its retelling, and further to this, relatability is essential for retention and all that may constitute a memorable story should in some way evoke empathy in the listener.

### **All that is heard**

*Resemblance to Other Animals*’ text is in the form of spoken word verse. The style of delivery developed through creative exploration, the need to connect the retelling of experience with its rendition, wanting to find a way of *speaking* about all that was encountered — the non-events, minor infringements, irreverent asides — in a way that was appropriate, in keeping with all that occurred, which did not take the role of a critical examiner, but addressed the found scene as a displaced equal.

<sup>3</sup> The cinematic essay is invariably a vehicle for educated male observation from its origins with Buñuel’s *Las Hurdes: Tierra Sin Pan* (*Land Without Bread*, 1933) through its developmental turn, films like Marker’s *Lettre de Sibérie* (*Letter from Siberia*, 1958), Debord’s *Critique de la séparation* (*Critique of Separation*, 1961), Godard’s *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d’elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, 1967) and continues to attract this form of knowing intonation.

The spoken refrain — quizzical, probing, relatable — explores everyday happenstance, the mundanity and joy of budget travel and employment, for “boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience.” (Ibid) In this way, the words indicate that these experiences are being reviewed at another time and place. It is observationally *and* emotionally driven, formulated to temporalize the text, evoke internal *and* external space and their connectedness.

The voice, which dominates the audio, is not that of the author’s, but is that of a fellow artist, Terence Humphrey. He is familiar with my London, but not with the described location. His vocal interpretation became another layer of related memory, with the implied slippage between points-of-view.

The spoken words are augmented by a sonic hinterland, which was created with Humphrey, when I first encountered him he was a DJ who had honed his skills on pirate radio, and Danny Dixon, who is another London based DJ.<sup>4</sup> It is an experiential soundscape of sensorial invocations, that emphasise the relational aspect of all that is heard, as if the viewer had tuned into a personal late-night broadcast. These sounds know no bounds, connecting new experiences with older ones, adding to their associative reference. Such occurrences are now usually heard in headphone solitude, but they sometimes still bleed into the public realm through an ajar window or even a passing car. They are locatable, the sound of a city, a portable and relatable memory of time and space.

All such sessions comprise of selections of tracks, mixing sounds and interludes, and are performances, live occurrences, exercises in taste, which are conjoined by implicitly and explicitly expressed thought. The traveller’s low tones, sotto voce delivery, invokes a sense of presence, which develops an inter-personal relationship between the spoken words and the listener. His intimate tones also suggest he is addressing absent individuals, who are alluded to in the text, friends and lovers (past and present), that his shared thoughts are a way of anchoring himself in all he knows, remembers, and reasserts where he would rather be, where he will return to.

### **The past is with us, now**

How can memory and imagination be differentiated? Sartre suggests that “what distinguishes memory from imagination is not some particular feature of the image but the fact that memory is, while imagination is not, concerned with the *real*.” (War-nock, 1987, p.34) Furthermore he stated that “if I recall an event of my past life, I do not imagine it, I *remember* it”, (Sartre, 2004, p.181) asserting that this is a real action. This matter is further complicated if considered within the context of a work of art, particularly as “memory and imagination overlap and cannot be wholly distinguished”

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<sup>4</sup> I have known Terence Humphrey and Danny Dixon since the late 1980s. I first met them at Time Warp Records, Croydon, a shop that Terence managed. At that time, we DJed together as I Ching. More recently, we have DJed as DAT. The audio production for *Resemblance to Other Animals* is the first time we have collaborated in this manner.

(Warnock, 1987, p.12), because even within the imaginative realm we are constrained by that which we know. This suggests that memory is within both past and future (“the living future and the imagined future”), (Ibid, p.34) that the past is “one mode of real existence among others” (Sartre, 2004, p.181), and that it is embedded within reality — a notion that echoed Bergson’s belief, therefore it follows that if a memory is altered, for whatever reason, it becomes, by degrees, a work of imagination, because memory is built upon that which is known.

This understanding originated in philosophy and literature, has subsequently been examined by film, is now proven by neuroscience. The contemporary efforts to map memory’s composition indicates instinctive reasoning’s profound realisation, an understanding that preceded the molecular evidence, as Proust and Freud prized unconscious memories, perceiving them to hold more revelatory importance, personal *truth*. As Eric Kandel, the Nobel Prize winning biologist, observes, “[the] idea that different aspects of visual perception might be handled in separate areas of the brain was predicted by Freud at the end of the nineteenth century.” (2006, p.303) And where novelists and philosophers once led filmmakers now follow.<sup>5</sup>

Sight has always been entwined with memory, as Bertrand Russell writes, in *Analysis of Mind* (1921), “memory demands images.” (Cited in: Warnock, 1987, p.20-21) Mary Warnock, in *Memory*, suggests that this philosophical privileging of images originated with Aristotle: “there is something in us like a picture or impression.” (Ibid, p.15) This is further emphasised by Frances Yates, who writes, “Simonides’ invention of the art of memory rested not only on his discovery of the importance of order of memory, but also on the discovery that the sense of sight is the strongest of all senses.” (1992, p.19) The linking of memory and image is based in an empirical truth, that when we see an image, we instinctively understand it has discernible pastness, as it represents a time before our encounter.

Optical documentation, and in film’s case its durational presence, allows for close appraisal and can represent that which is not usually seen or remembered. Considering photography’s unique potentiality Benjamin writes; “[only] photography, with its aids (slow-motion sequences, close-ups), will tell him [the spectator], how people really are. Only photography can show him the optical unconscious.” (2008, p.176) The invention of the camera allowed all that was previously unnoticed to be revealed. This facility, Richard Allen writes, also “redeems aspects of shared experience and invests

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that a number of films have inspired and influenced contemporary investigations. In 2013 American scientist Steve Ramirez succeeded in planting a false memory in a mouse’s brain (“Creating a False Memory in the Hippocampus”, *Science*, 26.07.2013, Vol. 341 no. 6144, p. 387-391) to further understand what is known about our memory’s capacities, and inspiration for his experiment was derived from cinema: he stated that “Hollywood has asked these questions before; here’s a lab that studies memory. Maybe I can get better insight into these movies [he references *Total Recall* (Verhoeven, 1990) and *Inception* (Nolan, 2010), amongst others, films that actively suggest more than one time frame] and at the same time get some fundamental insight into how memory works.” (Beck, 2013)

Figure 4  
The Horniman Museum,  
*Resemblance to Other Animals*  
(2019) © A. Vallance



it with new inter-subjective experience” (1987, p.233), as the image takes on collective possibility. Benjamin, regarding the emergence of photography in the nineteenth century asserted that “Humanity” has produced “the symbol of memory; it has invented what had seemed impossible; it has invented a mirror that remembers.” (1999, p.688) Photographs and film connect to what has been, its history, and place it in a distinct and recognisable temporal relationship.

The work’s durational images represent layers of being, the overlay of suggestive and relational connectiveness. The display cases’ multi-layered reflections, superimpose and relate diverse creatures, relate an uncanny relationship between this scene and other physical and temporal worlds. These images may not be as still as photographs, but through extended observation their visual complexity, an uncontrollable refracted *free-for-all* of geometric and figurative plains, becomes truly apparent. The act of looking differentiates “punctum-like” details (Mulvey, 2006, p.184) — Barthes originally described this effect thus, “Occasionally (but alas all too rarely) a ‘detail’ [of a photograph] attracts me. I feel that its mere presence changes my reading.” (1982, p.42) This sensation suggests something unexpected that moves and alters perception, which arguably can also be found in some images that have movement, such as these.

Informed authorship allows for the crossing of temporal planes, the filtering of experience through a subjective realm of historic and conceptual intersections. Steadman writes, that in “the practices of history and of modern autobiographical narration, there is the assumption that *nothing goes away*; that the past has deposited all of its traces, somewhere, somehow.” (2001, p.76) An awareness that an exploration of places exposition, experiential time, within the realm of personal happenstance, as Bergson thought, “we pluck out of duration those moments that interest us, and that we have gathered along its course.” (1911, p.288) In remembering we reaffirm our sense of what has been, we shape our past and make the present confirm to this vision.

Warnock suggests there is a widely held belief that “the sense of personal identity that each of us has is a sense of continuity through time”, (1987, p.75) and that a “person

and ‘his’ [or ‘her’] past are one and the same.” (Ibid, P.63) But how is this past expressed and to what purpose?

The past’s purchase on all that follows may be grasped, but this does not necessarily mean it is *truly* accepted; there is a desire to seek that, which might authenticate, in some way, our existence, confirm our place and belonging, the story we tell ourselves and others. This sense of being can be formed through personal memories and more expansive histories. It can also be sought and articulated through other sources, such as film, which mediate experience and become a means to offer articulated purpose.

The images, from the museum, show once displaced creatures, the accompanying audio does not explain these scenes, but imagines all that might be derived from a passage of travel. Both elements follow their own trajectories, giving relatable sonic and visual expression to thought’s rhythms and imagination’s curiosity. Through their compounded resonance, something of memory’s inclination and associative cast is suggested, a creative correlation, an active encounter, that offers a distinct memorious form.

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### Biographical note

Andrew Vallance is MA Film Practice Course Leader, Arts University Bournemouth. His doctoral thesis, *Memories Made in Seeing* (Royal College of Art), examined films that represent memory and, in turn, make memories, and how they inform our understanding of remembrance and its depiction. He co-founded Contact (contactscreenings.co.uk), co-curating *Contact: A Festival* (Apiary Studios), *Assembly: A Survey of Recent Artist Film & Video in Britain 2008-13* (Tate), published articles (MIRAJ, Sequence) and contributed to and convened symposia (AAH, MeCCSA). His artistic practice, which has been shown in numerous venues (Whitechapel Gallery, Rotterdam), considers questions of relational and locational identity and memory.

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