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Over and Beyond our Episodic Memories

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Memory and the Self: Phenomenology, Science and Autobiography. Mark Rowlands. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, 224 pages, \$55.00 hardcover.

[E]verything bears witness to what we are, our friendships and enmities, our glance and the clasp of our hand, our memory and that which we do not remember, our books and our handwriting.

Untimely Meditations
 Nietzsche, 1876/1997

Where do our memories go when we lose them? This question may seem childlike, and indeed it was posed to Mark Rowlands by one of his young sons, but it is a good question, and one that lies at the heart of *Memory and the Self: Phenomenology, Science and Autobiography*. In answering this question, Rowlands takes us on a fascinating, insightful, and revisionary journey through episodic memory, its content (and mental content more generally), and the nature of the autobiographical self.

Going back to at least John Locke (1690/1997), or at least one reading of Locke, philosophers have stressed the importance of memory for continuity of personal identity through time.¹ Indeed, the notion that memories play an important role in making us who we are — the *persons* we are — is an intuitive one. One of the great worries about ageing and losing one's memories is precisely the fear of losing one's sense of self. Memory, it seems, is essential to who we are. Rowlands casts a disquisitive eye over these intuitive notions, radically rethinking and revising them. He acknowledges the truth of the idea that memory, in some sense, makes us who we are, but he then points out that there are certain

The title of this critical notice is adapted from a passage by Gaston Bachelard, which is used in *Memory and the Self* to illustrate the phenomenon of (embodied) Rilkean memory. Bachelard writes: "But over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us" (quoted in Rowlands, 2016, p. 57). All page numbers that appear in parenthesis without year of publication refer to *Memory and the Self*. My thanks to John Sutton, Paloma Muñoz, and Raymond Russ for helpful discussion and comments on previous drafts. Any remaining errors are mine. My thanks also to Leslie Marsh for advice and encouragement during the writing process. Correspondence concerning this review should be addressed to Chris McCarroll, Department of Cognitive Science, Macquarie University, Australian Hearing Hub, 16 University Avenue, Sydney, NSW 2109 Australia. Email: christopher.mccarroll@mq.edu.au

¹Locke's account of memory is complex and multifaceted (Copenhaver, 2017), and other readings of Locke do not ascribe to him a memory criterion for personal identity; see, for example, Atherton (1983).

features of memory — its fragility and inaccuracy — that are problematic for this idea. How can memory make us who we are when we forget so much and when remembering one's past is often beset by error? Rowlands solves this problem by describing a particular type of memory that helps hold the self together over time. These memories are involuntary autobiographical memories. These memories are Rilkean memories, and they play a fundamental role in the constitution of our autobiographical selves despite the imperfections of episodic memory.

Working within existing typologies of memory, while pointing out some of the problems and inadequacies of these current typologies, Rowlands provides a compelling case for the nature of episodic memory and the importance of Rilkean memories. He draws on a range of sources: from philosophy and phenomenology, through poetry and prose, to scientific empirical evidence. The book is also warmly personal, with many of the examples and case studies the book relies on furnished from Rowlands' own memories and experiences. For a book that, as we shall see, emphasizes the importance of style and content, it has both of these in abundance.

Summary of the Arguments

Memory and the Self is a book about memory and how memories play a role in making us who we are. But when we episodically remember something, what is it that we remember? Episodic memories, those elements of our autobiographies, are often thought to be memories of (or about) episodes. Or, if they are not about episodes, then they are of (or about) the experiences that accompanied those episodes: episodic memories are memories of experiences. For reasons we shall see later, Rowlands thinks that there are problems with both these characterizations when they are taken individually. A true understanding of episodic memory combines them, and explains how such memory involves *both* the episode remembered and the experiences associated with those episodes.

In any memory, Rowlands reminds us, there is both the act of remembering and the content remembered — the remembering and the remembered. Rowlands informs us that memory research has typically focused on *what* we remember, the content of our memories, and has neglected the importance of the act of remembering. This marginalization is a mistake, thinks Rowlands, because if we neglect the act of remembering we are left with an unbalanced view of memory. The act of remembering requires rehabilitation (p. 19). Many of the important features of episodic memory, Rowlands tells us, stem from the act of remembering. Importantly, we cannot understand the content of episodic memory if we neglect the act of remembering. The act of remembering plays a crucial role in determining *what* we remember because the “content of memory is always a seamless combination of act and episode, of the remembered and the remembering” (p. 19). Indeed, Rowlands continues, because the act of remembering plays a role in the constitution of the content of episodic memories, then the act of remembering plays an important role in making us the persons we are (p. 19). Episodic memories are memories of episodes, which are presented as ones that I formerly experienced. The act of episodic remembering contributes this experiential aspect to the episode remembered, and is an essential element of episodic memory.

Moreover, Rowlands suggests, when we lose memory content, when what we remember is forgotten, the act of remembering can still live on in a new mutated form. Acts of episodic remembering can be transformed into Rilkean memories. Rowlands christens these contentless memories “Rilkean,” after the poet (and one time novelist) Rainer Maria Rilke, who, in describing the process of poetic creation, emphasized the importance of memories that have “changed into our very blood, into glance and gesture, and are nameless, no longer to be distinguished from ourselves” (quoted in Rowlands, p. 51). The “episodic circumstances”

of the birth of Rilkean memories is important because, for Rowlands, only episodic memory (not semantic memory nor procedural memory) has the person-specificity required to make us the persons we are, and this person-specificity transfers to Rilkean memory (p. 73). Rilkean memories “place you in a concrete relation to your past and the experiences you had in that past” (p. 72). Importantly, Rowlands emphasizes that in many cases Rilkean memories can exist simultaneously with their episodic counterparts. And, even if Rilkean memories are not properly understood as memories, even if they are non-memorial products of episodic memory, they can still connect us to our pasts.

Because Rilkean memories have no content, they are not intentional states (p. 72). Rather, they come in embodied and affective form. Rilkean memory is “a type of *involuntary autobiographical* memory that is not *Freudian*, neither *implicit* nor *explicit*, neither *procedural* nor *declarative* and neither *episodic* nor *semantic*” (p. 67, emphasis original).² Indeed, these “exotic forms of autobiographical memory” (Michaelian and Sutton, 2017) play a fundamental role in making us who we are, the type of persons we are. But what exactly, according to Rowlands, is a person?

Rowlands distinguishes between the metaphysical self and the autobiographical self. The metaphysical self will be understood through typical analytic philosophical projects aimed at answering questions related to the constitution, composition, distinctness, persistence, and essential versus contingent properties of selves (pp. 75–76). These questions will typically either have psychological or physical answers. Rowlands is not trying to understand or answer the questions pertaining to the metaphysical self, but is rather bracketing them. Rowlands is attempting to capture what is left out of the metaphysical project, he is attempting to understand the autobiographical self, which is “whatever your autobiography would be about” (p. 78). The autobiographical self of Rowlands’ project is not to be understood as a relatively superficial, mere sense of self, where this corresponds roughly to how one sees or defines oneself. The autobiographical self is more robust than this, it is a deeper notion. The autobiographical self describes and explains the relations between concrete and contingent episodes of self-understanding, weaving them into a more or less unified whole, which does not emerge at a particular time but only *through* time (p. 85).

Biographies and autobiographies have a dual character: they are both written and read. In a similar sense, one’s own autobiography, the book of you which captures the autobiographical self, has this dual character. It is both written (experienced) and read (remembered). That is, the book of you is dual-faceted: it involves both the W-Self, the self that undergoes the experiences recorded and written in one’s autobiography, and the R-Self, the self that remembers those experiences. And the “autobiographical self — the self that is captured in the book of you — is the amalgam of these two facets” (p. 91). Further, it is “not simply that the W-Self and R-Self are conjoined. Rather, when it remembers, the R-Self recognizes the W-Self as identical with itself” (p. 91).

²Rilkean memories are not Freudian (or neo-Freudian) repressed memories because the latter are more restricted, deriving from unpleasant experiences, whereas Rilkean memories are a much broader category. Rilkean memories are not implicit or explicit, because they have no content and they do not stand in any robust relation to explicit memories (as represented in the mind). Rilkean memories are not the same as procedural memories, which are embodied skill memories, such as remembering how to play the cello, because Rilkean memories “are not memories of how to do things or perform tasks” (p. 69). But neither are Rilkean memories declarative memories, because they do not have intentional content and so cannot be evaluated for truth or falsity, which is one of the marks of declarative memory. This also rules out Rilkean memories being episodic or semantic memories, both of which are forms of declarative memory. Rilkean memories are *involuntary*, in that you cannot intend to have them, they seek you out, and *autobiographical*, in the sense that they pertain to you and stem from episodic memories you once had.

Over and beyond standard episodic memories, which may be inaccurate and undergo degradation, Rilkean memories are enduring and they can help hold a person (an autobiographical self) together even when they undergo substantial memory loss. Rilkean memories provide a continuity to the fragmented self (p. 28). Even if the book of you is full of redactions and rewritings, it will still be recognizable as your book because of your particular style as a person. When I make judgements, from a third-person perspective, as to whether someone is the same person she once was, it is the person's style that holds her together over time. Rilkean memories can be thought of as this *style* that holds a particular person together, as understood from a third-person perspective.

In fact, every act of remembering can become a Rilkean memory simply by losing its content: "Every act of remembering is a potential or incipient Rilkean memory" (p. 28). Rilkean memories are not just important *qua* Rilkean memories, but what they were before they became Rilkean memories (i.e., acts of remembering) is equally, if not more, important. Incipient Rilkean memories account for the presence of self in memory, which provides the autobiographical self with unity and identity over time. The presence of self in memory (PSM) pertains to the *way* in which an episode is experienced: I am always in my memories, the remembered episodes are always presented as ones I formerly experienced. PSM, which is provided by incipient Rilkean memories, is necessary and sufficient for a memory to qualify as episodic (p. 153). The act of remembering transforms the episode remembered into memory content, which essentially involves the presence of the rememberer.

Episodic memory is memory of content, not memory of an episode as such, because the episode is a state-of-affairs that is mind-independent. Content, in contrast, is *not* independent of the act of remembering (p. 183). So there is a sense in which we get back to (remember) the original mind-independent episode, but it is remembered as content. And because remembering content is the important relation, Rowlands marks this distinction as between the content remembered and the episode remembered*. For Rowlands, rather than remembering* episodes per se, what we in fact remember is content: "The act of remembering *pulls* or *sculpts* the remembered content from out of the remembered* episode" (p. 181, emphasis original).³ There is nothing in the episode itself, understood as a state-of-affairs, that makes it mental: "the episode exists independently of the act of remembering" (p. 168). Further, there is "nothing in a remembered* episode, in itself, which guarantees that it will be presented as an episode formerly experienced by me" (p. 183). It is incipient Rilkean memories, as acts of remembering, which provide the presence of self in remembered content essential to episodic memory. Episodic memories are thus modified to include PSM, and hence make "the remembered into the sort of thing that can be presented to me as something I formerly experienced" (p. 158). Incipient Rilkean memories ensure, therefore, that from a first-person perspective the content of episodic memory is infused with the presence of self and hence infused with *style*.

In what follows I describe in more detail the main themes and arguments of *Memory and the Self* and engage critically with them. Rowlands' book is a rich, compelling, and wide-ranging work. There is much to find here, and I don't pretend to have captured all the insights, nor challenged all the arguments. No doubt there will be more for others to pick over and enjoy, but these are the ideas that most captured my attention.

³Rowlands is clear that this way of thinking about the content of memory does not introduce an indirect realist account of memory: "Content is not something that stands between a subject and an episode. Rather, it is a way or mode of remembering* an episode. One remembers content when one remembers* an episode in a certain way, manner or mode" (p. 176).

Episodic Memory: Content and the Presence of Self

What, exactly, is it that I remember when I episodically recall something? There seems to be two possibilities: firstly, I remember an episode; secondly, I remember the experiences that accompanied the episode (p. 44). Rowlands thinks that both options are insufficient on their own. If we take episodic memory to be the memory of episodes or events, he tells us, then we lose the distinction between episodic memory and semantic memory. Semantic memories are memories of facts, but even though some facts will be standing states (e.g., that turmeric is an ingredient of curry powder), certain facts can be understood as events or episodes that obtain in the world (e.g., that Napoleon won the Battle of Austerlitz). Therefore, if “episodic memory is simply the memory of an episode or an event — denuded of all experiential content — then there is nothing that distinguishes it from semantic memory” (p. 44). For Rowlands, the distinction between episodic and semantic memory is one of degree rather than kind, but it is not one that we should lose completely.

However, if episodic memory is remembering the experiences that accompanied an episode then we also face a problem. To see why, Rowlands invites us to consider the phenomenon of *perspective switching*. Generally, the visual imagery that accompanies episodic memory is presented from one’s original visual point of view. But, sometimes the visual imagery of memory presents the scene from an external point of view, such that one sees oneself in the remembered scene. These distinct perspectives are known as field and observer perspectives respectively (Nigro and Neisser, 1983). For Rowlands, in such observer perspective memories one is remembering visual experiences that one did not have at the time of the original event. This means that if episodic memory is the remembering of experiences, then such observer perspectives must be false memories. And, given that observer perspectives are relatively common, many of our episodic memories should thus be considered false. But, Rowlands suggests, this way of thinking blurs the distinction between truth and falsity in an unacceptable way (p. 46). We lose the distinction between false memories, which are false in the sense that the remembered event simply did not happen, and false memories in the sense that the event did happen but one’s remembered experiences do not match the experiences one had in the past: “Whether or not the episode in question actually happened is important for the status of the memory in a way that is lost if we think of episodic memory simply as the remembering of experiences” (p. 46).

The puzzle of episodic memory is how to make sense of the idea that episodic remembering is both the remembering of an episode and the remembering of experiences that accompanied that episode. Rowlands’ solution to the puzzle is to invoke the notion of a mode of presentation. A memory qualifies as episodic if (1) the episode actually took place, and (2) the episode is subsumed under a specific mode of presentation; that is, the episode “is presented as one that one has formerly witnessed, orchestrated, or otherwise encountered. This ‘as’ is built into what is remembered and this is what makes the resulting memory an episodic one” (p. 49, emphasis original).

I think Rowlands is correct that episodic memory is both remembering episodes and the experiences associated with those episodes, and there is much to like in the notion that the mode of presentation can help explain this feature of episodic memory. But there are a couple of issues with the way Rowlands sets up the puzzle of episodic memory. Let us take the second strand of the puzzle of episodic memory first. Rowlands proposes that in observer perspective memories one is remembering experiences that one did not have at the time of the original episode. One sees oneself from-the-outside in memory, and yet one didn’t perceive oneself from-the-outside during the past event. This is a quite common

conception of observer perspectives and why such imagery seems to be problematic as an instance of memory (Fernández, 2015; Vendler, 1979). But it is not clear that observer perspectives involve experiences that one did not have at the time of the original event. When one recalls an event from an observer perspective one is not remembering seeing oneself from-the-outside (Gregory, 2013); the experience of seeing oneself is not part of the content of the memory. Further, when one recalls from an observer perspective one can still maintain embodied and emotional perspectives that were experienced at the time of the original event (McCarroll and Sutton, 2017). When recalling from an observer perspective one is not remembering experiences that one did not have at the time of the event. One is simply remembering the past event, and this can still involve imagery that was experienced at that time.

I suggest that there is another issue with Rowlands' formulation of episodic memory. It is only *implicit* on Rowlands' account that episodic memory depends on the fact that the episode I remember is one from my *personal* past, and this poses a problem for his depiction of episodic memory. For Rowlands, there is the episode we remember, but this in itself is not enough to distinguish episodic memory from semantic memory: "a semantic memory can also be a memory of an episode" (p. 49). Rather, it is the mode of presentation during the act of remembering that provides the experiential aspect that the episode is one I formerly encountered (i.e., PSM). And this PSM is necessary and sufficient for the memory to count as episodic (p. 153). But, then, this characterisation seems to leave open the possibility that we could count memories of the events of semantic memory as episodic memories, as long as they present under the same specific mode of presentation. What would Rowlands say about false memories of events (episodes) that did in fact happen, but which one did not actually experience?

Rowlands gives the example of remembering (semantically) that a dentist named Walter Palmer shot and killed a lion called Cecil. This memory is a memory of an episode, but this memory is a semantic memory. Rowlands admits that this semantic memory can have an experiential–emotional quality, as an adverbial modification of the act of remembering: he remembers this event *angrily*. But what if Rowlands, through repeated visualisations of the horrifying scene, comes to remember that episode as one that he formerly encountered? That is, the memory is presented under an episodic mode of presentation and involves an experiential–emotional component that is not simply an adverbial modification of the act of remembering. It would seem that this new "Cecil* memory" is a memory of an episode, an episode that did in fact take place, and it also now falls under an experiential mode of presentation as an episode that Rowlands formerly encountered, and so involves the presence of self that is an essential feature of episodic memory. Does this memory count as an episodic memory?⁴ Does it even matter, for Rowlands, if it should count as a false memory?

Because the presence of self in memory is sufficient for the memory to count as episodic, then it would seem that his Cecil* memory should count as episodic. But, Rowlands also adds a qualifier to the sufficiency claim: "if something is merely an apparent memory, then the presence of self in this memory is sufficient for it to qualify as an apparent episodic memory" (p. 153). So, perhaps, Rowlands' new Cecil* memory of the poor animal being killed is merely an apparent episodic memory. But then what is it, exactly, that distinguishes between this type of memory and genuine episodic memory? We are told

⁴The example may seem rather far-fetched, but we could easily take a more plausible one by drawing on a personal semantic memory, where one knows about an event in one's early childhood, learned about through testimony or by looking at an old photograph, and then one takes oneself to be episodically remembering this past event.

very little about the difference between genuine episodic memory and merely seeming to remember. There is nothing in the remembered episode itself to distinguish episodic memory from semantic memory; rather, it is the presence of self, which is supplied by a mode of presentation during the act of remembering, that ensures episodocity. But this does not tell us the difference between genuine episodic memories and these falsely episodic semantic memories.

One important way of distinguishing between genuine episodic memories and merely apparent episodic memories (e.g., the Cecil* memory), is to invoke a causal condition. A genuine memory stands in an appropriate causal relation to the remembered event, such that one's original experience of the event *causes* one's subsequent memory (representation) of the event, through the retention of some form of memory trace (Debus, 2017; Martin and Deutscher, 1966). How a past event causes a present memory experience in the right way is a complex issue (Michaelian and Robins, 2018). And Rowlands, initially at least and quite happily, dismisses the importance of an appropriate causal connection for his account.⁵ False memories do not need to be explained because while false memories are problematic for the metaphysical project, the falsity of memories is not a problem for Rowlands' autobiographical project (p. 115). Indeed, "if the self in question is the autobiographical self, false memories can be just as self-constituting as real memories" (p. 115). So, false memories are not a problem for the autobiographical self. But is this really the case?

A key insight in Rowlands' understanding of the autobiographical self is that the book of you is heavily redacted and extensively rewritten. There are deficiencies of content, which involve "paucity and inaccuracy." And, Rowlands tells us, "these deficiencies of content engender problems" (p. 195). There are two such problems. First, the problem of *unity*: "What makes this fragmentary and distorted record the record of a single life?" (p. 195). Second, the problem of *identity*: "Even if the fragmentary and frequently inaccurate account in the book can be determined to be the account of a single life, what makes this life yours rather than somebody else's?" (p. 195). If inaccurate memories cause problems for the autobiographical self, then surely false memories are at least as problematic?

In fact, inaccurate memories, which are problematic for the autobiographical self, are largely synonymous with false memories (p. 127). Rowlands urges us to think not in terms of simple truth and falsity, but to consider a spectrum of accuracy versus inaccuracy, and he holds that "the falsity — better, inaccuracy — and forgetting of episodic memories provide us with a puzzle" (p. 127). This puzzle is, as we have seen, how memory can play a role in making us who we are when memory is often false (highly inaccurate) or forgotten. The inaccuracy and paucity of memory "present a problem for the idea that our episodic memories play a major role in the construction of the autobiographical self" (p. 127). If the W-Self "comprises all the episodes that it encounters, witnesses, orchestrates and so on," then, in false memories, there really was no W-Self for that episode because there was no episode to experience or witness. Given that the autobiographical self is the amalgamation of both the W-Self and the R-Self, then false memories, by effectively negating the W-Self, seem particularly problematic. What happens to the autobiographical self when there is no W-Self

⁵In fact, Rowlands later writes that "It is plausible to suppose that remembering* is a predominantly causal relation: the concrete, historical episode that forms the object of episodic memory is what causes that episodic memory.... Remembering ... is a more active, constructive relation: remembering is a process whereby content is ... pulled or carved out of the episode remembered*" (pp. 175–176, emphasis original). Given that it is the latter relation (remembering rather than remembering*) that is important for Rowlands, the causal story still takes a back seat in his picture.

for a merely apparent episodic memory? If PSM is necessary and sufficient for episodocity, and if this presence of self stems from the act of remembering alone, then we are left with no clear way of distinguishing genuine from merely apparent episodic memory (based on a real event that one did not personally experience).

One crucial difference between genuine episodic memories and falsely episodic semantic memories is that the former are about events that were part of one's *personal* past. But this is not explicit in Rowlands' account. The mode of presentation of the episode, which occurs at the time of remembering, is doing all the work for Rowlands. It is the mode of presentation — associated with the act of remembering — that supplies the presence of self so crucial for episodic remembering. But, I suggest that the episode does not stand alone as some independent fact that obtains in the world (as in the episodes of semantic memory), only to be then infused with the presence of self by a particular mode of presentation during the act of remembering. The episode of episodic memory does not exist independently. Rather, the episode was one that I formerly experienced and so it will be already shaped by perceptual experience, and modes of presentation of this particular intentional act. But, presumably, this perceptual mode of presentation involves a presence of self, whereby events are presented as ones that I am *currently* encountering etc. This presence of self, which emerges from modes of presentation during perceptual experience, can then be maintained in memory.

This is not to say that the content of the memory cannot change and that an original experienced episode can be colored or transformed emotionally, visuospatially, or in other ways. But even in perceptual experience the indelible stamp of a person always makes a mark on the episode encountered. Rowlands seems to be removing the person from perceptual experience. Memory content and the act of remembering may indeed be inseparable (p. 152), but so too episodic memory content and the act of perceiving are inseparable. Both acts contribute to the presence of self in memory.

I do not mean to attribute an obviously false claim about episodic memory to Rowlands. His discussion of the difference between the R-Self and the W-Self shows that experiencing an event is importantly related to remembering that event. Nonetheless, it is not clear how perception contributes to the content of memory and the presence of self essential to episodic memory. Rowlands, I suggest, is placing too much emphasis on the R-Self at the expense of the W-Self.

Consider one of Rowlands' own examples: his memory of the face of his father. This is one of Rowlands' earliest memories. Having inadvertently caused his father to miss the second Cassius Clay–Sonny Liston fight, Rowlands remembers the change in his father's face as his father realizes he has just missed the crucial knockout. His father's face turns from confusion to suspicion to acceptance to joy. Importantly, when Rowlands recalls the face of his father, he recalls the face of an older man, even though his father would have been a relatively young man at the time. The reason this is so, Rowlands tells us, is because of the paucity of photographs of his father from that period. And, "given the lack of photographs of my father from his younger days the only frame of reference for this presentation comes from the more recent past" (p. 191). Because of this scarcity of photographic information, "the face has to be updated to make it recognizable," otherwise, Rowlands thinks, there is a significant chance he would not recognize his father.

I am not suggesting that such updating cannot take place, but there still seems to be a key step of the argument left out, which relates to the role of perceptual experience. Why does the lack of photographs of his father as a young man mean that the only frame of reference for Rowlands' memory is the more recent past? What happened to the frame of reference provided by the original perceptual presentation, i.e., the face of his father as a young man? This seems to have been forgotten, but episodic detail gained in perceptual

experience is not always or even typically lost in episodic memory. Further, why would there be a good chance that Rowlands would not recognize his father's face if it were presented as the face of a young man, if memory, in some sense, maintains the content of perception?⁶

According to Rowlands, "The (mental) act of episodic remembering pulls the content of memory out of the (typically, entirely non-mental) episode. The result is a mental content remembered rather than merely a non-mental episode remembered"⁷ (p. 179). But this leaves out how the episode was marked and crafted by the mental act of perception. The episode is not some uncut marble block waiting for the act of remembering to chisel out the presence of self. Rather, the block has already been shaped by one's perceptual experience. Indeed, it seems unclear how the episode, as a state-of-affairs, can exist independently of the act of remembering, given that the state of affairs has already been affected by perceptual experience. The state of affairs that the act of remembering can sculpt or mould has already been sculpted by perception. An episode that is presented as one *I formerly encountered* can gain or inherit its status as something *I formerly encountered* from perceptual experience. By letting the act of remembering do all the work, and leaving out how perceptual experience is important for the content of memory, the difference between genuine episodic memory and merely apparent episodic memory, based on facts contained in semantic memory, vanishes.

Rilkean Memory and the Autobiographical Self

Rilkean memories are the stuff that holds the self together. But what are Rilkean memories, and how do they play the role they are supposed to in making us who we are? Rowlands distinguishes two projects in relation to Rilkean memories. The first is an existential project: providing support for the claim that Rilkean memories actually exist. The second is a conceptual project: working out what type of things Rilkean memories are. In terms of the existence of Rilkean memories, this is not something that can be established directly, admits Rowlands. Rather, "Rilkean memories are theoretical posits whose existential credentials will be established by the sort of explanatory work they do" (p. 55). Rilkean memories are posited to play a role in holding the self together.

Embodied Rilkean memory is body memory in a constitutive sense rather than a mere causal sense, in that one's body *is* the memory rather than merely *causing* one to think back and recall the past. Embodied Rilkean memory "incorporates both behavioral and bodily dispositions" (p. 58). An example of embodied Rilkean memory would be a runner's idiosyncratic gait, which has been shaped by previous experiences. Affective Rilkean memories are sensations, feelings or moods. Rowlands illustrates an example of affective Rilkean memory through an experience had by Mole in *The Wind in the Willows*. Mole, being a mole, has an exquisitely sophisticated sense of smell, and one day while out walking with his friend Ratty, he stops dead in his tracks summoned by an unknown yet familiar odour. The scent finally identifies itself as the smell of Mole's old home, and it starts to beckon him to return. For Rowlands, Mole is the

⁶The idea that Rowlands would not recognize the face of his father if it were presented as a young man also makes it sound like there are two factors involved: an image that comes before the mind, followed by an act of recognition. But this is precisely the photographic model of memory Rowlands wants to reject (pp. 166–168). Of course, Rowlands is underscoring the constructive nature of remembering here, but it is still unclear why a memory of his father's face presented as a young man would need to be recognized or interpreted. Whatever the content of memory (young or old face), no semantically inert item comes before the mind only to be then given meaning through an act of interpretation: "The remembered is always, essentially, remembered as something" (p. 168).

subject of certain sensations or feelings, “invisible little hands pulling and tugging, all one way.”⁷ These sensations are affective Rilkean memories.

In Mole’s case, eventually these Rilkean memories give way to full episodic recollection, but in some cases all that will be left are Rilkean memories. This means that sometimes the content of the parent episodic memory disappears entirely. But sometimes Rilkean memories can shift into more recognizable forms of episodic remembering, and this suggests that the episodic content is not eternally erased. Perhaps the difference between the two cases can be explained by drawing on the distinction between accessibility and availability of memory content (Tulving and Pearlstone, 1966). When episodic memory returns, perhaps the content was available but merely momentarily inaccessible, or only accessible in Rilkean form. Whereas when Rilkean memories are all that remain, content is not only inaccessible but entirely unavailable.

It is these Rilkean memories, both embodied and affective, that provide the style of a person, and which therefore help make us who we are. The mnemonic glue of Rilkean memories becomes especially important when our episodic memories abandon us, through accident or ageing. “The past lives of people with dementia often vanish as the illness takes its toll on memory” (Gould, 2006), we are told. But, according to Rowlands, the past lives of people don’t just vanish when episodic memories are lost, they live on through Rilkean memories, manifesting the person’s past in embodied and affective style. How Rilkean memories play a role in holding the self together can be considered from a *first-person* perspective, where “such an account will require that we address the issues of unity and identity as they pertain to the relation between the R-Self and the W-Self,” or from a *third-person* perspective, which is “the perspective adopted by one person judging or recognizing the identity of another” (p. 134).

From a first-person perspective, it is the presence of self in memory that provides the unity and identity between the R-Self and the W-Self. And, PSM is itself provided by the episode of memory falling under a particular mode of presentation, which is intrinsically linked to the act of remembering. And because acts of remembering are incipient Rilkean memories, then such incipient Rilkean memories ensure that I am always in my memories and the W-Self and the R-Self are unified and identical. But, why argue that it is *Rilkean memories* doing the work here? It may be true that *all* acts of remembering are *incipient* Rilkean memories, but it is the act of remembering *qua* act of remembering (combined with content) that provides PSM. Rowlands himself tells us that the “inseparability of content and act of remembering is a necessary condition of the presence of self in memory” (p. 152). But if content and act of remembering are necessarily inseparable for PSM, and Rilkean memories occur when content and act of remembering are necessarily parted, then Rilkean memory (*qua* Rilkean memory) is really playing no role in providing PSM.

The clear use of terms like “incipient Rilkean memory” or “act of remembering” is important. Rowlands stresses that his approach to understanding persons is *not* a psychological one. The reason is that it is Rilkean memories that hold the self together, and “many Rilkean memories are not psychological states but bodily and behavioral dispositions” (p. 78). And, although affective Rilkean memories (feelings and moods) are psychological states, they are “of a sort uncharacteristically visceral compared with the sorts of states usually invoked in psychological accounts of identity” (p. 78). This can’t be quite right,

⁷Perhaps one could read the “telegraphic current” and the “invisible little hands” that affect Mole as smells rather than sensations or feelings, but I think it is clear nonetheless what Rowlands means and that Mole undergoes certain sensations. The smell of home makes Mole “tingle through and through with its very familiar appeal, while as yet he could not clearly remember what it was” (quoted in Rowlands, p. 59).

however. It is not bodily or affective states that hold the autobiographical self together from a first-person perspective, but mental acts of remembering, necessarily bound up with content. These are not Rilkean memories. They are episodic memories (with act and content jointly playing a role in providing PSM), and these are psychological states. Rowlands' account of the autobiographical self is at least partly a psychological one. And for this reason, even though Rowlands is not specifying necessary and sufficient conditions for the persistence of persons, it's also hard to see how he can articulate the notion of the autobiographical self in an entirely non-metaphysical register.

Drawing on existing ideas in *Memory and the Self*, I think there is way of salvaging a role for Rilkean memories *qua* Rilkean memories to play in generating PSM. Rilkean memories, as moods and dispositions, are world-disclosing, attuning one to particular features of one's environment (p. 146). Because these Rilkean memories cause one to focus on certain features of one's environment or a particular event, then they will have an impact on what is perceived and then what is remembered. Rilkean memories *qua* Rilkean memories attune one to pick out certain features of one's environment and certain features of a remembered episode, and this may itself impact on the presence of self in memory (e.g., whether the self is viewed from an observer perspective), or on the content of memory. It is in this sense, I think, that Rilkean memories, rather than *incipient* Rilkean memories, can make an important contribution to the autobiographical self considered from a first-person perspective.

When the problem of unity and identity of the autobiographical self is considered from a third-person perspective the role of Rilkean memories is clearer. Rilkean memories, as embodied and affective ways of being-in-the-world, provide the style of the person — the analogue of literary style — and this style can hold the self together when memories are lost or inaccurate. Just as one can make a judgment as to the author of a manuscript based on its literary style, even if it is impoverished by redactions and rewritings, so too can one make judgments about the unity and identity of a person based on her embodied and affective style. One can judge the unity and identity of a person based on Rilkean memories. The style of a person will manifest in certain behavioral dispositions, which are “bound up in a rich cognitive and emotional context” (p. 141), and affective character traits. And these Rilkean memories help one to make judgments about the “mental life” of persons (p. 135), judgments of unity and identity. But do all these behavioral and affective ways of being stem from episodic memories of past experiences, or from the experiences themselves?

Rowlands distinguishes embodied Rilkean memories from procedural memories, one species of body memory. I think he is correct to do so, but one wonders whether there is not a broader category of “habitual body memory” to which at least some Rilkean memories belong. Skilled actions are one type of habitual body memory, but the category encompasses much more. It is an embodied way of being-in-the-world, where, just as Rowlands emphasizes with Rilkean memory, “character and style . . . are very much constituted by habit memories expressed bodily” (Casey, 1984, p. 282). In fact, affective Rilkean memories may also belong to this broader class of habitual memory, because it need not “be strictly bodily in character: I can slip, all too easily, into habitual patterns of thought or of feeling, indeed of remembering itself” (Casey, 1987/2000, p. 56). Indeed, resonating with Rilke's claims on poetic composition, Simone de Beauvoir (1970/1996) observes that habit has a “kind of poetry.” Habit memory is poetic “since it merges past, present and future in a sense of eternity,” and, like poetry, it “discloses enduring essences or ways of being” (Fielding, 2014, pp. 69, 74).

This broader category of habitual body memory is important because it is also invoked to explain what Rilkean memories are posited to explain. And if this category of habitual memory does the same explanatory job as Rilkean memories, do we need the category of

Rilkean memory? Indeed, “the evidence for the existence of Rilkean memories is indirect — a matter of the explanatory work they can perform” (p. 51). As such, if the category of body memory fulfils this explanatory role, then we have less support for the existence of Rilkean memories.

Thomas Fuchs distinguishes six forms of body memory: procedural, situational, intercorporeal, incorporative, pain, and traumatic memory. These types of body memory are not entirely separable from one another, but derive from different dimensions of *bodily experience* (Fuchs, 2012, p. 12). Both Fuchs and Rowlands appeal to some of the same examples in order to explicate forms of body memory and Rilkean memory. For example, both appeal to Bachelard’s description of how the spatial memory of one’s childhood home can be inscribed in the body. For Fuchs, this is an instance of situational body memory, for Rowlands it is an embodied Rilkean memory. Such embodied spatial memory “helps us to get our bearings in the space of our dwelling” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 13). Similarly, Rowlands tells us that “Our memory of how to navigate the house, and the way the house feels, is not grounded in standard semantic or episodic memories . . . It is because a pattern of dispositions has been woven into my body and its neural infrastructure” (p. 58). And, drawing on the same evocative account of Aharon Appelfeld’s past that Rowlands uses to describe how Rilkean memories can exist simultaneously with experiential memories of more general patterns of one’s life, Fuchs informs us that “it is a whole phase of life that has left its traces in body memory, and these traces are even more durable than autobiographic memories can be” (2012, p. 18).

This broader category of habitual body memory resonates with Rilkean memories because both involve a loss of content: “Bodily learning means forgetting what we have learned or done explicitly, and letting it sink into implicit unconscious knowing” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 13).⁸ Both are non-representational and non-intentional: “habit memory is an action, not a representation” (Casey, 1984, p. 281). Both are enduring: “the tacit, but enduring memory of the body” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 21). And, importantly, both play a role in identity constitution: “the structures accrued in body memory are an essential basis of our experience of self and identity: The individual history and peculiarity of a person is also expressed by his or her bodily habits and behavior” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 9). Indeed, “even when dementia deprives a person of all of her explicit recollections, she still retains her bodily memory: The history of her life remains present” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 20). Poetic habits “seem to provide for transcendence, for a hold upon the world that is not only disclosive but also an essential aspect of someone’s identity” (Fielding, 2014, pp. 74–75). In a similar vein to Rilkean memory, then, “What we have forgotten has become what we are” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 13).

What distinguishes Rilkean memories from these other forms of body memory is that Rilkean memories derive from episodic memories that have lost their content, whereas habit memory (in general) more typically derives from one’s lived (embodied) experiences in the world. Of course, habit memory may also be linked to episodic memories of lived experience, and sometimes open up to reveal its autobiographical contents (Fuchs, 2012, p. 19). But if this broader category of habitual body memory also explains how persons are held together over time, where does this leave Rilkean memory? This is a particularly difficult question because, ultimately, as Rowlands acknowledges, it is an empirical matter whether Rilkean memories exist (p. 148). But then how could we test whether a particular habitual or body memory is Rilkean or not? How could we test whether a particular mood or sensation, or bodily or behavioral disposition, can be traced back to a pattern of lived

⁸Body memory is, for Fuchs, “implicit,” whereas Rowlands holds that Rilkean memories are not (easily) classified as “implicit.” I don’t think this marks a major distinction, however, because Fuchs and Rowlands seem to be working with different notions of “implicit.”

experience (without any parent episodic memory), or to a particular episodic memory? This seems an impossible task, especially because there is no content remaining to which the state can be traced back.

Rowlands may have identified a particular class or subcategory of habitual body memory. Indeed, Rowlands himself notes that not all bodily and behavioral characteristics or world-disclosing moods will be Rilkean memories (p. 148). But we need to know more about how Rilkean memory differs from habit memory to determine whether it is a class of habit memory, or whether habit memory subsumes Rilkean memory. Whereas some habit memories are laid down directly with lived experience, Rilkean memories involve the extra step of lived experience laying down an episodic memory, which then mutates into a Rilkean memory. Rilkean memories “stem from memories you once had, and these memories were of episodes you once experienced” (p. 72). Important and common to both Rilkean memory and habit memory, then, is this notion of *lived experience*. The various experiences we have in our unfolding lives make us who we are. Lived experience has the person-specificity to ensure that the habit memories that stem from it can help play a role in making us who we are. It’s not memories that make us who we are but lived experience.

It may be that because episodic memory is memory of lived experiences, and because episodic memory is an everyday feature of most people’s lives, then Rilkean memory is a particular class or subcategory of body or habit memory. But we need to know more about the necessity of episodic memories in the genesis of habitual body memories to warrant calling them Rilkean. This is especially so because even Rilkean memories can be traced back, ultimately, to lived experience. The idea seems to be that episodic memories keep the experiences alive long enough such that they have time to be inscribed in the body (p. 56) [although some of Rowlands’ examples seem to speak against this interpretation]. The lived experience itself may be fleeting, but the episodic memory of the lived experience affords the time for the memory to be embedded and entrenched. If this is right, then Rilkean memories are habitual (body) memories that derive from episodic memories of lived experiences, but there may be other habitual memories that derive directly from lived experiences or patterns of lived experience themselves. Lived experience is the parent of some habit memories and may be the grandparent of Rilkean memories.

A potential instance of an embodied Rilkean memory (or a hybrid Rilkean memory, both embodied and affective) can be found in a case study from the Trebus project.⁹ The Trebus project is a collection of art works, developed by David Clegg, which involves recording the fragmentary autobiographical narratives of people with dementia, in collaboration with professional musicians and composers. Clegg visited care homes for the elderly and people suffering from dementia, and pieced together the fragmented life stories of “the disappeared” he found there. In one case, he discovered a man who was continually awakened at 9:00 am each morning by carers. This routine caused the man to be grumpy and apathetic. It later emerged that the man had worked as a milkman, and had habitually risen at 4:00 am. When he was allowed to get up earlier and eat his breakfast with the night staff, his behavior changed, he became a different character (see Gould, 2006). We can imagine that the experiences of working this particular job left their mark on this man. Episodic memories were laid down, perhaps those remaining fragments that enabled Clegg to patch together the man’s fractured life story. Yet most of his episodic memories have vanished. The only stable thing that remains is an embodied (and affective) way of being-in-the-world. A way of being-in-the-world underpinned by habitual body memory, a memory with no content, but one that still keeps the past alive. A past kept alive, perhaps, by Rilkean memory.

⁹Information about the Trebus project can be found at: <http://www.trebusprojects.or>

A second example of a potential Rilkean memory, this time an affective variety, is from fiction. It comes from the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* [*Eternal Sunshine*]. This is a film that explores the idea of memory erasure, a theme that resonates well with the notion of memory loss so important to *Memory and the Self*. Where do our memories go when we lose them? In *Eternal Sunshine*, the loss of memories is a deliberate and intentional act, and they are lost forever, obliterated by the technological machinery of the aptly named memory erasure company Lacuna, Inc.

After a relationship ends, Lacuna can erase all the memories relating to that period of one's life, thus eliminating the suffering caused by holding on to those parts of one's past. No memory, no pain.¹⁰ Joel (Jim Carrey) finds out that his former partner, Clementine (Kate Winslet), has undergone the memory removal procedure in order to forget him. As soon as he finds out, Joel, hurt, angry, and confused, contacts Lacuna in a bid to erase all memory of Clementine. During the treatment, however, Joel has a change of heart. He no longer wants to erase his memories of Clementine. The film then portrays Joel, accompanied by the Clementine of his imagination, as he struggles in vain to retain the memories of his former lover. As all his memories disappear, Joel desperately tries to cling to his last remaining memory of Clementine — a memory of the day he first met her at an empty beach house in Montauk. He pleads silently in his sleep for the Lacuna employees to let him hold onto this one fragment of the past he shared with Clementine. As this final memory disintegrates around them, Clementine whispers to Joel: "Meet me in Montauk."

Joel wakes the next day with no episodic memories of Clementine: they have all vanished, erased by Lacuna. Yet, as he sets about his normal routine, Joel is beset by a particular feeling or mood — an urge to skip work and take the train out to Montauk. He can't fully comprehend his actions; he just has a feeling that he needs to go to there. There, on a wintry and windswept beach, he sees a woman with bright blue hair. There, on that Montauk beach, he meets for the second first time in his life, Clementine, and a connection is forged anew.

Could this mood, or feeling, or affective energy dragging Joel to Montauk, be a Rilkean memory? His memory of Clementine whispering "Meet me in Montauk" is no longer episodic (was it ever fully episodic?). There is no content to the memory. Joel can't articulate this memory, but this past (partly imagined) episode is still alive in a mutated form, an affective state. Like the way in which the faded memories of dreams can often leave one in a strange emotional state with no immediate explanation, Joel feels compelled to go to Montauk but he can't explain the reasons for his actions. Both Joel and Clementine are "inevitably, if unconsciously, being moved by their nature and what remains of their memories to connect again" (Grau, 2009, p. 12). What remains of Joel's memories may be affective Rilkean memories. Joel, just like Mole, is the subject of certain uncanny sensations, a "telegraphic current" and "invisible little hands pulling and tugging, all one way." In Mole's case, they brought him to his old home. For Joel, this Rilkean memory, that invisible little hand, pulled and tugged him all the way to Montauk and to Clementine.

Joel's affective state seems a clearer case, I think, of an affective Rilkean memory. He doesn't undergo a repeated pattern of lived experience, so the affective state he is left with seems to stem from an episodic memory, albeit one infused with imagination. If Rilkean memories exist, then they will be embodied and affective states like this.

¹⁰The procedure involves handing over any keepsakes, photographs or letters etc., from the time of the relationship to Lacuna (a process that brings to mind Rowlands' discussion of *technologies of forgetting*, whereby the environment is altered to aid forgetting pp. 106–108). Any item that will evoke memories must go, as the complete relationship is to be erased from the memory of the "patient."

Concluding Remarks

Our pasts, and the people and objects that formed part of our lived experiences, have a way of “leaking into” us (Rushdie, 1981/2006). We are typically connected to our pasts through episodic memory. But the past can be alive in the present “simply in so far as it has helped to shape the way one is in the present” (Strawson, 2004, p. 432). Experiences and memories are inscribed in the body and help shape who one is. As Rilke (1996) notes, writing in a poem to his lover Lou Andreas-Salomé:

Memory won't suffice here: from those moments
 there must be layers of pure existence
 on my being's floor ...
 For I don't *think back*; all that I *am*
 stirs me because of you

Inspired by Rilke's thoughts on the nature of memory in poetic creation, Rowlands has seemingly identified an important if exotic form of autobiographical memory. Rilkean memories provide an existential style that helps hold the autobiographic self together over time, even in the face of false and forgotten episodic memories. Stemming from episodic memories rather than directly from lived experiences, these Rilkean memories seem to be a class of habitual memory. Sometimes we don't need words, images, or thoughts to remember: our bodies can place us in concrete relations to our pasts. Our bodies remember.

Memory and the Self is an intriguing account of forms of memory and the role they play in making us who we are. It makes a significant contribution to our understanding of episodic memory, and elucidates how, over and beyond our episodic memories, Rilkean memories may help hold the self together over time. The book still leaves some points unresolved, however, such as why episodic memory is emphasized over lived experience in the genesis of Rilkean memories, and the role perceptual experience plays in generating the presence of self in episodic memory. So I end with a call for Rowlands to keep asking and answering childlike questions. For there is poetry in his answers.

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