

Fallacies of Wonder

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Most of mind is memory — it is
memory which grants the means of thought.

From modern masters we have learned a lot —
from Freud

*We remember what we want to remember,
forget what we find no longer important.*

and antithetically from Proust —

The only true memory is involuntary.

but we have yet to learn that memory
is a fallacious mirror, rich but wrong,

useless as a record of experience,
for memory IS experience. In the end,

nothing remembered can be true, although
only what is remembered can be real.

*Confusion now hath made his masterpiece
and stolen thence the life o' the building*

Often, still, I turn to look downtown
from where I live on Waverly. I trust

the evidence, by daylight or by dark,
of variations in the versions of

those hundred-story towers, so neighborly
I scarcely need to look. I know that I can count

on seeing them where I *remember* them,
no different yet never quite the same.

I do look, though, and, where they were,
replace their being by their absences.

*Memory can only be artificially improved by the
operation of fantasy towards ideas in the Round
Art, which uses magical images, effigies of the stars,
statues of gods and goddesses, or through images
of corporeal things in the Square Art, using buildings
as places.*

Such is the way of wonders: no longer seen
because, being there, remembered merely;

and, no longer there, remembered because
no longer seen. Did they have to be beautiful?

(Was that what the ancient wonders were,
beautiful?) All are gone but the Pyramids —

*Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations, though the treasure
Of Nature's germens tumble all together
Even till destruction sicken, answer me
To what I ask...*

merely remembered: gardens, temples, tombs,
a lighthouse and the statues of two gods.

Did some three thousand die for us to call
remembered towers, wonders, beautiful?

*The reaction has commenced, the human has
made its reflex upon the fiendish; the pulses
of life begin to beat again; and the re-establishment
of goings-on of the world we live in makes us
profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis
that had suspended them.*

—Richard Howard