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Memory in the Novels by Dermot Healy
Paměť v románech Dermota Healyho

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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(I declare that the following MA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma).

V Praze dne .....

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1. Introduction

In 1996 Irish writer Dermot Healy published *The Bend for Home*. Advertised as a memoir about his own childhood, the text consists of a series of recollections of his younger self in a small town in Ireland as the narrator remembers his past experiences and goes through the diary he kept as a teenager.[1] Throughout, the memoir is told by an authorial narrator in the first person with the premise of Healy returning home to care for his mother, who is suffering from dementia. This return opens for him a realm of both his own memories as well as those of others' that he has learnt from different sources during his life, particularly from his own family. From the beginning of the narrative, however, Healy questions the notion of a memoir being a truthful depiction of a person's life and the accuracy and validity of one's own memories. In the first chapter the narrator seems to recount the story of his own birth, although focalised through his parents, and immediately afterwards adds a description of a moment when his older brother met him as a newborn for the first time. Although these cannot be the narrator's own memories, they are presented in great detail with commentary, and they importantly add to the narrator's sense of identity and form a part of his life's narrative. The birth scene on the opening page is even described as one of "family memories" which was "told so often that [he] always though [he] was there."[2]

The language used, the scenes depicted, as well as the added comments from the narrator question the authenticity of this and other memory accounts in the book. Although the first scene is narrated in the present tense which may give the readers a sense of immediacy and closeness, the expecting mother changes at the end of the first page from Healy's own mother to a family acquaintance and the house where the scene takes place from their own to the neighbour's. In just a few paragraphs Healy reveals a fallacy, one of many to follow, and urges the readers to read the 'autobiography' with circumspection. As an author he takes his own life account and shapes it for readers aware of the different influences upon his life; he keeps adding certain facts surrounding scenes that are not narrated from his own experience and that have been passed on to him. He is aware of the limitations of a single person's history and circumvents them. This process

[1] The full title of the text is *The Bend for Home: A Memoir*. A quote on the front cover from Patrick McCabe reads: "Probably the finest memoir … written in Ireland in the last fifty years."
[2] Dermot Healy, *The Bend for Home* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), 3.

in Healy's narrative thus introduces an interesting theme that permeates his other work as well – the theme of personal memory, its portrayal and the issues surrounding it.

After the introductory scenes where 'not' Dermot is born and where Healy's brother is brought home from school and introduced to the 'real' Dermot, the account changes again into a description of the town of Finea. The narrator changes tenses between the individual scenes which then appear more as separate images taken from different points in his life rather than finished, linear narratives. Although this is a memoir which is supposed to recount one person's life or journey, the narrator argues that memory does not work in a linear and completed way. It's more of an assortment of different, separate images that form a whole. As Healy returns home to care for his elderly mother, the place as well as the people he meets necessarily coax his memories out in a thread of images that he tries to piece together. The autobiographical text shows that a memory is a process which continues to work long after the particular events occur and that can change many times through other influences. Going back through one's own memories also brings out the question of interpretation and new awareness. When Healy remembers a song about Finea that gives directions which would not work in reality he tells us that "that's how [he] found out writers not only make up things, but get things wrong as well. Language, to be memorable, dispenses with accuracy."[3] This is both a comment upon the role of the author but also shows the interpretative process necessary for the evaluation of memories. Younger Dermot may have not realised the disparate in the song.

The questions of one's own memory and passed on memories, their linear as well as positive or negative quality, the influences upon them, the context during which they are remembered as well as the language used to remember influence not only Healy's *The Bend for Home* but his other writing. The protagonists of Healy's novels and their narratives that are described in them present an array of memories which deal with the questions of a person's memory. Often the characters are influenced by traumatic experiences. Whereas in some cases the trauma can serve as a productive force, in others it works to stagger the character's ability and willingness to remember and progress. The novels as well as the memoir show Healy's interest in the workings of memory and the awareness that characters' recollections point towards their sense of identity as well as to

[3] Healy, *The Bend for Home*, 10.

what Sutton describes as individual motivations and possible future development.[4] The characters' understandings of their own past and interpretation of memories provide their sense of self.

The purpose of the present thesis is to study Dermot Healy's novels in their relation to memory studies and to observe the processes of individual memory found in them, specifically in relation to the main protagonists. Although there is a limit to the extent of what fictional accounts can describe in terms of personal memory and the author's own influence needs to be acknowledged, there is, however, an intrinsic link between memory and textual narrative. For a memory to be expressed, a form of language is necessary; a cohesive memory then manifests as a type of narrative (or a type of text). The thesis will look at the main characters in *Fighting with Shadows* (1984), *A Goat's Song* (1994), *Sudden Times* (1999), *Long Time, No See* (2011) and discuss Healy's preoccupation with personal memory and its workings outside of his memoir. The novels will be considered in sequence based on their publication date and the thesis will consist of a close reading of the individual texts while drawing comparisons throughout.

[4] John Sutton et al., "Memory and Cognition," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates,* ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 213, doi:10.2307/j.ctt1c999bq.18.

2. Theoretical Context

2.1 Memory Processes and the Individual

The topic of memory in literature is often studied with the focus on collective memory. However, the processes of collective memory are also closely connected with individual recollection, identity and the sense of self. Although there are different interpretations of what memory means, including several systems of memory types created in connection with personal memory and identity, the basic definition remains constant: memory is "(1) the mental faculty of retaining and recalling past experience, and (2) an act or instance of remembrance."[1] This definition introduced by Frederick Bartlett, one of the first scientists interested in cognitive psychology, was followed by Endel Tulving's distinction between different types of memory processes where besides "procedural memory" which helps acquire skills, and "semantic memory" which introduces general knowledge or information, a primary type of memory defined by Tulving is "episodic memory," which "enables a person to remember personally experienced events as such."[2] This type of memory is precisely the focus of the thesis, however, the aspect of explicitness and one's past will be questioned in connection with Healy's novels. The example from his memoir shows that memories can be obscured and not come directly from of one's own experience.

In narratives, we frequently find only the memory or the account of a particular event from a character's life. We do not read the event itself but its (re)construction. The memories are also subjected to outside influence and Sutton points out that they are "constructed from a large range of sources, including what is stored and what is accessible, personal motivations, social motivations and situational demands."[3] The original event does not stand on its own. Once a character's memory is expressed, it is necessary to delve into the context and the implications of that process because it is the reconstructions from the character's past that help create their identity. Memory serves as the foundation of their existence whether the act of remembrance is momentary or lasting.

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[1] Jennifer Cole, "Memory and Modernity," in *A Companion to Psychological Anthropology: Anthropology and Psychocultural Change*, ed. Conerly Casey and Robert B. Edgerton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 103.
[2] Endel Tulving, "What is Episodic Memory," in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1993), 67. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20182204.
[3] Sutton et al., "Memory and Cognition," 213.

As we observe the characters' memories, we are able to observe not only their protagonists' past but also their current state of mind, their willingness or reluctance to remember, and further study their intentions in doing so. By piecing the memories together throughout the narrative, the character's identity becomes whole. As the narrator in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* tells his audience in the beginning: "these pages must show" whether he is to be considered a hero or a villain and the evaluation may change during the process of the character's interpretation and our reading.[4]

Cole argues that memories allow individuals to "conceive of themselves as integrated wholes,"[5] however, this integrity is something the characters in Healy's novels often struggle for as we observe their journey in piecing together their past. The journey they experience and the goals they are trying to reach are what Paul Ricœur describes in *Tempts et Récit* as the ability to "interpret narratives," the narratives in this case being the characters' memories arranged in a sequence so that they are able to "experience life as meaningful and coherent."[6] Individual memories of the characters may at first appear chaotic and discordant but their attempts at interpretation give space to the transformation of those discordant images and to a comprehension in the context of their world. The capacity to create a narrative out of a number of chaotic images enables individuals to then act with purpose and to create a connection between past and present, as Michael Böss also testifies.[7] In the example of Healy's memoir, the individual scenes from the first chapter may appear chaotic yet they form an essential part of the narrator's own identity. The first scenes described in the book in part create an identity for the narrator in connection with the time in his life he doesn't remember himself but which are part of his early childhood. The character's identity is then both permanent and dynamic as new memories and new interpretation add to the continuing process of understanding while at any point in time the character is a stable individual created by the memories he/she has at that moment.

In connection with autobiographical memory, described by Helen L. Williams, Martin A. Conway and Gillian Cohen as "episodes from an individual's life" and the combination of "episodic" and "semantic" memory, the characters in Healy's novels

4 Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London: Penguin Classics, 2007), chap. 1, Kindle.
5 Cole, "Memory and Modernity," 103-104.
6 Michael Böss, "Relating to the Past: Memory, Identity and History," in *Recovering Memory: Irish Representations of Past and Present*, ed. Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Hedda Friberg and Lene Yding Pedersen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 22.
7 Böss, "Relating to the Past," 22 – 23.

struggle for coherence.[8] They strive for what Sutton describes as "the need to maintain an integrated and consistent sense of their lives" and "the need for [their] episodic memory to correspond with reality."[9] This process is however not quite straightforward. The primary and important events in the characters' lives are often clouded in mystery and we witness only the attempts at understanding them. Definitive moments in the characters' lives – like family history – are often obscured and the memories are incoherent not only to the readers but to the characters themselves regardless of their influence being evident. Individuals may strive, in Hedda Friberg's words, "to construct coherent plots out of memories" while also experiencing new things that influence their evaluation of the past.[10] As the example from Healy's memoir shows the memories are additionally often reconstructions or mere inventions of other individuals' stories and although they form an important building block of the protagonist's identities, it is crucial to distinguish from the characters' own memories. Similarly, in the novels the inventions and the drive for interpretation do not necessarily come from the characters themselves but also from other characters or from the narrator, such as is the case in Healy's most famous novel *A Goat's Song*.

Through their reconstructions of past events we learn more about the protagonists than just from their immediate activities, and through what is or is not expressed we see their own and their surroundings' motivations. The context of when the characters remember plays a crucial role in their personal narratives and is a further important element of the memory process. It is not only what they remember but how and what causes that memory process to be initiated, as well as what potentially influences the validity of the memory. Richard Kearney points out that it "is not simply a question of remembering but of remembering in the right way,"[11] although the value of 'right' depends on different politics and motivations. The influence on the characters' remembering can be both open and covert and may or may not realize that agency.

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[8] Helen Williams, Martin A. Conway and Gillian Cohen, "Autobiographical Memory," in *Memory in the Real World, Third Edition*, ed. Gillian Cohen and Martin Conway (New York: Psychology Press, 2008), 21-22.
[9] Sutton et al., "Memory and Cognition," 215.
[10] Hedda Friberg et al., "Introduction: Memory as Re-Covering," in *Recovering Memory: Irish Representations of Past and Present*, ed. Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Hedda Friberg and Lene Yding Pedersen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), ix.
[11] Richard Kearney, "Memory and Forgetting in Irish Culture," in *Recovering Memory: Irish Representations of Past and Present*, ed. Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Hedda Friberg and Lene Yding Pedersen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 17.

For each character their capacity to remember also leads to selectiveness. Some memories may simply be more important than others and the characters' selectivity may be both conscious and unconscious even as regards to some minute details of their memories. What individuals remember is influenced by their current situation and is, according to Sutton, "consistent with the goals and values of [their] current working [selves which] are prioritized for remembering, while memories that conflict with [their] working self are more likely to be forgotten."[12]

One of the primary influences on the characters' memories are their relationships and importantly their familial relations. In Healy's texts we see the significance of the protagonists' childhood, which although it may not be directly portrayed or be included in the main part of the narrative, maintains an influence over them. It can present itself in the form of a particular person or the environment where the characters grew up. Importantly it is present in the family values in which the characters are raised. The influence of childhood and the learned beliefs continue to shape their newly formed connections and the social groups they may become part of. Böss suggests that memory narratives "are given shape and colour" based on group connections and on how the "[groups] narrate about themselves,"[13] and the characters are prone to take over a familiar narrative. Their interactions with their surroundings and their perceptions influence their experiences and their later memories and show what has remained significant or what has lost significance in their lives, be it consciously or unconsciously.

The memories that the characters reveal to the readers are thus often prompted by an outside source; however, they are still their own reconstructions expressed in their own language that may not reflect reality. Cole points out that the relationship between the rememberer and the scene in their memory "is mediated by [their own] words."[14] Their own rationalisations may not necessarily appear rational to the world the characters occupy and a single event will be articulated differently by two characters who experience that same moment. There is also a difference between an expressed memory and a memory kept private. While the process of remembering, according to Sutton, often serves to "share […] impressions with others," there are numerous instances where the character's memories are not shared.[15] The reasons for that may be varied; the memory

[12] Sutton et al., "Memory and Cognition," 215.
[13] Böss, "Relating to the Past," 23.
[14] Cole, "Memory and Modernity," 111.
[15] Sutton et al., "Memory and Cognition," 213.

may simply be unimportant while at other times it may be kept private for a specific reason. It is therefore necessary to observe where the focus lies during a particular memory process and whether the memory of a particular protagonist gets vocally expressed with other characters or whether it remains expressed only by them as a narrator.

The character's memories can be intentionally blocked or repressed and the issue of their expression may create a discord not only with the outside world but within the characters' selves. Often, we can see the influence of repressed memories as well as the effects of traumatic memories resurfacing and having the power to influence a protagonist many years after the event. A difference between repression and intentionally blocked memory then may be observed. Certain events can, however, be simply forgotten. Individuals, as Cole points out, "are limited in their capacity to process information."[16] Forgetting is a natural part of life and in the space of literature, the texts of novels necessarily have a physical limit. The difference between the repressed memory and the forgotten memory is their possible later retrieval, and it is interesting to observe what forces the repressed events onto the surface as well as what events are simply let go of and deemed insignificant. It can again tell us even more about the identity of the protagonists, their motivations and what they deem important to their current selves. Necessarily they cannot remember – and remember correctly – every single part of their lives; as the character of Hugh tells us in Brian Friel's influential play *Translations,* "to remember everything is a form of madness."[17]

It is, however, necessary to observe the validity of the memories in relation to the event that is being remembered, the context that sparks the memory, the possible influences upon those memories or repressions and the language used to express memories. When reading of Healy's novels, we can also observe that the narratives are often not linear but follow a specific memory's goal. One particular individual memory is often the focus of the texts, which according to Miller constitutes the basis of "a process of continuous renegotiation of selfhood in relation to [the character's] past."[18] Although the characters gain new experiences during the narrative, a single (often traumatic)

[16] Cole, "Memory and Modernity," 113.
[17] Brian Friel, *Translations* (London: Faber & Faber, 2012), Act 3, Kindle. The political context of this quote in Friel's drama is of relevance to Healy's *A Goat's Song* as will be noted in the corresponding chapter.
[18] Nicholas Andrew Miller, *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8.

memory continues to shape their present state of mind while in turn their new experience serves to re-interpret that experience from their past. Healy is also able to connect the personal memories of his characters with a collective narrative outside of his novels through his particular historical settings. The accounts of the characters, their personal stories and their memories thus offer versions of events both inside and outside the immediate narrative.

2.2 Memory in Irish Studies

Healy is not the only Irish writer interested in the workings of memory. Canonical Irish authors focus on the theme as well both in the individual and communal context. Kearney points out that James Joyce's protagonists are enslaved and paralysed by their memories "issuing in a form of 'paralysis' (Joyce's chosen term)."[19] Joyce's contemporary T.S. Eliot even suggested that Joyce's method consisted "in a kind of radical affirmation of the past's currency in the imaginative description of present experience."[20] While the experience of Healy's characters cannot be described necessarily as a 'paralysis,' the authors do share a common theme and knowledge of the influence of a character's past on their present actions. Healy's characters often experience 'nightmares' that Joyce alludes to in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* having been influenced by their family and religious upbringings. Numerous recent authors have been closely engaged with the subject of memory, of course, such as John McGahern or Edna O'Brien.

When describing distinctive cultural traits, Friberg uses the term "long memory," illustrating the ability to remember and recall events from a distant past both in relation to an individual and to a community, as a stereotype attached to Irishness and the Irish, suggesting that there is something specific to the culture that constitutes a particular type of memory function.[21] Similarly, Miller calls attention to a saying: "while the English do not remember any history, the Irish forget none."[22] The proverb does not just describe the seeming ability of memory retention in the Irish but also a continuing influence of the colonial experience that can be found in Irish collective memory, regardless of the

[19] Kearney, "Memory and Forgetting in Irish Culture," 18.
[20] Miller, *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory,* 5.
[21] Friberg et al., "Introduction: Memory as Re-Covering," xvi.
[22] Miller, *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory*, 2.

measure of stereotyping involved The interest in the past, the memory of it and its interpretation is apparent in the Irish context in the twentieth and the twenty-first century. For instance, the response (both positive and negative) of the Irish public to the Abbey Theatre's 2016 program focused on the 1916 commemorations shows the country's interest both in the past, its interpretation in the present and its influence for the future. According to Emilie Pine, it "vividly illustrates that the past and how it is remembered is of crucial importance."[23]

The significance of an individual's past, the interpretation of memories and its influence on our present motivations and identity was made by poet Seamus Heaney is his 1993 essay "The Sense of the Past." In this particular text Heaney states that the "past significantly amplifies our consciousness."[24] The statement can be well observed in Joyce as well as later in Healy. The poet discusses different objects, their relation to a person's past and their remaining significance in the present. Additionally, he discusses the possibility of their image and significance changing as they are passed on in families. Heaney also questions the notion of chronology, as individuals' past is not determined by calendars but rather by the images they remember (or do not wish to remember) at different points in their lives. Although Heaney focuses on real-life experience and not the experience of characters in a novel, his essay further shows the preoccupation with memory in Irish culture and its broader political contexts. He discusses in the essay the influence of the politics of one's own past. He writes that "although there are archetypal moments, occurring in every life irrespective of intellectual, social or economic differences," there are "common loyalties" that shape our process of remembering and interpretation.[25] These attachments situate us outside our basic instincts and form a relationship between ourselves and others.

The examples that Heaney gives in his essay are easily traceable in Healy's novels. The influence of the religious background is a primary theme in *A Goat's Song* where a part of the narrative focuses on Jonathan Adams, an RUC officer, torn between two communities. Both *A Goat's Song* and Healy's first novel *Fighting with Shadows* are set on the backdrop of the Troubles. The character of Ollie in *Sudden Times* is then a returning emigrant who is piecing his life together after a traumatic event in London.

[23] Emilie Pine, "Introduction: Moving Memory," *Irish University Review* 47 (1) (May 2017): 2, doi: 10.3366/iur.2017.0251
[24] Seamus Heaney, "The Sense of the Past," *History Ireland*, Issue 4, Winter 1993, accessed September June 10, 2020, www.historyireland.com/.
[25] Heaney, "The Sense of the Past."

Finally, *Long Time, No See* presents an image of a small community in the early twenty-first century Ireland. The politics of the Church, the Troubles and emigration are some of the most discussed in connection with memory and Irish studies and for Heaney they offer "a dream of the past against which all further learning [takes] place."[26]

Importantly, the interest in memory continues to be prominent among the current Irish studies scholars. Oona Frawley observes that already from the 1960s the "Revisionist debates" among Irish historiography scholars focused on the interpretation of the past "in order to explain the present" and historians such as Kevin Whelan and R. F. Foster "began what has been a long cycle of reconsiderations of the Irish past."[27] Scholars such as Frawley herself and Emilie Pine continue in the interest in memory within the context of Irish studies while academics such as Richard Kirkland focus specifically on the legacy of the Troubles and post-colonialism in the current Irish context. While Pine's *The Memory Marketplace* focuses on theatre and performance, her earlier book *The Politics of Irish Memory* spans across disciplinary boundaries taking interest in recent history and trauma specifically discussing topics such as the hunger strikes and the Great War. For Pine, memory is one of primary interests and she describes it as a strategy "by which each of us orients ourselves in time, in relation to our own self, and other selves."[28] Oona Frawley's four-volume *Memory Ireland* is then described in the introduction in the first volume as a "sustained attempt to consider what memory means in the context of the Irish past and present, and how it might shape Irish identities."[29]

The current spark for the interest in memory within the Irish studies is described in the introduction to *Irish Studies and the Dynamics of Memory* by Marguérite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack and Ruund van den Beuken as being "motivated by the 'memory fever in the humanities,' […] by the legacies of the Troubles, institutional abuse and the 'decade of centenaries'," as well as by the reconsideration of the country's colonial past and the still visible influence of the Church.[30] Dermot Healy is only one of many twentieth and twenty-first century Irish authors who are interested in these topics.

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[26] Heaney, "The Sense of the Past"
[27] Oona Frawley, "Introduction," in *Memory Ireland Volume 1: History and Modernity*, ed. Oona Frawley (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2011), xiii, xv.
[28] Pine, "Introduction: Moving Memory," 6.
[29] Frawley, "Introduction," xvi.
[30] Marguérite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack and Ruud van den Beuken, "Introduction: Transitions and Transformations," in *Irish Studies and the Dynamics of Memory*, ed. by Marguérite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack and Ruud van den Beuken (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017), Kindle.

3. *Fighting with Shadows*

Dermot Healy's novel, *Fighting with Shadows*, was first published in 1984. Set during the 1970s and the early 1980s on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland the text focuses on several members of the Allen family, who are, in Jack Fennell's words, at first sight "an average and mostly unremarkable family […] with no great achievements, ambitions, or past glories to speak of."[1] However, the lives and the thoughts of the individual members of the family become interesting thanks to the historical background of the novel, the Troubles. The conflict looms throughout the narrative, most prominently in the imaginary town of Fanacross, positioned just north of the border, where a major part of the novel takes place. The conflict is presented as the 'shadow' over the lives of the family members and the other characters in the novel and there are certain pivotal moments in their lives connected with the conflict that keep reappearing as memories and a continuing influence on their current selves. As the conflict is an ongoing event through the novel "the trauma [that the characters experience] is still current [and] it is extremely difficult to memorialise it," according to Emilie Pine.[2] A straightforward evaluation of an ongoing influence is impossible for the whole Allen family and we observe them as each of the members deals with their experience differently.

Although the novel focuses mainly on a Catholic family, the characters influenced by the conflict are Catholics and Protestants alike. To a smaller degree, Healy gives space to other characters like the British soldier, who kills Frank Allen, as he recalls his own version of the events. The novel does not take sides and the trauma of the conflict influences everyone. Neil Hopper and Keith Murphy observe that the "narrator's voice gives way to the individual characters' point of view, often for lengthy periods."[3] The border town of Fanacross has a symbolic position of being right on the border of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland with a bridge connecting the two sides. Similarly, diverse characters find themselves in the middle of the conflict without any

[1] Jack Fennell, "Dermot Healy's Heterotopias: Fanacross and Northern Ireland in Fighting with Shadows," in *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy*, ed. by Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Victoria TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2016), 246.
[2] Emilie Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 11.
[3] Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper, "Elegant Resistance: Dermot Healy's Fighting with Shadows," in *Studi Irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies*, no. 7 (2017), 192, doi: 10.13128/SIJIS-2239-3978-20756.

real power over it while creating their own personal memories under its influence. We observe not only the physical and emotional suffering but also the full scope of the Troubles which according to Neil Ferguson and Donna Halliday includes the "created economic costs, increased community division, and [the] psychological impact on those affected."[4] Thanks to this span, *Fighting with Shadows* has been described by Murphy and Hopper as "one of the most profoundly unsettling of all Northern Irish Troubles novels, precisely because Dermot Healy probes the grim, cavernous lives of the characters who lived in the fallout zone of political violence instead of training a direct narrative eye on that violence."[5] By focusing on characters who do not take direct part in the Troubles, Healy engages not only with history but with memory and loss that is connected with the conflict.

The main story line focuses on the nuclear family of Frank and Helen Allen and their son Joseph who at first live in Fanacross. The family is forced to leave south after Frank takes part in a protest against the demolition of the border bridge. While his decision appears in the spur of the moment, he manages to inspire other people to join him in jumping in the river and climbing on the bridge's columns effectively taking part in the conflict. After struggling financially in the South for several years the family moves back to Fanacross after the death of Geraldine, the wife of Frank's brother George. After Frank's murder by a British soldier the story changes its focus mainly to Joseph as he is sent to stay with his uncle Tom who owns a hotel south of the border. Here he spends several years while his mother stays in Fanacross. Towards the end of the narrative Helen manages to win a court case against the soldier responsible for Frank's death, buys a new house in the South where she moves with Joseph and Frank's father. They relocate presumably to stay this time ending the cycle of moving around.

The novel however doesn't feature a straightforward, linear narrative. The text begins with Frank, Helen and Joseph already living in the South after Frank's actions on the bridge and only after this introduction the readers learn what has happened that forced them to leave. The novel utilizes a 3rd person narrative with a covert narrator and throughout it shifts perspective as the story is at different times focalized through different members of the Allen family, most prominently through Frank, Helen and Joseph but also

[4] Neil Ferguson and Donna Halliday, "Collective Memory and the Legacy of the Troubles: Territoriality, Identity and Victimhood in Northern Ireland," in *The Social Psychology of Collective Victimhood*, ed. Johanna Ray Vollhardt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 57. doi: 10.1093/oso/9780190875190.001.0003.
[5] Murphy and Hopper, "Elegant Resistance," 186.

through minor characters like Frank's and George's father. Throughout, there are also smaller embedded narratives as particular members of the family tell stories about other characters which is in close connection with the memory topic of the novel and the question of legitimacy of one's story when being told by someone else. Additionally, several times the covert narrator becomes overt, e.g. when he describes the historical background of the Great Famine and how it affected people in the area around Fanacross or when he describes the local burial tradition after Frank Allen's death. There are also two short, interesting sections in the middle of the book, a long memory section of Helen Allen told in the 1st person as well as a series of letters she sends to Joseph after he moves away. Both of these passages follow the death of her husband and Helen mainly discusses her memories of him.

The novel has a subtitle, *Sciamachy*, which is explained by the author in his note first as a "fight with shadows," alluding to the influence of the conflict on characters' lives but also as "Divination through the Shades of the Dead" which he points out to be "an Irish way with history."[6] Many of the (even minor) characters in the novel keep coming back to their personal and the country's past and look for an explanation – or a divination – for their current situation. They form connections between the past and the present inventing their future. When the Allen family is visited by hunters in the beginning of the novel the men begin to recall "odd, slight things about those killed in the war" and quickly afterwards start to think "of the reason for the present war, of the place that might lie ahead."[7] They naturally keep looking for explanations based on previous experiences and hope that drawing on their memories will help them navigate a new situation. A similar attempt can be seen when an election is taking place in the second part of the narrative. The narrator tells us that "some of the dead would vote today, and who the living would vote for were long dead."[8] Here we again see the influence of the past and of the dead on the living characters. In a similar way, the members of the Allen family are influenced by the death that happens around them and we observe both the individual and the communal memory processes.

Although the town of Fanacross as well as the town where Tom Allen has his hotel are invented, there are real historical circumstances that make the account of the Allen family even more interesting and make their experience a possible parable for the

[6] Dermot Healy*, Fighting with Shadows* (Victoria TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2015), 3.
[7] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 65, 68.
[8] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 303.

experience of the Troubles. An important part of Joseph's time in the hotel happens on the backdrop of the election which at first may appear as another invention for the novel. However, as the locals discuss the results of the election, we learn that one of the new representatives is currently in prison and taking part in a hunger strike, pointing clearly to the election in Fermanagh and South Tyrone in 1981 and to Bobby Sands. On the other hand, many of the character's remarks add to the invention that necessarily happens when telling one's own or any other story. Several times we hear of memories invented, not accurately described or exaggerated. Mama, Tom Allen's wife, even says that "there is no such thing as telling the truth," when another character recounts a family story to her.[9] Again and again there are characters embellishing stories from their past when presenting them to others. Often, this represents their individual interpretation of an event, not necessarily a sign of attempt to lie. The characters in the novel are their own historians who put together their personal identity and historical moments to create and report memories.

What considerably adds to the background of the characters' lives and the historical circumstances are the passages not focused on the Allen Family. The narrator gives additional descriptions of minor characters whose lives and motivations mirror those of the main protagonists. When Frank Allen dies, we read of the men waiting outside the hospital as his body is taken care of, who begin to tell "stories of Frank with that air of authenticity that dies so much by correcting the truth."[10] This comment interestingly points to the contradiction of telling someone's else story and the hopeless attempt at the particular account being authentic as it undergoes the teller's interpretation. The men strive to remember important events of Frank's life and look "into the reaches of the former living man" who manages to evade them and only the lives and motivations of those speaking emerge.[11] The description turns almost dark when during Frank's funeral "in the far reaches of their mind the people [begin] abusing him" as the real image of Frank Allen opposes their inventions.[12] The real Frank Allen and the image both these characters and Frank's family have of him are different.

As mentioned, several times the narrator becomes overt to add commentary and historical circumstances. The account of the Allen family life after they return to

[9] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 195.
[10] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 146.
[11] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 146.
[12] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 148.

Fanacross is suddenly broken up by several paragraphs describing people travelling between South and North and the natural marvels to be seen on their trip. In a different passage, the economic struggles of the Allens are divided by the narrator's account of the Great Famine. Although these are only momentary mentions, it shows the persistent influence of not only the Troubles but also other historical circumstances that permeate the characters' lives as well as their effort at dealing with them. While there are attempts at forgetting the past, in some cases the past becomes so engrained in the characters' minds that they have a need to come back to it, such as is the case with the hunters mentioned above. Similarly, when a wedding goes wrong in the Allen hotel and a woman gets seriously injured by a gunman, the locals quickly turn to telling stories of her English husband and the possible reasons for the shooting. Although "there's guilt coming from the need to tell [the] story over and over," the locals keep on discussing the event to the point of the hotel falling into an economic ruin because of the infamy that surges after the event.[13]

3.1 Joseph and Frank Allen

The youngest member of the Allen family on whom the novel focuses mainly in the second part is Joseph. In the beginning he is mostly a witness to the difficult relationship his mother and father have and a companion to his grandfather. After the death of his father the novel follows Joseph as he moves in with his uncle Tom and works at his hotel in the South. From the first few pages we see the prominent influence of his family as the narrator tells us that "for Joseph, there was no place to hide from the world his parents had known which re-existed every time the stories were told."[14] Their stories and their lives have power over the boy that continues to be apparent even after he moves away, as he keeps dreaming and calling for his father. The connection to the village of Fanacross is also visible from early on as his aunt Geraldine visits on one occasion the family in the South and goes for a walk with Joseph to escape his parents' argument. Already at this point Fanacross exists as a symbol for the boy. While they are taking a walk, Geraldine tells him that a light in the distance is the family home in the village back on the border. As Joseph sets out to return there, Geraldine has to steer him back to the

[13] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 336.
[14] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 17.

caravan where his parents are waiting. The village continues to be in Fennell's words "a literal utopia, a 'no-place' that can be hoped for but never reached," because after the family returns to Fanacross their lives are anything but idyllic.[15]

Joseph's parents, especially his father, and the border village remain a constant in the boy's memory. His past is in Miller's words "all too insistent, all too present an influence."[16] After Frank's death Helen decides to send Joseph to stay at his uncle's hotel to provide him with a fresh start, something she doesn't do for herself. However, it doesn't work in such a straightforward way for the boy. After moving to the new town, Joseph keeps coming back to Fanacross and Frank, at least in his mind. As he arrives in the hotel, Joseph's first comparison of the place is against Fanacross, when he says that "nowhere in [the village] would you find such luxuries."[17] And it is not just his own memories. He gets stopped by a random person who recognizes him and tells him his own memory of Frank being "a brave goalkeeper."[18] Frank's image is inescapable both through his own memories and through those of others. In the boy's mind his father keeps reappearing. At one point Joseph is even "crying out for his father who had taken half his life away with him" and in his dreams he seeks the utopia of his family as he previously sought the utopia of Fanacross.[19] In Joseph's dreams he has "the constant company of his father" as he is "flooded by the memories of [him]."[20] The level of persistence that memories of Frank have becomes detrimental to Joseph.

At first it seems that the conflict will only have an indirect influence on Joseph through his father. However, the space he occupies is still according to Ferguson and Halliday "divided along sectarian lines, and space, boundaries, and territoriality all play and an important role."[21] Joseph continues in the unfortunate involvement with the conflict that plagues his family as a brawl starts in the hotel between two patrons which the hotel cook tries to stop. When a patrol arrives, Joseph asks to be brought to the station alongside him, almost looking to relive a situation that Frank had gone through. As he is beaten within an inch of his life, called a "black Northern cunt" and afterwards charged with obstruction, Joseph struggles with accepting what happened to him.[22] His encounter

[15] Fennell, "Dermot Healy's Heterotopias," 252.
[16] Nicholas Andrew Miller, *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2.
[17] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 210.
[18] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 277.
[19] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 217.
[20] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 307.
[21] Ferguson and Halliday, "Collective Memory and the Legacy of the Troubles," 60.
[22] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 237

with the guards keeps reappearing (while the memory of his father mostly disappears) as he continues to work in the hotel. Joseph recalls "that they hit him in the depths of his being" and specifically says that "[he'll] hoard this [and] remember all this for again."[23] He has taken over the weight of the conflict through his own memory instead of carrying his father's. The narrator comments that "for years after he [is] afraid. Going over the night in his mind. And after that, the night his father died. Then, one day he [forgives] them."[24] Joseph finally decides to let go of his own trauma after repeatedly reflecting on his experience.[25] He recognizes the power the guards have over him and possibly the power they had over Frank and chooses to let go. Although the generational influence is apparent in Joseph's connection to Fanacross, forgiving the guards that caused him trauma points to a break from his father. Joseph doesn't repress his own past and by allowing himself to revisit this trauma, he overcomes it and forgives.[26]

Joseph's father, Frank, does not seem to come to such a realization although he has his own fair share of trauma. After his actions at the bridge in Fanacross, he is interrogated and returns home to suffer "a month of nightmares."[27] Similarly to Joseph, he keeps replaying what he had experienced in the prison as a voice "remains longest in Frank Allen's head" which "can start up anywhere, anytime."[28] As the family leaves quickly afterwards, however, Frank isn't allowed the same time and reflective process that Joseph is and this particular memory is put on the back burner. Instead, after moving south, Frank keeps coming back to the 'idyll' of Fanacross and to the life he and Helen had previously. He is unsure of his new position after moving and gets embarrassed when he can't afford the bus, imagining the "real Irish stock" passengers staring at him.[29] Later when he gets drunk one evening and wonders around strangers' houses looking for their caravan, his worst fear is that this embarrassing moment "would be re-enacted in the shapeless reality that lay ahead."[30] Unlike Joseph who has been travelling between the two sides of the border, Frank firmly identifies with his (version of the) community in the

[23] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 244-245.
[24] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 246.
[25] Elena Esposito, "Social Forgetting: A System-Theory Approach," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 181.
[26] Jürgen Reulecke, "Generation/ Generationality, Generativity, and Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 122.
[27] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 24.
[28] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 25.
[29] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 43.
[30] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 10.

North, unable to find his place anywhere else. Although Fanacross is the place of his personal trauma, when he leaves, it becomes something he wants to come back to.

Unfortunately, after the family's return to Fanacross following Geraldine's death Frank's insecurity as to his position in the world continues. When the hunters come to visit the house, Frank reveals an insecurity of "a man inflicted with the scourge of wandering without cause."[31] He hasn't been able to really establish a life in the South and mostly remembers the situations where he would lie to the locals "to further himself in their eyes."[32] After their return, however, he doesn't form any new connections, seeing that the idyll of Fanacross wasn't real. When the British forces come to search their house on several occasions, Frank does not even acknowledge their presence. He seems to fall in the background unsure of where he belongs, his own memories of his actions on the bridge and his life afterwards invalid. Frank as an individual disappears even before his death. His murder "is simply reported, not described [and] Frank [vanishes] in the general flurry of living that proceeds unabated," according to Hopper and Murphy.[33] His existence becomes muddled after his death when a group of people he didn't know puts the flag of the Irish republic over his coffin, although "Frank had no involvement with any paramilitary organisation."[34] It continues even years after his death during the court when Helen manages to prove he was unlawfully killed. During the proceedings he is judged "by association and by family, for such are the disciplines of law and the disciplines of history."[35]

3.2 Hellen Allen

Although Frank and Joseph do not interact much in the novel, they are very close. After Frank's death, this connection is maintained by Frank's wife and Joseph's mother, Helen. She plays an important role in both of their lives and the novel focuses on Frank's and Helen's unhappy union particularly in the first half of the narrative. When Helen describes their relationship after Frank's death to Joseph, she says that they "diminished each other" and when she was alone, while Frank looked for work, she "had grown strong

[31] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 65.
[32] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 116.
[33] Murphy and Hopper, "Elegant Resistance," 186.
[34] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 253.
[35] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 367

in his absence."[36] On the other hand she also says that she was happy to be back with him, showing their strong albeit troubled connection. Whether we observe Frank and Helen alone or together their link is of a physical nature which shows also in their memories of each other. When Frank lives alone in Dublin while struggling to find a job, he experiences nightmares in which he is "disembodied. Just like that his body [can] change into [Helen's]."[37] When they think of each other in absence as well as when they are together Frank and Helen think of each other's physical attributes and their reunions again concern their bodies. When they move South, they experience a mysterious night during which they think they hear a marching band as they stay in a tent in the middle of a field. However, in the morning Frank is told in a nearby town that no such thing happened; in consequence "the procession and thus [their] lovemaking [cannot] be authenticated."[38] After one night of physical togetherness, Frank and Helen become disconnected again.

Although Helen appears resentful as the family moves around and Frank struggles to find a job, after he is shot by the soldier in their home in Fanacross she begins a fight for a compensation in court dealing with her own trauma. With the move to the South Helen loses her community, only to return to lose her husband and effectively her son as well when she returns. Although their lawyer advises Helen to settle several times, she doesn't do so and manages to gain a substantial amount of money. While this conclusion does not offer what Fennell calls "a straightforward happy ending" for the Allen family, it allows Helen to move from the family house where her husband was killed and start a new life elsewhere.[39] Helen's own approach to her traumatic experience and memories of it is to fight. In the end she appears to put away her trauma only after she packs up the old house and moves. The journey, however, isn't easy for her as after Frank's death Helen is almost frozen in her memories of Frank. There is even a long memory section of only her recollections and later several of her letters to Joseph appear in the text. For several pages, Helen's voice takes over the novel, however, she mostly focuses on her memories of Frank which seem to form her identity. Her struggle to forget results at first in the opposite. Her inability leads, in Elena Esposito's words, to "the accumulation of memories, intended to produce indirectly their neutralization."[40]

[36] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 167.
[37] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 34.
[38] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows*, 48.
[39] Fennell, "Dermot Healy's Heterotopias," 257.
[40] Esposito, "Social Forgetting: A System-Theory Approach," 181.

In her memory section Helen directs several monologues at her son and begins by saying that she and Frank were "only children [who knew] nothing of the hardship" ahead of them.[41] She tells several stories about Frank, his father, called Pop by everyone, as well as about George, Frank's twin brother. Everything has a connection to Frank. She also reveals more about the 'ordinary' life in Fanacross as she remembers, among others, a story of a customs officer's home being burned down. Helen continues to be preoccupied with Frank's image but similarly to other people, this is just her version of that person. Being aware of this, she becomes plagued by her recollections when she says that "we are trapped in the bodies of someone else," but she doesn't know how to stop yet.[42] Although she is aware of the trap she has created for herself, for a time after Frank's death her memories offer her comfort and often her connection with her dead husband is again physical. She is afraid to face her present situation. The narrator comments at the end of her memory section:

> her memories were not more real than her present life, so she feared to walk out into the present world for fear the things she would find there would have to be remembered. Her body sought escape through her mind, leaving in its wake a guilty trail. Her mind self-consciously stole away. Trapped in the present, she waited on memory to restore order.[43]

Helen then continues in this spiral of memories in a series of letters she sends to Joseph. Her letters are again her version of Frank and their life together. Importantly, although the novel offers several of Helen's letters, we only get to read one letter from Joseph back to her. His letter is also very practical and does not acknowledge what Helen is writing about. They both have their memories of Frank and they don't necessarily correspond. Both their memories are framed by what Joseph and Helen are willing and wanting to remember.[44] Neither is really looking for an input from the other person.

Unlike Joseph, who decides to forgive his attackers in their absence, Helen is offered an apology from the soldier who actually killed Frank during the court but shows "neither forgiveness nor hatred" towards him.[45] Nonetheless, the decision of the court and

[41] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 155.
[42] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 166.
[43] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 169.
[44] Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory*, 3
[45] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 366.

the end to the story of their father and husband respectively, offers a resolution. As they are packing up things in Fanacross we read that "the crudeness of the building stripped of its warm familiar began to show through. There was nothing to remind them of the day Frank Allen was taken so quickly that his after-image stayed."[46] While there is still a sense of safety to the family house, it being 'warm' and 'familiar,' they decide not to delve on that dangerous familiarity and move on. At least for Helen and Joseph, their story ends on a slightly positive note as they don't seem to intend to continue in what Halliday and Ferguson describe as "recycling of […] mutual memories of victimization" found in the transmission of traumas that would result in them being "passed to the next generation," as was the case with Frank and Joseph.[47] In the end, Helen strives for what Miller refers to in connection with memory as "stability and control in the present" which is often "deferred in particular acts of [an individual's] memory."[48]

3.3 George and Pop Allen

To a smaller degree, the novel also focuses on the other members of the Allen family, most prominently on Frank's twin brother, George and their father, Pop. Besides being influenced, just as the rest of the family, by the Troubles, George experiences his own personal trauma when his wife Geraldine is killed after being hit by a car. Although the culprit is never found, George continues to suspect the British army forces in the area throughout the years. After her death, Geraldine remains a constant image in George's mind. She is everywhere and "her very words [work] their way on to his tongue."[49] George's mind becomes "like a trapped animal" as he experiences nightmares where the man responsible for Geraldine's death confesses and asks him to forget saying that "[forgetting] things, no matter how terrible, makes the world go on."[50] But George seems unable to do so and finally he decides to leave the family house, on which his memories centre. While this works at first and George creates a new life for himself, he decides to come back at the end of the novel to turn himself over to the army to declare that he and not his twin Frank has had a connection with the IRA, and thus helps Helen in her court

[46] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 377.
[47] Ferguson and Halliday, "Collective Memory and the Legacy of the Troubles," 60.
[48] Nicholas Andrew Miller, *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 15.
[49] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 55.
[50] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 103.

case.[51] Coming back then seems to force George to revisit Geraldine's memory when without being asked he tells the interrogators that he "was up on the mountains shooting duck after the death of [his] wife."[52] He begins to experience guilt, although we never really observe him committing any serious crime and his affiliation with the paramilitary organisation is only implied, when the guards try to break him "down to terrible nightmares where he suffered all he had been accused of."[53] He is unable to forget, the memories of Geraldine and his life in Fanacross are still accumulated in his mind and he is according to Esposito not permitted "the construction of new memories" both mentally and physically.[54] As Helen and Joseph move south, George is presumably still in prison.

Pop Allen remains for most of the novel in the background. Although we do not learn too much about Pop, he too is influenced by his life in Fanacross as well as by the conflict which impacts his sons, Frank and George, as well as his grandson, Joseph. When Joseph is set to leave for the South, Pop strives to keep him in the village, almost in place of his own sons. Again, Fanacross represents family, which Pop sees as falling apart and tries to keep hold of. Even at the end of the novel Pop struggles in getting used to the life in the new house and goes "round and round searching for dimensions of the old house that he had known so well."[55] On the final page the novel ends with Pop's vision of both George and Frank, whom he is unable to let go. He goes in his memory to his sons. Yet when Helen tries to talk about them, Pop stops her to avoid "anyone following him" in his past reminiscences, almost as if not to drag Helen into the past with him.[56] Although Murphy and Hopper argue that "the genealogical lines of connection […] knit the novel's diverse structure together," Pop's vision and attempt to stop Helen from speaking allow for a possible break from another expected repetition of trauma and memories in the younger generations.[57] Pop, as his own historian, chooses to stay in the past and in his memories but doesn't extend the same fate on Joseph and Helen.[58]

[51] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 55.
[52] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 354.
[53] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 354.
[54] Esposito, "Social Forgetting," 181.
[55] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 378.
[56] Healy, *Fighting with Shadows,* 374.
[57] Murphy and Hopper, "Elegant Resistance," 194.
[58] Shane Alcobia-Murphy, "Remembering Bloody Sunday," in *Recovering Memory: Irish Representations of Past and Present*, ed. Hedda Friberg, Irene Gilsenan Nordin, and Lene Yiding Pedersen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 35.

Through the different members of the Allen family the novel is able to portray different personal traumas on the background of the bigger trauma of the Troubles and show diverse possible routes of dealing with the experience. The town of Fanacross functions in the family's mind often as a utopia, an idyll, whereas in reality the village on the border forms the centre of their suffering and while they stay there, its "past continues into the present and shapes the future," according to Ferguson and Halliday.[59] It appears that only by leaving can they let go but even then, happiness isn't guaranteed. The nuclear family of Frank, Helen and Joseph all deal with their traumas and memories differently. After the death of Frank, Joseph is followed by the ghost of his father to the point where he foolishly attempts to experience what his father did. Only after years of nightmares we are told that Joseph was able to forgive his attackers and with forgiveness he forgets. Frank isn't allowed such a resolution as his return to Fanacross only brings him back to the place where he experienced trauma in the first place. By association with his twin he is brought back in the conflict and unfortunately killed, and ultimately replaced in the collective memory by stories of both his family and the locals. His character is central in terms of influence both on the generation before and after him. Similarly to Joseph, Helen is at first flooded by her memories of her husband as she tries to keep him alive. Only after she moves from Fanacross, she lets Frank go. Pop Allen then remains as a spectator to the village and the community values while asking Helen and Joseph not to become further witnesses in the future. He doesn't ask them to continue in the generational engagement in the Troubles.

However, as George Allen remains in prison, the shadow of the Troubles continues to loom over the border and Ferguson and Halliday argue that the "prejudiced memories [continue to be] transmitted" to the new generations which will have to fight with them.[60] The novel thus ends on a contradictory note with one part of the family represented by Helen and Joseph leaving the conflict behind both mentally and physically while George remains under its influence. He remains physically in the prison and mentally in his thoughts of Geraldine and his own past (possibly invented) actions during the Troubles. Following the three generations of the Allen family, the novel is thus able to observe the familial relationships and the possibly destructive influence of one generation on another. Although Pop Allen realizes how harmful this influence is at the

[59] Ferguson and Halliday, "Collective Memory and the Legacy of the Troubles," 61.
[60] Ferguson and Halliday, "Collective Memory and the Legacy of the Troubles," 71.

end of the novel and consciously asks Helen and Frank not to follow in the generational repetitions, his son George appears to be sentenced to continue in his footsteps.

4. *A Goat's Song*

Dermot Healy's second novel *A Goat's Song* was published in 1994, ten years after *Fighting with Shadows* with which it shares many themes. Similarly to Healy's first novel, the narrative focuses on characters living either in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland during the Troubles. In the case of this particular text, the narrative doesn't follow a single family unit living at the border but several diverse characters each with their own background. However, the apparent influence of the conflict remains. The narrative even addresses the Northern Irish conflict more directly as one of the main protagonists, Jonathan Adams, as well as some minor characters are placed within actual historical events. Focusing mainly on Protestant Jonathan Adams and his daughter Catherine from the North on one hand and on Catholic Jack Ferris from the South on the other, Healy's second novel manages to delve much deeper into the minds of the characters and their reasonings. It observes their personal lives and memories merged with the memories and experiences of their respective communities more meticulously than *Fighting with Shadows*. As part of the novel is an embedded, therapeutic narrative by one of the characters struggling with alcoholism and a failed relationship, Dermot McCarthy describes the text as "a narrative of confession, exorcism, and therapy: the telling is intended to be freeing of the self from the pain and guilt of the past."[1] It is not, however, a confession and struggle with past of only that particular narrating character, but of the rest of them as well, and their personal and communal memories form a major part of the text.

The plot of *A Goat's Song* focuses on a playwright, Jack Ferris, who in the beginning of the narrative realizes that his romance with Catherine Adams is over and she isn't coming back after learning that Jack is still drinking. Struggling with accepting the failed romance, Ferris decides to tackle both his personal demon of alcoholism and his memories of his relationship with Catherine in a writerly fashion and begins to adapt their past life together as well as alone through his own invented narrative. His invention is an attempt to "endow [his] experience with sense and meaning," as Jürgen Straub observes when discussing the process of memory narrative.[2] Through Ferris' narrative we

[1] Dermot McCarthy, "Recovering Dionysus: Dermot Healy's "A Goat's Song"," in *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2000), 134. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20646346.
[2] Jürgen Straub, "Psychology, Narrative, and Cultural Memory: Past and Present," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 222.

can observe not only his own attempts at dealing with his past but also "the strain of anxiety and sectarian intimidation [and] several decades of the history of Ulster and the Republic," as Roberta G. Wondrich points out in her essay about the novel.[3] Ferris doesn't just recall individual memories from their lives, he puts them in a cohesive narrative in an attempt to make sense of them. As a form of self-therapy, Ferris invents both the story of Catherine's childhood and the story about her father, Jonathan Adams, an RUC Sergeant first in Fermanagh and later in Mayo. As Ferris' narrative progresses, we observe Catherine meeting Ferris – as a character in his own narrative – and see their relationship before its anticipated end. At the end, the novel returns to its beginning where we again observe Ferris as he hopes for Catherine's return to him.

Similarly to *Fighting with Shadows*, Healy's second novel uses real historical events to set its characters on the backdrop of the Northern Irish conflict. However, unlike the first novel, where the characters do not take direct part in the Troubles and its influence is collateral, one of the main characters in *A Goat's Song* takes part in the conflict and actually stands at its beginning. Sergeant Jonathan Adams, an RUC man, appears in the narrative as one of the primary actors during the civil rights march in Derry on October 5th, 1968. Although the specific date is not mentioned, he is said to be present as a policeman during a march on Duke Street, that is later televised, which points clearly to the march. This is reminiscent of the indirect mention of the 1981 elections in *Fighting with Shadows*. It puts Jonathan Adams at an event that according to Ferguson and Halliday "lit a tinderbox that had been drying since the build up to the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising commemorations, and violence began to sweep across the country."[4] Adams later also appears to be present during Bloody Sunday in 1972 as we are informed that "he heard the shots in Derry that were fired supposedly by the IRA before the British Army shot thirteen dead."[5] This particular event in Derry is additionally mentioned by a minor character, Christopher Nolan, who Jack Ferris meets during his stay in Belfast. Nolan tells him that he is a former member of the British army and in a drunken stupor tries to convince Jack that the "IRA it was started shooting first in

[3] Roberta G. Wondrich, "Islands of Ireland: A Tragedy of Separation in Dermot Healy's "A Goat's Song"," in *Writing Ulster*, no. 6 (1999), 68 – 70. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30022137.
[4] Neil Ferguson and Donna Halliday, "Collective Memory and the Legacy of the Troubles: Territoriality, Identity and Victimhood in Northern Ireland," in *The Social Psychology of Collective Victimhood*, ed. Johanna Ray Vollhardt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 57. doi: 10.1093/oso/9780190875190.001.0003.
[5] Dermot Healy, *A Goat's Song* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), 126.

Londonderry."[6] Although Ferris doesn't seem to form any opinion on what Nolan tells him, the text is able to put down two different perspectives on an important event, which is only one example of the discord apparent in the text.

Importantly, it is not only these specific events that influence the lives of the characters. What is crucial in the novel – as it is indeed the case in most novels – are their previous experiences, memories and background as well as the language they use. Their particular environments and differing attempts at "describing an experience […] lead to distinctive mental representations and memories concerning the experience," as Gerald Echterhoff observes.[7] Jack and Catherine come to describe their stay in Belfast quite differently due to their respective past. Their culture and background both influence their language and shape their memories. After Jack leaves Belfast, his experience there doesn't remain prominent in his memory while it continues to haunt Catherine. Impressions like this connect to the intricate use of focalization in novel: in the beginning we are following a third person narrative which is focalized through the character of Jack Ferris. Once Ferris begins the embedded narrative of the Adams family and himself, he becomes the narrator in a narrative which is in terms focalized through Jonathan, Catherine or even Jack Ferris, as a character in his own narrative. Each character then has their own perspective, although the community backgrounds influencing the characters are Ferris' assumptions; he is assuming the roles of the Adams family. At the beginning of this part of the novel, before he starts to narrate, Jack even says that it takes him "a great effort to separate his perspective from [Catherine's]."[8] McCarthy describes the embedded part of the narrative as "Ferris [*reforming*] himself through the art of storytelling: he constructs both himself and Catherine as characters."[9]

As the narrative comes at the end of the text to its beginning and we again see Ferris alone battling alcoholism, the narrative is according to McCarthy "uroboric. […] The narrative re-formation of Ferris's experience by the mind that creates serves the therapeutic reformation of the man who suffered."[10] The long therapeutic session offers both Ferris' and Catherine and Jonathan Adams' instances of memories and recollections. Although Ferris says in the beginning that "he [does] not want to think of the past," he

[6] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 290.
[7] Gerald Echterhoff, "Language and Memory: Social and Cognitive Processes," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 263.
[8] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 4.
[9] McCarthy, "Recovering Dionysus," 135.
[10] McCarthy, "Recovering Dionysus," 148.

nonetheless does so (although the past is invented) to get rid himself of Catherine's persistent image in his mind and to carve his own, free self.[11] *A Goat's Song* thus interestingly continues a theme that appears already in *Fighting with Shadows*, of telling someone else's story. Whereas in Healy's first novel we can observe only small glimpses of individuals using other characters' lives to create their own stories and interpretations – as happens to Frank Allen after his death – this theme becomes central to *A Goat's Song*. Early in the narrative Jack recounts meeting someone telling him that it is acceptable "when the loved one enters the subconscious. That's fine. Let them stay there. It's when they are alive and kicking in your every thought, that's when it means trouble," which is what happens to Ferris.[12] When we observe him in the beginning of the narrative, he is obsessed with Catherine's image and even her opinions – which is only added to by his addiction – to the point where he forgets the small things happening around him. When he sits in a pub with a random couple, the only thing he is able to think about is "how Catherine would hate him sitting here drinking and enjoying a random world swept through him," as the couple narrate their life story to Jack.[13]

His first attempt at dealing with Catherine's hold over him is documenting the lives of people he meets in a psychiatric hospital that he checks into. He is "visited by an obsession that he must become the chronicler of those who were his companions."[14] However, he quickly realizes that he cannot solve his state by writing a biography of a random patient in the hospital. He has to incorporate both his memory and invention to write the story of the person he is obsessed with. Neil Murphy in his essay about the novel says that one of Healy's concerns is "the problem of finding ways to speak that might begin to approach the complexity of existence."[15] Although Murphy focuses more on the narrative scheme of the novel, this theme can be seen in the character's issue with expressing his own past and memories and also in the Adams' family community memories which later lead to a lot of misunderstanding between the couple.

[11] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 9.
[12] Healy, *A Goat's Song,* 8.
[13] Healy, *A Goat's Song,* 26.
[14] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 69.
[15] Neil Murphy, "Dermot Healy's A Goat's Song: "To give some form to that which cannot be uttered,"" in *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy*, ed. Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Victoria TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2016), 280.

4.1 Relationships

What becomes apparent through Jack Ferris's own memories and from the memories he creates for Catherine and Jonathan Adams, as well as for some minor characters, is the influence of the conflict not only in its current form but importantly its historical background. Unlike *Fighting with Shadows*, which does not delve too deep into the origin of the Troubles, this particular novel utilizes both its primary character from the Republic as well as the family from Northern Ireland to show the differences in their thinking and the reasons for those differences. We see the influence of collective memory. Gerry Smith points out that the novel is "a portrait of a country undergoing profound change, desperately attempting to calculate the moral, emotional and psychological debts of the past in relation to the demands of the present and the hopes of the future."[16] Especially in the case of the Adams family we see the obvious influence of their upbringing and sometimes an inability to understand the life in the South after they buy a summer house there. Right from the beginning of the embedded narrative the discord is obvious: it begins with young Catherine finding a family neighbour, Matti Bonner, who was a Catholic, hanging from a tree in front of the church after committing suicide.

The narrator takes time to comment on Bonner's death both in relation to the Adams family specifically but also in relation to the two communities in town, stating that "it involved them all. There was a curse in what he'd done. It was a sign. He wanted to remain forever in their minds."[17] There is a sense of interconnected obsession as well as a lack of understanding from both communities. There is a fear of judgment as Bonner is properly buried although guilty of suicide. At one point the narrator tells the readers that "there are two things dear to the Northern Ireland Protestant hearts: the royal family in England and the Catholic mind."[18] We observe an interdependent interest in what each community is doing and how one group will look at the other group's actions. When the Adams family buy a summer house on the Mullet peninsula and begin to travel between Fermanagh and Mayo, there are several comments about their approach to these transitions. At one point the narrator says that "they felt superior to the Southern Irish in education, in manners, in politics, in commerce. The war in Northern Ireland had made

[16] Gerry Smyth, ""The orchestra of memory": music, sound and silence in A Goat's Song," in *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy*, ed. Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Victoria TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2016), 273.
[17] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 88.
[18] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 131.

them very sophisticated political creatures," although after several stays in the South they began to prefer it "to the stricter regime in Northern Ireland."[19] They approach their experiences in the Republic based on their community's past and incorporate that past in their language when describing their affairs.

Wondrich points out that "Catholic and Protestant identities, heritages and psychological backgrounds are at the core" of Jonathan and Catherine Adams' as well as Jack Ferris' story.[20] Numerous side remarks point to the difficult past of both sides and to the communities' actions being influenced by the long conflict. When Jonathan Adams dies, he is buried in Fermanagh, although he spent the majority of his retirement in the South and died in the family's summer house. However, the narrator notes that "only [in Fermanagh] could his tombstone proclaim that he had been a Sergeant in the Royal Ulster Constabulary."[21] Although the community in Mullet is always welcoming towards the Adams family, the family assume (probably correctly) what the approach to such a statement on a tombstone would be there. Both the personal past as well as the community past play a significant role in the characters' lives, and the influence that was mostly covert in Healy's previous novel becomes apparent in *A Goat's Song.* Jeffrey K. Olick discusses in his essay about collective memory a trend that can be observed here, that "individual memory is socially framed by groups [while] groups themselves also share articulated images of collective pasts."[22] This can be observed through the minor remarks, such as the one about Jonathan's tombstone, as well as through the major events in the characters' lives.

The relationship of the two communities can be compared to Brian Friel's play *Translations*, mentioned in the introduction of the thesis. Although both groups seem to speak the same language – in the case of Healy's novel they really do speak the same language (although they are easily recognizable by their respective accents) while in Friel's play they all speak one language as a dramatic device – they are unable to understand each other. Although Friel's play is set in the 19th century, it functions as an allegory for the Troubles. While for Healy the conflict is of primary interest, whereas Friel uses it also as a metaphor, both authors show the communities' inability to

[19] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 149.
[20] Wondrich, "Islands of Ireland," 70.
[21] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 209.
[22] Jeffrey K. Ollick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 156.

understand each other and to communicate. Both texts also show the collective context that influences individual experience and memory along the way. As Astrid Erll points out in the theoretical introduction to *Cultural Memory Studies*, individuals are shaped "by the people [they] live with [and by] the acquired schemata" in their communities, which can be observed both in Friel's and Healy's texts.[23] There is also an interesting parallel between Yolland in *Translations* going around Donegal, mapping and naming the places, and Jonathan Adams in *A Goat's Song* going around the Erris area and mapping the local myths. Both are instances of outsiders trying to grasp their new surroundings and describe them based on their own previous experiences. Interestingly, they both need the help of a local or locals to explain that experience.

The relationship between the two communities can be well observed in the personal relationships between Jonathan Adams and Matti Bonner, and later between Jack Ferris and Catherine Adams. In both of these we see the influence of collective memory on the two different people as well as the complicity of their bond in personal memory. Thanks to Matti Bonner, Sergeant Adams meets his wife and although at first he balks at the idea, they become close acquaintances. After Matti's death Jonathan cannot forget him as "for the past twenty years they had probably spoken to each other every day."[24] When Adams dies, their connection remains; during Adams' funeral the parson chooses the same verse that had been previously read during Bonner's – "*He is not dead. He sleepeth*."[25] This may be read as a comment on the pervading influence a dead person can have on the living on both a personal and a communal level. The two men's relationship is sadly filled with suspicion and silence throughout. Although Adams hires Bonner to work on the newly erected RUC barracks, the two never acknowledge the irony of Bonner as a Catholic in the North working on a loyalist police force building. After Sergeant Adams appears on national TV being involved in suppressing the 1968 march, the two men never speak about it. When Matti dies, Jonathan Adams becomes doubtful of their acquaintance, imagining "a friendship that did not exist."[26] Although they may have gotten along on a personal level, their respective backgrounds have never allowed them to fully form a friendship.

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[23] Astrid Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 5.
[24] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 96.
[25] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 210.
[26] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 96.

A similar relationship of silence and even misunderstanding then continues in the romantic affair between Catherine and Jack. Especially in the case of Catherine Adams we can observe the influence of her childhood in Fermanagh and the identity that has been passed on to her from her community and her father. Michael Böss has argued that our identity is "given shape and colour from the stories that [our] families narrate about themselves,"[27] and Catherine is an example of this. During the couple's stay in Belfast, Jack, having nothing to do, wonders around town, visits pubs and talks to numerous people from both communities. He laughs at being called "the Irishman" by the newspaper stand owner after he is distinguished by his accent. Jack doesn't quite understand Catherine's concern about his actions, having not grown up in Northern Ireland. He does not have the experience of growing up in a town of two opposed communities where a single, small action can distinguish one group from the other and be a cause for suspicion. As they are separated at the end of Jack's narrative, we observe both Jack's hope for reunification and the hopelessness of such an event happening. Jack and Catherine do not get to speak again – there is only a short phone call between them while Ferris is at sea and cannot fully hear Catherine – and their relationship thus ends in silence; they never discuss what had happened between them and their misunderstandings are not confronted. Gerry Smyth even describes their relationship as symbolizing "modern Ireland [in which] the silence of previous generations is embedded."[28]

4.2 Jonathan Adams

As noted above, Jonathan Adams is the only principal character in the novel with a direct connection to the Northern Irish conflict. During his youth he attempts to become a clergyman, however, being unable to speak to a congregation he chooses to join the Royal Ulster Constabulary. As the narrator notes, his father's words – "if you leave the ministry of the Church you'll be cursed – [remain] a challenge that Jonathan Adams [has] to contend with all his life."[29] It is, however, two specific events that come to shape the majority of his personal memories, at least as rendered by Jack Ferris. The first is the civil rights march in Derry in 1968 that he is present for as a policeman. At first, the event

[27] Michael Böss, "Relating to the Past: Memory, Identity and History," in *Recovering Memory: Irish Representations of Past and Present*, ed. Hedda Friberg, Irene Gilsenan Nordin, and Lene Yiding Pedersen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 23.
[28] Smyth, "The orchestra of memory," 271.
[29] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 102.

doesn't leave any impression on Adams and he returns from Derry as from another regular day at work. It is only after he sees the event televised later that he sees his actions during the march. He observes himself as a character on the news and "[becomes] a witness to himself. He [sees] the mad look of fury in his own eye," when he struck the protesters in the street.[30] He becomes terrified and is followed by nightmares as "each night the same set of images [swims] again before his mind and he [succumbs] to such fear that he [spends] the night at the foot of the stairs, a loaded revolver in his hand, facing the door."[31] Especially as the family begins to spend summers in the South, Adams lives with fear of being recognized.

He is eerily aware that his whole community in Fermanagh has seen him on the news, is aware of the tensions in his town and possible implications for himself and for his family. Yet, he is reluctant to buy the summer house and relocate there at first, as Northern Ireland is his home. There is a deep connection similar to the one characters in *Fighting with Shadows* have towards the village of Fanacross. Adams advocates his actions by telling himself that "the camera did not hear orders. The camera did not hear the chants of hate."[32] There is a discrepancy between what he remembers his actions to be and what, together with others, he can see on the television. This discrepancy then comes to haunt Adams further as a rumour begins to be spread of Jonathan reportedly raising a salute during an IRA man's funeral he attended as a sergeant. He himself never speaks of it in the narrative. His actions become something of a local folklore and he gains a contradictory image in either community. But while the image of him "batoning defenceless Catholics [is] fixed forever in visual history by television," his action during the funeral exists "only in folk memory. It could never be recalled by a few of those who were there on the day."[33] Similarly to Frank Allen in *Fighting with Shadows*, Jonathan Adams becomes a character for others to tell their stories about and to give their own meanings to.

The memories in Jonathan Adams' life are influenced by what Schmidt describes as "negation and differences," and an inability to understand the other side.[34] Both the march and his relationship with Matti Bonner are described in a contradictory manner and Adams himself is uncertain as to what the truth and fiction is in regard to his actions in

[30] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 121.
[31] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 122.
[32] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 122.
[33] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 144.
[34] Schmidt, "Memory and Remembrance," 197.

1968 and his friendship with Bonner. These images "accompany Jonathan Adams for the rest of his life" and he doesn't seem to be allowed any resolution.[35] He travels with his family South where he attempts to collect local myths, which, however, lead him back "to events in contemporary Ireland, a place where he did not want to be at all, having had his fair share of it in previous lives."[36] To connect with his new surroundings, Adams then tries to learn Irish. He tries to fit in. This again, however, results in an unwilling return to topics that he is vary of as he spends his classes arguing with the teacher about religion.

Jonathan Adams' life ends fittingly somewhere between reality and invention as he is on one hand a 'real' character and on the other hand Ferris' invention. There is even an interesting connection between fact and fiction in terms of memory which concerns the character's attitude towards reading. Jonathan Adams is described as a well-read man who however throughout his life refuses to read fiction, as it contains "inaccuracies, untruths, generalization, assumptions."[37] He even thinks of fiction as "the shameful stories prisoners [make up] to escape prison."[38] When he sees his actions on the television, he struggles to confront what he sees as fact in his own memory and what is factually portrayed through the lens of a camera. Fact and fiction become interconnected in his mind. As Jonathan Adams is dying, Jack Ferris describes his daughters and wife reading to him the myth of *The Salmon of Knowledge* from the Fenian Cycle. Ferris portrays Adams at the end of his life as looking for knowledge in (mythic) fiction as opposed to Adams' previous approach to life and literature.

4.3 Catherine Adams

Catherine, similarly to her father, becomes preoccupied with Matti Bonner after his death. He seems to influence even her later relationships with men. Catherine is the one who finds him, as a little girl, after he kills himself, and prompted by her sister Sara, who keeps asking her questions about the dead man's body, becomes convinced she saw "his member standing softly up out of his navy-blue trousers. [But] it was not true, it had never happened in reality."[39] But prompted by Sara, Catherine comes to believe she saw

[35] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 135.
[36] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 174.
[37] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 114.
[38] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 115.
[39] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 95.

more than she did. Male physicality then continues to influence Catherine's relations with men and later with Jack Ferris himself. Her first sexual encounter, which she later realizes was a rape, continues to reappear "ever afterwards, even before her most passionate love-making."[40] Similarly, throughout the relationship she has with Ferris, Catherine seems to mostly recall his physical traits – at least in Jack's rendering – and applies negative connotations as when she recalls "how Jack's grey eyes would go a dangerous violet as he grew excited."[41] Interestingly, Matti Bonner comes back in Catherine's memories even during mundane events. When her mother falls sick after her father' death, Catherine meets Jack Ferris for the first time and he tells her that she should give her mother goat's milk to help her. The same advice had been given to the family when Mrs Adams was sick many years previously by Bonner, as Catherine recalls. Although she doesn't consciously recognize Matti Bonner as someone important in her life (Bonner not really being a part of her community in Fermanagh), him being the family's neighbour and her father's acquaintance for many years necessarily remains in Catherine's memory.

Throughout her life in Fermanagh, Mullet, as well as later in Belfast with Jack, Catherine continues to be influenced, just as her father had been before her, by her upbringing in Northern Ireland and by the conflict between the two communities. She is also influenced by Jonathan Adams, her father, specifically. When she returns with her mother South after the funeral, they tend to the house and "doing all [those] things [gives] them the necessary release to mourn."[42] Although Catherine receives space to mourn, her new experiences are still structured and organized to "tie in with previous knowledge," to make them "worth being memorised, a *meaningful* […] experience," as Straub puts it in relation to individual memory.[43] When Catherine and Jack live in Belfast, she is constantly worried at his attempts to meet locals, and "she [listens] to every sound in the street. She [lies] awake listening for the sound of breaking glass like Jonathan Adams had long before her."[44] Even after they leave, Catherine is "followed by terrifying memories of the risks they'd taken by living together."[45] Her decision to end the affair with Ferris can be described as positive in terms of ending a toxic relationship where both parties are alcohol dependent. However, the relationship also ends in an inability to communicate

[40] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 156.
[41] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 344.
[42] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 213.
[43] Straub, "Psychology, Narrative, and Cultural Memory," 221.
[44] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 323.
[45] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 342.

and understand the other side without any real resolution. It ends in silence. Perceived allegorically, this again points to the continuing misunderstanding and miscommunication in the communities that Jack and Catherine are from.[46]

4.4 Jack Ferris

Jack Ferris' embedded narrative in the novel arises mainly due to his toxic relationship with Catherine and his attempt at dealing with its aftermath. As mentioned above, their different backgrounds and personal pasts never allow them to connect with each other fully and added by their addiction to alcohol, the affair necessarily ends badly. When Jack first appears in the novel, Catherine has left him and he battles between alcoholic nights and attempts at sobering up, while he repeatedly calls a Dublin theatre where Catherine is in the process of rehearsing a play that he wrote. Catherine and their relationship colours everything that Jack does. He is reminded of her by her letters which "[contain] possibilities [that are] no longer available to him."[47] After the first few introductory chapters in which we see Jack battle alcoholism and suffer episodes of lost memory he checks himself into a mental hospital where even "a splinter of wood [tells] her face."[48] During his stay at the hospital, Ferris at first attempts to make peace with his past with Catherine by focusing on other patients' stories which he begins to write down. He does this instead of writing his story, which he tells to a nurse here, as he is unable yet to admit his writing needs to focus on his own experience. Ferris struggles with narrating his own history with Catherine as their shared history provides a safe space for him. McCarthy describes his approach to her as narcissistic – when "[Jack] loses [Catherine], he loses himself."[49] With Catherine, Ferris knew who he was and without her he hasn't yet formed a new identity.

Jack says that without Catherine "his memory is impaired."[50] He has created a self which exists in connection with Catherine's image when they were still a couple, and this influence continues after Catherine leaves him. He doesn't seem to acknowledge memories he may have that don't include Catherine. Her influence, however, brings about a difficult limit for Jack as a writer. He is unable to write when they are together, as we

[46] This is a theme described by both Wondrich and Smyth as cited above.
[47] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 42
[48] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 46.
[49] McCarthy, "Recovering Dionysus," 138.
[50] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 70.

can observe during their stay in Belfast and even after Catherine leaves him, her influence remains and Jack's ability to write is further sabotaged. He cannot write at first because "the minute he [would] put a word on the page he would stop loving her."[51] Once he puts down her story, she becomes part of a fiction and not his actual past. Realizing the limitation his obsession brings, Ferris begins to tell the story of the Adams family, to the point where he himself becomes a character in his own invented narrative. Even as he leaves the mental hospital, he realizes the different versions of himself: "By the time he [reaches] the bus [he sees] a gathering of many selves, each wrapped up in their own condition and each demanding his attention."[52] As Murphy points out, Jack invents "a world he never knew" and as his own relationship with Catherine seemed to have failed due to miscommunication and inability to understand each other, the embedded story Jack invents about Jonathan Adams as well as about himself and Catherine is about "their various cultural and communicative barriers" and his attempt to at least communicate the miscommunication.[53]

Although Murphy calls Jack's invention sympathetic, Ferris does not choose to describe himself in a completely positive light.[54] When Catherine meets him for the first time, he is described as an anti-social man not always aware of what his actions convey to others. Especially during the couple's stay in Belfast, he proves to be oblivious of the possible dangers when he freely talks with locals and doesn't grasp Catherine's concerns. He does seem to realize the issue once an article is published about him, which states that he is working on a play about Belfast. Until this particular moment he was an anonymous individual from the South in Belfast but with his name in the newspapers, he is distinguished by what he is attempting to do in the city. Oblivious to that, Jack quickly continues to visit various pubs and drink with strangers. We never really learn what the play, which he manages to finish and that Catherine stars in, is about, interestingly enough. During his stay in the hospital, his psychiatrist asks Jack whether the play is about the North. Jack answers that "it used to be," but he doesn't know anymore.[55] Either Ferris suffers from memory loss or he is aware of his inability to describe the experience of the community he is not part of. This crushed man begins a narrative that helps him realise the delusion he had about the relationship with Catherine. His recreation of their

[51] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 79.
[52] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 73.
[53] Murphy, "Dermot Healy's *A Goat's Song*," 287.
[54] Murphy, "Dermot Healy's *A Goat's Song*," 286.
[55] Healy, *A Goat's Song*, 49.

relationship was not intended to bring her back. As McCarthy points out "Ferris [was] after the knowledge his relationship with Catherine [represented] for him, not the woman herself;"[56] and there is a distinction between Ferris the narrator, who has now come to the realisation of what the narrative means and Ferris the character, who is still waiting for the woman to return and give his life meaning.

Jack's narrative in the novel ends with the character of Ferris waiting for Catherine to return to him not yet knowing she is aware of his continuing addiction and the three primary characters are not allowed a positive resolution to their journeys. Jonathan Adams struggles with his learned community's prejudices throughout his life, both in Fermanagh and in Mayo. His Protestant upbringing doesn't allow him to form a close friendship with Matti Bonner – as a Catholic upbringing doesn't presumably allow Matti to form a friendship with Jonathan either – although the men have known each other for numerous years. Due to the length of their acquaintance, Matti necessarily remains in Jonathan's mind after his suicide but Jonathan is never allowed any insight into what caused Matti to kill himself at all. He seems almost afraid to ask such a question. His struggle continues when the family begins to spend time in the South where he tries to establish connections with the locals through the Irish myths and language but again, he never really forms any connection not realizing this isn't the way to form that relation. Until the end of his life, he is haunted by his memories of what he had done in his role as an RUC officer and what he saw portrayed through the media, losing the distinction between fact and fiction. What Jonathan's case particularly emphasises "is an awareness of how powerful and abiding the religious heritage remains," even though his own personal beliefs may not be orthodox, as Wondrich points out.[57]

Catherine, as his daughter, continues to be influenced in the same way. As a daughter of an RUC man, she may be even more affected by the divide between the two communities because she observes her own father struggling with his direct role in the Troubles, as well as his inability to connect with his one potential friend, whom she herself unfortunately finds dead. Although Catherine appears to be comfortable during their stays in Mayo, her upbringing and suspicions become apparent when she and Jack move for some time to Belfast. The decision to end their relationship at the end of the

[56] McCarthy, "Recovering Dionysus," 144.
[57] Wondrich, "Islands of Ireland," 73.

novel is both positive in terms of a personal resolution and negative in terms of the relationship of the two communities.

Jack's therapeutic narrative that he invents about Jonathan and Catherine Adams is similarly successful only to the point of the realisation that the two lovers don't fully understand each other as is shown by their final incoherent phone call. Ferris almost seems to invent the narrative to confirm that misunderstanding and to explain its origin to himself. As the novel ends – and begins – with Jack and Catherine being split up, the novel stands at a sort of crossroads not only in terms of their personal history but, by analogy, in terms of collective memory. There is a continuing conflict and misunderstanding between the Protestant and Catholic communities such as there was between Jonathan and Matti and there is now between Jack and Catherine. The temporal breadth is representative of the way Brown and Reavey describe the workings of a memory as Jack's narrative both "stretches back towards the past and forward to an anticipated future."[58] Although the invented Jack Ferris waits hopefully for Catherine's return, the narrating Ferris already knows the outcome of that anticipation. The expected personal as well as communal future is one that we have already observed in the beginning of the novel – a future of miscommunication and misunderstanding.

[58] Steven D. Brown and Paula Reavey, "Experience and Memory," in *Research Methods for Memory Studies*, ed. Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 46.

5. *Sudden Times*

Sudden Times, Healy's third novel, was published in 1999 and in some respects its topic and style are a departure from the previous two novels. Whereas *Fighting with Shadows* and *A Goat's Song* focus on several characters on the backdrop of the Northern Irish conflict and are told by a third person narrator with the use of alternating focalization, *Sudden Times* changes that wide focus towards a single character who tells his own story in the first person and his connection to the conflict is only vague. Nonetheless, there are clear connections, mostly to Healy's second novel. This text continues to explore the topic of memory found in the previous work to a new degree precisely thanks to the first-person narrator. From the beginning of the narrative we observe a young man struggling with his memories of a stay abroad, memories which are constantly trying to come to the surface and influence his present self. He is suffering with his own guilt and responsibility in past events while going through a mundane, everyday life. Annie Proulx astutely describes the novel as an "intimate story of a small-time carpenter and his moral suffering."[1] And although the novel does not have the Troubles as its background, Healy utilizes another important historical topic for Ireland (not only) in the 20th century – emigration – and explains his character's experience thanks to this background. The text is therefore not only a "re-examination of these interwoven themes of guilt, self and time" as Paul Fagan describes the novel, but it also draws attention to the Irish experience abroad through its stylized narrative.[2]

The structure of the novel is to a degree reminiscent of *A Goat's Song* as the text is divided into two parts with the second part interrupting the first section of the narrative only for it to return to the beginning of the novel in the final chapter. The reconnection of the two sections, however, is not as evident as in Healy's second novel and a distance remains between the main character in the beginning of the novel and at its end. In clear opposition to both previous novels, the narrative technique of *Sudden Times* stands out. Clear, succeeding chapters with long descriptive sentences are replaced by headlined short sections, which not always follow each other as regards theme, short paragraphs and

[1] Annie Proulx, "Review Essay: Dermot Healy's Sudden Times," in Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy, ed. Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Victoria TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2016), 124.
[2] Paul Fagan, "Guilt Trips: Dermot Healy's Sudden Times and the Meaning of Sin," in *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy*, ed. Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Victoria TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2016), 294.

a lack of quotation marks indicating direct speech. The style of the novel reflects the endeavour at delving into a human psyche, as often the narrator talks in short sentences and only snippets of scenes are presented, while much additional, unnecessary detail is revealed. In the beginning the main protagonist is being driven to a cemetery and describes the moment while giving additional small comments and fragments of his thoughts:

> I stand in the transport box of a neighbour who stopped on the new road for me and we take off over bumps birdlife scatters thunder past the cemetery John Pete lifts his cap and blesses himself with the peak I salute a hare darts across the road Good morning hare.[3]

His mind at certain points works too quickly to be expressed in words and as he tries to capture every sensory experience, he reveals much more than just his own story.

The plot of the novel focuses on a young man named Ollie Ewing who has recently returned from London back home to Sligo. At first the reason for his return is unclear; however, Ollie's memories of the events keep resurfacing and we learn that something bad has happened to his friend, Marty, and later also to his brother, Redmond. Ollie tries to focus on his current life and at first refuses to confront what occurred in London. He is unwilling to go back either physically or mentally through his memories. His fear of the experience, however, "begins to colour the event as something half-real, half the black imagination rearing amid the frizzle of pub culture and day-to-day getting-on," as Proulx describes it.[4] Random images of specific past events begin to appear in Ollie's mind, he recalls conversations he had with people in London and compares his current actions to those before returning home. Random moments from London appear in his nightmares. These repressed incidents keep resurfacing and culminate when Ollie and his friend Liz go on a spur of the moment vacation to Britain where they first visit Ollie's father in Coventry before planning to continue to the capital.

One evening Eamon reminds Ollie that the man who killed his brother is to be released from prison and for the first time, clear information about the events in London is revealed through another character's agency. Eamon attempts to goad his son into a confrontation, however, Ollie's first response is to tell Eamon that he doesn't want to

[3] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 40.
[4] Proulx, "Review Essay," 125.

'return' to London because "it did [his] head in once, […], and [he doesn't] want it to happen again."[5] Ollie appears at first unwilling to have any discussion about the prison release but his meeting with Eamon serves as an impulse for him to begin articulating his past through his own mediation. As he speaks with his father, Ollie realizes the weight of the events on him similarly to Jack Ferris realizing Catherine's influence. Both Ollie and Jack then begin their respective narrative memory sections to come to terms with their traumatic experiences. Liz, who is a witness to Ollie's and Eamon's heated discussion, even tells Ollie (when they discuss his ex-girlfriend) that these old things are "always hanging about in there somewhere," and for Ollie this is the moment those "old things" come to surface.[6]

As Ollie and Liz leave Eamon and presumably travel to London, this section of the narrative is interrupted and we observe Ollie travelling to London for the first time before the trauma weighing on him occurred. In the embedded narrative, Ollie travels to England where he meets up with his friend Marty. Although a carpenter, he begins to take random construction jobs to make money. Marty hints several times that he may be in trouble with a local protection racket and he tells Ollie that he plans to work for someone called Silver John. Soon after Ollie's arrival Marty disappears. Ollie later finds him dead in his lorry, having been violently killed with acid. Due to Marty's cues Ollie suspects Silver John of the murder and begins to work for him to find out more. He is soon joined by his brother Redmond. During a party, a fight breaks out between Redmond and John's associate, Scots Bob. After the fight, Scots Bob douses Redmond in gasoline and sets him on fire, causing his death later in a hospital. The final section of the novel then turns towards the court trial of Scots Bob and consists mainly of conversations between Ollie and the barrister who questions every memory Ollie may have of his stay in London before the protagonist begins to process those events himself. As the court finishes and the novel ends, the text closes as Ollie returns to Sligo for Redmond's funeral and watches his father sleep. The only thing he can remember at that moment is Eamon telling him that he won't ever forgive him.

In comparison with the two previous novels, *Sudden Times'* precise historical setting is quite vague. When Ollie and Liz visit his father in Coventry, they are discussing the couple's plans to visit London and Eamon notes that "things are not so hot down there

[5] Dermot Healy, *Sudden Times* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999), 163.
[6] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 126.

[…]. Maggie Thatcher saw to that."[7] The novel is then presumably set sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Ollie's experience as a work emigrant to Britain, however, sets the novel in a much broader historical circumstance, that of Irish emigration. Although it is stylized and includes two violent deaths as major plot points, the text alludes to the difficult experience. Not only Ollie, but also his father, brother and friend all travel abroad to make money, indicating the economic situation back home. It also portrays the reality of their life after moving. Ollie's return to Sligo additionally also points to another aspect of emigration, connected with stigma. Emilie Pine documents that "return to Ireland was traditionally seen by many as shameful."[8] That shame she describes is added to in the novel by the trauma that Ollie goes through in London, which becomes the talk of the town in Sligo. Interestingly, Healy chooses this particular novel to contain truly violent acts (Marty's and Redmond's deaths) as opposed to the previous two novels set during the Northern Irish conflict. The single mention of the conflict happens at the court as the barrister accuses Ollie of being politically engaged. Although Ollie Ewing is a character uninterested in politics, his background is used against him during the trial.

Healy's focus changes in *Sudden Times* from multiple, although interconnected, characters towards Ollie only. Every traumatic event is connected to him and expressed through him. He describes other people's reactions as well, or at least his perception of those reactions. While this is limiting in the sense that we only observe Ollie speak, it also gives more space to a particular individual experiencing and attempting to accept the tragic events that he has gone through. Although the narrative sequence of the novel is reminiscent of Healy's previous novel, *A Goat's Song*, there is a difference in what Ollie and Jack narrate. The memories that Jack Ferris presents in the embedded narrative are often invented while Ollie Ewing tries to describe his own experience. The connection between the two parts is also strengthened by phrases that are first reported through Ollie's surfacing memories and that later appear as the events themselves are in 'real' time. For instance, during one night back in Sligo, Ollie recalls a moment with Marty when his friend told him "not so bad, […] as if [he] asked him how he was, which [he] hadn't."[9] The same phrase is then repeated when Ollie lands in London for the first time and Marty welcomes him at the airport. This and other similar instances of phrases appearing in both parts of the narrative and they create a tension that according to Fagan

[7] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 143.
[8] Emilie Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 79-80.
[9] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 99.

brings "the novel's central narrative arc […] into view."[10] In *A Goat's Song* we are following two different Jacks but in the case of *Sudden Times* the focus is always on Ollie Ewing, although there is a clear development separating the Ollie who leaves to work in London and the one who returns. We are indeed observing an individual at first going through traumatic events who becomes unsure of his own memories due to the frightful nature of his experience as well as due to the trial where his account is questioned. He then tries to unsuccessfully supress those events while dealing with guilt. The second part of the narrative then can be seen, similarly to the one in *A Goat's Song*, as a therapeutic attempt as Ollie (unlike Ferris) begins to tell his own story to give it sense. The composition of events and the single character focus in this particular novel then much more clearly point to anachronisms and deviations that can be observed in "the haphazard workings of memory," as Birgit Neumann observes in her essay on memory and literature.[11]

5.1 Communities

Although Ollie at first attempts to suppress his memories of what happened in London, the community in Sligo doesn't fully allow him respite. Similarly to the community in *Fighting with Shadows*, the characters Ollie meets around the town are all interested in other people's actions and especially their misfortunes. Even though Ollie doesn't really talk to anyone, everyone seems to 'know' what happened to him in London with Ollie always anxious about the possible gossip. He even says that "people take great leeway. They tried groping into my past […]. I was vulnerable and said things in confidence that I should not have."[12] Ollie's history becomes a part of the local gossip with him having no control over what is being said about him. However, he also receives advice from the locals in the small community. Joe Green tells Ollie that he feels sorry for him "because [he] can't face it" and makes indirect references to both Redmond and Marty.[13] Similarly, a German psychiatrist, who resides in the city, tries to talk to Ollie about guilt and responsibility. Ollie, to his own detriment, doesn't take their advice and

[10] Fagan, "Guilt Trips," 295.
[11] Birgit Neumann, "The Literary Representation of Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 336.
[12] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 45.
[13] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 35.

focuses on the gossip only. He looks for people's expressions which would hint to what they think. One night he has an altercation with a group of local teenagers and a girl's scream of recognition as he is close to punching one of the boys stays with him rather than the advice he has received.

An interesting parallel to the community in Sligo appears in the novel in the people Ollie meets in Britain both during his initial stay in London as well as later when he visits his father in Coventry. Although geographically distant, the communities in England and Ireland strive to remain interconnected. During Ollie's visits the same interest in other people's business appears as his father and others ask him about the life of the residents in Sligo. The emigrants still seem to be looking back to their life in Ireland and Ollie does that too after his arrival in London as he and Marty eat food he has brought from home. Even the daily life that Ollie and Marty lead in London points to a sense of nostalgia. The two friends spend their free time going to a park and watch "a crowd of lads playing G.A.A," they choose to visit an Irish pub.[14] Emilie Pine argues that the primary reason for returnees from emigration in 1980s and 1990s would have been this feeling of nostalgia: "They came home because of a deep-rooted longing for community […] tradition."[15] Although Ollie tells a man in a pub that he never wants to return, his friend Marty is already pondering his return to Ireland, which he doesn't have a chance to explain as he is killed soon after Ollie's arrival.

5.2 Ollie Ewing After London

In the opening of the novel, Ollie explains the issues he is struggling after his return from London in the first few sentences. The novel opens with him saying:

> After London it was serious. I lay low. […] I dropped into Gerties pub the odd time, but people were wary of me at the beginning. Then I suppose they got used to me again. […] And I found it hard to talk to anyone with that constant argument in my head. Argument with the father.[16]

[14] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 184.
[15] Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory*, 80.
[16] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 3.

He describes his struggle with one particular memory, an argument with his father, which is central for his arch in the narrative. After his brother's death, Eamon told Ollie that he would never forgive him and Ollie takes on the communicated guilt which fully reveals itself when he visits Eamon in Coventry. Ollie explains the guilt he feels saying that it "is stalking [him]," describes the nightmares he has and tells us that he is living in "the afterlife of sin."[17] The memories of London first appear as small fragments only, but as the narrative progresses, the fragments come more and more to the surface until they are revealed in their own narrative section after Ollie's and Eamon's confrontation.

Ollie's struggle isn't so much in what he can't remember as in what he doesn't want to remember. There are several occasions in the narrative where a certain situation or an item tempt Ollie to 'revisit' London. These types of "external objects" are described by Jan Assmann as "carriers of memory,"[18] the interaction with which evokes Ollie's recollections. However, Ollie both physically and mentally resists. He opposes revisiting places and encountering certain objects which would in normal circumstances allow "for that basic function of memory that is remembering, collecting together again what was once whole," as explained by Alessandra Fasulo.[19] Instead, in the first part of the narrative, we are presented with mere fragments. Ollie's flat is right opposite the cleaners but although he visits once due to curiosity, he is quick to explain that he "never [enters] a cleaners. Not since London. Ever."[20] In a short section he also says he doesn't like courthouses and trials because he "once ended up in a courthouse for days," before the story of what happened in London is told.[21] Several times, Ollie mentally stops himself from recalling his past as when he observes the head of a man sitting next to him and begins to "think of [his] own and [tries] to get rid of the thought. *That was close.*"[22]

Ollie's unwillingness to recollect and his wariness of what people talk about around him point to the sense of guilt he experiences. There are several instances of when Ollie is watching other minor characters and wonders whether they are talking about him and what their opinions are. Similarly to Jack Ferris in *A Goat's Song* we at first

[17] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 3, 89.
[18] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 111.
[19] Alessandra Fasulo, "Walking the Autobiographical Path: The Spatial Dimension of Remembering in a Memoir by Italo Calvino," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (London: Routledge, 2016. Kindle), chap. 25, Kindle.
[20] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 8.
[21] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 16.
[22] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 41.

experience the character's mental state after trauma. We observe Ollie as he goes through moments of "if you had. If he had not. What if. What if," and only in the second part of the narrative actually learn what happened to cause those feelings as he attempts to use the embedded memory as a curative process.[23] As the novel at its end returns to Ollie's and Eamon's conversation about guilt and responsibility, Fagan points out that the novel is "less concerned with traumatic events themselves, than with the mental state of guilt to which they give rise."[24] Although two violent murders happen in the book, they are not described in great detail and we focus more on Ollie's handling of them. Ollie's decision to go on a sudden vacation with Liz only gives both the events in London and the argument with his father prominence so that Ollie can no longer ignore them. This particular occasion allows for his remembering to take place.

5.3 Ollie Ewing in London

Ollie's narrative of his time in London begins quite ordinarily. He travels to the city for work and meets up with his good friend Marty Kilgallon with whom he begins to live in a closed-off building site. He works at random construction sites as well as helps Marty deliver some goods in a lorry. Their simple life is quickly interrupted when Marty disappears after telling Ollie he has trouble with protection rackets. Ollie naturally becomes very anxious and searches for Marty around the town. After several weeks of wandering around he finds Marty's lorry and his remains on some random road. With Marty's disappearance Ollie's mundane experience changes as he begins to "[jump] at every sound, [hear] things, [see] things. […] The head [is] not right. No."[25] The doubt that will follow Ollie all the way to Sligo appears here already. We observe a first-person narrative of a troubled person in a foreign city, without financial means, trying to understand what has happened both before and after he discovers Marty. Ollie even recalls an evening where he thinks he is being followed by a sniper and in a short section describes something he calls a "glass-sprinkler," a sort of a vehicle he believes he saw one night driving around.[26] Marty's as well as later Redmond's violent death is so far outside of Ollie's normal framework of life, he struggles to accept it and he begins to

[23] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 3.
[24] Fagan, "Guilt Trips," 306.
[25] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 191.
[26] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 198.

imagine things. He doesn't even have a chance to mourn his friend as he needs to continue working and is soon joined by his brother, Redmond.

Unfortunately, Redmond's visit turns into another tragic event in Ollie's life. Although Ollie is filled with suspicion for Silver John, who had previously employed Marty, both Ollie and Redmond join his working crew. Before Redmond joins John's car Ollie has a moment of resistance where he tells Redmond not to follow him anticipating more trouble, but eventually Redmond joins the crew anyway as Ollie again accepts another character's agency. Although he is the narrator, throughout the novel things 'happen' to Ollie, instead of him instigating them. For a majority of the events Ollie is not the agent. This passivity shows also at the party where Ollie becomes a witness to the attack on his brother. Already, we can see glimpses of what constitutes a large part of the narrative that takes place in Sligo. There are certain objects that function as "the carriers of memory" for Ollie and will return him to moments from London. At the party, during which Scots Bob attacks Redmond, one of the attendees puts on a Pavarotti record, which belonged to Marty and that Ollie has kept. As Ollie listens to the music "all of a sudden [he is] sitting on the block on the site watching the fox stop in the clearing," just as he did when he lived on the construction site with Marty.[27]

Before Ollie has a chance to mourn Redmond after he dies from his injuries, the trial of Scots Bob begins and all of Ollie's memories of London are questioned by the barrister. The court is described in the novel in a different style than the rest of the narrative, which sets it apart. The first-person narrative where Ollie had some sense of authority changes. Fagan describes this section as a "realist narrative mode *via* the genre of the transcript" of the interactions between the barrister and different people appearing before the court.[28] The barrister manages to turn around different statements from the witnesses at the party, e.g. Scots Bob's girlfriend who Redmond was becoming friendly with or Ollie's neighbour who had the view of the moment when Scots Bob attacked Redmond. The barrister is now in power. He makes Ollie question not only the events at the party but also many things that preceded them. A testimony at court should attest "to the veracity of some event or conduct," as Jovan Byford points out, however the questions and comments of the barrister dispute Ollie's account of the events from the moment he

[27] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 250.
[28] Fagan, "Guilty Trips," 296.

landed in London.[29] It also fuels the feeling of guilt that will haunt Ollie as presenting a testimony can be connected with "a pronounced moral dimension," and in the barrister's words, Ollie comes out as the person responsible.[30]

Continuously, the barrister questions Ollie about specific moments and turns them around to the point where many things appear as Ollie's imagination and not memory. In the eyes of the law, Ollie becomes an unreliable witness who comes to question his own 'version' of events. The barrister continues to question him to the point where he accuses Ollie of being under an illusion "that the world is against [him]," and that "this whole tragic affair arose because of [him]."[31] He passes onto him a false sense of agency. He even manages to connect politics into the trial as a short discussion in Irish during the party between Ollie and another friend is turned into a talk about Northern Ireland with Ollie and his friends planning something against the English (Silver) John Reynolds. Proulx describes it as a scene of a "hammering barrister who shapes Ollie Ewing's lack of action in life into sinister and political Irish plotting."[32] The declaration that the barrister comes to is that Ollie has been misleading or claiming he doesn't remember in order to protect himself.

Although Ollie is not involved in any political group, the court is in a sense political, as Proulx writes, because "we find ourselves examining the guilt of the "innocent" who stand uncommitted and uninvolved."[33] It continues the theme of a questioned involvement in political events that appears in Healy's previous two novels and also adds a reference to anti-Irish prejudice in England – another well-known theme in Irish fiction, alongside emigration. The question of Ollie's guilt or innocence in the deaths of his friend and his brother is then only complicated in his mind by his father, who promises to never forgive him for his actions. In the first part of the novel we then observe a young man uncertain of his own memories being haunted by guilt and responsibility he feels passed on to him from others. Ollie begins to think in 'what ifs' and facts become replaced with speculations. He even tells us that he'd "forgotten the thing that tells [him] who [he is]."[34]

[29] Jovan Byford, "Testimony," in *Research Methods for Memory Studies*, ed. Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), chap. 12, Kindle.
[30] Byford, "Testimony," chap. 12, Kindle.
[31] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 274.
[32] Proulx, "Review Essay," 126.
[33] Proulx, "Review Essay," 127.
[34] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 38.

Neumann discusses in her essay the connection between memory and identity and says that "the remembering I constitutes his or her own identity in the dialog with his or her past self."[35] It appears that this particular link is broken in Ollie's case. Unwilling to re-live painful memories which could reveal his innocence, and accused of being responsible for the death of his friend and his brother, he returns to live in Sligo in a state of limbo, saying that "there is no life after this one."[36] The repeated allusions to Ollie's sin and guilt additionally point to a Catholic dimension in the novel. Although Ollie doesn't explicitly show himself to be a practicing Catholic, the influence of the religion is apparent in his fear that there is no life after life and no God. Ollie seems to think about his experience in terms of a purgatory as if assuring himself of the existence of an afterlife for himself as well as for his brother and his friend. He accepts the guilt. Although he explains that "the afterlife of sin is more horrendous than the sin itself," he retells his past an attempt at his own and other's redemption.[37] Healy here delves into a topic that was briefly explored in *A Goat's Song*, where Matti Bonner is buried in a cemetery after committing a suicide and Jonathan Adams questions his journey after death as well as the reasons for the proper burial by the Catholic community.

Healy's third novel is thus both similar and different from the previous two. The narrative again follows a character on the backdrop of a historical moment in the 20th century, a character who undergoes a traumatic experience after which we observe their attempt at accepting said ordeal. Similarly to young Joseph Allen in *Fighting with Shadows*, Ollie becomes part of events that he doesn't fully understand. Although he doesn't pay much attention to where he lives, he provides some background information about both Sligo and London in the 1980s and 1990s. We learn about the New Age traveller community in Sligo, the presence of Japanese investment in London as well as the potential disillusionment of Irish emigrants shown by Marty's plan to return to Ireland as well as by a short scene of Ollie, Liz and Eamon visiting a supermarket in Coventry and Eamon's disappointment that his perception of better life standard abroad is flawed. When he shows Ollie and Liz a head of Chinese cabbage and they don't respond with excitement, Eamon looks at Ollie "with a glint of furious sadness."[38] Besides the wide

[35] Neumann, "The Literary Representation of Memory," 336.
[36] Healy, Sudden Times, 88.
[37] Healy, Sudden Times, 89.
[38] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 136.

scope of background descriptions, the novel's changed focus on a single character allows for a much deeper insight into the mind of that individual without the interference of other characters' opinions. Ollie's process of remembering, or better the unwillingness towards remembering, further connects to his identity, and his inability to narrate his past hinders his self-narration in the present. Fagan describes the development of the novel as "Ollie's sense of self [unravelling] through his attempts to give voice to his experience," while struggling with a feeling of guilt.[39] After the experience during the court and his father's denial of forgiveness, Ollie is led by other people's agency to doubt his memories and to accept his father's accusing statement as well as the responsibility that is not his. Only the repeated meeting with Eamon provides him with the conditions to express his own memory.

Similarly to *A Goat's Song*, the novel comes back to its beginning with Ollie moving back to Sligo after the trial. There is again an anticipation as to how the character's story will continue due the novel's resolution being obscure, but whereas Jack Ferris finishes his story at the novel's conclusion and the embedded narrative reaches to the main narrative line, Ollie's story in *Sudden Times* chronologically ends before the first part of the narrative. Ollie's final sentence is that he is "waiting till the listening stopped," that is, his own listening to his father.[40] A few pages previously he says, however, that "the grief will come some time later […] Some where in the future [he'll] make that journey […]. [He'll] go back through the whole thing one day."[41] It appears that Ollie is already anticipating that his grieving process will stall until he is able to again visit his father and talk to him, but that eventually it will take place; however, he is still waiting for an outside agency even though the memory section shows his innocence. The fragmentary memories we observe in the first part of the text belong to a natural remembering process that Ollie himself hinders as he accepts the guilt passed on to him by his father and that he almost succeeds over in the second section of the narrative. However, the novel doesn't explicitly end with Ollie getting the redemption the memory process aimed to achieve. As Ollie waits for the "listening to stop," it appears that he is again waiting for someone else to provide him with atonement. Although he has started the therapeutic process, it doesn't catch up to the present as it does in Jack Ferris' case – and Ollie remains in his purgatory.

[39] Fagan, "Guilty Trips," 295.
[40] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 341.
[41] Healy, *Sudden Times*, 337.

6. *Long Time, No See*

Dermot Healy's fourth and final novel *Long Time, No See* was published in 2006, over a decade after *Sudden Times*. The narrative follows several characters in a small, close-knit, coastal community over the period of a single summer. Its focus, narrative as well as structure and style are seemingly a culmination of Healy's previous three novels. The story is told similarly to *Sudden Times* by a first-person narrator, moreover by a young boy who is dealing with a painful experience while taking on small, routine jobs in the neighbourhood during his summer break. There is a similar description of a journey the main character makes while coming to terms with a traumatic event. The chronological structure of the novel, however, resembles *Fighting with Shadows,* with which it also shares the focus on a family unit and the interest in the perception of family and community events by a young boy on the cusp of adulthood. The novel, however, examines not only the mind and the memories of a young boy but also the recollections of two older men who interact with him and one of the characters in the novel wittily asserts that life means being "once a man, twice a child."[1] The two childhoods and the different concerns that come with them are what we get to observe in the novel. In this way, it offers an interesting contrast between the approach to memory from a child just starting in life and two old men with most of their lives behind them.

As both the young boy and his elders reveal their past and the grief they experience, the novel doesn't delve so much into the trauma but into its aftermath; accordingly, Dermot McCarthy describes the novel as "a story of working through mourning."[2] Although the characters do not take part in any historical events in Ireland and the plot spans only months, the narrator reveals much more than just the events taking place during that period. We learn about the current state of the community as well as its past, the relationships between the locals and outsiders. Additionally, the narrator goes to great lengths to describe the state of the local nature and although Terry Eagleton claims that "nothing much happens" in the novel, McCarthy asserts that we get to read of topics

[1] Healy, *Long Time, No See* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 423.
[2] Dermot McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden: The Labour of Mourning and the Growth of the Self in Long Time, No See," in *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy*, ed. Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Victoria TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2016), 314.

"as momentous as a change of season, the reverse of a tide, the cycle of storm, the arrival and departure of migratory birds, or the passing of a generation."[3]

The novel focuses on Philip Feeney, also known as Mister Psyche, who describes the summer break after he has finished his Leaving Certificate examination in school. He lives with his parents in a small, coastal town of Ballintra and much of his time is spent helping the neighbours tending to their hedges and lawns as he waits for the exam's result. Importantly, Philip helps to take care of his grand-uncle, Joejoe, who lives in the town as well. He appears to spend much of his time with Joejoe as well as with Joejoe's friend, the Blackbird. This everyday, mundane reality is augmented mostly by the snippets of information we learn about Joejoe and the Bird from their often enigmatic conversations and by short visits of Philip's friend Anna. We find out that Philip is struggling with the death of his friend Mickey, who died in a car accident the day of their examination. Philip's struggle with his immediate past is then paralleled by the two older men who now in their old age recall small moments from their lives and in bits reveal their joined history of friendship as well as possible animosity.

This relative family peace is disturbed when Joejoe begins to claim to have been shot at through the window by a local man called the General. Nothing is proven and Philip's parents begin to suspect that Joejoe's mental health is declining. It is, however, the Bird who gets hospitalized after he falls off his bicycle following a night of drinking with Joejoe. After a short stay in the hospital the Bird dies and the family takes care of his funeral, only to watch Joejoe's health diminish as well. Philip's granduncle dies shortly after his friend ultimately suffering a heart attack and the family begins to prepare for a second funeral in the span of several weeks. The narrative ends with Philip picking a quotation from his granduncle's Bible to be read at the funeral next day. The narrative of *Long Time, No See* presents, similarly to *Sudden Times*, the view of a single character, who, however, is able to portray the intricacies of both family and the community's relations. Like Ollie Ewing, Philip experiences in a short time several events he struggles to comprehend and the readers experience his conflict. As he narrates his own story, Hoffmann describes the text as "[mediating] the protagonist's embodied experience [which] in turn affects the reader's emotional involvement and active participation."[4]

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[3] Terry Eagleton, "An Octopus at the Window," *London Review of Books*, vol. 33. no. 10, May 2011, accessed February 10, 2021., www.lrb.co.uk., McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 314.
[4] Catherine Hoffmann, "Mister Psyche's Microcosmos," in *Writing the Sky: Observations and Essays on Dermot Healy*, ed. Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Victoria TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2016), 331.

Philip's narrative doesn't focus on himself. Rather he portrays the intricacies of his community. He doesn't describe just his own everyday chores and his uncle's thoughts. He also presents a myriad of characters that the family meets during the summer months, most of them being tourists visiting the area. Quickly we are able to discern the varied presence in the town as Philip describes people on holidays or looks at the "men from Latvia, Lithuania and Poland […] out the rocks fishing."[5] In a quick succession the family meets fishermen from Russia, two Polish workers, who they mistake for an ambassador and his chauffeur due to the language barrier, and three travellers, who all become embedded in the Feeney family as they join them for dinners, parties as well as later for the funerals. Both Philip's immediate family and the numerous characters around town are integral to the narrative in the novel as, similarly to the previous novels, they constitute the background for both Philip's as well as Joejoe's and the Bird's memories and their encounters allow for the main characters' pasts to be revealed.

In comparison with Healy's two previous texts, the novel's structure is quite simple, however, its style amply makes up for it. Similarly to *Sudden Times*, the novel is written in sections which are in this case, however, subsumed under chapter headings. The dialogues between the characters which form a large part of the narrative, as we often focus on encounters between Philip and other people in the town, are not set in quotations marks. In some instances, the line between a character's sentence and Philip's description becomes blurred, sometimes the speaker is unclear. Philip presents the readers with the state of his and others' lives and as McCarthy writes, "it is up to the reader to 'see' what is going on within and between Psyche, Joejoe, the Bird [and others]," as Philip doesn't deem it necessary to always explain.[6] Unlike *Sudden Times*, however, Philip's descriptions are positively poetic in comparison with Ollie Ewing's. Hoffmann asserts that in Philip's mind, "human beings, animals and objects are all treated as worthy of narrative and linguistic aspect: nothing seems too small, humble or banal to be narrated."[7] The narrative is at times like a nature poem and several critics have linked *Long Time, No See* to Healy's poem *A Fool's Errand*, which was published four years after the novel.

Healy's intimate focus on the characters in the community is added to by the novel's vagueness when it comes to its geographical and historical setting. Unlike Healy's previous novels, *Long Time, No See* lacks a specific location in the sense that the

[5] Dermot Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 51.
[6] McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 322.
[7] Hoffmann, "Mister Psyche's Microcosmos," 338-339.

geographical places mentioned are in reality scattered across the Republic of Ireland as besides Ballintra, Philip mentions places such as Templeboy, Mount Nephin or Loch Teo. The text is set to take place anywhere and the particular placement of the town isn't important unlike the village of Fanacross in *Fighting with Shadows*. Similarly, the novel's historical setting plays a different role than it does in Healy's previous novels. The precise year is mentioned (2006) but there is no sense of the previous novels' "territorial, political and sectarian divisions," as Hoffmann describes it.[8] The outside conflicts that constitute a major influence in *Fighting with Shadows* or *A Goat's Song* are not important. The town's microcosm creates "a small island of peace," as shown by the functioning solidarity of the community.[9] When Philip's father brings soil for the new garden Philip is building, it is brought from an old Protestant home. The owner arrives and tells them that she brings "good Protestant earth" to a presumably Catholic household; however, the sentence doesn't necessitate any response from those present.[10] Quite the opposite, Joejoe tests the soil himself and agrees with the sentiment. Similarly, all locals are happy to welcome immigrants in the community. The outside conflict that permeates Healy's previous novels is displaced in this particular text. The characters are influenced by events in their own village – such as the death of a friend in Philip's case – and the narrative focuses primarily on their interpretation and acceptance of those events within that same microcosm.

6.1 Joejoe and the Bird

As Philip spends much time caring for his granduncle Joejoe, who in turn is frequented by the Bird, a substantial part of the novel focuses on Joejoe's and the Bird's relationship. Both Philip and the Bird spend the majority of their days with Joejoe in his house and throughout the narrative it becomes apparent that this is due to Joejoe's health. Philip's routine consists of helping Joejoe around the house but mostly he is sent by the two men to fetch them alcohol and cigarettes and nod during their conversations. He is a witness to their discussions and he presents their words without passing any judgment. He appears happy to amuse himself with their talk of invisible hens and other apparent nonsense. Through Philip we learn of their long friendship as well as occasional

[8] Hoffmann, "Mister Psyche's Microcosmos," 335.
[9] Hoffmann, "Mister Psyche's Microcosmos," 335.
[10] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 321.

animosity. Importantly, the boy observes two aging men as they reflect on their previous lives while aware of their ailing health. Over and over, we see their growing fragility that can be observed through recent and past conversations they have forgotten as well as through their increasing physical limitations. There are moments at which the men appear lucid, such as when Joejoe tells Philip that "it's busy tonight. […] In here as well, […], as he [taps] his head."[11] However, Philip also describes a moment at which neither man remembers a conversation they had with him the previous night and their annoyance of being reminded of their own forgetfulness.

Both Joejoe and the Bird thus appear to struggle with their lucidity and memory. The novel even begins with Philip entering his uncle's house and Joejoe unsure about his nephew's knock. He tells Philip that "a knock can carry anyone's signature," but that the "memory [of it] is a stranger who comes to call less and less."[12] As the Bird fights his move to the hospital after his accident and Joejoe opposes moving in with Philip's parents as his senility becomes more prominent, it's apparent that their ability to tend to themselves is important to both men. Their gradual loss of memory and self-reliance represents what Medved and Brockmeier describe as "basic fear about losing our identity and, as a consequence, being at the mercy of others."[13] Although Philip's family genuinely seems to care for both men, they see that need for care as a sign of their eventual death. Medved and Brockmeier make an assumption that "individuals who have difficulty remembering their own past are unable to define a sense of self or be agentic subjects."[14] The novel appears to depict this condition as throughout there are instances of both Joejoe and the Bird attempting to remember mundane moments from their past to retain their identity and agency, e.g. when Joejoe tries to recall the year of a big storm out of nowhere.

There are, however, many important parts of their mutual and individual pasts that we don't learn about because they are not interested in recalling them. Many times there are allusions to a possible animosity between the two men as well as between them and other characters in the novel. Much of this is revealed when Joejoe alleges that he has been shot at through his own window and suspects his neighbour, the General. Joejoe claims that the man has "had it for [him] since [they] were young."[15] Indirectly, however,

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[11] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 151.
[12] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 3.
[13] Maria I. Medved and Jens Brockmeier, "When Memory Goes Awry," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (London: Routledge, 2016), chap. 34, Kindle.
[14] Medved and Brockmeier, "When Memory Goes Awry," chap. 34, Kindle.
[15] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 31.

it is revealed that Joejoe shot the gun himself and one of several lapses in his memory is exposed. While the community responds with a gossipy interest, Philip's first reaction is a reluctance to tell his father about the incident as he knows it will "cause hell."[16] Indeed Philip's father goes into rage after he finds out and blames the Bird although Philip never tells him that the Bird was present. Philip even observes the Bird carrying the shotgun from Joejoe's house presumably for both of the men's safety. Philip's father, however, accuses the Bird of getting Joejoe drunk and "causing all the fucking problems," again providing clues to previous possible altercations which, however, no one in the family wants to discuss further.[17]

While the family has a negative perception of the Bird, which is never explained, it appears that for the most part, he is diligently taking care of his friend. After the Bird is hospitalized and the family tries to take care of his house and dog, Philip discovers Joejoe's rifle at the Bird's house. This is previously hinted at when Philip sees him leaving Joejoe's house with a mysterious sack over his shoulder, as well as when the Bird tries to silence Joejoe after his friend tries to point to the General as the culprit in public. Nonetheless, Philip is unwilling to discuss the relevance of the rifle being found at the Bird's house. The Bird's presence in the family's as well as the community's life remains a mystery. While he interacts with Philip, he is not overly friendly towards others. We are told that he hasn't been allowed in the local pub for several decades. Even as the family takes care of him after his accident, he remains his annoyed self. The Bird's nickname is never discussed and even his possible connection to the family is only alluded to. The man's actual name is Tom Feeney, exactly the same as Philip's father. Just before his death, the Bird talks to Philip's father and asks him whether he hates him because he indeed is his father. This piece of information, however, is never discussed further – Philip's father doesn't respond to the Bird's prompt – and it remains upon the reader to ponder whether it was just the rambling of a senile man. While the men's memories contribute to what Jedlowski describes as "general ability to manage our lives over time,"[18] they also appear aware that certain memories are better not revisited.

The little information that both Joejoe and the Bird reveal about themselves is from their more distant past and is in a large part spurred on by Philip meeting and them

[16] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 33.
[17] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 41.
[18] Paolo Jedlowski, "Memories of the Future," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (London: Routledge, 2016), chap. 11, Kindle.

re-meeting a local woman, Miss Jilly. Philip meets her on a recommendation from another resident about a possible job and as she drives him home in the evening, we learn that she knows both Joejoe and the Bird. Her reunion with the two men appears to provide a condition for them to speak about certain events from their past as if to make sure they do know the woman. The Bird reveals that he knows the layout of Miss Jilly's house and Joejoe recalls that the first time he has had a tomato in his life, it was from her garden. Their specific connection is never revealed, the three older characters appear to be content with remembering only short glimpses of their previous lives without sharing them further. The fact may be that they simply don't remember everything, as forgetting is a natural part of the human experience, or they are unwilling to discuss certain topics in their old age. The Bird several times alludes to a woman he has lost and when the Bird asks Joejoe about his deceased partner, Bridie, Joejoe is quick to stop that discussion, explaining that he "[doesn't] miss. If [he] missed her [he'd] only hurt her."[19]

Once the Bird is transported to the hospital and the two men are separated, it appears that they both come to expect their deaths. When the Bird is moved, Philip's parents as well as himself try to care for his house. Although the Bird at first argues when asked for the keys to his place, he eventually gives them to Philip adding that "[he] could not give a fuck if [he] died."[20] He dejectedly sits in his hospital bed waiting for the end and complains that he has been denied the present. When the family tries to engage him in a conversation, he replies: "I can make small talk, […] I can do that but out of the corner of my eyes I can see the dark approaching."[21] The connection between the two men appears to be a reliance of a kind. When the Bird is hospitalized, Joejoe at first refuses to visit him, possibly unwilling to observe his friend there or imagine himself in his place. He is later convinced to go by a group of the three travellers in the town, however, he only spends a short time with his friend before he eagerly leaves, not even waiting to be picked up and driven back home. When Philip tries to engage him in a conversation about the Bird's state, Joejoe tells him that "[he doesn't] want to get into that."[22]

After the Bird's death, Joejoe comes to expect his own. Unwillingly, he admits shooting the rifle through his own window. Although Philip's parents attempt to move

[19] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 175.
[20] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 281.
[21] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 361.
[22] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 286.

Joejoe into their own house, he resists, again holding onto his identity. But after his friend's death, he doesn't have anyone close to his age to share his time with and his health seems to quickly deteriorate. He gets a mysterious itch that he sees as a sign that will die soon. He invites strangers into his house and begins to see a man waiting at the fence of his house. Interestingly, Philip's father complains that "the whole thing is starting all over. We're back with the man who does not exist."[23] It appears that the Bird was helping to keep Joejoe's mind active only to an extent and even his attention to Joejoe couldn't overcome a growing senility, as is apparent from the incident with the bullet. Now, that the Bird is gone, Joejoe's feebleness advances even faster. He himself says that he "cannot go without him. […] If the Bird is gone then [he] should be gone too."[24] Although throughout the novel the two men never discuss mutual memories and the only proof of their joined past is a photo of them that Philip finds in the Bird's house, they appear to be close to the point of following each other in their demise.

6.2 Philip/Mister Psyche

Although Philip describes the conversations between Joejoe and the Bird and the family taking care of them in detail, he is very reluctant to talk about himself and his own troubles and most of what we learn about him is through casual dialogues with other characters. The readers learn in the first couple of pages that Philip is reluctant to drive a car as it brings him back in time. He is driven and later drives near a certain spot in the village several times throughout the novel and every time he makes sure to say his prayers and to bless himself. The reason for that is that "the spot at Mannion's shed [is] where Mickey died in the crash over a year ago."[25] While this basic piece of information is shared, Philip is unwilling to discuss anything else. When he is asked about his repeated ritual by a neighbour, he isn't exactly reluctant to tell him that his friend Mickey died at the spot while driving a car drunk the day they finished writing their exam papers for the Leaving Certification. He is, however, quick to end that explanation by saying "that's it" and being averse to offer anything else.[26]

[23] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 335.
[24] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 379.
[25] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 13-14.
[26] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 326.

Throughout the novel, Philip struggles with the guilt over Mickey's death. He thinks that if he had driven the car, nothing would have happened. This is especially revealed when he receives the result of his exams. Although his friend Anna prompts him to look up the results, he is reluctant to do so. When he later finds out that he has passed successfully, he falls into depression for several days. McCarthy describes the passage as Philip being "overwhelmed by guilt that he is going to have a future and Mickey will not."[27] Whenever he is asked about the results, Philip tries to brush the question off. He is hesitant to receive any praise for his successful passing of the exam and the possibility of future studies, which he never discusses with his parents. He even says that "everything was there for [him] to do in the long future. [He] felt this terrible sense of loss. [He] was thinking of Mickey."[28] Going back in his own memories would demand Philip to contemplate the responsibility he feels for Mickey's death – a responsibility he shouldn't actually feel. In this manner, Philip's character is very similar to Ollie Ewing in *Sudden Times*. Both characters take on the responsibility for something that isn't their fault and turn their focus towards their mundane lives.

Unlike Ollie, Philip takes on numerous minor responsibilities to avoid his memories of Mickey. He focuses on taking care of the two older men and building the walls for his mother's garden, for which he uses the remains of a different wall near their house. He imagines the history of the wall and the men who had built it instead of focusing on his own past. He also helps his father at work and is quick to help any stranded tourist or a local with their car, boat or chimney. He is keeping himself busy in what McCarthy describes as "the unconscious labour of grief."[29] Instead of focusing on his own grieving process and his future, he focuses instead on the personal past of Joejoe, the Bird and even Miss Jilly as they tell their stories, and on the communal past in the form of the wall he builds. When constructing the wall he even says that he "[feels] the sense of balance of the man who built it. He drew the stone from the coral beach by ass and cart to the spot [Philip] was taking them from."[30] Instead of focusing on personal continuation in his own life, Philip focuses on the continuity of his community in Ballintra and as he lifts individual rocks he hears "the command from somewhere in the past – let the rock find its own balance."[31] He gives future to the stones he works with. Philip even begins to

[27] McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 325.
[28] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 243.
[29] McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 319.
[30] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 128.
[31] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 242.

dream about the wall as he sees himself building it with the men who had built it previously while asleep and while the wall could be seen in a metaphorical sense as Philip 'building walls around himself,' the physical labour allows him time of respite. As the wall is finished at the end of the novel, it points towards the end of Philip's grieving process.

The family and community response to Philip's struggle is quite interesting and shows the range of possible reactions people may have towards the grieving process of another person. McCarthy argues that "family, friends, and community tiptoe around Philip's pain, respectful of his grief and guilt."[32] However, their reaction is not unanimous, sometimes it is egoistic, and throughout Philip's responses to the outside prompts are in the form of monosyllabic sentences. His parents are very cautious around him. While they try to solve the mystery of the bullet and the Bird becomes sick, both his mother and father apologize whenever they mention or allude to Mickey. A similar tendency to apologize and even to sympathize is apparent in Mickey's parents, whom Philip meets several times in the novel. Although Philip doesn't utter a single word when he meets them, Mrs Brady tries to comfort him by saying "[they] miss Mickey a lot, and [they] know [Philip does] too."[33] With Philip's non-responses to his parents' and Mrs Brady's prompts, it appears that their reaction to Philip's struggle with Mickey's death is not appreciated. Interestingly, when Philip is supposed to make a confession to a local priest, their talk is very practical as the cleric schedules Philip to cut his hedge and inquires whether there is anyone after Philip coming to confess. Either the priest is not interested in Philip's confession or he is aware that his help isn't required. He even tells Philip that "[he's] glad [Philip has] someone to talk to," when they discuss Joejoe.[34]

It is Joejoe and the Bird as well as Philip's friend Anna with whom the boy talks the most. Their conversations never focus on his dead friend and McCarthy agrees that Philip "benefits from his attendance upon Joejoe and the Bird."[35] Neither the two older men nor Anna try to engage him in a conversation about Mickey or apologize for what they talk about. Joejoe and the Bird pull Philip into their talks about fairies and invisible hens and their everyday care helps Philip focus on the immediate tasks. Similarly, Philip's communication with Anna provides him with moments of easy conversation about

[32] McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 314.
[33] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 159.
[34] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 163.
[35] McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 315.

irrelevant topics. She brings around books about the history of cats while she slowly tries to coax him back to the active social life he seems to have had. Anna tries to convince Philip to rejoin their group of friends, she reminds him of the exam results and urges him to look them up. She is, however, never aggressive in her quest and according to McCarthy she "functions as his guide."[36] Anna even allows Philip to take on different identities, so as not to focus on himself as Philip, by giving him names such as Jeremiah or Doras while giving herself different names as well to relate to him. There is an interesting parallel when she calls Philip *Doras*, meaning a door in Gaelic, while assuming *Fuinneog*, a window, for herself. While she is the open one, she lets Philip be the closed one with the possibility of a change in the future.

The name, however, that Philip truly embraces, is Mister Psyche. The majority of the town calls him that. Although the origin of the nickname isn't fully explained, Philip hints that it was Joejoe's idea. When a neighbour mentions the oddity of the name and asks why they call him Mister Psyche, Philip points at Joejoe and says "ask him."[37] Just as Anna has given him different names, so has Joejoe. A local immigrant mistakenly changes this nickname into Mister Side Kick, which is precisely the role Philip takes on for most of the novel. Just as Anna is his guide, he is Joejoe's and the Bird's guide. He tends to his granduncle and his friend as well as to his parents and the whole community while disregarding his own struggle. McCarthy even connects the nickname to Hermes Psychopomp as "he is attending to both the Bird and Joejoe as they approach their deaths, he is instrumental in ensuring that both receive successful wakes."[38] Once this role has been fulfilled at the end of the novel, Philip loses the nickname and tells so to Miss Jilly at Joejoe's funeral. He is now Philip again. It might appear baffling that a funeral allows "Philip's liberation from grief," as McCarthy puts it, but the process of attending to a dying person allows Philip to be present as he wasn't in Mickey's case and to fulfil a grieving process.[39]

[36] McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 326.
[37] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 248.
[38] McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 317.
[39] McCarthy, "Psyche's Garden," 323.

6.3 The Personal and the Communal

Philip's private and public role points to the connection between the personal and the communal in the novel and to the close relation of the characters within the family as well as the community. This is seen during the three events that the Feeney family plans – the Stations, during which the local priest comes to hear the confessions at Joejoe's house, and then the two wakes. Similarly to the previous novels, there is a visible curiosity from the locals about the family's private lives but in comparison to the other texts there is no negativity nor interest only for the sake of gossip. The neighbours are not interested in the family's affairs to further rumours. They are genuinely concerned about the life of Philip, his parents and the two older men and their connection to the lives of all the residents. During the confessions, the Bird steps into the room with the priest and everyone quiets down, hoping to hear what goes on in his mind. Philip explains that the Bird is "this local man that everyone saw and met and passed on the road or the beach but no one really knew, because he was a loner who really spoke to no one, except Joejoe."[40] Being unable to hear anything from the Bird's confession, the people present resume their own discussion without passing any judgment. They are content to accept the Bird for the mystery he is. The role of religion doesn't have its traditional, doctrinal role in the small town. It functions as a bond, as shown by the conversation between Philip and the priest, the confession evening turning into a town gathering, and even by the fact that the Bible Catholic Joejoe owns has been given to him by Protestant Miss Jilly. Philip reading to his uncle from the Bible seems to indicate an attempt at further connection between the two rather than Joejoe being interested in particular passages from the book.

These two people share a past similarly to how everyone in town shares their personal memories which become part of the community. Anna talks with the Feeneys several times about her own memories as well as the memories passed on in her own family. She sees them as continuous. When she shares an old, recurring family dream about being buried alive, the response from the Feeneys is that "no one ever told [them] that before," as if they have a right to know.[41] The relation between the individuals and the community in the book is delved into much deeper than in Healy's previous novels and is a great example of the interdependence of the individual and the collective. Böss

[40] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 162.
[41] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 33.

observes that our "individual memories [are] interwoven with collective memories and identities," which is what is presented in the novel as the community tries (although awkwardly) to share, in different ways, both Philip's and Joejoe and the Bird's lives and vice versa.[42] Similarly, the community and individuals seem to have forgotten things such as the Bird's connection to the Feeneys with whom he shares a last name, as well as the possible reason for the conflict between the two men. Things "considered threatening to [their] sense of self, either personally or collectively" tend to be forgotten, as Böss comments.[43] While forgetting may be often seen as a defect, the novel is able to show its value in terms of the community sustaining itself.

The people in Ballintra are all closely connected and rely on each other. One of the visitors even says to Joejoe that "[he looks] lonely but you see [he is] wrong, and he [opens] his hands wide and [nods] at all the souls gathered" at Joejoe's house.[44] There is also an attempt to include the outsiders into the community. When Philip describes two sailors leaving the house, he observes that "all morning [he] had wanted to ask them what happened that day out at sea but now they were taking their story away with them."[45] While the novel includes "hints of possible adultery, bastardy, attempted murder and suicide, violence and very dark secrets," as Annie Proulx discusses in her review, at the end of the day the community holds together.[46] The communal memory bears influence upon the people as individuals and their individual memories are integrated into the communal consciousness. Assmann correspondingly observes that "memory enables us to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory," and *Long Time, No See* portrays this particular symbiosis above its individual focus on Philip, Joejoe and the Bird.[47]

In comparison with Healy's first two novels in particular, the text is absent of any mentions of the Northern Irish conflict. While there are allusions to differences inside the community, such as between Miss Jilly's and Joejoe's religious backgrounds, it

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[42] Michael Böss, "Relating to the Past: Memory, Identity and History," in *Recovering Memory: Irish Representations of Past and Present*, ed. Hedda Friberg, Irene Gilsenan Nordin, and Lene Yiding Pedersen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 24.
[43] Böss, "Relating to the Past," 24.
[44] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 264.
[45] Healy, *Long Time, No See*, 235.
[46] Annie Proulx, "Long Time, No See by Dermot Healy – Review," *The Guardian*, accessed February 10, 2021, www.theguardian.com.
[47] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning and Sara Young (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 109.

doesn't appear to play any significant role in the characters lives. Unlike the Adams family in *A Goat's Song* or the Allen family in *Fighting with Shadows* the people in this coastal town appear to live truly in the present within their own small community without the influence of a larger communal past. In this manner, the novel can be read as an image of post-Troubles Ireland. There is a shadow of the memory of past generations but it doesn't play a role in the everyday lives of the characters in the present. They are even able to laugh about, e.g. when Miss Jilly gifts the Feeney family the soil for their garden.

The present community nonetheless retains its hold on the individuals and the story of these three characters cannot be told without its relation to the community. Joejoe, the Bird and Philip, although seemingly rather solitary, are integral parts of it. The struggles they experience become ingrained in the coastal town's memory and the people are involved in a young boy's struggle with accepting someone else's death and an old man's struggle with accepting his own death. Through their own conflicts with memories, the novel points to what Brown and Reavey discuss in their essay about memory and experience, in which they state that memory "stretches back towards the past and forward to an anticipated future."[48] In the beginning of the novel Joejoe and the Bird attempt to look towards a future that no longer awaits them, while Philip is reluctant to face a future without his friend. Although he is repeatedly told that he isn't to blame, only with the two wakes of Joejoe and the Bird, after his duty of taking care of them is finished, Philip faces his future and notably leaves behind the nickname of Mister Psyche given to him by Joejoe. Experiencing both Joejoe's and the Bird's death and funerals and understanding that death is a natural part of life, Philip finishes his own mourning process. As he is to read from the Bible at Joejoe's funeral in the morning, he fully rejoins his community.

[48] Steven D. Brown and Paula Reavey, "Experience and Memory," in *Research Methods for Memory Studies*, ed. by Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 46.

7. Conclusion

From the close reading of the four novels, it can be observed how Dermot Healy delves deeply into the topic of personal memory and acknowledges a range of possible issues that may appear in connection with a single individual attempting to recollect an event they experienced previously in their life. In *Fighting with Shadows*, *A Goat's Song*, *Sudden Times* as well as in *Long Time, No See,* Healy's characters go through diverse memory processes and issues such as the outside influence upon memory, questions of repressed and forgotten memories or the process of accepting a trauma appear, as indicated in the introduction of the thesis. The original events are to different degrees expressed by the rememberers, and we learn the reasons for particular memories to be revealed or obscured. Through the circumstances of their remembering, forgetting or supressing this allows for the observation of the particular character's identity, and although these are fictional characters in a novel, the memory processes testify to the general idea pointed out by Jedlowski that successful memory processes can "[contribute] to the more general ability to manage our life over time,"[1] while struggles with remembering can hinder it.

The memories are part of the characters' identities and are in turn influenced by their respective personalities, as well as by the communities they live in. While Maurice Halbwachs virtually denied the existence of individual memory and asserted that recollection always happens in connection with the communal, Michael Böss, for instance, has demonstrated that although the communal may provide a language for the process, "individual memory cannot be totally shared with others."[2] This equivocal relationship between personal and communal memory is apparent in Healy's novels. The first-person narrators and focalised characters in the third-person narratives undoubtedly express their own memories of particular events; however, the connection to their families, communities and towns cannot be fully separated. The interconnectedness shown in the novels acknowledges that "individual memories are the fundamental units

[1] Paolo Jedlowski, "Memories of the Future," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. by Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (London: Routledge, 2016), chap. 11, Kindle.
[2] Michael Böss "Relating to the Past: Memory, Identity and History," in *Recovering Memory: Irish Representations of Past and Present*, ed. by Hedda Friberg, Irene Gilsenan Nordin, and Lene Yiding Pedersen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 24.

of collective memory," as Schwartz writes.[3] The often traumatic experiences of Healy's main characters also influence both the protagonists and their communities. The individual memories are then mirrored by the communities that experience their own trauma, which in turn influences their occupants. To demonstrate this relationship, Healy chooses important historical moments in the twentieth-century Ireland as the background of three of his novels – the Northern Irish conflict and the emigration in the second half of the century – and the novels present microcosms of the experience, while his final novel offers a microcosmic representation of a world post-conflict.

Throughout the four novels there is a clear alteration of style and character focus. Healy's first novel utilizes a third-person linear narrative with changing focalisation on the individual members of the Allen family as well as some minor characters. The technique changes in the second novel, where the focus narrows down on the three main characters and although the third-person narrator with focalisation remains, Healy utilizes an embedded narrative and makes one of the characters an inserted narrator, drawing attention to a single character through his voice. The single character focus transforms in the two later novels into a first-person narrative and both young men in these texts tell their own stories. The interest in the outside, both in terms of other characters and the surrounding, is reduced to indirect mentions while the interest in the innerworking of the characters' minds increases. *Sudden Times*, like *A Goat's Song*, uses also an embedded narrative, while *Long Time, No See* returns to a linear narrative with short memory passages. The development appears to follow a growing interest in a single character's inner psychology, first produced through the embedded narratives of memory sections and later delivered through the change in narrative focus.

One of Healy's primary concerns is the characters' past experiences and the memories of them influencing their present selves. The original events that are remembered by the characters in the text are diverse but in general, Healy focuses on negative experiences as building blocks of his characters' psyches. In *Fighting with Shadows*, the text describes family relationships and the influence of previous generations on the current one on the backdrop of the Northern Irish conflict. We see how trauma – the experience Frank and Joseph have with the guards and, importantly, Joseph and Helen dealing with Frank's death – continues to weight on the individual members of the family and through the characters like Joseph, his mother Helen and Pop Allen we can also

[3] Barry Schwartz, "Rethinking the Concept of Collective Memory," *in Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. by Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (London: Routledge, 2016), chap. 1, Kindle.

observe the different approach to dealing with trauma. All three characters in their own way attempt to retain a connection to the dead man, and while Helen and her son eventually choose to move on, Pop willingly maintains that previous generation's influence in his mind. Through its setting in the imaginary Fanacross and along the border the novel also focuses on the influence of a particular place on individual memories. The way for the characters to leave the trauma behind at the end of the novel is to physically leave the village and move to the South, where they can presumably create new life and new memories without the influence of the previous generations and the conflict looming over them.

A similar physical move is also made by the characters in *A Goat's Song*, where the Adams family attempts to move to the South to escape the influence of the Troubles and the divide between the Protestant and the Catholic community they grew up in. The possibility for a positive outcome for Helen and Joseph in *Fighting with Shadows* is reversed as Healy shows the remaining influence of the memories after such an attempt at getting out of their reach. Both Catherine and her father continue to structure their new experiences based on their previous knowledge of a different place and community. Helen shows this in her relationship with Jack Ferris, especially during their stay in Belfast, and her father in the tense ties he tries to create in their new home. In a way, Healy negates the positive ending of the previous novel as the physical move of the characters doesn't allow them to break from the generational and communal influence. The character, who is allowed a break from a previous trauma, Jack Ferris, chooses a different approach to his past and importantly, also deals with a personal history, although still influenced by communal values. He narrates an invented story about both Catherine and Jonathan Adams and this creative energy serves for Ferris as a therapeutic analysis of his failed relationship with Catherine.

The therapeutic journey of a character re-emerges in *Sudden Times*. Ollie Ewing is again a subject to trauma – the death of his friend and his brother. At first, he is unwilling to confront his past and tries to repress the resurfacing memories, but upon meeting his father and being reminded of his past by someone else he faces his memories of what happened in London. The embedded narrative focuses on Ollie's personal history and we learn that his initial unwillingness to remember is mainly due to the sense of guilt passed on to him by his father. The influence of a previous generation appears again, despite the story being set on the backdrop of a different historical moment. Unlike Ferris, who finishes his story in *A Goat's Song*, however, Ollie's embedded memory section

doesn't reach to the main part of the narrative and we are left with the main character not concluding his therapeutic journey as there is an expectation of repetitions of the memory process still in the future.

The death of a close friend and a family member appears also in Healy's final novel *Long Time, No See*. In this text, Philip Feeney struggles to accept the death of his friend Mickey. The acceptance, however, doesn't come from a therapeutic recollection that Jack Ferris and Ollie Ewing experience, but from Philip being part of his community and also by observing his great-uncle and his friend yielding to old age. Here, in contrast to the previous novels, death becomes a natural part of life and the main character is allowed a natural grieving process. The influence of family and community is also positive one and Philip's present isn't hindered by the town's past. The characters have no need to move, quite the opposite. The novel additionally deals with the topic of forgetting, both through the characters of Joejoe and the Bird and through the community itself, as of a natural part of the memory process. As particular characters acknowledge that some things are not worthy of remembering, the community does the same. Although the novel mentions the discord between the Protestant and the Catholic community, which is paramount in *A Goat's Song*, in Healy's final novel the discord doesn't hold any power over the characters.

What Healy's novels undoubtedly share is the interest in memory and its connection to identity both in the scope of the personal and the communal. He focuses primarily on the personal experience of trauma, mostly on the backdrop of a larger historical event, and throughout the narratives shows the particular character's journey of dealing with their trauma while navigating both their own identity and outside influences. He is interested in the process of the interpretation of trauma and connects it with previous personal and communal memories, and often also with particular places. Interestingly, the idea of a physical move to deal with trauma is recognized as unsuccessful. The novels share an argument that a trauma needs to be interpreted, memories of it need to be dealt with – though in different ways – in order for new experiences to be processed and new memories to be formed. Only the interpretation of the characters' own past allows them to really live in the present, and the inability to interpret hinders their sense of identity and future self-development. As the present thesis has hoped to demonstrate, a close reading of Dermot Healy's novels shows that memory studies provide a range of useful concepts for the study of works of literature, and vice versa, that literary texts and

narratives may be of considerable interest when personal and importantly collective memory is discussed.

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Abstract

English title and keywords:

Memory in the Novels by Dermot Healy

- Dermot Healy, Irish literature, Irish novel, memory, collective memory

Despite his large and diverse body of work Irish writer Dermot Healy remains somewhat ignored by scholars. However, his formally diverse writing which spans from novels and short stories to poetry and dramatic work is without a doubt worthy of critical response. One of Healy's themes is an engagement with the formation of memory and with how an experience transforms in the mind of its 'experiencer' and changes into what from a certain perspective may be regarded as fiction. Stemming from his own life experiences the author engages a topic common to all human beings and plays with the concept of memory and its possible distortion in his autobiography The Bend For Home (1996), as well as in his plays and poems. His autobiographic work can be seen as a background for the theme; however, the present thesis will focus on Healy's novels, starting with Fighting with Shadows (1984) through A Goat's Song (1994), Sudden Times (1999) to his final novel Long Time, No See (2011).

In these books and in the characters that Healy presents we are able to observe individuals with diverse personal histories who return to individual experienced events through reconstruction and in retrospect. The thesis will examine these characters' memories, look at what details the readers learn and what remains undisclosed both in terms of what the characters themselves either do or do not remember and what (and why) they are not willing to tell; moreover in the case of the memories described it will look at the characters' bias. The thesis will ask why certain memories are emphasized, what language is used to describe them and whether these memories appear as an image, a sound or a simple undertone. The thesis will also look at characters experiencing involuntary memories and both conscious and unconscious recreations. In cases where we are able to observe both the experience and the memory that stems from it the thesis will then also look at the transformation from the experience itself to its fictional version. Although the author tended to limit his focus on male characters, his scope is wide in that he portrayed individuals from different strata of society, writing about labourers,

policemen and writers, as well as both the young and the old. Healy also portrayed both characters experiencing physical or emotional exile and characters involved in everyday life, offering a wide range of possible memory processes.

Humans necessarily remember certain things that they deem important while forgetting insignificant episodes. However, the processes of memory are not so simple; there are many other inner workings of the mind and reasons for remembering, reinforcing or forgetting and the thesis will engage with this theme through Healy's novels. Finally – and most importantly – the thesis is going to examine Healy's examination of individual memory in relation to collective memory, particularly in regard to the individuals' experience of remembering, fictionalizing or forgetting and its relation to the construction of Irish cultural and collective memory, using the work of memory scholars from Jan and Aleida Assmann to the following generations of researchers.

Abstrakt

Český titul a klíčová slova:

Paměť v románech Dermota Healyho

- Dermot Healy, irská literatura, irský román, paměť, kolektivní paměť

I přes své různorodé dílo zůstává irský spisovatel Dermot Healy kritiky poněkud ignorován. Jeho formálně rozmanitá tvorba ale sahá od románů a povídek po poezii i dramatickou tvorbu a je bezpochyby hodna kritické reakce. Jedním z témat, kterým se Healy věnuje, je tvorba a fungování vzpomínek, transformace zkušenosti v mysli ‚prožívajícího' do něčeho, co lze z určité perspektivy považovat za fikci. Autor vychází z vlastních životních zkušeností a zabývá se tématem společným pro všechny lidské bytosti. S tématem paměti a jejím možným zkreslením si pohrává své autobiografii *The Bend for Home* (1996), stejně jako ve svých hrách a básních. Jeho autobiografické dílo lze považovat za pozadí tématu; tato práce se však zaměřuje na Healyho romány, počínaje *Fighting with Shadows* (1984), *A Goat's Song* (1994), Sudden *Times* (1999), až po jeho poslední román *Long Time, No See* (2011).

V těchto knihách a v postavách, které Healy představuje, můžeme pozorovat jednotlivce s různými osobními historiemi, kteří se vracejí k jednotlivým prožitým událostem prostřednictvím rekonstrukce a zpětného pohledu. Práce zkoumá vzpomínky postav a podrobnosti, které se čtenáři dozvědí nebo naopak co zůstává nezveřejněno, ať už jde o to, co si samotné postavy nepamatují nebo co nejsou ochotné říct. V případě popsaných vzpomínek se práce dívá na možnou zaujatost postav. Diplomová práce se ptá, proč jsou zdůrazněny určité vzpomínky, jakým jazykem jsou popsány a zda se tyto vzpomínky objevují jako obraz, zvuk nebo pouze jako podtón. Práce se také zaměřuje na postavy, které zažívají nedobrovolné vzpomínání a na jejich vědomé i podvědomé zobrazení. V případech, kdy jsme schopni pozorovat jak zážitek, tak i jeho vzpomínku, se práce také zabývá transformací od samotného zážitku do jeho fiktivní verze. Ačkoliv měl autor tendenci omezovat své zaměření na mužské postavy, jeho rozsah je široký v tom, že zobrazoval jednotlivce z různých vrstev společnosti. Psal o dělnících, policistech a spisovatelích, stejně jako o mladých i starých postavách. Healy také vylíčil

jak postavy prožívající fyzické nebo mentální vyhnanství, tak postavy zapojené do každodenního života. Nabídl tak širokou škálu možných paměťových procesů.

Lidé si nutně pamatují určité věci, které považují za důležité, a zapomínají na bezvýznamné epizody. Procesy paměti však nejsou tak jednoduché. Existuje mnoho dalších vnitřních funkcí mysli a důvodů k zapamatování, posílení vzpomínek nebo zapomínání a tato práce se bude tímto tématem zabývat skrze Healyho románů. Nakonec – a co je nejdůležitější – se bude práce zabývat Healyho zobrazením vztahu individuální a kolektivní paměti, zejména s ohledem na zkušenost jednotlivců s pamětí, přeměnu vzpomínek na fikci a zapomínání a vztahem těchto procesů ke konstrukci irské kulturní a kolektivní paměti, s využitím práce vědců od Jana a Aleidy Assmannových po následující generace odborníků.