



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Supervisor's Report

Marie Gemrichová, "Memory in the Novels by Dermot Healy" (MA Thesis)

Marie Gemrichová embarked in her Master's thesis on an enterprise that has so far been avoided by established scholars, namely to examine all of Dermot Healy's novels within a single project. This is a truly challenging matter, since the novels are not only complex but also stylistically considerably different from one another. Moreover, the candidate has decided to focus her project on the topic of memory – a central theme in Healy's oeuvre regardless of genre –, which was likewise demanding and has necessitated extensive research in cognitive psychology and memory studies in order to establish the basic conceptual apparatus.

The result is a fine, wide-ranging essay, with a clear overall argument. The candidate examines in detail how the protagonists of Healy's novels (*Fighting with Shadows*, *A Goat's Song*, *Sudden Times*, and *Long Time, No See*) remember, come to terms with suppressed traumatic memories, and how they construct their identities based on the processes of remembering. As much as the comprehensive theoretical introduction to the work of memory experts in section 2.1 may be somewhat lacking in lucidity, the candidate's examination of how remembering (and forgetting) functions in the novels is quite poignant, relating individual memory with collective memory wherever relevant. The analysis of the novels stays laudably attuned to the – very different – narrative situations in the individual novels, paying due attention to the issue of focalization in particular. Admirably, the candidate's interpretation of the novels is always clear and well-argued, almost making the reader forget how complicated texts such as *Fighting with Shadows* or *A Goat's Song* are, each in its own way. Naturally, objections may be raised as regards areas that may need a more detailed discussion, such as the subtleties of the psychologically convoluted love relationship between Jack Ferris and Catherine Adams in *A Goat's Song*, but then these are not the direct focus of the thesis. All in all, the presented readings of the novels are plausible, and the concluding chapter aptly summarises the results of their examination, pointing out not only what may be seen as a consistent line of examination of memory in Healy's work, but also the significant differences in the outcome of individual memory processes in each novel.

All sources are properly acknowledged, referenced, and used judiciously. Only minor errors in copy editing, and here and there a stylistic awkwardness, are in evidence.

I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "excellent" (1), subject to a successful defence.

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