



“NOT MY TROUBLES ANYMORE”

Memories of Trauma, Violence and
Belonging in Bernard MacLaverty’s *Cal*,
Brian Moore’s *Lies of Silence* and
Glenn Patterson’s *The International*

I have a will for survival
So you can hurt me then hurt me some more
I can live with denial
But you’re not my troubles anymore

U2 – *The Troubles*

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MA Thesis Literatuur en Cultuurkritiek
June 2015

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Word Count: 15.216

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Introduction

Almost twenty years after the Troubles in Northern Ireland (1968-1998), evidence of the Troubles is still visible in Belfast. The Peace Wall is a silent monument of a time when a country was divided by a violent war, and several murals still depict the causes for which people were willing to fight their neighbour. Paddywagon Tour's busses, painted green and covered with pictures of leprechauns and shamrocks, had better not enter Belfast, as several acts of vandalism made clear "when four of [their] buses were burnt out in Belfast" (Gallagher), as recently as 2008 (Platt).

In Northern Ireland, which has been under British rule since the sixteenth century, many Catholics felt that the British government favoured the Protestants by suppressing the rights and needs of the poorer Catholic minority. Darby, who is specialised in Studies of Conflict, argues that the tension in Northern Ireland was mainly due to "a chronically insecure Protestant majority, an alienated Catholic minority, electoral malpractice, ethnic bias in the distribution of housing and welfare services, and a declining economy." England did not do much to improve this situation, and consequently Catholic people had no one to turn to for help against the injustice which was inflicted on them (Darby). Housing especially was a major issue: the poorer Catholics lived in badly maintained, cramped houses, which were owned by the richer Protestants. On top of that, the Northern Ireland system of voting dictated that only owners of houses and their spouses were allowed to vote. This meant that lodgers and young adults who still lived with their parents were not permitted to vote (McKittrick and McVea 12), a system that "could be of great political significance in areas where the Unionist and Nationalist votes were evenly balanced" (ibid).

The Nationalist-minded part of the population, which consisted mainly of Catholics, wanted Northern Ireland to be independent, whereas the Unionists or Loyalists, which consisted mainly of Protestants, wanted to remain with England. In 1967, a "civil rights movement began campaigning for a more equitable access to political power, social provision and cultural recognition" (Darby), which brought politics to the streets. England responded to these demonstrations by sending military

to Northern Ireland with the intention of protecting the Catholics (Darby). However, a small group of the Catholics felt threatened by the British Military presence, and soon the Irish Republican Army, or IRA, was re-established after a long period of being less active. By calling themselves an army, they made clear that they meant to achieve their goal of an independent Northern Ireland through violence. In response, Protestants modernised the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) (Fitzduff and O'Hagan). Several other minor paramilitary groups were established as well, who fought each other with violence.

Finally, on April 10th 1998, the various parties came to the so-called Good Friday Agreement, "in which a Northern Ireland Assembly is established and power devolved from the British government" (Carter and Durow, Introduction xv). Over 3500 people were killed during the Troubles, which might not seem much on a global scale but on a population of 1.6 million in a tightknit society as Northern Ireland's, the impacts were great (Darby). Only as late as 2007 has Northern Ireland's society stabilised with more-or-less equally shared political power: after elections, a "legislative Assembly of both Unionist and Nationalist politicians was finally set up to share power in Northern Ireland" (Fitzduff and O'Hagan). Although "difficulties remain, [. . .] Northern Ireland has enjoyed a period of relative peace that has become increasingly well established" (ibid).

Literature and Trauma

The field of literary studies is slowly becoming more involved with trauma theories. Writers are enabled to talk about traumatic experiences through the medium of literature, because "the struggle of an individual to be free of social or historical wretchedness is as universal in the modern world as the literary form of the novel itself" (Mason 302). More specifically, Mason argues that literature is also important during and after the Troubles in Northern Ireland, because it means that authors can come to terms with their past and present: "fiction about Ulster depicts a pathology of hatred intensified by revolutionary or conservative fervour that legitimizes violence. But Irish literature is full of the prejudices and repressive ways, especially in rural villages, that have so long and so often

plagued the human species" (Mason 302-3). By pointing out the socially unequal situations, authors can try to achieve change in their communities.

This thesis will focus on three Irish novels in which the authors portray life during the Troubles from different moments in time and points of view: Bernard MacLaverty's *Cal* (1983) is written from the perspective of a young Catholic accomplice of a murder, Brian Moore's *Lies of Silence* (1990) is about an adult Catholic man who becomes an unwilling participant of the Troubles, and Glenn Patterson's *The International* (1999) recalls life before the Troubles from the perspective of a young, bisexual Protestant bartender who works in a famous hotel called The International.

This thesis will be concerned with the novels' interaction with the historical and social context of the Troubles, and will do so by analysing the novels' differences and similarities in representing life during the violent years of the Troubles. In order to investigate these matters, the analysis will be focused on the consequences of violence on individuals and society on the one hand, and the influences of binary oppositions between, most notably, Protestants and Catholics on the other hand.

Cal

Written and published by Bernard MacLaverty in 1983, *Cal* tells the story of an unemployed Catholic young man who lives with his father in a small house in the middle of a Protestant neighbourhood somewhere in Ulster. Now and then, as part of a deal, Cal does some driving for a small branch of the IRA on their nightly missions. On one of these nights, his friend Crilly kills a police officer. Cal feels guilty about this, but it worsens when he falls in love with the man's widow, Marcella. His love turns out to be requited, but "there are none the less constant reminders that any future hope is conditioned by the actions of the past and the violence of the present" (Carter and Durow, Introduction ix).

One of the themes which Mason distils from the novel is "repressed guilt" (301), and the extent in which this guilt, resulting from violence, blocks "the intimate relationship between a man

and a woman" (ibid). Because the "past has shattered Cal's present life" (ibid), Cal's act of violence "colours all the action in this novel" (Griffith 335), making a normal life impossible. These feelings of guilt strongly influence Cal's search for redemption as he tries to move away from his past, trying to create a life for himself which is not defined by violence.

Furthermore, at the time of *Cal's* publication the Troubles were still part of daily life, and the Good Friday Agreement was years away. Unlike the other two authors, MacLaverty does not yet have the luxury of knowing that eventually the Troubles will be resolved. Cal's story, therefore, is full of "contrasts and contradiction's" (Carter and Durow, Introduction vii), while it is at the same time a search for "[Cal's] own identity as an Irish Catholic" in his "predominantly Protestant estate" (ibid). *Cal*, then, very clearly describes the struggle of a young Catholic man in a Protestant, hostile environment.

Lies of Silence

Brian Moore's *Lies of Silence* (1990) was published when peace negotiations were underway, and discussions about the Peace Agreement were being initiated. This, however, does not mean that the situation was any less grim than the situation depicted in *Cal*: in 1990, there were still 81 deaths which are linked to the Troubles as opposed to 84 deaths in 1983 (Sutton).

Lies of Silence tells the story of Michael Dillon, whom the IRA forces to plant a bomb at a hotel. He becomes more personally involved in the Troubles, but he finds it difficult to choose a side. Target of the bombing is the meeting of various members of the Orange Order with the main guest being a Protestant Reverend (Moore 9). Despite the threat that the invaders will kill Dillon's wife if he does not cooperate, and despite being Catholic like the IRA, Dillon calls the police because he cannot bear being responsible for so many deaths. Afterwards, he is called upon to choose a side in the Troubles, which he had no need to do previously (Mehrotra 163). Dillon prefers to flee Northern Ireland and remain out of the Troubles, instead of staying put and helping his fellow countrymen.

Additionally, violence is an important theme in *Lies of Silence*. Dillon is “confronted with the threat of terrorist violence and is forced to come to terms with it” (Mehrotra 161). However, while Dillon remains passive, his wife Moira becomes strong enough to publicly stand up against terrorism, actively fighting the violence (Mehrotra 166). Violence, therefore, influences Moira and Dillon differently. The book is a thriller, but it is more than just a page turner as it also discusses guilt and trauma and responsibility. Moreover, the novel creates a “feeling of pity and horror at the unforeseen and unmerited suffering caused by diabolic forces in the lives of innocent and unsuspecting individuals” (Mehrotra 167), and the cause suddenly does not seem to matter so much any more.

The International

The International, written by Glen Patterson, was published in 1999, a year after the Good Friday Agreement. Protagonist Danny is a young bartender at The International, a well-known hotel in Belfast. He is a Protestant, unlike Cal and Michael Dillon, but like Dillon he does not actively practice his religion. The story starts on Saturday, 28 January 1967, just a day before what is considered to be the start of the Troubles. The next day, Sunday January 29th, 1967, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) will be founded, which was the first step towards the Troubles because it indicated a change in society: the people no longer accepted their poor, unfair conditions and stood up for their rights. The NICRA was the first step towards the protests, which led to the Bloody Sunday Massacre in 1972 when the military killed unarmed civilians who walked in a protest organised by the NICRA.

In the novel, fictional people are enabled to tell their stories, while the final chapter discusses the repercussions of the war. The conflict is hardly ever confronted head-on, but it is a theme throughout the book: Anne Enright calls *The International* “the best book about the Troubles ever written” (Blackstaff Press). In 1999, the Good Friday Agreement had been implemented which meant the start of a cease-fire. This means that Patterson had the opportunity to look back on the conflict,

unlike MacLavery and Moore: *The International* is “a novel that is [...] anchored in the narrative possibilities of the backward glance” (McGuire 68). While the other two novels offer ways of coming to terms to personal violence during the conflict, *The International* shows the influence of the violent Troubles on society as a whole, listing several examples of people who died and suffered from the violence.

Also, *The International* exhibits “a more victim-orientated memory praxis” (McGuire 68), in which remembering is one of the key themes: religious identity does not matter so much any more as it does in the other two novels. Both sides suffered from the violence, regardless of religion and political views. It is the people that need to be remembered, not the violence and the prejudices that tore Northern Ireland apart.

Overview

Cal, *Lies of Silence* and *The International* have many similarities in plot and theme. Therefore, it will be interesting to see how certain themes and ideas are executed, and which solutions these books offer to negate or relieve the effects of war on society. The three novels are written at significantly different times throughout the conflict, and might therefore offer different views and reflections.

The first chapter will look at the ongoing discussions on memories of trauma as a result of war, the necessity of a group identity to create coherence in society, and the importance of literature in coming to terms with such trauma. The second and third chapters will apply these theories in the three novels through close reading. In Chapter Two, the focus will be on trauma and violence, and on how these factors influence the way people view themselves and society. Chapter Three will investigate in which capacity the sense of belonging to a community based on religion is considered inherent to the Troubles. Chapter 4 will be the conclusion, and offer suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Anything which happened in the past is stored in the brain as memories, although recalling these memories might be difficult, for instance for people suffering dementia. In a healthy brain, however, accessing and recalling memories may happen either voluntarily or involuntarily. Marcel Proust, a French novelist, described his experiences with these processes in his book *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913-1927). Proust has become very well known for his “vast story of memory recaptured” (Bloom 191), describing literarily how memories influence his past and present. The most famous anecdote of memory comes from Proust’s memories of eating a *madeleine* in France (Fuchs 19), which is used later by many psychoanalysts. Triggered by Proust’s seeing and tasting the French *délicatesse*, images of a happy childhood in France were evoked in vivid details.

Although Proust argues that reliving memories involuntarily is positive for the person reliving them, he is aware that his memories are of a happy childhood in the middle of the beautiful French landscape. When the memories are not of a tasty *madeleine* but of war, some aspects of involuntary memories can transform to an instrument of torture. After all, not only happy memories can be involuntarily remembered, but also those feelings “of unhappiness and irreversible loss” (Whitehead, “Involuntary Memories” 111).

Proust’s famous description of the recapture of memories and Freud’s theories of traumatic memories in his essays on psychoanalysis coincide on many points, focusing on the intrusion of memories from the past, which influences and disrupts the present. This will be central in section 1.1. Section 1.2 stresses the importance of creating a historical narrative which society agrees on. Establishing a collective memory in order to strengthen group identity is a key point in Ricoeur’s theories, because this will strengthen coherence in society after a difficult past. Lastly, in section 1.3, Derrida’s arguments on the importance of literature in the process of healing from trauma will be discussed.

1.1: Memories: A Disruptive Influence on the Present

One way of managing unwanted memories is by suppressing and ignoring them, and blocking anything that could make these memories return (LaCapra 87). However, mentally suppressing memories is only effective in the short run, because sooner or later any trigger may call them up. Because involuntary memory “enters the memories in a schedule of the past, in recognition, [so that] past and present literally coincide” (Fuchs 19), the past can arise again and take over the present at any given moment, so that past and present will fuse temporarily. To stop memories of traumatic events from infringing on the present, it is necessary to work through the shards of memories and piece them together in one complete narrative. Freud was specialised in this, and he suggested many theories which explained why people with unhealed trauma had such trouble accessing memories and trying to make sense of them. Moreover, Freud argued that it is necessary to access the memories, especially when these memories were created under traumatic circumstances.

The field of study concerning memory is complicated, and even Freud has been unable to provide the ultimate answers to the many questions surrounding the problems of the “inscription/recording and [...] storage/retrieval” of memories (Elsaesser 100). The most well-known example Freud used in his attempt to explain how memory is created and stored was by comparing the part of the brain that stored memories to a “Mystic Writing-Pad or *Wunderblock*” (Elsaesser 101). Using this model of a children’s toy, Freud shows that all the sensory input which humans receive through their consciousness is stored and processed, layer on layer, on the memory locus of the brain. Freud chose the *Wunderblock* to clarify his theories on memories because “it has an unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions and nevertheless lays down permanent – even though not unalterable – memory traces of them” (Freud 208). Anything that is inscribed on the Mystic Writing-Pad only touches the upper layer, a celluloid sheet. The traces are made visible on the wax paper which lies beneath this. The imprints on the celluloid can be removed by simply lifting the screen, making the data legible on the wax paper beneath. Once the celluloid is lowered again, the wax paper is ready to be receive new data on top of the old traces (Freud 210). Any previous traces of

writing, namely the memory, is stored on waxed paper which “retains its receptive capacity for an unlimited time” (Freud 208). Freud explains that it is the same with memory: “the layer which receives the stimuli – the [consciousness] – forms no permanent traces; the foundations of memory come about in other, adjoining, systems [i.e. the unconsciousness]” (Freud 211). The sensory input, then, is translated into memories. These traces of the past are inscribed on the unconscious, remaining accessible for an indefinite period of time.

Freud was intrigued by “the power of the past over the presence” (Whitehead, “Involuntary Memories” 100). The problem with trauma is that the sensory input during a traumatic experience is fragmented, and is “registered and encoded in the brain in a different way from ordinary memory” (Whitehead, “Involuntary Memories” 115). This difference during the construction of memory ensures that memories of a traumatic experience do not become “subject to the usual narrative or verbal mechanisations of recall” (ibid), but instead cause intruding “nightmares and flashbacks” (ibid). By bringing traumatic memories back, the haunting traces of the past mess with the personal experience of space and time. These problems can be “instantaneously and permanently removed” by psychoanalysis according to Freud (Whitehead, “Involuntary Memories” 100), or they can be partly resolved by the effort of creating a historical narrative. People suffering from trauma initially show reluctance when they have to talk about what has happened, because “narrativity implies temporality and this again implies grief and the work of mourning” (Varvin 94). Despite not being pleasant sensations, grief and mourning are an essential step towards “a sense of renewed meaning and purpose in our lives” (Wolfelt).

In short, Freud argued that because the memories of traumatic events are not processed properly in the brain, they can return at any given moment through flashbacks or nightmares. Because the past thus becomes intrusive, the present is interrupted, and continuing normal life becomes difficult. Talking about the traumatic events is necessary if one wants to be freed from the past.

1.2: Cultural Memory and Collective Identity

The Troubles in Northern Ireland can be described as civil war, because citizens fought each other over religious and political views, and many like-minded people united against each other in paramilitary groups such as the IRA and the UVF. After the Troubles, despite “the language of reconciliation [which] speaks of forgetting the past” (Dawson 183), it is impossible to smooth over the conflict because “the psychic and political legacies of history [. . .] remain a source of profound tension within and between warring communities” (ibid).

To create coherence inside society again, it is important that society as a whole agrees over what has happened in the past. In other words, its cultural memory should be as all-inclusive as possible, so that all people can agree with what is accepted to be the truth of history. To this end, testimonies from survivors of a past conflict, be they written or spoken, are important because they are “significant in the attempt to understand experience and its aftermath, including the role of memory and its lapses, in coming to terms with – or denying and repressing – the past” (LaCapra 89-90). Consequently, in cultural memory, “memory (the contemporized past), culture, and the group (society)” (ibid) are all combined. Among other things, cultural memory helps create a collective identity, or a cultural identity, “from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity” (Assmann and Czaplicka 130). By being reminded of what happened in the past, a group identity is created and the memory of the past is preserved. After all, as George Santayana warned: “those who cannot remember their past are condemned to relive it” (qtd. in Assmann and Czaplicka 133). This indicates that apart from remembering, it is also important to reflect on the past and learn from what has happened so that the past cannot repeat itself.

Both aspects of cultural memory, namely group identity and reflection, are important to Paul Ricoeur. His theories are concerned with cultural memory preserved through written material, which people use to commemorate their past and remember the victims. He calls this “historical consciousness” (Ricoeur 475), which means that people are aware of their shared past and where they are coming from (ibid). Ricoeur argues that “history as written by historians” (ibid) is not the

most inclusive history as it “sometimes contradicts the memory of survivors, their ancestors, and their descendants” (ibid). Ideally, cultural memory achieves complete agreement with all groups in society on the facts as they happened. To this end, memory has to “[establish] the meaning of the past” (Ricoeur 176), introducing a “critical dimension into our dealings with the past” and anticipating onto the future (ibid) so that conflicts will not occur again because society will have learned from the past.

However, sometimes creating an inclusive historical narrative goes wrong. Especially in areas or times of great conflict in a small society, for instance Northern Ireland, it is often “the history of the conquerors” (Ricoeur 280) that is written down. Eventually, this will “[boil] down to a forgetting of the victims” (ibid), resulting in certain groups feeling ignored and left out. As a result, a country cannot share a collective and cultural identity, which Assmann and Czaplicka argue is important because that creates unity and coherence inside society. Ricoeur argues that, ideally, a collective memory is only complete once all sides of the story have been heard, because “[e]very individual memory is a point of view on the collective memory” (Halbwachs qtd in Ricoeur 476): every individual experience matters to the collective memory, because the view of history to which all of society can adhere should be inclusive of all opinions and perspectives. All these sides and stories together add up to a “historical narrative” (Ricoeur 277), which Ricoeur also calls a “work of recollection” (478). This work of recollection forms the foundation for the official version of the past which is written in history books and believed to be the version of the past which most people can endorse.

To move away from trauma which disrupts the present, society needs to be taught “how to narrate [the past] from another standpoint” (Ricoeur 478). This enables people to step away from the past and create a gap, void of any trauma, between the past and the present. This void becomes “the essential sign of the ‘pastness’ of the past” (Ricoeur 477). This void then creates room for reflection, so that “critical history can make a contribution to this healing of collective memory” (Ricoeur 278). Viewing the conflict from both sides enables individuals to realise they are not the sole

victims of violence and suppression, but that other people, often their enemies, suffered also.

Instead of dividing society in two or more smaller communities, a collective memory will create coherence because it helps people to find a common ground.

In short, creating an inclusive cultural memory will make everyone in society feel accepted and included, and will help creating a collective identity. Especially minorities should be included in this cultural memory and collective identity, so that society will become a unity. Consequently, it will also enable people to view a conflict from another perspective, so that they are made aware that they are not the only ones who suffered. Creating a unity in society will help people through the process of healing from trauma, because they can help each other feel that the past is truly over.

1.3: The Healing Narrative: The Role of Literature in Society

Narratives about historical and traumatic events will help Northern Ireland's future, because "they offer immense psychic resources of strength, hope and resilience to the members of embattled communities [. . .] who thereby cease to be passive 'victims'" (Dawson 190) and instead are enabled to actively work through their traumatic memories. Literature makes this process easier, because it gives the authors the opportunity to look at a conflict from multiple sides, making history more accessible. Literature can contribute to healing from trauma because literature is a "relatively safe haven in which to explore post-traumatic effects" (LaCapra 180). Literature also exposes the mental scars from a period of hardships and conflicts "within the cultural, historical, and political relations in which the Irish and British peoples are mutually entwined and implicated" (Dawson 194).

According to Derrida, writing does not only influence the author and his or her memories, but also has an impact on society. He claims that writing is a combination of Freud's Mystic Writing-Pad, the people around us, and ourselves (Derrida and Mehlman 113): writing is concerned with personal memory and how this interacts with history and other eyewitness reports. Moreover, writing will help to redefine the individual in relation to the past and the present because, apart from being a nexus between personal memory and society, writing is also a link between the past and the

present. Freud argued that memory and the past mess with the experience of time, which is supported by other critics as well: “the internal experience of time differs fundamentally from chronological time” (Varvin 89): memories can return at any given moment, bringing the past into the present. Psychoanalyst Sverre Varvin argues that “narratives are structuralisations of happenings and courses of events, and are of fundamental importance for one’s identity and self-structure” (90) but he also points out that “simple linear causality [. . .] does not exist in the psyche” (89). It may be difficult to write about what has happened in the past and create a logically structured narrative, but creating a narrative through writing is an important aspect in a healing process nevertheless. It will make victims of trauma feel better because they have started the process of making sense of what happened. Their memories become less scrambled and stop haunting the victim of trauma: “The benefit is in creating a story that links together the emotional memories. Making these traumatic events more coherent makes memories of these events less likely to be repeatedly called to mind, and so they can be laid to rest” (Markman).

In short, literature is an important step in the process of healing from trauma, for numerous reasons: literature offers a safe place to discuss and explore the past, creates causality and exposes the scars and wounds left in society after a period of conflict. Literature, therefore, not only influences the author and his or her personal memories, but it also has an impact on society as it can alter cultural memory.

Preview

The three books which will be discussed all try to aid the process of recovery from the Troubles, working with themes such as memory, violence and belonging. Chapter Two will focus on trauma and violence and their influence on individuals as portrayed in the three novels, whereas Chapter Three will focus on the depiction of a divided society and a sense of belonging in a ruptured society.

Chapter 2: Living with Memories of Violence

In *Cal*, *The International* and *Lies of Silence*, the past has a prominent place and is often shown to have a profound impact on the characters. In the novels, the past is often referred to, most notably in the way the memories of violence make normal life harder. Violence influences the present and one's perception of the self negatively. Moreover, violence makes it harder for people to trust those around them, which results in paranoia and fear. However, the novels differ in conveying what would be the best way of recovering from trauma.

Cal

At the start of the novel it is indicated that Cal McCluskey despises himself. Repeatedly, he calls himself "*crotte de chien*" (10), meaning dog-shit, and at one occasion he also calls himself "merderer" (10). This word comes from the French *merde*, meaning 'shit', but it has a close resemblance to the English word 'murderer'. Later on, it is revealed that this self-loathing originates from the night when Cal drove the getaway car while his friend Crilly killed Robert Morton, a Police Reserve who was an enemy of the IRA. Cal did not fire a single shot, but he feels like a murderer nonetheless. Critic David Mason points out that "the past has shattered Cal's present life" (301). Because of this, Cal imagines he has "a brand stamped in blood in the middle of his forehead which would take him the rest of his life to purge" (MacLavery 88). Like the Biblical Cain, who is marked by God as punishment for killing his brother, or like Victor Hugo's Quasimodo (MacLavery 123), Cal feels that his past deeds have branded him for life "as if the ugliness of what he had done showed in his face" (ibid). It makes him feel scared, paranoid and guilty (Mason 301), and he feels as if everyone is watching him. Repeatedly, Cal feels "the eyes on him. [. . .] The eyes would be at the curtains or behind a hedge as a man paused in his digging" (MacLavery 4), and when he takes a bath, he imagines people bursting into the bathroom to hurt him (MacLavery 46). This constant fear previously resulted in Cal

accepting a gun from Crilly, which he has hidden underneath the floorboards in the attic. The McCluskeys are worried constantly that it will be discovered or that they need to use it (MacLavery 25-26). Just like Cal is afraid to use the gun, he also afraid to act on his desires for Marcella, which bloom up after he sees her in the library. He wants her, but because of his past he cannot have her. This helplessness also translates itself into a dream, where Cal sees a young girl who needs his help. As Freud argued, the past interrupts the present in various ways, translating into nightmares or flashbacks. Cal has these nightmares too, in which he is unable to do anything: “he knew she needed his help, but when he sprang from the gate to her window-sill and into her room, she shows stark terror on her lovely face” (MacLavery 31). Not only does she not allow him to help her, she is also terrified of him. According to Mahon, this dream is an expression of Cal’s desire for Marcella, a woman who “is both sexually attractive and unattainable” (82). Before he falls asleep, Cal is “frustrated” (MacLavery 31), which indicates a sense of helplessness: Cal wants to be with Marcella, but she always remains just out of reach because of the past which stands between them.

Cal does not only feel tainted by the past, but the past also oppresses him almost physically: “he was at the bottom of a gully, buried in an avalanche of his own making” (MacLavery 119). He feels bad about what he has done, and fears that he will never recover. He repeatedly says that he does not want violence, hoping that his friend Crilly will forget to ask him for another job for the IRA (MacLavery 14). When he is asked to do some more driving for the IRA, he says that he will “drive if it’s only for funds. [. . .] Just this once. Then you can think of somebody else” (MacLavery 21). He feels he has to “eat again the ashes of what he had done” (MacLavery 12). After Marcella and he have sex, he “want[s] to be open and honest with her and tell her everything” (MacLavery 152), but somehow he cannot. Cal feels helpless and “unable to influence what [is] going on around him” (ibid), which is a result of violence and consistent with Freud’s theories on disruptive traumatic memories discussed in section 1.1.

However, the past not only has its influence on Cal, but also on his father Shamie. Initially, Shamie did not want to leave Northern Ireland, but his fighting spirit is broken when his house is

burnt down. He becomes depressed, but he adamantly refuses to see a doctor: “‘I know what he’ll say,’ said Shamie. Even his voice had changed, had lost all its strength. It wavered like the voice of an old woman feeling sorry for herself. ‘Snap out of it, he’ll say, but I can’t. I have lost interest in everything’” (MacLavery 111). Violence makes people “crack up” (MacLavery 112) and reduce them to “shaking remnants of themselves” (ibid). Shamie’s doctor says Shamie should leave things in the past, but Shamie has not had the chance to talk it through and order it in his mind, which is necessary according to Freud. Shamie does not recover from the fire, because the Troubles have made him lose his fighting spirit. Cal is aware of his own mistakes, and tries to purge them. Unlike Cal, however, Shamie, suffers violence merely because he has a certain religion, while Cal has committed a crime.

The clearest example of the past trespassing in the present is the moment when Cal and Marcella have sex for the first time. Instead of being elated that he is finally getting what he wants, he cannot become aroused. Instead, Cal keeps seeing flashbacks from the night when he and Crilly killed Robert Morton. The past intrudes onto the present through flashbacks, which is in line with what is discussed in section 1.1 about Freud: because Cal’s past has been traumatic and as of yet unhealed, the traces from those traumatic events interrupt the present. Ultimately, Cal’s flashbacks threaten to ruin his chances with Marcella:

He kissed her and she opened her mouth to him and his tongue probed. He felt with its tip, or imagined he felt, the ridges on the roof of her mouth. He saw himself again touching the back of the steering wheel lightly with his fingers, heard again the incessant barking of the dogs and Crilly trying to get sound out of the bell. Marcella touched his back with her fingernails descending his spine, all the time staring unblinkingly at him. Unable to meet her eyes, he closed his own and smothered his face in the curve of her neck. In his darkness he saw her husband genuflect and the sudden soiling of the wallpaper behind him. The unreal sound of the cap gun. Marcella touched between his thighs and he felt shame. (MacLavery 137-8)

Still feeling guilty about the past and unable to talk about it to anyone who will understand, Cal is haunted by the past, which keeps pushing itself to the forefront of his mind. It makes him feel insecure and guilty, even more so because he knows he is keeping the truth about her husband's murder from Marcella. These feelings make it easier to understand why he is grateful when he is finally arrested on Christmas Eve. After all, "at last someone was going to beat him to within an inch of his life" (MacLavery 154). He can now come clean about the past and he will receive punishment for his deeds without having to tell Marcella personally. The fact that his arrest happens on Christmas Eve is significant because that day is for both Catholics and Protestants the day Jesus Christ was born to redeem people's sins. It also symbolises hope because the winter is over, which indicates a new start and a better life. Even though the situation looks hopeless, *Cal* shows the importance of having the will to be purged and the necessity of being confronted with the past to feel better about the situation.

Lies of Silence

For Dillon, the violence of war is a far-away happening that does not affect his daily life very much. He watches the news and reads the newspapers, but "like most people he kept well away from the events themselves" (Moore 42). Even though Dillon is not worried about the Troubles, he observes nevertheless that "shopping areas were deserted. For years, people had been unwilling to walk the streets at night" (Moore 21). Dillon may not be scared or worried about the war because it is the struggle of poor religious people and he is not personally affected the Troubles, but the threat of violence is still felt by the rest of Belfast.

Slowly, however, the threat of violence becomes personal, affecting Dillon's life. This starts when armed men with "real revolvers, faceless, staring eyes, scruffy boys in woollen masks" (Moore 42) enter his home in the middle of the night. Because he has no idea what these people want from him, he becomes frightened, and he feels personally attacked without a reason: "Who are they? [. . .] Is this one of those mistakes where they come in and shoot the wrong person?" (ibid). Moreover, the

members of the IRA threaten him personally by telling him that he is being watched constantly, and they warn him that if he or his wife “don’t co-operate with [the IRA] tonight, [they] are going to be sorry. If not now, then later on – a week from now, a month from now” (Moore 59). Consequently, Dillon starts imagining the IRA everywhere, and because they threaten him, Dillon becomes paranoid. This paranoia influences the way Dillon sees his surroundings, behaving just like intrusive memories of trauma on Freud’s Mystic Writing-Pad. The conflict is constantly pushed to the front of his mind: normally, the way to Dillon’s work is “far too familiar to evoke in him any thought of what he was passing” (Moore 79) but after he is attacked in his own home, all he can see is Belfast as “this ugly, troubled place which held for him implacable memories of his past life” (ibid). Before the attack on him and his wife in the safety of their house, Dillon felt at home in Belfast: it was the place where he worked and lived and where he grew up. His peaceful life in Belfast belongs to the past, because now he is making a new start with the experiences from the past already altering his feelings towards his hometown. Dillon thus becomes hyperaware of the conflict that is going on in Northern Ireland: a prison on the side of the road “which on a normal evening would be familiar, ignored part of the landscape” (Moore 127) now occupies his mind and has “become a factor in his life” (ibid). He also begins to see the IRA everywhere: in a young man who had too much to drink and is looking for the restroom (Moore 142), or in a white Ford that is simply driving after him on the road (Moore 127, 159). Police sirens cause flashbacks to the night Dillon and Moira were attacked (Moore 154), and Dillon distrusts anyone who looks entirely normal because the attackers “also wore the masks of normal life” (Moore 187). This infringement of the past onto the present corresponds with Freud’s theories on traumatic memories which have been discussed in section 1.1.

The change in Dillon’s personality is essential to the novel, because Dillon “has to evaluate his own deepest beliefs, not once but several times during the time-span of the novel” (O’Donoghue xix). Dillon has always been a capable man. After all, he is a successful manager in a famous hotel. When the police asks him to identify one of the men who broke into Dillon’s home, he is torn. On the one hand, he wants to help the police because otherwise “it will always be hanging over [his] head”

(Moore 208) and “it [is] the right thing to do” (Moore 232), but on the other hand he is simply too afraid to do anything because of the terrorists, who said that they could find him anywhere. Dillon is incapable of making up his mind as to what he wants to do about the violence although he has to choose a side (Mehrotra 163). He is constantly torn between co-operating with the police by testifying against the IRA on the one hand, and keeping his mouth shut, “admitting that he was afraid, that, again, the IRA had won” (Moore 233), on the other hand. Determined not to testify for his own safety, Dillon plans to make a phone call (Moore 250), although he remains worried that the police can still persuade him. However, it is indicated that Dillon is possibly killed in the end of the novel: his house is invaded by armed people who “were not wearing masks,” (Moore 251) because “this time, there would be no witnesses” (ibid). That is where the book ends, following the theme of insecurity and duplicity that was woven into the plot. Instead of talking about his fears and traumas, and consequently starting the healing process, Dillon tries to run away from the past. However, he is killed in the end because he posed a possible threat to the IRA. It is hinted at that if Dillon had either refused to testify (Moore 243-4) or if he too had spoken out against the violence like his wife (Moore 173) he would have lived. Instead, Dillon let fear rule him, forcing him to keep quiet about his knowledge of one of the IRA’s men’s face and name as the police ordered him “for [his] own protection” (Moore 100). As the novel shows, this does not end well for Dillon, because he is very likely murdered in the end.

Moira’s decision to speak out against the IRA on television is a much better course of action than Dillon’s fleeing the country. Moira feels perfectly safe because the IRA would not dare to harm a pretty woman who calls herself a victim of their actions (Moore 173). Moira becomes furious at the people who invaded her house, and even dares to address their captors, demanding to know what they want and who they think gave them the right to kidnap people in their own homes (Moore 60-1). She even claims that the IRA “are just a bunch of crooks” (ibid), no matter what cause they are fighting for. Angrily, she accuses them of “not fighting for anybody’s freedom” (ibid), because “the only thing [they]’re doing is making people hate each other worse than ever” (Moore 62). While

Dillon cowers and flees, Moira appears on national television and gives interviews to newspapers because she does not want the IRA to win through violence: “if people like us let the IRA push us around, how do you think we’re ever going to change things?” (Moore 132). She thinks that she “should stand [her] ground. And then, if [she is] shot, the whole world will know why [she is] being shot” (Moore 137). She is not afraid but willing to risk her life for this cause, knowing that the IRA would never harm her because not “even the most stupid of the people who back the IRA would say it was fair” (ibid). Moira has nothing to fear because she can talk about what happened to her and heal from her trauma in that way. Consequently, she is never really in danger, and manages to come to terms with the violence, as Mehrotra argues is necessary (161). Moira seems to have created a mental narrative during the attack in her home, which enables her to argue with the masked men and to try to escape. Consequently, she does not suffer from the memories of violence in the way her husband does, and which Freud argued comes with chaotic memories of a traumatic event. By sorting out what threatened her and creating a course of action, Moira regulates the memories and makes them finite (see also section 1.1).

Lies of Silence hinges on the question of “what will the individual do when faced with a crisis?” (O’Donoghue, Introduction xix), which makes it also interesting for an international public and not just Northern Ireland, because such questions are applicable to various situations. According to *Lies of Silence*, passivity is not the right answer to violence and injustice. Most of all, however, *Lies of Silence* shows that violence and trauma mess with people’s lives, especially when fear results in silence which in turn can lead to crippling paranoia.

The International

The violence of the Troubles does not seem to make the people who work at the International very concerned, at least narrator Danny makes it appear so. At first, violence seems to be merely there to provide the young men in the novel with a kick: Cecil, the night porter of the International, “live[s] in constant dread of missing out” (Patterson 4) on the action. Moreover, Danny makes the reader

believe that the only thing hanging over the people's heads is the Belfast Urban Motorway (BUM). The main with the BUM is its construction, which includes the demolishing of many houses, even though housing was already poorly arranged (Patterson 20). Danny does not think Belfast is very special: "it was simply The Town" (Patterson 43), and he "reckoned there were probably better places to live and probably places a whole lot worse" (ibid). At this moment in time, Belfast is still untainted and not yet "brought shaking, quaking and laying about it with batons and stones on to the world's small screens" (ibid): violence has mostly left Belfast untouched as of yet, but in the future that will all change. *The International* profits from the "backwards glance" (McGuire 68), in which the Troubles are anchored in the past which the novel looks back upon. According to the discussion in section 1.3, this offers many possibilities for the victims of trauma to recover.

Despite the International seeming to be an ordinary hotel, there is something brewing under the surface. Passingly, Danny informs the reader that "tragedy has a way of tainting a place" (Patterson 49), which is the first of many hints towards an event that took place not long before the story began, which is related to the Troubles. It turns out that Danny has been given the position of a bartender because the young man who occupied the position before him was shot dead because he was a Catholic. Apart from this, too, slowly but surely more information trickles through Danny's narrative. For instance Danny mentions a newspaper, with headings which report "Woman Dies in One of 4 Ulster fires" (Patterson 63), and "Orange 'Concern' at Bishop's Visit" (ibid). Although not very politically inclined, Danny feels the need to mention the Unionists and Ian Paisley, commenting on the brewing tensions between Protestants and Catholics (Patterson 64-5). It all happens in a detached manner, as if it is all a bit of a joke carried out by "fruitcakes" (Patterson 64) while Paisley is described as "a joke that became less funny each time you heard it" (ibid). Danny tries to discard it as something insignificant, but at the same time his narration hints at some seriousness behind Danny's casual façade. Then, however, Danny tells the reader what happened, but it is on a side note: "these men gunned down on Malvern Street, by the way. They were all barmen. They worked in the International. Peter Ward was eighteen when he died. I turned eighteen a fortnight after he was

buried, a fortnight after I started to work at the hotel” (Patterson 67). Here too, the past and current events seep into the present in various ways which can be explained with Freud’s theories, while Danny as narrator is also creating a narrative in which he tries to place the events leading up to the Troubles in a timeline, following Derrida’s guidelines.

Although Peter Ward’s murder is only fully explained and talked about near the end of the novel, *The International* often refers to Peter Ward’s murder in various ways, but rarely straightforwardly. Peter Ward’s murder is referred to as “the Unpleasantness of the previous summer” (Patterson 69), and people do not like to talk about it. Although Danny pretends he does not feel affected by it all, as indicated by his careless introduction of the event by starting with “by the way” (Patterson 67) and the referring to the murder as merely something “unpleasant” (Patterson 69), his parents feel otherwise. At first, they “thought [. . .] that if they didn’t talk about it it would simply go away” (Patterson 69) but their worries for their son disappeared as soon as the murderers were apprehended (ibid). His parents believe it is not so very serious: apprehending the killers is enough for their son to be safe. After all, “it would all be okay. A not unreasonable assumption and [Danny] was not alone in making it” (Patterson 217). Although Danny does not know, other people at the hotel are badly affected by Peter’s murder, too. For instance, Marian, one of Peter Ward’s friends, “was really, really crying that night” (Patterson 244). Danny feels guilty about having taken up Peter’s place because he cannot even “tell [the reader] much else about him, except that those who knew him thought the world of him” (Patterson 246). Danny knows that “Peter Ward was a good barman. He was earning eight pounds eight shillings at the time of his death, twenty-five shillings above the union rate” (ibid). Apart from that, Peter is “an absence in this story. I wish it were not so, but guns do that, create holes which no amount of words can fill” (ibid). The role of the author, then is “to refuse the reductive sentences (the death sentences) and to throw open the doors on life” (Patterson, *On Writing* 255). According to the novel, the past was devastating, but it is important to keep moving forward, and the novel supports this by being “optimistic [and] forward-looking” (Patterson, *On Writing* 252). More than anything, Danny as narrator recognises that losses

as a result of violence have a major impact on people, making *The International* about “Danny’s regret [. . .] for the town that is lost to violence” (Enright 258). This is in tune with Freud’s arguments on the need to talk about the traumatic event, so that the past does not influence the present any more.

According to *The International*, remembering the past will be the most noble that anyone can aspire to, because that will make sure that the past has not happened in vain. This is in line with Derrida’s arguments in favour for the creation of a narrative. In *The International*, the power of the absence of the victim, which is the result of violence, is central to the plot, as is verbally rebuilding and reimagining life in Belfast as it must have been before the Troubles. By focusing on the Belfast before the Troubles, the novel “captures [. . .] the personality, not just of this or that individual, but also of a distinctive place and time” (Enright 259), which is perhaps changed but not lost. The power of the novel lies in “turning to the moment before the blast” (ibid), which makes the novel a means to “giv[ing] the city its humanity back” (Enright 260) after violence changed the city. The transition of time from before and after the conflict makes it possible to insist “that things might have been different” (Enright 259), which is a powerful tool in healing from trauma according to Derrida, see also section 1.3.

Comparing the Three Novels

In all three the novels, an event from the past heavily influences the plot and the characters. These events are all of a different nature: Cal helps murdering a police officer, Danny is filling the vacancy after his predecessor’s murder, and Dillon’s crime is preventing an IRA bombing. More important, however, are the characters’ responses to the violence which has happened to them. Significantly, in all three the novels, the past is interrupting the present according to Freud’s theories on trauma. The reason for these differences might be sought in the date of publication, and in genre. Surprisingly, the religion of the characters does not seem to have any influence.

The past haunts Cal up to the point where he cannot function any more. His father Shamie does not fight these feelings and becomes depressed and traumatised as a result of his passivity, whereas Cal is given a chance at redemption which he gratefully accepts. In *Lies of Silence*, Moira is praised by the media and the other people in the novel, while Dillon is killed like a coward. Its message is similar to *Cal's*: there is still hope for those who accept their mistakes and are willing to pay for them like Cal, or who fight injustice and stand up for what they think is important like Moira, whereas those who become passive or try to run away, like Shamie or Dillon, will not make it through. *The International*, however, is different because the novel looks at the Troubles after they have ended. Trauma is best resolved, according to this novel, not by fighting injustice or trying to seek redemption, but by remembering those who suffered the violence or who were killed. While *Cal* urges people to come clean about their past, *The International* does not mention a necessity for people to atone, but urges them to remember. Remembering the victims in *Cal* disrupts normal, present-day life, whereas in *The International* it is encouraged because it will be healing over time.

Trauma of the past in *Cal* and *Lies of Silence* appears to be a personal matter which needs to be resolved by the characters' own actions, as the consequences of those actions mostly land on the characters. In *The International*, however, trauma has become a more societal issue, where society as a whole is given the task of remembrance to deal with trauma in the past. After all, Danny did not know Peter Ward at all except for what he has been told, and yet he wants to remember and honour this young man, and all the others who died, instead of nurturing bad feelings. The narrator of *The International* explains that the victims of these wars, regardless of religion or beliefs, should be remembered and commemorated by society, while the struggles which lay at the foundation of the conflict should be forgiven and not nurtured into more hatred.

Also, the genre of the novels may be a reason for the differences. *Cal* is most of all a love story, in which Cal has to become worthy of the woman he loves, whereas *Lies of Silence* is a more political novel, in which the problems are described and choices need to be made regarding the conflict. *The International* is more historical than the other two: it tells (fictional) stories about

individuals, focusing on their background and the things they all have in common, focusing more on the story of Belfast before the Troubles than on the Troubles themselves.

The religious background of the characters does not play a significant role when it comes to memories of violence. Whether they are Protestant or Catholic, all are haunted by the violence that happened to them. Cal and Dillon's present is disrupted by flashbacks and intrusive thoughts, just like Danny is not safe for prejudices and the threat of violence despite his being a Protestant.

Chapter 3: The Need for Belonging

The Irish Troubles are mostly known for the impact they had on Irish society and the fact that the origins and its persistence mainly lay in the unbridgeable gap of understanding between religions and political affiliations. The characters in *Cal*, *The International* and *Lies of Silence* hardly have a sense of belonging to any group or community, whereby the novels mainly focus on the differences in religion. The novels agree on the importance of seeking a shared identity with likeminded people, but they also warn for the accompanying dangers, as it can alienate communities even further from each other, thereby prolonging and worsening the Troubles.

Cal

Cal and his father Shamie are Catholics, but they live in a Loyalist area (MacLavery 26), meaning they are surrounded by possibly hostile Protestants where they do not feel at home. After a Protestant holiday, the curbs of the sidewalks are painted in the colours of the Union Flag, and Cal feels as if this “was aimed at them, the McCluskeys, because his father and he were the only Catholic family left in the whole estate” (MacLavery 5). The amount of unease which Cal constantly feels disappears when he leaves for a football game played in County Monaghan. To reach Monaghan, Cal needs to cross the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Instantly, Cal “experienced the feeling of freedom he always got. This was Ireland – the real Ireland. He felt he had come out from under the weight and darkness of Protestant Ulster [. . .] On top of a tree a green, white and gold tricolour flickered in the wind” (MacLavery 36). This feeling is enforced when he sees busses with supporters from Antrim: “their colours were yellow and white and Cal thought of them as papal flags” (ibid). Although it is not explicitly mentioned that these are indeed papal flags, Cal associates Antrim and the Republic of Ireland with Catholicism nevertheless, which makes him feel more at ease

than in Ulster. This above scene in the beginning of the novel indicates how ardently Cal is looking for a place to belong among people who share his background, which Ricoeur argues is paramount.

Cal does not feel at home among the Protestants, but, more importantly, he also fears his direct neighbours. He feels that everyone is watching his family and that they are paying more attention to them than is necessary. On top of that, Cal and his father are threatened through a note from the UVF (MacLavery 23), in which the Loyalists call them “Fenyan scum” (ibid) which is “an offensive term for a Roman Catholic, especially one who is suspected of having nationalist sympathies” (Carter and Durrow, Notes 161). Cal is scared, mostly because he and his father are “hated not for [themselves] but for what [they] were” (MacLavery 24): they are not hated for their personalities, but for their Catholic background because it does not fit in with their neighbours’ beliefs. When Cal is walking down the street, three young men “[stand] across the pavement, blocking his way” (MacLavery 43). They want Cal and his father to move away and “let somebody decent into that house” (ibid), and they hurt Cal to enforce their message. When Cal comes home, he thinks they “should consider moving” (MacLavery 45) but his father does not want to leave the neighbourhood he has lived in all his life. Even though Cal and his father just want to live peacefully, they are threatened and attacked by people whose religion is different than the McCluskeys’ beliefs. Although the McCluskeys have lived in their neighbourhood for years, they do not feel part of the community, because their beliefs and feelings are not accepted, which Ricoeur argued is paramount for a cultural memory and group identity (see also section 1.2).

Despite feeling he does not belong with the Protestant community, Cal is not part of the Catholic community either. Cal tries to find his own identity all throughout the novel (Carter and Durrow, Introduction vii). To feel more connected to his Catholic roots, Cal attempts to learn Gaelic but he has great difficulties with the language (MacLavery 6, 17). Moreover, he is unwillingly associated with the IRA through his friend Crilly, who killed Robert Morton because he posed a threat to the IRA. Because of Crilly, Cal is pulled into the conflict, but after the murder he “want[s] out” (MacLavery 19). When Crilly argues that Cal is “not even fuckin’ *in*” (ibid), Cal replies that he is “far

enough in to want out" (ibid). When Cal is employed at Marcella's farm, whose in-laws are Protestants, he does not dare to tell Crilly because "if Crilly knew that Cal was hanging around Morton's farm he might want to break his legs – not only want to but might well do it" (MacLavery 63). This indicates that, like some Protestants, some Catholics are capable of violence towards bystanders as well, because not picking a side evidently means being against the IRA. Moreover, they make Cal afraid, just like Protestants sometimes do. According to Mahon, *Cal* displays "the erosion of the difference between the violent dynamics at work" (80) in Northern Ireland: there is hardly any difference left between the Protestants' actions of violence and the Catholics'. The novel breaks dichotomies by showing the bad sides of both Catholics and Protestants, hinting at the possibility that the conflict may not be as black-and-white as critics make it seem to be. By breaking down these dichotomies, *Cal* is building on Ricoeur's cultural memory: all sides of the conflict are discussed and scrutinised, so that minorities can also feel included in Northern Irish society.

The situation seems rather hopeless because Cal does not feel at home with either Protestants or Catholics, and reconciliation between the two groups seems far away. Marcella Morton is a Catholic Italian who married Robert Morton, whose family "had been Protestant farmers for centuries" (MacLavery 35). If their marriage is a metaphor for a relationship between Protestants and Catholics, it carries a hopeful message: it is possible for two religions to live together happily. Robert's mother comments on the fruitfulness of the marriage: "even though she's a different religion, he and Marcella were well suited. He was so good to her too" (MacLavery 97). However, Marcella claims that her marriage with Robert had long lost its spark: "we had occasional sex but he didn't make me realise I was me. He was having it off with some creature of his imagination" (MacLavery 140). Marcella's marriage to a Protestant may seem blissful, but that is merely the outside. In reality, Marcella was unhappy, describing Robert as "one of those people whose company you love for an hour or so but you're glad you're not married to them" (MacLavery 141). This analogy makes the situation in Ireland appear rather hopeless: two people, each with their own religion, are united in an unhappy marriage.

However, not everything is hopeless according to *Cal*. While a metaphorical marriage between the two groups may not be the solution to the conflict, friendships remain possible once religion is ignored. Especially Shamie is admired by many people in their neighbourhood. According to Cal, Shamie can “stand for hours on end chatting at the street corner” (MacLavery 47) with Cyril Dunlop, a Protestant, despite Shamie’s claims that “that Orange Order is rotten to the core” (ibid). In return, Cyril admits that “there’s bastards on both sides” (MacLavery 79). According to this, Shamie and Cyril seem to think institutions or group behaviour are a bad influence on society, while people as individuals, even though they have different religions, can be the best of friends. Cal does not fear “a single bastard” (MacLavery 5), but “an accumulation of them” (ibid) makes him uncomfortable: individually, people can be much kinder and accepting of other people than when they are part of a group. For instance, after Cal’s house is burnt down, a protestant woman comes over to help, crying that “it makes you ashamed to be a Protestant” (MacLavery 73). Additionally, Marcella tells Cal that the Morton family “always thought of themselves as liberal Protestants” (MacLavery 114), while Mrs. Morton does not want to come across as “bigoted” (ibid) against Catholics. Cal feels at home on the farm, despite it being a Protestant area. Although some critics “[denigrate] Cal’s work on the farm as Catholic subservience to Protestant landholders” (Shumaker qtd. in Cameron Moore 31), Cal feels welcomed and at home with people who suffered from violence too (Cameron Moore 33). Cal helps Cyril with various tasks on the farm, and they become friends because Cyril has “nothing against Catholic people. It’s the religion itself [he doesn’t] like” (MacLavery 67). Cal makes friends, even though the people he becomes friends with theoretically belong to a community which is defined by religion. With his new friends, however, he shares not religion but a similar idea about what the Troubles are about: with his friends, Cal contributes to Ricoeur’s cultural memory, because they agree that all sides made mistakes, create coherence among them which results in peaceful cohabitation.

Cal, then, focuses very much on the individual and not on the forced religious identity people may have, thereby breaking the stereotypes of the two sides of the conflict. As Cal puts it into words,

“it was the people of Ulster that were heroic, caught between the jaws of two opposing ideals trying to grind each other out of existence” (MacLavery 82). Catholic and Protestant identities cannot stand each other, but it is possible that, once group identity is taken out of the equation, individuals can and should be friends.

Lies of Silence

In *Lies of Silence*, society does not seem to be ruptured at first sight. Michael Dillon distances himself from the conflict by not actively practising his religion. He is not really concerned with the Troubles, and does not identify with either Protestants or Catholics. Like “ninety per cent of the people of Ulster, Protestant and Catholic” (Moore 69), he just wants to “get on with his life without any interference from men in woollen masks” (ibid). For him, the conflict is merely something that the poor people of Belfast have to sort out (Moore 21), while he lives comfortably in a part of town that is “quiet, unpublicised, middle-class Belfast where Protestants and Catholics lived side by side, joined by class, by economic ties, even by intermarriage, in a way the poor never could” (Moore 22). Dillon does not “believe in God, in religion, or in any order or meaning to this world” (Moore 50) although he is a Catholic by birth and education (Moore 60). Not only Dillon lives this way, but all his neighbours are very friendly towards each other despite having different religious backgrounds. Such a peaceful relationship among neighbours is possible according to Dillon because, for instance, “Mr Harbinson was, by the sound of him, almost certainly a Protestant, but, equally likely, he was no more a religious Protestant than Dillon was a religious Catholic” (Moore 69). Like in *Cal*, it is possible to live close together peacefully, as long as religion is not practised. As a richer man, Dillon has the luxury of not needing to be concerned with the matters of housing and voting which were a major cause of the Troubles. Therefore, Dillon does not need to choose a side, and as a result the conflict merely exists on Dillon’s television.

Dillon’s not being involved in the Troubles shows a lack of interest in his fellowmen’s plights, and prevents a feeling of belonging to Northern Irish society. This is for instance shown in how he

dismisses the Troubles as merely quarrels among the poorer people (Moore 21). Also, Dillon agrees with his mother, who is “as Irish as anybody, but [she] can’t see how any of this is worth dying for” (Moore 136). They identify as Northern Irish people, but they do not feel Northern Irish enough to be passionate about the situation or their country. This attitude results into disinterest in anything that does not concern them, and leads to panic and paranoia when the conflict changes from something abstract into something far more personal. Because Dillon does not have people who understand his traumatic experiences, he feels alone and misunderstood, just like Ricoeur warns what will happen if people do not share in a collective identity with others.

To Dillon’s wife Moira it is clear that that Northern Ireland is not a united society. The attackers denounce her as “an enemy of Ireland” (Moore 77) after she holds a passionate speech about freedom and her hatred of violence. She calls their captors out on their behaviour, and argues that they are “just a bunch of crooks, IRA or UDA, Protestants or Catholics, [they]’re all in the same business” (Moore 61). However, it is not her personal decision to oppose the IRA, but it is the side the IRA forces on her the moment she voices her critique. Moira, however, accepts the label, and while Dillon is ready to leave Ireland, Moira refuses to “let the IRA push [them] around” (Moore 132). To fight the IRA, she appears on national television because “someone has to speak up [. . .] against both sides – the UDA as well. Them and the IRA, there’s no difference” (Moore 166). Moira has made her decision to fight violence and injustice inflicted on the Irish people, and she stays behind “to do something about the IRA” (Moore 196). Moira recognises that all individuals suffer from violence, and that the good cause does not matter any more (Mehrotra 167). Dillon argues that even if the IRA leaves Ireland, it will not change anything because “the Protestants here are never going to share jobs and power with the Catholics unless they’re forced into it” (Moore 196-7). Moira counters that nothing will ever change “unless we [i.e. the Irish] get rid of the IRA first” (Moore 197). Moira decides to stop being a passive bystander and starts to fight back by taking on the groups who inflict violence on the Irish people. In order to achieve more, she starts looking for “something, some group, to get [her] started” (Moore 196), because she knows that alone she cannot achieve anything. She looks for

a group in which people all have the same ideas of what the Troubles are about, sharing a cultural memory in a smaller community, which gives Moira a sense of belonging whereas her husband is left alone. Moira's desire to be part of a group with a similar background is in line with what is discussed in section 1.2, which discusses the importance of a shared identity in order to overcome trauma.

Apart from criticising citizens who do not want to make a personal statement regarding their position in the conflict, the novel also comments on the British Government's behaviour. Several times, the government's role in the conflict is mentioned and commented on by the characters. After Moira has spoken out against the IRA on television, Dillon is worried the IRA will find him. However, his lover Andrea reassures him that Belfast "is part of Great Britain. [. . .] And the powers that be in Britain are pretty good at keeping the Press in line" (Moore 192), by which she means that the British Government has the power to protect her citizens if she wants to. Originally, England sent military troops to protect the Catholics from the Protestants (Darby), but Dillon knows that "under British supervision, torture had been carried out" (Moore 126). This behaviour is not in accordance with the role of protector but of suppressor. Although Northern Ireland's "roads and public services [are] far superior to those in the Irish Republic" (ibid) and there are constant "reminder[s] that this part of Ireland was a part of Great Britain" (ibid), there is something not quite right. Dillon fondly remembers Belfast as a city with "Protestant prejudices and Catholic cant" (Moore 199) while "its copycat English ways [are] as incongruous as a top hat on a Tonga king" (ibid). It seems that Dillon argues that people who live in Northern Ireland belong to Ulster, not to either England or Ireland. They form a society on their own, characterised by their unique features such as religion and behaviour, sharing Ricoeur's collective identity because among themselves they share a past in which England does not belong. *Lies of Silence* shows the difficult relationship between England and Northern Ireland, but the novel also shows some of the positive contributions such as infrastructure. Dillon seems to appreciate the status quo and the profits that come with being a part of the United Kingdom. However, Dillon also blames England for the Troubles, arguing that the Troubles are rooted in

the lies which had made [Belfast] sick with a terminal sickness of bigotry and injustice, lies told over the years to poor Protestant working people about the Catholics, lies told to poor Catholic working people about the Protestants, lies from parliaments and pulpits, lies at rallies and funeral orations, and, above all, the lies of silence from those in Westminster who did not want to face the injustices of Ulster's status quo. (Moore 69-70)

Dillon's expression of anger follows the invasion of his home by masked IRA members. His anger at the lies leading to the Troubles shows Dillon's feelings towards England's role in the conflict, as the government did nothing to solve the tension in Northern Ireland. This is the political element O'Donoghue refers to when she calls *Lies of Silence* a "political thriller" (213). Blaming England for the conflict instead of pointing at either the Catholics or the Protestants might be considered to be the controversy which is also attributed to *Lies of Silence* (O'Donoghue 214). The novel has "a basis of moral choice or dilemma" (O'Donoghue 228), meaning that the novel is not merely an exciting thriller about terrorism and violence in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, but it also attempts to warn the Northern Irish people that they need to make choices for themselves. Moira does this, while Dillon does not. Although England protects Dillon by controlling the press, Dillon is still angry that the government remained passive and did not help when they should have.

According to *Lies of Silence*, remaining passive and neutral is ultimately impossible in a situation like the Troubles. Those who try to remain impartial are either blamed for the conflict or killed, which happens to respectively the British government and Dillon. Moira chooses a side when she can no longer avoid becoming involved, and looks for people who think alike by joining a group. However, this choice is not based on religion, because Moira fights violence regardless by whom the violence is practiced. Like Moira, the English government needs to become involved in the war as well, but has to do so by supporting the weak and poor, and not by favouring one of the two religious communities.

The International

Protagonist Danny is hard to place, because it is difficult to pinpoint his religion: his parents are “outstanding in only one aspect: in this most God-obsessed of cities they had lost their religion” (Patterson 27). Additionally, Danny explains “one had been born Catholic, the other Protestant – in the absence of grandparents I was never quite sure which was which” (ibid). In Danny’s life, religion therefore does not play an important part, even though Danny lives in a city where “swings were chained to their frames on Saturday night and not let down till Monday morning” (Patterson 15) to keep the Sunday rest. By making Danny averse to religion, Patterson breaks down the stereotypical division of Catholics and Protestants in Irish fiction, which is one of *The International’s* aims (Patterson and Mills 120). However, not only does Danny not feel part of any religious community, he also does not fit with either of homosexuality or heterosexuality, because Danny is bisexual. In reality, bisexuality is often less well understood than homosexuality and heterosexuality, because “dichotomous binary understandings of sexuality [...] position homosexuality and heterosexuality as the only valid forms of identity” (Hayfield, Clarke and Halliwell 355). Thus, by describing Danny as a bisexual man, *The International* makes clear that once more Danny does not belong to a fixed group, and because of both his bisexuality and his lack of religion, Danny is made into an “intermediar[y] between both islands” (Rodrigo 92), like a bridge between the binary definitions regarding religion or sexuality.

The hotel is a safe place for anyone who needs it, but the Troubles enter it nevertheless. The International is a safe place where people can drink, talk about their lives, and meanwhile crack jokes about the United Kingdom (Patterson 136) or watch a soap opera with Russian subtitles, which “we’ll all have to learn to speak [. . .] one of these days” (Patterson 37). The ambiance is friendly and relaxed, which illustrates and underlines the idea that The International is a safe place for everyone. However, at some point the tension between Catholics and Protestants also influences life inside the hotel, most notably when Jamesie, one of Danny’s colleagues, addresses Danny as “you Prods” (Patterson 196). Danny is shocked to be referred to in this way, and reacts surprised: “Prods? The

word caught me like a sharp stick under the ribs. No one in The International had ever made such a direct mention of religion to me" (ibid). Jamesie, however, does "not consider he had spoken at all out of turn" (ibid) and dismisses it as a joke. Not amused, Danny replies that he is not a Protestant, to which Jamesie responds: "Of course you're not. And I am not a Catholic. [. . .] What school did you go to?" (Patterson 197). This concurs with Rodrigo's ideas about inherited cultural and historical memory (Rodrigo 88-9): especially in Northern Ireland, "national identity carries along a weight linked both to the past and the future, to historical memory and political aspirations" (Rodrigo 88), meaning that people are born into a certain community which has its own historical tradition. To prevent a dramatic scene, Jamesie insists it was just a joke, adding, "I forgot, we're none of us anything. [. . .] We're International barmen" (Patterson 197). Instead of seeking things that drive their community apart, Jamesie tries to search for a more collective identity, namely the one in which they are all barmen, undefined by religion (see also section 1.2 on Ricoeur's cultural memory). However, the incident leaves Danny shaken, because he realises that "the International was no protection" (Patterson 197): although Danny at first thinks that the International is a neutral space, he is made painfully aware that it is not safe at all, because the prejudices which disrupt society outside the hotel are starting to disrupt life inside the hotel as well.

The International only pays specific attention to the Troubles in the last chapter, when Danny reminisces on the end of the Troubles. He mentions the moment when ceasefires on both the Catholic and Protestant sides were "bringing an end to what people here were in the habit of referring to, even long afterwards, as 'the last twenty-five years of violence'" (Patterson 244). He watches Gusty Spence on the news, who was allegedly the leader of the UVF and who is considered responsible for "declaring war on the IRA" (Patterson 245). Danny watches how "Gusty Spence engaged the cameras and spoke of the abject and true remorse of the Loyalist terror groups on whose behalf he was speaking" (Patterson 246). The narrator lists the names of all the people who died as a consequence of Spence's actions, for instance an innocent old woman, Matilda Gould, who lived next to the target of a bomb and who died as a result of her wounds (Patterson 245), or John

Scullion who “was killed as he walked home, late and alone” (ibid). These people all had different backgrounds but, according to *The International*, one murder is not more or less important than the other: in Ricoeur’s cultural memory, every side is equally important. Also, these few paragraphs show that *The International* is focused on remembering the victims, regardless of religion or background (McGuire 68).

Danny becomes aware of the influence that the Troubles have had on his life, and he admits that “it was difficult, watching these proceedings on television, to comprehend how much of an influence this dapper, gentle-sounding man’s actions had had on [his] life, on all our lives” (ibid). Although it was hard for Danny, and “it took [. . .] a while”, Danny ultimately believes that Spence’s remorse is real, and he is able to forgive the man and all the others who committed violence. Danny creates a narrative, which is necessary in the healing process according to Derrida (see section 1.3). He places everything in a timeline and is able to close off the period of the Troubles. He urges the reader to remember the “holes which no amount of words can fill” (Patterson 246), namely those who passed away: “we’re powerful people for remembering here, I hope that’s one thing we won’t forget” (ibid).

Comparing the Three Novels

All three novels situate the origin of the Troubles in Northern Ireland’s torn society. Catholics oppose Protestants, and often the characters have to choose a side. Dillon and Moira, as well as the British Government, have to distance themselves from a passive attitude towards the Troubles. Dillon, who is incapable of deciding which side he wants to support, is killed while Moira, who speaks out against the violence, continues to live. In *Cal*, belonging to a certain community is considered dangerous, because belonging to a group defined by religion or political affiliations will reduce the thoughts of the individual to merely black-and-white group dogmas. It is, however, possible for two groups to live together peacefully as long as religion is absent, because religion is an alienating factor. Politics would be alienating too, but in the novels there is less attention to political differences. In *Lies of*

Silence, it is strongly discouraged to ignore the situation, because it indicates a lack of interest in Northern Ireland's problems and causes disunity in society. *Lies of Silence* is much more politically inclined because the Northern Irish people themselves have to change the situation, regardless of religion.

Like *Cal*, *The International* also discourages clinging to the binary identities which have shaped the Troubles. Forgiveness and remembering those who have died is more important than nursing old grudges and resentments, and Danny's choices make clear that this is a possibility. This could be accounted for by realising that *The International* is a novel written after the Troubles. The novel's main objective is to leave the Troubles in the past and move on forward to create a better future, together as a Northern Irish community. In *The International*, friendship between the two groups is difficult to achieve but necessary in the healing process, because peace and a cultural memory remains a goal to be achieved through forgiveness and remembrance of the victims on both sides.

There seems to be no difference in opinions on the belonging to a community among people of different religious backgrounds. Cal and Dillon, who are Catholics, want the same things as Danny, even though Danny is a Protestant. They want a life in peace, without animosity and violence, and they are willing to put aside their religious and political differences if it means the Troubles and the violence will end.

Conclusion

This thesis was concerned with the role and consequences of traumatic memories in literature centred on the Northern Ireland Troubles (1968 - 1998). According to Freud, Ricoeur and several others, trauma can originate from various sources, of which violence and a distorted sense of belonging due to a ruptured society were the main focus of this thesis. If violence occurs, memories are created by a witness who is at that moment incapable of neatly processing them. This results in a scrambled view of the past, present and future. When these memories of trauma are repressed, they remain an influence on everyday life until they make normal life almost impossible. If people do not have anyone with whom they can share their memories, they will feel alone and marginalised. A collective memory, then, becomes essential because it validates all the stories and viewpoints on a conflict, and creates a healthy atmosphere in which victims are enabled to leave their past behind and move forward. As shown in Chapter One, it is possible to recover from memories of trauma by facing and investigating these memories, and to order them into a coherent narrative so that the past will no longer invade the present. Literature can help with this process, establishing a collective identity, in which people share a historical narrative, and adding to the collective memory.

Trauma features heavily in novels set in Northern Ireland during Troubles, most notably trauma resulting from violence and a loss of a sense of belonging. Three novels from different periods of the conflict show different ways of handling trauma, although *Cal*, *Lies of Silence* and *The International* concur on many points regarding plots and themes. Despite having significantly different years of publication, the novels show surprisingly similar views on what the consequences of trauma can be for everyday life, although they differ in their suggestions on how to heal from trauma.

MacLaverty's *Cal* (1983) focuses on the road to redemption, in which the characters have to carry the burden of the trauma themselves. In order to stop the interrupting nature of the past, Cal has to face the consequences of his deeds, and gratefully he accepts punishment at the end of the

novel. This acceptance stops memories of violence from interrupting his life, so that Cal can live normally again. According to *Cal*, religion is the root of the conflict, which can be stopped when people cease to be defined by religion. However, by showing various ways in which Protestants and Catholics can interact peacefully, the novel is optimistic about the future.

Moore's *Lies of Silence* (1990) focuses on the necessity of the Irish people to become involved in the conflict. The novel shows that the Irish have to stand up for their beliefs, and that they need to speak up for the cause of justice. Religion should not play any role in this, because both the UVF, which has mainly Protestant members, and IRA, which is mostly supported by Catholics, are shown to be wrong in the wrong as their violence, inflicted for the sake of religion, affects innocent people. As such, *Lies of Silence* is a rather political novel because it scrutinises both sides of the conflict as well as the role of the British Government. If people do not speak up, the past will continue to haunt them, concurring with Freud's theories on traumatic memories.

Patterson's *The International* (1999) focuses more on the duty of society to remember the victims and the violence, while urging the reader to forgive the people who fought on either side. The Belfast that existed before the Troubles is reimagined with the purpose of helping people to recover from violence and find again what defines them as Northern Irish. The novel does not define Belfast's inhabitants by their political or religious affiliations or beliefs, but by their human qualities, just like *Cal*, which the narrator shows by writing about the patrons of the bar to give them a background and centralise their stories. In *The International*, violence also interrupts life, even though it only becomes clear afterwards. Even safe public spaces such as a hotel slowly become part of the Troubles, although people do try to remain neutral. Also, *The International* tries to show that the Irish did not lose their humanity during the Troubles, and that they need to acknowledge this human essence again in order to create a healthy future together.

The root of the novels' different views on the Troubles can be sought in the dates of publication and in the genre of the novel. With regard to genre, *Cal* is a love story which is centred on Cal's search for redemption so he can be worthy of Marcella. The novel helps the reader to retain a

clear conscience and to remain hopeful throughout the struggles and the violence. *Lies of Silence*, which is much more political, focuses on ending the violence, which can only be done by calling out to the government for help and showing that people need to stand up because they can influence the conflict. *The International* portrays the people from Belfast by all giving them a personal story. It is a much more historical novel than the other two: the past is documented and made finite.

Written at different stages of the conflict, the novels carry out different meanings and purposes in their plots: *Cal* (1983) was published in the middle of the conflict, *Lies of Silence* (1990) was published later, when peace negotiations began to form, while *The International* (1990) was written after the Troubles had ended. These novels, then, show that different times call for different measures, and that the thoughts about society and towards violence have changed during the three decades of the Troubles. The focus on what is truly important changed as well: *Cal* focuses on personal redemption, *Lies of Silence* on personal responsibility as well as the government's, while *The International* urges people to set their grievances towards other people aside to focus on remembering the victims. The novels show that the Troubles are more complicated than Protestants opposing Catholics, which contradicts the popular notion that all Irish people were involved because of their religion.

It is striking that *Cal* and *Lies of Silence* focus on Catholic protagonists, whereas Danny in *The International* is Protestant. One might expect that their views on the Troubles and their wishes for a better life may differ, because Catholics wanted different changes for Northern Ireland than Protestants. However, their opinions on the conflict are strikingly similar: all protagonists want to live peacefully and are willing to overlook or ignore their religion if it means the Troubles will be less severe, and people from both religions are equally influenced by the violence that has been inflicted on them by the Troubles.

Because only three novels have been discussed, the scope of this research and its conclusions are limited. Further research could expand the analysis of the theme of sex and sexuality with regard to trauma and its position in the healing process might yield interesting results: Cal sleeps with his

victim's wife, Danny is bisexual and Dillon has an affair, meaning all three novels refer to sexual behaviour which deviates from the norm. Another suggestion for further research might include a closer look at the role of music and literature or art in general, as Cal plays the guitar until he meets Marcella, while Marcella is interested in paintings of a suffering Jesus Christ. Dillon used to be a poet who gave up because he felt he was not good enough. However, in *The International* art of any kind seems to be absent, which could invalidate a comparison with this particular novel, but a different selection might offer interesting insights.

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