'Images ... at the absolute edge of memory': memory and temporality in Hidden Symptoms, One by One in the Darkness, and Time Present and Time Past

Lehner, S. (2022). 'Images ... at the absolute edge of memory': memory and temporality in *Hidden Symptoms*, *One by One in the Darkness*, and *Time Present and Time Past*. In A. Fogarty, & M. Morales-Ladrón (Eds.), *Deirdre Madden: new critical perspectives* (pp. 17-31). Manchester University Press. https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526118936.00008

Published in:
Deirdre Madden: new critical perspectives

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal

Publisher rights
Copyright 2022 Manchester University Press. This work is made available online in accordance with the publisher's policies. Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.

Open Access
This research has been made openly available by Queen's academics and its Open Research team. We would love to hear how access to this research benefits you. – Share your feedback with us: http://go.qub.ac.uk/oa-feedback

Download date:28. Apr. 2025

‘Images … at the absolute edge of memory’: Memory and Temporality in *Hidden Symptoms*, *One by One in the Darkness*, and *Time Present and Time Past*

Stefanie Lehner

As Helen Dunmore astutely observes in her review of *Time Present and Time Past* (2013), Deirdre Madden’s works ‘have long been saturated with ideas of memory’s relationship to time’ (Dunmore, 2013). Akin to T.S. Eliot, in the fragment from ‘Burnt Norton’ that Madden uses as the epigraph to this novel, her fiction offers ‘a world of speculation’ to explore memory’s relationship to the past and the present as well as the future:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past. (Eliot, 1979: 13)

Her exploration of the impact of the past on the present is exemplified in her two ‘Troubles’ novels – *Hidden Symptoms* (1986) and *One by One in the Darkness* (1996) – both of which explore the haunting legacies of the Northern Irish political conflict on families and individuals and may be considered trauma narratives.[1] However, memory and temporality are also major concerns of her last work that is set at the height of the Celtic Tiger’s economic success, which is likewise imbued with a strong sense of the future. In all three novels, characters are faced with a past which intrudes into the present in quasi-traumatic form and has notable visual qualities. At the same time, the narrator drives these narratives forwards, especially *Time Present* towards the future. An apt correlative for the way in which the dialectic between the form and subject matter of these novels is captured by Madden in visual images is Walter Benjamin’s thought-image of the ‘Angel of History’, whose ‘face is turned towards the past’, while a storm ‘irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned’ (1999a: 249). For Benjamin, ‘[t]his storm is what we call progress’ (Ibid.). Benjamin’s image constructs a notion of history ‘that looks backwards, rather than forward’, Susan Buck-Morss notes, which ‘provides dialectical contrast to the futurist myth of historical progress (which can be only sustained by forgetting what has happened)’ (1989: 95).

---

[1] See Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (2003: 145-161) and Graham Dawson (2012: 139-158).

Benjamin's concern with the past is echoed in the focus on past memories in Madden's work, which can be understood as part of a wider shift in the structure of Western understandings of temporality (Huyssen, 2000). Aleida Assmann suggests that this turn towards the past should be seen as a reaction to the modern 'idea of irreversible progress and future-oriented action' (2013: 43-44). In this regard, it is significant that the recent historical developments in both parts of Ireland, with which these three novels are concerned, have been repeatedly characterized as progress narratives: the Republic's economic boom has been credited with 're-inventing' the twenty-six counties from an economic casualty to 'a shining light and beacon to the world' (Kirby *et al*, 2002; Ray and Padraic White, 2000: 360), whereas the Northern Irish Peace Process, in particular the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, was seen to herald 'the end of a long, dark period in Irish history, and the beginning of something completely new' (Ruane, 1999: 146). I want to suggest that there is thus a specific ethical impulse behind Madden's exploration of temporalities and memory: the novels under consideration here create memory images that challenge or arrest the irreversible 'storm of progress', and thereby also the conventional narrative structure of chronological development, in a manner comparable to Benjamin's notion of the 'dialectical image', 'wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation' (Benjamin, 1999b: 463).

When confronted with the notion of 'inexorable time', the protagonist of *Hidden Symptoms*, queries: "But what can we *do*?" (Madden, 1986: 19). I propose that the memory images in her work stand as memorials against the act of forgetting and work to reconcile the past with the present and future. Therein, they can be related to what Pierre Nora calls *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, that are characterised by 'a will to remember' (1989: 19). In *Family Frames*, Marianne Hirsch relates the way in which Nora's concept maps the spatiality of memory onto temporality, combining visual and verbal dimensions, to W.J.T. Mitchell's notion of the "imagetext, a double-coded system of mental storage and retrieval"' (1997: 22).[2] I argue that Madden's three novels stylistically compose such imagetexts, attesting to Benjamin's notion that 'history decays into images, not into stories' (1999b: 476). In these works, memories are embodied in physical spaces, especially domestic interiors, but most notably crystallise in images, in particular photographs, that are translated into 'prose pictures', above all in *Time Present*. Capturing the dialectic between presence and absence, photographs, as Hirsch suggests with reference to Roland Barthes' theories, 'affirm the past's existence and, in their flat two-dimensionality, they signal its unbridgeable distance' (1997: 23).

---

[2] Citing from W. J. T. Mitchell (1994). *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 192.

In her lecture 'Looking for Home', Madden deploys spatial imagery to describe her writing as an uncovering of images that are perched at the edge between memory and forgetting through an attentive process of listening and interpretation: 'For me, writing is a way not just of getting at something, but of getting back to something. It is like images that play at the absolute edge of memory. It is like hearing someone speaking on the other side of a wall and listening carefully, trying to make out what is being said' (2000-01: 30). Madden admits the influence of Marcel Proust on her work, whom she calls 'that great artist of time and memory' (2000-01: 32). Like Proust, Madden is aware that she cannot restore the past through what he calls intellect, but only glimpse it through instinct and imagination, which are often imbued with nostalgia and mourning. According to Svetlana Boym, nostalgia is not so much a longing for a past home, real or imaginary, but 'actually a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress' (2007: 7-8). For Assmann, nostalgia and trauma are two antithetical but related reasons 'for the recent interest in the past and the various attempts to reinsert it into the present' (2013: 53). Despite their differences, trauma and nostalgia are linked in representing problematic engagements with the past (Legg, 2004: 103) and, in their refusal to let the past be completely past, they combat the narrative of irreversible time and progress. This reading suggests that the memory images in Madden's three works oscillate between the traumatic and the nostalgic, yet ultimately help in reconciling the past and the present.

Hidden Symptoms and *One by One* open with memory images that are pervaded with a sense of 'absolute loneliness' (Madden, 2014: 33). Both works are concerned with how to cope with the haunting legacy of the recent loss of a close family member two years prior to the setting of the narration – in the former, this concerns the brutal sectarian murder of the Theresa's twin brother, Francis, while the latter work deals with the assassination of the father of the Quinn family. *Hidden Symptoms* opens with Theresa's childhood memory of 'a Bavarian barometer': 'It was so sad that always when Hans was out Heidi was in and vice versa: never together, always alone, so near, so far, so lonely' (Madden, 2014: 9). This image of isolation and loneliness comes to resonate an 'undeniable truth' for her, cross-connecting her past, present, and future in anticipating her condition after her brother's death (Madden, 2014: 10).

The novel centres on Theresa, who is currently studying English at Queen's University, Belfast, and parallels her attempts to come to terms with her loss with those of her recent acquaintance, Robert, an English graduate and aspiring writer. Theresa and Robert lost their fathers when they were very young. While Robert has only very 'faint' memories of his, Theresa has recourse to 'an eclectic array of photographs of her father' (Madden, 2014: 38, 68). 'A black-and-white photograph of her parents' wedding' only stresses for Theresa 'how far in the past the event had been', offering her 'no satisfactory substitute for experience' (Madden, 2014: 67-8). This image of her parents' past happiness does not allow her to access the past but, instead, affirms its irreversible pastness, as Barthes suggests: 'Not only is the Photograph never, in essence, a memory … but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory' (2000: 91). But while photographs emphasise the irretrievability of the past, they also, at the same time, challenge that temporality by their capacity to 'bring the past back in form of a ghostly revenant', and to reaffirm the presence of what is now absent (Hirsch, 1997: 20). Her favourite picture of her father shows him 'so young and happy, as unaware of death as he was of the eye of the camera' (Madden, 2014: 68). Contemplating it, Theresa notices

> a cigarette between his fingers; moments later he would have extinguished it … moving away from the moment of the photograph and towards his own death. … She would have given a year of her life to know the day and hour at which that photograph had been taken. She felt such knowledge would have given her the power to pluck and save her father from the flux of time. (Madden, 2014: 69)

The cigarette in the picture becomes a Barthesan *punctum.*[3] What 'pricks' Theresa's interest, in Barthes' words, is not a mere affective detail of the photograph but Time itself (Barthes, 2000: 96). Barthes' experience of observing in a photograph of a young man about to be hanged 'death in the future' is echoed in Theresa's reaction (Ibid.). Theresa's desire 'to pluck and save her father from the flux of time' seeks to affirm the significance of this *punctum*, which, in combining the past and the future, challenges and, in a way, dialectically arrests, the inexorable narrative of death. Invested with a 'symbolic aura', the photograph of her father becomes a *lieu de mémoire*, which functions for her as a means of blocking 'the work of forgetting' (Nora, 1989: 19). Theresa recognises that this desire to preserve memory against forgetting and annihilation also underpins her mother's tendency to romanticise the past in her recollections of her honeymoon in Clifden (Madden, 2014: 70). This nostalgic yearning for a different era is, as Boym argues, also a refusal 'to surrender to the irreversibility of time' (2007: 8) and the inexorable reality of death.

---

[3] In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes differentiates between the *studium* of a photograph, that is 'a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment … but without special acuity', and its *punctum* (meaning wound, prick, mark): the element which breaks (or punctuates) the *studium* as it 'rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [the observer]'. For Barthes, 'a photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)' (Barthes, 2000: 26-7).

In the novel, Theresa is time and again both haunted and somewhat consoled by memories of Francis, in particular their trip to Italy two summers earlier. These recollections are often triggered by sensory stimuli, such as 'the smell of sandalwood' (Madden, 2014: 83), and take the form of quasi-Proustian *mémoires involontaire*. The immediacy and authenticity of these past memories are at one point expressed through the sudden switch to the present tense and a shift in narrative perspective to an omniscient, distant narrative voice notably different to the usual focalisation from the point of view of the main characters:

> As one walks across St Peter's Square in Rome, the four rows of Doric pillars which form Bernini's Colonnade merge and shift so that they seem to increase then decrease in number and their colour changes from golden-grey to deepest black. There are, however, two small stones in the vast, cobbled square ... and, when one stands upon these stones, all four rows fall into order, so that one sees *only* a row of pillars. (Madden, 2014: 52–3, my emphasis)

While this experience triggered theological reflections for Francis and Theresa, the description may also be read as a commentary on memory. As Theresa has experienced several times, there is a certain instability and indeterminacy about memories, which can change over time; for instance, when she recovered her ugly, old doll that she remembered as beautiful (Madden, 2014: 10), or when she realises that she has forgotten what her old school had really looked like (Madden, 2014: 23). However, from a certain (nostalgic) perspective, the different versions of the past may often merge into one overarching image, which, as Theresa knows from her mother's nostalgic reconstructions, *only* offer a 'partial' truth (Madden, 2014: 70).[4]

Nonetheless, some of her other memory images are able to fuse 'the past and the present' and make them into 'a timeless perfection', in a manner that seems to provide an auratic experience of Time itself. This is the case when Theresa remembers her experience of St Mark's Square in Venice, where she was to meet Francis (Madden, 2014: 85). Theresa's recollection fuses the more distant and the recent past, zooming in on Francis's face. Her experience evokes Benjamin's notion of the aura as 'a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of a distance, no matter how close it may be' (Benjamin, 2005: 518). For Benjamin, the human face in photographs is the last residuum of aura. As Kathrin Yacavone notes, is is through his emphasis on 'the viewer's relation to the … referent' that the aura becomes bound to what Benjamin describes as the 'cult of remembrance of dead or absent loved ones' (Yacavone, 2012: 67; Benjamin, 2003: 258). Similar to the conjuring up of the barometer at the beginning of the novel, Theresa's memory image fuses different emotions over time, merging past(s) with the present as well as anticipating her condition, when she is confronted with the loss of her brother, in the future perfect: 'As she watched him move across the the damp marble towards her, she felt a sweep of love which was the sole complement to the loneliness she would feel before the statue in Rome, and this loneliness and love would be fused together in the black moment of grief when she learnt he was dead' (Madden, 2014: 85). These memories stand as memorials to Francis and allow Theresa to challenge the irreversible, inexorable passage of time imposed by the narrative that, despite these recurrent flashbacks, propels itself forward in time: in a way, her memories 'do' something, namely they preserve the love she feels for him against danger and her own 'capacity for forgetfulness' (Madden, 2014: 50). While Theresa describes her own feelings about his death at one stage as 'a wall, a pit, a hole' (Madden, 2014: 49), the auratic experience of his face in the memory image restores and recalls her real emotions for Francis.

The inability to come to terms with traumatic reality is symbolised by the novel's recurring use of images of 'reflection' (Kennedy-Andrews, 2003: 150). For instance, in the section following Theresa's memories of Italy, the other protagonist, Robert, contemplates the reflection of the ‘perfect image’ of his room and himself in the window at night, finding the absence of feelings and emotions in his shadow ‘liberating’ (Madden, 2014: 88). His desire to ‘be dissolved into nothingness’ stands in contrast to Theresa’s embrace of her feelings for her brother. It also denotes a nostalgic view that is immune to the vicissitudes of time. Significantly, at the end of the novel, Theresa wonders ‘How long would it be … until she could go beyond reflection’ (Madden, 2014: 141). Turning ‘her back upon the mirror’, she decides to face the cold world of reality, and symbolically starts to ‘rekindle the dying fire’ (Madden, 2014: 142), suggesting her reconciliation with immutable, irreversible time and her acceptance of the present.

---

[4] This reading takes inspiration from Michael Parker's thoughtful analysis of the scene (Parker, 2000: 89).

Similarly to *Hidden Symptoms*, *One By One* opens with a memory image pervaded by solitude: ‘Home was a huge sky; it was flat fields of poor land fringed with hawthorn and alder. It was birds in flight; it was columns of midges like smoke in a summer dusk. It was grey water; it was mad wind; it was a solid stone house where the silence was uncanny’ (Madden, 1996: 1). The vast loneliness of the country evoked in this passage crystallises in the alliterative ‘solid stone house’ that is home and yet unhomely, saturated by an isolating silence that reverberates in the novel’s ending, which furnishes its title: ‘In the solid stone house, the silence was uncanny. One by one in the darkness, the sisters slept’ (Madden, 1996: 181). The circularity that is suggested in this repetition contrasts with the temporal progression of the novel that chronicles one week in the lives of the three sisters and their mother, shortly before the declaration of the 1994 ceasefires, two years after their father’s murder. Yet, this apparent linearity is, at the same time, undercut by alternating chapters that offer memories of the sisters’ past in the 1960s and 70s.

The novel begins with Cate’s return home to announce the news of her pregnancy to her family. The idea of homecoming in the novel must be partly understood as an expression of nostalgia: ‘for a lost home, a lost past, a lost childhood’ (Kennedy-Andrews 2003: 156). In contrast to the uncanny home of the opening, the childhood abode that is evoked in these retrospective chapters is a place of safety and security that is associated with a different temporality and rhythm:

> For the pattern of their lives was as predictable as the seasons. The regular round of necessity was broken by celebrations and feasts: Christmas, Easter, family birthdays. The scope of their lives was tiny but it was profound, and to them, it was immense.

> The physical bounds of their world were confined to little more than a few fields and houses, but they knew these places with the deep, unconscious knowledge that a bird or a fox might have for its habitat. (Madden, 1996: 74-5)

Space and time collapse here as childhood time becomes almost indistinguishable from an idea of home marked by the circular regularity of seasons, customs, communal forms of commemoration, and knowledgeable communities – what Pierre Nora terms a '*milieu de mémoire'*.

Yet, as Kennedy-Andrews argues, this sense of timeless nostalgia can only be preserved by ignoring the sectarian-political reality that encroaches on the lives of the three sisters and the personal, domestic space of 'home', culminating in the Loyalist shooting of their father, Charlie, that took place in the kitchen of their Uncle Brian, who lives next door. While the kitchen in their own house is preserved as a shrine in their father's memory, the one in Brian's house has been completely modernised in an attempt to eradicate the horror that took place there. Nonetheless, both kitchen spaces work as *lieux de mémoire* for the family members and consistently remind them of Charlie's absence and brutal murder: while one is imbued with a melancholic attachment to a timeless memory of a happier past, the other is marked by loss and trauma. The attempted erasure of the horrific event gestures towards the family's actual inability to come to terms with what happened there. The eldest sister, Helen, is most strongly affected by her father's death and remains ultimately dissociated from the lost world of her childhood (Madden, 1996: 21-22).

Akin to Theresa, Helen's main access to memories of her father is through photographs. For both, these function as much more than just *memento mori*, reminders of their death and absence: the direct connection with the material presence of these photographed bodies works to certify the presence of fathers and authenticates their existence. As Barthes suggests, 'Every photograph is a certificate of presence', which confronts us with 'reality in a past state: at once the past and the real' (2000: 87, 82). In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes searches through family pictures after the death of his mother, 'looking for the truth of the face [he] had loved'; he finds it in a photograph of her mother as a five-year-old girl standing in a Winter Garden (2000: 67). As he describes it, this image 'gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance, just as Proust experienced it one day' (2000: 70). In a comparable manner, the 'snapshot' of her father that Helen finds in her mother's house 'captured his kindliness' and triggers involuntary memories of exactly that characteristic when he helped her with her car the last time she saw him before he was killed (Madden, 1996: 26-7). It also reminds her of 'a photograph of herself and her father' (Ibid.) at her graduation, which Cate later finds in Helen's living room; this image captures 'the affection between them' and makes Cate remember the impact his death had on Helen, leaving her, in the words of her cousin, in 'pieces' (Madden, 1996: 87).

These photographs of Charlie affirm a past reality – his kindness, the love and affection between his daughter(s) and himself, as well as the family's general sense of happiness, harmony, and security – that Helen is no longer able to access in her memories or imagination. She is haunted by the traumatic event of her father's assassination; when she tires to sleep, 'a different image unrolled inexorable in her mind, repeated constantly, like a loop of film but sharper than that, more vivid, and running at just a fraction of a second slower than normal time, which gave it the heavy feel of a nightmare' (Madden, 1996: 180). At the close of the novel, Helen is still completely subsumed by 'her grief, a grief she could scarcely bear' (Madden, 1996: 181), unable to recover from the traumatic event. However, while the novel – in structure and content – certainly, like Benjamin's angel, faces the past, it also tries to offer some redemptive glimpses of the future. It is particularly Cate's pregnancy that offers hope as the baby may restore the gaping absence that Charlie left behind: it becomes a symbol for of a new beginning and life.

Initially, *Time Present* offers a notable contrast to *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One* in its examination of the visible and hidden layers of family life in 2006 Dublin. Even more than the two previous novels, it provides a series of images to meditate on the interplay between time and memory, nostalgia and trauma. Éilís Ní Dhuibhne observes in her review that 'the novel doesn't so much tell a story as provide a snapshot of the extended Buckley family at an interesting juncture in Ireland's history, the final year of the boom' (Ní Dhuibhne 2015). Like Benjamin's angel, its protagonist, the middle-aged financial advisor Fintan, feels caught up in a storm of progress: 'Sometimes he feels he can almost hear time rushing past him; it is like a kind of unholy wind' (Madden, 2013: 67). One day, after dinner, Fintan asks his family for a moment's silence as a means of 'stopping time, of working against just this rush of life that he finds so disturbing. He wanted to keep the moment, to preserve it … to make something that they might all remember' (Ibid.). Given its *fin de siècle* setting, it is notable that the novel is filled with *lieux de mémoire* that serve to 'stop time, to block the work of forgetting'

(Nora, 1989: 19). For instance, the home of Christy, the deceased husband of Fintan's Aunt Beth, which now houses his wife and Fintan's sister, Martina, functions as a repository for the past. While the house has changed with its new inhabitants, it has 'still that same air of the past that Fintan remembers from his first visits here, of the quality of time itself seeming different in these rooms' (Madden, 2013: 51). His wife, Colette, recalls her first visit to Christy's house as akin to 'going back in time, like stumbling into the pages of a story book' (Madden, 2013: 45). Refusing 'to surrender to the irreversibility of time', Christy's house is expressive of a nostalgic longing for a different era, what Boym calls a 'time out of time' (2007: 7-8).

This nostalgic impulse is also evident in Fintan's growing obsession with early colour photography, especially autochromes, which derives from their seeming ability to 'stop time' (Madden, 2013: 78): 'They offer him a weird portal back into the past, into another world' (Madden, 2013: 110). His son Niall, who supplies him with books on the subject, exposes his nostalgic tendencies to romanticise the past, in a similar way to Theresa's mother in *Hidden Symptoms*: he quotes the lines by François Villon, '*Où sont les neiges d'antan*, eh Dad?' (Madden, 2013: 85). Explaining to his father that photographs offer 'just a construct … an idea of reality, not "reality" itself' (Madden, 2013: 78), Niall becomes one of the commentators that Barthes argues with in *Camera Lucida*: 'the Photograph, they say, is not an *analogon* of the world; what it represents is fabricated, because the photographic optic is subject to Albertian perspective (entirely historical)'. As Barthes suggests, 'this argument is futile'; for what critics, like Niall, do not recognise is the photograph's *magic* quality: 'The realists, of whom I am one … do not take the photograph for a "copy" of reality, but for an emanation of *past reality*: a *magic*, not an art' (Barthes, 2000: 88). Triggered by his intense contemplation of old photographs, Fintan himself realises this '*magic*', as it were, in the form of visual and auditory 'hallucinations and strange shifts of perception' (Madden, 2013: 193), which begin to affect his experience of time. As he starts to perceive reality like a photograph – 'The sky today is an eighteenth-century sky' (Madden, 2013: 194) – he comes to experience the 'defeat of Time' that Barthes describes as a characteristic of historical images, the almost hallucinatory experience of a future anterior 'of which death is the stake' that Theresa sensed as well (Barthes, 2000: 96). During a conversation with his boss, Fintan suddenly 'feels that he is looking at the scene from another dimension, from a point beyond time itself. He realises that he is dead. … indeed every creature now alive in the world is dead. The civilization, for want of a better word, in which he lives is over' (Madden, 2013:

195). His apprehension of 'immortality' gives him a 'cosmic gratitude' for 'the life he has been given!' (Madden, 2013: 195) – it is a reminder of his present happiness.

However, these auratic experiences of a 'strange weave of space and time' also work to confront him with a forgotten reality in his past, namely when Fintan contemplates an autochrome of 'a red apple sitting on a mirror' (Madden, 2013: 115); an image which is reproduced on the cover of the published novel. The picture triggers involuntary memories of 'his childhood in the North, where his granny had a little orchard', which literally bring him back to the past: to a traumatic event in his childhood when the moving apple trees transmuted into soldiers on foot patrol 'in camouflage fatigues', indicated by the use of present tense: 'They are moving closer, still somehow fitting in with the trees, in harmony with them, and yet also distinct now, as soldiers, as people. They are advancing inexorably towards the house. … Fintan is afraid' (Madden, 2013: 117). This memory of the soldiers intruding into the safe space of his grandmother's home resonates with one of the memorial scenes in *One By One*, when British soldiers come to gather information in the Quinn family's home (Madden, 1996: 96-7). In *Time Present*, this literal flashback, triggered by the apple autochrome, is related to another image, which plays a key role in the novel's plot development and which Fintan comes across in Beth's house, while searching through old family photos with his sister: 'It is a black and white photograph … [which] shows a farmyard with stables. … There is a group of people gathered around … Everyone in the picture is laughing, laughing wholeheartedly' (Madden, 2013: 58). This picture of 'Granny Buckley' and cousin Edward embodies for Fintan the happy summers they spent with his father's family in the North when he was a child and ended when the Northern Irish conflict became more intense. While this image denotes, on the one hand, nostalgia, it is also related to the trauma of the Troubles, which severed family ties. The way in which *Time Present* relates trauma to the Troubles affiliates it with the two previously-discussed novels, which are more directly concerned with this subject matter.

Where the picture of Granny Buckley stands as a reminder of broken family relations that Fintan and Martina try to repair at the close of the novel, another photograph, found in the same pile of family mementoes, works in a way to restore this lineage:

> a studio portrait of a young woman from the early years of the twentieth century or the end of the nineteenth. … She is clearly fully aware of her own extraordinary beauty and

> the power that gives her. But what gives Fintan pause is that she looks exactly like Martina, so much that one might almost persuade oneself that it actually *is* Martina, tricked out in the clothes and accoutrements of another era. … Even Martina herself, when Fintan hands the photograph back to her, admits that the resemblance they bear to each other is quite uncanny. (Madden, 2013: 56-7)

Martina's uncanny double reveals 'the truth of lineage' that Barthes perceives in photographs (2000: 103). Like her ancestor (who, as we later learn from the omniscient narrator, was called Agnes O'Donovan), Martina used to be secure in the power of her beauty – that is, until she was brutally date-raped by an acquaintance in London. Whereas Fintan is eager 'to find a way back into the past', Martina keeps that traumatic event locked in 'a room in her mind', buried in silence (she has not told anyone about it) and attempted oblivion (Madden, 2013: 198, 179). Yet, here again triggered by the contemplation of photographs, Martina revisits the event one night, which caused her return to Dublin to seek refuge in the house of Christy and Beth.

The novel ends with Fintan and Martina visiting their estranged cousin, Edward, and his family. As much as this encounter allows them to reconnect memories, evoked through the photograph at the farm, with reality, it also works to reconcile the past (in its nostalgic and traumatic aspects) with the present. Madden here again uses physical space to symbolise the simultaneous presence of different temporalities. For Fintan, Edward's new house seems to contain 'another house' within its shell: 'a dream-house, eternal, where the three of them are still children and Granny Buckely is still alive and always will be' (Madden, 2013: 215). Looking through the kitchen window, he notices 'the old orchard of the home-place, looking exactly as he remembered it, as if at any moment soldiers might materialise out of the trees, moving towards the house' (Madden, 2013: 217). This temporal union is also a family reunion, and 'they all feel that solid bonds of friendship and family have been established amongst them, binds they are keen to maintain' (Madden, 2013: 218). If this attests to the fact that one can repair past breaks – thereby evoking the notion of reversible time – at the close of the book, Fintan and Martina find themselves somewhat reconciled to the notion of irreversible time: the visit to those past places makes Martina aware of 'how completely over [the past] is: you can't really get at it again'. Fintan replies: 'And it can't get at you either' (Madden, 2013: 222), emphasising the safety and security that distance from the past can bring. Accepting the pastness of the past opens the present to the future – and this is what this novel does through its strong omniscient narrator who predicts not only the Republic's traumatic economic crash but also the future of Fintan's family. Interestingly, it is again a photograph that links the future to the past: the picture of the Buckely ancestor, which bears such a resemblance to Martina and 'which reconciled the past and the present' for Fintan (Madden, 2013: 10), is used by the narrator to bring the focus back to the past and then forward to the present.

In *Hidden Symptoms*, a drunken Theresa discusses the limitations of art after Auschwitz with Robert, suggesting that 'just as all the paintings and music and books in the world were unable to prevent those things happening, afterwards the artists found that they could not produce books or paintings or music which could express that horror'. Nonetheless, she argues, more and more artworks 'have been produced since that time than ever before. Because people … need stories to distract them from the passage of time' (Madden, 2014: 104). While the subject matter of Madden's work is certainly in no way comparable to the Holocaust, the memorial images and imagetexts created by her fiction examined here, especially what Ní Dhuibhne (2013) calls the 'anti-narrative' qualities of her latest work, seem, by contrast, to make us aware of Time itself. They confront us with the painful but also restorative powers of the past, and overall strive to reconcile the past with the present in order to open it to the future: for reconciliation and healing. This has specific resonance for Northern Ireland. While her last works are certainly not overtly concerned with this context, Madden admits in an interview that 'the Troubles are almost always in [my work] in some way, at some level' (Patterson 2013). The Northern Irish conflict constitutes a traumatic kernel to which she keeps returning in her fiction. Her memorial images, then, in a way, seek to make peace with the past, suggesting the need for memorials to mourn the dead. Due to the lack of consensus over the legacies of Northern Ireland's past, there is no overarching memorial for all the Troubles-dead. In *One by One*, Madden envisions such a *lieu de mémoire* through Cate Quinn:

> She imagined a room, a perfectly square room. Three of its walls, unbroken by windows, would be covered by neat rows of names, over three thousand of them; and the fourth wall would be nothing but a window. The whole structure would be build where the horizon was low, the sky huge. It would be a place which afforded dignity to memory, where you could bring your anger, as well as your grief. (Madden, 1996: 149)

This imagined memorial combines the function of remembrance and healing: it provides a space for mourning and thus closure – for the working through of anger, pain, and grief, rather than their repression or deferral. Importantly, while its three walls preserve the memory of the dead through the inscription of names, the fourth wall is symbolically open to the future. In this way, Madden's vision of a memorial recognizes the Janus-facedness of memorialisation, which is as much dedicated to the past as it is to the future.

References

Assmann, Aleida (2013). 'Transformations of the Modern Time Regime', in Chris Lorenz and Berber Bevernage (eds.), *Breaking up Time: Negotiating the Borders between Present, Past and Future.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 39-56.

Barthes, Roland (2000). *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* [1980], trans. Richard Howard. London: Vintage Books.

Benjamin, Walter (1999a). *Illuminations* [1955], trans. Harry Zohn. London: Pimlico.

— (1999b). *The Arcades Project* [*Das Passagen-Werk* (1982)], trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 463 [N3, 1].

— (2003). 'Work of Art in the Age of Reproducibility (Third Version)', *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

— (2005). 'Little History of Photography', *Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 2: 1931-1934*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Gary Smith, Howard Eiland. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Boym, Svetlana (2007). 'Nostalgia and its Discontents', *Hedgehog Review* 9.2: 7-18.

Buck-Morss, Susan (1989). *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Dawson, Graham (2012). 'Storytelling, imaginative fiction and the representation of victims of the Irish Troubles: a cultural analysis of Deirdre Madden's *One by One in the Darkness',* in Lesley Lelourec and Gráinne O'Keeffe-Vigneron (eds.), *Ireland and Victims: Confronting the Past, Forging The Future*. Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 139-158.

Dunmore, Helen (2013). Review of *Time Present and Time Past*, *Guardian*, 21 June. www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jun/21/time-present-past-madden-review. Assessed on 5 August 2015.

Eliot, T.S. (1979). *Four Quartets*. London: Faber.

Hirsch, Marianne (1997). *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Huyssen, Andreas (2000). 'Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia', *Public Culture* 12.1: 21-38.

Kennedy-Andrews, Elmer (2003). F*iction and the Northern Ireland Troubles Since 1969: (de-)constructing the north*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

Kirby, Peadar, Luke Gibbons and Michael Cronin (eds.) (2002). *Reinventing Ireland*. London: Pluto Press.

Legg, Stephen (2004). 'Memory and nostalgia', *Cultural Geographies 11*: 99–107.

MacSharry, Ray and Padraic White (2000). *The Making of the Celtic Tiger: The Inside Story of Ireland's Boom Economy*. Cork: Mercier Press.

Madden, Deirdre (1996). *One by One in the Darkness*. London: Faber and Faber.

— (2000-2001). 'Looking for Home: Time, Place, Memory', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 26.2 - 27.1: 25-33.

— (2013). *Time Present and Time Past*. London: Faber and Faber.

— (2014). *Hidden Symptoms* [1986]. London: Faber and Faber.

Ní Dhuibhne, Éilís (2013). Review of *Time Present and Time Past*, *Irish Times* 17 October. www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/time-present-and-time-past-by-deirdre-madden-1.1435448. Assessed 15 September 2015.

Nora, Pierre (1989). 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', *Representations* 26: 7-24.

Parker, Michael (2000). 'Shadows on a Glass: Self-Reflexivity in the Fiction of Deirdre Madden', *Irish University Review* 30.1: 82-102.

Patterson, Christina (2013). 'Deirdre Madden: "The Troubles are almost always in my work at some level"', *Guardian*, 14 June. www.theguardian.com/books/2013/jun/14/deirdre-madden-troubles-work. Assessed 5 June 2014.

Ruane, Joseph (1999). 'The End of (Irish) History?', in J. Ruane and Jennifer Todd (eds.), *After the Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 145-169.

Yacavone, Kathrin (2012). *Benjamin, Barthes and the Singularity of Photography*. London: Continuum.