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Mrs Dalloway

# *Trabajo Final*

## *Dolores and Peter's Memories*

*in The Hiding Place (2000) by Trezza Azzopardi  
and Mrs Dalloway (1925) by Virginia Woolf*

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TREZZA AZZOPARDI

*Dedicado especialmente  
a mis hijos, Nicolás y Joaquín,  
a quienes amo con todo mi corazón;  
y a mis padres, Alicia y Jean Marie,  
ejemplos de abnegación y entrega absoluta  
a la tarea docente y profesional.*

# *Agradecimientos*

*A mi esposo, por su apoyo constante.*

*A mi mamá, por hacer todo lo que está a su alcance  
para ayudarme en todo momento y en especial con mis hijos.*

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a darme una mano cuando más lo necesito.*

*Y a todos aquellos que me han acompañado  
y alentado en este proyecto.*

*¡Gracias!*

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## *Introduction*

*Dolores and Peter's Memories in The Hiding Place (2000) by Trezza Azzopardi and Mrs Dalloway (1925) by Virginia Woolf* inevitably leads to reflections on memory. When considering the term "memory" one relates it to the brain, the most mysterious organ human beings possess, with its neurons and synaptic connections involved in the process of remembering. We may have studied three stages of memory –encoding, storage and retrieval and know about short term and long term memory.<sup>1</sup> We generally hear people referred to as having a "good" memory or a "bad" memory (with respect to the amount of precise information they can recall at a given moment) and we must have found ourselves at times saying we had something "on the tip of our tongue" but still not have been able to produce it immediately. Memory has always been intriguing. Throughout time different disciplines have tried to account for the structures, processes and functions of memory, and there have been many important contributions to its understanding. However, much is still to be learned and remains a mystery to this day.

What is certain is that without memory the world as we know it nowadays would not be possible, and our existence would be meaningless. We would not even know our names or who we are, what we have done or what we are going to do. All learning

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<sup>1</sup> "Encoding refers to the transformation of physical information into the kind of code that memory can accept. Storage is the retention of the encoded information. And retrieval refers to the process by which information is recovered from memory when it is needed. The three stages may operate differently in situations that require us to store material for a matter of seconds –short term memory– than in situations that require us to store material for longer intervals –long term memory" (Hilgard et al., 1979:248).

about ourselves and the world around us would be impossible. In the Introduction to *Antropología de la Memoria* (2002), the French anthropologist Joël Candau explains that “without memory [...] one lives only the instant and loses cognitive and conceptual capacities; the world falls apart and identity vanishes” (5, my translation). In *Memoria e Identidad* (2001) he states that it is through memory that we “grasp and understand the world, manifest our intentions towards it, structure it and put it in order (in time and space) [...]” (57, my translation)<sup>2</sup>.

Many are the scholars who have aimed to define and describe memory. Candau (2002:13) states: “Memory is plastic, flexible, fluctuating, labile, ubiquitous, adaptable and it varies from one individual to another”. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2012), John Sutton states: “‘Memory’ labels a diverse set of cognitive capacities by which we retain information and reconstruct past experiences, usually for present purposes”. A curator of an ethnography museum confirmed that memory “is not a more or less faithful faculty but a complex activity that, depending on what’s at stake and personal and social conflicts, conserves, transmits, forgets, abandons, expels, destroys, censors, embellishes or exalts the past ” (qtd in Candau, 2002: 87).

Memory is not an exact reproduction of what actually happened; it is a reconstruction. It is a selective and creative process which involves remembering as well as forgetting<sup>3</sup> and it includes not only the specific past, but also the future of that past, the present and the future. When we recall a past event we are influenced by everything we have

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<sup>2</sup> Candau’s *Antropología de la Memoria* (2002) and *Memoria e Identidad* (2001) are translations into Spanish. Thus, from now on, all translations from these works into English are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Remembering and forgetting will be dealt with in detail in the theoretical framework.

experienced up to the moment of recollection, as well as by our present context, motives and expectations.

Memory has been studied at an individual level as a cognitive process taking place in individual brains and at a collective level, mainly related to how social groups reconstruct a shared past. The focus of this work is on individual memory, bearing in mind that individuals do not remember in a vacuum. The German professor and researcher Astrid Erll (2008) holds that “From the people we live with and from the media we use, we acquire schemata<sup>4</sup> which help us recall the past and encode new experience. Our memories are often triggered as well as shaped by external factors, ranging from conversations among friends to books and to places. In short, we remember in sociocultural contexts”.

In literary works throughout time, memory has always been important. Numerous texts portray how individuals and groups remember their past. The present work will focus on the memories of two characters from two different novels: Peter Walsh from *Mrs Dalloway*, written by Virginia Woolf and published in 1925, and Dolores Gauci from *The Hiding Place*, written by Trezza Azzopardi and published in 2000. In *Mrs Dalloway*, characterization is achieved from a psychological perspective. Virginia Woolf uses indirect interior monologue<sup>5</sup>; thoughts and feelings are uncensored, not intentionally controlled and not logically ordered. This gives the reader the impression

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<sup>4</sup> A schema is “a packet of general knowledge about some situation that tends to occur frequently”. Schemata can be very helpful but it will not fit every situation. As Barlett emphasized “memory distortions can occur when we attempt to fit stories into schemata [...] much like those that occur when we try to fit people into stereotypes” (Hilgard *et al.*, 1979:247-248).

<sup>5</sup> Indirect interior monologue is a literary technique which captures the flow of the characters’ consciousness using third personal singular pronouns.

of being inside Peter's mind bearing witness to his recollections. In *The Hiding Place*, the story is mainly told through the eyes of Dolores in a retrospective way; there are also flashbacks and third person accounts of minor characters. Using first person narration Trezza Azzopardi gives the reader insights into the psyche of Dolores, who looks back on her past trying to impose meaning on the surfacing memories.

In these novels, the characters selected travel back to their home country/town after many years, meet people they have not seen for a long time and remember past experiences. However, the way they recall past experiences is noticeably different. It is my contention that Dolores and Peter's reconstruction of memory differs due to the nature of their experiences, and this affects them differently. Thus, the questions which will guide this work are the following: What and how do Peter and Dolores remember? Why do they remember in that way? What are the consequences of their memories?

In order to carry out this comparative study, the notion of memory will first be examined in the theoretical-methodological framework; Dolores and Peter's memories will then be described, and the cause and consequence of their reconstruction of memory will finally be analyzed.

This work hopes contribute to comparative literary studies of memory and towards understanding the complex process of memory reconstruction.



## *Theoretical methodological Framework*

The present comparative study has been carried out taking into account the literary category of intertextuality<sup>6</sup> coined by the Bulgarian-French semiotician Julia Kristeva. From this perspective, every text<sup>7</sup> is a space in which another text can always be read (Barei, 2001). As Spanish professor and researcher Jesús Camarero Arribas (2002) states, “the miracle of intertextuality is that the palimpsestic (transversal and interrelational) interplay of texts apparently far away from one another let us relate, in an act of reading, meanings that are otherwise distant in time and space” (my translation). Thus, one is able to compare two novels whose authors were not contemporary but where the theme of memory can be traced.

From what I have been able to find out, there are no previous studies comparing the selected characters’ memories, but there is varied bibliography on memory. Throughout time, many different disciplines such as neurology, psychology, philosophy, theology, sociology and anthropology, among others, have contributed to its study<sup>8</sup>. Sigmund Freud’s classic works on memory in psychology, Candau’s anthropological contributions in *Memoria e Identidad* (2001) and *Antropología de la*

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<sup>6</sup> In the late 1960s, Julia Kristeva produced the first enunciation of intertextual theory combining Saussurean and Bakhtinian theories. Literary intertextuality can be defined as the relationship between literary texts within or between different literary systems. Nowadays, intertextuality has extended to art forms such as music, painting, photography, architecture and film.

<sup>7</sup> Barthes (1967) states that a text is “a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash”.

<sup>8</sup> The length and scope of the present work do not allow for an analysis of all contributions made to memory studies by the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

*memoria* (2002), and Paul Ricoeur's philosophical reflections in *La lectura del tiempo pasado – Memoria y olvido* (1999) are among the most relevant to this study<sup>9</sup>.

In order to understand memory clearly, the way in which this notion developed throughout time will be examined, and the views on remembering and forgetting which bear a meaningful relation to the matter under investigation will be explained.

### **Memory Throughout Time**

When referring to the mythical and philosophical foundations of memory, Candau (2002:21-23) explains that memory was considered a means to reach perfection outside human time. It helped man escape from time that corrupts, enslaves and degrades him as it constantly reminds him of his mortal condition. In its cosmological function, Mnemosyne<sup>10</sup> provides the Secret of the Origins; memory was almost exclusively dedicated to the past. In its scatological view, Mnemosyne provides the means to reach the End of Time (in the 16th century, the Greeks abandoned the heroic ideal and became conscious of the irreversibly fleeting human time). In Plato's theory of Anamnesis, memory becomes faculty of knowledge. The effort of recollection is confused with the search for truth. Remembering means joining the "World of Ideas", of absolute realities, escaping from the present of appearances. These archaic memory conceptions liberated man from time.

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<sup>9</sup> The works mentioned are translations into Spanish. Therefore, all translations from these works into English are my own; except for Freud, S. (1917) cited in note 24.

<sup>10</sup> Greek goddess of memory and remembrance and the inventress of language and words.

This is no longer so for Aristotle, who announces the modern conceptions of memory<sup>11</sup>. To him, memory is transferred from the intellectual part of the soul to its sensitive part. Man feels a body which overwhelms him and becomes a sign of his incomplete character. Memory cannot guarantee the access to perfection, and imagination plays a mediating role before what is sensed is stored in memory. Recollection and temporal perception are allowed simultaneously. Therefore, man is obliged to elaborate representations of the time that goes by (Candau, 2002:23-24).

In *Confessions*, Saint Augustine reflects on memory and time. He maintains that there are three types of memories: of sense perceptions (stored as images and ordered at the time of recall), of abstract concepts (learned from sciences) and of emotions (such as the power of recall decides at the moment of recollection). These memories can be recalled immediately or after a long search, or they can present themselves spontaneously (Candau, 2002:26-28). Regarding time, Saint Augustine states it is divided into three: past, present and future. The present of the past is memory, the present of the present is attention (previously referred to as vision: *contuitus*), and the present of the future are the expectations (Ricoeur, 1999:86). So, it is a threefold present.

Reflecting on this, the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1999:84-93) states that we pay attention to the “past sense” of things from the past and to the “future sense” of things to come. He considers the past, present and future to be equally important, and he suggests that the past, the present and the future be equated to what is one’s own,

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<sup>11</sup> A major advance towards a modern conception of memory is not, apparently, seen before the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Duns Scotus’ theory. Scotus uses Aristotle as his primary source (Bloch, 2007).

what is near and what is far away. The present also consists of initiative, exercising the capacity to act and to change things.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to the German professor and researcher Jürgen Straub (2008), “the emergence of memory sciences in [...] Europe was closely linked to secularization and the development of a scientific approach towards the human soul.” He explains that “in the latter third of the nineteenth century [. . .] the prevalent idea was that the most important keys to the mental life of humans lay in human memory and recollection. It was claimed ever more often that numerous life problems could only be comprehended and worked out through an exact reconstruction of the life story of a person or history of a group [...]”.

Sigmund Freud, whose research into the human mind began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, maintained that some experiences in childhood are so traumatic that they are repressed. In his essay “Repression” (1915) he states that “the essence of repression consists exclusively in rejecting and maintaining certain elements out of conscious awareness” (2054)<sup>12</sup>. These elements, or memories, do not disappear and may continue to influence current behavior. Freud offered a new method of psychotherapy: the psychoanalysis, through

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<sup>12</sup> In “Mecanismos de Defensa” (1965:51-52, my translation), Anna Freud explains that the terms “repression” and “defense” were used indistinctly by Freud to “describe the fights of the ego against painful and unbearable ideas and affects”. It is not until 1926 that “he sustains the advantage of using defense as a general term for all the techniques that serve the ego in conflicts that might eventually lead to neurosis, reserving the term “repression” for one of these methods of defense...”. Ana Freud includes repression among nine other defense mechanisms: regression, reaction formation, denial, suppression, projection, displacement, intellectualization, rationalization, and sublimation. As James Strachey explains in “Nota introductoria” to “La represión” (2008), the kind of repression in this essay mainly alludes to the one present in hysteria.

which a person can reconstruct the forgotten events of childhood with the guidance of an analyst<sup>13</sup>.

In his conference: “La fijación al trauma, lo inconciente” (1916-17:258), Sigmund Freud maintains that the aim of psychoanalytic treatment is “to fill the gaps of memory, to cancel its amnesias”. He also states the usefulness, to the analyst, of talking to a patient’s relatives to find out about any experiences from early childhood that might have been traumatic or which are unknown to the patient because they took place at a very early age. In this conference, he refers to case histories of people who are “fixated on a fragment of the past”, usually from childhood, “cannot release it, and as a result are detached from the present and the future” (250). He mainly focuses on neurosis but explains that “every neurosis contains such a fixation, but not all fixation leads to it, coincides with it or is produced by it” (252).

In “Sobre el mecanismo psíquico de la desmemoria” (1898:287) he states that repression takes place “not only in neurotics but also [...] in normal human beings”<sup>14</sup>, and that “among the multiple factors that concur to produce a weakness of memory or absence of recollection, the role of repression cannot be omitted”. He retells his experience of having forgotten the name of an Italian painter; he explains how and why he had repressed it and that only after an Italian told him the surname several days later, could he recall the name and solve the tension. This fact is “a good example

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<sup>13</sup> Hypnotherapy, developed by James Braid, was being used at the moment. Sigmund Freud adopted hypnoses to treat mind disorders in his early work.

<sup>14</sup> This is not a psychological work. It is not under the scope or interest of this work to determine whether the characters selected are ill or “normal” in psychological terms. Thus, it is useful to indicate that repression may take place in any human being.

of the efficiency of psychoanalytic therapy, which aspires to straighten out repressions and displacements, and eliminates the symptom through the reintroduction of the genuine psychic object”.

During the 20th century<sup>15</sup> “the concept of ‘remembering’, a cognitive process taking place in individual brains, is metaphorically transferred to the level of culture” (Erll, 2008). The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, with his works on collective memory in the first half of the century, can be considered the father of modern cultural memory studies; followed by the French historian Pierre Nora, with his lieux de mémoire in the second half, and the German egyptologists Jan and Aleida Assmann, who focused on media and memory in ancient societies.

In the last two decades, there has been interdisciplinary research involving fields such as history, sociology, art, literary and media studies, philosophy, theology, psychology and the neurosciences<sup>16</sup>. This has, in turn, opened up new horizons of research into cultural memory, which has become a “transdisciplinary” phenomenon “concerned with social, medial and cognitive processes and their ceaseless interplay” (Erll, 2008).

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<sup>15</sup> The twentieth century saw the emergence of “behavioral and purely cognitive paradigms” in psychology, later “superseded by ecological approaches to human memory and the study of conversational and narrative remembering” (Erll, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> For memory studies involving different disciplines, see Erll, A. and A. Nunning, (2008).

## Remembering and Forgetting

### ▪ *Psychological Views*

Not only does memory involve remembering but also forgetting, which is intrinsic to it. Because of different reasons one cannot and does not remember everything. On the one hand, the information may be lost from storage, which is more likely to occur in short term memory<sup>17</sup>. On the other hand, the information is in storage but we may have difficulty accessing it. Common experience shows that there are times in which we are unable to recall something at the precise moment we wish (it seems to have disappeared), but some time later we are able to remember it. Since the focus of this work is on memories recalled by Peter and Dolores of what they experienced many years before the current events taking place in the novels, we will concentrate on forgetting from long term memory.

As the American psychologists Ernest Hilgard, Richard Atkinson, and Rita Atkinson explain in "Remembering and Forgetting" (1979:227-249), retrieval failures are a major cause of forgetting from long term memory. Thus, it is essential to know what factors increase or decrease retrieval. The better the retrieval cues, the better our memory. There is experimental evidence that we do better in recognition tests than on recall tests. Organizing the information in storage and ensuring the context in which we retrieve information is similar to the context in which we encoded it considerably

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<sup>17</sup> Forgetting from short term memory may be explained by theories of trace decay and displacement. Short term memory is also referred to as Working Memory, as proposed by Baddeley and Hitch in 1974.

increase the chances of successful retrieval. Whereas some emotional factors and interference<sup>18</sup> hinder retrieval.

Experimental evidence shows that the context in which an event was encoded is itself one of the most powerful retrieval cues possible. This may explain why when people return to a place where they once lived they are sometimes overcome with a torrent of memories about their earlier life. The context can not only be restored physically (returning to the place where the event took place), but also mentally: recreating it using visualization. It is important to point out that context is not always something external to the memorizer, such as a physical location or a particular face; the internal state, i.e. the emotional state, is also part of the context. Thus, retrieval failures are less likely to occur when the external context and emotional state during encoding are restored during retrieval (Hilgard *et al.*, 1979:231-240).

Regarding emotional factors, there are some that somehow disrupt the usual retrieval processes. For example, some people get too anxious when being evaluated. This anxiety is often associated with extraneous thoughts, such as "I'm going to flunk out", which interfere with the retrieval of the information requested resulting in memory failure. However, we cannot disregard the fact that emotional factors can also improve memory since, as we tend to think about emotionally charged situations more than we do about neutral ones, we rehearse and organize exciting memories more than we do others. Many researchers have found better memory for emotional than for unemotional situations (Hilgard *et al.*, 1979:236-237).

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<sup>18</sup> See annex.



Nonetheless, when emotional experiences have been more than “exciting” and anxiety becomes intolerable to consciousness, such as in traumatic childhood experiences and later ones associated with them, they are said to be stored in the unconscious. Bringing unconscious material<sup>19</sup> into the conscious mind is no easy task, and as Freud explains in “Resistencia y Represión” (1916-17:262-270), there is always resistance (such as when people have an unbearable toothache and do not want the dentist to touch their teeth). This resistance is diverse, manifests itself in varied ways and is often hard to recognize. Repression, which has already been dealt with in detail, “represents the ultimate retrieval failure: access to the target memories is actively blocked” (Hilgard *et al.*, 1979:237).

#### ▪ ***Anthropological and Philosophical Views***

In *Antropología de la Memoria* (2002:15), Candau holds that social and cultural interactions have made thought and memory possible. They also constrain the psyche and are the origin of censorship and repression of certain thoughts or memories. Thought and memory are organized in relation to the presence of the other (group or individual).

To Candau (2002:99-100), each anamnesis<sup>20</sup> is a reconstruction dependent on the nature of the recalled event as well as the past and present contexts<sup>21</sup>. He mentions that it is a many times verified fact that human beings are prone to forget painful

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<sup>19</sup> Material outside awareness and not subject to direct observation.

<sup>20</sup> From Greek *anamnesis* “remembrance”.

<sup>21</sup> The importance of the context has been dealt with on page 16.

events which may lead to anguish, anxiety and intense emotions; and adds that a very strong emotion aroused by a particularly horrible experience can cause the total censorship of the event. He refers to the British psychologist Alan Baddeley, who provided the results of research carried out with deportees who were interviewed first when they were released between 1934 and 1947, and then again between 1984 and 1987. The interviews during the second period show an extenuation or repression of the most dramatic memories, which had, nevertheless, been told at the moment of liberation: bad treatment, having witnessed the murder of a partner in the hands of camp guards, etc.

According to the French philosopher Bachelard, the soul keeps memories of the events that created us at decisive moments of our past. Events that are put in order according to a rational system at the moment of recollection. As Candau states, we may say that remembering consists in configuring, in the present, a past event in the framework of a future strategy, be that immediate or long-term (Candau, 2002:31).

To Kierkegaard, a memory has to be happy. Therefore, it calls for the ability to forget the most painful aspects of a past event. In the case of the evils of love, for example, the work of memory consists in forgetting certain events and enhancing others. Forgetting can be considered a necessity. It can be seen as a form of "deliberate amnesia to survive; a delicious nothing which protects, during a time of anguish in life, from the uncertainty of memory". It can also allow the construction or restoration of a satisfactory image of oneself (Candau, 2002:77-86).

To Ricoeur (1999:53-62; 103-106), there are different kinds of forgetting. One kind consists in the loss or destruction of past traces. Another one consists in the appearance of impediments to access memories, such as in repressed infantile experiences. But there is also evasive forgetting, when we elude the suffering that memory can cause trying not to remember what can hurt us. Then, there is the use of forgetting in narration: we select only what we think is important and significant or what will make our story intelligible, and we neglect what is not worth considering. In this case, the rate of forgetting is proportional to the rate of selection. Finally, forgiveness can also be considered as a kind of forgetting.

The fact that one has forgotten something does not mean that one is not affected by it. This will depend on what and how one forgets. Repressed memories, for example, do not disappear and still affect us. Ricoeur (1999:41) states that when there is insufficiency, and excess of memory, the past is adhered to the present. It stills "haunts the present without keeping its distance". When the past does not pass it is said to "wound memory, leaving more or less painful sores" (Candau, 2002:75). A good use of forgetting, against what could mean falling apart due to infinite blame, is compassionate forgetting, which involves the others, the victims and oneself (Ricoeur, 1999:109).

So that forgiveness can contribute to healing the hurt memory, it does not have to be complacent, benevolent or indulgent. Complacent forgiving only prolongs evasive forgetting; it pretends to avoid the duty and work of remembrance. Benevolent forgiving pretends to avoid justice and is related to the search for impunity. Indulgent

forgiving is related to the idea of payment of a debt but by erasing the debt as if by magic; which is as destructive as the worst kind of forgetting (Ricoeur, 1999:62-69).

In Ricoeur's view (1999:48-52, 62-69, 93-98, 109-110), compassionate forgetting can help heal the hurt memory. Forgiveness, in this case, is related to an active forgetting: not of the event itself but of its debt<sup>22</sup>, which paralyses memory and the capacity of creative future projection. The debt is the past burden the future has to face. This moral burden can be made heavier through accusation or lighter through forgiveness; one may forgive or not. When one forgives, what is forgotten is not the event but its sense with respect to its future projection. The past cannot be changed, but the meaning attributed to what happened is not fixed. Thus, the events can be reinterpreted.

Forgiveness has to do with accepting the unpaid debt, accepting that one is and will be an insolvent debtor, and accepting losses. In order to reconcile with the past, the work of remembrance<sup>23</sup> has to be complemented by the work of mourning<sup>24</sup> (Ricoeur, 1999:69). To Ricoeur (1999:92), one is capable of initiative and the past now made

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<sup>22</sup> We owe Heidegger for the most developed form of debt phenomenology despite the primacy of the future and emphasis on mortality.

<sup>23</sup> The work of remembrance is what in psychoanalysis is called "working through". After the patient has begun to acquire insights into his problems, working through is a process "which allows the patient to understand the influence of the past in his or her present situation, to accept it emotionally as well as intellectually, and to use the new understanding to make changes in present life. Working through, thus, helps the patient to gain some measure of control over inner conflicts and to resolve them or minimize their power" (*Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine*, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> In "Mourning and Melancholia" (Freud, 1917:243-245) Freud states that "mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on [...] Reality has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object [...] Nevertheless its orders cannot be obeyed at once. They are carried out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathectic energy and in the meantime the existence of the lost object is physically prolonged [...] The fact is, however, that when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again"

present serves as the point of departure to exercise the capacity to act and to change things.

To Candau(2002:32), the memory of the past is a challenge launched to the future, which has to do with striking a balance today between what one did and what could have been done. As Ricoeur (1999:108) holds, not only does everything that was done form part of our memory, but also what was impossible to be done.

The Bulgarian-French philosopher Tzvetan Todorov speaks of exemplary memory<sup>25</sup>, which allows the tamed past to become “a principle of action for the present” (qtd in Candau, 2002:85). This potentially liberating memory presupposes the work of mourning, which is possible to carry out even though it is always dangerous. To this respect the Spanish writer Jorge Semprún states that “Every human life entails the learning of loss through its active forgetting: loss of youth, health, illusions, ambitions, love, parents, friends [...]”.

In “Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue with Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi” (2005:23), an interview which took place in Turkey in 2003, Ricoeur reflects on the ability to mourn and the idea of loss:

“I think that one cannot have a memory of the past without, at the same time, mourning a certain number of illusions, but also of hatred, or of love lost [...]. The idea of loss is important [...] life is marked by all the losses experienced. One must come to terms with each one every time [...]. This work of mourning

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<sup>25</sup> Pain caused by the memory is diffused by domesticating and marginalizing it. Then, the memory is opened to analogy and generalization; it is made an *exemplum* and a lesson is extracted from it.

is a long and patient travail, which brings under interrogation the ability to narrate it [...] Let us say that, to mourn is to learn to narrate otherwise. To narrate otherwise what one has done, what one has suffered, what one has gained and what one has lost. The idea of loss is fundamental to life”.

When reflecting on the relations between Israelis and Palestinian he states: “There is a problem of loss there; one cannot have everything, and therefore one must mourn that which will never be obtained. Negotiations are also about making a list of the losses to which one consents” (Ricoeur, 2005:24)

Ricoeur associates forgiveness with an appeased memory: “The appeased memory does not seek to forget the evil suffered or committed. It seeks rather to speak of it without anger” (Ricoeur, 2005:11). When one forgives, the past stops tormenting the present since the hidden possibilities of the past and the unkept promises are exonerated. The past stops being “the past which is not willing to pass” (Ricoeur, 1999:69).

## *Memory Reconstruction*

### **Peter's Memories**

The events of *Mrs. Dalloway* (Woolf, 1925) take place in a single day in June 1923 in London, England. It is the day Peter arrives from India and visits Clarissa, and the day Clarissa is giving a party. Since the material of the novel is presented in the characters' minds, most of what is known about Peter is through his thoughts and Clarissa's. Before describing Peter's memories, Peter will be characterized.

Peter Walsh is 53 years old. He has come back to London to see his lawyers about the divorce of an Indian woman he has fallen in love with, and who is married to a Major in the Indian Army. Thirty years ago, he was passionately in love with Clarissa, who rejected his marriage proposal. Since then, he has been living in India and has kept in touch with her in writing.

Regarding his achievements or failures in life, he got sent down from Oxford; married a girl on the boat going to India, and indulged in "journeys; rides; quarrels; adventures; bridge parties; love affairs; work; work and work!" (40). He was to have written because that is what he wished when he was young, but he has not written a word.

He is described as unconventional. When he visits Clarissa, for example, he does it unexpectedly, with no previous notice; he goes past the maid and runs upstairs so that she will see him. He is also susceptible to impressions, which "had been his undoing [...]. Still at his age he had, like a boy or a girl even, these alterations of mood; good

days, bad days, for no good reason whatever, happiness from a pretty face, downright misery at the sight of a frump” (64). When he visits Clarissa, there is a moment in which he weeps and Clarissa comforts him: “[...] and then, to his utter surprise, suddenly thrown by those uncontrollable forces, thrown through the air, he burst into tears; wept; wept without the least shame, sitting on the sofa, the tears running down his cheeks” (43).

One of Peter’s most significant memories is revived during his visit to Clarissa: her rejection to his marriage proposal. After this, he keeps vividly recalling people and events mainly related to his youth at Bourton, where he used to stay for a week or a fortnight in the late summer, in the early 1890s. Most of his memories are related to Clarissa and the profound effect she had on him.

The memory of Clarissa’s rejection is triggered when she reminds him of Bourton and indirectly of the fact that he had wanted to marry her. They both recall this memory:

[...] it almost broke my heart too, he thought; and was overcome with his own grief, which rose like a moon [...]. I was more unhappy than I’ve ever been since, he thought. And as if the truth were sitting there on the terrace he edged a little towards Clarissa; put his hand out; raised it; let it fall. There above them it hung, that moon. She too seemed to be sitting with him on the terrace, in the moonlight (39).

After reliving this experience, this is how he felt: “[...]. For why go back like this to the past? he thought. Why make him think of it again? Why make him suffer, when she had tortured him so infernally? Why?” (39). Later, when he recollects the final scene



by the fountain, in which Clarissa tells him it is the end, and after which he goes away never to see her again, he refers to it as “the terrible scene which he believed had mattered more than anything else in his life (it might be an exaggeration – but still, so it seemed to him now)” (58).

Some of Peter’s recollections are connected to London. He recalls how he and Clarissa used to explore it together on top of an omnibus (and Clarissa’s transcendental theory), and at Regent’s Park he remembers what the place looked like when he was a child. Most of his other recollections are about Bourton and different people he met there, such as Sally Seton, a friend he and Clarissa had in common and with whom they were intimate. He recounts, in his mind, different past experiences in detail; such as when he had once quarreled with Clarissa the day they would then meet Richard Dalloway and how he knew she would end up marrying him; how he felt when he had had the feeling there was a conspiracy against him: “Never, never had he suffered so infernally” (56), and how he felt when Clarissa came back to fetch him: “he had never felt so happy in his whole life! Without a word they made it up” (57).

All his memories are clear, vivid and detailed: “it was extraordinary how vividly it all came back to him, things he hadn’t thought of for years!” (68). He is surprised to recall details, such as the vivid green moss in the area of the fountain where she last saw Clarissa: “How sights fix themselves upon the mind!” (58).

He always remembered, “without his wishing it,” moments spent with Clarissa at Bourton: “they always walked [...]; and all the time they argued, discussed poetry, discussed people, discussed politics [...]; never noticing a thing except when she

stopped [...], and made him look with her” (136-137). They would also laugh at nothing and flirt in front of the house.

Peter had, and feels he has, a very special relationship with her “for in some ways no one understood him, felt with him, as Clarissa did [...] their exquisite intimacy” (42). “They went in and out of each other’s minds without any effort” (57). “They had this queer power of communicating without words” (55). They have been friends for almost thirty years and “she had influenced him more than any person he had ever known” (136); and now “he was unable to get away from the thought of her” (69).

### **Dolores’s Memories**

*The Hiding Place* (Azzopardi, 2000) is set in Cardiff, Wales. It tells two parallel stories: the story of the past, which is about a dysfunctional family with six children, who lived in poor conditions in a Maltese neighbourhood, in the 1960s; and the story of the present, when Dolores comes back to her childhood town for her mother’s burial thirty-five years after being taken away. To set the context for Dolores’s memories her family will first be described.

Dolores, also referred to as Dol, is the youngest of six children. Her five sisters are: Celesta, Rose, Marina, Fran and Luca. Celesta, the eldest sister, marries someone she does not love because his father arranged it, and so as to escape his rage. Marina is bartered for their house and is taken to Malta, never to be seen again. Fran, who is kind to Dol, always wets the bed, and as she sets houses on fire she is sent away to a

children's home, from which she later escapes. Rose and Luca are very close to each other and bully Dol influenced by their father, who thinks she is sinister.

Frank, their Maltese father, is a gambling addict who is amoral and violent. He hits them and their mother. After selling Marina to gangster Joe Medora, he sets to build a cage for rabbits at the other end of the garden, which will be significant in Dol's recollections. He betrays his best friend, leaves him to die, and goes away on board a ship abandoning his family.

Mary, their mother, is victimized first by her father and then by her husband. She has to face poverty on a daily basis since her husband keeps losing the few things they have on bets, which leads her to pay the rent in kind. She does what she can, given the circumstances. She is described by a social worker as mentally unstable and having bouts of depression. After Frank leaves them, she ends up in hospital and Rose, Luca and Dol are sent to different foster families. Dol is five at the time.

Dol is despised by her father right from the start because she is born a girl, not a boy, and he blames her for having lost the house and his half-share of a cafe that same day. Her mother hides her pregnancy, and after she is born hides her in a chest so that her father will not hurt her. When she is one week old, her mother neglects her and she gets burned and loses her left hand (she is left-handed). Her father considers her evil and bad luck. She sometimes wets the bed, she never cries and she is not allowed to go to school or play outside with her sisters.

During the five years Dol spends with her family, she witnesses terrible scenes and undergoes painful physical and emotional experiences. After being sent away, she

never keeps in touch<sup>26</sup>. At first she has dreams of Rose and Luca tormenting her; Celesta cool and distant; “gradually the nightmares crept away, leaving only Fran, as she remembered her [...]” (100). Now she is back, she is 40 and wants a cure.

She arrives in Cardiff with only a few memories of her past. When she returns to her childhood house, she remembers where things belonged; she also remembers her family. Different objects and places in the house<sup>27</sup>, as well as people she meets and conversations she has during her stay in Cardiff, bring to mind different memories of the past. She recalls things she experienced and things she was told.

She is well aware that her memories belong to a five-year-old child (256), and she refers to her memory several times as the story unfolds: “And my memory which cannot be trusted and which is all I have clings to me like mud” (231); “A sequence is forming, scuffing at the edges of my mind like a ripple on water, but there is no order to it yet. Pieces are missing, people are missing” (234). Then, she also mentions: “I’m good at listing, too. I’m putting things in order” (267).

When she is inspecting the contents of the chest in her old bedroom, she finds an old dirty nest of straw and senses: “there is a memory here but I can’t fathom it. A twist of pale straw breaks between my fingers” (210). When she is in the kitchen, she sees an old Toby Jug which reminded her of the pens it used to hold for his father “to run a ring around the horse he would bet on” and for her mother “to write her IOUs”. It also

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<sup>26</sup> According to Maurice Halbwachs, to forget a period of life “is to lose contact with the ones who surrounded us at the moment” (qtd in Candau, 2002:79).

<sup>27</sup> “[...] photographs, furniture and decorations represent the “tangible memory” of domestic history” (Candau, 2002:51).

brings back Luca, “drawing out a biro to scratch my [Dol’s] name before she carves my [her] skin; and Fran, her blue tattoos” and her mother again (208).

When she meets her sister Celesta and her two children, they look so familiar that her memories “skate into each other” (236) since Celesta resembles her mother, one of her sons resembles her father, and the other her sister’s husband. Her sister Celesta tells her that it is impossible that she remembers the past because she was a baby and she adds: “You can’t remember Joe Medora [...]. You never met him Dol. You can’t remember Marina, for God’s sake! It’s only what you’ve been told. It’s not the same as knowing” (243).

Dol insists she remembers Joe, but her sister’s words make her doubt the memory of him with her mother that moves at the back of her mind; and she dismisses it as “an engraving from an old book I [she] used to have. Not a memory at all” (243). Regarding Marina, it is her mother’s tale she had heard once and again when she was a kid; when Marina was taken away she was one month old and was still in hospital.

At the burial, she recalls Sunday School when Luca whispered it to her. Later, when Rose mentions the next-door Rileys she is surprised to remember something about them spontaneously: “I don’t know where I found this memory” (168). When she is looking for some glasses in the cupboard under the stairs, she remembers hiding there when she played hide and seek and that, through a crack at the door, she saw her mother (having sex, though she was too little to notice) with a man (Joe) (269-270). When she is on her way to visit Eva, a friend of her mother’s, she realizes Eva’s home is

on the same road as Whitchurch Hospital and thus recalls when she last visited her mother there.

When Rose tells her she's found their father's belt, she cannot remember it but "something turns in my [her] stomach, as she talks. Slippery, wet" (247). However when Rose tells Celesta, Luca and her that they had not seen what their father had done to Fran, she does remember. "I saw," she says, "I'm severed into two: here in the kitchen and there at the end of the garden, watching. It looks like a puppet show; Punch battering Judy to the ground<sup>28</sup>" (271).

After this, Dol feels sick. She is in the yard with Luca; it is raining. They can see the cage at the end of the garden, crouching in the long grass. Then, this conversation takes place:

Do you remember the rabbits? I [Dol] ask, keeping her.

A short, thick sounding No. Luca used to be a good liar.

You must! There were dozens. He'd buy them as presents.

I don't remember, she says, turning away. Understand me Dolores, I don't remember One Single Thing.

The rain and the cage and Luca standing in the garden, denying everything. The heaving in me comes as a shout.

Well I do! You and Rose, locking me in there. Shame on you, Luca!

She faces me. In the twilight, her own sickness shines like a jewel. Luca closes her eyes; she's tired of not remembering.

Dol, we were *letting you out*, she says (273-274).

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<sup>28</sup> This is baseball jargon. In this context we may read: Frank battering Fran to the ground.

Dolores can tell when Luca is lying and she knows she is not now. She thought her sisters had locked her in the cage at the end of the garden, but in fact they were helping her out. As a result, Dolores reconstructs this memory with the help of her sister Luca. Immediately after this, Dolores is able to recall other memories related, in one way or other, to this cage.

She remembers when her mother used to put her in the cage as punishment, whenever she was caught listening to her with another man (Joe). She also recalls when she hid there so that her father would not catch her, and that she saw how he got her mother, who had been caught red-handed with Joe. Fran and Dol had been on guard while their mother was with Joe, but her father arrived earlier than usual, and they were not able to warn her mother in time. It was raining.

Finally “things surface” (276). She remembers how, from the cage, she had seen his father hit Fran with his fists and belt. She also recollects that the doe in the cage had produced young while she was there, and how she had removed the purple film from the babies’ heads so that they would not choke: “it takes a long time. I have to use what I can – straw, paper, hand, mouth” (277); only to find out that the doe had eaten them by morning because she had interfered, as her mother told her in a way that sounded to her as murder.

All these memories were brought to mind while she was still with Luca in the garden: “I don’t know how long she’s been with me. She is holding my hair back from my face, and her mouth is pressed close to my ear; she’s whispering words. It’s gone. It’s all gone [...]. Bad dreams, Dol, she says. That’s all they are. We all get them” (278).

This moment of great revelations is foreshadowed in the present story with the expression “something being unearthed”. It first appears when she goes past the docks, towards her childhood house, not only referring to Salvatore, the friend who is left to die by Frank, who has been buried all this time and we later know is found; but also to the memories that will be unveiled as the story unfolds. It is also mentioned when she fixes on the chest in the old bedroom and has nightmares; when she vomits in the yard before confronting Luca, together with “Inside me, something claws to get out” (273); and then again, after she remembers how Frankie had hit Fran, right before recalling the doe producing young and what she does.

As it has clearly been shown, Dolores has isolated memories of the past. Her memories are at times uncertain, disordered, distorted, and fragmented.

## **Analysis**

Peter and Dolores’s causes and consequences of memory reconstruction will be thoroughly analyzed, and finally summarized comparatively.

Throughout the years spent in India, Peter has exalted the good moments spent with Clarissa at Bourton and has rehearsed them in his mind: “She had come to him; on board a ship; in the Himalayas; suggested by the oddest things [...]. And always in this way coming before him without his wishing it [...]. He saw her most often in the country, not in London. One scene after another at Bourton...” (136).

He has remembered the good moments over the painful ones; their bond and friendship over her refusal to marry him and their parting, and has kept in touch.



Looking back over that long friendship of almost thirty years [...]. Brief, broken, often painful as their actual meetings had been, what with his absences and interruptions [...], the effect of them was immeasurable. There was a mystery about it. You were given a sharp, acute uncomfortable grain – the actual meeting [...]; yet in absence, in the most unlikely places, it would flower out, open, shed its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole feel of it and understanding, after years of lying lost (136).

Peter has evasively forgotten the hurtful memory of Clarissa's rejection; he has not repressed it. Thus, it is clearly and vividly recalled after the past context is mentally and emotionally restored when they meet. This memory triggers many others which take place in the same location: Bourton. Many of Peter's memories have to do with good moments spent there, and are recalled immediately since good memories tend not to be forgotten as much as hurtful ones. Finally, among these memories are the ones of happy moments shared with Clarissa, which are also clear and vivid because they have been emotionally moving, and consequently, recollected once and again over these years.

Peter's reconstruction of memory and the strong emotional bond with Clarissa leave him confused. He says he is in love with an Indian woman he will marry; however, "for hours and days he never thought of Daisy" (77), and he cannot stop thinking about Clarissa. Besides, the fact that he must often remind himself he no longer loves her leads to the belief that he still does: "No, no, no! He was not in love with her any more! He only felt [...], after seeing her that morning, unable to get away from the thought of her; she kept coming back and back [...]; which was not being in love, of

course [...]” (69). When she escorts the Prime Minister down a room at her party he observes her and gives a long, detailed description of her “[...] having the gift still to be, to exist, to sum it all up in the moment as she passed [...]. (But he was not in love)” (154).

At Clarissa’s party, he meets Sally and as they are waiting for Clarissa to join them, he confesses: “I do not know what I feel”. He had not found life simple, “his relations with Clarissa had not been simple. It had spoilt his life” [...]. One could not be in love twice” (170). It is clear that he has not worked through the loss of her and moved on.

Throughout these years he has not been able to have a steady and sincere love relationship with other women. He tires of mute devotion and wants variety in love. “[...]Clarissa had sapped something in him permanently[...]; “[...]he could not come up to the scratch[...]]” (141); “It was impossible that he should ever suffer again as Clarissa had made him suffer” (71). He has not been able to release the past.

In the last lines of the novel, we read:

“What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?

It is Clarissa, he said.

For there she was.”

As she will always be present in his mind since he has not been able to let go of her for thirty years, and there are no signs he will.

As it has been shown in the description of Dolores’s memories, by physically returning to his childhood town and house, where the events took place thirty-five years ago,

she has restored the context in which the memories were encoded, thus greatly favouring the their retrieval.

Dol has come back after so many years because she wants a cure, and this expectation motivates and influences her work of remembrance. However, this is hard work and though she is willing to remember, there is resistance. Some of the painful experiences she underwent were so overwhelming that she repressed them; she blocked them out of conscious awareness.

There is more than one example of resistance in the story, and it is not until the end of it that a few connected memories are finally recalled. The memory she cannot fathom when inspecting the chest is related to the doe producing young and she removing the membranes which covered the babies. The memory she dismisses as being an engraving from an old book she had is in fact the memory of Joe and her mother on the kitchen table, whom she sees when she is on her way to warn her about Frankie's arrival. She cannot remember her father's belt when Rose mentions it, but then recalls how he hit Fran with it.

The fact that she has repressed certain memories, together with the fact that she has experienced most of the events when she was five years old or younger, and that she has not been in touch for so many years, account for her uncertain, distorted and fragmented memories.

With the aim of reconstructing the events of her childhood she wants to meet people from her past. Only three of her sisters appear for the funeral: Celesta, Rose and Luca; and they are not willing to remember painful past experiences. She is able to talk to

Eva and Martineu, who witnessed and were involved in many events. What Martineu tells her helps her understand her sisters better. They thought they were cursed because that is what their father had told them and they were afraid of her.

When they were young she was always left out by Rose and Luca and that is how she feels for a moment when Luca is with Rose during the burial, and when she later says "I saw" (271), and she knows by their faces that they will not yield to the moment when it can all be said; or when she proposes a toast saying: "To us, I say, To all of us – whenever we are" thinking she is "unlocking a door which would let us [them] all pass through" (272-273) but Celesta does not allow it.

However, the revelation that they were letting her out of the cage, not locking her in; and that her sisters have also been deeply affected by the past makes her realize that they were all victims. When she toasts with Rose and Luca right before parting, she finally feels in.

After she waves them goodbye, she puts things where she remembered they belonged in the house. She not only puts physical objects in order; her reconstruction of the past has helped her order thoughts and organize her world. On the back of a photograph of her family at Celesta's wedding, which Eva has given her recently, she makes her list:

If my mother had not left the house, I would not have been burnt.

If she didn't owe rent to Joe Medora.

If Frankie hadn't gambled it away.

If we still had the café.

If Frankie hadn't gambled it away.

If I had been born a boy.

If Frankie hadn't gambled me away.

And she adds: "I ran out of space, but I only needed to add one more thing: blame can be twisted like a flame in the draught; it will burn and burn and burn. Ask Fran" (281).

She has finally come to terms with her past. She has been able to reinterpret events. There were events she experienced without a clear understanding when she was five, but that she understands now she is a grown-up. Other events may never be fully understood but she has worked through painful experiences and has begun to accept the losses. She has begun the path to reconciliation with the past; she has begun to forgive. It is time to stop blaming and move on.

In summary, Peter's memories are clear and vivid since his experiences have mostly been inherently good except for Clarissa's rejection to his marriage proposal, which he has evasively forgotten but not repressed; and thus it is also recalled clearly when its past context is mentally and emotionally restored. By contrast, Dolores's memories are uncertain, disordered and fragmented because they are about painful experiences she underwent as a child and which she repressed.

Peter and Dolores have been affected differently. In Peter's case the past is not willing to pass; he is confused and unable to move on. Whereas in Dolores's case, the fact that she wants a cure influences the process of reconstruction of the past. The work of remembrance has allowed her to bring to consciousness what she repressed a long time ago, and through the work of mourning she has begun her reconciliation with the past.

## *Conclusion*

As it has been shown, memory is by no means a faithful reproduction of a past event but a very complex process which, among other things, conserves, forgets, exalts, distorts or censors the past depending on the nature of past events, present motives, context and future expectations.

Memory reconstruction in the two fiction characters analyzed refract what human beings of flesh and blood experience in real life. Memory pertains to human beings and in our lifetime we all undergo more or less painful experiences that affect us to different degrees.

“The past affects the present on many timescales and at many levels. But since remembering is an occurrent and context sensitive activity it is influenced by a variety of present factors independent of any mediated residues of past events themselves” (Sutton, 2012).

The past affects us and we affect it. Memory is a creative and selective process and we are all the time making choices. Whenever we narrate events, for example, we select certain memories at the expense of others. We also affect the past with our reinterpretations.

Forgetting is inherent to remembering and we forget all the time; not only because it is natural, but also because it is necessary. When forgetting has to do with painful experiences it may seem helpful, for example, to evade oneself for a while. But, as it is

clear in Peter and Dolores, pretending an event has not happened or erasing it from our memory will not contribute to our present happiness; we must not forget the event, but we need to forget its present and future sense.

Since all human beings are different, the workings of memory differ as well. Peter and Dolores also serve as an example of this. Though being rejected in terms of love matters is part of the normal repertoire of human experience, Clarissa's rejection to Peter's marriage proposal affected him deeply and he is unable to let go of her and move on. Clarissa, on the other hand, underwent many painful experiences as a child. But since she is willing to cure, she can bring memories to consciousness, work through the pain and start the process of healing, affecting the past.

There comes a moment in which the past needs to be faced, a moment to work through the painful experiences and the loss of the past, a moment to reinterpret events and move forward. Otherwise, the past will torment us and become an impediment to our happiness.

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## *Annex*

### **Interference, consolidation and reconsolidation**

One factor that decreases memory retrieval is interference. When we learn different items, for example, that are very similar to one another, trying to retrieve one of them (the target item) will bring to mind other similar items that interfere with the target. “Proactive interference” takes place when previously learned material interferes with our attempt to learn new information, and “retroactive interference” when the learning of new materials interferes with our memory of old ones. Numerous experiments have shown that proactive and retroactive interference are responsible for a great deal of forgetting (Hilgard *et al.*, 1979:235-236).

Nowadays, forgetting is also accounted for as a result of failures of consolidation, a neurological process that involves gradual changes in the nervous system through which information is converted from short-term memory into long-term memory. The hippocampal formation<sup>29</sup> plays an important role in consolidation. The idea that memories consolidate over time is standard story in neuroscience literature, but it is usually ignored by cognitive psychologists. If this process is not impaired, memories can be retrieved when necessary. In the abstract to “The Psychology and Neuroscience of Forgetting” (2004:235), the American experimental psychologist John T. Wixted

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<sup>29</sup> The hippocampal formation is a region of the brain which consists of the hippocampus, dentate gyrus, subiculum and entorhinal cortex.

refers to traditional interference procedures and mentions a new kind of interference which impairs the consolidation process and leads to forgetting:

[...] findings from a century of work in psychology, psychopharmacology and neuroscience converge on the notion that such procedures may pertain mainly to forgetting in the laboratory and everyday forgetting is attributable to an altogether different form of interference. According to this idea, recently formed memories that have not yet had a chance to consolidate are vulnerable to the interference force of mental activity and memory formation (even if the interfering activity is not similar to the previously learned material). This account helps to explain why sleep, alcohol and benzodiazepines all improve memory for a recently learned list, and it is consistent with recent work on the variables that affect the induction and maintenance of long-term potentiation in the hippocampus.

In the conclusion to "The Psychology and Neuroscience of Forgetting" Wixted points out that if a recently revived notion of reconsolidation holds up, the theory he advanced "would necessarily apply to recently activated memories instead of just recently formed memories" (2004:265). Reconsolidation suggests that each time a memory is activated it needs to be consolidated so as not to be labile, and become stable again.