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**THE PRESENT AND THE PAST  
IN THE NOVELS OF ANNE ENRIGHT**

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**Plzeň 2012**

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Jméno Příjmení

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## Abstract

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Supervisor: PhDr. Magdaléna Potočňáková, Ph.D.

The object of my undergraduate thesis is to introduce three novels of an Irish novelist, Anne Enright, *The Gathering*, *What Are You Like?* and *The Wig My Father Wore*. The thesis aims to show how the past and the present are interlinked throughout the three novels.

The thesis is divided into three major parts. Each part focuses on one of the novels.

The first part is concentrated on the novel *The Gathering* and its themes such as the family background and relationships of the characters which are affected by the memories of them and consequences of the past.

The second part of the thesis deals with the novel *What Are You Like*. This part investigates the role of the absent mother, searching for identity and the aspect of memories.

The last part concentrates on the element of ghost, the relationships within the society which are influenced by media world which the characters of the novel live in.

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## INTRODUCTION

Anne Enright is considered to be an exciting novelist, an essayist and a short story writer of the present day. Born in Ireland in 1962, Anne Enright grew up in the suburbs of Dublin. She moved to Canada in 1979 in order to complete her high school education at Pearson College for two years there. In 1985 she studied philosophy and modern English at Trinity College in Dublin. She accomplished a master's degree in creative writing at the University of East Anglia, where she met the writers Malcolm Bradbury and Angela Carter. Then Anne Enright returned to Dublin. After working as a producer and director for the Irish television, Anne Enright decided to start writing full-time. Since that time she has written several novels, for instance, *The Portable Virgin* (1991), *The Wig My Father Wore* (1995), *What Are You Like?* (2000), *The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch* (2002), *The Gathering* (2007), *Yesterday's Weather* (2009), and the novel *The Forgotten Waltz* published in 2011.

Publishing her works in the Celtic Tiger Ireland of the 1990s and early 2000s Enright discusses the Irish society of these years, particularly, social and cultural change associated with various events that occurred at the time.

The thesis focuses on different aspects of Enright's work throughout her novels, such as *The Gathering*, *What Are You Like?* and *The Wig My Father Wore*.

First of all, Enright's preoccupation with the family relationships and family background throughout many of her novels is evident. When asking a question What is a family? it poses some difficulties to answer. Also, one may have difficulty defining family as diversification over the last thirty years or more has led to a much broader range of family types than were previously common, not only in Ireland. Viewing the Irish family as a system in itself, it is also important to recognise that characters within families in Enright's novels are influenced in the behaviour by various factors due to social, economic changes that have occurred in the period of time affecting family relationships in different aspects.

Second, another theme that Enright pays attention to playing an important role in the novel *The Gathering* is that of the sexual abuse of children since it became a fact in Ireland. The extent and nature of the sexual abuse of children was little understood before the 1980s, when it became apparent through the work of a range of professionals in the field that sexual abuse of children was much more common and widespread than previously believed. The secret and taboo nature of child sexual abuse within the family meant that many cases never came to light prior to this, and worse still many others were



dismissed or not responded to by the professionals involved. Including such an aspect of the reality in Ireland does Enright desire public to ponder the situation in Ireland?

Next, writing about the inventions made in the twentieth-century, Enright focuses on symbols of modernity such as automobiles, planes, television and cameras. According to Bracken many female characters in Enright's work are connected in some way with a machine (186). Involving both the female character being alive and the machine being a thing/not natural there is a relationship between one another to be adhered. Considering the machine to be a symbol of modernity the thesis pays attention to the aspects of the relationship and how the female characters are affected by the machines in the novels.

Even though, Enright engages with serious subjects and themes such as death, committing suicide, sorrow of loss of a family member, complicated family relationships, motherhood and ghosts Enright displays an ability to be funny using dark humour. Enright often reveals the family secrets which had been hidden for many years under the skin of her characters. Due to the hidden secrets all Enright's characters are preoccupied with the past and the memories that appear to be at the core of her novels. Acting under some circumstances the characters desire to ascertain the secrets in order to apprehend not only their family history but also their destiny. Moreover, due to the relationship between past and present, remembering and forgetting, many characters leave Ireland to solve their family history in many different parts of the world; the phenomenon is referred to the Irish diaspora.

Despite the fact that Enright is considered to be an Irish author, her work aims further than *The Emerald Isle*. There is a lot to be said to more than the local Irish people; everyone no matter what their nationality is; might be addressed. Although, it might feel depressive at times, Enright's work is full of witty, humorous moments, as well as, true points, which every reader can reflect a fragment of their destiny in. Therefore, the thesis concentrates on the relationships in the families; the way the past and the present is interlinked and affect one another. The inevitable role of memory and identity within human existence is obvious. It is necessary to point out that throughout the novels several symbols and motifs mingle, for instance, ghosts, mirrors and photographs, journeys with association with the inventions of modernity, such as a plane, a car and a camera. Enright is perceived to be a feminist writer; consequently, I concentrate on the mother, alive or dead, the way she is expressed in the novels considering the characters.

First novel that my thesis deals with is *The Gathering* which won the Man Booker Prize and it is a fourth novel of Anne Enright. The novel is narrated by Veronica Hegarty. When Veronica acknowledged that her brother Liam had died, she begins to tell a story of her family. Gathering around Liam's dead body in the family house for his wake is significant as the occasion gives the novel its title. Due to the event Veronica is forced to investigate closely the history of her large family which leads her to look back into the past three generations. Will Veronica's search for the reasons for Liam's suicide and her attempt to identify a person or circumstance to blame; help her cope with her grief and loss?

Then, *What Are You Like?*, is another remarkable Enright's novel published in 2000. It is a story of twins, Maria and Rose, whose lives are completely changed due to their separation after her mother's death. Shortly after the birth their father, Bert, states that he can cope only with one child. Consequently, Maria is raised in Ireland with her father and his second wife, Evelyn, while Rose is adopted by a couple in England. The novel rehearses similar themes like in *The Gathering*, such as: relationships, loss and the missing mother. Moreover, as the twins are influenced by the experience of split identities they desire to find the reasons of their unhappiness which occurs throughout the novel.

Finally, *The Wig My Father Wore*, the last novel the thesis deals with, concentrates on the central character Grace, who works as a television producer. The novel opens with an angel, Stephen, arriving at the door of Grace. She is affected not only by the ghost's presence but also by the media world that Grace is surrounded with. Thus, her character is gradually being modified in several aspects. Moreover, the story centres on love, death, sex and relationships and the past and the present are obviously the core of the novel, too.

## **1. THE GATHERING**

### **1.1 FAMILY BACKGROUND AND THE RELATIONSHIPS**

The relationships within families and their impact on children's development in Enright's novels are never easy to understand. Events affecting one member of a family affect the family as a whole. Mark Savage in his interview with Enright says that the novel is about an Irish woman "who is prompted by her brother's suicide to revisit three generations of history of her large, dysfunctional family" (Savage).

Veronica's family has never been an easy proposition. First of all, the family having twelve children, namely, Midge, Bea, Ernest, Stevie, Ita, Mossie, Liam, Kitty, Alice and the twins, Ivor and Jem does not appear to function properly. Commonly, a birth of a baby has a positive impact on the lives of all the family including all the siblings. The initial feature of having a new baby in the family is usually one which celebrates the birth of the new child. Veronica has a different approach to this, though. She feels that having so many children, being pregnant all the time results in her mother having no time for her children or not paying so much attention to their upbringing. Consequently, her mother does not understand the needs of all her children; they also have to compete for the share of their mother's care. As their mother does not spend much time with them she does not develop strong emotional bonds with them. Veronica feels that she will always miss the time she could not spend with her mother in her early years. She finds it difficult to forgive her mother for many reasons:

I have not forgiven her for my sister Margaret who we called Midge, until she died, aged forty-two, from pancreatic cancer. I do not forgive her my beautiful, drifting sister. I do not forgive her my brother Stevie, who is a little angel in heaven...I don't forgive the endless hand-me-downs, and few toys, and Midge walloping us because my mother was too gentle, or busy, or absent, or pregnant to bother.  
(Enright 7)

Moreover, the children's relationships with parents become inefficient as their parents have never been either supportive or encouraging. The children have always had many difficulties in communicating their views and ideas. They have had problems expressing their feelings either because they were unable to do so due to their parents' under-stimulation throughout the childhood or simply as they did not want their mother to

worry. The lack of communication sometimes comes near to despair. They need to talk to someone about their experiences, fears, and feelings. Still, they do not want her mother to be worried about anything. Having no possibility to talk to their mother about some troubles which happen forces them to disclose their feelings to the father:

Don't tell Mammy, because Mammy would – what? Expire? Mammy would worry...It had all come – singly and painfully – out of her. And my father said it more than anyone; level, gallant, there's no need to tell your mother now, as if the reality of his bed was all the reality that this woman should be asked to bear.

(Enright 9)

Similarly, the father is not able to respond to his children's challenges which may be the reason for Veronica's complete frankness and disrespect while mentioning him. Recalling her father's death of a heart attack Veronica remembers the mourners laughing about his excessive sexual desire which was believed to cause his death. Whereas the parents of Veronica's friends who had more than five sisters and brothers were thought to be a little enthusiastic, she was considered to be pathetic with her parents who were "just helpless to it, and bred as naturally as they might shit" (Enright 25).

As a result, having complicated relationships with their parents Veronica's siblings have been dependent on each other for a very long time. Veronica and her older siblings have to share every day chores and responsibilities, such as looking after their younger brothers and sisters; hence, they have become different from ordinary siblings. Despite lacking their parents' attention and care they grew up to be self-sufficient and not used to finding a help from their parents. Nevertheless, there is a lifelong course of trying to prove that they are as good as or better than each other, they want to share and want to act and work as a team. Although providing a safe and secure environment for Veronica and her siblings has never been easy and the norm, some positive values have been established within their family. Not only a strong sense of family identity, closeness and shared values strengthen and protect all of them but also form long and remarkable relationships. The brothers and sisters, alive or dead, maintain bonds which remain even after death. Also, Veronica develops with Liam very strong relationship which prevails among all the siblings. Thus, she becomes deeply emotionally hurt after acknowledging the news about her brother Liam, as well as, utterly devastated upon hearing the cause and details of his decease; he got drunk, put stones inside his pockets and went off to the sea to commit

suicide. The incident took place in Brighton, England; therefore, Veronica embarks on an intensely painful journey in order to transport her brother's dead body to Dublin. There is a significant difference in expressing grief in Ireland:

The British, I decide, only bury people when they are so long dead, you need another word for it. The British wait so long for a funeral that people gather not so much to mourn as to complain that the corpse is still hanging around [...] they do not gather until the emotion is gone. (Enright, 182)

Following the tradition, Liam's body is about to be placed in his house where he grew up together with his siblings. Dressed in white linen Liam's body will be laid down in his bed, surrounded with candles, his body will not be left alone. As the title of the novel indicates the close relatives will be coming to gather around in order to pay their respects to their dear departed son, brother, and uncle.

Since Veronica's relationship with Liam is very close it seems that she is the right person to arrange everything. She informs all the people, the relatives, friends about his death, in short, everyone who could have known Liam. She has to consider the coffin she will choose when she states: "Usually, people's brothers become less important, over time. Liam decided not to do this. He decided to stay important, to the end" (Enright 28).

Veronica, being angry both at her sisters and brothers for not being there to support her and her mother for reacting in such an inappropriate way, tells about the impressions and experience of the fact that she is the one who has to deal with everything which such a situation involves. Above all, Veronica has to inform her daughters about their uncle's death; why they will not meet him anymore. While she is trying to explain to them that it was not the age that caused their uncle's Liam death she realises that she can express neither her pain nor her grief at Liam. Being angry at her brother for leaving her in such a difficult situation; Veronica is unable to think about anything else than him.

"There is something wonderful about a death, how everything shuts down and all the ways you thought you were vital are not even vaguely important"(Enright 27). Thinking of the death, in fact, she finds something marvellous about it.

## 1.2 THE MEMORY AND THE PAST

One of the major themes of *The Gathering* is the process of recalling and forgetting memories and the relationship between telling a story and memory. In an interview with Claire Bracken, Enright claims:

The past changes because of events in the present; the past becomes more apparent. And the characters learn about their own pasts by the good functioning of their memory. So you could also say that they don't remember things properly, even though they have really good solid memories [...] So the process of recovering memories – that's already an interesting phrase – the process of remembering and forgetting and undoing the forgetting and all of those, these are great. *The Gathering* is interested in the edges between, certainly fantasy or imagination and memory, between memory and history, where it becomes when people die.  
(Bracken)

Veronica remembering her brother Liam is motivated throughout the novel to explain the aspects of her brother's suicide. She looks to the past to obtain a better understanding of what went wrong in Liam's life and why he killed himself. Although it is very painful it is important to recall all her memories. It is a process in which specific steps need to be taken to reduce the damage caused by the memories from the past which she recalls. Involving all her family and remembering their experiences she feels frustrated and unhappy. Therefore, it is obvious she needs some time to consider the important relationships in her life. Following the feelings and memories seems to help her deal with interpersonal problems and conflicts, as well as, improve her relationships with family members or other important people in her life.

Interestingly, the memories that Veronica arouses do not necessary have to be true, these memories or conflicts can be both obvious and hidden. She sometimes tends to create her own memories. She cannot avoid the feeling of blaming her mother for her Liam's problems. On the other hand, the truth is that conflicts are often caused more by events that occur. Furthermore, "Enright plays with the idea of history as cliché". Recalling her memories, Veronica attempts to discover her family history and find the roots first to the trauma then consequently to Liam's suicide by assembling and imagining both her mother's and grandmother's life, gathered up and composed from clues, physical evidence

and filling the gaps. One can feel that the uncertainty of the events remains throughout the novel, from the beginning to the end. It is unclear which parts of the story are made up. According to Ewins history is written within the body which is particularly significant throughout Enright's novels interwoven together with the author's obvious preoccupation with history. As the family history causes several traumas to the Hegarty siblings they long for escape that "seems to be the heart of Enright's characters" (Ewins 136).

Veronica tries to summon her memories to ascertain whether any of her relationships have serious problems or conflicts, and detect what is causing these problems. By searching for the answers to her questions about Liam and herself in the course of the personal history – especially what she imagines as the youth and courtship of her grandparents, Ada and Charlie – Veronica realises how relationships and their life stories are interlinked, the way one life crucially and inevitably affects another. This type of history has its strong power which is not detachable and is engraved within the body. While recalling the event which she witnessed in her grandmother's house Veronica realizes she is not quite sure about what exactly happened (Ewins 136). Even the opening of the novel indicates both the doubt of the narrator and the body engaged:

I would like to write down what happened in her grandmother's house the summer I was eight or nine, but I am not sure if it really did happen. I need to bear witness to an uncertain event. I feel it roaring inside me – this thing that may not have taken place. I think you might call it a crime of the flesh, but the flesh is long fallen away and I am not sure what hurt may linger in the bones. (Enright 1)

Typically Enright demonstrates an atmosphere of doubtfulness around the historical occurrences themselves. There are certain instances of abuse of Veronica's brother Liam that may or may not have happened, and that Veronica may or may not have observed. Due to the uncertainty and confusion around these events they perform in a metaphorical way. Examining the past closely and visualizing stories from her grandparents' youth and adolescence Veronica tries to analyse and find out the basis of the guilt, the first triggers of her brother's suicide (Ewins 130). Veronica considers history to be biological: "We pick and choose the facts about ourselves...what is written for the future is written in the body" (Enright 162). Veronica is not able to figure out when Liam's fate was engraved into his body. According to Ewins everyone is influenced to act according to their past experience so that past experience can leave unable to bear them the responsibility for his or her

actions (131). When undergoing a plastic surgery one of the Hegarty sisters desires to break this determination in order to eliminate “the history written on the body” (Enright 162). Their preoccupation with the surgical changes on their bodies helps to support the claustrophobia of the family. Consequently, many of Enright’s characters want to separate themselves from the family (Ewins 131). Veronica, in an attempt to analyse the aspects and the factors which made her brother Liam commit suicide, finds out numerous terrible stories. However, her analysis is in no sense complete. Still, her memories serve to illustrate a path in which her brother directed himself. By showing some of the larger aspects of the tragic experience that she has had after acknowledging of her brother’s death, Veronica reveals very private opinions full of her grief at his death. Gradually, she describes her brother’s social world that he lived in, seeing problems to be caused by a horrible reality she once had seen. She considers that to be the crucial reason for Liam’s suicide. Liam had been sexually abused by his Grandmother’s and family friend Mr Nugent. Schwall in her essay analyses:

the variations on the central scene that seems to haunt Veronica since she was eight years old... This scene seems to convey three possible things. Firstly, it seems a metonymy of a practice that was widespread in the country: not only does Veronica imagine that a pattern of sexual (child) abuse already ran in Nugent’s family but also the fact that her school was named after St Dymphna, who had to escape from her own father’s sexual advances, suggests that it was a problem (Catholic) institutions and families as has been revealed over the past number of years. Secondly, Nugent’s... position as both private and public figure seems to be a metaphor of the Catholic Church which interfered with parents’ sexuality. Thirdly, the scene questions the silence surrounding child. (Schwall 208)

Moreover, the events within living memory are located in a “remote past”. This is sometimes difficult to understand on one hand but rather sense-making on the other if perceived as a form of denial which the character uses to cover the hideous character of the children’s abuse. Above all it may be viewed as “politically expedient one” since the cultural torture around the Ryan Report has not been interpreted in Ireland in order to enhance the necessity and urgency of improving services and protection of children in the present. (Meaney 159) The Ryan Report published in 2009 revealed the scope of child abuse that had occurred in Ireland since 1936. Even though, The Ryan Report demonstrated experience with child abuse that happened many years ago the influence of



the terrifying stories on people living in Ireland is evident in the present, too. The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse made request to many witnesses to give evidence in an attempt not only to examine the events but also to raise awareness among people in order to stop overlooking the reality in society, furthermore, to give the other victims the possibility of disclosure (*Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse*).

By addressing and confronting the issues of child abuse the author intends to show the urge of acting upon the fact that the abuse has been evident throughout the society. However, the struggle to make a lost life publicly grieving in hope of raising awareness of existing child's abuse resists powerfully with discovering the fact that the Irish Health Service Executive failed to report the real number of children who died in its "care" which proves that the past persists in the present. According to Meaney, in Enright's work the past and present interlink and may appear rather unstable, yet, this does not mean that the past trauma interrupts the present and must be put in its proper place. Instead, opening up new stories makes it possible to go on into the future, perhaps to reach the conclusion. (Meaney 159)

*The Gathering* both uses and criticizes "the structure of psychological narrative" and "the technique of finding causes in memory and resolving the effects off past trauma" (Meaney 159). Moreover, Meaney claims:

It also asks political actions about the way in which the recovery of memory substitutes for engagement with its consequences in the present. In contrast to the Irish narrative which keep abuse narratives resolutely in the past, *The Gathering* forces a reader to confront both the suffering boy and the bitter ruined addict, to complicate our identifications and challenge our sympathies, to make the process of the acknowledgement of the past as difficult as it needs to be if it is to be a new form of denial. (159)

When writing about children abuse Enright would like to announce the problem which has existed for many years. In the interview *What Women want* with Susanna Rustin, Enright claims:

In the 80s and 90s, people talking on the radio about abuse were not just breaking a silence; they were actually forming new words. It's not just that they were articulating something that could not be said out loud, it was that they didn't even have the words in their minds. (Rustin)

Consequently, Veronica herself believes that she would not reveal such an issue without being informed by the public:

Over the next twenty years, the world around us changed and I remembered Mr. Nugent. But I would never have made that shift on my own – if I hadn't been listening to the radio and reading the paper, and hearing about what went on in schools and churches and in people's homes. It went on slap-bang in front of me and still I did not realize it. And for this, I am very sorry too.(Enright 172-3)

There is the question posted by Enright's narrative whether "having found the words, the reality can be changed" (Meaney 160).

On the other hand, it is necessary to point out what happened to Liam, the details of his story which caused him so many problems. He should have got support, advice how to cope with his memories. Liam must have felt fear and embarrassment. He needed someone to listen to his concerns; or he needed someone to talk to about such an important story. Thus, another reason why Liam could have committed suicide is that of his relationship with his mother which also seems to be very complicated:

He didn't even like her. There is a nick in the wall, over by the door, where Liam threw a knife at our mother, and everyone laughed and shouted at him...The hole Liam made, after my mother ducked, and before everyone started to roar...Also me – I was also laughing, as I recall. My mother clucking a little, at the sight of it, and going about her business again. (Enright 6)

According to Schwall "it is the struggle of the child to get away from parents, the struggle which is mainly a matter of unconscious aggression and fear" (216). This conflict, which becomes apparent in Liam's separation is clearly seen when he throws the knife at his mother, shows that Liam was not able to accept his parents' authority which resulted in being unable to bear his own responsibility as a parent. Everyone is surprised after acknowledging at Liam's funeral that he has a child since Liam had never mentioned having one. Due to the complicated relationship with his parents he could not develop better relationship with his own son either, thus, he even did not know anything about him (Schwall 216).

### 1.3 THE PRESENT, THE CONSEQUENCES

Veronica knows that Liam wasted his life. She has become aware of her brother's risky behaviour, carelessness, and negative mood states. On the other hand, she seems not to recall him expressing pessimistic and depressive thoughts and beliefs. She observes a huge waste of his human potential. Worse, even tragically, she remembers him to become ill but she would never expect him to die prematurely or suddenly as a result of his self-defeating actions. One can feel Veronica's helplessness associated with witnessing her brother being careless about his life. Both siblings have suffered or are still suffering from this kind of experience. There was no one who attempted to help them find any solution in dealing with life patterns that occurred during their lives. Veronica knows that there is no one who is born with a desire to become a self-defeating and self-destructive person.

Unfortunately, Veronica realises that many of her brother's thoughts and actions probably have become habitual. Having a glass of whisky or something else often helped him reduce anxiety or tension, to relax, to cope with other unpleasant feelings, or to escape. For Liam, this eventually contributed to dependency as he got more accustomed to using alcohol to feel normal. The family and social environment in which he lived had influenced his behaviour. His decision to drink or not to drink was affected by access to alcohol, pressure from his friends and standards or values learned in his life. Most likely it was not one but a combination of factors that caused him to develop a drinking problem. The question is how all the trauma affected Liam's life and the lives of people close to him. However, the fact that he became addicted opens up the possibility and the risk that serious consequences or even death could result if he did not stop completely. Veronica often feels an emotional burden and distrust towards Liam. Being dependant makes it difficult if not impossible to function responsibly as a brother, which leads to many problems. Veronica recalls the time she did not want to see her brother any more as if she wanted to stop seeing him, perhaps in order to avoid being the witness of his own self-destruction: "Seriously. The last time I brought him here...this horrible old fucker, that I turned to and said. Plenty of time" (Enright 49).

Moreover, the people around Liam should have helped him in changing behaviour or aspects of his lifestyle that kept his drinking problem active. It would have been advisable to discuss the most effective and helpful recovery issues to change beliefs, thinking, and behaviour and learning to help him not drink more and attempt to change his

life. As his family had known about his problems but no one did anything about it, Veronica states:

Drinking was not his problem, but it did become his problem, eventually, which was a relief to everyone concerned...Quite right too, it was all complete shite. Alcohol wrecked him, as it does...I could smell his lunch-time wine and last night's beer. He didn't eat much, those years, his body already cycling on alcohol. (Enright 54)

Drinking alcohol caused Liam many problems. Possibly, Liam also developed a tolerance for alcohol requiring an increasing amount of alcohol to obtain the desired effect and relief. Furthermore, Liam's family may have got used to their brother's behaviour. Perhaps, some of his family members were frightened, ashamed, or intimidated into denying that there was a drinking issue. They might not have realised that Liam should never drink again. On the contrary, Veronica assumes that his behaviour was developed since his childhood trauma, trying to think about the time of his drinking: "But I am trying to put the time on it – when I stop worrying about him and started to worry about his drinking instead" (Enright 54).

Enright describes many situations which prove that there is a problem with refusing alcohol running in the family. It is quite common for people involved in any substance abuse to experience hurt or pain as a result of a loved one's trying to solve the problem, obviously, Veronica's family is no exception. Their relationships require an ability to share feelings with others. Veronica's siblings try to express upset feelings such as anger or disappointment as well as positive feelings such as love or appreciation. Normally their worries ease up while the upsetting feelings are shared over a glass of whisky or something else. Indeed, this feels rather inappropriate now, when they are to gather around and mourn for their beloved brother whose death is, above others, a consequence of long time drinking. When her family feels too much pressure being around their brother's dead body they try not to drink any alcohol, still it is hard for them all to resist. They try to minimize the time they spend with Liam's corpse in one bedroom. They cannot leave out such situations entirely, even though they would love to. After a while, one of Veronica's sisters pours some vodka trying to hide it in the sink as if alcohol makes it easier for her to accept the fact that there is their brother's corpse in the house.

It is not clear whether all the family have an alcohol problem or not, on the other hand, everyone knows that it will be more difficult to stay sober if he or she does not drink.

It is too stressful for all the family members to come over the situation, thus, no one suggests they should stop drinking. It is obvious that Hegarty family is prone to developing a drinking problem, suggesting their family's rituals and routines are strongly influenced by alcohol.

Gathering around Liam's dead body in the family house for his wake is significant due to the fact that the occasion gives the novel its title. It is necessary to point out that the Hegarty children have dispersed all over the world; countries such as Canada, the United States or England became their new homes. There is the question why they have desired to live somewhere else far away from their family and country. Obviously due to their difficult family background they choose to escape since they do not feel supported and nurtured. Likewise Liam, who had not got any help to overcome his problems was forced to deal with his problems on his own, consequently, he ran off into alcoholism; the other brothers and sisters flee the country in order to stay remote from the burdensome reality of their lives. The feature, spread in various Enright's novels, has been described as the Irish diaspora. Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland, mentions the important role of diaspora in Irish society in her speech:

I chose the title of this speech - cherishing the Irish diaspora - with care. Diaspora, in its meaning of dispersal or scattering, includes the many ways, not always chosen, that people have left this island. To cherish is to value and to nurture and support. If we are honest we will acknowledge that those who leave do not always feel cherished...No family on this island can be untouched by the fact that so many of our young people leave it. The reality is that we have lost, and continue every day to lose, their presence and their brightness. These young people leave Ireland to make new lives in demanding urban environments. As well as having to search for jobs, they may well find themselves lonely, homesick, unable to speak the language of those around them; and, if things do not work out, unwilling to accept the loss of face of returning home. It hardly matters at that point whether they are graduate or unskilled. What matters is that they should have access to the support and advice they need. It seems to me therefore that one of the best ways to cherish the diaspora is to begin at home. (Robinson)

Although, Robinson suggests the significance of diaspora in the present there is a remarkable fact to point out. It is estimated that in order to start a new life in better

conditions abroad, particularly the USA and Canada, more than 4.5 million people left Ireland from 1850 to the beginning of the WWI (Hatton, Williamson) In other words, the past remains in the present as previously seen regarding child abuse.

Scattering of the members of Hegarty family is even demonstrated in their family house which reminds “an endless extension” (Ewins 133). Thinking about the family house Veronica says that with so many children the house needed to grow bigger and bigger:

This is my house too. I was inside it, as it grew; as the dining room was knocked into the kitchen, as the kitchen swallowed the back garden... The place is all extension and no house. Even the cubby-hall beside the kitchen hall has another door at the back of it... You could not sell the place, I sometimes think, except as a site. Level it and start again. (Enright 213)

As a result, when the Hegarty brothers and sisters return from all over the world to their family house for their brother's wake they occupy the different extensions with their diverted personalities and the house reflects how both the family and national identity is broken into pieces.

Enright's characters have to face various obstacles and traumas which their lives are accompanied by. Liam's death leaves Veronica in despair. Suffering from a great loss of her beloved brother she feels that her life has been completely changed. Consequently, she finds herself feeling miserably most of the day full of sadness and emptiness. Veronica considerably diminishes her interest or pleasure in all every day activities. As a result of her insomnia she starts drinking wine every night, thus, when her husband and her daughters are asleep, she goes upstairs and downstairs their house thinking about her dead brother Liam. Veronica recalls her memories, examines her past life in order to find the answers to all her questions. Hence, she realises that all the things she does every day are only a daily routine:

Most of the stuff that you do is just stupid, really stupid, most of the stuff that you do just nagging and whining and picking up for people who are lazy even to love you, even that, let alone find their own shoes under their own bed; people who turn and accuse – scream at you sometimes – when they can only find one shoe. (Enright 27)

Analysing all the events she makes a horrendous discovery. She has been living her life in “inverted commas” (Enright 181). Moreover, the fact that Veronica would have not realised it if her brother did not commit suicide is rather shocking. At first Veronica tends to regress into depression continues with drinking which may relieve the despair awhile. Yet, the reality of Liam being dead will never disappear. In addition, Veronica’s relationship with Tom, her husband, worsens. It is challenged by her sadness and hopelessness which she needs to cope with. Veronica becomes very angry with her husband, starts insulting him and refuses to be intimate with him. Instead of allowing the family members to become involved in her recovery to come over her sorrow and depression she is preoccupied with the thoughts of the past. The previously developed pattern of the absent mother eventually reappears as Veronica is not used to expressing her feelings.

In addition, Veronica’s character is associated with space but also with an invention, a car, which was first used in Ireland in 1925, at the same time the Irish post-colonial state was established. The necessity of Veronica trying to live with her brother’s absence drives her car to the places which she travelled to with her brother. The car assists her to cope with her grief. Veronica’s car and her driving perform a journey into memory interlinked with her family and its past. Omitting the present, the car enables Veronica to bring her back in time into the past and memory without any clear purpose and direction where the car goes. Veronica’s present and young adolescence and childhood pasts are constructed within the pasts of her parents, grandparents and family. Moving through different interpretations of her present and past Veronica intends her memories to both Nugent, Liam’s abuser and the garage, the place Veronica assumes the abuse to take place. To understand the scope of her brother’s death, the car becomes a linking motif. Also, Veronica is associated to the car at the beginning of the novel, when driving to the airport after being informed about her brother’s death. (Bracken 190) The airport has a significant importance since it is the last place where Veronica met her brother. Being unaware of approaching the airport Veronica is distracted: “I don’t think about where I am going... I think about nothing – there is nothing to think about” (Enright 25). Veronica reiterates the same parts of the utterance in order to express her mind in a “figurative state of automatic driving” (Bracken 190). She is in an agony of sadness and disarray when she parks her car feeling safe locked inside. Experiencing a treating situation of the present Veronica can control neither her emotions nor her thoughts, but remaining with the car support her to bring back her memories of Liam relied on the steering wheel of the car. (Bracken 190)

A plane expresses another relationship with space in the sense of modernity throughout Enright's novel "as the human-plane assemblage facilitates a configuration of the moving self (Bracken 193). As Veronica travels by plane to Dublin crossing the space surrounded by air she observes the Irish coastline in order to discover a particular place closely associated with the land below. Although she notices something which is partly hidden or not clear it vanishes immediately. According to Bracken it may happen due to "connection and dislocation occurring at the same time" (193). As Veronica notes at the end of *The Gathering*: "I look at the people queuing at the till" wondering whether they are going home or far away from the people they love, saying "there are no other journeys" (Enright 258).



## 2. WHAT ARE YOU LIKE

### 2.1 THE ABSENT MOTHER

The novel tells the story of identical twin girls, Maria and Rose, who are separated at birth following the death of their mother, Anna. Due to the loss of the mother and the separation of the twin sisters, there is a discernible sense of absence throughout the novel *What Are You Like?* Both *The Gathering* and *What Are You Like?* express how the family relationships are complicated discussing the loss and absence and consequently how the characters desire to maintain better relationships not only with the ones who they love but also with themselves. The characters embody “a general sentiment of dislocation and disorientation” as they are connected to the environment of their families and the world surrounding them (Cahill 87). Trying to find the meaning of the world around them the characters endure the experience of feeling their lives in “a place with no proper map and no way home” differently (Enright 7).

First of all, considering the twins' mother, Anne, to be a „buried character“, Enright aims to acknowledge the traumatic effects of the missing mother on her daughters (Cahill 87). Anna, whose decease is one of the most significant effects, dies even before the twins are born as her brain tumour is not cured. Consequently, both the twins have been suffering from their loss even though they are not informed that they are half of the twins. Since their birth both sisters have been continually confused not only about their lives but also about their own identities as Enright says: „Rose was born with a hole in her head, a hole in her life“(Enright 140).

The split identity is obvious, particularly in relation to the protagonist Maria as she has a feeling of someone's presence: “there is someone always coming around the corner, who never arrives” (Enright 54). Maria feels certain that there is something missing in her life. When searching for answers Maria leaves for New York at the age of twenty. Maria being lost develops many intimate relationships with men without really loving them. Although she finds living there better than back home, being depressed, she is not satisfied with her life. According to Cahill not only „the unconscious experience of separation“ but also the „perceived lack of interconnection between self and other“, causes the psychic trauma of Maria and Rose (91). In addition, when Maria realizes her existence being on her own she tries to commit suicide, in fact, she feels that she is a burden to others, at the same time she feels disconnected from them.

The twins' connection to each other is seen during the scene while Maria is attempting to commit suicide and Rose fails to recognize a lampshade in the house opposite her thinking that it is a woman hanging herself. It is obvious that the twins' lives are closely interconnected (Cahill 91).

Another motif which causes the twin's feeling of someone's absence and consequently the trauma is that of the mirror effect. Maria seems to have a different view when looking at the mirror. One cannot recognize in his or her mirror stage a whole person coherently "in contrast to the fragmented body and self-identity that we actually experience" (Lacan 1). In contrast, Maria discovers a different image of herself and the mirror strengthens her feelings of loss and absence. When ascertaining a photograph of a girl in the wallet of her lover Anton, Marie is about to reveal a certain secret hidden for so many years. The girl who is actually Rose at the age of twelve reflects the same image that Maria has had of herself since her childhood. Her discovery of the twin sister's photograph has augmented Maria's relationship with the mirror:

Maria saw her own eyes. She saw her own teeth, the two extra incisors that were taken out when she was fourteen. She saw her own smile. She went over to the mirror to check if it was still there. She had been completely robbed. In the photo she was surrounded by strangers, she was wearing a blue granddad shirt tucked into a pair of white jeans...In the photo, she was wearing her own smile. (Enright 25)

It is interesting that the role of the missing mother is obvious even in perceiving the mirror image of the characters. Irigaray states:

The mirror stage can be predicted on the position of the mother as infrastructure, as support to the formation of the subject [...] women as body/matter are the material of which the mirror is made, that part of the mirror which cannot be reflected [...] so never see the reflections of themselves. (Irigaray 34)

The twins having difficulties with the mirror image are closely associated with the absence of their mother; moreover, for Maria and Rose it is even intensified by the actual death of their mother. Besides, after being informed by a clerk from adoption agency about her

mother's death Rose sits on the tube and watches her reflection in the opposite window, "the two faces juddering apart", feeling dislocated too (Enright 191). When the twin's dead mother, Anna, speaking from beyond the grave, imagines her name as a reflection of itself she considers it a mirror that fails to reflect her. Furthermore, there is a strong comment on the position of pregnant women, especially mothers considering the blankness of the mirror: "a blank body in the centre of it [her house], like a gap in the middle of a hole" (Enright 246). Due to her environment Anna is able to perceive herself as a gap lacking everything. Enright is preoccupied with the sense of the gap in her novels as women have not been heard for a long time and the time has come to make it different. Another missing mirror image is that of the twins' unconscious sense of each other's loss. The loss of the twin's mother is the quintessence of the trauma that both, Maria and Rose, suffer from. There is a constant imagery of gaps and holes that all the characters experience. (Cahill 92-3)

## **2.2 SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY**

Berts, Maria's and Rose's father, tries to eradicate the feeling of his absent dead wife. He covets his dead wife to be absent in his life. After Anna dies, her husband ceaselessly thinks of a cruise around Ireland's coastline. The coastline and the sea might symbolize Berts' feelings of his death wife and lost daughter who are both viewed from a great distance without any opportunity to neither see nor touch them again. Due to his journeys which he imagines Berts might control the memory of his dead wife:

The house would be the same when he got back, but it would be better the second time around, or at least different. His wife would be dead, but he would be alive, with a circle inscribed around that life. She would leave him alone...he might catch the edge of her absence; he might drag it with him around the entire country, until his wife's death had filled the map, emptied the map... (Enright 11)

Concerning the coastline along Ireland and its map Berts might try to show the limits of his mourning for his wife's death. Attempting to define the boundaries Berts finds it difficult to erase the presence of his dead wife due to its connection to his body. The only alternative to him is to "expel his wife beyond the boundaries of his map" (Cahill 96). Instead, Berts realizes that there is a gap inside his own head where his dead wife is placed.

Finally when he meets both his daughters walking through the door he apprehends that he made it possible for his wife to live constantly in the gap of his head. Wondering how long it has lasted Berts insists that he must have spent his life in a grave. Closing the empty space in his head, afterward, Berts pronounces his wife dead and “his rebirth is achieved through the erasure of his wife” (Cahill 97). On the contrary, Anna’s voice still speaks from beyond the grave explaining that being in hell she is not dead. Therefore, after Berts tries to avoid his wife’s presence it prevails in his life.

On the other hand, Maria and Rose desire to obtain the gaps in their lives and to locate the missing origin. When acknowledging that she was not born in England Rose feels the confusion relating to her identity. Rose being an adult woman realises that she has been subverted by the discovery that she has lived a lie. Consequently, she has been suffering from the loss since her childhood. She feels that she has a name without any identity. A part of her identity lacks another part. Rose finds her relationships incomplete due to some circumstances that she is not aware of and so she desires to ascertain where her roots are, where she comes from hoping for an opportunity to discover her origins and her past that had been relinquished many years ago. Rose thinks about travelling to Ireland in order to apprehend the situation and circumstance that made her parents adopt their child after its birth. Rose knows that the issue of finding the truth about her parents yet has to be addressed. When finding out that she had been adopted and that her parents are not English she wonders about her life: “She was a mess. She was someone who tried to give up things up and failed all the time. It was all lies. Rose had a hole in her head and anything at all could come out of it” (Enright 140).

Although Rose knows who her parents are, they have brought her up as their own biological daughter still, Rose tends to discover her roots, especially, and the reasons why her parents had refused to bring her up. Tracing their roots seems to be very important to Rose and Maria as a source of her own sense of who they are. They both consider themselves to be different from others. Sources of identity may be inferred from the clues that others present to them and this is the way they are identified by the others. While their friends and family can make their own judgements about who they are the girls both are not able to answer the questions as they do not know who they belong to. When Rose ascertains that her biological mother is dead and father unknown, Enright claims:

She started to wind through the street for no reason at all. She crossed from one side of the road to the other ... She had been running on the long leash. All her life,

she had been attached by an invisible rope and when, finally, she got around to tugging on it there was no one holding the other end. (Enright 166)

The discovery of the fact even defiles her life as she is linked to nothing. The invisible rope revealing the hidden secret of her dead mother only assists to explain her lost identity. Maria too, after trying to commit suicide “waited for her life to unravel in the dark [...] and slay the monster – which was nothing at all” (Enright 163). It seems that both Maria and Rose attempt to reveal the absence that motivates their psychic trauma. This is what they are searching for. (Cahill 94-5)

### 2.3 THE MEMORIES

Recalling memories and the ability of the characters to perceive the past and the present is interwoven with the symbols of modernity in Enright’s novels. In addition, the aspect of undertaking different journeys are similar both in *The Gathering* and in *What Are You Like?*.

First, a car is also an characteristic of the modernity playing an important part in Enright’s novel *What Are You Like?* which is connected to context of time and remembering. Maria at the age of eleven, travelling in her father’s car on the road to Dublin after she has visited her dead mother’s relatives, thinks about her school homework:

The Past Continuous – always, always, in the past. Or, at least, all the time.

Mammy, didn’t you always use to?...Because her mother was there once, but now she is gone. There was no always in it. Each time she [her mother] walked, she was already gone. (Enright 53)

Maria’s experience of her absent mother focuses on the aspect of time while journeying in the car. The aspects of the past constantly occur in the present and the future. Maria’s absent mother is reflected by a continuous past, the past that is constant. Applying the words with a negative meaning “nothing” and “not” is important since it entails the negative side of Maria’s situation due to the absence of her dead mother. Maria’s memories of her mother cannot be articulated, as there are no memories which Maria would share with her mother. As a result, “remembering itself becomes a generative process in the present” which will affect different memories in the future (Bracken 193).

In *What Are You Like?* the characters Maria and Rose, are related to journeys which are achieved through various states of their minds in different places in the world surrounded them. Being isolated and uncertain they are overwhelmed by their feeling of lost and confusion. Speaking about the situation when Rose comes back home Enright states: “There was never a clear way to get to the house she grew up in” (Enright 213). Obviously, one can notice how the place and journeys are interlinked in the novel. Similarly, the idea of home and travelling overlaps in Enright’s work in another example in the novel when the girls travel to Rose’s home to England. In other words, the characters are expected to be constantly on their way in order to journey in space. Not only *The Gathering* but also *What Are You Like?* perform the journeys in order to demonstrate that the characters experience pain due to their family secrets. For example, when Rose flies over the Atlantic she is afraid of the plane not landing: “She thought it would never end. That she would be on this flight for the rest of her life” (Enright 162). Veronica in *The Gathering*, likewise, discusses her suffering due to the grief of her brother, saying that she has been in the air since the decease of Liam.

According to Bracken the plane going to different places operates as “an installation of the dislocated experience” of the characters rather than “being fixed and grounded within it”. Thus, there is still hope that something positive having positive result might happen, for instance, the reunion of the twin sisters at the end of *What Are You Like?* which is believed to be a new beginning for both sisters after such a long time of disarray. (Bracken193-4)

### 3. *THE WIG MY FATHER WORE*

Anne Enright's first novel, *The Wig My Father Wore*, commenting on the situation in Ireland in 1990's, performs the themes of love, a presence of a ghost and difficult relationships which are affected by the past. There are certain absurdities of modern life present that are expressed by the connection to the machines, relationships developed between the characters and the inventions of modernity. The novel depicts the world of media and reality which is often misunderstood through cameras and television.

#### 3.1 THE ANGEL AND THE VIRGIN

Enright's work is full of ghosts. The dead exist and they fall in love. For example, in the novel *What Are You Like?* the ghost of the mother, Anna, speaks from beyond the grave in order to persuade her husband that she is not dead, in fact, she is only absent.

The novel *The Wig My Father Wore* opens with an angel Stephen appearing on Grace's doorstep, asking for a cup of tea. Stephen who became an angel after he committed suicide in Ontario in 1934 is seen as an ordinary man who killed himself due to some circumstances causing him difficulties. (Hansson 51) Although Grace, the television producer, seems to have everything what she needs in her life such as money, sex or power, being asked several questions concerning her feminine self, when Stephen emerges at her door, she realizes a rather surprising fact. Questioning her about, for example, her mother and her fertility Grace admits that there is an absence of the feminine aspects in her existence as she lacks purity, wisdom and honesty. On the other hand, Stephen being an angel embodies the contrary the purity of his soul is represented by his physical whiteness. Whereas Stephen is completely pure and naive, Grace being exposed to shame appears to be sarcastic. Therefore, Grace is the one to represent the male role in their peculiar relationship. (Elke D'hoker 186-194)

Progressively, Stephen establishes a change within her. As Grace states: "I become too clean...my flesh so soft (Enright 136). After taking a shower at work, she looks at herself in the mirror, recalling the image of herself being nine or fourteen years old she wonders if she is a virgin again. When Grace discovers that she is expecting a baby she decides to change her life, resigns from her job, and moves away from the big city to the countryside to the western Ireland. Recalling her mother's pregnancy rituals she turns away from the

material world she used to live all her life in the city back into the nature (Elke D’hoker 186-194). As Grace states:

I swim every morning in the sea, in the sun and in the rain and I say to God that this is my prayer for our child, whoever it is, whoever it might turn out to be. I swim on the back and look at the sky, which reminds me of the sky when I was a child, the sky when I asked my father “Why is the sky blue?” realizing as I said it that it wasn’t really blue at all. And my father gave me an answer as mixed as the weather. (Enright 214)

Grace being influenced by Stephen’s presence decides to abandon the life in materialistic world for a live in nature. Moreover, Grace has discovered her femininity and has attained her true place in society as a mother. Consequently, considering Grace’s feminine behaviour as a mother D’hoker states that she “would reinforce rather than challenge the tradition conventions” (130).

### **3.2 THE RELATIONSHIPS**

While human inventions have made Enright’s characters’ lives infinitely convenient they have also introduced new threats, however. There is a question whether the inventions are only necessities in their lives. It is obvious that technology that the characters are surrounded with has created shape of their current world. Consequently, the inventions, such as cameras and television due to the misinterpretation affect or destroy the characters’ relationships. In addition, Enright’s characters are closely associated with the body and sex. In an interview Enright complains that men “have always written of sex as if it’s the worst thing that could ever happen to anyone providing their work with puritanical disgust and misogyny (Koval). Enright in the interview with Moloney says of *The Wig my Father Wore*: “Throughout, the book contrasts a spiritual/ascetic male idea of love...with female sexual love that has not been widely explored in fiction which includes pregnancy and children as well as sex” (Moloney 59). As Matthew Ryan claims:

The body is rendered primarily through images of sex and reproduction, which are placed in relation with the technologies of television production and reception. The question of rendering the materiality of the body is then complicated by the



presence of the semi-embodied Stephen and the disembodied interaction by television. In the novel, this is played out through various inversions and merges of body and image (Ryan 172).

For instance, in the description of the office the people are viewed as a “ward for the blind,” shouting at each other they want to make themselves clear. There is a television switched on with “nothing coming through. It is not simple”. (Enright 10)

The contradiction is extended despite a dating game-show which Grace works on as a producer. The face-to-face concerns of the game are enacted at a distance and experienced through image, actually. Television is considered to be “the simulation of face to face interaction as Ryan admits it “enacts an altogether more abstracted social exchange” (173). To live within the society it requires excepting the contradictions between these aspects of interaction. In *The Wig my Father Wore* the contradictions become apparent as they express Grace’s father dementia. After having a stroke, her father’s behaviour is changed as the stroke affects his mind in a wrong way. He starts perceiving the telephone and the television as the same thing and creates a relationship with television programmes. He talks to the people on the television, plays games with them as if they were real (Ryan 173).

Consequently, the present turns into delusion and starts a “process of folding the body into the image of the body,” which embarks with the introduction of both the wig and the first television set within the family (Ryan 173). The three elements might express the false perception of the reality to be only the image of them.

Furthermore, the wig Grace’s father wears is the symbol of falsehood in the novel associated with the media world. The wig hiding her father’s baldness allows him to appear as a man with hair that in a similar manner television changes real people into something else and delivers thus as truth (Hansson 61). Obviously, the dating game Love Quiz shown on the television is presented as true love. On the show, reality is converted to the world which occurs to be more real than the world outside and the protagonist of the show creates his identity through a film:

Damien stumbles in wearing a trench coat, a cigarette clamped in his teeth. What move is he in today? Columbo? The Big Sleep? He looks out at us through his hangover and twitches, as if every move were a jump cut from *A Bout de Souffle*. (Enright, *The Wig My Father Wore* 120)

In addition, Enright's view of the modernity in the novel *The Wig my Father Wore* is expressed by using the machines, such as, video cameras and a television. Grace's complaints depict the situation when the video cameras cause troubles and stop from continuing capturing an episode of the show. On the contrary, due to the lack of organization which prevails when using the camera it is impossible to make shots, subsequently the camera expresses chaos experienced in modernity. Likewise, the television is another establishment of the connection with the character and the modernity itself. The television switched on making a noise without any sense does not signify any meaning either. Again, chaos is spread through the television no message to come through, in other words, the image of the television is misrepresented. On the other hand, when thinking of the show Love Quiz, one can suggest that there is repetition of the situation that arises during the scene. The girls performing on the show in order to contest are of the same appearance. The girls are believed to come to public attention through the image of the television broadcasting as mass media produce the same image therefore sameness in modernity is evident. (Bracken 187-9)

Besides, photographs do not reflect the reality either. Moreover, they create the reality that never existed, as Grace realizes about a photograph taken at Christmas. While she is describing the picture, she admits that the reality cannot be seen:

There is a picture of us... I am going to cut my knee; you cannot see this in the photograph. But first I will throw my plate against the wall; you cannot see it either...look closely at our smiles. The picture is black and white suicide. It is an accident waiting to happen. (Enright 110)

The photograph fails to show the accurate situation, another one showing Grace's mother depicts a situation which does not correspond to Grace's expectations. It might also be understood as an effect of her complicated relationship of her mother when Grace is unable to accept the image of reality. In other words, communication lacks and the relationships deteriorate; moreover, the photographs misrepresent and falsify the past instead of revealing the memories. Grace looking at a photo of her mother admits that she cannot remember her mother to be beautiful because "The photo is a lie". (Enright 171)

Another photograph of Grace's family which captures the repetitive situation within the society was taken during Christmas time. Only the family members become different as

they grow old, in contrast, not only the meal served but also black and white formatting has not been changed and remains the same.

The idea is further proved when describing Grace's colleague Frank and his family who never makes photographs from most of his film, in case they would turn out differently to what he can bring back in his memory. Similarly, his dysfunctional relationship as in Grace's family is apparent as his wife is suspicious that he is betraying her with another woman which an undeveloped roll of a film documents. Instead of finding out the truth, she keeps it in her bedside drawer without even touching it. When considering visual representation and memory, it is necessary to mention another element, that of the mirror image. Due to the fact that Grace's father detested cameras, mirrors were placed in every room as in the mirror every image looked the same; neither the feeling nor the pain was reflected. Unlike the photograph the mirror image does not represent reality correctly. (Hansson 59-62)

## CONCLUSION

The main aim of the undergraduate thesis was to compare three of the novels of the contemporary Irish writer, Anne Enright. In order to find similarities the thesis focuses on the aspects of three various novels *The Gathering*, *What Are You Like?*, and last but not least, the novel *The Wig My Father Wore*; moreover the way the present and the past is interlinked.

First of all, the family is one of the major themes in all novels. The families are influenced by several aspects; not only the family background but also the Irish society is important when Enright's characters develop very often complicated relationships during their lives. It is also important to remember that siblings, grandparents and other close relatives all have their own influence on Enright's characters throughout her novels. The absent mother, dead or alive, in all the novels is evident. Consequently, Enright's characters are haunted by the lack of mother. Although the mother is missing, the characters maintain strong bonds between siblings within their dysfunctional families. In *The Gathering*, Veronica is challenged by the death of her brother's suicide and she tries to recall her memories in order to apprehend the reasons that made him commit suicide. By searching for the cause of his death Veronica reveals the truth about child abuse that occurred not only in her family but also in Ireland. Enright might desire to address the terrible events to public so that people can learn from the past and prevent the public from child abuse in the future.

Then, the thesis depicts the consequences of the Irish diaspora that is seen not only in the novel *The Gathering* but also in *What Are You Like?*. The characters flee the country in order to find better life and to forget where their roots are from. Still, due to the fact that the past affects their lives inevitably they can never escape their destiny.

Moreover, mentioning the causes, that made Veronica's brother commit suicide, such as drinking alcohol, complicated family relationships and child abuse the thesis also deals with the consequences of his death. After Liam's death Veronica's life has been completely changed and she has been depressed for a long time. Unlike Liam, who sinks into his troubled life and never finds his way out Veronica gradually gathers all her strength to learn from the past, conquer the misfortune and start living her own life as she feels a strong urge to take the inverted commas off her life.

Besides, for Enright's characters it is the memory which plays significant role in their lives. The process of remembering is often very painful; on the other hand, it is

necessary to look back into the past in order to understand not only the present but also to find the identity which is a core of the novel *What Are You Like?* Both Maria and Rose act under some circumstances, both due to the background they live in, and also the family in which history they were brought up. For both twins it is important to know where they are from, what their roots are so that they can comprehend their lives.

In addition, the thesis demonstrates how Enright's characters are affected by technological inventions. In *The Gathering*, Veronica is somehow connected to the car and the plane that help her recall her memories of her brother. In *What Are You Like?* there is a connection with the car and the plane too as the journeys of the characters assist them to overcome the isolation, split identities, as well as, the absent mother. In the novel *The Wig My Father Wore*, it is the camera and the television that reflects the reality of the world that is often misunderstood through the images of photographs, mirrors and television programmes. Nevertheless the fact the technology is viewed to be a necessity in Enright's characters' lives it may also destroy or misinterpret the relationships.

Finally, in the comparison with Enright's novel, it is necessary to point out that not only Enright but also another Irish writer, Marina Carr, is preoccupied with ghosts, the element of water, twins' separation and motherhood.

After seeing Carr's play *Portia Coughan* at the J. K. Tyl Theatre in Pilsen one could admit that there are certain aspects and elements similar if not the same. Portia Coughan, whose life is affected due to the death of her twin brother, suffers for not being able to live with the loss. Portia's sense of her life is associated with the absence part of herself, the ghost of her brother, Gabriel, who maintains her journey between the death and the world surrounded. In an attempt to overcome sorrow for her lost brother, Portia is unable to behave as a mother and a wife, thus, she chooses between her life and her twin brother and drowns in the river.

Although Enright's novels are full of darkness, depression, disappointment and despair at times, eventually a flash of light and hope for better future appears at the end of each novel. Thus, every reader is likely to find a piece of their own life story similar in some measure, which could make both the work and the author reach and address readers even beyond Ireland.

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## SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tato bakalářská práce srovnává romány irské autorky Anne Enright, která je považována za feministickou autorku současného Irska. Hlavním cílem této práce je srovnání novel *The Gathering*, *What Are You Like?* a *The Wig My Father Wore*, a to z pohledu prolínání minulosti a přítomnosti, které je nemožné od sebe oddělit.

Bakalářská práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních částí. První nejobsáhlejší část podrobně popisuje jakým způsobem je irská rodina ovlivněna různými aspekty měnící se současné doby. Důležitý je element chybějící matky, který ovlivňuje hrdiny všech tří románů. Další téma, kterým se práce zabývá je fakt, že V Irsku docházelo ke zneužívání dětí, o kterém se dlouhou dobu nemluvalo, i když k němu docházelo několik let v různých sférách irské společnosti. Další část práce pojednává o osudech postav, které, v rámci tzv. irské diaspory ve velkém množství opouštěly svoji rodnou zem, v naději lepšího života v zahraničí.

Další část práce zkoumá způsob, jakým jsou romány této autorky ovlivňovány symboly moderní doby, jakými jsou automobil, letadlo, televize, fotoaparát a v neposlední řadě kamera. Tato část upozorňuje na fakt, že i když technologie umožňuje zjednodušení každodenního života postav, zobrazuje i současné špatné způsoby komunikace i vnímání světa samotnými postavami.

I když je mnohdy Anne Enright považována za autorku, která se zabývá ponurými a depresivními tématy, v každém románu se odráží nutnost postav oprostít se od minulosti a vzpomínek a věřit v lepší zítřky.