

**The Entanglements of Individual and Official Commemoration in Julian Barnes' Short
Story "Evermore"**

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I. Introduction

While a renewed fascination with the legacies and memories of the most important events in 20th century history and a growing interest in its literary representations might be attributed to a better understanding of those historical moments from our more distant position this obsession with the past, as Astrid Erll points out in her book *Memory in Culture*, is also the result of several other developments and changes that the world experienced in the last decades. Besides technical developments and a more elaborate representation of history by the media (a factor that is particularly important in its influence over public opinion), the most significant political, societal and historical transformations (from the point of view of this paper) revolve around memory and its (missing) human vehicles. This is particularly relevant in terms of how societies remember the last century's most devastating conflicts, especially because the world had lost or has been losing the generation that had personally witnessed them (Erll 4-5).

Momentous changes have occurred within academic discourses, as well, since the 1980s. Most theoretical developments concerning how memory and its processes work appeared in the 1960s and 1970s with the second "memory boom" (Winter, 18) (after the first one dating back to the 1890s and 1920s), and thus the idea of the 'end of grand narratives' and the past as an entity constructed by society (Hayden White) (Erll 5) all shaped our perception and literary representation of historic events and the legacies they left behind. Part of this turn is the growing prevalence of terms such as 'collective' (Halbwachs), 'cultural' and 'communicative' memory (Jan and Aleida Assmann), 'counter-memory' (Foucault) and 'sites of memory' (Pierre Nora). This second wave in the evolution of memory, moreover, was largely influenced by the experience of the Holocaust. Jay Winter points out that this era was "the age of the witness" as it was only in the last decades of the 20th century that the survivors of the Nazi concentration camps started telling their stories; this was the era when "new voices...[...]...the new carriers of memory" (*The Great War Between Historical Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, 28) appeared on the cultural scene and contributed to the transformation of memory. As Winter also indicates: "The second memory boom privileged a new group of people and their memories. No longer would one group of carriers of memory – the heroes and heroines of resistance – eclipse another group" (28). Winter identifies one crucial characteristic of the newly emerging perspectives to memory: by including those who had not come forth with their memories before the 1970s, the discourse of memory could transform into a more democratic and thus more inclusive (including more and more layers of society and marginalised groups in it) realm giving way to accounts and testimonies of the darkest and most

traumatic chapters in 20th century history. Such expressions of personal grief and trauma also made its way into literature in the forms of fiction and fictionalized memoirs that, as Winter acknowledges, have been “important vectors for the dissemination of notions of traumatic memory” (44).

Exploring the many notions of memory as well as their appearance in literature and popular culture as a complex and relevant system might give us a better understanding of memory and how it is sustained and passed on. As Astrid Erll also argues: “...[...]... all these [different concepts, types of memory and its cultural representations] cannot be considered in a vacuum, independently of one another. Attempts to separate ‘individual memory’, ‘tradition’, ‘history’ or ‘fiction’ from ‘memory’ prevent us from seeing the threads that connect such phenomena” (Erll 7). 21st-century perspectives on memory can be seen as quite democratic as they do not assume a hierarchy between the media and types of memorial discourses. In fact, postmodern ideas acknowledge the fact that history, memory and fiction stand for a distinct perception of memory, playing an equally important role in a complex system of entangled memories and cultural representations.

Another reason for the transformation of the cultural attitudes to memory, as Tamás Bényei suggests in his essay “Történelem és emlékezés a kortárs történelmi regényben” is that, “what seems to have taken place in the cultural condition that is also referred to as postmodern is the realisation that the separation of personal reminiscence and collective commemoration is no longer tenable” (39); instead, theoreticians call for the investigation of these concepts as a web of notions where the interconnectedness of elements are undeniable.

The present essay is concerned with Julian Barnes’ shorts story “Evermore” published in his short story collection *Cross Channel* (1996) that explores the complexities of diverse memory processes in an entangled memory system while dealing with the First World War and its memory that is maintained and embodied by the elderly main character, Miss Moss. The story takes place in the second half of the 1960s and follows Miss Moss who has been visiting First World War cemeteries in Britain and France annually for the last 50 years. Through this particular visit taking place in the present of the story, Barnes explores and opens up a whole life and world based on grief and the commemoration not only of the First World War in general, but also of the brother of Miss Moss, Sam, who fell in the trenches. The story explores the complex and conflicted relationship between the individual and the mechanisms of officialdom on several levels, from the treatment of the individual soldier by the military and

the problematization of individuality as a result of official institutions, discourses and practices shaping the memory of soldiers and potentially disrupting the processes of individual commemoration and grief. The text traces the process through which collective grief and commemoration come to constitute the basis of the individual identity and memory of Miss Moss.

What this analysis will particularly focus on are the interplay of individual, collective, official and cultural memory and the way they construct the memory and legacy of the war, an investigation into how the story presents the conflict or opposition between the individual and official memory of the war and whether it imagines any possible resolution. Such processes will be investigated through the character of Miss Moss whose attitude and identity clearly represents the entanglements of memory. In exploring such memory processes, I shall argue that, although Miss Moss expresses elements of personal grief and, and has personal links to the war, because of the instability of her personal identity and because she exhibits the characteristics of a figure of officialdom, Miss Moss can be perceived as someone belonging more to the official realm of memory rather than inhabiting the position of the individual in it.

In my argument, I shall draw upon the term ‘cultural memory’, originally coined by Maurice Halbwachs and complemented by Jan Assmann in several books, and in his essay “Communicative and Cultural Memory”. Assmann’s theories on memory will be of great importance in this paper as his figure of the ‘memory specialist’ that I identify with the character of Miss Moss will be instrumental in exploring how she relates to the First World War, and it will also serve as a trope of the intersection of official and individual memory, enabling us to see the protagonist as the embodiment of cultural memory as well as the representative of what we can call a certain type of counter-memory. I shall also draw upon Assmann’s understanding of “individual memory” in which the concepts of ‘subjective time’ and ‘inner self’ (Assmann 109) unite and that presents an approach to history and memory that, in many cases, deviates from mainstream considerations and that is independent of politics or public opinion. I shall refer to ‘official memory’ as a set of different notions, practices and attitudes that have become fundamental in commemorating the conflict; these are attitudes that tend to dominate cultural memory. ‘Official memory’, in contrast to ‘individual memory’, is always explicitly entangled with politics. In the context of the memory of the Great War, official memory has tended to regard soldiers as heroes who sacrificed themselves for a noble cause rather than as victims of a senseless and destructive conflict. ‘Individual’ and ‘official’ memory are often juxtaposed in the fiction of the First World War and shed light on the discrepancies between the ways of

commemoration offered by official memory and the needs of the individual seeking consolation and reconciliation after the loss of a brother or husband¹. “Evermore”, although it touches upon the inadequacy of the system to provide adequate practices of commemoration that would be beneficial both for the individual and the community or nation, harmonising what Miss Moss calls “the voluptuous selfishness of grief” (Barnes 79) with consolatory methods made available by the state, in Barnes’ short story the relationship within the memory system is more complex and comprehensive than such dichotomies.

¹ Individual bereavement stories serve as the focus for Robert Edric’s two novels: *In Desolate Heaven* (1997) and *Field Service* (2015). While the former novel is set in Switzerland, 1919 and follows the story of two young British women seeking reconciliation after the loss of Michael (brother to Elizabeth and husband to Mary) in the Great War, in the latter one a grieving woman travelling to France in 1920 to visit her husband’s grave in a war cemetery also appears.

II. The Individual, Her Memory and the (Potential) Disintegration of the Self in the Cultural Memory of the First World War

Before exploring Miss Moss as a person of officialdom and a ‘memory specialist’, reflecting on her identity as an individual (or the lack thereof) is of key importance. Miss Moss’s personal connection to the war, as it has been established, is based on the loss of her brother, Sam, which loss constitutes the basis of her identity, as well. Miss Moss is keenly conscious of this aspect of her life and the huge impact it has on her perception of the world: “Her grief was a calliper, necessary and supporting; she could not imagine walking without it” (Barnes 79). And indeed, the memory of the brother pervades every field and aspect of her life and serves as a motivation as well as a direction and focus for her in managing her life. Consequently, when individuality is expressed or personal choices are made in her life, those are also filtered through the brother’s memory and push Miss Moss towards another manifestation of commemoration. After the war she marries Denis, the best friend of Sam, who himself was fighting in the war and returned as a physically and mentally damaged man who is unable to have “carnal connection” with anyone, while Miss Moss herself is “unwilling” (83) to do so. Such obliteration of human relationships shows that the war damages not only its direct participants but also many of those who are affected one way or another, and it also questions the possibility of regeneration after such devastation. The initial reason behind Miss Moss (whose first name the reader never learns) and Denis’ marriage is that Miss Moss wants “to feel her loss afresh” (83). From this perspective, their marriage is a one-sided relationship and manifests itself through the objectification and fetishization of Denis, a symbol of the senseless war Miss Moss so excessively commemorates. Fully aware of her own motives and her inability to have a functional relationship, Miss Moss explains that “the rest of her life had been selfish too, devoted as it may entirely to her own commemorations, but this was a selfishness that hurt nobody else” (83). After two years of marriage, Miss Moss “returned him to his sisters” (84) like a mere object, which act is also described as the “disposal of Denis” (85).

In addition to her personal links to and individualistic perception of the war, Miss Moss’s individuality manifests itself through her peculiar requests towards the army, more precisely the War Graves Commission which had been responsible for the construction and maintenance of war cemeteries since the First World War. She expresses quite peculiar needs in her process of commemoration and grieving. One year, for instance, she wants to sleep next to Sam’s grave on Remembrance Day; also, after her death, she wants her ashes to be scattered

in the cemetery where Sam lies. She, of course, is never granted permission to do either of these. While Brian Dillon suggests that Miss Moss is an “obsessive necro-tourist”, her relationship to the Commission is also described by him as the little man’s fight against a “faceless bureaucracy” (np) strengthening her position as an individual in the cultural memory of the war.

As far as the material basis of her memory is concerned, there are also objects or material “carriers” of (individual) memory that constitute the foundations of Miss Moss’s memory of the brother. These are postcards that Sam sent home from the front and photographs taken of him. These objects function very much as relics embodying Miss Moss’s effort to preserve her brother’s memory as well as that of the First World War. Such intention, as Pierre Nora argues, is crucial as “a will to remember” (“Les Lieux de Mémoire”, 19) distinguishes mere objects or material places from the *lieux de mémoire*; a physical place or site of remembrance. Based on Nora’s concept of the “sites of memory”, I argue that although they do not take the form of a physical place, the letters and photographs of Sam function as “sites of memory”. On the one hand, they are material by definition and, on the other hand, they also correspond to the purpose of stopping time and immortalizing death (Nora 19) as well as the memory of the brother, which results in an everlasting commemoration of war and process of grieving. The very fact that the basis of Miss Moss’s identity and memory are photographs that, considering their most basic function, capture the moment and time, is symbolic and quite apt.

Miss Moss is opposed to some collective ideas and the existence of a universal experience of grief and loss that the state propagates. In rejection of official memory and practices of commemoration, a few years after her brother’s death, she refuses to participate in annual national commemorations on Remembrance Day and share those moments with other millions of people. Instead, she shifts her commemorations and visits to First World War cemeteries to other months of the year. By doing so, she rejects some of the modes by and through which the masses who have incorporated and now share the many ideas propagated by the state remember, only to find solace and pursue her own way of mourning in other official venues, war cemeteries. Her rejection of the limitedness of war commemoration (which is only one day a year) and the fact that she shifts her commemorations both in time (as she prefers visiting cemeteries in the spring) and space (travels around Britain and France), Miss Moss extends the scope of remembrance transforming it into an eternal process as another act of commemoration. This never-ending aspect of her memory as well as of the fact that her entire life is based on commemoration, corresponding to Pierre Nora’s concept of *les lieux de*

mémoire, enlarges the time and space of remembrance while also confining and trapping her in both dimensions.

As Nataliya Danilova reflects, the state and the army have grown inseparable through war commemorations, which “ensured the incorporation of the military culture into the national master narratives” (*The Politics of War Commemoration in the UK and Russia*, 214). Evidently, when criticizing official practices of the commemoration of the Great War, Miss Moss is bound to be critical of the military machinery, as well, the impact of which on official memory is undeniable. In this respect, Miss Moss dismisses the collective and eternal authority of the military that claims the soldiers even after their death. The critique against such practices appears in the story as follows:

Something about the way they had vanished and the way they were now reclaimed was more than she could bear: as if an army which had thrown them away so slightly now chose to own them again so gravely. (80)

What Miss Moss finds especially revolting in the way the military operates is the fact that, after soldiers die in action, their bodies cannot be reclaimed by their families or other civilian authorities; on the contrary, the military extends its authority and ownership over the soldiers even after sacrificing them to a “greater good”. Interestingly, this opposition to the military and their claim for the soldiers is not an opinion generally shared by civilians in relating to the war dead. In fact, as Joanna Scutts indicates in her essay “Battlefield Cemeteries, Pilgrimage, and Literature after the First World War: The Burial of the Dead”:

In Britain, unlike France, there was no widespread call for the bodies of the dead to be returned to their families for burial; instead, it was generally accepted that soldiers should be buried on the land where they died, and that the foreign soil would become literally and figuratively nationalized. (393)

Both during and after the First World War, as Scutts suggests, the authority of the military was widely accepted and supported by public opinion in Britain, and it was generally accepted that fallen soldiers should be buried in foreign lands even if it meant that the burial would take place within the framework of the British military. By refusing to accept such ideas, Miss Moss revolts against collective perspectives that she feels are potentially damaging to the individual and their individual needs for bereavement (let us just think of Miss Moss’s peculiar requests towards the army) and goes against the assumption that soldiers are universally regarded with patriotic ideas and thus are present in the war narrative as soldiers but not as individuals.

In addition to the extensive power of the military, Miss Moss also rejects both the physical and transcendental legacies of the soldiers, finding no comfort in either of these collective ideas of remembrance advertised not only by politicians but by the army, too. First, she rejects the idea or image of the soldiers' "decomposing body as a sort of fertilizer capable of imbuing foreign soil with Englishness" (Scutts 393) which patriotic and supposedly comforting idea was widely propagated in and through Rupert Brooke's poem "The Soldier" and was also quite popular when the War Graves Commission started its work after the First World War. One wonders what exactly Miss Moss is rejecting here. The image presented above can be regarded as something disturbing, both liminal and abject; nonetheless, it found its way to the official memory of the war rather quickly. The decomposing body of the soldier is a haunting image both in Brooke's poem and from the perspective of individual bereavement as the image of an undead soldier is something that has the potential to unsettle the grief of the individual and affect one's search for consolation quite negatively when the very death of the individual is questionable, and the possibility of a rebirth is so physical. With a patriotic but potentially haunting imagery, "The Soldier" aims at prescribing a socially acceptable behaviour and intends to reduce the scope of practices of and perspectives upon commemorating the fallen soldiers. The key word of the famous first line of the poem is probably the word "only": "If I should die, think only this of me..." (*Poetry of the First World War* 106) as it offers a person seeking consolation a ready-made perspective from which they can judge the war and that could easily serve as an uplifting and patriotic legacy of the soldiers sacrificing their lives for their country. However, the fact that Miss Moss is unable and, even unwilling, to accept such concepts and refuses to distance herself from the soldiers and events taking place on the front, suggests the conflict between the individual and official practices and principles of commemoration, where the needs of the individual are overshadowed by national interests. As a result, Miss Moss and official memory silently engage in the "hero-victim dilemma" that "problematises the dichotomous representation of fallen soldiers as both heroes and victims of the war" (Danilova 210). Even though Miss Moss's memory is obsessed with the brother, she never glorifies Sam or other soldiers, neither does she emphasise their victimhood, arguing that "Sam had done what he could – he had served and died" (Barnes 86-87). As a result, her position presents a mixed view of the soldiers rather than propagating a set of dichotomies while connecting individual and official commemoration. Secondly, we can also see Miss Moss rejecting a transcendental view of the fallen soldiers. Brian Dillon calls attention to the fact that Miss Moss never really considers that one day she will be rewarded for her efforts in preserving the memory of the war (np) nor does she dwell on the fact that her sacrificing her whole life

just to keep Sam's memory alive was worth it or that it is indeed a noble act on her part. Thus, while national consolatory practices do not meet the needs of the individual, the individual herself is also, to a certain extent, incapable of articulating and realizing her needs and reaching comfort eventually.

Even though it is clear from the above instances that Miss Moss can be seen as representing an individual and dissident memory practice that is opposed to the dominant version of the cultural memory of the war, an important aspect of her character that we have not yet touched upon can easily destabilize this view. The reason behind this potential erosion of her individuality lies in the fact that, despite being obsessed with the memory of Sam and organizing her life around commemorations of him, Miss Moss does not actually recall any specific personal memories of her brother. Although the first "mnemonic" word of the story occurs in connection with Sam ("Of course she did not need actually to look at [the photographs] to recall his dark eyes, sticky-out ears, and the jaunty smile which agreed that the fun would be all over by Christmas" (75)), this is the first and last of personal reminiscences. In fact, she seems to have only a mediated memory of Sam that is motivated through the material basis of her memory: the postcards and photographs. In view of this impersonality, it could be argued that Sam, rather than a dead brother, becomes Miss Moss's own institutionalised "Unknown Soldier". Rather than the opposite of official commemoration, Miss Moss's memory practice is its miniature, individual replica. Moreover, it might be argued that besides being mediated, her memory is also an inherited or intergenerational one as the postcards that Sam sent home from the frontline were not addressed to Miss Moss but to their mother. A lack of social bonds can also be detected in Miss Moss's life as she has no family or friends and encounters only a handful of colleagues due to her work; but there, she tends to avoid people. The absence of a social framework might also be the reason behind why Miss Moss lacks any specific memories from her personal life or anything else that is independent of the war and its memory. Jan Assmann calls our attention to the fact that "the durability of memories depends on the durability of social bonds and frames" and that "a change of frames brings about forgetting" ("Communicative and Cultural Memory", 111). Given these concepts of the accumulation and loss of memory, Miss Moss's lack of personal memories even of the most important figure in her life, whose loss defines her existence, can be the result of her lack of any social bonds both in her everyday life and during her commemorations and pilgrimages to war cemeteries.

Another perception of and reason behind Miss Moss's lack of personal memories is similar to Denis' post-war position. While Denis "had guilt and pain, but no specific memory

of what he felt guilty about” (Barnes 84), Miss Moss is similarly unable to recall her memories of the brother as the object of her greatest obsession. Thus, we can perceive them as characters suffering from dissociative amnesia, and as victims who have been traumatized by the war: Denis by what he experienced on the battlefield, and Miss Moss in a somewhat indirect but still quite personal manner, by the loss of the brother. Miss Moss’s excessive strategies of commemoration are perhaps a way to compensate for her amnesia; this is manifested in an excessive life based on grief (and perhaps guilt) penetrating all areas of her life.

Thus, even though Miss Moss can be perceived as a fairly unique, even eccentric individual in the cultural memory of the Great War because of the peculiarities of her character that go against collective and public opinion in relating to the military machinery or official ways and places of commemoration, without any specific memories of the brother, Miss Moss’s identity (based solely on his memory) becomes questionable at this point and her role as a dissident individual with her own practices of counter-memory is also problematized within the framework of the cultural memory of the Great War. Evidently, devoting her life to the commemoration of war, Miss Moss is able to move past her shattered self and become absorbed in the cultural framework of the conflict, which results in her reconstruction as the representative of a greater and more profound memory of the war. Because of the non-existence or failure of her character as an individual and because she fulfils several functions in the story that are associated with a peculiar realm of officialdom, Miss Moss can be perceived as a figure of officialdom or rather a person inhabiting a special position in the legacy of the First World War which role has the potential of unifying the different concepts of memory (individual and official) and offer a more nuanced and viable view of memory and its entanglements in a postmodern era.

III. The Figure of Officialdom: Miss Moss the Memory Specialist and the Democratization of Grief

After problematizing the individuality of Miss Moss, we must reflect on the role she indeed plays in the legacy or cultural memory of the First World War. Such a role, as I have already suggested, can be found in the special official role Miss Moss fulfils that deviates from the mainstream official world that is pervaded by politics and many patriotic ideas, often disregarding the self and individual needs for bereavement. In this chapter, I shall argue that Miss Moss can be seen as an instance of the figure of the ‘memory specialist’ introduced by Jan Assmann in his essay “Communicative and Cultural Memory”.

The “memory specialist”, as Assmann explains, is a key figure in cultural memory that “always has its specialist, both in oral and in literate societies” (114). In addition to going against some aspects of national memory politics, in Barnes’ short story, Miss Moss is presented as a figure that can be seen to embody a more democratic way in which the First World War and the fallen soldiers are remembered. Instead of choosing to represent only one aspect or side of the discourse and fulfil the needs of individual bereavement or official commemoration, the ‘memory specialist’ offers a unified vision, trying to reconcile the many notions and considerations of memory that are seemingly irreconcilable. Thus the ‘specialist’ acknowledges the importance of objects as carriers of memory, accepts the sites of official (mainstream) commemoration, but is also conscious of the contingency and fragility of the position of the grieving individual and is constantly working on altering and reconstructing language so that it is aware of the sensitivity and special needs of individual mourners. Besides bringing together the notions of the individual and the collective, the ‘memory specialist’ also engages in connecting the writing-central literate societies and oral cultures that are suspicious of official language and written language in general.

One of the ways in which Miss Moss embodies the ‘memory specialist’ or “connoisseur of grief” (Barnes 77) is her habit of memorizing the material basis of her memory and commemoration of Sam. Besides memorizing the postcards and photographs of Sam, Miss Moss easily recalls the inscriptions in war cemeteries, and thus the sentence “THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE” or the inscription “No Morning Dawns/ No Night Returns/ But what we think of Thee” (77) echo through the text so as to remind one of the finality of the soldiers’ lives but also of the eternity of their name. Such practice is especially important in the case of cultures where the oral transmission of memory is of key importance in maintaining

society and social structures. Miss Moss also follows rituals according to a certain script, which is another characteristic or function she shares with the ‘memory specialist’. As it also appears in the short story, this is something that is:

...[...]...verbally ‘written’ into the highly specialized and trained memory of these specialists. This is typically the case when ritual knowledge is at stake and where a ritual must strictly follow a ‘script,’ even if this script is not laid down into writing. (Assmann 114-5).

“Evermore” presents these rituals when describing Miss Moss’s annual trajectories around First World War cemeteries in Britain and France where her route is mapped out precisely, although it is not something that she follows as a written text:

Since she had acquired the Morris [a car], she had in theory become freer, and yet her route remained almost immutable. She would drive to Dover and take a night ferry, riding the Channel in the blackout alongside burly lorry-drivers...[...]...Then she would follow the N43 to St-Omer, to Aire and Lillers, where she usually took a *croissant* and *thé à l’anglaise*. From Lillers the N43 continued to Béthune, but she flinched from it: south of Béthune was the D937 to Arras, and there, on a straight stretch where the road did a reminding elbow, was Brigadier Sir Frank Higginson’s domed portico. (Barnes 78)

This precision, which verges on the obsessive, becomes natural when Miss Moss’s position is seen as that of a ‘memory specialist’. Her mobility or potential to be mobile is represented as an illusion as she sticks to her original itinerary, subjugating herself to the established choreography of commemorative rituals. Additionally, we can also see this ‘script’ in effect when we consider Miss Moss’s choreography of visiting these cemeteries. She makes a distinction between the different memories and legacies left behind by the soldiers not on the basis of the importance or noteworthiness of their ranks or their war exploits but on that of the emotional toll it puts on the grieving non-combatant in dealing with the memory of the war:

She had a horror of Thiepval, one which failed to diminish in spite of her dutiful yearly visits. Thiepval’s lost souls. You had to make the right preparation for them, for their lostness. So she always began elsewhere, at Caterpillar Valley, Thistle Dump, Quarry... (Barnes 77)

This is a peculiar, even eccentric memory practice, but one which has its internal coherence that is validated by Miss Moss’s ‘style’ and protocols of mourning. Again, Miss Moss’s personal variant of war commemoration is a kind of counter-memory in that it is set up in opposition to larger official structures, but its underlining ‘ideology’ is not some consciously held political position but the ‘institutionalisation’ of Miss Moss’s individual position. Miss

Moss makes a distinction between the different memories soldiers left behind and divides them into two groups: those who have been identified and were given a proper burial and resting place, and those who were never found and were lost for ever. She is especially mortified by the latter group and tends to avoid or visit those cemeteries last where the tombstones of such soldiers can be found. Miss Moss's reaction to the missing also sheds light on the fact that, although the democratization of death and the soldiers' equal treatment by the state during the First World War blurs the boundaries between ranks and classes on the battlefield², the reaction of the individual is not always predictable and that the delicacy of individual processes of grief should also be taken into consideration.

In addition to acknowledging the perspective of the individual and treating their memory with great care, Miss Moss presents an attempt at the democratization of memory on a gendered level, as well. As Carol Acton argues, the way civilians, especially women, reacted to the Second World War was largely influenced by their experience of the First World War (*Grief in Wartime*, 48)*. According to the author, the suppression of emotions and their expression in public was not something that was regarded beneficial to the war effort either in the First or Second World War, and so was suppressed in the public discourse of both conflicts and could not be expressed "until the cultural context post-war allows it to be revealed" (56). The female perspective to war was also likely to question the representation of soldiers as heroes and their presentation as the embodiment of patriotism; instead, they were perceived more by their roles in a civilian society: as sons, brothers and fathers. Thus, Acton offers several personal accounts in the forms of diary entries, memoirs and letters where the longing for the lost husband (56) or a general distress over losing acquaintances and being personally affected by the war (61) dominate this unofficial view on the conflict. The very fact that the protagonist and only focus of "Evermore" is a woman, can be viewed as an attempt in the field of literary representations to make up for the lost and silenced perspective of the woman, and can also function as an endeavour to unify the many sides to the discourse of memory while also demolishing a hierarchy based on gender. Moreover, a general "omission of a bereavement narrative is particularly noteworthy" (57), as Acton also suggests. Given the suppression of the female

² The democratization of the war dead from the perspective of class and social position manifests itself through the fact that the names of soldiers appear in alphabetical order in the form of inscriptions on war memorials, and instead of presenting only servicemen of the highest rank, the names of privates are also included. This characteristic of war memorials Gábor Gyáni refers to as "new type of (or modern) sensitivity" (Gyáni 60)*. Moreover, the design of war cemeteries as well as other details surrounding the burial of the dead taking place within the framework of the military (eg. the tombstones and inscriptions on them) strengthen the attempts at the unification of soldiers in death (Worpole 164)

experience and its more civilian and humane approach to the war, female bereavement stories are even more neglected in the memory of wars. Conclusively, “Evermore”, even though takes place in a post-WW1 world and so presents a less oppressive environment for the expression of war grief (as Acton also positions the expression of the general female perception), the story can be seen as a compensation (even when it is carried out in such an excessive way or perhaps exactly because of it) for female voices and lost stories in which official language and perspectives are overshadowed by the individual, their distinctiveness and humanity.

The distrust of official language is an integral part of Miss Moss’s role as a ‘memory specialist’. This distrust concerning the use of written language is most prevalent in oral cultures; nonetheless, it is represented as a central problem in “Evermore”. Miss Moss does not find official language adequate at all in expressing or understanding the nuances of individual bereavement, and thus she is often dissatisfied with how words are punctuated, especially on inscriptions in war cemeteries. The most important word in this sense is “reconnaissant” which is broken into two parts as “recon” and “naissant” at Thiepval war cemetery, France; a punctuation which Miss Moss finds ultimately distasteful:

....[...]...she disliked more and more the line-break in the word *reconnaissant*...[...]...she insisted that breaking a word in the middle of a doubled consonant was nonsense. You broke a word where it was perforated... (Barnes 82)

As a memory specialist, Miss Moss is particularly aware of how language works and how it is treated in memory practices. As the excerpt also suggests, she is obsessed with grammar and punctuation, which can be seen as somewhat ironic, in the sense that, rather than worrying about the ‘meaning’ or ‘message’ of the inscriptions, she finds fault with the mechanical, material aspects of the inscription: her personal disgruntlement is expressed in relation to the most ‘impersonal’ aspect of language. The ‘problem’ she picks out is due to the material aspect of commemorative language: the offending word was broken into two because there was no space on the memorial. The physical properties of language also become fundamental when we are to examine the connection between issues of individuality and the letters or postcards of soldiers sent from the front. Barnes’ story calls attention to the strict censorship of war correspondence, the rules and regulations that soldiers had to follow according to which personal messages (let it be of the events of war or how one is adjusting to his new situation) were denied to them and only a schema relating the general well-being or whereabouts drafted quite vaguely is offered for the soldiers to send home. The story opens with the reproduction of one such blueprint with

its “brutal choices” (Barnes 75) where the word “choices” comes as an ironic and quite painful formulation of the critique of military – although such a criticism is never explicitly formulated by the protagonist³. Stressing the importance of the physical properties of language, the handwritten parts (name and address) of Sam’s letters become the only human elements that carry in themselves the traces or remains of individuality in the military. Miss Moss magnifies these elements, particularly the writing style of Sam calling attention to “a large looping S with a circling full stop after it...[...]...written without lifting from the card what she always imagined as a stub of pencil-end studiously licked” (76). However, it is not language and the physicality of it that become the only central factors in her study of language, but also some potentially patriotic or consoling thoughts that creep into official language. The punctuation of the word “reconnaissant”, that Miss Moss so conscientiously explores, also gives way to the potential of rebirth. As Miss Moss argues: “*Naissant* had nothing to do with *reconnaissant*, nothing at all; worse, it introduced the notion of birth on to this monument to death” (Barnes 82). Thus, we can detect an underlying ‘politics’ in Miss Moss’s rejection of what she insists is the incorrect punctuation. As the word “naissant” (based on its English counterpart “nascent”) literally means “coming or having recently come into existence” (*Merriam-Webster*), the inscription indeed presents the possibility of the rebirth of the fallen soldiers. In the previous chapter, I explained why it is problematic that the war dead are treated as liminal creatures and how the prospect of their possible resurrection or their questionable death (to begin with) disrupts the processes of grief and commemoration, and so this might be the reason why Miss Moss rejects this particular bit of official language. The prospect of resurrection as a means of reuniting with Sam is not something that Miss Moss considers at all. At this point, it seems that Miss Moss’s acceptance of finality might be the key in her relation to the dead: even though she spends her life commemorating the war dead and occasionally offering some criticism of the military, she accepts and respects death as the end of life. As to why war cemeteries are unable to connect with and fail to understand civilians and the nature of their memory, Ken Worpole indicates that “those ultimately responsible for cemetery design are out of touch with public concerns and interests” (*Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West*, 8)*. Miss Moss’s experience of the inadequate is thus presented not only through language and

³ The critique of military is prominent when Miss Moss considers the eternal authority of the military and the way they insist on burying the dead. However, she never protests against such practices openly nor does she call public attention to the fact that bereaved women were left out of the official discourses of commemoration and thus their experience is not part of the heroic narratives that dominate the official memory of the Great War.

its official use but through the ideological foundation upon which the construction of war cemeteries rest.

This, however, is not Miss Moss's only bone of contention with official spelling. While "reconnaissant", she insists, should be written as one word so as to avoid mistakes, the word "evermore", as Miss Moss argues, should be written in two words:

Nor was she content with EVERMORE...[...]...It was of course the correct form, or at least the more regular form: but something in her preferred to see it as two words. EVER MORE: it seemed more weighty like this, with an equal bell-toll on each half. (Barnes 82)

In the case of the word "evermore" (from the sentence "Their name liveth for evermore") another alleged inadequacy of official language use is spotted, but this time the problem is semiotic as much as orthographic: official language is condemned for its inability to grasp the nuances of language and their meaning as well as their effects on individual grief. The "bell-toll" on the word and the fact that it is "weighty" seems to be symbolic in remembering the dead: while the bell-toll (of the church) is presented as the echoing sounds of grief, the death of the loved one puts weight on the family members and that is then carried by them. Moreover, "ever more" might also carry another layer of meaning where the word (when it is split in two) expresses "more and more", shedding light on the perception that grief is not only eternal but also a gradually growing feeling for the protagonist. This is precisely a meaning of "evermore" that we can associate with Miss Moss as the narrative explores how her commemorations and rituals as well as perception of grief and loss has changed over half a century. Miss Moss's supersensitivity in the matters of individual grief is extraordinary and has become clear by now, thus her problem with "evermore" and language in general can also be seen as another manifestation of this awareness and desire for precision in the commemoration of the war.

These apparent errors of written language are experienced by Miss Moss as manifestations of the disregard of official memory towards the individual. As Assmann also points out:

In the context of rituals, therefore, we observe the rise of the oldest systems of memorization or mnemotechniques, with or without the help of pre-writing...[...]...Memory is held by far the more trustworthy medium to hand down the religious (that is, ritual) knowledge...[...]...the reason normally given is that too many mistakes may creep into the text by copying. (Assmann 115)

Assmann presents the critique of written language as characteristic of oral cultures and also explains this phenomenon, which is motivated by the slipperiness of language, its tendency to make mistakes and, as a result, confuse fundamental memory processes. Miss Moss also finds traces of this in a cemetery she visits:

There was no mystery really. Private H. W. Malcolm becomes H. Wilson. No doubt he was in truth H. Wilson Malcolm, and when he volunteered they wrote the wrong name in the wrong column; then they were unable to change it. That would make sense: man is only a clerical error corrected by death. (Barnes 81)

Once again, Miss Moss presents official language as a framework that is incapable of grasping the essence of the individual, and just as in the case of the military and its destructive ways in using language, the corruption and ultimate erasure of selfhood is inevitable. Moreover, from Miss Moss's perspective, official language reduces man only to errors, mere numbers and a few letters where individuality and uniqueness are denied not only in the numbers of the dead, but also in the ordinary, bureaucratic ways of life. For her, the First World War and its aftermath indicate the insignificance of human life, the disintegration of identity (including her own) and a general loss of humanity as well as a senseless conflict not only on the battlefield but at home, as well. Miss Moss's fight for justice and democracy against the official memory of the war can be connected to Michel Foucault's idea of the sacrificial use of history. While Foucault calls attention to the fact that this view to the study of history is "neutral, devoid of passions and committed solely to truth", the person taking up this particular perspective is exposed to the dangers of losing "all sense of limitations and all claim to truth in its unavoidable sacrifice of the subject of knowledge" (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 164). Although Miss Moss is anything but neutral (affected by the loss of Sam and quite possibly traumatized) as she is transforming the field of memory and reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable sides to it, her character as an individual becomes absorbed in the cultural memory of the war ultimately sacrificing herself in her search for justice to the groups whose memory is suppressed and silenced in the legacy of the war. A loss of "all sense of limitations" (164) is particularly noteworthy as Miss Moss's fight for a more democratic memory pervades every aspect of her life that is motivated by (yet another "limitless" aspect) the eternal grief she feels, and also presents no limitations as to what can appear as a battleground (let it be language or the female experience of the conflict) in the war on memory. Instead of a neutral position in the sacrificial use of history that Foucault argues for, it is exactly Miss Moss' personal, emotional involvement

in the war that enables her to subordinate her life and sacrifice her individuality in commemorating and democratising the memory of the First World War.

From a semiotic perspective, the name “Miss Moss” is a telling name as it presents yet another platform that reflects the protagonist’s identity constructed by grief. Moss, as a plant, can be found in cemeteries, or more precisely, on headstones gradually covering names and other inscriptions on the graves thus imitating a slow but gradual process of forgetting the dead. It can also be argued that “miss”, on the other hand, refers to Miss Moss’s primary feeling towards Sam as well as a lack in her life dedicated to the memory of her brother. As the very name of the story’s protagonist revolves around notions grief, a sense of loss and the reinforcement of emptiness, Miss Moss’s grief functions as a substitute for her life (that was or could have been) where the real object or focus of her grief is no longer important or needed. Instead, her life based on grief and commemoration becomes a self-sustaining system or process where a sense of grief and loss is no longer motivated by the loss of the brother, but by a universal and perpetual grief deriving from and pointing towards itself.

The last characteristic of Miss Moss as a ‘memory specialist’ I wish to investigate adds another layer to the ambiguity of her character. Even though Miss Moss is extremely critical of official language that destroys individuality, she can be perceived as someone part of that official realm of memory that has the power to influence language and, with it, memory. Working as a lexicographer (which is her actual job), she is constantly trying to correct the mistakes of written language and to establish the linguistic norm that should be followed by all users, irrespective of individual differences. Her obsession with language comes to its peak as she is correcting words and the context in which they could or should appear, and making suggestions concerning the use of language while her thorough investigation into the use of it makes even the smallest and otherwise less important properties of language keys to the transformation of memory:

She spotted colons which were in italic instead of roman, brackets which were square instead of round, inconsistent abbreviations, misleading cross-references. Occasionally she made suggestions. She might observe, in looping pencil, that such-and-such a word was in her opinion vulgar rather than colloquial, or that the sense illustrated was figurative rather than transferred...[...].she had a strangely disputatious attitude over words labelled as obsolete. Often she would propose ?*Obs* rather than *Obs* as the correct marking. Perhaps this had something to do with age, Mr Rothwell [her boss] thought; younger folks were perhaps more willing to accept that a word had had its day. (Barnes 84-85)

Besides a general obsession with language, what is most important here is that Miss Moss holds on to outdated words that might serve as another, displaced commemoration of the war and the reintroduction or, rather, maintenance of its linguistic context (perhaps that of the First World War) from which the memory of Sam emerges. Thus, Miss Moss treats language as a key in preserving or reconstructing the individual as a foundation of identity for the collective. The short story also offers several instances where verbs and expressions connected to the military are used. These linguistic evocations of the realm of the military include the verb “bayoneted” (Barnes 75) as well as expressions such as “arguments to deploy”, “positions to hold” (78), “an outline of strategy” and “the conviction of gallantry” (79) that emerge in non-war related contexts. With such choice of words, Miss Moss directly evokes the world of Sam and reflects on the context of the First World War.

Although she criticises many aspects of official memory and creates her own, personal rituals of remembrance and grief, Miss Moss as a ‘memory specialist’ displays several characteristics that push her towards official discourses of memory. First, she memorizes objects and the material basis of Sam’s memory as a sort of total internalization of grief through which she constructs herself. As a “connoisseur of grief”, she follows rituals and a particular order in carrying out her pilgrimages to British and French war cemeteries. These rituals are repeated annually, while not only these shorter periods, but her entire life is organised around grief and her smaller commemorations of Sam and the war. The distrust of official language and, on the other hand, another type of language she offers (more sensitive and more considerate of the individual), play a major role in how memory is deconstructed and reconstructed together with the influence of the soldier figure in the cultural memory of the war. Through Miss Moss’s tendency to use words deemed “obsolete” by others and expressions emerging from the framework of the military, Miss Moss expresses her inability of letting go of Sam and reaffirms her wish to dedicate her life to the commemoration of the First World War. As a person of officialdom, Miss Moss accepts the sites of official memory (war cemeteries) but presents a unique way of relating to them that is potentially a more considerate and socially sensitive one.

IV. Conclusion

Since the 1980s, we have been experiencing a new wave of literary representations within academia and a more developed view on memory processes in society. By the inclusion of marginalised or forgotten groups, the representation of memory and its mechanisms have become more democratic, more elaborate and our attitude to them perhaps more sensitive and understanding. The exploration of the many notions of memory as a web or system of entangled memory processes has resulted in a wider and more elaborate discourse on memory thus enabling us to explore the “grey” areas of the field rather than insisting on the more simplistic and dichotomic relationships in it.

Julian Barnes’ “Evermore” is a short story that reflects on the major developments of the memory discourse and its entanglements while making attempts at unifying ‘individual’ and ‘official’ memory through the character of Miss Moss whose identity is constructed by grief and a sense of loss. While she exhibits the traits of the individual by rejecting some political and nationalistic attitudes to the war and its memory of the soldiers and, especially, her brother Sam, she also calls attention to the individual’s perspective as well as the delicate nature of their memory processes and grief when it is up against the dominant official memory. Besides criticising the state, Miss Moss offers a critique of the military and its all-pervading authority, as well, that potentially disrupts and overshadows the memory processes of the civilian and the individual. Because of the instability of her figure as an individual and her considerable involvement in the war’s memory as a figure of officialdom, she is bound, or rather, destined to occupy a greater role in the cultural memory of the war and offer a “counter-official” memory to it.

As a figure of officialdom taking the form of a ‘memory specialist’ as well as a ‘connoisseur or grief’, Miss Moss calls for a more thorough and inclusive cultural memory of the war: while making attempts to include the experience of the individual, she is trying to transform the realm of official memory thus offering a new, unified perspective to the memory of the First World War that could potentially dominate the cultural memory of the conflict instead of some more simple and (most possibly) oppressive perspectives to the conflict. Besides a more elaborate introduction of the individual to the cultural memory of the war, Miss Moss’s struggle for equality in the realm of memory can also be seen as an attempt to include women and reconstruct their silenced and lost stories within the discourse of memory. The fact that the short story’s only focus is that of a woman and her expressions of grief while she fulfils

the role of officialdom, Miss Moss's unconscious fight for justice and a more democratic representation is present on a gendered level, as well. Besides memorizing texts such as inscriptions and postcards and following rituals in commemorating the war (the official sites of which Miss Moss acknowledges and accepts), she transforms the linguistic framework of the war's memory and works on reconstructing it in a more democratic and inclusive way that suits the individual whose memory and delicate perspective is, in many cases, overshadowed by the impersonality of official memory. As Miss Moss's figure as an individual is rather unstable and because of her representation as a figure of grief and loss that potentially reconciles and unifies the seemingly contrasting perspectives to the war, Miss Moss appears as an entity or the embodiment of grief and loss whose very phenomenon epitomises the cultural memory of the First World.

Conclusively, it is rather crucial, as the second 'memory boom' and its representatives have also argued, to address and explore that the memory of the First World War, and memory in general, is not an area that presents fundamental processes from homogenic and simplistic perspectives, but a field that should address the complexities of memory, as well. Although the literature of the First World War has the tendency to juxtapose individual memory and official practices of commemoration where stories are frequently pervaded by the issues of politics and the oppression of the individual and their memory, the exploration of these "grey" areas (where different notions of memory meet and interact) might be a more elaborate and authentic way to represent how memory works. Barnes' divergence from common representations of memory processes and his social sensitivity are manifested through the fact that, similarly to Miss Moss's efforts to find a new and more precise language in relating to the war, Barnes is also seeking new ways and modes of talking about memory and reflecting on the entangled, more complex perspective to it.

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