

“THE PAST LAY CLAIM TO THE PRESENT”
MEMORY AND NARRATIVE AS A JOURNEY TO ONE’S SELF:
A STUDY OF DAMON GALGUT’S *IN A STRANGE ROOM*

Master’s Thesis
Jonna Holopainen

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Languages
English
June 2013

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten laitos
Tekijä – Author Jonna Holopainen	
Työn nimi – Title ”THE PAST LAY CLAIM TO THE PRESENT” MEMORY AND NARRATIVE AS A JOURNEY TO ONE’S SELF: A study of Damon Galgut’s <i>In a Strange Room</i>	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Pro gradu- tutkielma
Aika – Month and year Kesäkuu 2013	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 79
<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Eteläafrikkalainen kirjallisuus on pitkään keskittynyt maan vaikean historian avaamiseen niin yhteiskunnallisella kuin yksilönkin tasolla. Tärkeitä teemoja ovat olleet niin identiteetin luominen siirtymävaiheessa olevassa yhteiskunnassa kuin myös yhteyden luominen menneisyyden ja nykyisyyden välille. Kirjallisuudessa on myös pitkä omaelämäkerrallisuuden historia, jonka alku on kirjallisuuden vapautumisessa poliittisista kytköksistä ja yksityisen kokemuksen kuvaamisen lisääntymisessä.</p> <p>Damon Galgutin <i>In a Strange Room</i> (2010) yhtäältä jatkaa näitä traditioita, mutta toisaalta myös kehittää niitä edelleen. Romaani on oletettavasti Galgutin osittainen omaelämäkerta, jonka keskiössä on itsen rakentamisen vaikeus tilanteessa, jossa kertoja ei kykene luomaan suhteita minnekään tai kehenkään. Romaanin teemat pyörivät muistin ja muistamisen sekä itsen rakentamisen ja sen artikuloimisen äärellä. Romaani ei kuitenkaan näkyvästi käsittele eteläafrikkalaista yhteiskuntaa, vaan liikkuu enemmänkin symbolisella tasolla.</p> <p>Tutkimukseni analyysi lähtee avaamaan muistia sosiologisen näkökulman kautta ja katsastelee sen yhteyttä itsen diskursiiviseen rakentumiseen. Muistilla on tärkeä rooli itsen rakentamisessa ajallisella jatkumolla: muisti mahdollistaa menneisyyden, nykyisyyden ja tulevaisuuden itsen yhdistämisen elämäntarinaksi. Muistin sosiologinen näkökulma mahdollistaa tällaisen sosiaalisen konstruktion tarkastelun. Valitsin diskursiivisen näkökulman, koska romaanin voidaan katsoa olevan kirjoitettu narratiivi kertojan itseystensä.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat, että muisti on ensisijaisen tärkeä kertojen itsen eri esiintymien yhdistämisessä menneisyydestä nykyisyyteen. Muisti mahdollistaa matkaamisen takaisin ajassa ja paikassa. Elämäkokemukset menneisyydessä voidaan tuoda nykyisyyteen, joka luo merkitystä elämäkertomukseen ja sen tarkoitukseen. Tärkeää on myös elämäntarinan liittäminen laajempaan tarinoiden verkostoon: muiden ihmisten muistoihin. Vasta muistojen jakaminen antaa niille lopullisen merkityksen osana elämäntarinaa.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Damon Galgut, South Africa, literature, the self, memories, narrative, liminal space	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	7
2 DAMON GALGUT, HIS LITERARY CONTEXT AND WORK.....	10
2.1. Damon Galgut in the field of South African literature	10
2.2. <i>In a Strange Room</i>	15
2.3. Previous studies on Galgut’s works	19
2.4. Placing my study	22
3 THE SELF	24
3.1. Identity or the self?	25
3.2. Constructing self	28
3.3. Fragmentation of the self	33
4 MEMORY AND MEMORIES.....	38
4.1. Memory in <i>In a Strange Room</i>	39
4.2. “What you don’t remember never happened.”	42
4.3. Memory in time and place	46
4.4. Articulation of memory	52
5 MEMORIES AS NARRATIVES OF THE SELF	56
5.1. Storytelling and narratives	56
5.2. Life story as a narrative	59
6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77

1 INTRODUCTION

Memory has widely been discussed from a range of perspectives in different areas of research. In this study, the aim is to unravel a social construction of the self through memory and story telling and uses sociological and philosophical approaches to do so. Memory is not static, nor is it absolute; we do not remember everything. Furthermore, the memories we do remember always include a degree of interpretation and reflection. Memory is not objective either; it is subjective interpretations of events that the individual deciphers as somehow meaningful to herself. Memory is also a way to connect the past, present and future to a continuum. However, despite the temporal connectivity of memory, its “weakness” is that it is strongest in the present.

Memory is anchored to specific times and places. The body as a medium of memory connects us to the social world around us. The body also serves to determine the present. Time and action are also intertwined with the concept of memory; on the one hand, action gives meaning to life events in time. Actions can be considered as stories we share with others. On the other hand, time gives action a coherent form; an inherent temporality is included in memory which organises our experiences into a coherent form. Thus the direction of memory is not the present but the future.

Memory is conveyed to others via articulation. The articulation of memory can be divided into internal and external expression. The accuracy and correctness of memory is, however, under debate, especially of the written word. Some argue that the written word does not mirror human thought processes and that memories create inauthentic selves because memory is outside knowledge. Others state that narratives are ways in which we organise memory. Indeed, narratives are a form of expressing memory. Storytelling is an innate human characteristic through which we conceptualise the world around us. The stories we tell also contribute to social and cultural identities and through storytelling we express those identities. Thus, these stories also function as life narratives, or as narratives of the self.

Therefore, memory is both social and subjective. The subjective part of memory which houses experiences and brings them to the present is the main focus of this study, but the social part will also be discussed to a certain degree. The reason for this is that the life stories of individuals, formed through memories, relate to a wider social and

historical narrative which is the context of the stories of individuals. By considering also the social dimension, it is possible to situate the experiences of the individual in relation to those of his contemporaries and of the larger context: the surrounding society. As John Donne wrote, 'No man is an island': we both influence and are influenced by our surroundings.

More specifically, experience and memories mould our selves. The self is constructed not only by personal experiences, but also through the relationships with other people and the roles we take in them. Whereas identity is fundamentally social, the self can be seen as the reflection of these social identities. Thus, identity is formed in relation to other people, but the self is an inner construction formed on the basis of the reflection on experience and social relationships. In fiction especially the self has been at the forefront since the deconstruction of the subject; the fragmentation of modern society reflects itself upon its inhabitants. Examining the expressions of the experience of the self in fiction is worthwhile because, as literature can be seen as representing the culture it is written in, it is possible to come to an understanding of the society's social life as the experiences of individuals reflect it. In addition, examining these experiences we are able to evaluate and challenge previous models of thought.

South African literature has long concentrated on depicting the divides that torment the society as a whole. The colonial past and especially the memory of apartheid feature strongly as themes in the South African literary scene. The legacy of the colonial times and of apartheid set the themes for literature as well: it touched upon bridging the rural and the urban, as well as the central divide between classes and races. As a result, contemporary South African writers have growing interest in connecting literature and history. Important topics for such writers are, for example, the society's struggle for democracy, the relationship between the past and the present and the difficulty of creating an identity. Some renowned authors who have dealt with these issues are Nadine Gordimer, Solomon T. Plaatje, André Brink, J.M. Coetzee, and, most recently, Damon Galgut, whose work will be discussed in the present study.

The divided society reflects itself also on the life of the individual. In fact, life narratives are a recurrent theme in South African literature. Contemporary South African writers use the divided society as a backdrop for the representation of the fragmentation of their subject. Damon Galgut, one of the heralds of contemporary South

African prose, has addressed the politics and society of the post-apartheid 'new South Africa' but in a rather indirect manner; through the narrators of his novels, he has addressed the difficulties the individual faces a divided society. Galgut's novels have been studied extensively but only a few studies have been conducted of *In a Strange Room* (2010). In addition, there are no studies from the specific point of view adopted in the present study. Hence, concentrating on how memories affect the formation of the narrators self I will bring forth a new perspective on the novel. This is where the niche of my study lies; it will fill a gap in existing research by offering a new point of view of memory in Galgut's *In a Strange Room*.

This study focuses on the formation of the self through memories in Damon Galgut's *In a Strange Room*. The novel is divided into three seemingly independent stories in which the narrator Damon takes on different roles with the people he meets. It is an autobiographical novel, where the narrator reminisces about his past travels to faraway countries and the people he meets on his way. Through these three stories an outline of the narrator's life and identity is drawn. The stories work as a means of self reflection for the narrator, and as it turns out, the novel itself works as an account of his life. The fact that the stories rely a great deal on the narrator's memories of his past makes it relevant to study exactly how the self is constructed both in memory and through memories.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to answer the following research questions:

- How do memories help Damon, the narrator, to construct his self in *In a Strange Room* by Damon Galgut?
- How do memories become concrete through telling narratives in the novel?

The first question aims at answering why certain memories are taken as part of the protagonist's life story instead of being pushed aside. Taken as a part of a wider context, the memories become concrete, they come to have a meaning for their bearer, instead of being detached units floating in memory. The question thus also directs the present analysis so that one of its foci is on finding an answer by which the memories are anchored in the story. Consequently, the second question delves deeper to help reveal the means with which the protagonist constructs his self through memories. The connecting link between the two questions is narrative; narratives are a way to revisit memory and memories, especially in the case of life narratives. Articulating memories

(to an audience) is also a meaning-making and selection process by which their importance to the life story of their teller is explicated. To a life story, the sense of self is as important as memories. Much like a life story, a sense of self is created through a consistency. Therefore, it is important to investigate the role of memory and memories in creating a sense of self.

Firstly, in order to provide some background, I will briefly describe South African literature, as well as Damon Galgut as writer and his literary works. Secondly, with the help of theoretical insights provided by a narrative perspective on memory and the self and also with the help of sociological studies on memory and identity, memory and memories and the self will be discussed with specific references to the novel in question. The relation of the theories of memory and the self to how the self and memory are portrayed in the novel are best exemplified with the help of passages from the novel in which the self and memory are featured. By first analysing these examples and explaining what they have to say about the themes I may further explain them by then situating them with the current research in the fields of the self and memory. As a result, a comprehensive analysis will be given as to how the self of the narrator is constructed with the help of memory and narrative.

2 DAMON GALGUT, HIS LITERARY CONTEXT AND WORKS

2.1. Damon Galgut in the field of South African literature

Damon Galgut is a South African author and playwright. His works include novels, plays and a collection of short stories. Galgut has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize twice, with *The Good Doctor* (2003) and *In a Strange Room* (2010a), and, likewise, he has been nominated twice for the Commonwealth Writers Price, which he won in 2003 with *The Good Doctor*. Even though much of his works are set in his home country, Galgut has not explicitly addressed the politics of post-apartheid South Africa. Yet, the experience of the society in transition is strongly present in the characters of Galgut's works; in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* (1991), the personal struggles of the narrator are mirrored by the difficult political situation in South Africa. In *The Good Doctor* (2003), Galgut explores the different experiences of two generations of South Africans, generations that are "separated by the experience of war". Likewise, in *The Impostor* (2008), Galgut addressed the difficult generational gaps, gaps between past

and present and between the black and the white. The politics of the country may not be an overt theme for Galgut; rather his focus is in the power play between individual and the societal forces binding them. (British Council.)

In the novel of interest to my study, *In a Strange Room*, the narrator Damon travels around the world almost obsessively in order to create a coherent identity – a task impossible for him in the South African society in transition. Like in all Galgut's of previous novels, the societal issues work in the background in the story of the narrator. They also provide the platform for the narrator's detachment; the newly established democracy in South Africa, the Gulf war and the election in Tanzania are hinted at in the novel, but simultaneously, the narrator states his disconnectedness from the world. Galgut's recurrent theme of an identity looking for its place is thus present in *In a Strange Room* as well.

Over time, South African literature has addressed the difficult relationship between the white and black population in South Africa. As all literature, South African literary tradition is closely connected with the surrounding society. A good example of this is that the division between classes and races that dominate South African society can be detected in South African literature. As White and Couzens (1984) state, there is no South African literature; instead, there are literatures. South Africa is a multilingual country in which literatures in various languages coexist. Because of colonial power, South African literature has various different sub-branches, black and white writing being the two strongest ones, while literature written in indigenous languages has been more recently acknowledged. Indeed, as Attwell (2004: 505) argues, for the past two decades the historicisation of South African literature has been against the single language literary history. Hence, the history of literature in South Africa is two-fold: on the one hand, it is the affirmation of colonial legacy, on the other, it has provided a publishing platform for non-English writers as well. (Attwell 2004: 504-505.) In the 1980s, white South African writers were commonly considered proxies for black writers on the international stage, because the latter were effectively silenced. Writers like Coetzee were also thrust into the realm of professional academic criticism. (Meskell and Weiss 2006: 91.)

However, as the novel in interest in the present study can be included in the sub-branch of South African literature written in English, in this chapter I will concentrate solely on

the history and development of literature written in English in the South African context. As Attwell (2004: 504) states, English became the dominant language used by authors in South Africa because, under the strain of the colonial power, it was commonly regarded as the most appropriate medium to publish. In the same way, Attwell (2004: 504) also argues that it is by no means exhaustive to speak only about literature in English in the South African context; the lack of comparative research can be said to continue the colonial legacy. The sociocultural history of South Africa has had its effect on the literary traditions as well; white writing has been segregated into English and Afrikaans, in addition to which there are numerous sub-branches, for example oral literatures, women's writing and black journalism. (Ibid.) Certainly, Attwell (2004: 506) argues that we need not to compile a literary history per se, but investigate the processes of 'cultural translation' in which literary works and, in particular, their value becomes a sign of national development as well.

The very heart of South African literary history is situated in "the narrative of colonialism, industrialization, and the struggle for democracy" (Attwell 2004: 507). Despite the various conflicts of the South African people, they are all part of this narrative, and thus, the call for a collective literary history stems from the ability of the post-apartheid society to construct a sense of belonging within democratic institutions, such as education. Indeed, the major advantage of South African writing in English is its vast scope; as a lingua franca, the writing in English collects together a vast array of writers from various backgrounds. Thus, English can be said to work as a unifying force within the field of South African literature. South African "white writing" is not merely writing by whites, but it also addresses the concerns of people who are not completely European or African, but in a space between these two. However, the Africanness of the white writers using English will always be in question because of settler- or postcolonial- white identities' proximity to apartheid and colonial power. Intrinsicly, literature written in English in the South African context can be characterised by provisionality; as constraining and undercutting the confident appropriation of English language in literature, and in relation to generic instability which describes the South African society. (Attwell 2004: 507-9.)

No account of the history of South African literature can be made without a reference to J. M. Coetzee – one of the most influential figures in South African literature and intellectual debate starting from the late 20th century (Eaglestone, Boehmer and Iddiols

2009). In his writing, Coetzee, much like Galgut, addresses the colonial past. Coetzee's writing portrays the culture of South African society and provides important pathways in which to analyse identity, the colonial past and indigenesness. Forgetting has become a significant factor of South African politics; in his writing, Coetzee rejects these policies by foregrounding the colonial past and the individual identities that the past has moulded. Therefore, Coetzee's writing is as much connected with the past as it is with the present and the future; the past works as a backdrop against which these new identities and culture is reflected. Hence, Coetzee's work can also be seen as non-fiction – a mixture of history, social commentary and fiction (Meskell and Weiss 2006: 88-89).

In effect, as Meskell and Weiss (2006: 91) state, South African literature, like Coetzee's, discusses the generic human conditions in which the postcolonial experience can be given meaning on the level of the individual. These individual experiences make the general public reflect on the colonial rules' more specific, personal effects. Coetzee's writing avoids the explanatory historical narrative and concentrates on the actual effects of the colonialism and apartheid. Coetzee's writing describes the "material bodily affects" of history and through the images of abused and tortured bodies – the materiality of colonialism and apartheid – he forces his reader to confront history. (Meskell and Weiss 2006: 97.) In consequence, as Attwell (2004: 520) states, Coetzee's writing fractured colonial discourses and forms of subjectivity by mixing criticism of the prevalent historical discourse, social representation and representations of the contemporary scene. Much of the writing of Coetzee's contemporaries also concentrate on the social commentary of the wider conflict (ibid.), that is to say, what it means to have an identity of the English-speaking South African.

In addition to Coetzee, there are several other authors who have addressed the problematic nature of the South African society. These notable South African writers include for example Sarah Gertrude Millin who, in the early 20th century, addressed one of the most important themes of South African writing: miscegenation. As the focus of literature shifts from the rural to the urban landscape of the cities so does the interests of white writing turn to the split consciousness and internal turmoil. Of this the writings of Herman Charles Bosman are early examples. (Hawley 1996: 55.) The early black writers included, for example, Solomon T. Plaatje who was the first black South African to write an English language novel (Attwell 2004: 508). Nadine Gordimer, in turn, doubted the white power's ability to improve the country's politics. Gordimer addressed

issues of guilt, despair, recompense, time and memory, and consequences of past actions. Further, exile and expatriation have also been recurrent themes in South African writing, such as the short stories by Alex la Guma. La Guma was part of the Drum writers, whose objective was to establish a cosmopolitan identity to resist the identities of black South Africans that were fixed in rural and tribal backgrounds (Atwell 2004: 517). Many of those who exiled were black writers who consider the oppressive atmosphere of South Africa as discouraging. André Brink's, who writes in both Afrikaans and English, works are existentialist accounts of a man confronting his oppressors and his works are said to embody the entire culture of South Africa. (Hawley 1996: 55-61.)

Contemporary South African literature features a growing mixture of literary tradition and history. Analogously, within the academia, there is a growing interest in an interdisciplinary approach to narrative (Boehmer, Gunner and Maake 1995: 558). From the late 1940s to 1990s, apartheid was the most prevalent topic in literature. However, the focus of writing about apartheid shifted from emphasising the political to risk political censure to emphasising the gap between the political and aesthetic to, finally, innovating tradition, to irony, to textual play. This evolution enabled writers to address more personal issues which brought about a wave of autobiographical writing. As writers began to write about their childhood experiences under apartheid, memory became the paramount theme in the early stages of the liberation of the country's political life. (Attwell 2004: 522-523.) A transition of this kind generates other responses as well. On a national level, in contemporary South African literature there is an effort to produce a "great national novel" that would unify the divided nation and bridge the rural and the urban (Attwell 2004: 516). On the level of the individual, the difficulty of creating an identity within the society and the relationship between past and present are prevalent themes in contemporary literature (Meskell and Weiss 2006: 93). In effect, post-apartheid writing reflects on the role of representation itself in a society in transition (Attwell 2004: 524). Boehmer et al. (1995: 558) also state that because the discourse of liberation is no longer an urgent, relevant matter, the point of view is now moving towards an exploration of symbolic construction.

Certainly, life narratives have become a recurrent theme of South African writing in which to deal with the issues of subjectivity and society in large. Life narratives address the divided realities of South Africa and, thus, enable a new interpretation of the past.

Life narratives include the changing power of story-telling and its possibilities to explain the complexities of life. Autobiography, as a format of writing, enables the writer to create a narrative identity that offers remedy and, at the same time, rejects the mundane. For example, the symbolic space in Coetzee's writing offers a point of view to the future where South Africa could be an organic nation. (Boehmer et al. 1995: 558.) In fact, autobiography is often used to blend experiences of personal life to, for example, urban violence and resistance. Autobiography was also chosen especially by the exiled South African writers. They would expatriate in order to escape the oppressive and racist environment that inhibited social criticism and creative work. (Hawley 1996: 57.)

However, Galgut disengages his writing to some extent from this societal perspective. For example, in an interview, Galgut said that he is most interested in examining relationships between people in his works. He stated that being a South African writer makes him always aware of the bigger picture (Miller 2006: 140). Galgut's fascination of portraying a general experience through individuals can clearly be seen in his work in which the difficulties of the South African society are used as a backdrop for the anxiety of his narrators. As his own objective, Galgut states that he wants to concentrate on redeeming South African prose that has long been constructed of clichés in which "the morality was very set and very clear". Galgut's aim, thus, is to deconstruct the foundations on which South African prose has been built on, and further, to create a "new South African book" which would be based on the experience of ambivalence and ambiguity. (Miller 2006: 142.) Indeed, this ambiguity is central to Galgut's work: ambiguity of being, of place in the society and the world, of creating an identity. Galgut's views echo that of White and Couzens' (1984), who state that the teaching and critique of South African literature has become stale and fixed on former practise.

2.2. In a Strange Room

The title of the novel comes from William Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying* (1930). Faulkner's stream of consciousness novel explores "the enigmas of being", as Hemenway (1970) states. The passage from which the title draws, is taken from Darl, who is one of the narrators of *As I Lay Dying*: "In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep" (ISR, 46). The original quotation continues:

And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I don't know what I am. I don't know if I am or not. (As I Lay Dying, 1930, 65)

As can be seen from the extract, Darl's reflections of being in Faulkner's novel strongly relate with Galgut's themes of belonging. Hemenway states that this existential mystery is clarified by what Faulkner calls "necessary present." Faulkner attaches being as a logical continuum of the present (tense) thus combining the ontological issues according to Darl's definition of consciousness: "I am is". (Hemenway 1970). Faulkner's "necessary present" in ways echoes Clingman's (2009) "space of transition". In Clingman's analysis, the self lingers in an in-between state that he calls the space of transition. Clingman argues that the self is constructed much like the grammar of language; as we begin a sentence, we do not know how it is going to end but we navigate in the different opportunities grammar gives us. The self, thus, is always in a process of navigation – navigation between boundaries, be they geographical, symbolic or interpersonal. (Clingman 2009; 22-25.) Darl's rumination over the nature of his being can be compared to Damon's search for self. Considering the space between awake and sleep as a symbolical boundary, we can see that also Darl wrestles in a space of crossing and the implications of this crossing to his existence. The implications of Clingman's ideas in relations to *In a Strange Room* will be discussed more thoroughly in section 3.3.

In addition, as an introduction the themes of the novel, there is an epigraph from the Serbian poet Vojislav Jakić – 'He Has No House'. The clause also features in the story 'The Lover' in *In a Strange Room*:

(1) He spends a day in a gallery of outsider art, paintings and sculptures made with the vision of the mad or the lost, and from this collection of fantastic and febrile images he retains a single line, a book title by a Serbian artist whose name I forget, He Has No House. (ISR, 115)

There is a temporal relation between the epigraph and the story as well. Within the story, Damon, the narrator, cannot recall the author of the clause at issue. However, Damon, the author, is fully aware of the name of the author which implies a temporal conjunction between 'The Lover' and the epigraph, in addition to the use of the pronouns 'he' and 'I'. As discussed further later, the pronouns refer to different selves of the narrator through time. 'He' refers to the narrator's self in the past, whereas 'I' refers to the narrator in the present. This poses one of the central questions of the novel: what is the relationship between the 'he' and the 'I'?

At the beginning of the novel, it is not clear who exactly the narrator is. The narrative point of view shifts from the first person singular to the third person singular, sometimes even within the same sentence, as in the example above. Hence, it is worth taking a closer look at how Galgut shifts between writing about his narrator – allegedly partly grounded in the author and his experiences. More specifically, it is interesting how this narrative point of view creates and builds the experience of the narrator and how it is constructed for the reader. Indeed, as also Jacobson (2011: 103-104) argues, Galgut manoeuvres between actual author, implied author, narrator and subject/protagonist in consequence of which the novel, and the narrator similarly, should be read as a blend of autobiography and fiction.

Jacobson (2001: 101) also argues that there are two separate Damons in the story: Damon, the subject of the story, and Damon, the narrator. Jacobson (ibid.) concludes that the story is “fictional representation of an unfolding transitional identity”. Indeed, in the novel, Galgut plays with these different characters interchangeably. Throughout literary criticism, it has been acknowledged that the author of a novel is not the same as the narrator of that novel. However, even though the author may not be the narrator, the author is always present in the text. The concept of the implied author rests in the communicative function of literature: the relationship between the message, the author and the reader. The implied author, thus, is neither the actual author nor the narrator; in contrast, it should be conceived as a narratorial entity which sets the moral and emotional content to the story. In effect, the implied author is the readers’ perception of the author and his norms and views; in other words, an “implied version of the author”. (Kindt and Müller 2006: 47-51.) In the case of *In a Strange Room*, the actual author refers to Galgut himself whereas implied author, in this case, is the perception of the narrator Damon’s self which he seeks in the novel.

The novel itself is divided into three sections – ‘The Follower’, ‘The Lover’, ‘The Guardian’ – that represent the different roles the narrator Damon takes in the relationship he builds with people he meets in his travels. All of these relationships fail for one reason or another, leaving the narrator with a sense of emptiness and loss. These three stories are connected through the themes of lost moments and relationships failed. In addition, a very abstract time frame can be detected in the stories; a sense of growing and development through self-reflection can be detected from the narrator. Together these stories, however loose the concrete links between them, offer an insight in to the

mind of the narrator; having no place to call home and an inability to connect with people create an intense impression of loneliness and rootlessness.

Jacobson (2011: 101-104) explains further the time span of the stories. The first story takes place in the early 1990s when the narrator is a young man, in the second story the narrator is in his thirties and in the third he is middle aged. The last story, Jacobson (ibid.) states, takes place in the recent past. Jacobson (ibid.) further suggests the stories to be read as a cycle; he draws this conclusion straight from the novel:

(2) Already in the ending of this story the next cycle of grief and revenge is inevitable, that is to say the following story must begin. (ISR, 10)

This example in itself urges to cyclical reading of the three stories which, on the one hand, repeat the issue of detachment and, on the other, combine the stories together. In addition, there are other repetitive and combinatory features in the novel; these include the black figure in the 'The Follower' (Reiner) and its variation in Jerome and Anna and, finally, the black 'other' in Damon himself. Thunderstorms are also a prominent feature in the novel; an actual thunderstorm in 'The Follower' finds its counterpart in the erotic energy between the narrator and Jerome in 'The Lover', and the emotional breakdown of Anna in 'The Guardian'. (Ibid.)

The ending of the novel also supports this kind of cyclical reading. The last lines of the novel say:

(3) He feels awful, but also relieved somehow, emptied. By now the taxi driver is hooting impatiently outside. The day is wearing on and he has a bus to catch, a journey to complete. It's time to go. He dries his eyes and picks up a tiny stone from the ground, one like millions of others all around, and slips it into his pocket as he walks towards the gate. (ISR, 180)

The ending suggests both a finale and a continuation; Damon's journey not yet complete, but it is to be completed. As Jacobson also notes, as one journey ends, another begins. However, even though Damon, the narrator's, journey continues, the sense of finality comes from his 'emptiness'. As discussed earlier, the reference to emptiness comes from William Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying* which represents the problems of belonging and detachment in Damon. The emptiness and relief Damon feels suggest atonement of a degree. Yet, even though Damon may have come to term with the "I's of his past, the person(s) the he was, he keeps moving because, as also Faulkner's original quote states, "And when you are emptied for sleep, what are you." Even though the past has been compensated, the story continues.

Indeed, these three journeys both in time and in space combine together as a means for Damon to make a journey to himself as well; the memories he has as journeys past and present provide him with a framework to get in touch with his lost self. Another major theme of the novel is the meaning of storytelling: narratives of self and life lived act as tools for self-discovery and creating meaningful relationships with people.

In the next section Galgut's previous work is more thoroughly investigated and, with the help of this discussion, I will try to draw a theoretical framework into which *In a Strange Room* can be situated. I will be using both Jacobson's analysis of the novel and Clingman's ideas of transitional identity hand in hand with my own analysis because both provide it with a useful starting point to the investigation of the relationship between the construction of self and time. Jacobson's study, however, differs from my own in the sense that his focus is completely in the self in general. Therefore, it will provide good starting points for the section concerning the self, but not so much insight on the analyses of memory and story telling.

2.3. Previous studies on Galgut's works

Galgut started his career as a professional writer in the 1980s as a playwright. His first two novels, *A Sinless Season* (1984) and *Small Circle of Beings* (1988), did not gain much public attention. Since then he moved to prose, and was first noted for *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* (1991). The narrator of the novel, like that of *In a Strange Room*, is alienated from society and this causes him anxiety attacks. Key themes in the novel are alienation from society and borders which carry a symbolic weight of interpersonal relationships. As in *In a Strange Room*, so in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*, the narrator is aware of another, detached self watching him. The narrator of the novel could be said to represent a prototype of narrators of Galgut's later works as well. (Jacobson 2011: 92-94.)

In 1995 Galgut published *The Quarry*, which essentially was a story of a man who assumes the identity of another. In this story as well, the narrator is a stranger to himself. The narrator is an unnamed fugitive who kills a priest and adopts his identity as a minister in a South African town. From there on, the narrator has to balance between the local police men and avoiding his conscience. The title of the novel has two meanings. Firstly, it refers to the place the narrator hides the body of the man he killed.

Secondly, it refers to the chase between a hunter and his quarry; in other word, the narrator and his victim. (British Council.) Thus, the themes typical of Galgut are also present in *The Quarry*: alienation, loneliness, detachment from self and from other people. Again, Jacobson (2011: 94) argues that the narrator is a variation of Galgut's prototypic narrator who is detached from his self. Added to this is a feeling of insubstantiality, of not being enough. Like in *In a Strange Room*, this is manifested in word-play with personal pronouns; the narrative structure leaves unclear the actual referents of the pronouns.

Galgut's fifth novel, *Good Doctor* (2003), was the first to gain international attention – mostly because of the fact that it was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in its year of publication. In a review, Roberts (2003) argues that it is a deeply political novel, concerned about the mentality of contemporary white South Africans. The Angolan war functions, again, as a setting for the novel; in Galgut's mind, it is a central experience of South Africans (ibid.). The narrator of the novel, Frank Eloff, is doctor who works at a remote rural hospital situated in a former apartheid homeland. Like many of Galgut's narrators, Frank also has a separate self watching over him. Again, Galgut addresses the themes of alienation and borders, this time in the sense that borders inhibit him from having personal relationships. (Jacobson 2011: 94-96.)

The Impostor (2008) explores human nature in addition to the identity formation of the South African society in transition, which makes it a post-apartheid novel. Adam Napier, the narrator of the story, is a middle-aged man who, after losing his job, leaves for a remote cabin to write his poetry. He meets a childhood acquaintance with whom he feels intact, but after losing this connection he falls into alienation again. (Jacobson 2011; 96-98.) Yet again, Galgut writes in this novel about alienation, two separate selves (which come seemingly together in his poetry), the new South African. However, as Nanton (2008) suggests, “[a]t the heart of Galgut's tale are also the implicit divides that still torment the new South Africa.” In this novel, Galgut implies that there are new villains in South Africa after colonialism; corrupt policemen and criminal money exchange feature in the novel (ibid.).

Another key theme for Galgut is male sexuality. According to Crous (2010) it is ambiguous whether Galgut's characters are seeking intimacy or homoerotic relationships. Crous continues that subtle homosexual undertones result from

heterosexual men being stripped from their power and potency. To regain these, heterosexual men have to somehow humiliate their erotic object. Hawley (1996: 61) states that *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* takes the South African novel on to a new level concerning sexuality. Indeed, there are homosexual undertones in both *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* and *In a Strange Room*; in the former, the narrator has a brief sexual encounter with an old friend which only intensifies his sense of alienation (Jacobson 2011: 92) and in the latter, in the first two stories (*The Follower*, *The Lover*), Damon the narrator experiences sexual desire towards his travel companions, but he never takes action in satisfying his desire, which results in the same intensifying feeling of alienation. Thus, as Crous (2010) also states, new South African writing, including Galgut, challenges traditional notions of masculinity and heterosexuality.

Kostelac (2010) goes even further by suggesting that, in his works, Galgut addresses his own position as a South African contemporary writer. In many reviews, Galgut has been praised of his depiction of the 'South African psyche'. However, this has not always been so. Early in his career, his works were dismissed because they did not overtly address the politics of South Africa. In contrast, nowadays, he is appreciated as the representative writer of new South Africa just because his works are a response to the socio-political situation, though not overtly so. The general opinion is that South African writing must address the socio-political situation of the country. The author has been placed under strict ethical demands, which has rendered impossible artistic freedom. However, the post-transition author can greater freedom to prioritise aesthetics over politics. In spite of the freedom, Kostelac points out that South African writers are still subject to the political limitations of the global literary marketplace because rests on the exoticism of postcolonial writers. (Kostelac 2010: 53-57.)

Kostelac (2010: 54) argues that, in *In a Strange Room*, the cosmopolitanism of the narrator rejects this status given to him as the herald of South African prose. Kostelac argues that the south africanness of the writer is a peripheral quality while the subjectivity in a foreign setting is in the forefront. In addition, Kostelac argues that Galgut refutes his position as a representative insider; the theme of travel instead emphasises his outsider position as a member of a privileged minority with means to travel and cross borders. South Africa seems to be only one part of the narrator's identity and one of the many locales of transition. (Ibid.: 57-59.)

2.4. Placing my study

From this outline it is possible to gather that the alienation of the subject in the context of the South African society is a key topic for Galgut. Another theme is borders, both concrete and symbolic ones. This is the starting point also for Jacobson's (2011) analysis of *In a Strange Room*; he delineates Galgut's narrators' search of self to Clingman's (2009) idea of transitive identity. Transitive identity is something that combines the one and the many; such identity marks differences but is able to engage and cross the boundaries between them. Clingman (2009: 22-25) argues that we navigate across boundaries between meanings to form identity in order to create a syntax of self, just like we do in formulating speech through various possibilities in language. For Clingman, identity is meaning and, further, meaning is navigation, exploration and transition. Syntax of the self, thus, is the negotiation of these navigations, explorations and transitions. Not only does the syntax of self make possible formulation within the self, but also it can draw from element outside the self, from the self's relation to others. In the light of Clingman's syntax of the self, Jacobson (2011) concludes that Galgut's narrators are in this state of navigation where they are trying to integrate their divided selves and create connections to others.

Jacobson's study is very close to the present study in the ways he examines the self of the narrator Damon and the issues concerning authorship and narration. For this reason I will be using it partly as a foundation of my analysis. Jacobson's analysis on crossing borders and creating the self through a syntax are useful tools with which to start my own reflection. Also Clingman's original ideas will be further reviewed in the section concerning the construction of the self. However, unlike Jacobson's and Clingman's studies, my focus on memories in relation to the formation of self is a subject of research lacking in Jacobson's analysis of *In a Strange Room*. In an interview for the Man Booker Prize, Galgut (2010b) himself states:

"Far more central is the theme of memory. The narratives have been crafted to convey something of the quality of how memory works, and I would hope that this is the strongest impression people take away. The relationships that are described are also central, of course. Power, love and guardianship - these are the three primary themes of human connection."

Thus, the novel as a whole can be said to be a journey in space and time to the narrator's self. The aspect of time is represented by memory, of course, and journey in space by the actual journeys the narrator makes in the novel but space is considered here also as the positions the narrator takes in relation to others and in the world. Therefore, the aim

of my analysis is to see how the dynamics of memory work in creating the narrator's self; in other words, how his journeys in space and time affect the construction of his self.

In these contexts – in the broad context of South African literature but also that of Galgut's – it is important to study how the self of the narrator is constructed through memories and narrative in *In a Strange Room*. Although the novel does not directly address the politics of post-apartheid society, it is used as a backdrop for Damon's story. Thus, the society in transition functions as an underlying factor that affects the formation of Damon's self. The novel can be said to portray the modern South African society at the level of the individual, because it shows how the more general currents of the society reflect upon its citizens. Certainly, Damon's experiences are narratives of a time and a place; although what he experiences is physical placelessness and rootlessness, stories of his self are anchored in time as well as in place. The South African society in transition affects the narrator's fragmented self which in turn affects the space he inhabits in his relationships and the world. This implies movement both in time and in space which, in turn, entails boundaries. The nature of the boundary in *In a Strange Room* can be seen in relation to time and space; in relation to time, memory has its own boundaries and restrictions, with space the boundary can be physical and/or metaphorical. In the novel under analysis, these boundaries are all also in connection to the narrator's self.

I will firstly address how the self of the narrator is portrayed in the novel. The next section will focus on the difference between identity and the self, how the self of the narrator is constructed in the novel and further, how the fragmentation of the narrator's self is constructed. I hope to gain an overall picture of the narrator's sense of self, in order to be able to then move on to the analysis of how memory plays a role in it.

3 THE SELF

A central theme of the novel is the formation of the narrator's self. Even though the self is a subjective entity, there are societal forces that set boundaries for identity and self building work of individuals. In the case of this novel, the South African society in transition is used as a backdrop for the narrator's (post)modern experience of flâneur-like detachment which manifests itself as homelessness and rootlessness. As the novel's core is the self-reflection of the narrator, it is important to examine what aspects and phenomena affect the self-building work of the novel's narrator Damon – with special emphasis on the role memory plays in this construction.

As Oswell (2006: 125) states, there is no 'theory of the subject', just a problematisation of it. However, there are some general lines of direction according to which guidelines of the self and the subject can be drawn from. Before the disintegration of the subject, there prevailed a school of thought according to which the self was considered as a unified, coherent entity, a fixed whole. However, the humanist tradition and, in particular, the Cartesian subject began to crumble along with the poststructuralist theories of psychoanalysis and deconstruction and, thus, the theorisation of the self shifted its focus from identity to identification, the subject as being always in process. (Klages 2006: 47-51.)

Nevertheless, the theorisation of the self and the division between the self and identity are not straightforward ones. In the following chapters, a framework of relevant recent theorisations of the self will be presented, including an account of the division between the self and identity. This will be followed by chapters of the fragmented self and the construction of the self. The experiences of the narrator of *In a Strange Room* will be situated along these theoretical lines and an analysis of the self will be gathered from the various positions the narrator takes during the stories. A journey into one's self is also a journey in space, or, more particularly, a journey in social space. Journeys and boundaries are a recurrent theme in the novel; thus, the aim of this chapter is to show the navigation of the narrator's self in social space across various boundaries.

3.1. Identity or the self?

The concepts of identity and the self are often used interchangeably. However, there are substantial differences in their meanings. Whereas identity can be thought of as the set of individual traits and beliefs which formulate one's personality and social being, the self is characterised as the conscious self-awareness of this identity. (Hall 2004: 3-4.) Thus, the self refers to the human as a psychological essence, whereas identity is formed in a social and cultural setting. The problem of identity is the articulation of the social and the subject (Oswell 2006: 114). In its core identity is thus connected to others around us. The self, in turn, refers to the reflection of those social positions.

Therefore, identity is constructed of a number of social positions we take in relation to others. Thus, it would be more appropriate to speak of identities instead of a single identity; identity is not an essence, nor is it stable. The resources available to construct our identities are not divided equally; power relations within the society, and the world as a whole, affect which resources are made available – in other words, which social positions we are able to take. (Hall 1999: 227-229.) The self is the reflection of these multifaceted aspects of identity and constructed of the meanings we give to these aspects of identity. As identity is inherently multiple and fragmented, so must the self be as well.

The novel is constructed of three seemingly separate stories named after the social positions the narrator Damon takes with the people that become central in those experiences. In the first story, 'The Follower', the narrator Damon is travelling in Greece where he meets Reiner, a German traveller with whom he continues his journey. Damon feels a momentary connection to Reiner, and as he arrives back home in South-Africa is delighted to hear that Reiner is coming his way. They decide to go to Lesotho together, where the connection between the two ultimately falls apart:

(4) Money is never just money alone, it is a symbol for other deeper things, on this trip how much you have is a sign of how loved you are, Reiner hoards the love, he dispenses it as a favour, I am endlessly gnawed by the absence of love, to be loveless is to be without power. (ISR, 42)

The disagreements between the two culminate in the inability of Damon to stand his ground or say his opinion. In their mutual relationship the hierarchy is clear; Reiner has a superior position to Damon. The core issue in the failure of their relationship is summed up like this:

(5) Then at some point he realizes that the silence, the suspension, is the only form of resolution this particular story can have. (ISR, 64)

The second story, 'The Lover', starts from Zimbabwe where the narrator is wandering by himself. He attaches himself to a group of young people going to Malawi. However, Damon falls into quarrel with the group and continues his journey alone. Then he meets a threesome he has met before, among whom there is Jerome, a young Swiss in whom the narrator takes an interest. The feeling is mutual but communication is difficult because Jerome speaks hardly any English. The party separates, and months later when Damon is travelling in Europe he goes to visit Jerome. The connection, however, is lost and communication, still, as difficult, if not even more difficult, than before. As he leaves, Damon notes:

(6) They have never been more distant, or polite. In the morning his actual departure will be an echo of this one. He has already left, or perhaps he never arrived. (ISR, 117)

As he returns, yet again, to South-Africa Damon writes a letter to Jerome, but it is sent back with a note that says Jerome has died in an accident.

In the third, and final, story the narrator sets out on a journey towards India with his friend Anna. The narrator is older now and he also travels differently:

(7) He has become more sedentary, staying in one place for longer periods of time, with less of that youthful rushing around. But this new approach has its problems. On a previous trip to India, waiting in a town far to the north for some bureaucratic business to be finished, he became aware that he was forming connections with the place, giving money to a sick man here, calling the vet to attend to a stray dog there, setting up a web of habits and social reflexes that he usually travels to escape. (ISR, 130)

Anna has been diagnosed with a manic-depressive psychosis and she becomes suicidal during the journey. Anna is committed into an Indian hospital where she needs to be monitored day and night – and Damon becomes her guardian. Damon gets help from a Dutch-English couple and Caroline whom he befriends. After a series of setbacks the group succeeds in sending Anna back to South-Africa. A bond between Caroline and Damon evolves, and Caroline opens up, for the first time, to Damon about her husband's death. Nevertheless, the narrator seems dubious about this connection:

(8) But this makes for a fraught and uneasy alliance, he feels he owes her a debt and at the same time resents that obligation, he wants to leave this whole experience behind, to erase every trace of it, but she's there every day to remind him. And she's carrying her own pain and loss, which have become crafted onto Anna and by extension onto him. [...] He has failed Anna, he will fail her too. (ISR, 174)

The meaning of the story – the meaning of telling and receiving the story – does not dawn on the narrator until years later (discussed later in more detail).

These three stories act as a window to the narrator's identity and self. Drawing on Hall's (1999) definitions, identity is connected to our beliefs and traits that make up our social being and further the positions we take in social reality. The self, in contrast, is the self-awareness and reflection of these positions social identities. Considering the three stories the novel includes, the titles of the stories already tell something about the identity of the narrator; they are roles – or, in other words, identity positions – the narrator takes in relation to the people vital in his life. The self of the narrator, thus, would unfold in examining the self-reflection of the positions by the narrator himself.

Indeed, the meaning of these positions to narrator can be detected from the novel in the three examples:

(9) Now he feels exquisite agonies of unease, maybe the failure wasn't the mutual one he's constructed in his head, maybe it belongs to him alone. If I had done this, if I had said that, in the end you are always more tormented by what you didn't do than what you did, action already performed can always be rationalized in time, the neglected deed might have changed the world. (ISR, 61, 'The Follower')

(10) By imperceptible degrees, then, he accepts the notion that the journey is over, and that he's back where he started. The story of Jerome is one he's lived through before, it is the story of what never happened, the story of travelling a long way while standing still. (ISR, 111, 'The Lover')

(11) And he feels it now, maybe for the first time, everything that went wrong, all the mess and the anguish and disaster. Forgive me my friend, I tried to hold on, but you fell, you fell. [...] He feels awful, but also relieved somehow, emptied out. (ISR, 146, 'The Guardian')

In the first example the narrator questions the position partly taken on by himself, partly given by his travelling companion Reiner. His inability in the role of the follower to assert his opinions has left him with a speculation of what might have happened. Further, the second example the narrator relates his journey, as one might call their relationship, with Jerome with the experiences he has had in the past. A similar sense of not accomplishing something is present here as in the first example. The third example echoes the same things as the first two, a sense of wanting to succeed in that relationship but, in the end, failing in it. All three stories tell of failure to attain and sustain a certain position of identity.

As we can see from the examples provided from the novel, both identity and the self are hence strongly connected to lived experience. As Hall (2004: 111) states, it is in lived

experience that we take subject position which we compile together as parts of our identities. However, no experience in and of itself can be said to define our identity; for the experience to become a subject position as part of identity, it has to be constructed within and through discourse (Oswell 2006: 55). Identity is always articulated; that is, articulated in speech as speech acts (words, sentences) and connected to the material world. The articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation (taking various positions) of identity implies its constant change; thus, identity is identification in specific times at specific places. (Ibid.: 113.)

To sum up, in *In a Strange Room*, the narrator explores his self through the identity positions which he takes in the relationships in this travels. The positions he takes in these relationships are portrayed through a discourse of self-reflection; the novel as an autobiography takes on a narrative character in which the narrator tries to make sense of his experiences of the past and relate them to the experience of self. The discursive approach to self and narrative, which will be dealt with in more detail in the following section, is the appropriate tool for analysing the novel because the self can be considered as a 'text' (Hall 2004; 5). In addition, in my view the whole novel is an articulation of the self and the memories of the narrator, thus it is appropriate to take this discursive and narrative point of view to both the self and memory.

3.2. Constructing self

Many theorisations of identity and the self are anchored in language and discourse. Although theorists may have different starting points – for example psychoanalysis for Lacan and social sciences for Foucault – the focus on language largely stems from the ideas of poststructuralism. As Brown (1989: 9, 34) states, the ideas of poststructuralism criticised the adequacy of language to express experiences of the self. In addition, the self as a subject was questioned by poststructuralist theorists. Poststructuralist literary criticism challenged that idea of the self as constant; on the contrary, the self was found to be unstable and changing. The individual was to be seen as a collection of one's experiences, beliefs and ideologies. (Klages 2006: 47-51.)

Poststructuralism asserted that language is a key factor in shaping the self and reality. Language does not reflect the real world, but, on the contrary, language creates reality. Thus, also the self is the product of the system of language; we reside in language, not

vice versa. Consequently, as everything is fluid and language determines reality, there is only ambiguity and variety of meaning. (Klages 2006: 51.) The inadequacy of language to describe experience and memories is central in *In a Strange Room*;

(12) He would like to say something, the perfect single word that contains how he feels, but there isn't any such word. Instead he says nothing, he makes half-gestures that die before he can complete them, he shakes his head and sighs. (ISR, 105)

(13) There are no words for what is happening now, for what he thinks and feels. His body is working by itself, trying to undo what is already accomplished, while his mind and spirit are elsewhere, having a high, disconnected dialogue. (ISR, 147)

Language fails to describe Damon's feelings and thus Damon fails in recognising his position in these situations. Language has no words for Damon's experiences and feelings, and thus he fails in relating his emotions with his self. In addition, the wordlessness prompts miscommunication between him and his peers; meaningful communication creates close relationships, and with this lacking, Damon's relationships remain empty. As language has a significant role in shaping the self and the reality outside it, Damon's inadequacy to express himself also inhibits him from shaping a self in the context of reality. Further, as we as subjects live in language, the failure of language to describe Damon's experiences also affects his construction of the self; without any words to describe his experiences, his self must also be incomplete:

(14) In his clearest moments he thinks that he has lost the ability to love, people or places or things, most of all the person and place and thing that he is. (ISR, 67)

This example shows how the narrator reflects on his past self and how his past self has trouble recognising who he is and where his place in the world is. This detachment from himself and the world becomes concrete is his inability to love anything, most of all himself.

However, the words in language also provide a way of expression for the narrator of *In a Strange Room*:

(15) For his part, he has never withhold emotions, if anything he vents them too freely, at least in letters. Because words are unattached to the world. (ISR, 18)

In Damon's statements about the expression of his emotions there is a certain contradiction. As noted in earlier excerpts, at times Damon is lost for words concerning expressing his emotions and experiences. In the above one, in contrast, Damon feels words do not have any connection to the lived world, especially written words. He feels a similarity to the words because he himself is unattached to the world. The words written on the paper, thus, echo his own existence and maybe that is why the narrator

feels he can express himself in letters, even though he fails to communicate to people in person. Perhaps this is the reason he is also writing his life story (in other words, the novel); as he otherwise fails to explicate his feelings, the written word provides him with a tool to seek for his self and coherence in his life.

Thus, language for the narrator is almost a double-edged sword; on the one hand, it prevents him from creating meaningful connections to other people of the world in person. On the other hand, because of this lack of connection, language is a tool for him to express his emotions in the written form. However, underneath the words he does feel some kind of connection or oneness.

(16) Perhaps each of them thought of real communication as unnecessary, words divide by multiplying, what was certain was the oneness underneath the words. ... An image in a mirror is a reversal, the reflection and the original are joined but might cancel each other out. (ISR, 41)

Nevertheless, there is an ambiguity even in this connection. This example is taken from 'The Follower' where the narrator is trying to establish a relationship with Reiner. The narrator uses Reiner as a mirror of himself; at first he thinks they are completely alike but later realises that, actually, they are completely different. The metaphor of the mirror shows how even the oneness can have a negative connotation as the reflection and the original are similar but opposite to each other. Words in this example are seen as harmful for this connection but, in the end, the lack of communication is what ruins this relationship. Thus, language provides both a tool for self-reflection but also serves to separate the narrator from other people and the world.

Nevertheless, a focus on language itself is not sufficient for the examination of self. As argued by Laclau and Mouffe, drawing on discourse theory, identity is constructed within and through discourse. Identity is formed through discourse within a system of differences; socially constructed situations are given meaning through articulation – that is, a discourse. Therefore, the collection of experiences is given meaning through discourse; no experience has meaning in and of itself. However, articulations of identity are “open ended and fuzzy” because they are dependent on the system in which they were created. In addition, any attempt to create an identity implies movement of power, inclusion and exclusion. (Laclau and Mouffe, cited in Oswell 2006: 55-61.) The modernist self is based on the dialectics of recognition through otherness. The 'I' cannot be defined through one single discourse. The 'I' who speaks is not the same 'I' that is spoken of. Thus, identities are constructed in several different discourses and hence, the subject takes on several identity positions. (Oswell 2006: 107-8.)

In addition to the three separate stories that exemplify different identity positions the narrator takes and reflects on in the novel, there is a concrete temporal division between the 'I' who speaks and 'he' who is spoken of. This division rather concretely shows the different discourses that are in play in the novel. The identity positions the narrator takes, thus, are multiple. These discourses of the self are created within different power relations and also through inclusion and/or exclusion. Firstly, the title of the story 'The Follower' implies subordination to a leader, in this case Reiner. As Reiner takes on a leadership role both economically and socially, the narrator is left with the role of the follower. 'The Lover', in turn, is a role that never really finds fulfilment. There are only suggestions of a love affair between the narrator and Jerome, but the relationship between them stays empty. In the third story, the narrator is pushed to the role of the guardian, and there is a power struggle between him and his friend Anna. The power struggle over Anna's life ultimately ends when Anna takes her own life. In effect, the narrator is never free in choosing his own position in these relationships; the roles are given to him by someone else or by circumstance.

However, we are by no means able to create our 'selves'. In fact, we are given only a restricted range of options within which we must fit into the society and its subcategories. (Hall 2004: 1.) The exact degree to which we are constrained in constructing ourselves is under debate, but even in emphasising external forces no theory supports complete powerlessness of the subject (Hall 2004: 76-7). In *In a Strange Room*, the ability of the narrator to construct a meaningful self is restricted by his past and also by the forces of the surrounding society. In other words, in addition to external forces, Damon confines himself from creating a self:

(17) But he hardly ever manages to lose himself, mostly he is stuck in one place in the past. The physical world feels substanceless, like a drab dream from which he will wake up into a dirty hospital ward. (ISR, 176)

In the above example it is the narrator's past that confines him in functioning in the present. Living in the past inhibits him from making sense of the present. Thus, as he states, 'the world feels substanceless', there is nothing to hold on to, nothing to make sense of. The past is like baggage he is carrying and restricts him from constructing a self that ranges from the past to the present. Instead, the past is so overpowering that the narrator cannot find meaning in the present.

Kerby (2001: 125) also recognises that the self is essentially created in and through language. However, Kerby approaches the concept of the self from a narrative point of view and states that the self is particularly created through self-narrative. The self is, thus, a product of language. However, most of us do not have need to explicitly narrate ourselves; we only do so when it is needed. However, short and long term plans function for us as narratives: they are structures that create a direction in life. With these kinds of implicit life narratives and guidelines no explicit narrative is needed. Kerby (2001: 129) also adds that, on the level of everyday life, life narratives have little coherence or consistency. Life, and thus identity, are a series of fragmentations; home versus work etc. Yet, as Kerby (2001: 136) continues, there is an underlying desire in unification; meaningful co-existence with fellows is basic for human beings. Thus, narrative unity is only an effort to find “what will suffice”. Language is a development of experience, not a mirror of it (Kerby 2001: 138).

All this raises a question about the position of the subject. Are we just products of language? Does language shape us or do we shape language? Kerby (2001) starts his answer by stating that the narrative approach tries to avoid the mystification of the subject and, instead, emphasises the subject of discourse, i.e. the linguistic subject. He continues by stating that the foundation of subjectivity is in using language. Therefore, narrative is not merely a description, but indeed an interpretation of life (Kerby 2001: 127-131).

An interpretation of life *In a Strange Room* truly is. As noted several times so far, the novel in whole is an autobiography of a kind and it includes stories that are meaningful for the narrator. The stories also serve a purpose for the creation of the self of the narrator; as can be seen in the example below, they serve the purpose of situating the narrator’s selves in specific times and, further, into the surrounding social reality.

(18) It happened 30 years ago, but it’s as if she’s living it again in this moment, and it becomes like that for him too. Her story travels into him, his skin is very thin, there’s no barrier between him and the world, he takes it all in. And even afterwards when he wants to get rid of it he can’t do it, in the weeks that follow as he tries to leave Goa and the village behind the things that he has lived through there will recur in an almost cellular way, haunting him, and Caroline’s story is part of it, joined somehow to Anna, all of it One Thing. Yet what can you do with a story like this.--- (ISR, 175)

This example shows a reflection of how creating one’s self requires also others and the others’ stories. However, the story is not yet complete; there is an open ended question

of how the story of Caroline finds meaning in the narrator's story and how it thus relates to his formulation of his self.

What is common for all of the theories discussed above is the realisation that the self is not a fixed essence, but rather a time and place specific construction that is influenced by the outside reality and power relations. Therefore, to make an ample analysis of the narrators self, the instability of the self needs further consideration.

3.3. Fragmentation of the self

As already stated above, there is no static, coherent self to be formed. The self is a reflection of multiple roles identity takes on, and these roles vary from one situation to another, and according to moments in time. Indeed, the fragmented self has been a major topic for modern fiction as it is the product of modern society – the shock of the Great War and industrialisation brought about a new form of social alienation which the artistic movements started to experiment on (Brown 1989: 1).

However, the fragmentation of the South African society dates further back than modernisation. As a former colonised country, the division of the country pre-exists fragmentation in the modernity, and thus it would be appropriate to situate South African literature in the scope of postcolonial literature. To this end, the fragmentation of the subject in South African literature can be seen not as a modern state of being but, instead, as an inherent form of the South African society. However, as Kostelac (2010) states, the present-day South African writers de-prioritise the apartheid past and emphasise a changing context in the society thus being increasingly autonomous from the pressures of the political. Galgut plays with the notions of the autonomous and representative authorship which both are rather unambiguous in relation to the author's context. Galgut's literary accomplishment thus is that he resigns himself both from the autonomous and representative notion, creating an author who is neither a 'citizen of the world' nor a 'citizen of the nation' (Kostelac 2010: 55- 59).

As discussed earlier, the self is constructed through various binary oppositions. As subjects, we take on different social roles in relation to others: this makes identity primarily social which is constructed and reconstructed. The positions are constructed from and in language. Selfhood is an illusion of a self-sufficient subject created in

language; however, the user of language is always confined by the rules and limitations of it, and thus the self is a misrecognition of a subject position in language. (Klages 2006; 88-89.) What Klages suggests is that the self is only an illusion created in but also restricted by language. The self is thus as much misrecognition as it is recognition. The individual is not in control of his creation for self. This misrecognition gives rise to fragmentation of the self.

As already discussed earlier in this paper, such focus on the textual formation of the self has been used before to analyse the narrator's identity in the novel *In a Strange Room*. Clingman's (2009) ideas about the transitional nature of identity and the crossing of boundaries were used effectively in Jacobson's analysis of Galgut's works and, thus, will be reviewed here as well. As Clingman's 'grammar of identity' enables the simultaneous reading of multiple selves, it will be of use also in my analysis.

Central in Clingman's (2009) theory of transitional identity is navigation in space and time – which culminates in crossing boundaries within the self. We live in a contemporary society in which the *many* and *one* compete: the world is thought of as the stage of flows – power, money, people – hence, the world of *many*. However, concerning identity and identification, the *one* controls. The *one* is “a way of ruling out transition, change, interaction, modulation, morphology, transformation” (Clingman 2009; 1-33). It is this space of transition – the combination within and between selves – where identity is enacted. In other words, identity is the navigation within that transitional space between versions of identity.

With navigation comes boundaries; navigation does not occur despite boundaries, but because of them. Navigation also connects the self to the world outside the self, it attaches meaning and movement. Navigation occurs in the space between meanings, and crossing these boundaries produces meaning. Thus:

The boundary of meaning, then, is a transitive boundary; the transitive is intrinsically connected with meaning; navigation depends on, and creates, the transitive boundary which itself may undergo change. In all these ways the boundary is not a limit but a space of transition. (Clingman 2009; 22.)

Hence, identity too can be thought of as meaning; the differences of self, and of others, then become the foundation of this meaning (difference is the ground of navigation). It

must be noted that navigation means being in the state of crossing, not having done so.

Clingman continues:

It means *being prepared to be* in the space of crossing, in transition, in movement, in journey. It means accepting placement as *displacement*, position as *disposition*, not through coercion of others or by others of ourselves, but through 'disposition' as an affect of the self, as a kind of approach. (Clingman 2009; 24-25.)

What is notable here is movement, instability. Clingman shares the view of multiple others by saying that identity intrinsically a negotiation of multiple identities; negotiation for him being navigation.

Clingman's 'transitional space' can be paralleled with a concept more widely used in sociology: that of liminal space. Hetherington (1997: 32-33) argues that the origin of liminality lies in the spaces of rites of passages. Rites of passage concern the social ordering of the people in the society and they include a symbolic transition in three stages, which are separation, margin and reaggregation. Each of these transitions, such as childhood or adulthood, includes initiation rituals which separate them from society and their former status and identity. Liminality exists between these rites of passage, in the margin; spatially it is a threshold in which the structure of society is temporarily revoked and the in-betweenness of identity emphasised. Thus, spaces of liminality are ambivalent. In the final state of the rite of passage, the person is reintegrated into the society as an entirely new person. Liminality is thus the space in between these stages where one is not the past self nor the future one. Thus, liminality is essentially about the relationship between freedom and order. (Ibid.)

In a Strange Room is divided into three sections which function as identity categories the narrator Damon takes in the novel; the multiplicity of roles already implies an identity which changes in time. In the background of the stories is Damon's alienation from the South-African society:

(19) Everything has changed while he was away. The white government has capitulated, power has succumbed and altered shape. But on the level on which life is lived nothing looks very different. He gets out at the station and stands in the middle of the moving crowds and tries to think, I am home now, I have come home. But he feels that he is only passing through. (ISR, 16-17)

(20) He watches, but what he sees isn't real to him. Too much travelling and placelessness have put him outside everything, so that history happens elsewhere, it has nothing to do with him. He is only passing through. (ISR, 15)

Even though trying to convince himself that South Africa is his home, the narrator fails to root himself in his home country. This rootlessness drives him to travel, but it also

creates a vicious circle in which he is detached from everything and every place. In the progression of the three stories the reason for this rootlessness unravels:

(21) Something in him has changed, he can't seem to connect properly with the world. He feels this not as failure of the world but as a massive failing in himself, he would like to change it but doesn't know how. In his clearest moments he thinks he has lost the ability to love, people or places or things, most of all the person and place and thing he is. Without love nothing has value, nothing can be made to matter very much. (ISR, 67)

Here we see what is suggested to anchor people in places: the people in that place. This detachment contributes to Damon's fragmented self; unable to express his inner emotions and feelings, without a connection to himself, he cannot have a connection to anyone else either. Clingman (2009: 28-9) argues that there is also a 'negative' grammar of identity in which the transitivity is wholly rejected or rejection becomes a part of the transition. The boundary between one part of the self or, between the self and another is rejected and becomes intransitive, impossible for navigation. These rejected objects become contagious and ensue a chain of impossibility. In effect, the rejection of part(s) of the self is a correspondent of rejection of others outside the self, and vice versa. Hence, as can be seen also from the example below, there is no navigation between the selves of the narrator:

(22) I can't even remember now what they are, the remains of some big but obscure building, there was a fence that had to be climbed, there was a fear of dogs but no dogs appeared, he stumbles around among rocks and pillars and ledges, he tries to imagine how it was but history resists imagining. He sits on the edge of a raised stone floor and stares out unseeingly into the hills around him and now he is thinking of things that happened in the past. Looking back at him through time, I remember him remembering, and I am more present in the scene than he was. But memory has its own distances, in part he is me entirely, in part he is a stranger I am watching. (ISR, 5)

There are two selves who seem to be separated. One self is in the past, the other in the present. In addition, the three somewhat separate stories show that the narrator does not allow any movement between his selves. In the past, which is the time frame of most of the novel when the narrator reminisces his experiences, no navigation or movement takes place within the narrator and, thus the narrator cannot create any kind of self. Trying to cling onto a certain kind of self, not enabling any variation within it, results in a disconnected.

The navigation and interpretation, however, takes place in the course of time. The 'I', who is the present self of the narrator, reminisces his past selves, the 'hims'. The 'I' has the advantage of hindsight which enables interpretation of the past selves. As Clingman (2009) argues, navigation can take place in time and in space; in the case of the narrator in *In a Strange Room*, time enables navigation between different parts of the self.

Meanings are constructed in the present by the 'I'. The 'I', then, navigates in time as his others selves are in different location in time in his past. The navigation happens also in social space; he is trying to establish a position for himself in the social reality around him. Ultimately, the navigation in social space is also navigation between his selves because the positions he takes in the social reality around him become parts of his self.

The division of the 'I' and 'him' is a textual property in which the fragmentation of the subject can be detected. In the below example are two dimensions which can be said to illustrate the narrator fragmented self.

(23) The part of him that watches himself is still here too, not ecstatic or afraid. This part hovers in its usual detachment, looking down with wry amusement at the sleepless figure in the bunk. It sees all the complexities of the situation he's in and murmurs sardonically into his ear, you see where you have landed yourself. You intend to visit Zimbabwe for a few days and now you find yourself weeks late on a train to Dar as Salaam. Happy and unhappy, he falls asleep in the end and dreams about, no, I don't remember his dreams. (ISR, 97)

Firstly, there is the divide between the self that is present in the scene and the one that watches him. This part functions as a kind of mini-me sitting on his shoulder, criticising his actions. Secondly, in the end of the example is the temporal division between the 'he' and the 'I' of the text. He, obviously, is the self of the narrator in the past, in the initial event that is described here. The 'I', then, is the present self which is writing this story, reminiscing the event in the present. There is, thus, both a spatial and a temporal division in the self of the narrator; in the time of the initial event the self of the narrator occupies two different spaces (spatial) whereas the reminiscence of the event divides the self into two (temporal).

Thus, it could also be said that the narrator lingers in a liminal state. He has passed the first stage of his rite of passage and moved to the state where his identity is in an in-between state. He is in the margin state, where he is isolated from the society and has lost his former identity. This liminal state also emphasises his detached identity and sense of self. In this liminal state he has no place in the society. His attempts in creating relationships can be seen as also attempts in crossing to the next state of the rite; re-aggregation. But he does not seem to succeed, until the very end of the novel where he is able to connect again to other people and find meaning in his own life.

As we have seen, the self of the narrator in *In a Strange Room* is nothing but complete. The temporal and spatial divisions in his self contribute to his sense of detachment from the world and from other people. As I have now considered the characteristics of the

narrator's self, the qualities of memory can be taken into account. With the help of sociological and philosophical theories of memory, I hope to gain an understanding of how the functions of memory and, further, individual accounts of memories affect the formation of the narrator's self.

4 MEMORY AND MEMORIES

In addition to the self, memory is a prevalent theme in *In a Strange Room*. The three stories are told in a way that rests on memory and its capacity to bring instances from the past into the present. In addition, memory serves as a tool for the construction of our selves as well; essentially, the self is a negotiation of different selves across time. That is to say, the self in the present is a collection and result of the selves of the past. Thus, the past is a crucial element for story telling because memory aids in creating a logical (self) narrative across time. In *In a Strange Room*, the narrator Damon reminisces the travels he has made and people he has met in the past with the overall intention to discover his self. His present self is lonely and unattached to the world and other people, and this is why he is trying to make an account of his life; by examining his past selves he may be able to get in touch with his present one. Memory functions as journey back in time, and further, individual accounts of memory, in other words memories, provide building blocks with which the narrator can begin to understand and form his selfhood.

Memory is a complex process which scientists and philosophers alike have tried to explain in numerous different ways for centuries. Since my aim is to unravel the way Damon's memory works and how Damon uses memories to construct his self, it is appropriate to review memory from a point a view that enables this kind of overall social construction. Thus, a medical, mechanical understanding of memory is unnecessary; what is needed is a sociological and philosophical framework through which the meaning of memories to a person's sense of self can be detected. Memory is, of course, not the same as memories. But through memory we access our memories, however fluid the both may be. For this reason, memory and memories are used in this thesis somewhat interchangeably, even though memories are the product of the function of memory.

Memory is generally roughly categorised into two segments: an objective part which stores facts and a subjective part which houses the information and emotions that are

important to us. The former is passive because it simply stores knowledge but the latter is more active for it “experiences and recalls to consciousness”. (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 5.) However, memory can also be considered social in addition to its subjectivity (see e.g. Fentress and Wickham 1992, Hinchman and Hinchman 2001). What makes memory social is talking about it. Even one’s personal memories are of a social origin. The memories that are shared are the most relevant ones either to the person himself or in a social context. (Fentress and Wickham 1992: viiii-x.) In addition, life stories of individuals, constructed from memories, often touch upon a wider historical or social narrative which, in turn, provides a context of these personal narratives (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001: xxiii).

The examination of *In a Strange Room* from these perspectives is key to the understanding of the importance of Damon’s memories in constructing his self. Damon’s actively reminisces his past and his life experiences in order to gather a sense of self. These active remembrances he compiles into book, which has two dimensions: a personal and a social one. The personal dimension is the life story which he uses to make sense of his own life by connecting significant life events to each other. The social dimension is sharing his story, which connects him to his surroundings and other people.

4.1. Memory in *In a Strange Room*

What is important in the context of *In a Strange Room* is to notice that the narrator Damon is reflecting on his own experiences of the past which are integral to the formation of his self. This active, subjective part of memory is the focus of the present study. However, it is important to notice that the social part of memory is also present in the novel. As Hinchman and Hinchman (2001; xxiii) state, what makes memory social is talking about it, sharing it (the social origin of memory will be thoroughly addressed in relation to story telling in section 5). They continue that the life stories built upon memory often are constructed in a wider social context.

As stated in section 2.2., the South African society is in transition and it often functions as a backdrop for Galgut’s work. The relation of individual memory and the wider societal context in *In a Strange Room* can be drawn from the section where the narrator Damon returns home to South Africa from one of his travels. He states:

(20) [...] it's war in the Gulf. Everybody has been waiting and waiting for it, now it's happening, it's happening in two places, at another point in the planet and at the same time on the television set.

He watches but what he sees isn't real to him. Too much travelling and placelessness have put him outside everything, so that history happens elsewhere, it has nothing to do with him. He is only passing though. (ISR, 15)

(19) Everything has changed while he is away. The white government has capitulated, power has succumbed and altered shape. But on the level on which life is lived nothing looks very different. He gets out at the station and stands in the middle of the moving crowds and tries to think, I am home now, I have come home. But he feels that he is only passing though. (ISR, 16-17)

In these two examples it can be gathered that the societal changes and turbulences do not seem to affect the narrator in any way. The two examples also show how significant events, such as war and in the case of South Africa the change of leadership, do not happen directly in the lives of the citizens, but somewhere else; on other levels of society, on television sets, in places that do not directly concern the average citizen. Thus, as "history happens elsewhere" and not at the level of the individual, detachment from the society happens easily. In *In a Strange Room*, the narrator is detached from both the society of his home country and the rest of the world. He blames travelling for his detachment of the world, though he is not "a traveller by nature, it is state that has been forced on him by circumstance." (ISR, 15)

Damon, the narrator, could even be considered a flâneur-like character of the global era. The concept of the flâneur was originally specifically located in the streets of modern Paris. The crowds are the flâneur's natural habitat, he wants to merge with them. The flâneur is driven from the private sphere to the public sphere by the search of meaning; the flâneur is only at home existentially when he is not home physically. However, what separates the flâneur from other people in the crowd is that the flâneur is a man *of* the crowd not a man *in* the crowd – and he is aware of this division himself. He cannot be recognised from the crowd which makes him an incognito observer of metropolitan city life. This unrecognisability enables him to seek mysterious places and spaces in the city. He can also be whoever he wants; anonymity allows him to take on 'masks' and to be who he chooses to be thus controlling the meaning of his world. (Tester 1994: 1-21.)

As a result, the existential completion of the flâneur requires an escape from the private sphere. The man who lives in the box of the private is incomplete; completion requires mixing with the multitudes. However, seeking for self-hood through dissatisfaction only leads to more dissatisfaction. Further, as he has the ability to transform faces and things

only to the meanings he attributes to them, his attitude towards them is somewhat detached. The anonymous spectator roams the city to find anything to occupy his gaze and complete his identity. Thus, the figure of the flâneur and his activity, flânerie, are essentially about freedom, the meaning of existence and being-with-others; freedom because of the definition and self-definition of the figure, meaning of existence because of meaning making of the flux of life and being-with-others because of the being and becoming who we are through observation. Nevertheless, to an extent, the flâneur is a victim, not a master, of his freedom because he can never enjoy being because of doing flânerie. (ibid.)

As noted earlier, the narrator in *In a Strange Room* can be considered as a flâneur of the global era. He is driven to travelling by the sense of not being at home when physically there, in South Africa. He is trying to search his self through travel, although he at the same time acknowledges that travel also inhibits him from finding it. By extending the definition of the flâneur and flânerie beyond the city of Paris, we could say that, on a global scale, travelling is flânerie performed by the narrator. The narrator is trying to find meaning to his life and also come to terms with who he is. Yet, the narrator is an anonymous spectator of his surroundings, never feeling quite attached to anywhere. He is a subject to this flânerie because it, on the one hand, makes him free to search for his self but, on the other hand, he does not do it entirely of his own will, but, instead, describes it as a condition forced on him. Thus, the flânerie of travelling is only a restricted freedom which ultimately detaches the narrator both from his private sphere and from the public one.

Nevertheless, to apply the concepts of the flâneur and flânerie from the 19th century Paris to the global era is not a straightforward task. Several theorists (see eg. Tester 1994, Parkhurst Ferguson 1994) note that the figure is a historically specific one, and that it cannot be taken out from the streets of modern Paris. However, in many respects, the 19th century Paris and the situation in South Africa share the same characteristics that form the basis for the figure's existence. The Paris of the flâneur is characterised by the urbanisation of the city, consumerism and decadence (Parkhurst Ferguson 1994: 23). The cityscape in transition and increasing changing dynamics between the private and public spheres are driving forces for the flâneur. A similar kind of transitional state can be detected from the South African society; changes in the governmental level and overall in the global situation as well. Yet, seeking meaning and satisfaction from an

incomplete society drives the narrator to travelling. The public thus extends to cover the globe, which shows itself to the narrator as unstable as his home country – though in a different way.

Even though societal forces have an impact on the experiences of individuals, in the novel in question there are far more potent, personal forces that shape the memories of Damon, the narrator. The personal forces shaping memories will be discussed in the next sections. For the purposes of this study, the subjective part of memory is the more important than the objective part. The part of memory which holds personal experiences, i.e. memories, is integral in order to trace the effect of memories and their remembrance to the construction of the narrator Damon's self. In the next sections, an outline will be drawn of how memory functions in the present novel, and, further, how different forms of articulation and memories' linkage in time and place affect the narrator's formation of self. My overall aim in this section is to gain an understanding how the narrator Damon's memory plays a role within the novel and its function as his life story. Firstly, the core concepts and functions of memory will be explained, following a section on how memory is fixed in time and place. Lastly, the articulation of memory will be addressed with a specific goal to show memory can be preserved through articulation.

4.2. "What you don't remember never happened."

The title of the section is an extract from the novel (ISR, 16), and it is a good starting point for the analysis of the importance of memory in the novel. It introduces the fact that we do not build a life story or a narrative of the self from *all* our memories, *all* our experiences but the ones that are crucial to the construction of the self. The minor, insignificant events which are not even remembered, and as the narrator suggests, can be said to have never happened, do not play a role in creating a meaningful account of our lives. In *In a Strange Room*, these meaningful accounts are the memories of the places the narrator Damon has visited in the course of his life and also the memories of the people connected to those places.

Memory is the only resource we have for the reference of the past, it is the only way of knowing something has taken place. Attached to it is a presupposition of truthfulness. In addition, memory is object-oriented: we remember something or someone. Ricoeur

(2004) distinguishes between memory and memories as follows; memory is an intention and a capacity, memories are the thing intended. Memories are thus reappearances of the original appearances. The memory-event is a perceived event of the actual, physical event. (Ricoeur 2004: 21-23.) Remembering, for Ricoeur (2004: 4), means having a memory or going on a search for one.

What, then, distinguishes memories? How can we recognise these things “of the past”? Ricoeur (2004: 24-36) defines memories through a series of oppositional pairs: habit versus memory, evocation versus search, reflexivity versus worldliness. Firstly, habit and memory have temporality in common: both require an experience acquired earlier. However, in the case of habit, the acquired is incorporated into the present and disregarded as past. In contrast, memory recognises the temporality of the acquisition as happened somewhere in the past. What distinguishes the two, thus, is the recognition of the time of the initial experience. In the second pair the key issue is of activity. Evocation is an affection, an involuntary and unexpected appearance of memory. Search, in turn, is a synonym for recollection; for the intentional retrieval of memories. One searches what one fears to have forgotten. However, searching does not equal finding; the effort can either fail or succeed. Thirdly, the couple reflexivity and worldliness are in part complementary, in another part opposing. Remembering does not occur only within oneself; it also includes the situations in the surrounding world in the initial situation took place. These situations include one’s own body, bodies of others, lived space etc. They are in opposite ends because reflexivity of memory is an internal process yet it connects us to world via the initial situation it occurred in. The relation between the interiority and exteriority will be discussed further in section 4.3.

From the binary pair of evocation/recollection, an inseparable link can be drawn between remembering and forgetting. According to Ricoeur (2004: 30), the active effort to recall makes possible to “remember forgetting”. Remembering, or searching for memory indeed works against forgetting, we are constantly working in order not to forget. Thus, the responsibility of memory is not to forget. However, it is not clear whether forgetting is just a barrier to the evocation and recalling of memories or an unavoidable wearing-away process in which time eradicates the initial affections. (Ibid.)

Forgetting, as the flipside of remembering, and the unreliability of memory are features in *In a Strange Room*. On numerous occasions the narrator states, explicitly or implicitly, these qualities of memory: forgetting and unreliability:

(24) What you don't remember never happened. (ISR, 16)

(25) Memory is patchy and intermittent again, why are certain vistas, certain stretches of a path, so deeply impressed in recollection, so vividly evoked, and others disappear without a trace... (ISR, 43)

These examples show the effect of forgetting on an individual's life. Something that is forgotten is completely erased from memory; the "evidence" of that instant is entirely lost and it cannot be said to even have happened. As Ricoeur (2004: 30) argued, memory renders possible to remember forgetting. In the second example here, the narrator admits that memory is incomplete. Forgetting is noticed by recognising something that is remembered. The gaps in the event that is remembered show that something has been forgotten.

The latter example also introduces a question of why certain memories stay in memory. Indeed, we do not remember all things. Memories always include reflection and interpretation to a certain degree. The analysis of memories configures their meaning to the individual; the memories are given priority. Our memories are not static either; they can be changed by analysis in the present. Therefore, there is no objective truth of events; only personal interpretations which are inherently connected to a historical context, societal discourses and interpretations by others. (Davies 2006: 56.)

In addition, the last lines of example 22 exemplify the central issues of memory and the self in the novel. It serves as a reminder that even though memory is a good tool for retrieving information of past selves and experiences, it is subject to failure as well. As Fentress and Wickham (1992: 23-24) state, memory is at its strongest in the present, and, hence, the embedding of memory in the present has its weakness as source of knowledge of the past. Memory links the past to the present by creating a consistency between the two. Therefore, "our experience of the present is embedded in past experience" (ibid.). As a result, memory is never absolute. Experiences of the past and in the present are constructed in the recollections in the present. However, our experiences are no stronger than the recollections they are built on. (ibid.)

In the novel, memory is a way of preserving time. The next example shows the non-concreteness of Damon's life and the vanishing nature of human life in general:

(26) A journey is a gesture inscribed in space, it vanishes even as it's made. You go from one place to another place, and on to somewhere else again, and already behind you there is no trace that you were ever there. The roads you went down yesterday are full of different people now, none of them knows who you are. In the room you slept in last night a stranger lies in the bed. Dust covers over your footprints, the marks of your fingers are wiped off the door, from the floor and table the bits and pieces of evidence that you might have dropped are swept up and thrown away and they never come back again. The very air closes behind you like water and soon your presence, which felt so weighty and permanent, has completely gone. Things happen once only and are never repeated, never return. Except in memory. (ISR, 123)

The example emphasizes that humans are just passers by in the life of the world. Even though all of are material beings and seemingly leave traces in the world behind us, the world seem to wipe them away. The only place our existence can continue is memory. The example describes well the whole atmosphere of the novel, how diminutive and even insignificant the narrator feels in comparison to the world. However, memory creates continuation and comfort; because our existence is so evanescent, the only this to ground it in the surrounding world is memory and the way memory anchor us in different places in time.

Certainly, memory and travelling are closely paralleled in the novel. Travelling, for Damon, is way to escape his mundane life. Travelling is an effort to escape time, whilst memory is a way to retrieve it.

(27) Only someone cold and hard of heart could fail to succumb to these temptations, the idea of travelling, of going away, is an attempt to escape time, mostly the attempt is futile, but not here, the little waves lap at the shores just as they always have done, the rhythms of daily life are dictated by the larger ones of nature, the sun or the moon for example, something has lasted here from the mythical place before history set itself in motion, ticking like a bomb. (ISR, 74-5)

In this excerpt, Damon is in Malawi, at a lake in Cape Maclear. Surrounded by entities that seem eternal – such as the sun, the moon, water – Damon feels that time stands still. He is attracted by the primitiveness of life in the lake which has not been affected by modern life. However, escaping time by travelling is mostly unsuccessful. Travelling is a means to seize time with oneself, a way to find a feeling free of all cares and duties:

(28) And maybe that's the true reason for this journey, by shedding all the ballast of familiar life they are each trying to recapture a sensation of weightlessness they remember but perhaps never lived, in memory more than anywhere else travelling is like free-fall, or flight. (ISR, 26)

Travelling in the above example is paralleled with carefree weightlessness. The example also accentuates the effect of memory on travelling. Interpretation of a past event, that is a memory, happens in the present. Memories grow sweeter in time, as the popular saying goes. In these cases the interpretation of a memory is something else that it

originally was; the weightlessness is something to be strived for, even though it may not have ever been attainable – except in memory.

Indeed, memories are interpretations of a moment in time by an individual. Memory (time) can distort memories as seen in the following example:

(29) When I look at these images now, years later, they call back a sense of idyll and innocence which perhaps was never true, not even then. Though I know from other visits how fine a place it is, and if the air is disturbed every now and then by the death-screams of a pig, well, there is slaughter in every paradise. (ISR, 132-3)

In this example we can detect a dichotomy which affects the truthfulness of memories: that between an image/imagination and memory. Memory and imagination are thought to be the opposites of each other. Imagination is characterised by fiction, unreality whereas memory is considered as temporal reality. Thus, confusing the imagining and remembering results in the distortion of truthfulness. However, as memory is an image-making process, and the total separation of the two is impossible. (Ricoeur 2004: 7.) Imagination and memory are bound because they belong to the same part of the soul. Consequently, the memory produced in the soul and body ought to be considered as a picture, an image. (ibid.: 16.)

Considering memories as images anchors them onto a specific time and place. The next section considers the implications of time and spatiality to memory. An image of a place is a memory of a place in a specific place in time. As discussed in the previous section, temporality and spatiality play a role in the formation of the self. Now what needs to be considered is the role memory plays in this equation.

4.3. Memory in time and place

Temporality is a key issue of memory. Ricoeur's (2004: 15-16) analysis of temporality leans on Aristotle's phrase "But memory is of the past". The mark of anteriority differentiates between the past and the present. By perceiving movement, we perceive time; however, time is perceived by distinguishing two instances, one as earlier, the second as later. What combines recollection and memory, thus, is temporality. Remembering and recollection are produced when time has lapsed. Recollection travels between the two points in time: between the initial impression and its return.

Memory can be considered as space and place in time. The spatiality of memory is, according to Ricoeur (2004: 148-149), limited by a system of places and dates; the lived space of perception and action as well as the lived time of memory, can be explained within this framework. The primary evocation of memory stems from bodily and environmental spatiality; that is, our bodily experience of space is linked with the surrounding environment, such as a memory of having lived somewhere. These kinds of memories are both intimate and shared. They are intimate because of the individual experience of the body, and they are shared because of the shared space of the surrounding environment.

The body, thus, anchors us in space and time. The fundamental activity of placing – or displacing – oneself results in place becoming something to be sought out. Never finding that place is the cause of uneasiness and emptiness. Because of this unfilled space, there is a question of place. This is why sometimes it is necessary to displace oneself, even with the risk of becoming a vagabond. However, the displacement of the body, or its continuance in one place, cannot be spoken of without some reference points outside the body. Between the lived space of the body and the public space resides a constructed space which is connected to narrated time. Constructed space is mostly composed of the sites of the interaction of life. Thus, in constructed space, the lived space is interwoven with calculable space in a similar way that narrated time combines cosmic time to perceived time. (Ricoeur 2004: 149-150.) The narrator of *In a Strange Room* has truly been displaced which has led to a life as a vagabond. Travelling has disconnected him from his surroundings so that there seems to be no place for him.

The relation between time, place and memory is thus focused on the lived experience of the body. The body determines the here and now, in relation to which the passing of time and moving in places and space can be detected. Further, the relationship between time and movement produces intervals, interconnectedness of events which aid recalling, evaluating and relating instants remembered with others. This movement distinguished the ‘before’ and ‘after’ in which the body is the present. (Ricoeur 2004: 154.)

In a Strange Room is filled with extremely vibrant evocations of place. The three stories that compose the novel are rooted in the places in which the narrator Damon travels. In the first story he is travelling in Greece and Lesotho, in the second story he is in

Zimbabwe and Malawi, and in the last one he is travelling in India. The vivid descriptions of the place onto which Damon's memories are anchored are strongly connected to emotions of them:

(30) Memories come back of other places he has waited in, departure halls of airports, bus-stations, lonely kerbsides in the heat, and in all of them there is an identical strain of melancholy summed up in a few transitory details. A paper bag blowing in the wind. The mark of a dirty shoe on a tile. The irregular sputter of a fluorescent bulb. From this particular place he will retain the vision of a cracked brick wall growing hotter and hotter in the sun. (ISR, 27)

The memories of places described here are awakened by the feeling of melancholy they evoke in the narrator. The experience of place in this particular example is concentrated on details which Damon the narrator recalls from these places. The details he remembers are quite disruptive; in comparison with the examples in the previous section, there is not a harmony with in these memories, but instead a sense of loneliness and desolation. A dirty shoe print, a flickering light and a cracking wall are all something that are not meant to be where they are; they represent an imperfection in the surroundings, a disruption in the scene.

What is notable here is how the narrator has imprinted these sights in his memory. Sight is one of the five senses we humans have and also one of the sources for memory. Sensory memories are essentially spatial (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 28). However, sensory memory and personal memory are inherently linked to each other, which stems from a continuity between the mind and the body, memory and perception. These continuities shape a platform of coherency which supports our sense of self. (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 30.) Thus, memories connect our mind to our body, and further, our body to the social world around us. (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 39.)

Certainly, these evocations of place can be said to echo the narrator's feelings and being. The desolation the narrator feels from the world is paralleled in the disruptive elements depicted in the example. As Fentress and Wickham (ibid.) argue, this continuity between mind and body shapes also our sense of selves. The images from places Damon has visited spur feelings the narrator has of his place in the world and, thus, also induce his sense of detachment and his identity as an outsider.

The narrator also states this in more direct words:

(31) [...] he sees the lights of a ferris wheel go round and round and round.

He doesn't know why, but this scene is like a mirror in which he sees himself. Not his face, or his past, but who he is. He feels a melancholy as soft and colourless as wind, and for the first

time since he started travelling he thinks he would like to stop. Stay in one place, never move again. (ISR, 118)

The scene he is in thus mirrors his present self (in that moment). The narrator has yet again been anxiously moving from one place to another, and the ferris wheel in the fun fair makes him see his life and his self for what they are: going around in circles. His body anchors him in the present, and thus he sees his present self, not his past one(s). The melancholy is with him again, but that as well, as the narrator says, is not a very strong feeling he experiences, but a mild one.

Indeed, these experiences of places are strongly connected, on the one hand, to the narrator's senses and, on the other hand, to his sense of self and place in the world. The connection of memory to the body is also discussed by Steineck (2006). He calls the body a medium of memory that transmits experiences, actions and emotions from the past into the present, both actively and passively. The body is a living symbol that conveys meaning passed through it. Meanings are produced in a spatio-temporal existence, and so the body serves to determine the present. (Steineck 2006: 49-50.) In the novel in question this is just the case. As seen in the above example, the body of the narrator indeed binds him to the present: the emotions are transmitted through the sense of sight of the body. The body serves as a mediator of the past and the present, thus creating a continuum in which memory also plays a part.

The temporality of the body is also discussed by Parker (2006; 38-9), who states that memories tattooed on the body in the past are narrated in the present to impact the future. In the same way, Kerby (2001; 132) argues that the body is thus both a site of narration and the site of ascription for the person telling a personal narrative. Through this "mediated reflexivity", a body with a history, meaning and soul is produced.

(32) It's strange how all this space, unconfined by artificial limits as it spills to the horizon, should throw you back so completely into yourself, but it does, I don't know when I was last so intensely concentrated into a single point, see me walking on that dust road with my face washed clean of all the usual emotions, the strains and strivings to link up with the world. (ISR 31)

In this example, there is a connection between the body and the surroundings but also between the past and the present. The space serves as a reference point for the narrator to examine his self. The narrator remembers this space and its reflection on his body, and creates meaning through this memory. The memory of the body in the space is imprinted in memory. The space and its connection to the body also enables some self-reflexion for the narrator; because of the deep connection of the two, he does not need

to consciously try to make connections to the worlds, as he has been trying to. Thus, the narrator's past self is rooted in this space in this specific time which is reflected in the present. His creates a sense of personal history which is given meaning in the present.

Thus, memory is medium that links the past, present and future on a continuum. This creates a consistency in our identity and a sense of self. As Parker (2006: 35-36) argues, memory is a bridge ranging across time; it enables the comparison of the self of the past to the one who exists now. Therefore, memory also acts as a guide to the future. In assessing our former selves and comparing them with the present one, we should be able to form a desirable future self. However, as humans we are aware of the fluidity of memory, its potential to fail us. If memory is what makes us and if memory can change, then our selves as well become unstable. (Parker 2006: 36.)

However, in *In a Strange Room*, there is no link between the past and the present self of the narrator. Moments in the present seem meaningless as the narrator is living in the past, as seen in example 17:

(17) But he hardly ever manages to lose himself, mostly he is stuck in one place in the past. The physical world feels substanceless, like a drab dream from which he will wake up into a dirty hospital ward. (ISR, 176)

The result of this is that the present self on the narrator is detached from the moment he lives in. Thus, the narrator is also unable to form a desirable self.

Memories cannot become personal without narrative reflection (Kerby 2001: 131). Remembering requires going back a chain of memories which all link together. If the chain breaks, remembering would become impossible. (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 6.) Thus, remembering can be said to be travelling back in time and in space; "a mental space in which to hold a series of invented mnemonic images" (Fentress & Wickham 1992; 11). This visuality of memory is the heart of spatiality as well, because we explore images in memory like works in a gallery by walking around them (ibid.; 12).

(22) I can't even remember now what they are, the remains of some big but obscure building, there was a fence that had to be climbed, there was a fear of dogs but no dogs appeared, he stumbles around among rocks and pillars and ledges, he tries to imagine how it was but history resists imagining. He sits on the edge of a raised stone floor and stares out unseeingly into the hills around him and now he is thinking of things that happened in the past. Looking back at him through time, I remember him remembering, and I am more present in the scene than he was. But memory has it's own distances, in part he is me entirely, in part he is a stranger I am watching. (ISR, 5)

Example 22 exhibits self-reflection which is based in temporality but also in space. Firstly, the narrator goes back into his memory in two distances here: the present self of the narrator is remembering his past self and, further, the past self as well is remembering his past. A temporal reflection is shown as he tries to relate his past and present selves and finding that in part he can find some common ground between the two selves but in other part they are completely different. Secondly, even though he states that memory has a feeble points because of time, despite the temporal distance his present self is more present in the past than his past self. The memory acts as a mental space in which to return and he quite literally walks around the ruins. The visuality of this space puts him more present in the past than his past self could at that present moment. Travelling to this time and space by remembering enables self-reflection for the narrator.

To sum up, memory can be considered as space and place in time. What anchor us onto time and space is the body, through which temporality and spatiality can be measured. Memory, in turn, connects our mind to our body. The mnemonic images thus are spaces in a time continuum, images to which meaning is created through the self-reflection. The body and experience ground us in the present thus imprinting a mnemonic image in the body. Memory is able to create a continuum between the past, present and future which is vital in creating a sense of a coherent self. However, for the narrator of *In a Strange Room*, the continuum that spans from the past to the future is impossible. Even though he can “revisit” places and spaces in the past rather clearly, his past selves seem like strangers to him. Experiences come to have meaning for him not in the present as he experiences them, but in the future as he reflects on them and shares them.

It is argued by Carr (2001; 8) that the temporal assembly of life events is evaluated by the meanings action gives them. The past and the present are described in our experience as what will be. The temporal direction of our active life is not the present but the future. As a result, stories “are told in being lived and lived in being told.” Thus, narrative can be said to be a natural continuation of reality. It is not just a way of describing events; on the contrary, narrative structure is an inherent part of real events. Actions in life can be considered as telling stories to ourselves, listening to these stories, and further, living them. Narrative is thus intertwined with action, not separate from it, not a retrospective afterthought articulated after the action itself. Narrative, from this point of view, is constitutive not only of action but for the self which experiences. The

narrator is “a subject of a life story told and retold in the process of being lived.” (Carr 2001; 13-17.)

The notion of action and its temporality is also the basis of Crites’ (2001) analysis. Time gives action a coherent form, which Crites (2001: 33) calls style. There is an inherent temporality in memory as well; without memory, experience would be incoherent. Through memory we are able to create a sense of succession and temporal coherence from our experiences. Crites (2001: 33-36) argues that memory has an order. Not the one formed by thought or imagination, but an order of succession. By this order the experiences in time have been preserved in memory. However, also Crites states that the recollection of this succession is not without gaps; on the contrary, it is in part quite fragmentary. Crites continues that the most obvious manner of recollection is storytelling. (Crites 2001: 33-36.)

4.4. Articulation of memory

There are three concepts closely related to memory: recognition, recall and articulation. Recognition means identifying someone or something from past experience, recall is bringing something back into mind. (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 26.) Ricoeur (2004: 15-16) further explains the division between memory and recollection. Recollection, for Ricoeur, is a conscious search whereas memory is affection. Both of these take place in ordinary language. There is a further distinction between a “simple evocation” and “an effort to recall” where a simple evocation is an involuntary action, effort to recall an active one. (ibid.: 19).

Ricoeur (2004: 38-39) makes a division between three different kinds of mnemonic activities that take physical forms: reminding, reminiscing and recognising. Reminding refers to the simple cues that inhibit forgetting; photographs, postcards, diaries. Reminiscing has a more active character; through reminiscence, we make the past live again as sharing it with others. In reminiscence, activity is reciprocal; all parties help each other to remember better. Expressions of reminiscence include autobiographies and memoirs, for example. Lastly, recognition is largely the same as in Fentress and Wickham’s (1992: 26) definition; the ability to identify the present memory as the same with the initial instant. These modes of mnemonic activities and thus, modes of

articulation are in the core of this section; all of these modes can occur both as internal and external expressions.

As a whole, *In a strange Room* is an account of articulation. Firstly, it is internal reflection as the narrator describes and evaluates his experiences and related them to his selves. As narrator Damon states after the death of his friend Jerome:

(33) Jerome, if I can't make you live in words, if you are only the dim evocation of a face under a fringe of hair, and the others too, Alice and Christian and Roderigo, if you are names without a nature, it's not because I don't remember, no, the opposite is true, you are remembered in me as an endless stirring and turning. But it's for this precisely that you must forgive me, because in every story of obsession there is only one character, only one plot. I am writing about myself alone, it's all I know, and for this reason I have always failed in every love, which is to say at the very heart of my life. (ISR, 106)

In this extract the narrator Damon reflects on the meaning these people have had in his life. Even though words fail him in making an accurate external expression of his memories, the way in which he describes the impact on himself "as endless stirring and turning" made by his travel companions tells how he scrutinises their meaning to his life. In addition, the narrator also evaluates his own life; because he is in the leading role in his own life, he has not been able to connect to other people. As a result, he feels he has failed in life in general.

Secondly, the words on the paper, printed as an actual book are an external expression of the narrator's memories.

(34) They write down each other's addresses. The only piece of paper he has is an old bank statement, he gives it to each of them in turn. *Now years later as I write this* it lies in front of me on my desk, folded and creased and grubby, carrying it's little cargo of names, its different sets of handwriting, some kind of impression of that instant pushed into the paper and fixed there. (ISR, 88; italics my own)

The bank statement is an articulation of the memory of the instant the names were written on it. However, the bank note is only 'an impression' of than situation, not the situation in itself. The bank note can only evoke part of that instant but not replicate it wholly. In addition, the sentence in italics reveals that the novel itself, the three stories, are in themselves an external expression of memory. The italics reveal a temporal continuum between the stories (now three years later) and, also, reveal that the present self of the narrator is the one writing the stories. The effect of this is that the novel itself, *In a Strange Room*, is the final result of the writing taking place in that particular time.

Nevertheless, the articulation of memory is never as accurate as the actual experience. Writing especially freezes memory in textual, indirect forms which are quite unlike the spontaneity of consciousness. Thus, the written word cannot mirror our thoughts or thought processes exactly, and, further, does not even try to do so. (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 9-10.) However, language itself is a natural tool for the expression of memories, because it organises what we know in categories which then are ready for articulation (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 28).

Nearly all of the novel is structured as a stream-of-consciousness narrative. Parts of it are structured much like written works often are – with a clear syntax and logic. However, other parts very much describe the thought processes of the narrator and mirror the kind of spontaneity that Fentress and Wickham claim writing often freezes. For example, there are no clear signs (dashes) where there are direct speech acts, nor are their speakers stated. The structure of clauses does not follow the traditional patterns of grammar; rather, they are organised almost as if straight from thoughts.

(35) But the truth is also that there is an answering impulse of subservience in him, part of him wants to give in, I see shadows thrown up in the grappling contortions on the roof of the cave.

I don't know what I meant.

You don't know what you meant.

I was looking forward to seeing you.

Nothing else.

Not that I can think of. (ISR, 33)

As can be seen from the example above, the shifting points of view in the middle of the sentence as well as the organisation of the speech acts portrayed in an almost natural way, as if the reader is reading the mind of the narrator and following the conversation in person. It is not structured in a way that written texts usually are, rather the text follows the mind of the narrator and his conversation with his peer. This is a memory by the narrator, expressed in a written format but it has not lost the spontaneity and thought processes of the narrator, as Fentress and Wickham claim written expression of memory to do.

In the light of the example 35 above, and in light of the discussion on recollection and evocation in the previous section, I suggest that the way in which the novel is written depends upon the analogy of recollection and evocation and, further, their relationship to the interpretation of memories. As we can remember, recollection implied the

conscious effort to claim an event from the past, whereas evocation is an involuntary action in which a memory springs up by itself through an external stimulus. The evocations of memories are, in the text, written in this stream-of-consciousness-like style. As in example 35, a visual cue takes the narrator back to that specific cave and situation. In contrast, the parts of the text that are written in a more organised manner are memories fetched through recollection, through the conscious effort to remember them. In addition, the organisation of the text also implies that a degree of interpretation of the memories has already taken place.

The expression of the self, and its difficulties were discussed in the previous section, but now we need to include memory into the discussion. Fentress and Wickham (1992: 9-10) argue that the written word does not correspond to thought processes, and thus cannot accurately articulate memories. However, they do recognise that language naturally organises our thoughts to be articulated. Parker (2006: 36) also argues for the incorrectness of the inscription of memories. In her view, external inscription of memories create inauthentic selves because the memories that make the self are outside knowledge. As a result, there is no bridge between the past self and the present one.

To sum up, memory in *In a Strange Room* has a number of functions: it enables travelling back in time and in space, preserving these events and experiences happened in the past and, further, creating connections to other people through articulation of these memories. On the one hand, the capacity of memory enables the travelling back in time and forming a sense on self. On the other hand, memory and its reliance on time having passed, also separates the selves. The spatiality of memory relies on the experience of the lived body which anchors it onto time and in space. Despite the weaknesses of memory, it is more of an enabler than a hindrance to the narrator.

I have now considered separately the factors that show the fragmentation of the narrator's self and further how the functions of memory affect the construction of the self. The combining factor between the two is the narrative. By considering the self of the narrator with its memories as a narrative of the self in time and in place, we may come to reasonable conclusion of the role memories actually play in the creating the self and the life story. The next section will provide a point of view that will stitch together the theorisation of the self and of memory. Further, in relation to *In a Strange Room*,

exploring narratives will provide a tool for understanding the novel as a whole and thus coming to a conclusion about the narrator's self.

5 MEMORIES AS NARRATIVES OF THE SELF

Having considered how the self can be constructed and the role of memory in it, it is appropriate now to consider the way memory and the construction of the self come together; that is, to take a closer look at storytelling. Storytelling is, yet again, a central feature in *In a Strange Room*; the narrator Damon is both in the forwarding and in the receiving end of narratives. The novel in itself is an account of Damon's life story which he is writing partly to himself, partly to a wider audience. In addition, within the novel, the turning point is when the narrator realises how stories/experiences that are shared can affect interpretations of one's own life.

Firstly, I will describe some general features narratives are thought to possess. Narratives are a universal feature of humanity and they convey social and cultural identities. It is important to situate *In a Strange Room* in a wider context of narratives so as to see how narratives work outside and inside of the novel. That is to say, to identify the narratives in the novel and examine their overall meaning and function as well as to recognise the narratives of a wider social and cultural context that might affect the interpretation of the novel under investigation in this study.

Secondly, I will examine in more detail how life stories are constructed as narratives. Memories are essentially narratives – narratives of the past, of our selves or our experiences. In this section my primary focus is to examine how life stories are also constructed as stories of the self – a process in which memory plays an important part. My aim is to detect how the stories in the novel come together to compile a life story of the narrator Damon.

5.1. Storytelling and narratives

Stories and storytelling are a central aspect of our lives since they are key elements in social interaction. Through telling stories we conceptualise the world around us as well as try to articulate what we are or are not to other people. (See e.g. Thornborrow and Coates 2005, Rimmon-Kenan 1983, Abbott 2008.) Stories themselves have multiple

functions from entertainment to explanations and social norms. Yet, above all, the stories we tell carry various characteristics of our social and cultural identities, and through storytelling we articulate these identities. (Thornborrow and Coates 2005: 7.)

It has been suggested that the narrative capacity is an innate human capability important for our survival (Thornborrow and Coates 2005: 2). Already as infants we learn to tell stories. Storytelling has a notable impact on the child's development of the self and as a member of his/her culture. First, children listen to stories told by their parents, and in time they become the storytellers of their own identity and membership of their culture. (Thornborrow and Coates 2005: 15.) It has been suggested that the capacity to tell stories starts at the age of 3 or 4 which is in contact with the child's first memories. Thus, the articulation of memories depends on our narrative capacity. (Abbott 2008: 3.) Without the ability to tell stories we could not make sense of ourselves and our experiences or the worlds around us, and would thus be excluded from social interaction.

There are two characteristics of narratives that are widely accepted; firstly, a narrative must contain a sequence of narrative clauses which are in accordance with the real time order described in those clauses. Secondly, a story must have a beginning, a middle and an end. However, the form of the narrative is also defined by the context it is told in. In addition, stories need to have a point, they need to be tellable. However, a central problematic lies in tellability; a tension lies between the stories tellability and the fact that, in the story, the teller should express her self and at the same time say something interesting. The central problematic, thus, is that the normal order of things needs to be disrupted. Despite this problematic, it is through the narration of our selves that we construct culture. (Thornborrow and Coates 2005; 7-13.)

In a Strange Room is a story, more accurately three stories that combine into one, whose aim is to tell the life story of the narrator. Storytelling is a theme in general in the novel; through telling and sharing stories about his life, the narrator expresses who he is.

(36) I haven't told the story yet. I've told some of it, just the basic facts. But the whole story, what actually happened, I've never told to anybody.

Yes, he says, and he can feel what's coming. It makes him sick to the heart, he wants to run, but he stays where he is.

I would like to tell the story just once, she says now. I want somebody to hear it, then I might be able to leave it and walk away. Do you know what I mean.

He nods, he knows exactly what she means. Whatever the story is, he knows it will be terrible and he dreads taking it on. But after what she's gone through on his behalf, how can he refuse. (ISR 175)

Thus, in addition to the narrator telling his story, there is another character in the novel whose story ultimately becomes part of the narrator's story. Here Caroline, a woman Damon meets in his final journey, is talking about what happened to her husband a year earlier – a story never explicitly told in the novel itself. The expression of a significant life event is, thus, experienced as somehow relieving. By telling that specific story, it vanishes, is washed away from memory. As the stories need to have tellability, the selection of this particular story conveys something about its narrator's identity. In the same way, also the three stories selected as part of the novel mediate something about Damon's self; these are the stories he sees as significant to the construction of his self, and the overall meaning of his life story.

In addition, the following example suggests that the reason people tell stories about their lives is that their stories need to be told in order for the people to relate to others and to create mutual understanding:

(37) A year or two later, out of the blue, he will send an e-mail to me in South Africa. In part it reads, how is your work going on. I hope you may sell lots of books. I'm fine and do good business. I always remember your good words, your words are a great knowledge to me. In future if you publish a book you should write about that girl, who wished to die. (ISR, 171)

Telling stories to other people creates a dimension of social space, a shared world. Story telling can, thus, be considered shared memory – or collective memory, as Ricoeur (2004) calls it.

Thus, there are two possible functions for life stories; the individual function as narratives serve as life stories of their tellers, and a larger societal function which weaves together stories of individual experience. The narrow scope of this thesis does not allow a more thorough examination of the societal function of narratives; however, it will later be revised rather narrowly. It is important, however, to first examine the narratives of individual because they are the basis of the societal function. In addition, as the novel is an account of individual narrative structured from memory traces, the individual function will be considered in detail next.

5.2. Life story as a narrative

Life stories can be said to act as narratives of the self. As has been stated, there is no integrated self – likewise, there is no integrated autobiographical narrative. A life story, or autobiography, can be understood best as a conversation of narrators; there is no one story, but a variety of possible stories which are “oriented in space as well as time”. In order to understand the autobiographical narratives of the self, these multiple stories should be read simultaneously in connection with each other. (Raggatt 2006: 16-18.) In the novel under examination, there are three narratives of the self which are divided into roles the narrator takes in his relationships. I hope to gather an overall picture of how memories work in constructing the narrators self in the novel and, further, how memories are made permanent or meaningful to his life. In addition, as stated above, there is a split between the ‘he’ and the ‘I’ in the stories; the former being the narrator in the particular time frame in the past, and the latter being the narrator in the present.

(38) At this remove, his thoughts are lost to me now, and yet I can explain him better than my present self, he is buried under my skin. His life is unweighted and centreless, so that he feels he could blow away at any time. (ISR, 67)

The example above shows the multiplicity of narratives in the novel. Two different points can be made from it. Firstly, the distance between the narrator’s past self and present self is manifested in the use of the pronouns ‘he’ and ‘I’; the narrator is speaking from the present tense and as if of someone else, not of himself. There is a concrete, temporal distance to his past self, but which feels closer to his than his present self, to which he seems to have a symbolic distance. There is a dichotomy between time and the self; even though the self is moulded over the course of time, time can also divide the self, like in example 22.

Pals (2006: 176-178) argues that, in general, autobiographies are expected to tell a story of personal growth. In narrating a life story an individual makes evaluations of past experiences on the basis of them having a causal impact on the present self. In the heart of the life story there are significant experiences which are highlighted as having an effect for the growth of the self. All this is based on the assumption that the life story must have coherence; if a life story is constructed as a random collection of events, then no meaningful sense of self can derive from it. Hence, life story is a self-making process in which the significant experiences of the past are related to the present self in order to produce coherence. Coherence as stated here is not the same as unified. (Ibid.)

However, life stories, as based on memories and experiences of the self, have some limitations regarding their truthfulness, the major one being the problem between fact and fiction. Identity is shaped by the stories we tell about ourselves. These narratives are built on our present choices and actions which are reflected upon the imagined future and also our past. Thus, personal identity emerges in and through narratives. The self is therefore created by connecting the present to both the past and the future. (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001: xvii-xviii.)

It can be further argued that life itself has a narrative structure, one that is rooted in temporality. In creating a life story, and thus an identity, a person develops experiences in time into a narrative. If narrativity can be seen as anchored in reality, then people must also experience themselves as temporal. (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001: xx.). Temporality is inherently connected to memory; Hinchman and Hinchman (ibid.) cite Crites by saying that “Without memory...experience would have no coherence at all.” Thus, the temporality of life stories is connected to memory which creates continuity in the life story.

Indeed, Hinchman and Hinchman (2001: xx) continue that “memory has always been the “home” of narrative”. That is, we construct our life narratives with the aid of memory. Effectively, narrative offers a way to represent and organise memory. The relationship between memory and narrative is, thus, reciprocal; in creating life narratives, especially, memory has an important role as the container of life experiences. Narrative, in turn, offers a medium through which to articulate these memories.

In relation to example 38, the central problematic is this: how can a self be created if we have no connection to those life experiences? The narrator of *In a Strange Room* does not have a connection to his self in the past nor is he present in the life experiences that he recollects. That limits also the reflection of personal growth: even though the narrator remembers these events and recognises them as his own, but they do not seem to have meaning to him. These experiences seem as detached units that float in the narrator’s memory until they are narrated in context and in relation to each other.

Life narrative also tells a self-narrative. Or, to be more precise, life narrative can be seen as a macro narrative constructed of a series of micronarratives, self-narratives. Self-

narratives are, according to Gergen and Gergen (2001), an individual's explanation of the relationship between events relevant to the self across a span of time. Gergen and Gergen see the individual as a constructive agent in a social context; self-narratives are generated through trying to find coherent links between life events. Instead of being just a series of unrelated events, the individual tries to regard life events as closely related to each other. Therefore, an individual's identity can be seen as a result of a life story. Creating coherence and order of this kind gives an individual a sense of meaning and direction.

Macro and micro narratives are in the opposite ends of a temporal continuum. Macronarratives span across a long stretch of time whereas micronarratives are events with a shorter duration. Macronarratives that include an array of micronarratives are called nested narratives. (Gergen and Gergen 2001: 171.) Thus, we can argue that life stories are also nested narratives, macronarratives spanning across an individual's entire life including micronarratives as shorter glimpses of relevant life events. A hierarchy exists between the two forms of narratives; macronarratives have superior importance because they are the foundation on which other narratives are built on (Gergen and Gergen 2001: 172).

In the case of *In a Strange Room*, it can be said that the three shorter stories – 'The Follower', 'The Lover', 'The Guardian' – are micronarratives which together compile a larger macronarrative; that of Damon's life story and story of his self. As Gergen and Gergen (2001: 172) state, micronarratives are relevant life events used to compile a macronarrative. Thus, the three macronarratives are in some way or another relevant to the overall macronarrative of Damon's life. To try to disassemble the overall macronarrative it is essential to find the meanings of the three micronarratives to the larger macronarrative.

The three narratives in the novel are named after the social position the narrator takes on his journeys and with the people in them. The stories also include the self-reflection of these positions from which a sense of the narrator's self can be drawn. The succession of these stories from one to the other is clear; the only combining theme in them is the constant movement the narrator is in and the sense of failure in his life.

Narrative's ability to create directionality is here of the essence. To create directionality the three stories of the novel need to be evaluated with each other and with the larger macronarrative.

(10) By imperceptible degrees, then, he accepts the notion that the journey is over, and that he's back where he started. The story of Jerome is one he's lived through before, it is the story of what never happened, the story of travelling a long way while standing still. (ISR, 111)

Directionality in *In a Strange Room* is, on the one hand, the circularity discussed earlier and exemplified in the above example. In general, a journey has already in its meaning a sense of direction; Oxford English Dictionary (n.d) defines the word 'journey', among other definitions, as 'continued course of travelling, having its beginning and end in place or time', as 'a passage through life' and as 'any course taken or direction followed'. In this excerpt, the fact that the narrator Damon has been (or is) on a journey implies directionality. Nevertheless, that directionality is circular as he finds himself back in square one. However, the following example also illustrates his constant movement, his journey towards something even Damon himself does not recognise:

(39) He spends most of his time on the move in acute anxiety, which makes everything heightened and vivid. As a result he is hardly ever happy in the place where he is, something in him is already moving forward to the next place, and yet he is also never going towards something but always away, away. This is a defect in his nature that travel has turned into a condition. (ISR, 15)

Here it is suggested that it is not towards something Damon is moving but, instead, away from something. It almost seems that he is always between two places, but never in either one.

Gergen and Gergen (2001: 165) argue that to create this directionality and, hence, coherence, the subject chooses events or images that have occurred across time and combines them by comparing and evaluating them. Creating an enduring, coherent sense of self is also the basis of successful performance in social life. In enduring social relationships, the sense that the other is 'what they seem to be' is of importance. This is achieved through stable narratives of the self. Nevertheless, the subject never accomplished a completely stable narrative of the self, only learns to communicate it to others. (ibid.; 173.)

In addition to stability, however, subjects have the need to articulate action towards change. Gergen and Gergen (2001: 174) argue that positive change is expressed most effectively through a progressive relationship between events in life. One's ability for

social relationships depends on the stability of the self over time, and simultaneously, yet a bit contrary, to show one's improvement. Achieving such goal requires negotiation about the meaning of life events in relation to each other. Yet, these progressive narratives entail a regressive narrative; for example, increasing maturity means decline in youthful enthusiasm. (Ibid.) However, if we are to read *In a Strange Room* in a cyclical manner, one story leading to another and, after the last one, continuing in the same path, that change is not obvious.

In *In a Strange Room*, the narrator Damon is not able to create a clear sense of direction. As discussed in the previous section, Damon the narrator is unable to construct a self coherent through time. His travels as well as his self always repeat the same pattern of failure, as detected in example 33:

(33) But it's for this precisely that you must forgive me, because in every story of obsession there is only one character, only one plot. I am writing about myself alone, it's all I know, and for this reason I have always failed in every love, which is to say at the very heart of my life. (ISR, 106)

As Gergen and Gergen argue, creating enduring relationships requires a stable narrative of the self. In this example it becomes clear that the narrator Damon has failed to do so because he has long concentrated on his self and, more precisely, on his detachment and rootlessness.

(40) If I was with somebody, he thinks, with somebody I loved, then I could love the place and even the grave too, I would be happy to be here. (ISR, 68)

The dire need of attachment to another person and to the world is obvious in the above example. A vicious circle is present here as well; without a coherent sense of self Damon cannot form meaningful relationships, and, further, without meaningful relationships he cannot connect to the world – which, again fuels fire on his detached self.

Narratives always demand an audience. Creating a narrative within a system of meaning (language) is always a social act because that meaning system is a shared one. Thus, events in a life narrative are not the actions of the subject alone but interaction with others. A narrative is always dependent on the roles that the subject gives to others within the narrative and the sustainability of these roles in relation to the subject. A defining feature of social life is the reciprocity in negotiating meaning. Thus, should one actor refuse a role ascribed to them or fail in sustaining it, the construction of the narrative is threatened. However, the subjects can also decide to communicate a shared

narrative instead of two separate ones. By doing this, they create a new narrative; that of their relationship. These narratives are concerned not with the growth of the individuals, but that of their relationship. (Gergen and Gergen 2001: 176-179.)

However, in *In a Strange Room*, Damon states that he is writing only to himself. To return to example 30, Damon states that he is writing only to himself, that the audience of Damon, the narrator, is himself. The negotiation of meaning must be created only in the mind of Damon. Jacobson (2011; 103-104) argues that the novel's far best narratological achievement is the movement between actual author and implied author, and Damon the narrator and Damon the protagonist. The voice in example is that of Damon the narrator. Damon the narrator admits that the people he has met in his journeys have made an impact on him and, in a way, live within him. However, the example also shows how these people function for Damon to create a life story of himself.

Indeed, storytelling and the importance of (shared) narratives are a key theme in *In a Strange Room*. In the last third of the novel, Damon receives a letter from a man he met in his journeys saying:

(37) I always remember your good words, your words are a great knowledge to me. In future if you publish a book you should write about that girl, who wished to die. (ISR 171)

I would be inclined to argue that he did. I have already established the relationship between the narrator and the protagonist; however, this excerpt sheds light to the relationship between implied author and actual author. In chapter 2.2., the temporal relation of the intertextual reference to the novel's epigraph was discussed. Damon the narrator, stated that he cannot remember the author of the poem. Nevertheless, the epigraph was assigned to the real person, Vojislav Jakić. Thus, Damon the narrator can be said to be partly Damon Galgut, the actual author and, as a consequence, the implied author.

The closing of *In a Strange Room* provides an insight to the importance of shared narratives. The next example, already analysed in the section concerning identity building, provides a glimpse to how shared narratives can have an impact to the receiver of the story.

(41) Caroline's story from the beach is with him again, memory and words inseparable from each other. [...] Lives leak into each other, the past lay claim to the present. (ISR 180)

In addition to the narrative providing a tool for Damon for self-creation, the example shows how the experiences of others, when shared, can become one with another's experiences. Paralleling 'memory' with 'words' implies that time ceases in the moment of storytelling and present and past cannot be separated; both Caroline and Damon seem to be reliving the moment that happened 30 years ago. Caroline's story of her husband's death seems to connect Damon to his surrounding; "he takes it all in", whereas earlier he has stated of being disconnected from the world.

Here it is useful in returning to Clingman's ideas about boundaries. There are no barrier between Damon and the world:

(42) He has always had a dread of crossing borders, he doesn't like to leave what's known and safe for the blank space beyond which anything can happen. Everything at times of transition takes on a symbolic weight and power. But this too is why he travels. The world you're moving through flows into another one inside, nothing stays divided anymore, this stands for that, weather for mood, landscape for feeling, for every object there's a corresponding inner gesture, everything turns into metaphor. The border is a line on a map, but also drawn inside himself somewhere. (ISR, 85-6)

Here the narrator states that borders make him uneasy. Yet, this fear of the unknown is what makes him travel. The borders on a map also are borders within himself; borders within his self, between him and the world, between him and other people, between actual experience and language to describe it. However, the ending suggests that these borders dissolve with the story of Caroline. The story opens a pathway to the space of navigation which Clingman (2009) discusses. Firstly, Damon is able to relate to Caroline and her story and finally make a connection to another person. He also realises the effect Anna had on him and his failure in saving her. Secondly, he realises something of himself; he starts reminiscing his past journeys and the people he has met during those journeys, turning them into a novel. Thus, also the borders between the world and words have dissolved. He is able to articulate a reasonable life story in which he reflects upon the navigation between his different selves. All the experiences and memories from the past are now transported into the present, thus creating a space of interpretation in which the past effects the present and, further, the future.

This is a step in the direction of a shared memory. Thus far in the novel the narrator has only reflected on and evaluated the meaning of his own memories to his life. However, sharing the ordeal of Anna with Caroline and, further, sharing the story of Caroline has lowered his guard. He is not trapped within his failures anymore, there is no boundary

that would separate him from Caroline. As Ricoeur (2004: 131-132) argues, there is a happy medium between collective memory and individual memory. The distinguishing factor is proximity; the relation between self and others is characterised by the people we keep closest to us. Proximity is a dynamic relationship where distance between people is in motion. These close relationships are in the middle-ground of self and they, and are also the basis of the experience of contemporaneity. The people closest to us are to ones who approve of us as active agents, and vice versa. Therefore, memory must be attributed to oneself, to one's close relations and to others. (Ibid.)

Ricoeur (2004: 93-97) argues, their relationship is actually reciprocal and interconnected. Certain features of memory speak on behalf of its individuality; for example, memory is primarily an individual experience of one's past and, thus, it creates continuity of the person. On one hand, memories are divided into subcategories according to meaning. On the other hand, memory has the capacity to travel across time, further enabling the movement of continuity. It is through narrative that memories in singular and in the plural are articulated. The continuity also reinforces the inwardness of memory in a sense that it contains an inversed movement from expectation to memory. The individual character of memory, and its characteristics describes above are solidified in ordinary language and common experience.

However, the social character of memory, so called collective memory, cannot be overlooked. The basis for this is that we need others to remember. It is in belonging to a group and receiving instruction from other that individual memory occurs. The intersection between individual memory and collective memory happens in the process of recollection; there our and other's memories cross paths. In recollecting, we receive information about the past from someone else and so "in reality, we are never alone". In recollection, we travel within our social network, from group to group, both spatially and temporally. (Ricoeur 2004: 120-121.)

This view is shared by Davies (2006: 56), with the exception that this linkage between past, present and future always takes place in a social context and different power structures. Memory enables the usage of information from the past to deal with the present and to confront the future. No social change would take place without individual and collective memories. Indeed, as Hinchman and Hinchman (2001: xx) also argue, social and collective memory is constructed through the memories of individuals.

As also Misztal (2003: 6) argues, even though memories can be thought of as processes of an individual, memories always exist and are shaped by what has been shared and, further, that memories are that of a past time lived with other people. Thus, remembering is a social experience – a complex set of ideas, knowledge, practices, rituals and monuments that are used to express attitudes towards the past and which construct relations to the past. (Ibid.) Misztal (2003: 11) continues that memory is inherently social because memory exists only when shared; in language, symbols, events and contexts. Memory is social because it is based on language and on internal or external communication (Misztal 2003: 11). Therefore, memory and memories can be thought of as social space.

I choose to see the concept of social space along the lines drawn by Morgan (2009), who sees it as the social relations between people. He defines concept of social space through the ways people relate and link to others around them and through the significance of the linkages to people and to the wider social orders. Morgan states three categories with which social relations can be defined: intimates, acquaintances and strangers. Intimates are the relationships an individual holds as important, in other words family, lovers, friends and so on. Vice versa, strangers are people we do not know or recognise. Acquaintances are somewhere in between intimates and strangers. These three categories are only rough sketches; they somewhat overlap and one relationship can in time evolve into another (for example, acquaintance to intimate or stranger). (Morgan 2009: 1-15)

The unity of the self also stems from this collective thought. The individual's consciousness has the power to move between different reference groups. However, this power of mobility and ability to situate oneself to a group also poses the central problem in the unity of the self; this makes us believe that we are in control of our beliefs, which is an illusion created by social pressure. (Ricoeur 2004: 123.) Thus, the social reality makes possible the mark of the other in memories but it also renders possible an assertion of control in the actions of oneself. The memory's entry into the social is the source of personal insecurity. Yet, the experience of individuality originates in the experience of others. We act with and on the others around us and are guided by their actions. (ibid.: 128-130.)

Close relations are missing in the narrator's life until the end of the novel.

(10) By imperceptible degrees, then, he accepts the notion that the journey is over, and that he's back where he started. The story of Jerome is one he's lived through before, it is the story of what never happened, the story of travelling a long way while standing still. (ISR, 111)

This passage shows that the narrator is going around in circles in his relationships. The narrator's failure to connect with Jerome is not a unique experience; he has repeated this same pattern over and over again. The narrator recognises the others in his life and memories – nevertheless, he is not able to situate himself in a group with them which would create a sense of shared experience. As Ricoeur (2004: 123) suggests, mobility in movement between reference groups is the central problem in the creating a self; in this case, the problem of situating himself in the group of personal relationships and acting with that group creates a self that is not unified.

Thus, the narrator's memories do not enter the realm of social space – until they are narrated. These individual accounts of memory stay inside the narrator as a symbolic space, in other words the liminal space the narrator inhabits, where the self of the narrator lingers. However, after being articulated, memories enter the realm of social space. As social space can be considered as the formation of relationships between people, the social act of articulating memories is an act to create them. What is notable here is that the people the narrator meets - all but one - evolve from strangers to acquaintances, but never go beyond that dimension. It is only through the articulation of memories – of his own and sharing those of others – that he finds his place in the social space.

As Misztal (2003: 5-6) argues, individual remembering happens in a social context. Social cues evoke remembering, it is used for social purposes and, further, memory is under the rule and order of social norms. This makes remembering ultimately social, without directly implying shared remembering. Individual memories are embedded in social contexts; memory is thus more than a personal act, even though it is the individual who does it. In order to examine the social factor of remembering, a review of commemoration practises and sites of memories is needed. As also Ricoeur (2004: 149) argues, the commemoration of collective memory is linked to place of tradition – in other words, sites of memory.

Sites of memory are created spaces of memory. There are four different categories for sites of remembrance: symbolic, functional, monumental and topographic sites. Symbolic sites are commemorations, pilgrimages and anniversaries; functional sites are autobiographies and associations; monumental sites include grave yards and buildings, and finally, topographic sites are for example museums and libraries. These places tell about our own past and history and, thus, help in filling the gaps of collective memory. Nevertheless, these do not help in creating sameness with those remembered but just the opposite; they should be remembered in order not to be like them. (Miztal 2003: 105.)

The revelation of the narrator and, all in all, the finale of the novel takes place in a grave yard in Morocco. As Miztal (2003: 105) notes, grave yards are monumental sites of memory. This created space of memory affects the narrator deeply:

(43) A huge emotion is welling up in him, unattached to the scene, he doesn't know either of these people, after all, and they died a long time ago. But it seems unbearably sad that lie should come to rest here, on a sun-blasted hill above a foreign city, with the sea in the distance. (ISR, 180)

It is not the place itself that evokes these kinds of emotions in the narrator, but the destiny of the people who lie there. This all links to the narrator's friend Anna, and the story of the people who lie on the grave yard – Caroline's husband and her friend. However, it is the site of remembering that evokes a sense of shared experience. The graves of these people, whose story he has heard and has sunk deep in him, evoke the memory of Anna's story and, further, the narrator failure in it. Thus, the grave yard, a memorial site for the people who have passed away helped the narrator to situate his story to a larger narrative.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to answer the following questions:

- How do memories help Damon, the narrator, to construct his self in *In a Strange Room* by Damon Galgut?
- How do memories become concrete through telling narratives in the novel?

The triad in the heart of this thesis, thus, consists of the concepts of the self, memory and memories and narratives. Indeed, there is a connection between the three that helped understand the formation of the narrator's self in the novel in question. The

results showed that memories have a deep impact on the narrator's sense of self. Memory is a way to connect past selves to the present one and, further, to the ones in the future. Continuity in time and space is key in creating a sense of self that ranges across them too. Thus, memory provides a tool for the preservation of significant life events that are seen as important for the construction of the self. Nonetheless, the mere existence of memories by themselves is not sufficient in understanding how they affect the self. Memories become real only when shared; for this reason, the articulation of memory and narratives in general were included in the analysis. In the case of the narrator, only the articulated and shared memories become part of his life story.

The analysis showed that the self of the narrator is fragmented. Most recent theories of identity and the self consider that they are ultimately anything but unified; they are always in process, in a state of movement. The self is a reflection of the social positions we take in our relationships. These reflections later become part of our life stories. In the novel in question, the different parts of the self can be detected on two separate levels: the structure of the novel and the level of narration. The division of the novel into three parts named according to the narrator's identity positions is one part of his fragmented identity; the other is the clear detachment from his present self in the level of narration, which can be seen in the change between the first and third person pronouns. In these three selves the common factor is the failure to sustain the position taken by or given to the narrator.

As the narrator was seen in a modern framework and in a society that is in a state of transition, it can be said that the narrator's quest for a self reflects the currents of the society he resides in. The constant state of movement I called *global flânerie* describes well the state of the narrator's mental life; he is emotionally as detached from the world as flâneurs are from their surrounding society and crowd. The narrator's internal inability to make meaningful connections drives him to seek meaning outside his domestic sphere. However, the constantly changing location never fulfils his desire to be complete – it only makes him more incomplete. Whenever he moves back into the realm of the private, in other words tries to connect with people, he fails. The narrator states that this is due to his travelling; it has made him an outsider.

Furthermore, there are a few points to be made in the level of narration. Language plays a significant role in the detachment of the narrator. He has difficulties in expressing his

himself and his emotions which inhibits him from connecting to other people. Language shapes both the self and reality; the narrator thus is restricted in shaping a self in the reality that surrounds him. Further, as the self is shaped in language, the narrator's inadequacy to express himself also affects his construction of self. Nevertheless, language is a double-edged sword for the narrator; in person, it prevents him from creating meaningful relationships with people, but in writing it provides him with a tool for expressing himself. Language is thus both a tool for self-reflection but it also separates him from other people and the surrounding reality.

In addition, there are two different discourses in play in the novel. The 'I' who speaks and the 'he' who is spoken of are divided by a temporal division; the 'I' in the narrator's present self whereas the 'he' is his past self or selves. In addition to these two, there is another part of him alongside his past selves, a part that is watching over him. The analysis of these discourses provided a deeper understanding than the mere analysis of language by itself. The past, and other external forces, actually restrict him from creating a self. There is no bridge from the past to the present, or to the future. Read together, these discourses provide a window into the analysis of how memories affect the narrator's sense of self. Memory enables the ranging of the self across time.

The examples provided from the novel showed that the novel is an exploration of memory in and of itself. The experiences and stories told by the narrator well depict the dynamics of memory and memories. Memory is the only tool which enables us to enter the past. Memories, thus, are reappearances, or perceived events, of the original events we experience. This, in turn, implies that memories entail a degree of reflection. Therefore, memories are not objective truths. Rather, they are personal interpretations that reflect a historical context, societal discourses and interpretations of others. We remember events, places and people which we think are of importance to us or to our life stories.

The unreliability of memory is exemplified in forgetting. Indeed, we do not remember everything. Remembering makes possible to remember forgetting as well and the active effort to remember is to not forget. Memory is strongest in the present and thus has its weakness as the window to the past. The instances not remembered can be said not to have ever happened. These do not play a meaningful part in the creation of a life story.

The role of memory in *In a Strange Room* is that it enables the narrator to travel back in time and space, to preserve time and life experiences and, further, to connect to other people by articulating memories. The narrator has realized the vanishing nature of life and of his travels, and he admits that memory is the only way to continue existence. Memory thus brings continuation and comfort and ways to create consistency throughout life experiences which are anchored in specific times and places. In the novel, the physical space is constantly changing as the narrator travels the globe. Travelling, for him, is a way to capture a feeling of freedom he may have once experienced. However, the narrator realizes that memory has played its tricks on this image: travelling is not the source of freedom, it has become a compulsion.

Temporality and spatiality of memory can be explained through the experience of the body. The body serves as a reference point for life experiences; it grounds them in specific times and places. The body determines the relationship between time, place and memory. The body determines the present in relation to which the passing of time and moving in space and place can be detected. Furthermore, memories connect our mind to our body and thus emphasises connection between memory and body. In *In a Strange Room*, the places the narrator describes often mirror his sense of self. In addition, also the displacement of his body fuels his detached self. These memories, thus, reflect not only his self but his place(lessness) in the world.

In a Strange Room features different levels of articulation of memories. The novel as a whole functions as the articulation of the narrator's memories, and also of his life story thus far. From the examples provided, it can be seen that the narrator is writing his life story in the present, trying to make sense of the experiences in his memory. The audience of his story is primarily himself, but it can be argued that he also has a wider audience; the readers of the novel.

The novel thus exemplifies that memory is not only individual but also social; it connects us to ourselves and to others around us. The individual side of memory is the reflection of memories and the meanings attributed to the memories through that reflection. Memory and memories are tools through which we can create consistence in our life and a sense of self that ranges from the past to the future. However, what makes memory social is talking about it, sharing memories with others. The articulation of our

memories, and life stories, connects them to a wider network of others' life stories and thus to the surrounding social reality.

The intertwining relation of memories and the self can be best explained through narration. Narratives are a central characteristic of humanity; they convey social and cultural identities and connect our lives to that of others. We can conceptualize the world around us and articulate what and who we are by telling stories. Without storytelling we are excluded from social interaction because the articulation of memories depends on narrative capacity.

Temporality is a key issue in the creation of one's life story. The experience of temporality is connected to memory and memory, in turn, creates continuity of the life story. In fact, narrative and memory have a reciprocal relationship in creating the life story; memory has an important role as a container of life experiences which create the life story and narrative offers a medium to articulate memories. As a product of language, the self is in particular created in self-narrative. Self-narratives take place only when needed. However, these life narratives have little coherency and consistency. Instead, they are interpretations of life and its significant events. The novel is a collection of life events of the narrator in specific times and places and they help him in situating himself in surrounding social reality. Indeed, the narrator's self is not complete until he can situate his life story to a wider network of stories and destinies.

Memories are essentially narratives – narratives of the past, of our selves and of our experiences. A life story as a wide narrative is created through the smaller narratives of life experiences. In its core, *In a Strange Room* is a narrative of the narrator's life and the evolution of his self. The three stories told separately as parts of his self come together in the end of the novel to create a sense of the narrator's self. These selves are oriented in time and space: they occupy different places and times which the narrator tries to somehow tie together in order to form a life story. The different selves in the novel have both temporal and symbolical distances between them; temporal distance between the present and the past self and, further, a symbolical distance in his detached past self.

This division of selves can be seen as micronarratives of the narrator's life story. These self-narratives are explanations of the relationships between relevant life events across a

time span. A macronarrative, or a life story, is constructed by linking together micronarratives. In the case of this novel, the three different parts of the self first seem to be detached from each other, and further the narrator can be said to be detached from them. But, read together as stories that complement each other, a larger macronarrative of the narrator's life begins to form.

In addition, it is suggested in the novel that life stories need to be told in order to create understanding and form connections with others. Creating enduring relationships requires a stable narrative of the self. Without one, the narrator is unable to share his life with others. Sharing stories creates a dimension of social space in which meaning is created mutually. The finale of the novel emphasises the shared aspect of storytelling: sharing experiences is creating meaning that affect both the teller and recipient of the story. This dissolves all the boundaries the narrator has had between him and the world, between him and other people and also between his selves. The dissolving boundaries open up a space in which negotiation in which the past and the experiences there can be transported into the present.

Movement actually became the most prominent theme of the novel: the movement of the narrator's self in time and in space, symbolically and concretely. This symbolic movement was also addressed in Clingman's (2009) analysis of transitional identity where identity navigates in spaces between boundaries. In *In a Strange Room*, the narrator's self lingers somewhere in between his many selves. This navigation enables the narrator to comprehend the meaning of each self in his overall life story. Thus, the self if the narrator is seen as a kind of negotiation of the many selves. Additionally, the narrator goes through a negotiation about his place in the world. His place is not his home country and this rootlessness drives him to travel. Nevertheless, he cannot be considered as a global citizen either because he cannot connect to any place. Hence, in the novel, there is concrete movement between places and symbolic movement between the many facets of the narrator's identity and movement of his self in social space.

Shared storytelling brings the narrator into the realm of social space. Being able to situate himself in a reference group and his life story to a wider network of life stories, the narrator is able to find meaning in his own story. In the very end of the novel, as the narrator visits a grave yard, a site of remembering, he has a sense of a shared experience and he feels that he is part of some larger narrative and his past makes sense. He takes

with him a stone from the grave yard which could be read symbolically as taking part of the place with him. As memories and thus selves are essentially grounded in specific places in specific times, the end of the novel provides also a glimpse of the future.

The directionality of the story is circular. The direction of the narrator is not very clear to himself: he seems to be going around in circles and repeating his failures in connecting to others. In addition, instead of moving towards something, he is moving away. The whole of the novel emphasises a sense of in-betweenness. The narrator is thus in an in-between state both physically and mentally: his body is grounded nowhere and his self as well lingers in a liminal state. There are many implications as to way the novel should be read cyclically. In addition to repetitive features in the novel, the cyclicity is implied by the narrator himself in stating that one grief follows the other, one failure is the beginning of the next one – that is, another story begins where the previous ends. The ending of the novel implies a journey that continues, but also redemption of a kind, an emptiness that echoes the coming to terms with the past.

To answer the questions posed for this thesis in a nutshell: memory not just given, it becomes a meaningful one through reflection and articulation. Memory and memories provide the reflection of selves and bridging them across time and space. The articulation of these memories and selves enables sharing them in consequence of which memories and life stories become a part of a larger narrative as they form connections to other people's stories. Being a part of a larger narrative, thus, also help to create a bridge from the past to the present and also to the future. The past and the experiences are emptied so that the journey may continue towards the future.

South African literature has long dealt the identity of its country's citizens. Galgut's work continues a tradition of autobiographical writing which has addressed the central issues in creating and preserving an identity in a society in transition. The relationship between the (apartheid) past and the present has been an important point of view in this discussion. The most acute focus is shifting away from the discourse of liberation to discourses of symbolic construction. And a symbolic construction *In a Strange Room* truly is. It is a symbolic construction of an individual in a society in transition where the past and the present are linked in order to impact the future. The narrator's self lingers in a symbolical space until his life events are embedded in a surrounding social reality.

With this study I have filled a gap in current research. The novel and the formation of the narrator's self has been studied before. Yet, by taking memory and memories in the heart of this thesis, I hope to have brought a new perspective on the multiple aspects that are in play in the narrator's formation of self. And, indeed, it did complement the previous studies by extending the view and understanding of the narrator's self. As revealed, memory's capacity to bridge selves across time and create meaning between them gives a wholly new dimension to the understanding of the novel.

This study is by no means an exhaustive analysis of these new aspects. Memory and the self are vast concepts, on which much more could be said about how they affect and work to the formation of self. In this study, I have merely scratched the surface of the memory and the self. In addition, in reading and rereading the novel, more and more issues to analyse emerge. The novel itself is such a complex web of issues that such a strictly limited focus only scratches the surface.

In addition, the societal factors of the self and memory were almost entirely beyond the scope of this thesis. The societal factors were discussed to an extent as they may function in the background of memory and restrict self-narratives, but they were not discussed in any detail. The focus of future research on the novel could, thus, dive more deeply into the relationship between the society and the individual and how they affect each other.

Taking into consideration the autobiographical side of this novel, researching the societal factors in play in the novel would also shed more light to Galgut's position in the field of South African literature and to the direction it is going. Galgut is the forefront of contemporary South African literature and the progression of his writing will most definitely reflect its wider currents.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbott, H. P. (2008). *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge University Press.

Attwell, D. (2004). South African literature in English. In F.A. Irele and S. Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge history of African and Caribbean literature*, Volume 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 504-529.

Boehmer, E., Gunner, L. and Maake, N. (1995). New Representations out of Neglected Spaces: Changing Paradigms in South African Writing. *Journal of South African Writing* 21 (4).

British Council website for literature: profile of Damon Galgut. <http://literature.britishcouncil.org/damon-galgut>. (25 October, 2011)

Brown, D. (1989). *The modernist self in twentieth-century English literature: a study in self-fragmentation*. London: Macmillan Press.

Carr, D. (2001). Narrative and the real world: An argument for continuity. In L. P. Hinchman and S. K. Hinchman (eds.), *Memory, identity, community*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 7-25.

Clingman, S. (2009). *The Grammar of Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crites, S. (2001). The narrative quality of experience. In L. P. Hinchman and S. K. Hinchman (eds.), *Memory, identity, community*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 26-50.

Crous, M. (2010). White Masculine Desire and Despair in *The Good Doctor* by Damon Galgut. *Literator: Journal of Literary Criticism, comparative linguistics and literary studies* 31 (2), p. 1+.

Davies, K. (2006). Body Memories and Doing Gender: Remembering the Past and Interpreting the Present in Order to Change the Future. In M. Crawford, J. A. Parker and P. Harris (eds.), *Time and memory*. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, p. 55-69.

Eaglestone, R., Boehmer, E. and Iddiols, K. (2009). Introduction. In R. Eaglestone and E. Boehmer (eds.), *J. M. Coetzee in context and theory*. London: Continuum International Publishing, p. 1-7.

Fentress J. and Wickham, C. (1992). *Social memory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Galgut, D. (2010a). *In A Strange Room*. London: Atlantic Books.

Galgut, D. (2010b). "Power, Love and Guardianship. *The Man Booker Prizes: Author Interviews*. <http://www.themanbookerprize.com/perspective/articles/1435>. (15 May 2012)

Gergen, K. J. and Gergen, M. M. (2001). Narratives of the self. In L. P. Hinchman and S. K. Hinchman (eds.), *Memory, identity, community*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 161-184.

Hall, D. E. (2004). *Subjectivity*. New York & London: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1999). *Identiteetti*. Edited and translated by Lehtonen M. and J. Herkman. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Hawley, J. C. (1996). South African Writing in English. In R. Mohanram and G. Rajan (eds.), *English Postcoloniality: Literatures from Around the World*. Westport, USA: Greenwood Press, p. 53-62.

Hemenway, R. (1970). Enigmas of Being in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. In *Modern Fiction Studies* 16, p. 133-146. Abstract online MLA International Bibliography. <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=6&hid=12&sid=fc13bbd1-a1fb-4c25-831f-7322a16cb174%40sessionmgr10&bdata=JmxvZ2luLmFzcCZzaXRIPWVob3N0LWxpdmU%3d#db=mzh&AN=1970107590>. (5 May 2012)

Hetherington, K. (1997). *Badlands of modernity: Heterotopia and social ordering*. London: Routledge.

Hinchman L. P. and Hinchman, S. K. (2001). Introduction. In L. P. Hinchman and S. K. Hinchman (eds.), *Memory, identity, community*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. xiii-xxxii.

Jacobson, J. U. (2011). Syntax of the Self in Damon Galgut's *In a Strange Room*. *English in Africa* 38 (3), p. 91-112.

Kindt T. and Müller, H.-H. (2006). *Narratologia: The Implied Author: Concept and Controversy*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Kerby, A. P. (2001). The language of the self. In L. P. Hinchman and S. K. Hinchman (eds.), *Memory, identity, community*. Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 125-142.

Klages, M. (2006). *Literary theory: a guide for the perplexed*. London: Continuum.

Kostelac, S. (2010). 'Imposter, Lover, Guardian': Damon Galgut and authorship in post-transition South Africa. *English Studies in Africa* 53 (1), p. 53-61.

Meskill, L. and Weiss, L. (2006). Coetzee on South Africa's Past: Remembering in the Time of Forgetting. *American Anthropologist* 108 (1), p. 88-99.

Miller, A. (2006). Ambiguous Territory: Damon Galgut interviewed. *The Journal Of Commonwealth Literature*, 41 (2006), p. 139-145.

Misztal, B. A. (2003). *Theories of Social Remembering*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Morgan, D. H. J. (2009). *Passing acquaintances: the space between intimates and strangers*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Nanton, I. (2008). Taut African tale; Damon Galgut shares some qualities with Ian McEwan. *The Vancouver Sun*, Aug 9, p. C11.

Oxford English Dictionary online. Entry for 'journey',
<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/view/Entry/101747?rskey=ipXZ6E&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>, (14 February, 2013).

Oswell, D. (2006). *Culture and Society: an introduction to cultural studies*. London: Sage.

Pals J. L. (2006). Constructing the "springboard effect": Causal connections, self-making and growth within the life story. In D. P. McAdams, R. Josselson and A. Lieblich (eds.), *Identity and Story: creating self in narrative*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, p. 175-199.

Parkhurst Ferguson, P. (1994). The *flanêur* on and off the streets of Paris. In K. Tester (ed.), *The Flanêur*. London & New York: Routledge, p. 22-42.

Parker, J. A. (2006). Inscribing and Forgetting. In M. Crawford, J. A. Parker and P. Harris (eds.), *Time and memory*. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, p. 35-40.

Raggatt P. (2006). Multiplicity and conflict in the dialogical self: a life-narrative approach. In D. P. McAdams, R. Josselson and A. Lieblich (eds.), *Identity and Story: creating self in narrative*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, p. 15-37.

Ricoeur, P. (2004). *Memory, history, forgetting* [Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli]. Translated by K. Blamey and D. Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rimmon-Kenan S. (1983). *Narrative fiction: contemporary poetics*. London: Routledge.

Roberts, A. (2003). 'People are scared to criticise the new South Africa'; Rave reviews and a place on the Booker shortlist have astonished novelist Damon Galgut - but what matters most to him is telling the truth about the moral chaos in his homeland. In *Evening Standard*, Sep 29, p. 41.

Steineck, C. (2006). The Body as a Medium of Memory. In M. Crawford, J. A. Parker and P. Harris (eds.), *Time and memory*. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, p. 41-50.

Thornborrow J. and Coates, J. (2005). *The sociolinguistics of narrative*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Tester, K (1994). Introduction. In K. Tester (ed.), *The Flanêur*. London & New York: Routledge, p. 1-21.

White, L. and Couzens, T. (eds.) 1984. *Literature and society in South Africa*. Harlow: Longman.