

The Abused Orphan: Memory as Legitimate and National Heritage

On the 20th May 2009 *The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* published a report which became known as *The Ryan Report*. This was the result of an inquiry conducted into investigating the historical institutional abuse of children and young people being raised by catholic organisations in the Republic of Ireland. Findings of the report identified the widespread extent to which neglect, physical and emotional abuse, as well as peer abuse and sexual abuse occurred in these out-of-home institutions. Whilst being ‘known as one of the world’s most extensive restoration processes for historical institutional child abuse’ (Sköld 2016, p. 495), *The Ryan Report* was not the first of its kind, nor will it be the last. Inquiries into the prolific institutional abuse of children have proliferated, across the globe, since the 1990s. In 2016, Katie Wright, Shurlee Swain and Johanna Sköld launched an ongoing project entitled ‘The age of the inquiry: a global mapping of institutional abuse inquiries’. The authors note that there has been an increase in the number of historical abuse inquiries taking place around the world, but little is known about where exactly these inquiries have taken place. The project aims to map and create an online resource containing all the inquiries which have taken place internationally. At the time of writing this book the resource consisted of 175 entries with references to 141 published resources, demonstrating how prolific such inquiries are.

Sköld (2016, p. 493) has suggested elsewhere that the ‘reports from these inquiries form new kinds of history narratives about childhood

in general and out-of-home care in particular'. I agree, but add that narratives constructed in these reports became and remain a dominant narrative about the experiences and identity of those who grew up in children's homes. For example at the time I was carrying out my research on the memories of care leavers during 2008–2012, *The Ryan Report* had just been published and this led to significant media interest and speculation surrounding this topic. This narrative remains prevalent in all of our memories and I knew this was going to impinge upon how people responded to and received my research and it did. For instance, peoples' initial reaction to my telling of what I was researching was usually something along the lines of "oh that must be really awful" or "I bet you have heard some terrible stories". These inquiries, reports and media stories about historical experiences of care have clear agendas behind them, to expose the horrors that occurred in institutions. This book has no such agenda, I do not set out to prove or disprove any of these claims; in this book I merely search for the child who started life in the House and the adult who made her way through being and becoming in the world.

Moving on from the introductory chapter of this book, which presented the history of care in Northern Ireland, this chapter explores a dominant memory of orphanhood: the *abused* orphan. This memory has been constructed within three socio-cultural contexts of fact and fiction, which this chapter explores. The first to be considered is the historical narratives of the orphan in real life and those presented as the truth in fiction, in literature for example. I consider the orphan as a character, by exploring the orphan discourse in literature and in Victorian culture.

As the chapter will show, the orphan in real life and the one memorised in fiction exist in unison and inform the identities of each other. This is apparent within the second context to be considered. The chapter moves on to consider the orphan of the 'abuse inquiry narrative' and what this had led to in terms of a creating a 'memory habit' (Plummer 2001). What this chapter will demonstrate is how 'vital memory' of difficult pasts as outlined by Brown and Reavey (2015) can exist not only for individual autobiographies, but on a social level. In particular, it focuses on the strength this singular narrative has in categorising experiences and identities. There is something about how narrative and memory when constructed in a public context and within a discourse of 'truth seeking' it is deemed legitimate. Inquiries have documented alongside the stories of neglect and abuse, more positive memories but these remain largely peripheral, why so? Is it because of what Sintow (2010) suggested:

that which is most repeated, most narrated, most encoded in ritual, most elevated to the mythic, or most shockingly, publically traumatic survives as the story of who 'they' [are]. (Sintow 2010, pp. 150–1511)

In other words, the memory which is most shocking and disturbing, or simply the most recurring, is what survives as the overarching story. We as a public, have known about the abused and neglected orphan long before this 'age of inquiry'. As the first section of this chapter will demonstrate, it is a character that has had a presence in social memory both in real life and in fiction.

The final context to be considered is the museum and the role it has constructing the orphan from the identities given in the historical and inquiry narratives. The museum brings the stories and identity of the orphan to life. Not only is the museum an empowering place in which a person can tell their story, it is place that allows others to explore that identity story from outside that experience. Furthermore, the story then becomes part of the nation's heritage that cannot be forgotten. Each of these three different contexts feeds into our collective memory of who we think an orphan is and how we memorise them.

In preparation for the remainder of the book, the final section of this chapter introduces the ambivalence of identity practices, understanding that the workings of identity, is both a social and individual process. We understand who we are in the world through our identity practices. As the first part of this chapter will demonstrate, the orphan has been given an identity from several viewpoints and through a number of practices. But orphanhood for those like my mum is an individual memory process that remains largely invisible. It is too simple to 'reduce the experience of culture to those meanings that are most visible' (Williams 2002, p. 91) such as those found in an inquiry, a newspaper, museum and the novel. Instead I want to use the final section of this chapter as a beginning to think about the individual process of identity and how wider socio-cultural representations of the orphan coexist in the memories of the Girls of Nazareth House.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVES OF THE ORPHAN

In biblical times 'the orphan, rather than being institutionalised, stigmatised and impoverished the orphan [was] to be celebrated and to share, by right, in half the produce of the land' (Deut XIV, pp. 29, xxvi, 12, 13,

cited in Peters 2000, p. 17). I am aware that ‘orphan’ may be considered as a dated term or one of great controversy; nevertheless, it is the origin of orphanhood and the ‘care identity’ and is a term that exhibits the power of language.¹ If identity ‘is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth’ (Hall 2003, p. 226), mapping or relocating the place-identity and the ‘cultural scheme’ (Auerbach 1975) of orphanhood will help understand how such identity constructions ‘were used to justify practices of surveillance, control and exclusion’ orphans experienced in real life (Dixon and Durrheim 2000, p. 33).

A ‘Real’ Victorian Orphan Identity

Historically identified in Victorian welfare discourse as ‘waifs and strays’ and ‘nobody’s children’ (Murdoch 2006, p. 1) orphans were characterised as ‘vulnerable, disadvantaged and miserable’ (Peters 2000, p. 1). In fact, society went as far as to use ‘the rhetoric of class, race and nationality’ to categorise them as a different race; for example the term ‘street arabs’ was a popular label to imply that such ‘children were nomadic, alone in the world without homes or families’ (Murdoch 2006, p. 25). This distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is one ‘that all people recognize [...] We are *here* [...] They are *there*; they are not fully human and they live in *that* place’ (Tuan 1977, p. 50). The Other ‘derive part of their identity and their otherness from the more or less stigmatizing space prescribed to them’ (Staszak 2008, p. 5). This ‘division between the established (those who belong) and the foreign (those who do not belong) [became] *embodied* in the material organization of places’ (Dixon and Durrheim 2000, p. 42).

Hetherington (1998, p. 108) argues that heterotopian spaces (see Chap. 1) are the source of ‘social centrality’ because they exist to act as a symbol of ‘Otherness, difference and marginality’. Whereas ‘difference’ belongs to ‘the realm of fact’, ‘otherness belongs to the realm of discourse’ (Staszak 2008, p. 2). The Other is ‘a criterion that allows humanity to be divided into two groups: one that embodies the norm and whose identity is valued and another that is defined by its faults, devalued and susceptible to discrimination’ (Staszak 2008, p. 1). Chapter 1 described how the act of Othering was used to justify the spatial organisation of orphans. Identification of the orphan remained embedded in ‘Otherness’ and the institutionalised child in 20th Century Ireland, the ‘grotesque other’ (Ferguson 2007) has its origins here.

It can only be concluded that identity ‘as well as being about identification and organisation is also about spatiality. In part, this means that identity involves an identification with particular places’ (Hetherington 1998, p. 105). Otherness, as demonstrated in this chapter is not only geographical in nature (Staszak 2008; see Said 1978).

A Discourse Memory in a Novel

Oliver cried lustily. If he could have known that he was an orphan, left to the tender mercies of churchwardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder. (Excerpt from Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*, 1994 edition, p. 4)

Peters (2000) confirmed that it is possible to interweave the lived experience of the orphan with that of the ‘orphan as text’, so that *Oliver Twist* and his peers have become an ‘established category’ (McHoul and Grace 1993) and perhaps the only category available to an orphan, the only story that can be produced. It must be remembered that identities discursively and spatially imposed ‘are often internalized by the individual who takes them on’ (Weedon 2004, p. 6; Goffman 1991). In other words this discourse may inevitably shape how an orphan is identified by others and by the orphan him or herself.

Ricoeur (1984, cited in Widdershoven 2005, p. 113) ‘stresses the role of literature [...] in personal identity’, yet, Widdershoven (2005, p. 107) explains that ‘human life is measured against the meaningful patterns presented to us in literary stories. In the first case life is the example that literature is supposed to follow; in the second case literature gives us the example according to which we should live’. The orphan should be considered a ‘cultural identity’, as well as a personal identity, which is ‘a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, they have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation’ (see Hall 2003, p. 225). Since the 18th century, the orphan emerged in the novel ‘as the primary metaphor for the dispossessed, detached self’ (Auerbach 1975, p. 395). Auerbach (1975) identified how the orphan was incarnated in the novel genre differently within the 18th, 19th and 20th century, but was consistently constructed as a threat (see Auerbach for a detailed discussion). Late-Victorian

publications ‘portrayed such children as isolated in the world, without family or friends, arriving at institutions from unknown or transitory locations’ (Murdoch 2006, p. 1). But it was Dickens who successfully ‘created a portrait of the workhouse child that remained the standard image for the Victorian age’ (Murdoch 2006, p. 1) and I argue beyond, into the twentieth century. *Oliver Twist* epitomised the ‘archetypal workhouse child [who] was first and foremost an orphan; alone, without a past, and completely disconnected from his parents’ (Murdoch 2006, p. 1). This experience has come, rather powerfully, to represent what and who an orphan is. It has become a narrative of our social memory, how we remember orphans. But not for all of us. For example, I too have read *Oliver Twist* and watched the film *Annie*. I have seen that both of these protagonists face severe hardships in the workhouse and orphanage and only get their happy endings when they are adopted. But I know from my mum’s experiences, this did not happen to her. This does not represent her life story.

Our memory from these representations is that orphans are forever children who are most likely uneducated, abused, sad and victimised. They can only escape the misery and embarrassment of orphanhood by being taken out of it. These narratives have become grand because of their authorial nature since the Victorian era. This is the only story that has been told and which we have internalised as part of a legitimate body of knowledge. They are history. Although they are fictional characters, somehow they have become treated as factual representations of who and what an orphan is.

INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE IN IRELAND: FROM A MASTER NARRATIVE TO A MEMORY HABIT

In 1999, *States of Fear*, a three-part documentary, was broadcast in the Republic of Ireland on the country’s national television channel RTÉ. The documentary told the story of the sustained abuse suffered by children living in church-run Industrial and Reformatory schools in Ireland between the 1930s and 1970s. The documentary contained the ‘personal accounts of abuse and deprivation from people who had spent their childhoods in institutions in Ireland’ (Carr 2010, p. 53). This was the first time these private and personal experiences were being made public. The televised (re)presentations ‘led to heightened awareness and debate’ on the subject of institutional abuse (Carr 2010, p. 53)² resulting in the

then Taoiseach of Ireland, Bertie Ahern, formally apologising to the victims of abuse.

Ever since, public discourse in Ireland has ‘largely been about institutional abuses, as a revelation of trauma and injustice’ (Murphy 2010, p. 308). The orphan is known and is remembered as the victim turned survivor, who has the courage to tell one’s story. Smith (2008) labels this discourse of historical abuse as the ‘master narrative’.³ The abuse story became a ‘media template’⁴ and ‘taken-for-granted’ knowledge (Keenan 2009). For example, on the day the Ryan Report was published, the *Guardian* Newspaper reported: ‘*Endemic’ rape and abuse of Irish children in Catholic care, inquiry finds*’. Similarly, *The telegraph* wrote: ‘*Hundreds of Irish Catholic priests ‘to be implicated in child abuse report’*’ and *The Daily Mail* opting for: ‘*Irish Catholic Church ‘covered up’ sickening catalogue of child abuse by paedophile priests*’. Media attention was given around the world, with *The Toronto Star* reporting how ‘*Irish children ‘lived with terror’*’. News items then began appearing from the victims themselves, such as *The East Anglian Daily Times* reporting: ‘*Cruel nuns stole my childhood*’. The public could not get enough of this narrative and turned to other means of finding out about these experiences, such as reading autobiographies written by the victims. Paddy Doyle’s *The God Squad* from the 1980s being the one people most often mentioned to me when I told them about my research. But when you search for this book on Amazon, the recommendations for other similar books is endless (see Keogh 2009 for a consideration of numerous memoirs). The majority of these take place within industrial schools, reformatory schools and asylums in the Republic of Ireland. The writing of an autobiography or the telling of a biography to another has been used to express a variety of ‘self’ journeys and have been written for very diverse purposes in this area; for example as a coping strategy or for self therapy (Reilly 2008), a platform from which to speak out, a drive for policy reform in the child care system and to seek justice for those improperly treated (Raftery and O’Sullivan 1999). McKenzie (1996a), who grew up in a Home run by the Presbyterian Church in the United States is the only autobiographer I have examined who has shared his memoirs with the intention to express gratitude to those who cared for him and to demonstrate how the ‘protagonist’ can accomplish in the end.⁵

The understanding of institutionalisation is somewhat confusing for people to understand and remember. For instance, when I would tell people about my project, they would be fascinated and then somehow

recall the film *The Magdalene Sisters*. This was a film released in 2003 which tells a story about experiences of being incarcerated in the Magdalene laundries and asylums, which were institutions maintained by the Catholic Church in Ireland throughout the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries.⁶ In fact, when I told my students about writing this book, one of them asked “oh, is that about those Magdalene places where people were abused and all that”. Although such portrayals and stories are of ‘fallen women’, prostitutes and unwed mothers, rather than the orphan, this is a film that is widely mentioned whenever care in Ireland is discussed. But this is an example of how identities and memories become intertwined and one constitutes the other. The homogeneity of narrative and eventually memory.

What emerges from this grand narrative and homogeneity of experience is a ‘memory habit’ (Plummer 2001). Memory becomes a habit when it ‘starts to be seen as much less of an inner psychological phenomenon, and much more of a socially shared experience. [...] It is what we have said so often that we literally come to believe it as true [...] Long afterwards, when the event has been lost, what we are left with is only this habit, this ‘story’” (Plummer 2001, p. 234). For instance, years later, we are reading and remembering these same stories in the news. *The Belfast Telegraph* on the 6th January 2015 published ‘Nazareth homes ‘cold and cruel places offering the children no chance in life’ and later that same month *The Irish Times*: ‘All we did wrong was to be born’. This master narrative has become what Poole (2010) describes as a ‘universalization scenario’ in two ways. Firstly, any mention of a catholic children’s home in Ireland automatically brings to the forefront of people’s memories images of the Magdalene Asylum and industrial schools, which as already stated is largely down to confusion. Secondly, this in turn has come to act as a signifier of the orphan experience and identity. This story no longer belongs to or is the possession of those who experienced it. This ‘memory habit’ and ‘universalization scenario’ we are experiencing fortifies the narrative of shame, whether real or not for those who experienced it, but also for those who did not. It is an international pattern and has come to be a defining feature for many nations.

An International Memory: The Apology

On behalf of the state and all its citizens, the government wishes to make a sincere and long overdue apology to the victims of childhood abuse for

our collective failure to intervene, to detect their pain, to come to their rescue [...] all children need love and security [...] Too many of our children were denied this love, care and security. Abuse ruined their childhoods and has been an ever-present part of their adult lives reminding them of a time when they were helpless. I want to say to them that we believe they were gravely wronged, and that we must do all we can now to overcome the lasting effects of their ordeals.

These are the words the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern said when he made his public apology in 1999 to the Irish victims of institutional abuse, acting as a reminder that ‘Memory has *force*. It is not merely the conduit of information (and misinformation) about the past; it is also—and primarily—the medium through which the past makes demands on us’ (Poole 2010, p. 32). The memories located in the inquiry, from the *States of Fear* and *Dear Daughter* documentaries have mobilised direct action in the respect of getting an inquiry conducted and receiving a formal apology from the government. This enacted response to memory has taken place all over the world, not just in Ireland. Care experienced adults have come forward to tell of their experiences of abuse through memory with the hope of gaining recognition and justice mostly in Europe, but also Australia, New Zealand and Canada (Sköld 2016). In her article, Sköld (2016) recounts other European nations which have a similar story to that of Ireland. She discussed Sweden and Denmark. Sweden aired a documentary called *Stulen barndom* (stolen childhood) in 2005. This documentary consisted of the oral histories of six men who told of their sexual, physical abuse and hard labour. Within a few days an inquiry was taking place which would lead to the establishment of a larger inquiry marking the ‘birth of the Commission to Inquire into Abuse and Neglect of Children in Institutions and Foster Homes, operating until September 2011’ (Sköld 2016, p. 496). Similarly, *Drengehemmet* (The Boys’ Home) was aired in Denmark in 2005 and this brought to light whether boys growing up in Godhavn, an orphanage for boys, had been the subject of medical experimentation. This led to the establishment of a Godhavn care leavers association ‘who lobbied to influence the government to appoint a commission to examine the abuses at Godhavn in more detail’ (Sköld 2016, p. 496).

In some of the cases, along with the compelling media coverage, this resulted in criminal prosecution cases in court, ‘that have eventually forced governments and other responsible bodies to take action.

A common response has been to launch an inquiry investigating the past through interview or oral hearings with victims, sometimes preceding or following an official apology by the government or representatives of the care providers and financial redress schemes' (Sköld 2016, p. 493).

One of the most widely recognised apologies for injustice of the care system came from Australia. First the government apologised to the Stolen Generations on the 13th February 2008:

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

Later that year Kevin Rudd, Australia's Prime Minister was making another apology, to the Forgotten Australians and the child migrants sent to Australia throughout the 20th Century:

We come together today to deal with an ugly chapter in our nation's history.

And we come together today to offer our nation's apology.

To say to you, the Forgotten Australians, and those who were sent to our shores as children without your consent, that we are sorry.

Sorry—that as children you were taken from your families and placed in institutions where so often you were abused.

These terms 'Forgotten Australians' and 'Stolen Generations' have been specifically created for these people, almost certainly characterising them and their experiences of orphanhood. In each of these instances, the personal become public and national. The voice of a few, has given voice to larger populations. Several years after the apology to the Forgotten Australians, the government was asked by the community to create an exhibition, to construct an identity and share their memories through a different medium.

REMEMBERING ORPHANHOOD IN THE MUSEUM: THE PERSONAL AS NATIONAL

Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions was a touring exhibition created by the National Museum of Australia in 2011, seven years after the Australian government formally acknowledged and apologised for the childhood experiences of the Forgotten Australians. One of the senate inquiry recommendations was to create and curate an exhibition that would commemorate the experiences of the Forgotten Australians (see Jacqueline Wilson's (2014) review of the exhibition).

In the USA and the UK, museum exhibitions have also explored the history of its care experienced communities. In 2003–2004, the American History Museum exhibited *Korean Adoption: An American Family Story* and The Foundling Museum in London presents histories of philanthropic work with abandoned and orphaned children since the eighteenth century. These are three examples of exhibitions which attempt to locate the history of care and care experience within national historical narratives. By telling such stories within the museum, these personal memories shift 'from private to public consciousness' (Fine 1988, p. 44 cited in Edwards 2012) thereby becoming part of a nation's—in most cases—'difficult heritage' (McDonald 2006).

Interestingly, in Denmark, the national inquiry into childhood institutionalisation was entrusted to the Welfare Museum in Svendborg, rather than a state appointed commission as in the other examples mentioned in this book (Sköld 2016). This was because the care leavers had been sharing their memories in Museum workshops and therefore trusted museum workers. The museum 'investigators were attentive to the symbolic value of artefacts' they heard about in the stories and one item of significance was that of a gymnastic horse at one home that the museum workshop participants remembered children were bent over and beaten (Sköld 2016, p. 507). The horse was found and a forensic blood analysis was conducted which returned as positive, thereby validating the horrific stories of the care leavers:

We realized ... the potential of this and the impact it could have, not only for the museum but for many of the abused children from children's homes, as a symbol, evidence, and proof of the abuse and illegal punishment that had taken place in such institutions in the 1960s. Children in care are not used to being believed when they talk about their childhood sufferings, and this has led to serious existential problems such as loneliness, feelings of inferiority, and isolation. The survival of this type of

evidence could be the ‘smoking gun’ that so many had been longing for. (Rytterand and Rasmussen 2015, pp. 11–12)

This physical object supported the memories of the care leavers and was eventually displayed in the museum exhibition, with other items, used as mnemonic devices to help tell stories. Museums have negotiated and used the prism of memory to gain access to *lived* experiences, narratives and identities of care. This particular identity of orphanhood transgresses as personal and as heritage. The museum becomes a site of life story work reminding us that ‘memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings’ and creation of identities (Portelli 1998, p. 69; Brockmeier 2002; Murphy 2010).

THE AMBIVALENCE OF IDENTITY

Identity is part of the practice of everyday life and is the thread we use to weave our biographies (Jenkins 2004; Schütze 2008). In the preface to his book *Mask and Mirrors*, Strauss states that:

Identity as a concept is fully elusive as is everyone’s sense of his own personal identity. But whatever else it may be, identity is connected with the fateful appraisals made of oneself and by others. Everyone presents himself to the others and to himself, and sees himself in the mirrors of their judgments. (Strauss 1969, p. 9)

This quote suggests that identity is *processual* and not ‘something that simply *is*’ (Jenkins 2004, p. 5). In this respect, identity must be thought of as a human attribute that is continuously constructed and (re)constructed, negotiated and (re)negotiated through *and* by our interactions with others and also by our memories. Fivush (2013, p. 13) reminds us that autobiographical memory is the core of identity. Identity is a way of ‘being’ in the world and being recognised and a way of recognising and validating others. Having an identity and identifying other people is how we are able to classify and make sense of our interactions and the world.

Identification is embedded in a web of communication that involves language, symbols, characters, signifiers and many other forms of statements, as we have seen from the ‘inquiry’, published autobiographies, novels and media reports. This intricacy reflects our complex and multi-layered entanglement in society and supports the difficulty in ‘locating’

personal identity (Fischer-Rosenthal 2005). Côté and Levine (2002, p. 9) assert that “‘identity’ is a function of both external (social) and internal (agentic) factors’. In other words, identity can be totally social and personally individual. The extent to which role structural arrangement and agency plays in identity construction and display will never be known, which is why identity remains ambivalent.

Who Am I? Identity, Biography and Memory

The internal dialogue and performance of the self through identification guides us to one pinnacle ‘existential question’⁷ (Giddens 1991) every thinking human being asks themselves...Who am I?⁸ Is the answer to this question buried in what has already been debated; we come to understand who we are through the eyes of others, the structures put in place for us or can we answer this question ourselves, as individuals? For the orphan, is this through literature, media stories or those identities encountered in a museum? Those in the field of biographical research claim that the ‘telling’ or the process of autobiographical work, a reviewing of one’s life, can be a way an individual approaches answering this question (Schütze 2008). As Giddens (1991, p. 72) notes, autobiographical thinking can develop ‘a coherent sense of one’s life history [which] is a prime means of escaping the thrall of the past and opening oneself out to the future. The author of the autobiography is enjoined both to go back as far as possible into early childhood and to set up lines of potential development to encompass the future’. This is what he calls the ‘reflexive project of the self’ (Giddens 1991). Autobiographical ‘experiences create forms of reflexivity that are important for our understanding of learning identities’ and making our way through the world (Ciesilk 2006, p. 238). In high/late modernity, according to Giddens (1991, p. 3), the self ‘has to be reflexively made’, which is why, consequently, he writes of a ‘self-identity’ or more so an ‘identity of the self’. The self ‘presumes reflexive awareness’ because it is not just given but incessantly ‘created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual’ (Giddens 1991, p. 52). In other words we are continually working on answering the questions of who we are through a processual ‘mediation between structure and agency’ (Archer 2003).

Fischer-Rosenthal (2005, p. 217), argues that we cannot answer the question simply with ‘identity’, because ‘as soon as we try to pinpoint what ‘I’ means or who a particular person actually ‘is’, we find a ‘you’,

a ‘we’ and a ‘they’ lurking just around the corner, as integral parts to all human actions and experiences’. He proposes that, if it is not already, identity should be made redundant and biography should take its place. He stipulates that one cannot understand how the individual and society are connected through identity, because it is too simplistic; instead we should attempt to understand through the activity of biographical work (Fischer-Rosenthal 2005). It is biography, rather than identity that connects the individual and society for Fischer-Rosenthal.

Are our identities and self the material from which we draw to create our biographies, or is it our biographical material from which we create our identities? McAdams (1993, p. 117 and 11) purports that ‘identity takes the form of a story’ and that if ‘you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines who I am. And if I wasn’t to know myself, to gain insight into the meaning of my own life, then I too, must come to know my own story’. It has been observed that a lack of structure in the biography that supports our personal identity would lead to some sort of crisis (Weigert et al. 1990). It has been further noted that ‘individuals may employ to reform their identity through biographical work’ (Starr 1982, cited in Miller 2005, p. xxxiii); what Giddens (1991, p. 72) may call ‘a corrective intervention into the past’. These explanations make it difficult to disagree with Fischer-Rosenthal when he describes biography as a process of ‘becoming’ and that by ‘constructing a biography a person can discover who he or she has become’ (2005, pp. 226–227).

Should we therefore, in light of this argument, disregard the concept of identity altogether and simply think about biography? Bauman (2004, p. 49) has specified that in modern society ‘identities became tasks which individuals had to perform [...] through their biographies. As Jean-Paul Sartre memorably put it then, to be a bourgeois it is not enough to be born a bourgeois—one needs to live one’s life whole life as a bourgeois!’ What Bauman seems to be saying is that we cannot have an identity without (auto)biography which ‘is actually at the core of self-identity in modern social life’ (Giddens 1991, p. 76). McAdams (1993, p. 12) calls this the ‘personal myth’, which he describes as ‘an act of imagination that is a patterned integration of our remembered past, perceived present and anticipated future’. For McAdams, myth is therefore a life story that is unique to each individual and a secret that we hold within our selves and share only episodes with others. He argues that ‘we do not discover ourselves in myth; we make ourselves through myth’ (McAdams

1993, p. 13). In other words, we create our identities in the stories we tell about ourselves.

All this considered, in this book (auto)biography will refer to ‘the story which the individual is able to—and, indeed, must—tell’ (Fischer-Rosenthal 2005, p. 223). Identity will not be made redundant because as demonstrated by the theories discussed, it explains too much of how people *are* in and how they understand and position themselves and others in the world.⁹ The book so far has shown that the orphan is socially and culturally remembered and subsequently positioned as a specific identity. The intention for the remainder of the book is to confront the complexity of autobiographical and absent memory and identity politics for those with care experience, by exploring the memories and identity practices of those with care experience.

CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to outline the ways in which the orphan has been socially and culturally remembered and the lasting effect this has on the identity of those with care experience. This chapter has objectively considered how the orphan is identified in the wider socio-cultural realm, but the remainder of the book investigates how different forms of memory (autobiographical, cultural and absent) are used by the Girls of Nazareth House to frame the self. The inquiries which have legitimised the abused orphan identity rely on oral testimony of care experienced adults seeking recognition and justice for their experiences. In other words, the reports and narratives are created from the *memories* people are willing to share. I cannot help but be reminded here of Poole’s (2010) assertion that ‘Memory has *force*’. As I already stated, it was not the aim of this book to question whether such narratives are true or not. It is not my intention to seek out the role memory has in pursuing the truth. Instead, the intention of this book is to highlight the complexity of memories and remembering not only for those with past care experience, but for those being raised in the care system today. Some narratives are silenced and memories are forgotten. For example, I cannot recognise my mother in the grand narrative. My inheritance conflicts with the grand narrative described in this chapter, and temporarily places distance between her personal narrative and the hegemonic discourse. But the distance remains only for a moment. The grand narrative is too powerful and its position of dominance is sustained (Edwards 2012).

The following chapters continues with the understanding that memory flows through experience (Brown and Reavey 2015); taking into consideration the experiences of 12 adult care leavers.

NOTES

1. American academic Richard McKenzie, who was himself raised in a children's home, dislikes the use of the term 'orphan' because of the false identity it denotes. Is it not time for orphans to reclaim their identity?
2. Prone (2009, p. 93) has written a chapter that considers the lack of the church's voice during the controversy, their lack of communication. Keenan (2009) outlines the role the media played in demonising clergy members as the Other, in a way shifting the discourse so that the child placed in care is no longer the Other.
3. It is interesting also to consider the purpose that such new master narratives serve—the narrative of the bad church serves to exculpate society and the state from blame. In the Republic of Ireland the state set up the inquiry and the Church is the main target of opprobrium—the State's *laissez-faire* role becomes a side narrative.
4. Such templates firstly 'shape narratives around specific issues', secondly, 'they guide public opinion and discussion and [finally] they set the frame of reference for the future' (Keenan 2009, p. 192). Kennedy (2001) highlights how abuse was also present in the home and within the family/wider society in general (see Chap. 6) and it was present in foster care (Stein and Carey 1986).
5. McKenzie was also an executive producer on a documentary film called *The Homecoming: The Forgotten World of America's Orphanages* (2005). After contacting him, he very kindly sent me a copy of *Homecoming* on DVD, which was wonderful and brilliant to watch. It consists of 15 men and women of the older generation of care leavers discussing their memories of the Homes they grew up in. It is sad at times, but also funny, but indicative of the preciousness of such stories.
6. Magdelene laundries were places where 'fallen women' (women who were considered promiscuous) were housed.
7. Giddens (1991, p. 242) defines existential questions as 'queries about basic dimensions of existence, in respect of human life as well as the material world, which all human beings 'answer' in the conducts of their day-to-day conduct'.
8. Giddens (1991, p. 170) argues that such a question is 'an expression of narcissistic absorption rather than a realisable quest'.

9. Those in the field of geography and environmental psychology state that questions of ‘who we are’ are ‘often intimately related to questions of “where we are”’ (Dixon and Durrheim 2000, p. 27). The ‘rhetorical traditions through which people locate their selves and others’ can be examined by recovering ‘the irreducibly social origins of place identification’ (Dixon and Durrheim 2000, pp. 32 and 33).

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Orphanhood

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Edwards, D.

2017, XI, 219 p. 10 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-64038-9