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Present, Past and Human Relationships in Penelope Lively’s Novels
B.A. Major Thesis

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.
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Introduction

There can be no doubt that postwar Britain has experienced a lot of influential changes in almost all areas which spring to one’s mind. These major changes have been carried out in such spheres as science and technology, politics, culture, economy, education and many others which have an influence on everyday lives. Certainly these changes along with additional factors have brought about other significant changes in no less considerable field such as literature. Postwar writing differs from previous literature in many important ways but really substantial contributions to progress in literature were probably made during the 1980s and 1990s.

Contemporary literature encompasses a large number of experimental elements which cannot be summarized into only a few words. In brief, new experimental techniques can be found in the content as well as in the form of contemporary writing. I do not intend to enumerate all the newly introduced elements which have enriched modern or postmodern literature. Instead, I will focus on matters which provide a clue to my thesis.

Contemporary writers are preoccupied with themes such as history, memory, death and disorder. All of these features being constantly presented in contemporary literature can also be undeniably found in books by contemporary female writer Penelope Lively whose selected novels are at the centre of my research for this thesis. The themes mentioned above are crucial to the part of my thesis which deals with Lively’s obsession with the past and memory in particular.

What is important to say here is that the aim of my research is not Lively’s obsession with the theme of history in general but rather her exploration of the continuity of time and the parallels between the past and present as the title of my thesis suggests. One of the features frequently emerging in novels by Penelope Lively is undoubtedly a narrative which symbolises the endurance of the past. In the section of my thesis examining the inseparability
of the present and the past, I focus mainly on the family and personal history. There is more space devoted to description of this idea in detail in the chapter called Inseparable Past.

Another theme listed above is memory. This attribute of Lively’s writing cannot be investigated separately as she implies that memory is a basic tool for shaping our overall view on history and understanding the present and its connections with the past. What I attempt to say about this theme in Lively’s novels is perfectly expressed in the words of John Brannigan, who, in his book on postwar literature in England, proposes the idea that the present “is vacuous and futile without meaningful connections to the past” (43). The characters in all of the novels which I selected for my research are preoccupied with recollections of past events and provide an evidence for the fact that we cannot put the past behind us; the past is still there, as if continuous with the present.

Memory is not chronological as shown in Lively’s novels, from which I conclude that disorder, by which I mean randomness, is a necessary constituent of our perception of the past and time in general. Thus disorder in connection with memory is also often incorporated in Lively’s fiction concerning the parallels between the past and present.

The last frequent theme mentioned above, which is of interest to contemporary writers including Penelope Lively, is the theme of death. It also seems to be a necessary part of the continuity of time which Lively thoroughly examines in her novels. Nevertheless, I do not examine this feature since it is not so relevant to my thesis as the other aspects of her writing.

In the second part of my thesis I explore the influence of the past on the characters’ development and relationships and the influence of the present experience and the flow of time on the characters’ perception of the past, again with focus on family relationships, which fill Penelope Lively’s novels.

I will seek to show in what way these seemingly different topics are interconnected.
via memory at whatever point of time, which influences the characters’ lives and their development throughout the novels. Recollections of past events play a crucial role in the characters’ progress as well as family history has enormous impact on the characters’ lives and relationships with others. This also happens the other way round; the present changes the perception of the past events, which is no less important in the characters’ development. Thus it is obvious that the two aspects – the former concerning the endurance of the past, the latter concerning the influence of the past as well as the present and time in general on the characters’ relationships – are coherent in some way and cannot be dealt with separately. My intention is not to consider human relationships in isolation but rather in connection with past and present experience.

I will now formulate the aim of my thesis as it could seem that it has not been clearly stated so far because I attempted to provide all the background information needed to propose the main idea of my thesis. The thesis examines the parallels between the present, past and human relationships in three novels by Penelope Lively. It focuses on personal and family history, recollections of past events provoked by present conditions and explores the extent of influence of the past and time in general on the characters’ lives, relationships and perceptions. As I explore time from several viewpoints – although with focus on a different matter in each part – the content of the chapters and subchapters may overlap. The selected novels include *Moon Tiger*, *Passing On* and *Heat Wave*.

The protagonist of *Moon Tiger* (1987) is Claudia Hampton, an unconventional historian and former war correspondent. While dying of cancer in a hospital, Claudia recollects her life and relationships with her close family. Besides, she remembers a love affair with Tom Southern, who was killed in the war. In this novel, Lively uses an unconventional narrative technique and gives several points of view. The novel was the winner of the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1987.
The novel *Passing On* (1989) begins with the death of a mother whose middle-aged children Helen and Edward now face the independent life. However, they are not able to lead normal lives because their mother’s shadow still interferes in their conduct. The book is preoccupied with family relationships.

The novel *Heat Wave* (1997) depicts human relationships which are crucial to the characters’ lives. Pauline, a book editor, is witness to her daughter’s decaying marriage. This makes her recollect her own broken marriage, at which point she realises that she must intervene.
1. Penelope Lively’s Life

This chapter does not give a detailed account of Penelope Lively’s life. It only provides basic information regarding her life and some points which might prove useful to my thesis. What I mean by these points is that Penelope Lively experienced some situations during her life which seem to have influence on her writing. According to my research the matters in Lively’s life supply grounds for exploring particular themes in her novels. The facts about her life have been drawn from several sources but as the main source for this chapter I have chosen *Literature Online biography* by Petra Freeland since it includes the details relevant to my thesis.

Penelope Lively was born in Cairo on 17 March 1933, the daughter of an expatriate English bank manager, Roger Low, and his wife, Vera Greer. She was an only child and grew up in the care of an English nanny called Lucy. Lively’s parents were remote figures for her. Until the age of twelve, she had no formal schooling. Instead, she received lessons from Lucy, with the help of correspondence material designed for expatriates. Lively had happy childhood until her parents divorced in 1945 and she was sent to England where she felt completely dispossessed. In Sussex she attended the English boarding school. Her grandmother and her aunt became Lively’s closest family and their Somerset house her refuge.

Lively took interest in modern history which was the object of her studies at St Anne’s College, Oxford. After graduating in 1954, she worked as a research assistant at St Anthony’s College where she met Jack Lively, a political theorist, whom she married in 1957. They had two children: Josephine and Adam. Since she herself never felt emotional attachment to her parents, Lively longed to be a good mother to her children. Therefore, she devoted herself to motherhood and loved being a full-time mother. The experience with her own parents is relevant to my thesis since it seems to be the fact which had an impact on her writing about
family history and relationships, mother-daughter relationships in particular.

Lively began her writing career with children’s books. What links her children’s books with her mainstream adult fiction is a fascination with history and the connections between the past and present. Her children’s fiction includes books such as *Astercote* (1970) – her first children’s work, *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* (1973), *Stitch in Time* (1976) and others. To list some of her books for adults: besides the novels which I use for the analysis I can add *The Road to Lichfield* (1977), *Treasures in Time* (1979), *Judgement Day* (1980), *City of the Mind* (1991) or her most recent novels *The Photograph* (2003) and *Making it Up* (2005). There are many other books but it is not the purpose of this chapter to list all of her work. Lively contributes regularly to a number of national daily newspapers and journals, including the *Sunday Times*, *The Observer* and the *Times Educational Supplement*.

Penelope Lively is a contemporary British female writer, which in itself defines her writing in some way. Women novelists introduce new themes as well as new experimental techniques into literature, especially as a result of postwar development. Many of them were affected by the feminist movement in the second part of the twentieth century. They became interested in gaining full social and economic equality and perception of women in general. As a result, female novelists write about women who are no longer in a position subordinate to men. Their writing concerning women’s bodies, sexuality, motherhood and relationships rejects male representation of women in earlier literature. “Women break their silences all the time; other women are needed to listen and to read those disruptions of the law of literature” (Wheeler 225). This is what female writers never lack – other women who are drawn to their fiction; they are the readers whose attention this kind of literature is designed to catch.

Penelope Lively is definitely one of those writers whose novels include the themes mentioned above. Although she cannot be classified as a feminist writer since she is not particularly concerned with inequality between men and women Lively uses the themes which
are of great interest to women readers; especially women’s relationships with their lovers, husbands, children and relatives are in the centre of her attention. Nevertheless, her audience is probably not comprised only of women since her work provides a great number of experimental features to be explored. “Academic audiences are drawn to her adult work for its moral and intellectual sophistication and for its experimentation with complex, multi-faceted narrative techniques” (Freeland).

Penelope Lively has not been given much attention in critical studies although she is not any less important in the formation of contemporary British literature. Moreover, she brings unusual elements into literature – such as the narrative told in flashback and moving continuously between the present and the past or changing points of view – and therefore deserves to be academically researched.
2. Inseparable Past

We all live in the present; hardly anybody realises that the past constructs inseparable part of our identity. One’s self is framed by past experience – whether by incidents, things, places we saw or by people we met.

As the title and the first paragraph of this chapter suggests, in her novels Penelope Lively lays stress on the importance of the past in individual lives. In many different ways she demonstrates that whatever we did, saw, heard, said and experienced has undoubtedly found its firm place in our lives. Through her novels Lively attempts to convey the idea that while we believe that the past events have no control over our current behaviour and actions, the past impenetrates our lives in whatever moment without previous alert. And then comes the moment of realisation – flashbacks evoked by some present circumstance provide the evidence that what we did, saw, heard or said as well as whom we met has undeniable influence on our lives and relationships.

Lively is obsessed with history, which corresponds with her former decision to study modern history at college. By means of depiction of the characters in her fiction, Lively implies that “we all put ourselves at the centre of human experience, while at the same time remaining marginal or non-existent for others; […]” (Massie 62). She suggests that every individual can see only his or her experiences, enjoyments, emotions and relationships and puts them into the heart of all happening. Yet, we are only futile particles creating history; once we will be completely forgotten with all of our actions. Nevertheless, Lively puts emphasis on the individual lives – without those there would be no history at all. Thus there are two viewpoints in Lively’s work which mutually mingle; one highlighting the important role of the individual in the course of events, the other almost ignoring the individual self and putting it on the margin. This especially applies to Moon Tiger: Claudia sees herself and her own experiences in the centre of all happening when recalling the past events but at the same
time she is well aware that she will be forgotten in the future and all that she experienced will become general history. These feelings are usually expressed when she remembers the war years: “What happened there happens now only inside my head – no one else sees the same landscape, hears the same sounds, knows the sequence of events” (70).

To prove that history is the essential part of our lives and keeps intruding in them, Lively also considers the history of places and buildings. The personal history mingles with the history of other individuals and with the history of the places. One of many instances of Lively’s referring to the persistence of the past is found in Heat Wave in her description of World’s End, a cottage that “appears to be locked still into the early nineteenth century” and “could have simply grown of its own accord, you feel – made from the very bones of this land. It is an emanation of a time and a place” (2). It is quite obvious that every substance has its own history which lives with the characters – whether seen or unseen – at any time and any place. Pauline, the protagonist of Heat Wave, often thinks of various places and their history, especially of their social history and former inhabitants’ way of living. She also remembers places which she once visited or lived in and the images she has in mind are not those reflecting their present-day face but rather their old look. She can see the streets, the buildings, the inhabitants. She reembers the town where she lived with Harry, her former husband. She can see the streets, cathedral, Harry’s university, his students and their house where crucial things happened. The town “will be for ever locked into a particular time” (83). Nevertheless, there is a certain logic in keeping the past images in mind when she does not know what the places look like these days.

In Moon Tiger, Claudia is also able to see the past images of places she once visited or lived in because it is the only way to see them. She can think of Cairo embedded in time when she was there as a war correspondent. On the other hand, some of the recollections of people, especially relatives, reflect the past appearance of them in spite of the fact that characters
know their faces even today. It is connected with particular actions which the characters
experienced. It also seems to be partly related to speech – particular words which the people
said and which remain in characters’ minds. According to Stacy Burton, “Temporal
experience and intellectual perceptions of time are profoundly important” in Moon Tiger. Accordding to my research, this fact applies to the other two of Lively’s novels as well.

The characters in Lively’s novels are enclosed by their own history rooted in general
history. In Moon Tiger, Claudia Hampton, a popular historian, decides to write a history of
the world:

A history of the world, yes. And in the process, my own. The Life and Times of
Claudia H. The bit of the twentieth century to which I’ve been shackled, willy-nilly,
like it or not. Let me contemplate myself within my context: everything and nothing.
The history of the world as selected by Claudia: fact and fiction, myth and evidence,
images and documents. (1)

Claudia is aware of the fact that while being the central figure of her story, at the same time,
she is only a fragment of all the happening of the particular period which she decided to
describe. However, every past event she comments on is personalised. It is completely
different from how other historians record the events. Thus it is Claudia’s history rather than
the history of the world. Lively’s novels display diverse ways in which time is experienced
and perceived, which is further examined in the following subchapters.
2.1. Personal and Family History

In her novels, Penelope Lively is, unarguably, obsessed with personal and family history. Throughout the novels, the characters recall their personal history as much as family history. These two histories actually intermingle; what constitutes the character’s past is also the past of others as Claudia in *Moon Tiger* acknowledges: “The signals of my own past come from the received past. The lives of others slot into my own life: I, me, Claudia H.” (2).

The personal and family history remains in the characters’ minds for ever. They cannot get rid of their past; even if some fractions of the characters’ past are hidden in the depth of their memory, a particular moment has the power to invoke the past image of the event to which they have not attached the importance so far. Lively portrays the personal and family history in all of the novels which I decided to explore. What ties the three books together, concerning the personal and family history, is the depiction of bad mothers and missing fathers. Dealing with parenthood and family relationships confirms Lively’s own experience with her parents who did not devote her too much care.

In *Moon Tiger*, it is Claudia who recalls her own history shaped by the family past and the past of others who were profoundly important throughout her life. This novel is written from multiple points of view in order to demonstrate that Claudia’s history is rooted into the history of everyone who is close to her, that it is impossible to take her history as only her own. Her story is “tangled with the stories of others” (5). Her past is reflected as a shift in time, as if everything happened in the present.

When Claudia remembers her mother, she describes her in such a way that she seems to condemn her in fact. She cannot highlight any really important event in her mother’s life because she remembers her as a simple person, without high expectations of life, whose “greatest anxieties were concentrated on the vagaries of the climate” (6). Her father is only a figure in history for Claudia because he died when she was too young to remember his face,
voice or whatever could define him in her mind. At this point the memory is not too reliable; she is not certain whether the man who once put her on his shoulders – apparently the only scene she can remember – was actually her father or not. Another person who shapes her personal history as well as family history is her brother Gordon. He is the only member of her family who played a crucial role in her life. Although he is no longer living when Claudia tells her story, he is constantly being remembered by her. Their relationship was gradually developing from their being rivals in childhood through having an incestuous relationship as teenagers to becoming best friends in adulthood. The relationship with her brother Gordon had significant impact on Claudia’s life. However, this subject is dealt with in the second part of my thesis concerning the influence of the past on the characters’ lives and relationships.

There are other figures emerging from the past when Claudia recalls what she experienced but they are a part of her personal rather than family history. Perhaps Jasper could be seen as a part of the family past as he is in fact the father of Claudia’s daughter Lisa. Nevertheless, Claudia never married him and he was quite unimportant throughout her life except that he was her daughter’s father. It is said in most appropriate way by Claudia herself when she concludes her recollecting with these words:

    Enough of Jasper. It should be clear now how he fits into the scheme of things. Lover to begin with, sparring partner always, father of my child; our lives sometimes fusing, sometimes straying apart, always connected. I loved him once, but cannot remember how that felt. (51)

It is clear that Jasper cannot be erased from Claudia’s mind although she thinks he occupies her mind unnecessarily. He is quite essential part of her past and she is aware of this fact – at least when she looks at her daughter Lisa. Claudia acknowledges that Lisa is the evidence of her restless relationship with Jasper.

In the novel, Lively emphasizes the importance of others in the characters’ lives. She communicates this idea through Claudia’s voice: “You are public property – the received past. But you are also private; my view of you is my own, your relevance to me is personal” (29). It
is the collective past that constructs Claudia’s identity; it cannot be separated from her personal history.

Yet, probably the most important person in Claudia’s past – except her brother Gordon – is her lover Tom Southern, who was her lover before Jasper. Although it was a very short time which they spent together in Cairo when Claudia was working as a war correspondent, he is in the centre of her recollections, always in a positive way. It could be argued that she remembers him in such a way just because they spent together only a few days. She can only remember the pleasant feelings she experienced when she was madly in love with him. Had it not been for Tom’s early death in the war, Claudia’s memories might have been completely different. Claudia acknowledges that she can only remember Tom as a young man as there are no further images of him and that they would be now absolute strangers to each other. At the end of her story, aged seventy-six, she thinks: “You are in some ways unreachable, shut away beyond a glass screen of time; you know nothing of forty years of history and forty years of my life; you seem innocent, like a person in another century“ (206). But still he is the essential part of her identity.

Similar personal and family history is traced in the following two novels which are of my interst for the thesis. In *Passing On*, the personal and family past is remembered by Helen and her brother Edward, aged fifty-two and forty-nine respectively, who cannot get rid of the recollections of their now dead mother. Their memories are entirely negative. The same involves Claudia’s memories of her mother in *Moon Tiger* but the mother of Helen and Edward in *Passing On* is much more crucial in creating their personal and family history and constructing their identities, which I explore in the part of my thesis concerning the impact of the past on the characters. It is Helen in particular who is overwhelmed by involuntary memories whenever she does something or comes across some object. She expresses similar feelings about her mother as Claudia about her mother in *Moon Tiger*. Nevertheless, Helen’s
feelings towards Dorothy, her mother, are much stronger. “Eternal life is an appalling idea, especially in mother’s case,” springs to Helen’s mind after her mother’s funeral (4). Dorothy is described as a manipulative mother, constantly complaining, having no friends, with fighting spirit and other unpleasant attributes. She is also described as “a vigorous old woman, sound of mind and body, who had no interests” and was difficult to entertain (19). Helen feels extremely relieved after their mother’s death.

Perhaps the only member of Glovers’ family who mourns at the death of Dorothy is her daughter Louise, Helen and Edward’s younger sister. She is completely different from them. The main difference is clear; she is married and has children whilst Helen and Edward are still single at the age of about fifty and had both lived with their mother until her death. Now, they still occupy one house together – single and childless. Louise was the only one who could resist her mother’s manipulative character and set herself free. Helen often thinks about the difference between Louise and herself and marvels how it is possible when they both come from the same descent:

The mystery, as Helen saw it, was that two people could emerge from the same circumstances and set about dealing with the world so differently: follow the thread back and you reached, in each case, the same hearth, the same cot, the same indoctrinations, Dorothy’s uncompromising lap. (50)

The father was missing in Helen and Edward’s personal and family history; a feature which is also found in the novel previously analysed.

The Glovers are regarded as a somewhat strange family. The equipment of their house is old-fashioned although their house is one of the largest and most valuable in the village. They possess the Britches, a small wood, which could earn them a quite large amount of money if they sold it. But Dorothy “wasn’t ever going to sell: she meant what she said“ (12). Dorothy was stubborn and uncompromising. However, after her death neither Helen nor Edward were going to sell the woodland. “The years went by and the Britches remained unsold and untouched. It became apparent to the village that you were dealing with people who were
beyond reason and impervious to common sense” (12). The Glovers are seen as from an other world and Dorothy is probably the culprit.

In Heat Wave, the personal and family history is remembered by Pauline. Again, particular features, similar to the novels which I examined above, emerge in Heat Wave as well. It is especially the similar character of the mother and the similar opinion of her expressed by the daughter. ”Her [Pauline’s] adolescence had been anxiously supervised by her mother, who had little else to do” (58). As in the other two novels, Pauline’s mother is also described as the mother without any interests and disrespected, at least by her daughter. Pauline’s mother is also remembered in relation to Pauline’s former husband Harry and their daughter Teresa. Pauline realises that her mother “did not much care for children“ (133). She was never emotionally interested in Teresa. She only occasionally made a remark about Teresa’s growth or things of that kind, which was seen as a kind of conventional dialogue. This fact made Pauline realise that there was no difference in the attitude of her mother towards Pauline herself during her childhood. When Harry was the subject of Pauline’s dialogue with her mother, the mother only asked some necessary questions and never concerned herself about her daughter’s wretched marriage. Despite the fact that Pauline once attempted to raise the issue of Harry’s infidelity, her mother sought to avoid being involved in that matter. When at last Pauline said that she was leaving Harry, her mother told her that it was very wrong of her as if it was Pauline who was at fault. Pauline’s mother is described in a negative way, no positive attribute is ever mentioned.

The missing father found in the previously explored novels applies to Heat Wave as well; Pauline did not see much of him although he lived with his family and was in fact present in her life. However, Heat Wave does not provide further details about Pauline’s parents; it is rather Pauline herself who is seen in the position of the mother. She recalls her own history as of the mother. Furthermore, her memories concern others who were important in her past and
constructing her identity, such as Harry, Teresa, Teresa’s son Luke and her husband Maurice – the one who is constantly giving impulses for Pauline’s closer observation of him and her recollections of Harry.

With respect to family history, Lively incorporates a particular element into her fiction. What I mean by this element is Lively’s suggestion that the characters’ faces bear the marks of their family history. The feature itself is not extraordinary; it is the way Lively deals with the subject that is distinctive. Lively suggests that the characters cannot throw off their family history – even if they attempt to behave in a completely different way and do completely different things from the other members of their family because they want to dissociate themselves from the unloved relatives, the features of their faces will forever give away their origin.

In *Heat Wave*, Pauline can see almost every member of her family through the features of Luke’s face, which is “an assemblage of references” (12). First of all, she can see his parents, Teresa and Maurice, which is nothing unusual. Luke’s nose and eyebrows show who his mother is as much as the spacing of his eyes reveals who his father is. However, she can see far more distant family history when she observes Luke’s face more closely. Not only does she see herself but she can also see “a flicker of her mother and a shimmer of her father” (12). Yet, there is another human being whose face acquires considerable significance for Pauline. She can see a great deal of herself when she looks at Teresa. Although she thinks that their features are not alike, she acknowledges that “that echo is there, that mirror-glimpse of self – elusive, indefinable, but inescapable” (13). And there is also Harry, no less important in this respect.

Claudia in *Moon Tiger* experiences similar feelings when thinking of faces. For her it is particularly her brother Gordon whose face makes Claudia compare his features with her own. She states: “Gordon’s face always mirrored, eerily, mine. We were not considered alike, but I
could see myself in him and him in me. A look of the eye, a turn of the mouth, a shadow. Genes declaring themselves” (20). Furthermore, Claudia says that her “own face flickers back” (20) when she looks at her daughter Lisa although she thinks that they are not alike at all – the same situation as with Pauline and Teresa in *Heat Wave*.

The situation in *Passing On* is slightly different. Helen, who can see her own face features in someone else’s face, is childless. Consequently, Helen’s features are not reflected in her daughter’s face. She can see herself in the face of Louise, her sister.

Lively is obsessed with “enigmas of time and self” (Jackson). My research into the personal and family history of the characters in Lively’s three novels shows how much the novels have in common. In all of them the mothers play the crucial role in the characters’ recollections. Alternatively, the protagonist is preoccupied with recollections of herself as the mother of the daughter once a child but now an adult with her own family. Another common feature concerns the missing fathers; the fathers were rather marginal figures in the protagonists’ lives. The novels have far more features in common if we look closer at the families but it is the subject of the chapter about the influence of time and human relationships.
2.2. Power of Memory

Memory is the central issue with which Lively is obsessed in her fiction. Whether referring to personal and family history or history in general the function of memory is in the centre of her interest. As Lively herself says, “[...] a lot of the fiction has been about the operation of memory about the way in which it works, whether we control it in any way or whether it controls us” (Penelope Lively). It usually seems that the operation of memory controls the characters but the characters are rarely able to control the memory. Lively stresses the enduring effects of experience and puts memory into the foreground in exploring the past.

There is always something that has the ability to provoke the operation of memory and this brings about recollections of events which have been lying beneath the surface. I focus on the events or objects in the present which make the characters recall the past events somehow connected to the present matters. Besides the events and objects, there are people, face expressions, features, clothes, behaviour, feelings and language by means of which the memories flash through the characters’ minds. Lively is genuinely interested in the vagaries of reminiscence and “perceptions, glimpses and interpretations of past, rather than a singular authoritative history” (“Penelope Lively”).

The operation of memory does not work on the basis of chronology, the memories are not arranged in a particular order – everything seems to be simultaneous. The recollections enter the characters’ minds no matter what the sequence of the past events was. There is always something that is the occasion of the particular recollections. In Moon Tiger, the protagonist Claudia Hampton is aware that it is impossible to know which event followed which and everything seems to be concurrent in her mind. “It is feeling that survives; feeling and the place. There is no sequence now for those days, no chronology – I couldn’t say at which point we went to Karnak, to the Colossus, to the tombs – they are simultaneous,” she says thinking about the days spent with her lover Tom (73).
In *Heat Wave*, there is a great number of elements which provoke recollections of the past events. One of the most frequent elements provoking the memories are people, their faces, expressions and feelings. There is especially one person who is repeatedly causing Pauline, the protagonist, to recall what happened in her own past. The character is Maurice, her daughter’s husband, who is cheating on Teresa. Since Pauline experienced the same with her former husband, she is unwillingly reflecting on Harry’s infidelity whenever she looks at Maurice, his behaviour towards Teresa, his gestures or Teresa’s face expressions and feelings. Pauline is suddenly found in the past experiencing exactly the same situation as her daughter in the present. In the early stages of Maurice’s infidelity, Pauline is rather ‘a prophet’. She can foresee what will happen to Teresa on the basis of the recollections of her own experience with Harry even before Teresa becomes aware of Maurice’s betrayal. Pauline takes notice of Maurice’s gestures and expressions and is becoming more and more afraid that he will betray Teresa. When James and Carol, Maurice’s friends, spend time with Maurice, Teresa and Pauline, she watches Maurice’s absorbed look upon Carol and realises that she has seen this look before. “In someone else’s eyes, at another time. She both sees the look and feels it like some chill shadow” (72). It is understandable that she does take notice – she is Teresa’s mother and the mother-daughter bond is quite strong in this case. Moreover, she is influenced by her own experiences with Harry.

Maurice is not only the source of Pauline’s recollections of Harry’s betrayal but also the source of her recollections of Harry himself. She frequently compares them. She realises that Maurice never calls Teresa darling, sweetie and similar expressions while from Harry’s mouth “endearments showered” (27). In addition, Maurice is seen as ‘Maurice of then’ and ‘Maurice of now’. Lively suggests that these two views are different because in the present Pauline knows Maurice in another way. She judges him in terms of Teresa’s husband while in the past he was seen just as Pauline’s acquaintance. Consequently, her views are separated.
‘Maurice of then’ often enters Pauline’s mind when she looks at him and she is fully aware of the fact that he is no longer the same Maurice whom she knew in the past. “The new Maurice is loaded with implications – nothing he says or does can be seen in the same way” (87).

Pauline’s most frequent recollections are those of Harry’s betrayal. Besides Maurice and his gestures, there is Teresa and her feelings and face expressions causing Pauline to reflect on the past events of this kind. Through Teresa’s face Pauline can see herself in the past; she was madly in love with Harry as Teresa with Maurice now and she is afraid that Teresa will suffer from Maurice’s betrayal in the same way as Pauline did from the betrayal of Teresa’s father. Teresa is not only the source of the memories but she is also the subject of them.

Lively is interested in the connection between the present and past and a master at picking exactly the same events from different periods and getting them together by means of recollections. There are many of them: Pauline is giving Luke his bath, which makes her think of another child, another time and another place – it is bathing of Teresa as a child but this event is only the source for further recollections in the centre of which is evidently Harry. Lively portrays the operation of memory as a chain reaction; each recollection provokes the next one.

This applies to Moon Tiger as well. In fact, there are not any present events which provoke memories but rather Claudia’s haphazard recollections which provoke other recollections of other events. More than any other Lively’s novel, Moon Tiger suggests that there is no chronology in recollections and the past events seem to be simultaneous with each other. In the article “The desires of history, old and new”, Tony E. Jackson explains the process of memory with respect to Moon Tiger:

What we do know of the past occurs as the synchronicity of coexisting mental associations (“inside the head”), and such associations are bound to each other by all manner of connections, their places in a sequence being important at some times and irrelevant at others. Such is the version of history preferred by Claudia.

In this fiction, Lively also uses especially people as the source of Claudia’s recollections.
When she thinks of her daughter Lisa, Claudia is immediately transferred into another time and another place (Lively is repeatedly using the phrase “another child and another time”, “another man and another place”, etc.) because the flashback of a particular memory has something in common with another flashback of another memory. In this case, Lisa provokes the image of Jasper, her father, and Claudia cannot avoid thinking of him. Yet, it is not Lisa herself but rather Lisa in a particular situation, which causes Claudia’s memory to match this picture with another similar picture in her mind. Lively implies that our memories are desintegrated in our minds but the power of memory links them together when some clue occurs. It is a haphazard process and the characters are not able to influence the sequence of the recollections. Instead, the operation of memory has the power to influence the characters.

In addition to Lisa, there are Gordon, Jasper, Tom, her mother and some marginal figures who have control over her memory; they are the pieces who intertwine together and constitute the whole of Claudia’s past and identity.

As Pauline in *Heat Wave* can see ‘Maurice of then’ differently from ‘Maurice of now’, Claudia in *Moon Tiger* similarly perceives Lisa. ‘Lisa of now’ is completely different from ‘Lisa of then’, who “is dead now as ammonites and belemnites, as the figures in Victorian photographs, as the Plymouth settlers” (46). This idea enters Claudia’s mind while she is remembering Lisa’s childhood. She is well aware of the fact that Lisa cannot be the same now as she was in the past.

Exactly the same feature also occurs in *Passing On*. I mean the ability of characters to see a person as two different people. In *Passing On*, a look at Louise provokes Helen’s recollections of her as a child. She sees ‘Louise of then’ who seems to have nothing in common with ‘Louise of now’ as implied in this passage:

> Long ago, Louise had been Helen’s baby sister — adorable, charming, vulnerable, to be looked after and protected. This Louise seemed very far away and inaccessible now: from time to time, though, she surfaced, weeping over the telephone of betrayals, impositions and the cruelty of fate. More often, the Louise of today scolded Helen for
This element concerning the ability to see a relative in two different ways, according to my research, appears in all three novels by Penelope Lively, which I explore. It is supported by the fact that the characters know each other for a rather long period of time.

In addition, *Passing On* also provides a great number of examples of recollections of the past events provoked by the characters. The recollections are not provoked by the people themselves but by them in connection with a particular situation which reminds the protagonist of a similar situation experienced in the past. This applies, for instance, to a situation when Helen takes notice of Louise’s husband Tim standing in the kitchen of the Glovers’ house and “looking with distaste at the cramped sink” (6). Watching him, she becomes aware of the fact that he always avoided the Glovers’ kitchen and did not come out of the drawing room or the dining room while domestic chores were being undertaken.

In addition to the characters and their behaviour, the typical elements provoking the memories are objects. *Heat Wave* abounds with recollections based on the glances at objects significant in remembering events connected with these things. There is the village phone box which provokes Pauline’s recollections of the telephone at another time and another place. Yet, it is not the phone box itself; it is the phone box in connection with a person and a situation, which provokes the memories. She sees Maurice emerging from the phone box and at the same time she sees Harry putting down the receiver when she comes into the room – the beginning of Harry’s as well as Maurice’s infidelity. There are also other types of recollections provoked by objects as when Pauline looks at the Italian majolica bowl on the shelf and remembers her first sexual experience during a holiday in Italy. The majolica bowl was “bought her as a memento by the Italian youth whose features she could no longer remember” (60). Lively implies that we may not remember something that seems to be crucial to the event – in this case the boy who was undeniably important in this experience – but we
remember things which seem rather negligible. In fact, they are not inconsiderable when they have significant connotations. Lively herself talks about the importance of the objects:
“They’re not necessarily going to be valuable objects, but just all the little things that relate to something in your life, the thing given to you by somebody, the thing that you acquired somewhere. If all of those vanish it would be quite difficult to hold on your own identity” (Penelope Lively).

Probably one of the most significant objects for Claudia in Moon Tiger is a Moon Tiger, which serves for repelling mosquitoes. This object has forever a particular connotation for Claudia: the connotation of her lover Tom and his declaration of love to her. Whenever she remembers the Moon Tiger, she reflects on the unforgettable night spent with Tom in Egypt. Another profoundly significant object provoking recollections is undeniably the desert. When Claudia returns to Egypt many years later and looks at the desert, which has for anyone else simply the connotation of Egypt, she sees her “own images, the distant but vivid shapes and colours of another time, the tanks hunched into the sand, […]“ (87). Lively implies to what extent the seemingly ordinary objects which are reflected in the characters’ memories are significant in individual lives.

For Helen in Passing On, it is Earl Grey tea which has a considerable connotation and power forever to incite recollections of Giles Carnaby, a man with whom she once fell in love. Helen and Giles drank Earl Grey when they first met in Glovers’ house. When Helen reviews Giles’ visit another recollection flashes across her mind. Feelings experienced at Giles’ presence provoke memories of the situation in which Helen was in the same emotional and physical state – her first sexual experience. Feelings are the essential part of the memories in all of the novels examined; Lively suggests that feelings survive unchanged. In respect of objects, Earl Grey is not the only thing evoking recollections. There are mother’s clothes which remind Edward of mother’s visits to the pantomime or the ballet in his childhood,
books which remind Helen of mother’s contempt for Helen’s reading or Helen’s old evening
dress which Helen comes across and which makes her recall the situation when her mother
claimed that it was spoiled during the cleaning.

In all three novels examined, Lively is interested in the operation of memory and the
occasions which provoke the recollections of the past. She suggests that nobody can resist this
process and the past events we once experienced cannot be separated from the present in any
case. Everything we have experienced is stored in our memory; the only trouble with memory
is that we do not know what is hidden in depth – we only realise that when some present
moment activates this ability to remember things and we are suddenly found unaware in the
past, completely absorbed in our recollections. The process of memory cannot be
discontinued on purpose; what happens to us enters our memory whether we like it or not and
at the same time “memory is the key agent in maintaining and negotiating our relationship to
the past” (Brannigan 42).
3. Influence of Time and Human Relationships

This part of my thesis is related to the previous one despite the fact that it focuses on a different aspect emerging in Lively’s novels. This feature, along with the connection of the past and the present, is of great importance to Lively. It includes introspection of the human relationships with focus on the family relationships. However, they are not considered in isolation. In her novels, Lively stresses the connection between the human relationships and the influence of time on the characters’ lives and relationships. The characters are undeniably influenced by the past on the one hand and by the flow of time and gaining experience on the other hand. The past – especially the family past – has a major impact on characters’ development and their relationships throughout the novels; Lively places emphasis on the persistence of the past in the characters’ lives. On the contrary, the present changes the characters’ view on the past; the unstoppable flow of time makes the characters realise that the past events cannot be seen in the same way in the present. Before I focus on these aspects I will provide some examples of the characters’ perception of the flow of time and its influence.

“Ms. Lively’s characters are all preoccupied with change and loss and mortality, with trying to balance the equation between youthful hopes and adult disillusionment, childhood dreams and grown-up doubts” (Kakutani, “Finding Memories”). The characters gradually discover that the world they saw in childhood is completely different from the world they see in adulthood. They become aware that the changes in the perception of the world are caused by the flow of time and their own development. In this respect, Lively is concerned with childhood and children’s perception of the world. In her novels, she implies that children see what adults can no longer see in the same way since they are influenced by the events they experienced, by the people they met and by the emotions they felt during their lives.

In *Heat Wave*, Lively employs the character of Luke, Teresa’s son, to evince her thoughts
of the difference between the children’s and adults’ perceptions. Describing Luke’s ability to see the life around him, Lively states: “Knowing nothing, he is astonished by everything. He exists on a different plane from Teresa, from Pauline, from Maurice – seeing what they cannot see, hearing what they cannot hear” (11). For Luke, there is no past, no present, no future. Everything is happening now and here. While the adult characters are well aware of the flow of time, for the child character an hour seems motionless. There is nothing that could influence Luke’s perception of the world since there is no experience and no knowledge. It is usually Pauline who senses that Luke is not tied to anyone and anything. “One thing is for sure – you would not wish to revisit the country in which he lives, knowing what you know now” Pauline realises (155). Lively is concerned with the time influence on human beings, their behaviour and relationships and shows that our behaviour is affected by the past experience and no one can avoid this influence.

The same applies to *Moon Tiger*, where Claudia is interested in children’s perception of the world which is quite distant from her or other adults’ ability to see things. She remembers her daughter Lisa once being “locked in her amoral preliterate condition with no knowledge of past or future, free of everything, in a state of grace” (43). Lively suggests that the adult characters realise at a particular moment that they can no longer live the life unaffected by the past experience and knowledge. They wish to experience those feelings of carelessness and happiness again but know that it is impossible with all the past events stored in their minds.

With respect to the flow of time, Lively’s characters are often concerned with the situations which might have happened in the past, the moments when things might have gone differently and the relationships which might have spun off in some other direction. In *Moon Tiger*, Claudia, influenced by the flow of time and knowledge and experience gained during her life, reflects on the past and its possible alternatives:

If feminism had been around then I’d have taken it up, I suppose; it would have needed me. As it was, I never felt its absence; being a woman seemed to me a valuable
extra asset. My gender was never an impediment. And I must also reflect, now, that it perhaps saved my life. If I had been a man I might well have died in the war. (14)

The influence of time also plays a crucial role in *Passing On*. There are a lot of moments when the characters feel the persistence and continuity of the past in their lives. What they do and how they conduct themselves is the result of the influence of the past and they are acutely aware of this fact. In this respect, my attention is focused on the influence of time on the characters’ relationships, or, alternatively, the influence of those relationships on the characters’ lives. In the following I explore this feature in all the three novels selected for my thesis.
3.1. Impact of the Past and Family Relationships

Contemporary female writers are usually concerned with issues connected with women’s lives and Penelope Lively does not make an exception. Along with other female writers, she focuses on women’s relationships with others. The novels which I explore are rich in family relationships; especially the mother-daughter bonds are in the centre of Lively’s attention. In her novels, Lively examines to what extent these bonds as well as other relationships and the family history have influence on the development of female characters. As a background for the chapter concerning family relationships, I have studied *The Psychodynamics of Family Life* by Nathan W. Ackerman, which provides a theory of family relationships, thereby explaining some of the features found in the novels. I suppose that Lively’s own experience with her mother had a considerable impact on her writing dealing with the mother-daughter bonds.

According to Ackerman, parents’ attitudes to their children are manifested in two different ways: the parents show the same attitudes as they themselves experienced in childhood; or, they display attitudes opposite to those they once faced (20). Lively herself seems to belong to the latter group of the parents. Although her mother had not been a very good mother, Lively, according to Freeland, devoted herself to the full-time motherhood and aspired to be a perfect mother to her children. However, Lively’s distant and unemotional relationship with her mother is reflected in the characters’ relationships in her novels which are concededly influenced by the family history in one way or the other.

As mentioned above, the most important family relationship in Lively’s novels is between the mother and the daughter. From the three novels selected the most profound and visible influence of the family history on the character’s life and relationships is demonstrated in *Passing On*. In the novel, Lively portrays tyrannical Dorothy who “browbeat and humiliated her unfortunate husband, mocked and chastised her children, provoked and irritated her
neighbors” (Kakutani, “A Mother’s Grip”). It is particularly Helen who suffers from her extremely manipulative mother’s ability to control her life, even after her mother’s death. Helen is reminded of Dorothy every minute – she can hear her mother’s voice responding to almost every situation or decision which she is going to make. Whether she is buying a sweater, spending time with Giles or simply rambling through the house, Helen cannot resist seeing her mother or hearing her voice. In these cases, Dorothy is always criticising Helen’s behaviour and decisions:

She [Helen] stopped to contemplate a display of sweaters. Blue. Interestingly patterned. ‘You can’t wear that sort of thing,’ said her mother. ‘It’s too young for you. You’re fifty-two. And too short and too fat. Louise could get away with something like that, I daresay. Not you.’ (20)

Helen strives to do things as she likes but she is unwillingly dependent on her mother in whatever she does. Dorothy is still there; she controls her children’s lives from beyond the grave.

Edward is also influenced by the family past. In Britské spisovatelky na konci tisíciletí, Milada Franková says that Edward not only grew up in the period which did not allow him to confess his homosexual orientation but it was also his puritan mother who deplored sex, which had a devastating effect on his identity and relationships with others. “Dorothy’s attitude to sex was one of withering contempt. She did not disapprove, she despised” (Passing On 42). In despair Edward attempts to get closer to Gary Paget, a young boy, who is working in Glovers’ garden and this act has disastrous consequences. Concerning the homosexual orientation, Ackerman explores this matter in disordered families and states that “there are instances of homosexual behavior linked to a domineering, possessive mother and a remote, reticent, inaccessible father” (91). It suggests that Edward’s homosexual orientation may be the result of the mother’s influence and her manipulation and the missing father. In terms of establishing contacts with people, Helen is profoundly influenced by her mother’s attitudes and upbringing as well. She has mixed feelings about the relationship with Giles and cannot
get rid of hearing her mother’s voice from beyond the grave constantly making unpleasant remarks and convincing her that she means nothing more to Giles than just a client. “Their younger sister, Louise, is the only one of Dorothy’s children who got out from under her [mother’s] thumb, who never acceded to her possessive and squelching tactics” (Bausch). Only Louise managed to become free of her mother’s manipulative tendencies since she had moved away and married.

Helen and Edward still live in their mother’s house, unmarried and childless. They both suffer from the mother’s manipulation when they learn that she bequeathed her house to their nephew Phil. Lively implies how much the characters are influenced and controlled by their mother whose power seems to be “even stronger from the grave than it was in life” (Bausch). When Helen and Edward are released from Dorothy’s manipulative tendencies after her death, they naturally face some problems. Even though they seek to begin a new independent life, it is not possible since their mother’s shadow still interferes in their lives. This situation could be partly explained on the basis of the theory examined by Ackerman in *The Psychodynamics of Family Life*:

> The mind of the individual already contains a deposit of social events recorded out of the past. It meets each new social situation with both the perceptions of the new experience and the deposit of the old. The action which ensues is a function of the psychic interplay of perceptions conditioned by past experience and the new one. (52)

It proves that the personal and family history has a considerable impact on everything we do in our lives without realising to what extent we are affected by the past experience. It is obvious that this explanation refers to Helen and Edward in *Passing On* as well as to other characters in *Heat Wave* and *Moon Tiger* as will be shown further on.

The mother-daughter bond also plays a crucial role in *Moon Tiger*. In fact, there are portrayed two relationships between the mother and the daughter – one describing the relationship between Claudia and her mother, the other showing that of Claudia and her daughter Lisa. There is no doubt that Lisa is affected by the family past and by the
relationship with her mother in particular. Lisa was brought up by the grandmothers since Claudia had little patience and time to care for her. Claudia herself admits: “Babies I find faintly repellent; young children are boring and distracting” (42). In retrospect, Claudia sometimes sees herself as an imperfect mother who did not much care for Lisa. She even wanted Lisa to call her by name. All these matters resulted in such a distant and unemotional relationship between them that Lisa does not regard Claudia as her mother and is quite indifferent to her even when Claudia is dying in a hospital. Their relationship has a heavy influence on Lisa’s relationships with others. She marries young to a respectable but boring man to run away from her mother. Claudia is aware of the cause for Lisa’s early marriage: “Had I not been as I am, Lisa would not have felt impelled, at nineteen, to grab at the status of marriage, at a world of her own, at the first likely young man to come along” (47). Lisa also seems to be have been affected by the family past in terms of her relationships to men. Claudia had never wanted to marry Jasper and had seen him only as the father of her daughter which might have resulted in the fact that Lisa is found in a similar situation with her husband. She sees him as the father of her sons but nothing else. The lack of feelings to her husband is compensated for by the relationship with her lover.

In spite of the fact that the mothers and the daughters in the novels argue that they have nothing in common and distance themselves from each other, Lively shows that there is always the influence of the past and the family history on the characters as well as the influence of the family members on each other. “A child never completely separates its psyche from parental influence,” according to Ackerman, “and in an analogous sense the adult’s identity is always being influenced through the accretion of the new layers of interpersonal influence” (58).

Pauline and Teresa in *Heat Wave* are no exception in this respect. Pauline is an independent woman while Teresa is vulnerable, insecure and easily becomes influenced.
Although it seems that they are completely different, several moments in the novels prove that the contrary is true. Watching her daughter’s behaviour, Pauline gradually becomes aware that she was almost the same as Teresa in the past; only the past experience has made her what she is now – an independent and self-assured woman. The influence of the past on the character’s life and relationships is clearly demonstrated in Pauline’s case. Her former husband’s infidelity made her more immune to disappointment but at the same time more thoughtful and anxious about Maurice’s imminent betrayal of Teresa. With her past experience with Harry in mind, Pauline can see that Teresa faces the same problems with Maurice. From all the novels examined, Heat Wave is the only one in which Lively depicts a loving and caring mother or rather two generations of the loving mothers. Teresa truly loves Luke as well as Pauline truly loves Teresa.

Not only is Pauline affected by the past but also Teresa is influenced by the family past in some way. It seems that the missing father plays the crucial role in shaping Teresa’s identity and attitudes to others:

Teresa has long since come to terms with her father’s defection, but she remains fatally endowed with expectations for the best. Being herself without malevolence, deviousness or duplicity she expects others to behave as she would and is perplexed rather than enlightened when they do not. She has never become attuned to the treachery of circumstance. When the rocks loon she does not recognize them. (34)

It provides an explanation for her incapacity to see Maurice’s infidelity and when she eventually recognizes it, she is so bemused that she is not even able to talk about this matter. Every time Maurice smiles at her or makes a gesture of goodwill, Teresa is immediately disarmed and full of hope that everything will be all right again. However, Teresa eventually experiences the same as Pauline did. The experience with Maurice’s infidelity changes her character – she becomes more immune to his smiles and gestures. “Teresa’s face is changing, by the day. It is losing its volatility. [...] The sun no longer comes out, in Teresa’s face” (199).

In addition to the relationship between the mother and the daughter, there is one more
family relationship which is extremely important in Lively’s novels. It concerns the relation between the brother and the sister but it only applies to Moon Tiger and Passing On. This brother-sister bond also undeniably affects the characters’ behaviour and establishing the relationships with others in some way. In both of the novels the relationship between the brother and the sister is close and positive and shows similar features. Both these relationships – Claudia and Gordon in Moon Tiger and Helen and Edward in Passing On – display the interdependence of the characters on each other and the inability to accept the fact that the other sibling has a partner.

Claudia and Gordon in Moon Tiger were very attached to each other in childhood despite being rivals and their relationship has remained warm and close although they had been separated for some period of time. Claudia disdains and deliberately neglects Gordon’s wife Sylvia of whom she thinks to be “profoundly stupid” (23). This is the same vice versa: Gordon disapproves of Claudia’s lover Jasper and cannot stand seeing Claudia in his presence. The relationship with Gordon had an enormous impact on Claudia’s life; she has always regarded him as a perfect man and her best friend.

Passing On also provides an example of a close relationship, this time between Helen and Edward who have lived together for all their lives except the period when Edward was sent to boarding school or Helen went to college. As in the previously described relationship Edward is disgruntled when Helen goes out with Giles and constantly worrying that Helen spends with him too much time. Edward does not have a partner who would make Helen uneasy but Helen has a warm relationship with Edward beyond doubt. She is protective about him and when she thinks about this attitude toward Edward she admits: “Protective. That, yes. One had no choice, really. Given mother. Given Edward” (36).

This sentence explains the feelings expressed in the brother-sister bond in both novels. The close relationship between the siblings is the result of the unemotional and distant relationship
with their mother who had rather hidden her feelings. On the other hand, the relationship between the brother and the sister has an immense impact on constructing their identity and establishing relationships. As Milada Franková says Lively demonstrates on the relationship between Claudia and Gordon to what extent the person’s own identity and destiny is shaped by the personal and family history and how little our own will is significant in this process (136).
3.2. Changes of Perception

The aim of this subchapter is to prove that the characters are influenced by the flow of time and consequently by their experience in perception of the world and the past events. In this respect, I focus again on human relationships since the changes of the characters’ view on the past events often concern this aspect in Lively’s novels. Lively suggests that we gradually put the fragments of the past events in our mind together, which subsequently creates the images and shapes our view on everything that once happened. It cannot be expressed better than in Claudia’s words in *Moon Tiger*: “In life as in history the unexpected lies waiting, grinning from around corners. Only with hindsight are we wise about cause and effect” (28). Several moments in her books prove how much the characters’ view on the events is different when considered with the distance of time.

As I said above, the changes of view on the past are particularly related to the relationships. In *Moon Tiger*, it was difficult for Claudia to understand Gordon’s decision to marry stupid Sylvia. However, years later she can see the point of his choice:

> Gordon needs Sylvia like some people need to spend an hour or two every day simply staring out of the window, or twiddling their fingers. Gordon’s intellectual energy is prodigious; his emotional energy is minimal. Those sharp clever women with whom, from time to time, he is seen, would never do as permanencies. Sylvia has always been more secure than perhaps she realises. (24)

While recalling the past events, Claudia becomes aware of the difference in perception of what happened during her life. She remembers time spent with her lover Tom in Luxor and realises that the image of the place in her mind is not the same as it was then since she saw it “through him and with him” and it was the beauty of the place which was in the centre of her attention (75). Now, she can see the place and Tom as one, “fused in the head to a single presence of his voice and his touch, those sights and those smells” (75).

In *Passing On*, there are mainly situations when Helen realises that Dorothy was a cruel and manipulative mother. Or, perhaps, she had known this before but only in the present,
when the mother is no longer alive, she is able to say it aloud: “She [Dorothy] bullied everyone who gave her the chance. She was prejudiced and inflexible and opinionated. She never listened to what anyone else said. She had a vile temper” (48). In the present, Helen can see that there is some connection between her relationship with Dorothy and her choice of occupation. Thinking about her decision to work in a library, she comes to the conclusion that she became a librarian since her mother did not care for the books and had nothing but contempt for Helen’s reading.

In *Heat Wave*, the changes of perception concern particularly Pauline and her view on Harry’s former infidelity. Watching the changes in Teresa’s marriage, Pauline recalls the past situations and gradually becomes aware what actually happened in particular moments when Harry was acting in the same way as Maurice is doing now. She can see now what she could not see at that time. She can also see many past events differently in the present. When Pauline learned about Harry’s lover Myra, she hated her and thought that she would always see her as the only progenitor of all that happened. Now, she has a completely different view on Harry’s betrayal and Myra is quite unimportant in the recollections of those years. Pauline gives an explanation of this change of perception: “It’s not that it ceases to matter – whatever there was back then – but simply that it moves off into some other dimension” (177).

In her novels, Lively suggests that the characters are not only affected by the personal and family past and past experience but also by the present experience and by the flow of time in general and this all has a serious impact on their lives and perception of the world.
Conclusion

In my thesis I examined the connection between the present and the past in three of Penelope Lively’s novels. I provided the evidence that Lively is concerned with the persistence of the past in the characters’ lives and its influence on their behaviour, decisions and relationships. I focused on the personal and family history although general history emerges in the books as well. Nevertheless, the personal and family history concededly predominates. With respect to this feature, I explored the operation of memory and occasions which provoke recollections of the past events. I attempted to show that the past cannot be separated from the characters’ lives.

The aim of the second part of my thesis was providing the evidence about the influence of time on the characters and exploration of the human relationships – with focus on the family relationships – which are of crucial importance to Lively. She demonstrates on these relationships how much the people are influenced by them in their development. On the other hand, the characters’ relationships are affected by the past experience. As all the features explored in my thesis concern the past, the present and time in general – although with different focus in each part – the content of the chapters and subchapters overlap.
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