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Title:

Irishness, Identity and Trauma in John McGahern's *Amongst Women (1990),* Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark (1996),* Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture (2008)* and Anne Enright's *The Gathering (2007)*

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Dedication

To my first teachers, who guided me through life so that I could become the person I am today; to those who ingrained in me the desire for knowledge at a young age and to those who encouraged me to pursue my dreams.

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on Irish identity and trauma representation in four contemporary Irish works, selected on their historical settings which are highly significant to the discussion. When read altogether, as a sequential historical representation of Ireland, these stories sculpt a multitude of social, political, and religious interpretations of what it means to be Irish during two pivotal periods in Irish history, notably from the War of Independence in the 1920s to the Celtic Tiger economic boom in the 1990s. Despite differences in themes, characters, and settings, these novels, namely John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1991), Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* (1996), Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture* (2008), and Enright Anne's *The Gathering* (2006), depict their protagonists as singularities of Irish expression that had either been unheeded in Irish Literary Revival portrayals or had been unacknowledged by official national documents. Therefore, this thesis attempts to delve into the question of Irishness as a traumatic representation that has been, and continues to be, obscured by the centrality of national identifications and historical interpretations. However, because the identities of these protagonists are replete with haunting experiences that bear cultural multigenerational attributes, our enquiry takes a psychoanalytic approach by delving into trauma theory. The central argument is that each of these stories represents a distinct narrative, a facet of Irish history, and a collective experience. These narratives confront the promoted oneness of Irish national narratives and advance a transformation towards singularities of Irish expression that can only be communicated by conceptualising what traumatic memories entail.

Keywords: Irishness, Trauma, Multigenerational Trauma, Nationalism, Irish Traditional Paradigms, Irish Literary Rivals, John McGahern, Seamus Deane, Sebastian Barry, Anne Enright

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Irish people are commonly thought of in terms of the collective, which is a social microcosm that rewards certain forms of identification, especially those that introduce the past as a residue of uniqueness. From here, linking Irish history to ongoing discussions on Irishness as a descriptor for Irish subjectivity, being Irish is believed to be an identity profiling that endorses strong nationalistic sentiments. Although such identity architecture inherently assumes that Irish people identify strenuously with their national history as a reflection of Celtic cultural traditions, the point that several Irish discussions attend to is whether Irish people view themselves as more than one historical continuum. To put it another way, after the rise of strong national ideologies in the early twentieth century, it is still uncertain how Irish people see themselves today: whether as a hegemonic expression of their Gaelic heritage or as different manifestations within that paradigm. Being Irish is, thus, not equated with becoming Irish; as the former surrenders to the directionality of outward structures of Irish images that of one nation, whereas the latter is a progression of Irish identity - self-identification - that is based on psychological peculiarities. In between these two poles, trauma studies have recently emerged as an interesting perspective from which to contextualise Irishness; rather than propagating the past, trauma exposes a method of scrutiny that is feasible for meeting Irish themes.

As far as this thesis is concerned, we will attempt to wrestle with uncharted territory in the recent Irish discussion on identity, by contending with the dynamic of two structures of identification. The first is the representation of Irishness as a form of conventional national identity in a postcolonial context, from the post-independence period until the 1990s, while the second refers to the set of contemporary expressions of individualism pertaining to a specific

psychoanalytic angle, trauma. In this way, such an endeavour would stimulate to rethink Irishness as a possibility for transformation, as singularities, that have moved past the outmoded belief in uncompromising national unity. This outmoded identification of the Irish oneness, in an attempt to preserve the Irish pure image, perpetuates intolerant practices toward peripheral models of identification. These experiences are immensely felt in four stories, albeit differently, but the theme of being Irish without becoming Irish is prevalent in John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1990), Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* (1996), Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture* (2008) and Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007). Therefore, we intend to recognise these stories, which depict a multitude of traumatic events, as a medium for expressing an Irish identity that has evolved, through several generations, from the early twentieth century to the present.

Because the concept of Irishness after Irish independence was susceptible to the pervasive supervision of national narratives, which in turn, were swivelled around established identifications promulgated from romanticised history, nationalists had to repress certain individual identifications that did not fit with the national agenda to reconstruct a unified Irish image. The narratives in these selected works, however, reveal the extent to which unspoken situations were left unaddressed, as evidenced by the experiences of the main characters in these works who epitomise the continuing dysfunctional dynamics between the other characters, and their recollections of what is Ireland. All of these contribute to the impression that traumatic experiences, yet, have to dissipate in the present.

The significance of this research is underlined; herein, by the urge to establish a dialogue between national and individual institutions. Consequently, we find that the subordinate voices in Irish historical narratives are as unique and diverse, albeit unreliable accounts, as Ireland's

history- which is shrewd in subjectivity on its own. These voices outline a larger path for establishing a broader structure for Irishness in their quest to challenge external pressure or reclaim internal individualism. The various means by which each story expresses trauma provide genuine representations of a multifaceted Irish culture, an *Irishness*, that emerge from the individual journeys to overcome traumatic experiences.

Because Irishness, as an identity paradigm, is a challenging construct that is habitually shaped by both domestic and foreign perceptions, it is uneasy to pinpoint what Irishness implies. Adding to the complication is a convoluted understanding of history with their neighbours, i.e., the British colonisation of Ireland, a trauma-based perspective limits this ambiguity to narrower, yet, compelling inquiry. Trauma was chosen as the major anchor in our research for a myriad of motives. The main motivation is Ireland's situation as a divided island where the North and South are historically connected in moments of crisis only. Certainly, this is a statement that W.B Yeats agrees with as we read the memo addressed to his peers: "If you show that this country, southern Ireland, will be governed by Roman Catholic ideas and Catholic ideas alone, you will never go north" (qtd.in Arkin 77). Another motivation is to recognise how habitual forms of national experience would inevitably find their way into that nation's literature.

Given that William Butler Yeats was influenced by Irish mythology, folklore, and geography, his poetry and plays almost always take place in Ireland. Reading his *Easter, 1916*, we learn of his attachment to his nation as an act of undying commitment expressed through metaphorical senses. This was a vital aspect of our personal motivation for embarking on this endeavour, which has resulted in the amassing of latent forms of postcolonial insight on the temperaments of the Anglo-Celtic bond. Being a product of postcolonial context, we believe this

journey to explore Irish identity to be particularly symbolic, replete with subjective proportions, as there are several parallels between the Irish and Algerian experiences to shed light on.

Like most decolonised nations, Ireland had to rely on national narratives fashioned in a postcolonial context for a universal conduit of dignified representations. Moreover, these narrativisations embraced accounts confined to the centrism of collectiveness to minimise the disordered images left by the former coloniser's disruptive presence. However, some of what was envisioned to be a romanticised Irish nation, where the ideals of Catholicism and Celtic tradition would withstand the secular and modern impulses of its former colonisers, had traumatic aftermaths that should have been addressed long ago. That being said, it is not difficult to understand why Irish people are often said to be obsessed with living in the past-of being vulnerable to historical fluxes- and that their history continues to influence current Irish social engagements. During the early twentieth century, it was widely thought in Ireland that the Irish past was a root of mysticism. Furthermore, the sentimental engagement with history was meant to give Irish people a unique sense of oneness; nonetheless, much of the uniqueness was aggressively implemented.

Irish identity had long been regarded as a hegemonic cluster, and preserving national images necessitated a centralisation to maintain control over its narratives, some of these were experimented with to complement those with romanticised interpretations. Nonetheless, one of the implications of colonialism is that it solidifies sentiments of inferiority as a prominent characteristic between the colonised and their colonisers. In the Irish context, this is somewhat true, given the long history of the British empire in Ireland, and the repeated campaigns to take control of the island, beginning in 1696 with English parliamentarian Oliver Cromwell's attempt to conquer Ireland from the ruling Irish Catholic Confederation. The British had waged ever

since strategic assaults on Irish character in their acquisition of Ireland, specifically on the Irish language, Catholicism, and rural life, an approach intended in the early modern period to ensure Irish people would fully assimilate into English civilisation. In this respect, the Irish experience with colonialism might be no different from other colonised countries; however, unlike many other Western European countries, Ireland's historical development was interrupted and misrepresented in the early twentieth century.

For ages, violence has characterised Ireland's history, with perpetrators hailing from both within and outside its boundaries. The colonisation of Ireland by England began in the sixteenth century, but colonialism's legacy has been more potent in the twentieth century than in any other period throughout history. Whilst Ireland underwent decolonisation shortly after the turn of the century, the process of regaining political independence from England would not take place until the 1940s. The Celtic Island was eventually partitioned into a Republic in the south and Northern Ireland, a part of the United Kingdom, in the north. The turbulent decades leading up to Irish independence influenced not just the political landscape of north and south Ireland, but also how the island and its people were portrayed in literature.

In the face of these uncertainties, Irish intellectuals, following the initial country's independence, were self-conscious social performers whose efforts had a significant impact on public discourse. Their objective was to create a unified social, literary, artistic, and even religious identity that corresponded to the new socio-political context of the newly independent Republic. Nonetheless, the uncertainty was more visible in the North, where decades of conflict had perpetuated an incalculable traumatic legacy affecting how Irish people venerated their identity. As a result, the new emerging question of Irish identity in modern Irish fiction has been pervaded by an active attempt to re-recognise the past as a type of glorified mysticism and to

filter modernity via that conjecture. For the second part of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, the social vision and practice of being Irish were homogenised largely around clearly understood and commonly accepted notions contained within what would be termed a 'Traditional Paradigm' of Irishness.

In a chapter titled "*The Irish Paradigm,"* a reading from Pascale Casanova's book, *The World Republic of Letters*, the leverage of national subjectivity over conceptualizing history, and hence their individual identifications, is perceptively addressed. Casanova contends that the Irish founding fathers' concept of Irishness recognises Dublin as the fundamental distributor of Irish literary legacy, with London and Paris only serving as two axes orbiting the traditions. For that reason, Yeats was hailed as the first national champion of Irishness in Dublin. On the other hand, the image of the Irishman in London as assimilated English specifications by George Bernard Shaw, and James Joyce's depiction of Irish anomalies in Paris would come second to the concept of Irishness that is bound to national discourse (318). On a similar note, Mark Cronin writes of how cultural nationalist organisations, which developed in the late Nineteenth-century, promoted a "cohesiveness of cultural experience" that offered people "a clear sense of an Irish identity" (166). This "clear sense" of identity coalesced within a common framework grounded by particular constituent markings. Moreover, Joseph Moffatt argues that these paradigms had been constituted into four main facets: rural Ireland, the Irish language, the Gaelic tradition and the Catholic Church (1). Though each constituent does not need to have necessarily inter-acted or even have been accepted by all people in Ireland as marking Irish identity - for instance W.B. Yeats may not have understood his own Irishness through any Catholic marking but he did somewhat understand Irishness through his espousal of rural Ireland and the Irish language. Those scholars, activists, and authors shared a spirit of national intellectualism rereferred to as

the Irish Literary Revival movement. Between two benchmarks in Irish history, Irish independence and the Irish Civil War in the first half of the twentieth century, the Gaelic renaissance, as advanced by these writers, laid the groundwork for a specific set of identity formations regarding Ireland, predominantly based on the aforesaid paradigms.

Irish nationalists, likewise, identified themselves with the ideals championed by revivalists in a trend that intended to wield immense control over the country for the coming decades. As Declan Kiberd asserts in his study of Irish national history, "the value of nationalism was strategic" in a way "it helped to break up the self-hatred within an occupied people" (146-147). The surges of anti-British sentiments were a powerful impetus in establishing the Irish character, as the Irish had been identified as the uncivilised 'Other' for generations due to their colonised status. This meant that re-establishing a sense of national pride was a major prerequisite shared by the general population.

However, when Ireland sought to establish itself as an independent country, any incident or quality that would jeopardise the idealised image was repressed to preserve the authority of the homogenised concept of Irish unity. Accordingly, in his *History of Ireland*, Thomas Bartlett reports how the political crises that Ireland had to cope with kept coming in overwhelming succession namely: World War I, the Easter Rising, Partition and the emergence of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, the Civil War, the enactment of the Constitution, World War II, and eventually, the signing of the Republic of Ireland Act, which ended the government's final ties with England. From 1914 to 1949, this period of uncertainty and turmoil lasted three decades, during which political struggles were inextricably linked to the definition of Irish national identity. From the half of the century to the 1990s, one of Ireland's notorious nationalist groups, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), implemented aggressive methods to inculcate national

consciousness in the Republic, as well as among northern nationalists, and to globalise the struggle - in particular, to rally Irish-American sympathy (564). During the 1990s, these fluctuations of historical identifications were confronted with a series of shocking situations at the national level, compelling Irish writers to question how precisely Irishness is defined, wherein the conclusion was deduced to the sense of 'redefining', and thereby the late movement of historical revisionism transpired.

With the abundance of literary and non-literary deliberations, it is evident that the claim that Irish literature is traditionally obsessed with the past has been established. However, the method by which these authors approach the issue has shifted from romanticisation of history to revisionism, where several traumatic experiences are bluntly articulated even if they deconstruct the revered Irish image. Tellingly, our selected authors for this research struggle with this obsession but reading these stories closely, albeit fictional, reveals the possibility of new conversations taking place in the evaluation of the Irish experience. Some may argue that the uniqueness of Irishness lies in these nuances, as history continues to generate new options for identification, regardless of how bleak and soulful they come to be. Kiberd reads this 'fixation' not as an inability, or a disinclination, to move on from the troubled Irish past, but rather that "the Irish are obsessed with their power over it [the past], including the power to change its meaning whenever that seems necessary" (280). According to Liam Harte, in *Reading the Contemporary Irish Novel1987–2007*, the return into the past is visible not only in Revivalist works, shepherded by Yeats and his circle, at the turn of the nineteenth century but also in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries when countless Irish writers had an acute interest in history to navigate their own experiences through fictional narratives (Harte 108).

For many years following the war with Britain and the subsequent dispute in Northern Ireland known as 'the Troubles,' Irish people identified with the revivalists' national discourse seeing as they believed in the need for unification, — especially between the north and south—, a collective urge that was harnessed by national centrism ideology. However, several events took place during the 1990s, that resulted in profound changes in the way the Irish thought about themselves and their country. The signing of the Good Friday Agreement (1998) put an end to political bloodshed in the north and the Celtic Tiger's economic boom (1994) aided in the development of a more global, consumer-driven culture than had ever been seen before. Ireland experienced a growing economy, which allowed it to cater not only for its local population but also for an influx of immigrants while still holding a competitive value internationally. Henceforth, Irish authors such as McGahern, Deane, Barry, and Enright, who are products of this shift, grapple with how to represent this change in a handful of social aspects, privately or publicly. Therefore, representing traumatised individuals for these authors necessitates contending with the nation's unique history, and by extension, it presupposes investigating true Irishness.

This worldview, which involves reconsidering collective experiences via individual journeys, is in line with what Cathy Caruth, a trauma theorist and one of the pioneers of this field, implies when she claims that we should study history "not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his past, but as the story of the way one's trauma is tied up with the trauma of another" (8). The novels that were produced after the 1990s, a period marked by two national stamps known as The Good Friday Treaty and The Celtic Tiger Agreement, are not only diverse portraits of participants in the Irish stereotypical society but also accounts of a national ambition to restore prominence in Irish history. Therefore, *Amongst Women (1990), Reading in*

the Dark (1996), The Secret Scripture (2008), and *The Gathering (2007)* unfold stories riddled with unacknowledged experiences of Irish people.

Taking into consideration that each of the selected four texts revolves around a fundamental trauma experience that manipulates history and generational memory in unique manoeuvres, the argument has been made that some of the unacknowledged Irish experience is *uniquely* traumatic. The identifications of individuals with national experience should be personalised, as Caruth expresses previously, for their experiences to parallel those of the broader group. Therefore, beyond the urgency to know the truth about tragic events in Irish history, we are more concerned with how these characters, McGahern's Moran, Deane's unnamed protagonist, Barry's Roseanne and Enright's Veronica, cope with the aggressive identifications that have been placed against them. Hereby, we argue that a sense of individual transformation is, therefore, required, one that takes psychological investment around traumatic experiences in these texts, in order to challenge the centrism of hegemonic image that has plagued Irishness for far too long. Historically, this reflects Ireland's transition, as contemporary Irish national narratives are now driven by a different obsession: accurately portraying Irish reality rather than the idealistic ideas of the Irish Literary Revival.

While 'trauma studies' as a newly emerging field have been praised as an appealing and excellent method for scrutinizing literature in broader terms and postcolonial discourse, in particular, its psychoanalytical inquiry does not fully incorporate colonialism, which is a key element of Irish literature and its cultural context. Notwithstanding this limitation, trauma studies still serve as a useful starting point for observing the narratives described in our research. The reason for considering this approach is that in the aftermath of traumatic experiences during the decades when nationalists assumed charge, Irish people were forced to renegotiate unspoken

centrality that affected subsequent generations. However, trauma representation, what it means, how it affects Irish people, and how it is handled, at least in these stories, cannot be confined to a single approach or unified rationale. Therefore, in fictional settings which resemble a newfound Ireland, Moran, the anonymous narrator, Roseanne, and Veronica all undergo a shift in their perceptions, resulting in new possible outcomes for identifications. As each character represents a unique set of Irish expressions, it all culminates in traumatic struggles. It is, however, difficult to pinpoint the mechanisms that lead to this premise. As a result, addressing the following supplementary questions is warranted in reflecting on such observations:

The dichotomy of 'we against them' has always been at the centre of Irish nationalism. By applying postcolonial inquiry, (1) how do these stories' narratives echo similar underlying principles in their representations of national identity? Furthermore, in these stories, each character represents a specific perception of Ireland, wherein, we observe their individual identifications. (2) How do they connect to the continuous flux of Irish traditional paradigms inherited from previous generations? Finally, since trauma, as a multigenerational condition, is a critical factor in reasoning how people come to terms with centralised identifications, (3) what is the connection between their perception shifts and working through trauma?

To meet these questions, and because the nature of our discussion demands a considerable involvement in - and of- various concepts, using a psychoanalytic view would offer a wider range of possibilities for our inquiry. As a consequence, a number of critical perspectives that branch out from the psychoanalytic scope, such as postcolonial theory and trauma theory, will be carefully integrated. All of this emanates from our research's interest in a multitude of social, psychological, and, to a lesser extent, political, and archetypal investigations of Irish identity. For these reasons, Caruth's comprehensive works on trauma and psychoanalysis in

literature will assist us to explore the dualism of postcolonial history and trauma as a condition that lingers in generational narratives—this is to make reference to the community. Given that trauma is originally synonymous with Freudian readings, we will lay further emphasis on Jacques Lacan's definition of trauma. We will place more leverage on the Lacanian viewpoint, considering he is a continuation of the Freudian model, to discuss the individual's place within their setting as a traumatised 'self' versus 'the other.' Finally, and equally important, Dominick LaCapra's works add more perspective to the trauma studies interpretation of these novels, where the process of narrating, writing, and self-fulfilment becomes our focal point for observing individual transformation. The utilisation of these different perspectives is an endeavour to soothe a craving in social, and hence political, viewpoints about Irish identity as understood from our reading of these novels.

Continuing with the novels selected for this thesis, it is equally important to offer a brief explanation of the rationale for choosing these specific characters, who were purposefully assigned to embody a unique facet of Irishness via their traumatic narratives. Moreover, it should be highlighted that our exploration of Irishness attempts to adopt a chronologic view, beginning with traditional perceptions of Irish identity inside Irish families during the War of Independence by first delving into Moran's narratives in *Amongst Women*. Then, we conclude the research by giving a perspective on the transformative model of Irishness that emerged in the 1990s, when Ireland has undergone a shift in its socioeconomic propensities marked by The Celtic Tiger's boom, in which Veronica's narratives in *The Gathering* are essential in achieving this claim. Our objective is to show how Irishness has evolved across generations, through its socio-political and socioeconomic circumstances, where the location from rural, that is Great Meadow of *Amongst Women*, is contrasted by *The Gathering's* Dublin/England. To elaborate, the objective behind

placing the other two novels, *Reading in the Dark* and *The Secret Scripture*, in the midsection is to emphasise the locations of their narratives while placing minimal attention on the time of events—despite the fact their events, nonetheless, fundamental in interpreting these stories. Deane's novel depicts Northern Ireland amid changes, narrated by an unnamed child from a Catholic household in a protestant community, whilst Barry's narrative contrasts this premise by providing an account of a Protestant woman in a predominantly Catholic town in the Republic.

The first novel we will discuss is *Amongst Women*, which is considered to be John McGahern's finest work. McGahern's novel is about the overwhelming and unrelenting social forces that determine rural Irish life after the war for independence. The setting of this story, Great Meadow, the family property, where nearly all of the novel's action happens, is vital and inherent in fudging narratives. Great Meadow not only functions as a landscape for Moran's initiatives, but it is also a metaphor for Ireland in and of itself. The story begins with Moran's daughters preparing an annual celebration for their father called Monaghan Day to commemorate his wartime experiences during the War of Independence. With no recollection of what it entails because they did not live during the conflict, the daughters appear to live in a different time as the Republic of Ireland enjoys relative peace. When this day ends up in a failure, Moran is thrown back in time as he recounts to his daughters his traumatic experience during the war, describing how he killed a man. As the troubled old man struggles with his repression, which can be observed in his violent war memories, McGahern moulds a polemical view about the dissatisfaction with politics, and even the scepticism about the war sacrifices since Ireland did not turn out the way many Irish had imagined.

Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* is the second text that we consider in this study. The plot revolves around the experiences of a little boy as he investigates the inexplicable

disappearance of his uncle, Eddie. Unlike the other three stories, in Deane's book, the setting is in Northern Ireland, Derry, where the minority Catholic community struggle between maintaining their Irish Catholic identity and assimilating into Protestant society. As the family narrative is riddled with painful unacknowledged scenarios, the disappearance of Uncle Eddie some twenty years ago becomes the text's enigmatic centre. In this novel, it is not just the uncle's death that is traumatic, but it is also the silence that surrounds his death, which passes the aftershocks of that trauma down to the family's second and third generations.

The third novel is *The Secret Scripture* by Sebastian Barry, the story of Roseanne McNulty, an old inmate at Roscommon Mental Hospital. This book divides the narration between Roseanne, who is committed to writing down her life's history, and Dr. Grene, the hospital's attending Psychiatrist. Following a series of unfortunate events, Roseanne, who has become an unmarried mother, is admitted to a mental hospital. In this story, the complicated relationship between the Catholic Church and women's asylums extends beyond Roseanne's experiences. By outlining not only the new state's troubling treatment of women but also the tragic experience of those children removed from their parents, the story shows how traditional forms in order to preserve the façade of purity bring traumatic unspoken ordeals to the family institution. Barry's novel illuminates a link between the nation's sociopolitical dysfunction and the domestic dysfunction of individuals following the island's partition.

The last novel is Anne Enright's *The Gathering*, which won the Man Booker Prize in 2007. Enright, like Barry, places her story in present-day Ireland but the narratives sculpt journeys into an imagined past of the narrator's tenuous childhood memories. As the protagonist, Veronica Hegarty, describes the painful process of telling her family that her brother Liam committed suicide in the first chapter, we are immediately made aware that this story deals with

trauma. Enright's story conveys the symptoms of trauma that inhabits many Irish families. What distinguishes this work from others is that the horrific incident at the heart of the novel is not openly tied to the sociopolitical environment; rather, the domesticity of the trauma is pertinent to the portrayal of Ireland through the transmission of traumatic experience.

Because, as we argue, each story centres around a particular instance of traumatic experience, we will opt for a diversified method for the structure of our thesis. As a result, this thesis will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will look into the theoretical materials associated with our inquiry into Irishness, whether the individual or national identifications, as well as the applied concepts of Trauma Studies. The four chapters that follow will each correspond to a novel, and each of these chapters will be subdivided into three subsections. Each subsection, on the other hand, will aim to grapple with a direction that meets the thematic orientation of this thesis: identity, Irishness, and trauma. The first part will outline Ireland's national representations in these stories, as well as, the complementary socio-political and socioeconomic images within hegemonic and historical paradigms. The second section will attempt to introduce the subject, the centre node of the narratives, the main characters, as we will reveal their self-identifications in their respective worlds as a substitute for unique symptoms of Irishness. The third chapters are where our exploration of trauma is fully executed, with each chapter serving as a repository of different interpretations of what we intend by a traumatic event. Herein, we will eventually unearth a semblance of transformational Irishness underneath the traditional view of Irish identity.

I. Theoretical Framework

1.1. Introduction

This chapter is the theoretical threshold of this thesis, where we will attempt, first, to describe concepts relevant to our research enquiry, such as trauma as a psychological disorder or as a field and its sub branches. We will also put emphasis on explaining what do we mean by identity and how it might be a conditional construct with respect to national and individual zones. In the second section, we will address various historical and literal applications of Irish identity as represented in the Irish tradition from the past century to the present: the Irish Literal Revival and historical revisionists, as well as concepts of Irish identity paradigms and Irish transformation.

1.2. A perspective on Trauma Theory, National Identity and their Implications

1.2.1. Trauma Theory from Freud to Caruth

The definition of trauma is quite enigmatic, having been met with both conflicting and comprehensive opinions by academics, leaving us with a diverse range of interpretations of its impacts, particularly in connection to its recent emergence in literary criticism. The word trauma is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people's ability to cope, leaving them powerless. In other words, trauma means a very severe shock or very upsetting experience which causes psychological damage. According to Judith Herman, American clinical psychiatrist and renowned Harvard theorist, the traumatic event overwhelms the ordinary human adaptation of life (33). Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life and bodily integrity, or a close personal

encounter with violence and death. Trauma has sometimes been defined in reference to circumstances that are outside the realm of normal human experience. However, for some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become part of the common human experience. Consequently, traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they disturb the ordinary human adaptability to life (33).

The word trauma originates from the Greek language referring to a physical wound or injury on the body. The term has long been used in medicine and surgery; nevertheless, in its later usage, the word trauma was referred to as a psychological wound upon one's mind in psychiatric studies and the related literature to psychotherapy, particularly Freudian discourses. The classic model approach to trauma studies, such as Freud's, understands trauma as an emotional wound or shock because of an event in one's life, characterised by its "intensity", the inability to respond fittingly, and the fact of having long-lasting effects. Because consciousness cannot fully apprehend the immediate aftermaths of these events, traumatic memory is not available until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in nightmares and repetitive actions of its survivors (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 6). Known for his psychoanalytic investigations on various emotional disorders, Freud recognised, in adults suffering from neurotic disorders, recurring psychological patterns manifesting as a psychic shock, most prominently hysteria. In his work, *Three Essays in Theory of Sexuality,* he explains that this pattern implicates a process of three stages: the traumatising event, the victim experiencing the trauma and the victim's psychological reaction by either forgetting or repressing (Freud 17). Freud's model of that time was extremely dependant on the relations between the notion of trauma and that of defence in which repression constitutes his model.

In this situation, repression occurs according to a repeating pattern rather than one's normal/typical responses: typically utilised in reaction to an unpleasant event. To elaborate, repression mechanisms reveal that trauma is a powerful experience that, when consciousness seeks to forget (repress), it manifests itself in the form of repetitive behaviour. According to Freud, these traumatic events linger in the unconscious like alien bodies, ready to be triggered at any time. Victims whose memories are fixed on a certain aspect of their history are unable to liberate themselves from their past experiences, therefore, they become estranged from their present and their future (Freud 236). Freud's ground-breaking research on trauma as psychological causation was restricted to his clinical investigations on disorders such as hysteria (which is mirrored in victims' memories as a response to childhood sexual abuse, experiences of fear, anxiety, intrusive thoughts, and unsettling images). As a result, Trauma Theory had not yet been fully established as a literary criticism since it confined itself to a clinical view of human behavioural psychology.

Trauma Theory was first accused of its irrelevance or unresponsiveness to real-world issues such as history, politics, and ethics because of its epistemological tendency, but that understanding soon began to change around the mid-1980s and onward. Since the 1990s, the theory embarked upon literary criticism contributing with a variety of significant analytical and methodological tools, which were provided by psychoanalysis to adequately comprehend texts that engage with traumatic memory. Among the early influential figures, American scholars dominated the new literary endeavours earning an undeniable pioneering role. The volume *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, edited by Soshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992), followed by Cathy Caruth's two influential studies *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative*

and History (1996), and works of Geoffrey Hartman, and Dominick LaCapra; paved the way; and have now achieved canonical status.

In explaining the historical progression of trauma studies, we will reference Michelle Blaev's extensive works, *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014), which outlines the growth of trauma studies since its inception. That being said, the initial impression of this new scholarly trend in trauma studies was quite enthusiastic and optimistic in terms of the future of literary trauma theory by popularizing the notion of trauma as an unrepresentable event. This theoretical trend opened up a new psychoanalytic post-structural approach that suggests trauma as "an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language" (Balaev 1). Caruth, however, challenges the poststructuralists' thesis by arguing that the textual method may provide us with a distinctively unique perspective on history (*Unclaimed Experience 10*). This approach emphasises trauma as a concept that frequently refers to "absence," and which refutes existing knowledge of these traumatic experiences, preventing the assertions going on the linguistic values other than a referential expression. Moreover, this possible "rethinking of reference", as Caruth calls, allows us to reconsider the reinterpretation of history instead of eliminating it. Hence, Caruth's approach aims "at resituating [reference] in our understanding that is, permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not" (11). Caruth's model is a sufficient approach when seeking to gain access to extreme events and experiences that contravene the general- and typical-comprehension and representation of history (usually hegemonic interpretations) by applying deconstructive epistemology and psychoanalytic studies to the analysis of literary and cultural discourses calling attention to traumatic histories. Nonetheless, Balaev, in a chapter entitled *Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered,* believes that this model of deconstructive criticism

leaves space for particular emphasis on linguistic indeterminacy, equivocal referentiality and aporia since *the unspeakable void* becomes the dominant concern in this criticism for locating trauma's function in literature (1). As a result, Caruth's trauma model appealed to a wide spectrum of critics working outside of poststructuralism, notably those interested in the interplay of marginalised literature in the grand historical narratives.

To understand how viable Caruth's model has become, a more neurologically based view will be explored. Henceforth, John F Kihlstrom clarifies these neurological peculiarities by commenting that a traumatic event – or traumatic stressor – produces an excess (overabundance) of external inputs (stimuli), culminating in an excess of excitement in the brain. When a victim is threatened in this manner, the brain is unable to fully assimilate or "process" the event and responds through a range of techniques such as psychological numbing or shutting down of normal emotional responses. In some cases, as a number of theorists claim, the situation of extreme stress *dissociation* takes place. Consequently, the subject "splits off" part of itself from the experience, producing "multiple personalities" in the process which, in extreme cases, evolves to hysteria or amnesia. Therefore, traumatic levels of stress sometimes lead victims to invoke mental defences, such as repression and dissociation (Kihlstrom 67). All the subtle and insidious forms of trauma (as violence -intentional violence or witnessing violence, assault, discrimination, poverty, racism, oppression, and ensuing chaotic life conditions) are pervasive and, when experienced chronically, have a cumulative impact that can be fundamentally life-altering. However, in terms of the selection of psychological theories, whether a traumatic event is utterly unrepresentable, or not, it is debatable. Thus, it is unclear what causes particular traumatic responses to particular individuals. Different types of traumas produce different

responses, such as dissociative amnesia or intrusive recall, which are manifestations of the social contexts of the traumatic experience, created in a particular culture (Kihlstrom 184).

However, Balaev explains that the consensus about the innate neurobiological features of trauma – being unrepresentable and causing dissociation – were significant to arguments that emphasise the immense suffering from external sources, whether that source is an individual perpetrator or a collective social practice. That being said, it should be noted that while the model is useful to reinforce claims in respect to language's inability to locate the truth of the past, i.e., the objectivity of historical narratives, recent methodologies emerged as alternative models to revise the essence of this claim seeking implicit values which exist in a traumatic experience and ~~to~~ keep up with the current interdisciplinary studies on trauma theory (1).

Trauma theory, as a study in literature, ascribes largely to the goal of uncovering the connections (and disconnections) between theory and practice. Many psychologists, critics and theorists return to literature to describe the traumatic experience; Freud himself was fond of Western literature –a story told by Tasso in his romantic epic *Gerusalemme Libertata* – in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to describe the traumatic experience. This is because, as Cathy Caruth argues, literature like psychoanalysis is interested in complex relations. Different texts explore and deal about and through the profound story of traumatic experience. The texts engage with a central problem that emerges from the actual experience of a specific crisis (*Unclaimed Experiences* 6-8). For Shoshana Felman, the witness of art is no less important than the witness of history so art has a testimonial potentiality. She sees that "literature and art are a precocious mode of witnessing - of accessing reality- when other modes of knowledge are precluded…."(Shoshana, Laub 57). Various Literary genres handle trauma in the context of race, class, and sexuality; the ethics of representing trauma in testimonial literature,

autobiography-including false trauma memoirs- and fictional texts. Their main subject matters are personal trauma such as rape, incest, relationship violence, and mental illness; as well as historical or collective trauma such as the Holocaust, American slavery, Native American genocide and the Vietnam War (Balaev 3). In other words, trauma theory has undergone and continues to undergo, through various stages over the years since the early Freudian and Lacanian understanding of its nature, a transformation in how to encapsulate it, beginning with Caruth's studies on the concept in the 1990s and continuing to the very recent Neo-Freudian and Neo-Lacanian studies.

1.2.2. Trauma Theory Models and Approaches

The past decades have witnessed the emergence of trauma studies as a rapidly expanding and extremely diversified field. Branching out from the early 1990s via psychology, cognitive science, law, and cultural and literary studies, it is now regarded as one of today's signal cultural paradigms. The cultural aspect of trauma has been significant in contemporary critical discussion on the traces of historical events on collective consciousness, memory, and future identity. Therefore, trauma theory has known two major approaches. One is the cultural model, i.e., the one which has hegemony over trauma studies started by the early critics in the 1990s, hugely influenced by Caruth's model. The second and the most recent approach is known as the pluralistic approach upheld by Geoffrey Hartman, Michelle Balaev, Ruth Leys, Ann Cvetkovich and others. By drawing a contrast, the new approach emerged as a reaction to the cultural approach, and as an alternative perspective to trauma theory, such as postcolonial concepts, offering a range of representational possibilities which the cultural approach might have dismissed.

As aforementioned, trauma theory is a relatively recent concept that emerged in the health care environment during the 1970th, mostly in connection with studies of Vietnam veterans and other survivors' groups (holocaust survivors, refugees, victims of sexual assault). PTSD, "posttraumatic stress disorder", was added as a new category in APA, the American Psychiatrist Association, official manual of mental disorders in 1980. Since PTSD provides the basic framework for understanding the symptoms of trauma, the early trauma theory of the 1990s took the premises of the 1980 formulation of PTSD by the APA that constituted the early model of trauma theory. At first, APA only recognised those who suffer from symptoms directly related to their experience of the traumatic event, but since then, redefinition of trauma has expanded in each new edition of *the Association's Diagnostic Manual* to include secondary and potential victims, witnesses, therapists, friends and relatives of victims (Kaplan 40). What is clear is that these officially recognised symptoms are extremely diversified, subtle and indecisive and sometimes contradictory. For instance, the traumatic event may intrude repetitive behaviour that interrupts victims on daily basis, but there might be as well a total absence of the memory. Irene Visser, in *Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects* (2015) contends that these symptoms may appear chronically or intermittently; immediately or years after the event (Visser 272). Regardless of the characteristics followed by APA related to defining trauma in the early emergence, it is important to acknowledge that the official formulation was a victory for the political struggle of activists on behalf of war veterans such as in the Vietnam War, and vital early framework for the cultural approach of trauma and literary studies such as Caruth's.

Henceforth, the initial model in cultural trauma was first presented by critics of the Yale school in the early 1990s, precisely in Caruth's body of work. According to Visser, Caruth's model is based on two inherent paradoxes of trauma from the Freudian notion of

‘Afterwardsness’ (Nachträglichkeit). First, the unusual temporality by which trauma is not experienced as it occurs: belatedness. This makes trauma only interpreted in relation “with another place, and in another time”. Second, "the literal yet latent nature of the traumatic experience," that is, the incapacity to know it, is attributable to the immediacy of the exertion (Visser 273). Since Caruth’s early works, the cultural model has been dominated by the assumption that trauma as an event returns to haunt the victim while being inaccessible to consciousness.

The notion of inaccessibility or “unspeakability” of trauma has accumulated a fair range of opposing bodies of work in trauma theory with some of the most significant counterparts being associated with the work of Judith Herman. In her book *Trauma and Recovery* (1994), Herman argues that narrative is empowering therapeutic tool that might function as bringing people of traumatic experience together and aiding healing and recovery. As a result, this contrast in trauma theory raises questions about the nature of traumatic narrative as to whether it is aporetic leading to increase indeterminacy, or it is therapeutic enabling the process of “working through” and eventual resolution of trauma. The former is grounded firmly in the deconstructive origin of cultural trauma theory, which posits that trauma resists narratives, and it is to be seen as a core concept in cultural literary studies today (Visser 274). Nevertheless, we should not dismiss that trauma could be understood in light of a new untangled theory of narrative such as Herman’s, which finds appreciation in literary criticism that seeks to apply the empowering qualities of narratives of traumatic experiences. Other alternative models also challenge the cultural model’s governing principle that defines trauma in terms of its universal characteristics and effects. Critics such as Leys, Cvetkovich, and Balaev develop a psychological framework that departs from Caruth’s model and thus reach different conclusions about trauma’s

impact on language, perception, and society. Beginning with a different psychological starting point for defining trauma than the traditional approach allows critics to refocus on the distinctiveness of trauma and the mechanisms of remembering.

One of the key benchmarks that obliquely adheres to the contemporary approach is how it broadly contrasts Caruth's assessment of traumatic memory narrativisation as a loss of incomprehensibility and an "impossible saying." (*Unclaimed Experiences* 9). In contrast to this view, Herman argues that "the victim must be helped to speak the horrifying truth of her past - to speak of the unspeakable" (Herman 179). The aporetic current of trauma theory, thus, rejects its therapeutic current which poses that narrativisation of trauma is necessary and possible, as an "organised, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical context" (177). Likewise, the current trends are more focused on introducing the decentralised viewpoints that acknowledge trauma's diversity in literature and culture. Taking into consideration, and given the variety of approaches to studying trauma in literature, Balaev suggests that extreme experience cultivates multiple responses and values which is what sculpts the diversity of lens (2). Trauma causes disruption and reorientation of consciousness, but the values attached to this experience are influenced by a variety of individual and cultural factors that change over time.

The alternative models attempt to take full advantage of contemporary discoveries on neurobiological theories, for example, by comprehending trauma within a wider conceptual framework of social psychology. Furthermore, these models suggest that there is always another new perspective to consider when it comes to narratives: being felt, experienced, and narrated by victims, or confronted by critics. By doing so, critics want to establish a specific psychologically constructive understanding of the trauma that recognises the variety of contextual circumstances that define the value of the experience. Baleav contends that this approach may therefore

investigate issues with the claim of trauma's intrinsic dissociation because the majority of the most current critique is based on psychoanalytic and semiotic theories that address how we perceive trauma's involvement in writing (2). By focusing on the rhetorical, semiotic, and social dimensions of trauma, contemporary critics have developed Neo-Lacanian, Neo-Freudian, and new semiotic techniques.

This shift in literary trauma theory has produced a set of critical practices that place more focus on the particular social components and cultural contexts of traumatic experience. There are a number of ways to classify the different approaches that utilise alternative trauma models. These contemporary approaches are ranging but could be generally referenced under the umbrella term of the pluralistic model of trauma due to the multitude of theories and approaches employed. Many critics who address the rhetorical components of trauma explore both how and why traumatic experience is represented in literature by combining psychoanalytic theory with postcolonial theory or cultural studies. For example, critics like Rothberg and Forter work within a Neo-Freudian and postcolonial framework. Critics such as Luckhurst, Mandel, Yaeger, and Visser address the social and political implications of trauma within a variety of frameworks. Irene Visser employs a social psychology model of trauma within a postcolonial analysis, while Laurie Vickroy and Paul Arthur situate rhetorical concerns of trauma within a cultural studies framework (Balaev 3). The range of pluralistic models moves away from the focus on trauma as unrepresentable ~~and~~ toward a focus on the specificity of trauma that locates meaning through greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience. The focus on the specificity of trauma is paired with an analysis that assumes greater scepticism regarding a universal pathological concept of trauma, thus, generating more diverse views regarding the relationship between language and experience. Critics who diverge from the classic model may

well be called revisionists. The revisionists, however, are not simply forging ahead along the path laid out by the early trauma theorists. Instead, revisionist critics either move away from Freud and Lacan altogether or take up certain Freudian or Lacanian theories while hewing a new theoretical paradigm in analyses that achieve a starkly different destination.

These recent theorists argue that rather than viewing literature as a closed psychoanalytic system, it is possible to employ theoretical approaches and critical practices that suggest trauma's function in literature and society is more varied and complex than first imagined by early theorists. The idea that knowledge of the past, not just any past but a particular type of past experience, can never be known or remains forever unclaimed by either the individual or society is being challenged by critical approaches that elucidate other possibilities regarding the value of trauma in terms of psychological, linguistic, and social mechanisms. The pluralistic model of trauma suggests that criticism may explore trauma as a subject that invites the study of the relationship between language, the psyche, and behaviour without assuming the classic definition of trauma that asserts an unrepresentable and pathological universalism. The collection, thus, demonstrates the methodological diversity within literary trauma theory that moves the field beyond a restrictive analysis by demonstrating trauma's varying representations (Balaev 3). Criticism within this framework may function to acknowledge the impact of suffering on individuals and communities, to consider the role of literature in a violent world, or to analyse the ways language conveys extreme experiences.

Adhering to the dominant concept of trauma as a universal absence furthers certain ethical and aesthetic concerns but severely restricts the exploration of others. Understanding trauma beyond these monikers leads to a great range of questions regarding literary trauma, experience, representation, and value. Recent theorists consider the multiple meanings of trauma

that may be found within and between the spheres of personal and public worlds, thus providing views of both the individual and society, rather than consolidating the experience of trauma into a singular, silent ghost. In recent times, Trauma studies demonstrate the changing landscapes of literary trauma theory which has moved away from the early psychoanalytic methods to a theoretical position that advances a different set of issues, questions, and consequences that ~~arose~~ arise in part through the interdisciplinary approaches informed by psychoanalysis, cultural studies, and postcolonial theory. In a sense, it is critical to state that literature is more diffused, varied, and less programmatic than the classic model affords.

1.2.3. Trauma Novel

There are alternative approaches for analysing trauma in literature, including trauma as intergenerational, transhistorical, unspeakable, unpresentable and place theory. These are best represented in a specific kind of novel, known as "trauma novel". The term "trauma novel" refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels. A defining feature of the trauma novel is the transformation of the self-ignited by an external, often terrifying experience, which illuminates the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and world. The trauma novel conveys a diversity of extreme emotional states through an assortment of narrative innovations, such as landscape imagery, temporal gap, silence, or narrative omission--the withholding of graphic, visceral traumatic detail. Trauma in fiction is conveyed through a protagonist that functions as a representative cultural figure. The protagonist's role is to represent and communicate an event that occurred with a group of individuals that occurred in a setting that is either historically inspired or prospectively conceived (Balaev 8).

In literary texts, the traumatic experience becomes unrepresentable due to the inability of the brain, understood as the carrier of coherent cognitive schemata, to properly encode and process the event (Balaev 8). This notion of trauma leads to the basic framework of the dominant literary trauma theory best articulated by Caruth when she reports that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way it is very unassimilated nature--the way it was precisely not known in the first instance--returns to haunt the survivor later on" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). The origin of traumatic response is, thus, forever unknown and unintegrated; yet, the ambiguous, literal event is ever-present and intrusive. Caruth's theory argues that trauma is only known through repetitive flashbacks that re-enact the event because the mind cannot represent it otherwise. Painful traumatic events cannot be fully grasped or consciously and systematically recalled.

Therefore, trauma novels' authors employ a nonlinear plot or disruptive temporal sequences to emphasise mental confusion, chaos, or contemplation as a response to the experience. The narrative strategy of silence may create a "gap" in time or feeling that allows the reader to imagine what might or could have happened to the protagonist, thereby broadening the meaning and effects of the experience. These strategies help the author structure the narrative into a form that attempts to embody the psychological "action" of traumatic memory or dissociation. For Freud, the repressed memories, when reactivated, produce a defence mechanism against remembering that can lead to disruption in language. Traumatic events destabilise language and demand a vocabulary and syntax that go along with what happened in the past. It is often difficult to distinguish between primary and secondary narratives, or between past and present. Hence, a traumatic loss is never directly described, in such fictions, or recalled in a single narrative. Instead of such premise, the construction of the past includes new details

with each telling, or it is constructed from different perspectives, which demonstrates that memories of the traumatic experience are revised and actively rearranged according to the needs of the individual at a particular moment (Balaev 12). In reading these novels, Felman asserts that the testimony of characters, as the survivors of traumatic events, correspond to a broader community, however, she sees that their testimony may, sometimes, be invalid, or unreliable, because they cannot find the words, images and narrative forms which can convey their experiences accurately (Felman, Laub 51). Therefore, many trauma novels, seeking creative choices of narratives, align with Caruth's model, that trauma is an unlocatable - unpresentable experience.

The trauma novel demonstrates this process of questioning as the crux of the plot in terms of the reconstruction of personal and social knowledge. The traumatised protagonist's inquiry into previous 'truths' of the self or formulations of identity produces a change in perception. However, as traumatizing this might be felt, the self-formation takes the protagonist on a transformative journey, one that does not necessarily provide relief from suffering or redemption. Responses to traumatic events in fiction often cause the protagonist to turn inward and struggle with the past. Moreover, the traumatised protagonist may experience a doubling or self-estrangement, which differs from a shattered identity or dissolute self. Trauma novels indicate that traumatic experience disrupts the previous framework of reality and the protagonist must reorganise the self in relation to this new view of reality. This reordering is sometimes successful for characters or communities, but other times, the protagonist cannot find a sense of fulfilment. The distinction between the perception of external reality and the experiences of the internal self and organisation of identity have thus led to the popular proclamation that traumatic experience "shatters" identity and inherently pathologises the person (Balaev 45). Yet, in a trauma novel,

that narrative demonstrates that the protagonist is forced to reorganise perceptions of reality and explores how the event changed previous conceptions of self. Leslie Silko portrays the expanded identification of self and the revision of the relationship between self and society that arise from the traumatic experience. This inward glance is paired with a growing awareness of the external world outside the individual mind. In this way, trauma is both a personal and cultural experience linked to a place (45). Rather than forwarding a reductive view of identity formation or producing a binary ontological framework to understand human behaviour and emotions, the trauma novel offers its structure by demonstrating that how the protagonist views the self before and after the traumatic experience. This is a threshold that is determined by the type of traumatic incident and, more pertinently, the place of its occurrence, reiterating the relevant culturally-informed narrative frameworks that can underpin various generational conceptions of the given experience if it becomes an integral part of that culture.

1.2.4. Trauma and Identity: Intergenerational Trauma, Transhistorical Trauma and Place Trauma

The various models on understanding the possessing traumatic experience all explore a similar premise: trauma experience permeates a persistent, unpresentable, photographic-negative (the ability to recall a prior experience in vivid detail) and unlocated memory. Such experiences, however, have the potential to disrupt consciousness and transfer to non-traumatised individuals and organisations. This lends credence to the idea of trauma as a transhistorical - intergenerational phenomenon. This form of literary trauma theory makes several important claims about trauma, stating that traumatic experience is repetitious, timeless, and unspeakable, yet, it is also a literal, contagious, and mummified event. Caruth suggests that traumatic

experience is contagious and that trauma "is never simply one's own [...] [but] precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (24). Based on the contagion hypothesis of an unidentified, yet contagious disorder, literary critics like Caruth argue that traumatic experience is transhistorically passed down via generational gaps, largely through verbal or written acts of remembering. Furthermore, this assumption leads to the conclusion drawn by critics such as Kirby Farrell that traumatic experience is intergenerationally transformed based on shared social characteristics. As a result, trauma is experienced through vicarious contexts based on one's ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, or economic background, thereby producing a "post-traumatic culture". As an outcome of this intergenerational concept, a massive trauma experienced by a group in the past could be experienced by an individual living a century later who has a broadly similar attributes with the previous group. Because of the timeless, repetitive, and contagious properties of traumatic experience and memory, these shared attributes can be manifestations of the sameness observed in race, religion, nationality, or gender. According to this rationalisation, the argument that trauma narratives may reproduce and abreact the event for individuals who were not present— such as the reader, listener, or witness can experience the historical experience first-hand—is plausible (Felman Laub 52).

However, the theory of intergenerational trauma, referred to as multigenerational trauma too, limits the meaning of trauma in literature because it conflates the distinctions between personal loss experienced by an individual and a historical absence found in one's ancestral lineage. Personal loss can be defined as an individual's lived experience of a traumatic event, which is, as Dominik Lacapra asserts in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), represented in the morn for those individuals' losses, so that any critical issue concerning traumatic historical events comes to terms with the unspeakable losses and catastrophic past. On the other hand,

historical absence may be defined as a historically documented loss suffered by the individual's ancestors. The groups who suffer particular losses, their losses cannot be addressed when they are enveloped in an overly generalised discourse of absence, including "the absence of ultimate metaphysical foundation". This points to LaCapra's readings of Jacques Derrida's concept of metaphoric death: when the memory of death is totally absent, death is no longer regarded only as a loss, since the possibility of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new utility or fully bonded society grows (LaCapra 698).

The blurred distinction between absence and loss may bear witness to the impact of trauma and post-traumatic stress, which induces disorientation, anxiety, or even confusion. In post-traumatic situations where the past is resurfaced, distinctions tend to blur, especially the critical distinction between then and now. As a result, even secondary witnesses' reactions to extreme responses may entail empathetic discomfort. Since situating absence happens on a historical level – previous losses may be retold, reactivated, and altered in the present – situating absence operates on a transhistorical level (LaCapra 697-700).

The theory of intergenerational trauma encapsulates loss, absence and collapses boundaries between the individual and group, implying that reading about a historical narrative or having a shared genealogy can vicariously traumatise a person's contemporary identity, allowing them to morally claim the social label of the victim as part of their personal or public identity. An example of an experience that could be viewed as producing a historical absence is the socio-economic institution of slavery in North America, which denied human rights to African slaves and their descendants for decades. Slavery produced a historical absence for the descendants of slaves whose ancestors were not granted citizenship and all ensuing rights and protections. This type of historical absence of citizenship is employed by some to claim that

descendants of the group who were oppressed or experienced traumatic events have also experienced the same oppression based on a shared ethnicity or genealogy (Balaev 27).

The multiple models of trauma and memory presented in the trauma novel draw attention to the role of place, which functions to portray trauma's effects through metaphoric and material means. In a significant way, the contemporary trauma novel explores the effects of suffering on the individual and community in terms of the character's relation to place. A traumatic experience disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments. Descriptions of the geographic place of traumatic experience and remembrance situate the individual in relation to a larger cultural context that contains social values that influence the recollection of the event and the reconfiguration of the self (Balaev 46). Novels represent a disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma, for the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories embedded in landscapes that define the character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience. The primary place in the representations of trauma anchors the individual experience within a larger cultural context, and, in fact, organises the memory and meaning of trauma (46). Yet, the place of trauma is not only a physical location of experience, but also an entity that organises memories, feelings, and meaning; the site where individual and cultural realities intersect.

In his paper *The Symbolism of Place: A Geography of Relationships Between Space, Power, and Identity* (2011), Jérôme Monnet provides an efficient framework to interpret place as a physical environment frequently understood as a symbol that expresses cultural values and perspectives invested in a place (10). Place, hereby, becomes central to representations of trauma

in the novel because the physical place of suffering and remembrance of loss is rendered as an identifiable source for the author to explicate the multiple meanings of the event. The physical landscape is a reference for the individual's sense of self or identity, and writers often centralise the natural world when the protagonist confronts a traumatic memory to demonstrate the internal struggle of the self and the various workings of the mind as the individual attempts to understand, incorporate, and explain the traumatic event. LaCapra believes that the writers' own narrative serves to establish or even legitimize current forms of multiculturalism and appease scepticism, and that highlighting the dichotomy between past and present contributes to define or even support that explanation (726). The capacity to have a full adequate knowledge of one's past, particularly a traumatic one, when there is a singular narrative of national history that most inhabitants of that place, known as a nation, recognized as part of their heritage, is challenging given how we read history today.

1.2.5. Trauma Theory and National Identity

Research on the link between nationalism and social memory has gained momentum since the fall of old imperialism and the decolonisation era shaping new horizon to people and national representations in literature. Traditionally, historians, social scientists, and philosophers have often attempted to explain the link between nationalism and memory through a historical lens that explains the nation-state's formation in a linear progression. Social memory is thus emphasised as an important part of national identity formation and maintenance. Though often focused on the glorified versions of the historical past, social memory is provoked to embrace collected moments of the past so that the nation and its people would come in one union. The aim here is to preserve these histories as an agency of remembrance and to produce a shared

identity usually so that nations are less susceptible to external historical revisions. However, more recent works on remembrance and memory have increasingly emphasised the traumatic collective past and the memory of mass trauma as an important historical site, with a strong impact on national and group identity formation over time. Beyond the typical understanding of national identities, a more critical perspective has brought the discussion of trauma to the centre of nationalism studies. The subject of how traumatic episodes in a nation's history might impact national discourse and national identity constructions has been addressed not just by social scientists, but also was met by abundance of representations in fiction. Regardless of the differences in these representations, they all discuss the impacts about how traumatic experiences shape identity formation.

Therefore, by connecting the concept of trauma to the study of national identity, three major angles, as Sevan Beukian argues, help to show why some traumatic historical events of individuals or collective people have a strong impact on discourses across generations, and how memories are transmitted, and can also contribute to a rethinking of the national narrative vs. individual's testimony. First, trauma is a trigger of nationalism through which it challenges national identity discourses. Second, focusing solely on perpetrator, trauma might perpetuate denialism discourses that seek to silence trauma victims. Third, the assumption here is that trauma is seen more than autonomous events or sequences; therefore, it ought to be investigated independently to distance it from the pervasiveness of national discourses. These three views can play a vital role in understanding the identities of victims and their perpetrators and how they shape often hidden narratives from national discourses (1).

In memory studies, national identity construction refers to the shared collective memory that focuses historically on specific people (heroes), events (through commemoration), and

places of memory and memorialisation – or "lieux de memoire" to use Pierre Nora's seminal concept (Nora, Kritzman 1996), which has been critiqued by postcolonial and poststructuralist scholars for relying on a homogenising ethos. The emphasis in the literature on contesting hegemonic forms of national identity construction brings to light the need to break away from the idea of national identity as a single collective memory, as Jeffrey K. Olick explains, "…the origins of the concept of collective memory [is] in the crucible of statist agendas," which leaves "reductionist tendencies" in the field for those working on the concepts of memory-nation (5).

The literature on nationalism and memory has been dominated by analyses of history as associated with the idealised past of the country or ancestor myths, as emphasised by authors such as Anthony Smith and Eric Hobsbawm, for example. Increasingly, however, the history of brutality, colonialism, migration, and war is brought to the forefront of nationalist discourse. This has the potential to divide the country, but in the end, it sheds light on the marginalised histories of individuals and groups that have long been repressed as a result of the hegemonic systems of colonialism, capitalism, industrialisation and modernisation, and systematic brutality (Chakrabarty 42). As such, memory studies are an important field of inquiry, especially when linked to the theories of nationalism because they help to highlight the importance of an often persistently lingering past into the present and future of national identity. This memory-making can take the form of top-down state-imposed memory discourse that attempts to erase the presence of minorities, dissidents, or gendered identities. On the other hand, memories are also powerful tools of struggle against imperialism, hegemony, and top-down silencing attempts. It is through the latter understanding of memories that the subaltern can speak (Chakrabarty 21). For example, in the case of the Soviet Union, historiography was deliberately used by the leadership in order to integrate a multinational society and modernise it to achieve socialism. However, as

Vicken Cheterian points out in the case of Armenia, a marginal discourse prevailed as "a more subtle discourse distinct from the Soviet official line, often for the defence of the nation and against either the Russia central power or a rival neighbouring nationality" (Mink, Neumayer 37https://stateofnationalism.eu/article/nationalism-and-collective-trauma/423).

Moreover, explanations that the past of the marginalised 'disappears' in the modern construction of the nation are strongly argued in the literature by several theorists, including John Rawls, Ernest Renan, Ernest Gellner, etc. However, thinking about memories and the strength of the transmission of memories in families and collectives, the past could be viewed not as countering the present or the future or regressing them, but as simultaneously coexisting with them. The historiographical linearity with the perception of time is therefore not useful in explaining the place of memory (and trauma) (Hirsch 123).

The critical discourse analysis tradition, led by Ruth Wodak and other critical theorists of nationalism, has become an important alternative to the traditional theories of nationalism, especially when considering the place of trauma and history in the making of national identity. The emphasis, in this case, has strongly shifted from the structural, historical, and institutional explanations of nationalism to the everyday practices and discourses of national identity (Calhoun 3). Calhoun explains that nationalism refers to what "Michel Foucault…called a 'discursive formation,' a way of speaking that shapes out consciousness, but also is problematic enough in that it keeps generating more issues and questions, keeps propelling us into further talk, keeps producing debates over how to think about it" (3). In addition, intersectional studies have reminded us that several other factors are necessary to consider when studying identities, such as class, ethnicity, race, and gender, and other social divisions (Yuval-Davis 87).

Traumatic memory is not just represented through an individual's sphere of collective events, photographs, objects of recollection from the past, or family belongings or stories, but it is also viewed as a collective phenomenon. Collective memory may be the result of a need to create strong bonds among people, emphasising, as Marianne Hirsch posits, their "shared inheritance of multiples traumatic histories and the individual and social responsibility we feel toward a persistent and traumatic past" (33-34). Certainly, as Jeffrey Alexander also stresses, cultural trauma becomes embedded and engrained in the collective identity. He posits that cultural traumas need to be interpreted, narrated, and given meaning by carrier groups, "which performatively seek to have a particular event acknowledged (or not) by the wider group as traumatic" (Woods, Debs 611). As such, cultural traumas, unlike individual traumas, depict "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that have achieved some degree of cohesion" (Eyerman 2).

Trauma studies focus strongly on how the traumatic experiences of the past become internalised and expressed through commemorations and various acts and practices of remembering. Much of this work has considered intergenerational shifts of traumatic memory, especially in terms of studying memory as the history of brutality, colonialism, migration, and war - often through a critical gendered lens (Chatterjee 9). From this literature, we can read how traumatic events and memories require us to consider the impact of collective harm in triggering a sense of loss, destruction, and reparation. The 'shadows of trauma', as Assmann puts it, highlight the "involuntariness and inaccessibility in the experience of those who engage with the traumatic past, both of those who are directly affected by it as well as those who come after" (5). In this sense, remembering is related not just to the golden period of the nation, such as the

rhetoric of the War of Independence, but also, and more crucially, to the histories of violence, defeat, movement, and loss.

The feeling of being part of this shared group, especially based on traumatic experiences, is reinforced through "*transgenerational"* transmission (Assman 42), based especially on habitus, rituals, commemorations, archives, historiographies, etc. As such, the individual and collective are interlinked, because people form memories about the collective "not only via lived experience, but also via interacting, communicating, identifying, learning, and participating." (40). Therefore, the concept of post-memory is important in that it serves to connect prior traumatic events to younger generations in a family or community through various symbolic systems. In Ireland, contemporary conceptions of national identity narratives are not usually based on idealized images and military feats. They may involve catastrophic events that create lasting generations' national expression. National memory is an important component in these narratives because it determines how Irishness is established beyond the individual markings.

1.3. A Perspective on the Representations of Irishness, Nationalism, and Trauma in Contemporary Irish literature

1.3.1. Who are the Irish? Who Speaks for Them?

Ever since the initial surge of cultural nationalism in the 1840s, the Irish have pondered the question "Who are we?" With the creation of the Free State, the issue of national identity became more acute. In the context of the early 20th century and onward, this question had an enormous effect on the writings of Irish intellectuals, especially in the interwar period. The enthusiasm to embrace a cohesive Irish identity was the result of the pursuit of many Irish writers

and publishers after the Irish Independence in 1922. Additionally, Irish writers felt the need to produce literature that reflects their Irish heritage which would counter the rather significant influence of English dominance in the social, historical, cultural and political aspects of the ordinary Irish folk. It was a striving attempt to posit the Irish narratives as distinguished from those produced in England, at the same time, praiseworthy writing. Drawing on this, some would say it is the sort of competitiveness on the part of Irish writers that pushed the boundaries into defining Irishness and introduced a new generation of writers to juxtapose themselves with England. This endeavour was met with appreciation by Irish Nationalists in the Republic who sought to define and defend the nation.

Given the historical context of Ireland being a former colony under the British monarchy, the reaction was quite understandable. In many ways, the colonial existence of Britain meant it would be difficult for Irish people to have come to terms with their history since it was interrupted. Fitzgerald Garret, in *Ireland's Identity Problems*, writes that the colonisation had brought a sense of uncertainty amongst Irish people toward their own national identity (136). As a result, it would be difficult for the Irish people to unloose the ties of this uncertainty even in the post-colonial era. Albeit Irish expectations were ambitious prior to their independence, a very significant moment in Irish history as regarded by nationalists, Irish people were soon to endure the pattern of post-colonial development.

Garret continues to argue "the whole process" of bringing Irish people together "was distorted, one might even say aborted, by the profound effects of the political division of the island in 1920" (136). Consequently, the political division of Ireland into Northern Ireland and the Republic, or Unionists and Nationalists, demonstrated that Irish people were not as unified as many Irishmen believed. Northern Irishmen were seen as lacking self-confidence in the Irish

project of one unified country, even though two-thirds of the population were anticipant they would eventually emerge with the rest of the island (137). Northern Ireland was driven by a feeling of uncertainty in which there was no consistent understanding between its two largest communities, Catholics and Protestants—a reality that had resulted in the failure of the inhabitants to sustain a cohesive sense of identity.

Due to these historical circumstances, it is difficult to come with an exact definition of Irishness as it is clearer, we have a mosaic of identities bounded socio-politically into one geographical periphery. As the Protestant-Catholic or Irish-English dialogues appear to be frequently the core of the debate; nevertheless, currently, it is rather more complicated than these dualisms in the sense that Irish identity is exposed to several ongoing identifications of various inclinations such as modernity and socioeconomic tendencies. However, by investigating the origins of the reconstruction of national Irish identity, one would understand that the archetype of Irish identity is interiorised by certain political and social agencies and as a reaction to their former coloniser. For instance, in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature,* Seamus Dean addresses, in the introduction, the constant efforts of Irish to re-identify themselves as consequences of creating an ideal national character which is by possessing and modifying these images about Irish (Deane et al 18). That can be seen by reviving the Gaelic which according to Dean is a Celtic variation. The Irish Literary Revivals were no doubt an important phase in Irish history transforming Ireland into its present form. Because these attempts fed the national agenda held by Nationalists, it is very crucial to reconsider Irish identity which was seen both as a generative aspect by Irish intellectuals and limited within its national context.

The term "Irish" implies a sense of belonging that is concerned with the geography and location of Ireland, and Irishness is a quality that is born with people or something that develops

on Irishmen as a by-product of where they originate from. Therefore, to understand the Irish is to recognise Ireland as a nation- a territory whereby the modern Irishman citizen identities with another Irishman, history, culture and society. In order to understand the relationship between Irish identity and Ireland as a modern country, we have to understand what constitutes this relationship; i.e., the national identifications.

Since national identity is a multifaceted subject, whether in recent studies or within its classical view, every researcher defines it by highlighting a different perspective. For example, Breuilly emphasises the exclusive characteristics of the national identity by observing the relations between culture and nationalism distinguishing nations from one another. Moreover, Kymlicka suggests that civic nationalism aims to locate its inclusiveness by respecting the existing cultural differences. Gilroy defines national identity as a melting pot that possesses an assimilating function by taking advantage of citizenship and patriotism. Whilst Anderson states that national identity is imagined and constructed, Rutherford sees national identity as dependant on uniformity, cultural community and common culture. According to Güvenç, the origins of national identity is the national culture that is obtained by socialisation mechanisms. Another point Yurdusev brings to attention is that there is an inevitable correlation between the national identity and the state in which national identity is “the yield of nation-building” and national ideology. Furthermore, for Connor and Smith, national identity embodies “a primordial” inclination in which it has a backwards-looking character seeking “the myth” of national origin. Contrary to this claim, Bradshaw states that national identity constructions have a forward-looking character that emerges with the politicisation of the nation habitants looking to a consensus about their future while sharing one soil and one homeland (İnaç, Ünal 293-231). Henceforth, national identity is perceived as to possess imaginative and constructed

characteristics to a real historically recognised territory or to a homeland to which people can only aspire.

Our understanding of territory suggests a space grounded in recognised borders. From this point of view, borders become very important as they do not function as they did before the rise of nationalism. There are several implications of borders on both how people, within those territories, identify themselves and how they are identified by the Other. These implications are linked with modernisation, globalisation, internationalisation of economics and politics. Culture plays an essential role in the social construction and negotiation of these borders. State borders also show us the transformations in the definitions of citizenship and national identity. Boundary breaking and making within and between states is a political act, which can be seen to support or oppose that structure. Borders may serve as useful metaphors for understanding the movement of many populations. Everyone lives within or between the boundaries of nation-states, and these boundaries are always more than metaphorical (Donnan, Wilson 10). In this sense, borders are markers of identity and they are indispensable in the constructions of national cultures. Boundaries could be understood, on one hand, as they are structural in which they mark the edge of a social system, and on the other hand, they separate the inside from the outside. A community exists under its opposition to another community (Donnan, Wilson 24). Boundaries are founded by people interactions which in their turn define people as they give meaning to themselves and vice versa.

The Irish border divides the Republic of Ireland's twenty-six counties from Northern Ireland's six counties, which has been a political entity since the 1920s and is part of the United Kingdom. The border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland had a significant impact on the structure of social ties in the territory of Ireland. It serves as construction and

symbol of distinctions in status, power, and politics, primarily through crystallizing Catholic and Protestant hostility to one other. The majority of Protestants in Northern Ireland are Presbyterians and members of the Church of Ireland, and their political and cultural ideas label them as Unionists, supporters of the current United Kingdom and Northern Ireland's position within it. Their sub-group is known as the Loyalists, and they advocate the union and the Protestant way of life. Because the majority of them identify as British, very few of them profess to have an Irish identity. They are ethnically Ulster Protestant or Northern Irish in a British state, hold British citizenship and respond to issues concerning national identification in terms of being British. In Northern Ireland, Irish national identity is asserted by the minority Catholic community. To separate themselves from their southern counterparts, they refer to themselves as Northern Irish Catholics or Northern Catholics.

Therefore, Irish authors have attempted to represent Irish identity since the country's independence, and the concept of nationalism has always found a place in their writings. In *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006), Wai Chee Dimock poses the following challenging questions in respect to the position of literature as a representation of nations, "what assumptions enable us to take an adjective derived from a territorial jurisdiction and turn it into a mode of literary causality?" "And what makes literature reflexive to represent these abstractions that come from an adjective?" Dimock's argument recognises literature as the uppermost representative of people and thus nations. She contends that nation as temporal recognised coordinates and spatial territory is not only a brief definition of the people it represents but also too narrow in the sense that it is predictable to assume. The concept of nation is "a prefabricated box" and only through literature that nations are standardised and appear surprising rather than small, tame and dull (Dimock 3). However, one

could also make the argument that defining literature according to an adjective associated with the nation limits how it can be read. Taken together, Dimock's account of the adjective "Irish" and her critique of national literature raise interesting questions regarding Irish literature.

Contemporary Irish literature is much less focused on national literature than was the literature of the Irish Renaissance. However, we can state that contemporary Irish literature is postcolonialism literature, in a sense it still recognises the past by finding new ways to revisit it. Disarming of the past at the level of individual characters is often analogous to the wider re-examinations of history in which Ireland is involved. Additionally, Irish fiction has moved away from the focus of the past of Ireland as a collective nation, to the past of the individuals, where their testimonies can afford varied substantial narratives to understand Irish. Moreover, contemporary Irish literature questions the nature of this global era by addressing the relationship between nations and individuals. One important question that is often confronted in reading the new Irish trends is: has Irishness been emptied of national significance to such an extent that it is no longer attached to the nation of Ireland? And since literature reflects that, have contemporary Irish authors abandoned the national narratives for seeking a new outset that might posit them in contradictions? As a result, areas like trauma studies may be useful in framing and investigating opposing tendencies in contemporary Irish novels toward revealing Irish representations of the past and present, while also creating additional readings of individual texts.

1.3.2. Ireland Tradition from the Irish Literal Revival into The Celtic Tiger

As Yeats and his circle attempted to create an idealised, nostalgic vision of Ireland at the turn of the century to inspire their countrymen to orchestrate a national identity that came into

sight at the end of colonialism, the possibility of that identity to represent a unique Irish experience was directed by how commonly their history was read. Since the 1990s, a growing corpus of literature has chronicled events from Irish history, both nationally and privately, in an attempt to reopen the discussion on those events while also admitting the need to abandon the assiduous delineation of the Irish image. As a critic and observer of this era, Deane professes, in chapter "*Literary Myths of the Revival"*, that the Yeatsian tradition has long outlived its political relevance. Deane reports that "it is surely time to abandon such a myth and find intellectual allegiances elsewhere" (322). It is also crucial to specify what we mean by Yeatsian tradition, which is linked to the larger topic of Irish tradition—a recurring literary impetus that can be felt in innumerable works of Irish literature.

According to most assessments, Yeats' significance in shaping Ireland's image on both the national and international levels is universally acclaimed. However, some critics like Casanova, contend that Yeats, being the centre of the Literary Revival movement, made his representations of Ireland politicised by non-literary reductionist causes. For instance, his drama *Cathleen ni Hoolihan* (1902), which takes inspiration from Irish mythology, was prevalently used to re-popularise traditional Gaelic folktales in Ireland. The project that Yeats and others like him wanted to communicate is different from what nationalists felt important about Ireland image. Admittedly, Yeats called for a literary undertaking around the time he published *Cathleen ni Hoolihan*, stating, "our movement is a return to the people, like the Russian movement of the early seventies" (qtd.in Casanova 306). Nonetheless, Yeats strove to elevate the Irish culture by reviving Gaelic, Catholic, and rural qualities, which, as a project, is immense and was never designed to be reductive. This was mirrored by his contemporaries, including Douglas Hyde,

George Moore, Seán O'Casey, James Connolly, and Harry Boland, who all wrote extensively about these Irish subjective issues between 1890 and 1930.

Following the revival movement, Irish identity became refurbished as a common approach to enforce allegiance to the nationalist cause. The view on the civil war, which had been "generally narrated, not as an exceptional event, but as the tragic denouement of the war of independence" (Kissane 14), was one of these upsets. Rethinking the postwar tragedy has brought to light a number of repressed traumatic narratives that existed from the late 1930s to the 1990s when recollections of these frequently painful events were concealed from the Republic's official narrative. This period, as David Lloyd claims, is riddled with vulnerabilities. Hence, Lloyd reads the current trend of historical revisionism of Irish literature, as a form of fixation on the past that has not left Irish thinkers. How Irish people are attached to history has just transformed into self-critical predispositions. In his text, Irish Times: *Temporalities of Modernity*, Lloyd states that Irish "relation to the history is strictly not a relation to one's past, but to a social history and its material and institutional effects" (25). This is arguably a universal human experience, but in Ireland, where history, particularly recent history, is still actively shaping current Irish experiences, the Irish would always construe history in terms of the community, irrespective of trends and opinions.

Therefore, a handful of contemporary authors, in revisiting the Irish past, accepted that Irish experiences are fundamentally traumatised. These authors believe that in order to represent this authentically, they should write stories from the past that do not coalesce around the idealism and heroism of their nationalist predecessors, but rather on the common Irish lifestyle seen and felt in ordinary homes. One approach to accomplish this was to depict the time from the late 1930s to the 1990s when recollections of these traumatic experiences were obfuscated from the

official narrative of the Republic in the Irish public discourse. Irish contemporary fiction wrestles with the objectivity of historical narratives since, for many authors, constructively presenting these realities into artistic forms may provide new interpretations into domestic and national themes. What they negotiate with is mostly personal, but through that branding, we receive glimpses of that history, from the political position of the Irish state down to families, when the obsession with crafting a flawless image resulted in a systematic suppression of everything other than the spiritual, Catholic projection of Irish culture.

Some authors, such as Sebastian Barry, chose to incorporate institutions such as women asylums, known as the Magdalene Laundries, that were founded to serve as receptacles for those who did not conform to nationalistic ideals. Others like Anne Enright confronted directly the concept by representing the scandals about victims of sexual abuse by religious figures in the 1990s. Similar structures existed in Northern Ireland, where authors such as Seamus Deane in *Reading in the Dark,* called these nationalistic sentiments into question by including the IRA's involvement in 'The Troubles,' and partisan violence that was overlooked to shield instances of institutional abuse. Regionalist writers, such as John McGahern, opted to remain within the traditional structure of Irish portrayals, the predominantly rural and Catholic aspect of Ireland during the twentieth century, but there are often dysfunctional dynamics and systems behind that ordinary façade.

The assumption that similar institutions operated in several nations may be true, but what distinguished Ireland's system is how the state and Church-run establishments were locations where offenders were frequently kept for indefinite periods. In *Remembering Ireland's Architecture of Containment: 'Telling' Stories in The Butcher Boy and States of Fear',* James Smith discusses how institutions like Magdalene laundries, Mother and Baby Homes, and mental

hospitals were used as social controls, particularly on women who challenged the nation's image of 'purity' (3). Individuals who survived their experiences in those facilities would never have had their allegations of abuse and torture accepted since they were deemed disruptive to the newly formed nation's unified order. Only after Ireland began to shift away from the major influences of the Church and nationalism were the victims' claims accepted as valid and deserving of inclusion within the countries' historical narrative.

1.3.3. Trauma, Shift and Transformation in Irish Perception

Irish exposure to European Renaissance ideals was delayed and distorted by the influence of British colonial disruptive presence in the Island from the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century. As Irish nationalism began to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Irish conflicts highlighted what nationalism implies for the Irish, with the bearing of violence and trauma being critical in this context. For many authors, representing unspeakable trauma in the Irish context means exposing the blurred events of Irish history, namely, the aftermath of the War of Independence. Trauma may have a bearing on cultural levels, as traumatic experiences can shift existing narratives from the past if the recollection of certain events is tainted. As a result, such patterns exhibited in traumatic societies are more likely to be apparent, since trauma often spins narratives to overcome or echo the unspeakable.

However, Thomas S. Kuhn's 'Paradigm Shift' in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* introduces what we mean by a shift, albeit its fundamental principles are scientific-based. Nonetheless, it may be a critical method for studying how societies adapt in specific patterns for their shift toward new generations, such as in the aftermath of wars, or for exploring the

dynamics of changes, especially in the economy. One example could be the rise of the European population, the migration of peasants to cities, the flourishing of commerce with new, distant markets, which made it possible for generations of uneducated people to acquire useful quantitative habits, in often found marginalised aspects of culture, we can then identify eventually a point of transformation in the Western culture. In the cultural paradigm shift that took place in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, culture drastically changed at the turn of a few generations (Crosby 147, 186, 208). The change raises new concerns about the meaning of individualism in the face of a hegemonic paradigm: authoritarianism. Hence, a defining aspect of independence wars is that the participants of the war had to confront the possibility of continuing to survive in the aftermath of their own painful experience, which echoed with others in the Irish public memory.

Nonetheless, throughout the 1990s several events took place which resulted in major shifts to the way the Irish thought about themselves and their country. The signing of the Good Friday Agreement in the late 90s brought about the end of the partition violence in Northern Ireland. The economic boom referred to as the Celtic Tiger contributed to the growing trend towards modern driven culture than had ever been experienced before (McCann 109). However, following the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War, there had been a concentration on identifying the intrinsic foundations for this shift in culture between the war generation and the generation that followed, of which John McGahern (1934 -2006) and Deane were members.

Since this is a generational shift, we should consider the lingering Irish cultural trauma that installs Irish hegemonic practices, which can be supported by observing the collective memory. According to Amy Corning in *Generations and Collective Memory*, the critical parts of an individual's memory are developed on a greater community basis. These communities could

be groups consisting of a family, a generation, or a nation. Furthermore, psychological and sociological researchers have found that the most dominant generational memories are formed during youth (Corning 6). This is called the "critical years theory," developed by sociologist Karl Mannheim (75), which is often pronounced in a time of violence or war.

Violence is a key aspect here in determining how different groups of participants in the same culture correspond to the perpetuated unspeakable trauma. McGahern comments that "Ireland was always a very violent society, and, like most things there, it was very hidden there as well" (qtd.in Collinge and Vernadakis 9). In his book *The Generation of 1914*, historian Robert Wohl writes about how this theory applies to generations of young men swept into war. Wohl contends that war constitutes a specific shared point of reference that fosters a sense of separation from the past and ultimately separates members of the first generation from those who follow them through time. Termed as a "generational consciousness formation", this frame is often drawn from great historical events such as "wars, revolutions, plagues, famines and economic crises" (Corning 77). Remembrance is implemented by certain historical events that people impose as a shared meaning from their history and attach their personal fates with "those of the communities in which they live" (77). The independence war had sculpted how the Irish perceived themselves, and as McGahern points out, violence had been re-evaluated as one of his father generation's admirable ideals that were required in the process of freedom: "My father was violent. He went into the guards straight after fighting in the I.R.A. in the War of Independence. He was instantly promoted because of his rank in the guerrilla company to which he had belonged" (qtd.in Collinge and Vernadakis 9). Violence, which resides in the Irish collective memory, perpetuates traumatic yet unspoken realities that reflect scarcely on Irish identity in public domains.

1.4. Conclusion

In their writing, Irish authors have had to navigate various means of depicting the eccentricities that continue to fragment the contemporary image of Ireland. To put it another way, authors had to provide “narrative responses to changing life in general, and to the complexities of a mutating Irish culture and identity in particular” (Harte, 2014, 3). This act demanded not just extraordinary command of the novelist as a narrative form, but also the understanding of cultural and historical contexts while illustrating a skilled sense for multiplicity and flexibility. The challenges presented to Irish novelists as an outcome of these rapid economic and cultural developments in Celtic Tiger Ireland have resulted in "works of fiction that have intellectually, affectively, and imaginatively extended and consolidated"(3), the Irish fiction legacy after Joyce, Yeats, and other Irish towering figures. Roddy Doyle, John McGahern, Patrick McCabe, Colm Tóibin, William Trevor, Edna O’Brien, Seamus Deane, Sebastian Barry, and Anne Enright as examples of such authors. Other names may include Emma Donoghue, John Banville, Dermot Healy, Hugo Hamilton, Claire Kilroy, and Paul Murray, and what follows is a new generation of authors carrying on the legacy of their forefathers.

II. Recognizing Trauma, Shift, and Transformation in National Attitudes: Moving Beyond Traumatised Centrality Towards Multiple Irish Manifestations in John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1990)

1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to discuss McGahern's first novel: *Amongst Women (1990).* Thereafter, we will attempt to explore Irish identity as a fragment moulded by historical paradigms in order to unleash dysfunctional, yet persisting, social and psychological performances of being Irish. As Ireland is yet to narrow the gap with other Western Nations in terms of economic flexibility, these traditional ideals of being Irish—often anchored in religious and social discourses—are frequently being juxtaposed with a sense of individualism and a disdain for authoritarianism structures. This has been substantiated not only by socioeconomic matrices but also by contending with the single Irish experience, as a variable affected by the repercussions of the Anglo-Irish conflict, in which the vacuums of unspeakable repression have become the conductors of numerous social interactivities. All of this is observed closely with the central character, Moran, whose story with his family, as McGahern knits, puts us near to that lifestyle in traditional Irish households from the war of independence until the 1990s.

Therefore, our aim in this chapter is to focus primarily on those traditional conceptions of being Irish from Moran's perspective as the embodiment of national ambitions. To address these concerns, this chapter will seek to cover some of the novel's significant representations of postcolonial nationalism in Ireland. Furthermore, a similar degree of attention will be placed on defining who Moran is as a character and as a symbol of the nationalist spirit contending with now-different Ireland represented by his children. Finally, by considering Caruth's theory, we

argue that being Irish has traumatic roots in the novel that do not find a framework to be communicated, resulting in a shift between two perspectives of the father and his children and signifying a transformation in the concept of Irishness.

2. Postcolonial Representations of Nationalism: Change and Allegory of Generations

In its essence, McGahern's novel, *Amongst Women*, is a story of the inevitable destruction of the crumbling old Irish structure, as seen with Michael Moran and his family, as opposed to the change Ireland had witnessed during the post-independence era. Like the stereotypical Irish man in the mid-twentieth century, Moran quickly escalates to use domination and power, verbally or physically, as the patriarch of his household to control his second wife, Rose, his three daughters and his two sons. The private microcosm of authoritarian fatherhood is the marking of Ireland's larger objective to safeguard control of the nation by making it impenetrable from what Irish deem an outsider intrusion. Having said that, one point that is to be addressed is that Moran's authoritative grip on his family in *Amongst Women* is not absolute—his dominance diminishes as he becomes more disconnected from them. His alienation offers a viewpoint on the dissolution of the Irish self-identification paradigms dwells in the typical Irish families which in turn represents the reconstruction of the nation's collective image.

In postcolonial Ireland, *Amongst Women* is an allegory for a new Irish impression wherein Moran's initiative to close his family off from the outside is similar to Ireland's efforts to suppress itself from the world in order to preserve Irish culture and Catholic conservative values. Patriarchal families such as Moran's serve as a testimony for the change that Ireland has undergone, and they reveal a nation's ineptitude to recognise its social disparateness. The constant effort of Moran to keep his family oblivious of a wider worldview narrative, which is to

him anything but what he considers Irish, enables him to preserve his position of power. Consequently, this places him as an embodiment of the patriotic nationalist whose ideal identity is a site of power and control. As a first-generation Irish father figure in the book, he draws attention to the tensions in the Irish social matrix, making his narratives to be analysed as a carefully preserved national paradigm. Thus, Moran's representation as a nationalist exposes the Irish conventional perception of male power over his family that transcends to the national level.

One of the predominant themes of the novel is the retribution of resisting the changing social aspects and unpredictability of the present as an extension of the past. Certainly, Irish people are not alone in this, but the disturbance of the familiar patterns that made sense regarding the lives of a generation like Moran is an unmanageable matter to conceptualise especially in a nation that keeps moving to embrace modernity. The experience of Moran, as one man, does not suggest the history of a nation, however, one could argue that in attempting to identify the impact of the historical narrative on the ideals of this man, we read through his recollections of that nation. Befittingly, that is the case of Moran in the story, who represents, like those of his generation, the challenge to acknowledge the present. Overwhelmed by the rhetoric of glorifying ideals of the past rather than adjusting to the current situation, the hegemonic understanding of history is not just their past but it builds on their disappointment. Henry Glassie notes that, "history is not the past, but a map of the past drawn from a particular point of view to be useful to the modern traveller" (Glassie 621). On the one hand, history functions as a continuum that leads to the present day that involves a cumulative sequence of events that might assist one explain or clarify what has occurred. However, no matter how objective and analytical history is intended to be, it is susceptible to people's subjectivity, which infuses their discourse and ideals. History, like language or moral and religious convictions, is communicative in this respect. It is

around this terrain of one man's personality that substitutes for the majority that we sense how traditional perception of history permits investigation on the complexities of embracing the present realities. Moran's character is a surrogate for a wider traditional Ireland rather than just one individual; a segment that reveals the possibility that Irish historical discourse is more comfortable with adopting nationalist routes.

Moran, a proud veteran who served in the Independence War, has very specific views about religion, family and Ireland, in which he refuses to consider any change that could contradict his convictions. He finds it difficult to adapt to new civilian life and feels rather shunted to be associated with those who had taken over the leadership in the New Free State. This is exemplified in one scene, when his former comrade-in-arms McQuaid visits him, for the last time, to celebrate a day they call the Monaghan day at the Great Meadow. Throughout their interaction, the desire to control one another is brought to the surface of their discourse. As both reminisce about their days during the war, McQuaid grows impatient with Moran's insistence on having things on his terms. As a result, McQuaid leaves him in frustration and while he is getting into his car to drive away, he says aloud "some people just cannot bear to come in second" (McGahern 22). Although Moran had been his superior during the War, McQuaid represents a new Free State that has emerged as the fruit of their struggle. Furthermore, Moran's disappointment with the new government is quite clear when he announces his frustration indicating the difficulties to accept the new situation and move past the glories of war. Moran thinks it is a plague that crippled his family since some of his family members do not share his identification with historical narratives: "more than half of my own family work in England. What was it all for? The whole thing was a cod" (5). Moran is angered that his children do not

embrace his patriotism. His behaviours are like early nationalists who envisioned a path of Irish people through their perceptions of what constitutes Irishness.

Moran's patriotic sentiments are set in motion when his daughters plan to revive Monaghan Day. This is supposed to be a delightful day in late February when Moran receives a visit from his friend McQuaid and the two reminisce about their youthful escapades. Monaghan Day is Moran's equivalent of Remembrance Day in Ireland in which a National Day of Commemoration is held for Irish men and women who died in the war. Nevertheless, this year Moran is ill and old. After the narrative introduces us to his family preparing for Monaghan Day, it is followed by a long flashback, and it concludes with the same Monaghan Day—shortly after which we learn about the father's death. Most of these narrative flashbacks chronicle the gradual shift in power from Moran to his daughters and his wife Rose. As the novel wraps up on the same day, Monaghan Day, it is insinuated that such patriotic enthusiasm for Ireland cannot be felt in the same way because the last true participant in that history has vanished, deeming the last bits of this celebration a failure that cannot be carried forward into the coming years.

Amongst Women is a story about how the memory of the past transforms into the future, with Moran as the centrepiece of the nationalist philosophy and his children as possible torchbearers. Robert Garratt, who provides us with a thorough reading of this story in *John McGahern's 'Amongst Women': Representation, Memory, and Trauma*, writes: "the decision to open and close the novel with the same event means that, above all else, *Amongst Women* is a novel about memory…And the subject of the novel involves a return to history, a history of the self that is private" (130). With Moran as the family's central focus, the family history bits establish the plot in which Moran not only controls his family's decisions, but also how his family commits to national historical events. Therefore, Moran's family's attempts to prepare for

Monaghan Day are analogous to Ireland's politicisation of their independence to perpetuate it as a normative discourse. Because this is a yearly event, history seems repetitive to Moran's family who is linked through repeated rituals such as Christmas preparations and the concluding dinner, the saying of the rosary every evening, card games, seasonal work in the fields and the visit of the children. The praying is rather a moment for self-reflection over the monotonous recitation of words than a religious practice. However, the mere custom binds the family members together: "'They say the family that prays together stays together,' Moran said. 'I think that families can stay together even though they're scattered, if there's a will to do so'" (McGahern 137). Notably, all the family comes together, except the oldest son, during the hard and satisfying hay gathering in summer which creates a sense of teamwork. After the work is done, they reflect: "It was everything. Alone we might be nothing. Together we can do anything" (85). The repetitive and monotonous housework too creates some feeling of security. The relationship between the father and his children offers historical dynamics of its own that are disturbingly rooted in fear, violent conflicts, respect, indifference, hate and love.

Perhaps it is worth noting that the idea of generational transformation is a viable theme in several of McGahern's works where 'the wheel of life' is an inherent concept. For instance, the short story *Wheels* summarises this idea as McGahern writes "I knew the wheel: fathers become children to their sons who repay the care they got when they were young, and on the edge of dying the fathers become young again" (McGahern, *Wheels* 19). Although the cycle of marriage, birth, ageing, and death has become omnipresent in discussions of modern Irish literature, what McGahern offers in *Amongst Women* is a window into the process of replacing one person's relentless centrality. The growing of the children and the decline of the father's role can be declared when Moran loses interest in the world around him and constantly says: "who cares

about anything now anyhow?" (McGahern, *AW* 5). The power structures are completely reversed and the girls and Rose try to evoke his will to live: "They were so bound together by the illness [of Moran's] that they felt close to being powerful together" (180). McGahern appears to hint that as a counterpoise to the national hegemonic discourse and as a healing potential concealed under the roof of authoritarian man, the feminine traits of women, biological or social, leverage them against the dominance of Moran. We read that "since they had the power of birth there was no reason why they couldn't will this life free of death. For the first time in his life, Moran began to fear them" (180). Consequently, Moran escapes several times out of the house during his last months, to look over the meadow which once represented freedom and independence to him.

The crucial and essential location of McGahern's fictional Ireland in the novel, is Great Meadow, the Moran family farm, where almost all of the story's actions take place. Great Meadow serves purely as a background for the activities of Moran and his family, a place where grown-daughters return to visit. It is where the family harvests the corn and interacts with one another, where Rose, Moran's second wife and step-mother to his children, tends the house and where Moran, an outwardly powerful and domineering man who suffers inwardly from anxiety and fear, lives out his life. But as the story develops, Great Meadow becomes for the Moran family a kind of mythic kingdom or holy ground, inextricably connected to Moran himself and his powerful and brooding dominant personality. Even though all the daughters have left home they find themselves in periodic need to return for restoration. They feel like "within the house the outside world was shut out" and only within their father's shadow and under his protection they are safe. Hence, the Morans feel confident only in a place that provides "unique" wholeness and meaning (McGahern 129). Within that sphere, Moran, their "Daddy" is the centre of these ideas about Great Meadow.

Albeit for different historical and political reasons, Moran's endearment to Great Meadow parallels the nationalists' connection to the rural identity that stems from specificity-based images of Ireland. This view, as resets on a prevalent postcolonial contention, is illustrated by Tom Gravin in his article *National Identity in Ireland,* in which he argues that in the late 1700s, when Ireland fell into the Protestant ruling minority, commonly the English; the nature of Irish identity was a locus of change. He writes, "'when the foe indeed was master'…Catholicism became virtually a proscribed religion" and under the ruling of the Protestant landowners, Catholics "grew up, much deeper and more bitter than similar class and status gaps in other feudal or semi-feudal countries"(254). The concept of agrarian identity and Ireland was introduced in the national discourse as a conspicuous correspondent to the modernisation of Britain in which nationalists sought to overcome their former colonial presumed supremacy by leveraging Irish historical affinity for their lands to one hegemonic ideology. Gravin continues to shed light upon the Irish "resistance to the system's modernisation" by arguing that the Irish independence as a "rhetoric of nostalgic retrospection grew up in which Ireland would again be in the hands of the old Catholic lords" (254). Therefore, during the dreadful years of the War of Independence, Irish fidelity to the land became an obsession, and becoming a Catholic owner of the rural property once taken over by the Protestants was considered a recognised national pride.

McGahern himself remarked upon the conflation of the familial and the national in the rule-bound space of Great Meadow in *Amongst Women*. Eamon Wall in *The Living Stream: John McGahern's 'Amongst Women' and Irish Writing in the 1990s*, describes its portrayal of change in Ireland as it, "functions both as a chronicle of the fortunes of the Moran family and also as a chronicle of the fortunes of the nation in its progress through fifty years of change" (305). Thus, change identifies Great Meadow as Moran's identifies himself as a "personal Irish Republic"

(309), in which he "has traded the War of Independence for the War of the Hearth" (307). Given the predominantly patterns of the agrarian society of postcolonial Ireland in the decade in which the novel is set, the fusing of the familial and the national dimensions can also be mapped onto the Moran family's movements between Great Meadow, Dublin and London. While *Amongst Women* offers no exact indication of the time in which key scenes are set, most critics plausibly date the action of the novel to Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s.

Another aspect of the novel lies in Moran's power over his family appears to take centre stage, it also delivers a social and historical reflection on Irish women's lives and national conversation. In this context, the discussion about women's role in Irish society educes two contrasting arguments as Pat O'Connor stresses: "it has either changed altogether or it has not changed at all" (162). Therefore, a substantial question about the role of women in the family of Moran and within the republic is then raised as the structures of the public and private sphere include them as variables of this change. Women in Ireland have for centuries been bound by the traditional patriarchal society that limited their roles to their homes and depicted them as "one dimensional". In the new Irish state, Catholic ideology and constitution created a number of challenges to female involvement in the national version of Ireland, both formal and informal, by maintaining their roles in houses where the role of motherhood has become established in Ireland as "the natural" role both socially and legally (Sheehan et al 163). In one of his essays, *Whatever You Say, Say Nothing*, McGahern spells out some of the effects of the closed culture of the 1950s and its impact on Irish women: "Church and State worked hand in hand. Women and single men were in a lower scale in the public services, a higher scale was in place for married men. Retirement on marriage was compulsory for women" (*Love of the World: Essays* 128). The emotional suffering and disempowerment that mark McGahern's account of the lives of Irish

women in this period are important to understanding and interpreting the place of Moran's daughters, as second-generation and his wife in the novel.

Education is intrinsically one of the variables influencing the transformation in Ireland. Whilst schooling promoted a hegemonic view of identity, engaging in education supplied Irish children with a perspective on the outside world, allowing them to recognise other identity structures that were not available to them in domestic spheres. In *Amongst Women*, education is depicted as a way-out for Moran's children to escape the influence of the home, and eventually the grips of Moran's authority. However, the notion of freedom in the public space is presumed as a pervasive attainability since the national authority, whose essence dictates Irish lives, prevails in any reconstructive discourse. That is the case of the son, Michael, who struggles to free himself from his family. Intimidated by his secluded upbringing and captured by the awe of the outside world, he refrains from going on to third-level education (McGahern 95). The purpose of education shortly after the Independence, was strategic, as was in the sentiments advocated by the Ministry of Education, to empower the Irish revival. Irish education ought to aid in constructing the national image, "the ancient life of Ireland as a Gaelic state, Gaelic in language, and Gaelic and Christian in its ideals"(qtd. O'Callaghan 2). Nationalists rallied behind cultural and literary activists since the discourse back then undermined the importance of exclusiveness of Irishness.

One of the leading cultural figures was the poet, writer, and political activist Patrick Pearse who was the foremost pre-independence pioneer of Irish-Ireland education. Pearse looked forward to the post-colonial phase for national identity to be fully restored. He argued that all of Ireland's problems originated in the education system. It was "the most grotesque and horrible of the English inventions for the debasement of Ireland"(Pearse 6). Pearse held the nationalist

primary objective that was the preservation of the Irish identity within coherent hegemonic paradigms such as resisting English by spreading the use of the Gaelic languages in schools. In the context of the story, this is ironic since Michael and Luke, Moran's other sons, as the second generation, leave to England after escaping from their father's tyrannical role. Thereof, Moran's family once again symbolises a tradition of nationalist attempts to bring different Irish generations together which only ends up in more diasporic outcomes.

With all his prejudices towards women's roles, it is disturbing to Moran, then, the fact that the first member in his family to go the furthest in education is his daughter Sheila. This is significant in tracing what is thoroughly accepted and not in Irish conventions especially if it concerns women education. The relationship between women education and nationalism was a polemic and multifaceted path in Ireland during the early years of this century. Their involvement in secular education in particular was a highly contested area of discussion in the early years of independence. However, accepting women's education was systematic. On the one hand, unlike many other Western European countries, Irish women engaged in anti-colonial struggles. On the other hand, they "had to negotiate a tricky path between demanding their rights and risking the antagonism of groups demanding the nation's right to self-determination" (Ryan 487). The nation's dilemma concerning women was to reconcile the traditional representations of their womanhood with a progressive inclination. The latter attributed to tensions with nationalist interests in order to redefine or reinvent traditional images of Irish women's identity.

The challenge in the nationalist ideology is strongly expressed in the lack of Moran's support to his daughter Sheila when he prevents her from accepting a scholarship to study medicine: " Sheila could not have desired a worse profession. It was the priest and doctor and not the guerrilla fighters who had emerged as the bigwigs in the country Moran had fought for" (

McGahern 88). In becoming a doctor, his daughter would not only represent the new upstart class he so resents but also outgrow him and the other children: “his constructed equality of all family members demands uniformity: “I consider all my family equal. I don’t like to see a single one trying to outdistance another.” (89). Moran ‘forces’ Sheila to take up a post in the civil service as his third daughter Mona does. Later, Sheila limits Moran’s access to her children because “she did not want [their] confidence damaged in the way she felt her own had been . . . doors would be open to them that had been locked to her, their lives would be different” (170). Then as constructed to strategic nationalist objectives, education succeeds in women empowerment albeit limited. The Irish second generations acknowledged that Irish women, even if confined to their conventional positions as homemakers and teachers, had a critical contribution to make in the development of the Irish republic. According to Frank Biletz, the resurgence of the Irish language, the education of Irish children in national history and literature, and the use of Irish products to boost the national economy were the goals of nationalist inclination. Nonetheless, nationalist political groups, whether constitutional or republican, embraced policies surrounding women’s education, but by supporting a cultural ideology, they have proven much more open to recruiting women as an active basis of the Irish economy (Biletz 61). Thus, the marriage and financial independence that resulted from education like the case of Sheila transforms the constellation of the Irish families and confront their inner circle with the outside world.

Whereas the development of Sheila stems from her perception of her limited advantage in Ireland, Moran’s other son, Michael, finds a self-fulfilment outside of Ireland when he marries an English woman. The influence of the outside world become one of the most obvious themes in *Amongst Women*, “above all [the visits of the daughters] brought the bracing breath of the

outside, an outside Moran refused to accept unless it came from the family" (McGahern 93). In contrast to his daughters, who see Michael's English wife as an "interloper", Moran regards all partners of his children as members of the family who have to take on responsibility and ideally to conform to his will (172). He reports: "I look on all my children as equal no matter what their station in life is. Anybody they choose to bring into the family I also look on in the same way" (138). Thus, he agrees with Sheila's husband Sean "that the family [is] the basis of all society and every civilisation (117). Instead of dealing with the outside, Moran is concerned "with himself and that larger self of the family which had been thrown together by marriage or accident" (15). While Moran's Great Meadow stands for the image of rural Ireland, the big cities, London and Dublin represent the exciting but also threatening outside where the "unique and separate Morans" are only individuals (94). During their visits back to their father's home, the children have to restore their "unexamined sense of superiority . . . which [is] little acknowledged by the outside world "(93). All Moran's children, except Luke, have deep-rooted nostalgic memories about their upbringing and look to the family for recognition after they leave the house, "the remembered light on the empty hayfields would grow magical, the green shade of the beeches would give out a delicious coolness as they tasted again the sardines between slices of bread: when they were away the house would become the summer light and shade above their whole lives " (85). Despite their independence, the family remains an essential part of the children's identity.

McGahern's novel is often interpreted to represent the "stifling, apparently changeless atmosphere" of the Irish state between its foundation in 1922 and the 60s and 70s (Holland 186). Undeniably, the everyday life of children is mundane, repetitive and often claustrophobic, dominated by an oppressive, sometimes violent patriarch. The distribution of authority, however,

is more complex than seen at first sight, and the family exemplifies not only repression but also protection in a closed community. McGahern stated in an interview: “the whole country is made up of families, each family is a kind of independent republic . . . [The] family is a kind of half-way house between the individual and the society” (qtd.in Cronin 170). Like ‘real’ republics, the families are not entirely democratic, still, they are not dictatorships and each family member plays an important role. Domestic and private spheres are not completely separated, because the adults had a life before they entered the family and even the children have to interact with the outside. Furthermore, the composition of McGahern’s family changes due to birth, death and marriage. While social and economic circumstances in Ireland have significantly changed over recent decades, the impact of Irish identity, whether the Catholic or Republican paradigms, on families, could still be detected by readers. One reason for the popularity of John McGahern’s novel is probably this believable and intelligent portrayal of the Irish ordinary family, as well as, their daily struggles to cope with changes in the landscapes wherein they live.

In several instances, however, the change to cope is complicated, as Moran’s paranoid reactions to the movement of household members outside the borders of his home and republic are attributed to broader anxiety. The impact of migration and departure on the new Irish Republic is illustrated by his children’s departures from the familial home, whether outside the community of their home place in Co. Leitrim, or later, as Mona and Sheila’s departure to Dublin, and Maggie, and Michael and Luke’s to London. Their departure represents a threat to the sovereignty of Great Meadow and is, at times, imagined by Moran as an act of desertion. Despite his searing disillusionment with the achievements of Irish Republicanism and his embitterment at his part in the making of the new Irish State, Moran’s idea of his family as ‘that larger version of himself’ establishes him as an autocratic ruler of his private republic

(McGahern 22). In this, the status quo of Moran's domain is most affected by departures from, and impingements upon, the territory of Great Meadow. In Michael's wedding to Ann Smith, an Englishwoman, the sisters take part in this process of defamiliarizing the Other as they try to denote her flaws, but the only "real flaw" they could point out was her being "an interloper" and how she should not be admitted within the familial space. Because the wedding was held in England, Ann's "entire English family … made [Moran's family]to feel what they were – immigrants" (171). Hence, family relations are imagined in terms of "we" against "them" in Michael's marriage. Having Michael's and Moran's characters to be devices to implement dynamics of emigration and immigration presupposes that Ireland, during that time, particularly some individuals of the newer generations did not hold the same principles as Moran's who represents the way the postcolonial Republic resiliency tried to presume a superior narrative about national identity.

Marriage to an Englishwoman leads to a situation in which the Moran family's borders are carefully guarded, paralleling the strictly politicised Ireland and attempting to close on themselves. In an essay on *Amongst Women*, Declan Kiberd describes McGahern as 'an artist of the self-enclosed world' (Kiberd 195), and a separatist culture is inculcated in the Moran children from a young age determining their interactions with other people to the point that as adults they come to terms with their immigrant status in England by exerting the only powers of exclusion available to them. Critical conversations about Irish emigration in the 1950s often make passing reference to this as the apotheosis of national anxiety about mass emigration and population decline in mid-century Ireland. The same potential catastrophe also fell within the interests of another group of Irish abroad in this period as seen in *Minutes of Meetings of London County Association* dating to 1957. One association went so far as to put forward a plan for

emigration control, including the setting up of a Mutual Aid Society that could be funded in several ways. The method was described as similar to National Service in which those who are unable to secure employment might have to emigrate during their period of service. At the end of this service, they would have enough capital to start a good life in Ireland (FA CICA 39). This was aimed to encourage emigrations for a short period only during the service in the hope of stopping permanent emigration.

Because the Morans are made to feel like 'immigrants', they express their hostility to Michael's wife in the same terms. The Irish immigration identity of the younger generation in the twentieth mid-century carries such a burden of embarrassment phenomenon observed by several scholars. Donald Harman Akenson notes that, "It was a matter of public shame to successive governments of the Irish Free State, and its successor the Republic of Ireland, that each year thousands of the brightest and most energetic of Ireland's young people left home for life with the Old Enemy" (214–15). Likewise, Piaras Mac Éinrí describes the phenomenon as being received with 'public silence'. The silence was interrupted only by the Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems of 1956 (3). The treatment of subjects such as silence and generations are possibly unique to McGahern's storytelling approach, as seen in his other works such as *Memoir* (2010) where he concludes '[my generation] was a silent generation, and it disappeared in silence' (278). Certainly, such a point of view stems from the experiences of McGahern, like many young Irish generations in his time, who emigrated to London looking for work on construction sites. Henceforth, the annual exodus to work in their former colonial nation is another recurring postcolonial motif in McGahern's works. For instance, in his other novel *The Leavetaking* (1984) when the character Patrick is planning his leave of absence, we learn that, " [he] had been in London before, digging trenches or pouring

concrete into the shuttered walls and floors of the blocks of flats that were going up at that time all over the East End' (101). McGahern's unpublished novel *The End or the Beginning of Love* depicts Irish residence in London and life on building sites there. It is a novel that also works through some of the complexities that emerged from the theme of the Irish diaspora in the period.

One element of Moran's multifaceted national stance regarding England is the negative views that the story portrays so vividly. Certainly, in his vision, the emigrant ship is never far away and is seen to have shaped his generation as well as affected his children's lives. Moran notes of his former Republican comrades: 'many of the men who had fought got nothing. An early grave or the emigrant ship' (McGahern 15). His bitterness and regret extend to the next generation and is doomed to the same fate. Moran questions the outcome of the War of Independence he was part of by voicing his disappointment in the current generation. He wonders: "what did we get for it? A country, if you'd believe them" (15). This is a strong indication that Moran is well aware that Ireland is an independent country by all merits, however; what he truly pleas against is the perception of Irish people, in his perspective, had changed from antagonism toward England to a country Irish want to emigrate to, like his son. He continues in disappointing demeanour, "more than half of my own family work in England" (5). Losing that hostility against England makes the likes of Moran and certainly, those who embrace such radical identity unsure of the future of his country as many like him had their entire lives thought of Ireland to be in opposition to England. In comparison, Moran reflects the republic's mind-set concerning England in this sense, which resembles the feeling of an adversary outside the borders. It is a narrative that the nationalists have adopted as a patriotic effort to preserve a collective unanimity, and it manifests in their entire identity for many.

When art rethinks history, notably Irish history, and considering the influence it had on people's consciousness, *Amongst Women*, by presenting the account of a man like Moran, paints the attempt to repair previous mishandlings as human errors rather than just condemning them as sins. In an essay *From a Glorious Dream to Wink and Nod*, McGahern writes, "the 1916 Rising was not considered to be of any great importance in the country I grew up in. In fact, it was secretly felt to have been a mistake" (qtd. In Van Der Ziel 10). The War of Independence meant so much to the hegemonic national narrative about the country, but it had little to offer for the people especially those who did not experience it but struggled financially or those who thought things would be better once there is an established Irish Republic. This disappointment echoed in two ways: the once ideals of the prosperous country of Moran's generation who observed the transformation of Irish society, and had no one to blame but the current generation and England, and the other disappointment in their country was the people like Moran's son, Michael, who did not participate in any war but had despised the older generation. Therefore, there is an underlying dichotomy of expression about the War of Independence, which had little significance in building such a narrative to bridge the two aspects together.

The common sentiment announced by the generation of Michael (the son) is that "[War of Independence] meant little to the people in the crowded boat trains, the men who worked on the roads or had a few acres and followed de Valera's dream, to the men and women who waited till they were too old to marry" (McGahern 125). Despite the fact that the mass emigration to England was an escape pathway that somewhat alleviated the burden on the fragile economy of Ireland, it was an unacknowledged embarrassment that national reports did not want to affirm. In the contest of the novel, England might on first consideration seems to be one of the many enemies at the gate of Moran's sovereign state; he comes to the gloomy conclusion at one point

that, “a lot of our people go wrong in England” whilst at the same time the family takes comfort in the promise that, “there was always England” (73). In Moran’s imagination, England, as host land for the Irish, represents both banishment and refuge, and in this way, the novel questions this public shame of the Irish who left England and were observed as outsiders, or those who felt defeated within its borders because England gravitates the minds of Irish.

Moran is a republican who always feels that his days as a fighter in the civil war of the 1920s, and a fierce former guerrilla commander, justifies his acts of protective authority over his country and his family. Therefore, he is presented as a typical obdurate kind of Irish father. This, in particular, among other things, *Amongst Women* succeeds to explore intensely. By exposing this facet in the patriarchal Irish society, we detect in the lost world of terrors and wars, the menfolk discover their true selves in bitter sectarian violence, but cannot sustain the intimacies of family life. As his wife affirms: “He’s a different sort of person altogether behind the walls of his own house ” (McGahern 18). This is also a fitting description of the Republic whose pursuit for a national identity substitutes the feeling of neutral comfort, warmth and intimacy with a public announcement of self-promotion. Eventually, this leads to rendering the experience of many Irish to feel as if Ireland is a prison. As Moran says: “I’m afraid we might all die in Ireland if we don’t get out” (155-156). Thus, Moran’s own ultimate death becomes a strange moment of release for his family, especially his daughters, who are now free to become themselves which also insinuates the death of the old tyrannical republic whose identity is, as Moran’s, clutched to a traumatic past.

3. Moran's Irishness and Selfhood: From Generational Idealisation towards the Resilience to Change

The concept of nationalism, endowed with Irish historical memory, plays a significant role in determining the sense of self in Moran's identity. The question then becomes whether his children's self-formation and own identity, Irishness, is a locus of the same inclination, e.g., through Moran's self and ideals, which are based on the agency of his dominant character or it is a product of undermining his perceptions thus these ideals he stands for. Taking this into account, as Moran seeks to create an analogy of a republic at home, he plays an instrumental role in determining the kind of discourse that is generally available in his household, resulting in their understanding of community and self. Moran's children, especially his three daughters Sheila, Mona, and Maggie, and his wife Rose are confronted with a hegemonic narrative that only confirms similarity between their roles within the private sphere. Moran's propensity for separating the domestic and public worlds is primarily determined by the nationalist idealisation of separate spheres such as his rejection of coeducation, women's college, and any participation of women outside traditional practices. This certainly furthers the discussion that if the only possible retreat is into what has already been formed, the reconfiguration of self could be disorientated if not lost. The transformation from a hegemonic sense of identity to a variety of different outcomes does not only reflect the prevailing authority of Moran with his children, but it also mirrors the Irish dilemma endowed in generations, either in the postcolonial or postmodern faculties. The argument that is presented is how these individuals, like Moran, link themselves to a new country, whether by merits of self-identification or already defined frameworks from the Irish national histories.

By first beginning to discuss the main subject of the story, Moran, we come to understand him as the primary force that forms the self-perception of those around him whether that is his wife, daughters and to lesser effects, his sons. Needless to say, he is the one who is, after all, amongst women, as all his sons departed leaving him to maintain the position of solely the male narrative and hence the dominant power in his household. Moran is often referred to by his surnames or "Daddy" even by his wife. This reveals two major aspects of his character and how he is seen by his children and wife: It highlights the importance of this father status and Daddy image that even his wife implicitly sustains, and the subordination of Rose to the children as one group. Moran's absent son who we only know through other characters' narratives, Luke, remarks that, "only women could live with Daddy" (148), and the story, to a certain degree, upholds this gender standpoint. Moran is first observed as a sick old man with his wife and three daughters worrying about him. That is to say, in the opening paragraph, the correlation between power and gender is asserted because the physical vulnerability of Moran has turned their interactions into his visible insecurity and then it builds their gradual dominance. While Moran cannot recover his control because of his health, he has not yet utterly lost his influence over his daughters, whose mindsets still linger in Moran's authority that signifies their mental threshold to disaffiliate from. The implication of Moran's authority over the everyday lives of his daughters is challenging to erase since he "was so implanted in their lives, that they had never left Great Meadow" (McGahern 1). Thus, the story delineates an Irish Catholic rural household wherein an irascible father, whose inherent qualities are those of an authoritarian milieu, dwells with his children, most of whom are at the mercy of his agitation.

In order to address Moran's self-identification, which provides a testimonial of the transformation in authority; we ought to resort to how Moran distinguishes himself inside and

beyond home. The formation of Moran's identity, in this particular, the Self, is a deeply ingrained terrain of authoritarian powers that are permitted by a strong nationalist inclination of the self and the Irish community. The hegemonic architecture of the outside, the presumed Other, retains Moran's external ideological and self-perpetuating representational power by subscribing to certain identifications to preserve a self-value. Once this imagined structure transforms, as shown in his encounters outside Great Meadow, the initiatives to recreate assured identification are profoundly impaired. Moran's inefficacy and invisibility beyond the home are confirmed when he and Rose are ignored by a young bank manager and Moran refuses to contest, "instead he continues sitting dejectedly and a little tiredly" (McGahern 175). Disillusioned by the country's political developments, Moran retreats into the private sphere where he hopes to fulfil certain power ambitions. The outward frustrations of Moran arise largely because of the shift in Ireland's peremptory hegemonic engines of Irish nationalism to a more modern capacity, although restricted; it still generates a noticeable impact. Eóin Flannery argues that this imagined space of the irrefutable hegemony of Ireland provides "the realisation and consolidation of authority" (12). That is to say, in the State, the Church and constitutional forms, the visible hegemony of social and cultural discourses, which prefer the tropes of traditional political nationalism, are prominent. That is a proposition that Siobhän Holland contends within *Marvellous Fathers in the Fiction of John McGahern* considering Moran as a character who seeks to maintain his "authority by borrowing from the familiar discourses of the Church, the education system, and revolutionary struggle" (188). The proliferation of this discourse from these identifications is noted in the impact it has on shaping himself and his children, evidenced by his labelling them as his "troops" (McGahern 34). As a war veteran,-Moran's linguistic

choices are perhaps more reiterated, as he still feels in command of a military unit that metaphorically continues to wage a war with the outside.

The hostility of Moran towards the outside was an implicit nationalist condition of the time that the Irish had attracted to themselves. To shield Ireland from foreign influences, the Church and national interests held the same ideals of uniqueness in Irish culture and were equally concerned with restoring, maintaining and protecting what was regarded to be a distinctive but one Irish Catholic identity. However, the reality of post-independence fell well short, as Louise Fuller argues, for Irish nationalists and their utopian republic and fantasies of national unity, since the nation was "left politically fragmented" as "the identification of Irish and Catholic" in the quest for national identity sought to uphold a substantial significance. In these circumstances, there was a tight "alliance" formed between Church and State whilst the successive governments between the 1920s and 1950s strengthened the basic Catholicity of the State in all facets of life (Fuller 307). Thereupon, it is rather noticeable in Moran's spiritual discernment considering he operates in the religious symbolism imbued in the discourse of a rural and Catholic patrimony. This is a tendency that has greatly influenced the worldview of Moran's generation, which further deepens his convictions in Ireland's hegemonic dimensions. Eamon Wall, in *The Living Stream: John McGahern Amongst Women and Irish Writing in the 1990s*, points out that the repetition of the Rosary is an intrinsic Catholic ritual and a part of rural life's timeless rhythm. In addition to what has been said, Wall continues to comment, "although [Moran's] children never espouse negative attitudes to Catholicism, they nevertheless do not share their father's enthusiasm for it (310)". Family prayer, whose purpose has changed though, remains a connecting force in Great Meadow. To put it simply, John Croinin classifies Moran as, "a brilliantly imagined character, who throughout this powerful book, grows into a memorable

symbolic force" (175). Moran uses his symbolic status in the family to overcome his restlessness on the outside. His pride and separateness isolate him and his families, thus, they overwhelmingly and repetitively bond together in emotional dependency.

The bonding expedition is observed in the Monaghan Day preparation, which takes refuge within the home and extends beyond its meaning of remembrance as it shows the ritual habits constructed in the Moran family. The women in the family, then, form a symbolic connection with the real political and historical context, which is erupted by Moran's presence as the centre of the Great Meadow. Although they share an identification with Ireland when performing such symbolic meaning rites, each individual has a mosaic social identity that differs from the other since each experience is evolving in response to real political events. The peace Ireland has experienced has culminated in other forms of identification, including some symbolic rituals being more relevant as a social context than historical commemorations. We might thus argue that one of Moran's effective strategies of perpetuating the historical narrative is through ritual symbolism rather than verbal suppositions and that such rituals will never have the same meaning to his offspring as they do to him.

We can comprehend Moran's conformity to conventional views when he seeks a symbolic meaning—one that can be observed in repetitive practices and prescribed rituals—by carefully observing two instances from the novel: the first is Moran's wanderings in and out of his house, and the second is his final dying moments. Moran is seen through the eyes of his family as the idolised father, the hated tyrant, the counsellor and the monarch. Therefore, it comes as a surprise to his family to see him wander aimlessly through the meadow where he is reassured with the familiar landscape as he gazes vacantly at the distance. The evening before Michael's wedding, we see Moran lost for words for the first time as he wanders "through the

house that looked like an empty stage waiting for their lives together to begin (McGahern 128). Similarly, when the family recites the Rosary on his deathbed, like a stage that has especially influenced their life, their prayers seem like a fitting physical and emotional display. Once they feel that he has passed away, they stop praying, only to be asked why they stopped. Moran's last words were, "shut up!" (152), addressed to Maggie as if he attempted to claim something before the enunciation, but his life expired.

Moran is on a never-ending hunt for moral meaning, at least for him, as well as symbolic connotations that go beyond the confines of the religious rituals that adsorb his rationalisations about the Irish identity. The perception of him as a performer whose experience of ritualisation is to achieve a moral sense is partially validated by placing Monaghan Day as a family custom since this repetitious effort is entwined with his demand for the restoration of a lost power structure outside of the domestic zone. This day for Moran is not just a mere celebration but "Monaghan Day" had always been for the whole house; with the distance, it had become large, heroic, blood-mystical, something from which the impossible could be snatched" (McGahern 2). His disappointment with the outside and current Ireland only deepens his reliance on the symbolic significance of Monaghan Day. In hopes of reviving this memorial rite, the women in his household recognise the importance of this day to Moran as they intend "against all reasons" (2) to rejuvenate their sick father for the last time. Therefore, the women in his house had different aims from reviving this ritual as Liam Harte explains: "their aim is to restage Monaghan Day, an annual domestic ritual that they recall as having sustained their father when they were young" (58). While Moran wants to celebrate his identity as the proud nationalist who sees being lost beyond the frontiers of his private sphere, this day is one of the mediums to communicate his nationalist values to his children. However, Harte asserts this day is not just for

them, unlike Moran, to deliberately “sentimentalise” their family tradition but also to “sanitise” it. The notions of “blood-mystical” do not just signify “the redemptive romantic nationalism of Patrick Pearse, leader of 1916 Rising” but it renders Monaghan Day as a domestic rite since the direct attachment to the Irish war is absent from the children’s memories. In this sense, it suggests that McGahern uses a rite zeal “to reconfigure history as an enabling, regenerative fiction” (58). In other words, this makes it more likely that by targeting women of his family, Moran intends to be the kind of person with significant self-esteem, and likewise, by being actors in this rite his children willingly reinforce his feeling of personal worth.

Such symbolic activities are propelled by socially and culturally fused meanings and values, which, according to Moran, remain a binding power in Great Meadow, even though their function has shifted depending on each individual’s experience. Moran’s selfhood provides an example of a nationalist allegory saturated in the sentimentalisation of Irish uniqueness and rooted in historical myths. His endeavours bear a bewildering perception of Irish social structures in the post-colonial era. Ineluctably, thus, he experiences unavoidable alienation that strips away unwavering ground for empowerment propositions. The cyclical temporal patterns of the incantations, whether the Rosary or the repeated return to the Great Meadow for validation, are increasingly becoming a place of transformation. Moran’s children appear to be the catalysts of his tyranny, especially when they were young; each of the five children is compelled to dedicate themselves for a decade to the Rosary in order to appease their father. Rosary is not only a familial sacred domestic enterprise, but it emits a hint of a hierarchical structure in which their terms are not negotiated but yet they are willing to comply. In addition, home rituals come to represent a confounded structural containment as they mature in their respective lives. From this point of view, though Moran has installed his sense of external insecurities into his children

especially his daughters, it is still evident that his utter unyielding principles are not communicated fully to them. Because they come to visit their "Daddy" repeatedly, they feel as if they are growing "again into the wholeness of being the unique and separate Morans" (McGahern 94) where home provides a sense of comfort that comes at the expense of their individuality. As a result, the lingering paradigm of change that has yet to erupt within the trajectories of the power dynamics in the family is conflicting in the manner of the children's reactions towards their father, revealing a much wider spectrum of intergenerational bleakness.

Moran's feeling of outward insecurity is a product of a shrouded reluctance to change, which is often imbued in his view of the past as one with the present, as one single unification, he fails to see it in lenses of a transformation. He thinks that it is unwise "dredging up of the past," that could replace the foundations of "the continuing present he felt his life to be" (McGahern 3). One of the cases that confirms that Moran's disdain for pondering about the past extends into the personal sphere is when Moran is questioned by Rose whether he remembers their first encounter at the post office. The narrator indicates that, "his aversion to the past was as strong as ever and their early life together was now the past" (173). In fact, the assertion that Moran's antipathy of discussing his past is inherent to the argument that he is a traumatised person, as we will discuss in the next section of this chapter. As much as Moran implies a character whose discourse is filled with tyranny and comprises only hegemonising discursive national ideologies, he is nonetheless a victim of Ireland's political past. Therefore, as Harte clarifies, "remembrance has become his enemy, a disruptive force that unsettles his current sense of self" since he is consistently reminded "of his ambivalence about the war and his failure to prosper as an officer in the Free State Army". His disappointment engenders a feeling of "an acute disaffection for those who rose to the top in the post-revolutionary state that he helped

bring into being" (85). Consequently, his silence is a mechanism to subvert his exterior proneness to be discontented with the outside where he hopes that his position in it is well defined and never liable to change.

However, only when he detects that his authority is disintegrating among his children; Moran breaks his "embargo on the past" to tell them his war memories without a shred of idolisation. Recalling the war is a lurking danger to his present sense of self since his methods of working through his traumatic memories have caused him to retreat to closed privacy. Moran, when describing the war as "a bad business" and his unit as "a bunch of killers", would not convey any idealisation or mythologisation of history (McGahern 5). He criticises those who, for political and financial convenience, retrospectively repudiate the horrid reality of armed rebellion. Moran eventually finds an ecstatic exist in the language he implies to express the ugly reality of the battles and recall glimpses of the great young Moran as he says:

> The war was the cold, the wet, standing to your neck in a drain for the whole night with bloodhounds on your trail, not knowing how you could manage the next step toward the end of a long march. That was the war: not when the band played and a bloody politician stepped forward to put flowers on the ground. (McGahern 5)

Therefore, his silence is a product of "protective envelope" where his muted self is "aching loneliness, in which the traumatic experience is treated as a solitary burden that needs to be expunged by acts of denial and resistance" (Erikson 186). As we embark on the technicalities and scope of Moran's traumatic experience, in the next section, one has to mention those traumatic experiences impact his self-reconfiguration and his children's respectively, as well as, it weaves out Moran's narratives, personality and memories.

As a pompous former soldier, Moran also exhibits an intrinsic longing for the sense of control that he embraced as “a guerrilla fighter” and was a component of himself “from the time he was little more than a boy” (McGahern 163). The only means he remembers his history through is his memories in wars, through which his past merely acts as an amplitude of his subjectivity and, so to speak, he is quite often disturbed when he is reminded that there are occurrences, namely of others, that do not reside in his past. He speaks highly of himself and his friend McQuaid as he thinks of the past, “for people like McQuaid and myself the war was the best part of our lives. Things were never so simple and clear again. I think we never rightly got the hang of it afterwards” (6). These definitions as “simple and clear” reaffirm again the hegemonising subjectivity of his point of view that Moran’s Ireland is different from those who swerve away from his encapsulations. The outcome of independence is quite a matter of paradox: Moran had more power in his war days as a guerrilla fighter, but in current peaceful times there seems to be no need for people like him, hence it is understandable when he glorifies the days of the war. The degree to which the war has sculpted his subjectivity is furthered by his avoidance of public life in corresponding disappointment with the post-revolutionary directions.

Reading Moran’s character necessitates understanding his conflicting and inconsistent views and how he ascribes to the external identifications, in the sense that he is a victim and an active architect of traditional paradigms. Though he is the primary actor and conductor of the oppressive powers in Great Meadow, he is concurrently a victim of repression, alienation and displacement by the unfolding forces of society exerted upon Moran in post-colonial Ireland. However, it is not through self-observation and patented affection for his children that he brings himself to who he is and therefore to silence, rather, it is through his unverbalised experience to his family that he realises it. He only talks to McQuaid about the war and then when he speaks

about it with his family, it is to make a point about Ireland rather than opening up to his vulnerabilities. As a result, his children are unable to interpret their father's contradictions, which leaves for his wife to find subtle ways to connect with this side of Moran. Rose attempts to maintain a stable atmosphere at home, to repair the disconnections between Moran and his children and to regulate her husband's temper. Rose considers her marriage as a way to a union where she escapes the monotonous life she had before marrying Moran, "She would no longer have to chase and harry after happiness, exposed and vulnerable. From a given and confident position, she would now be able to move outwards (McGahern 33). Although Rose is occasionally the subject of Moran's contradictions, she tends to be less disillusioned, due in part to her sympathetic bond with them.

The role of Rose in this story provides a further example of Moran's status as the authoritarian of the family striving to answer to Moran's dominant endowment that mostly occurs in Great Meadow. Subsequently to that end, in two significant circumstances, she becomes the focus of Moran's anger. Moran insults her in the first instance then demands her to stop talking nervously. Consequently, Rose avoids the family until Moran says "I'm sorry, Rose" once they are apart from the girls some hours later. However, "[Moran's daughters] heard him say. They were able to hear clearly though he had closed the door. 'I'm sorry, Rose,' he had to say again. 'I lost my temper'" (McGahern 54). The second instance is when Moran attempts to emotionally attack her and taunt her while she is cleaning up the room. He says to her, "there is no need for you to go turning the whole place upside down". In Moran's words, there is a strong sign of negative output in the manner he "said [them] as quietly as if he were taking rifle aim" (72). In comparison to the daddy figure, Rose can adequately contain her emotions without staging a dramatic scene. When she feels angry, Rose does not challenge Moran and others but

instead, she allows them to sense her absence from the ritual rosary by retreating to her room. Furthermore, she forgives rather quickly, though perhaps because she has almost no other alternative as “her life was bound up completely with this man [Moran] she so loved and whose darkness she feared” (25). In the dynamics between her and Moran, there is often a subliminal sense of compulsory respect that could be read as a form of impediment, or fear in some instances, to prevent the discomfort of his uncontrolled emotional outburst.

Nevertheless, in her marriage, Rose appears to be complacent at times. Instead of behaving aggressively, she decides to subtly undermine Moran’s indecisive domineers. Garret believes that Rose gradually turns, “Moran’s mind so that he comes to believe the decision is his own”. After she understands his personality as, “an insecure and self-doubting person” who must project his “self-confidence in all he does or says”, she comes to terms with accepting his traits (125). By the same token, she similarly succeeds in taking on other roles within the house and would quickly take great pride in becoming a mentoring figure for the girls by supporting them in different ways. Undoubtedly, by relying on her ability to adapt and find what role she can fulfil in the house, she secures a place among Moran’s family. As such, she takes over the house from the girl, enabling Maggie to have a life on her own and allowing others to concentrate on education. Rose, who “was much younger than [Moran]” (McGahern23), becomes more of a sister than a stepmother. Rose, thus, retains the role held by many Irish women, where the responsibility of daughters has historically fallen to mothers or other women. Within the defined layers of Irish wife models, Rose performs the traditional role of the housewife as she learns to predict the emotions of her husband and to respond accordingly. She agrees that Maggie should be a nurse in London and that Luke should meet her in London (50), which indicates she is a valuable consultant to the children.

Whereas the authority of Moran is a site of others behaving according to his demands, the position of Rose in the family emerges from her thorough understanding of the needs of each individual. In contrast to the stereotypical depiction of women as childish here, Moran is the one to display childlike behaviour. The assumption was that women represented purity, which was embraced at the time by State narratives and Catholic ethos, assigning childlike irresponsible images to rural women who need constant supervision. Women in this particular setting were often stylised as paragons of virtue with a more defined role in a patriarchal household. Rose falls into the picturesque depictions of the Utopian primitiveness of rural purity, the Celtic enthusiasm and humorous eccentricities. Stevens et al. suggest that such characteristics used to subvert the colonial oppression, came to be celebrated by the Irish themselves and even adopted by those participating in discourse to reimagine Irish cultural and national identity both within and outside of Ireland (Stevens et al 411). Rose's character, however, invalidates the argument of the irresponsible child who should be disciplined and administered, as before even her marriage, "Rose was anxious, feeling that [Moran] had lived in the stone house with too much responsibility for too long." (McGahern 32). After her marriage with Moran, she wakes up early one hour before anyone else to prepare tea for Moran (40). She "changed everything. She was able to organise her day… [her] meals were always delicious and on time" after which she would clean the house (41). Moran, on the other hand, is the one who displays a childlike temperament that continuously demands attention and leads him to annoy others for it. In one incident, Moran feels as he does not have the women's attention and that their "circle of concentration" and therefore "he had to resort to tiptoeing into the room in an exaggerated parody of someone trying to enter unheard" (77). The conflicting attitudes of Moran towards Rose that he knows he needs her beside him because she is the only one who seems to tolerate him and that he attempts to

undermine her when she endows authority in the house, linger latent nationalist ideas which align with postcolonial paradigms.

Women, like Rose, had to devise methods to reduce the consequences of religious and political dogmatisms on their decisions, morality, and bodies, all of which were dictated by a postcolonial framework. Although Rose is a shard of Ireland, the new state advocated for a post-war structure that sought to conceal the displaced and denied while the violent symptoms remained fundamental. According to Harte, these symptoms were rooted in "the gendered psychological dynamics of power, fear, and love in a rural Irish Catholic family", as well as "the formative effects of war, militarism, and traumatic memory on the articulation of masculine identity in a postcolonial context" (57). Ireland, throughout this period, was a nation linked with in-between circumstances, which implies to border itself from the outside, equivalent actions must be taken within which rendered female social borders insecure and uncertain.

By maintaining the notion that Moran's overwhelming alienation from the new state of Independent Ireland stems from the need for the loss of authoritarian hegemony in the public, it is rather evident from his treatment to Rose that "vulnerable [self] in the face of the power that rested in the hands of the outside," (McGahern77) nourishes his beliefs of hegemonic structures which translate to his views on women. Harte argues that this control he exercises in the private realm is aimed at replicating the goals of the Republican project, that he feels ~~it~~ betrayed him, by turning the "many ‘‘ into the "one" (62). Moran establishes his house as a hideout from public disappointments in which the private sphere emulates a war zone. As a consequence, everyday life becomes a tangled bemusement, which resembles an armoury of watchful attitudes of "camouflage [...] for safekeeping" (68). Moran's perception of authority is profoundly "gendered" since he compares the initial docility of Michael with maleness. However, when

Sheila questions the authority of her father, she appears male in his eyes, thereby reinforcing the statement of Luke that only women live with Moran (Harte 63). Moran endorses cultural stereotypes about the feminine images, wherein this sort of gender characterisation stems from hegemonising perceptions of Irish femininity. Pauline Maclara, in *Gender, Nationality and Cultural Representations of Ireland: An Irish Woman's Place?* contends ~~with~~ the subjectivity towards the contravened images of femininity that had been ingrained in the consciousness of Irish in a postcolonial era in which women are alluded to as: "the antiquated dualisms of Madonna/Medusa, virgin/whore, Venus/virago and sacred/profane". Maclara makes an interesting argument that such derogative attachments, which are ambivalent and binary in tendencies, are always an extension of the coloniser's relation to colonial others and are locked into British culture. The bearings of these power relations are defined in a broader binary structure where the perception of Irish women is projected (Stevens et al. 418). Indeed, Moran's underlying contradictions are the culmination of the long execution of binary relations of power, which shackle~~s~~ his views of the outside versus the inside, his sovereignty versus the public, the "us" versus the "them", and the group versus the individual.

Unlike his children, Rose did not grow up in Great Meadow, so during her childhood and most of adulthood, her perception of the other and self was not impaired by Moran's views of the world. Rose's life had enough "false starts" (McGahern 30) but she is not naïve by any means. She is described as someone who has the required experience in the world, being a returned emigrant, to "foresee failure" (25). Rose begins her relationship with Moran as his shadow and has to adjust to his demands and grant him her daily life but "through a kind of subversive subservience, she gradually overtakes him as the central authority of Great Meadow" (Garratt 126). As demonstrated when she pursues Moran in "the open", which Harte describes as a

tactician, it implies her little concern for showing vulnerability and public ridicule (63). Rose manifests “true instinct” in “the usual social frameworks” in her interactions establishing “forms that can be used as weapons when they are mastered” (24). Her implicit tact is not an instrument of hostility manoeuvres, but it is rather “emotional bridgehead” based that exemplifies “the circumscribed and precarious nature of her challenge to the monolithic power of Moran” (Harte 63). In that respect, Rose, through knowledge of his individuality, comes to realise that Moran “is an insecure and self-doubting person” at heart “who must project the opposite” that ties his actions (Garratt126). Rose’s calm, non-threatening, and non-confrontational attitude in bonding with Moran marks her as the harbour for the vulnerabilities of his children since they know she listens. Considering their father’s temper, she meddles instead of them politely suggesting the advantages they can get from jobs in London, schooling in Dublin, or travelling, eventually turning Moran’s mind so that he comes to believe that the choice is his own.

In comparison to Moran’s interactions with his children, Rose provides a stable and ordered harbourage as they can at least feel safer within the manner of how she criticises them for their mistakes or celebrates their accomplishments. That is to say, their sense of the self is conditioned by Moran’s deep-rooted inclination to disapproval about the world and by his attempts to establish isolation for them within the walls of his home. In an ironic display where his actions work the opposite of what was meant to be, Moran’s definition of the other, his religious convictions, and the determination to never leave home or leave Ireland were denied by his children. For Moran, he had not been able to achieve liberation through the civil war, thus he wanted to establish his little nation within his home. Yet, this separate concept of the nation continuously paralyzes the family interactions, revealing the difference between the private and

the public, especially with his sons Luke and Michael. In addition, it illustrates the disparity between two generations of Irish men and the male perceptions established since independence.

Michael (the son), who grew up surrounded by his sisters, runs away from home after several disputes about staying out late and missing school with his father. That being said, unlike his older brother, Luke, who never returns home, Michael is quickly reconciled with his father and visits several times a year. The unwillingness of Luke to retain the relationship with his father again affects the whole family. The sisters and to a certain extent Michael declare his unrelenting attitude as "unnatural" (McGahern 144). Luke, from his perspective, insists that he did not choose his father and that he has neither resentment nor anything else for him, but he thinks that only the women around his father accept him (133). Because what has occurred between the two of them has never been disclosed, the reader could guess about the motivations of this dark point in family history and remain unable to judge the credibility of both positions. In challenging his father's greatest wish, to be always in Great Meadow, Luke eventually frees himself from his influence by leaving out. Children find several ways to undermine the reign of their fathers by subtly focusing on education in their earlier years where "schoolwork had been a haven" and where they felt "safe and protected" (67). School education, therefore, presents this particular second-generation a mode of thought that has not been granted to the likes of Moran, where they respond to the world from different angles.

Although it is straightforwardly outspoken and visibly announced, the emergence of the independent self-figuration within Moran's sons, unlike McGahern's use of women whose roles mirror a natural resistance force in the new state, is more symptomatic to Moran's authority than Rose and his daughters. This tension springs from the inherent conviction of Moran about the outside as dangerous terrain for his identity, where the sons, due to various cultural roles, are

more likely to occupy this space. For instance, as Harte once again implies, that Moran's Great Meadow "only welcomes its own; and his obsessional desire to reconnect with his eldest son Luke, whose exile in London makes him a traitor to the family in his father's eyes" (Harte 57). Across two generations, what McGahern's text exposes is that this separation between the masculinised search for fundamental self, which prevents the natural resistance to the construction of nationality and nationhood, creates conflicts of point of view. Because the convictions of Moran do not affirm the initiatives of Luke, who is given anonymity status, this construct of identity violates the patriotic notions of Moran. As a comparison, it is rather noted that, in *Amongst Women*, women's potentiality to act according to change is defined. Therefrom, when they withstand parallelizing cultural expectations on their social performances, it enables men in their familial space. As seen, the men in the Moran family are not excited to embrace this new Ireland politically: Moran Michael's (the father) indecisiveness contradictions, Michael's (son) marriage to a British woman and Luke's absence and moving between Ireland and England.

Upon their decision to leave his house and Ireland, Moran's partnership with his sons Luke and Michael becomes destabilised and complicated. As a result, the text revolving around their narratives in the cases where they are remembered enroots a sense of shame that is preponderantly generated by their absence whenever the story attends to address their departure. For example, when Sheila asks "what's Luke like now?" since they have not seen him for a long time, "silence fell at once. Everyone looked towards Moran who held his own pained silence" (McGahern 65). Luke's departure and reluctance to replicate his father's role is a palpable reminder of his father's marginalisation status in the new state, where Moran does not exhibit the authority available to him on the domestic stage as natural, reasonable, or fitting. Moran signifies

his generation's perception, now recognised as the patriarch of Ireland's new generation, and who may have had a wounded sense of self-given during the times of conflicts with Britain. In comparison to the ordinary acts of repetition in post-independence, the clear yet traumatising essence of armed life is now out-placed by post-colonial means in which the assigned status to men like Moran is impeded and conditioned. Therefore, it is improbable for them to recapture the structures of authority established outside their household by other men. Moran's incapacity to pass on his view of self to his sons, particularly his eldest, is perceived to be a failure to Moran's principles. In reading Moran's identity as a former military member, it is intriguing that he had soldiers following his orders during his prime, while now his words seem to be a call of despair to his sons. Defiantly displeased by post-independence, this fatherly authoritarian tendency has the social masculine characteristics of the period that pervaded the antagonism about foreign identification, that is, the enemy of self. Moran unquestionably occupies this role perfectly as an IRA veteran who reveals that the nearest, he came close to any man in the battle "was when [he] had him in the sights of the rifle and [Moran] never missed" (7). He carries his militaristic values into the private sphere, as his reference to his children as "troops" (59). In essence, this figurative utilisation of troops' symbolism provides the fullest sign of Moran's failure as represented in the emigration and refusal to return of Luke Moran, who has become a traitor in his father's eyes.

The narrative is intensely indicative as to how family attachment works to maintain the dominance of a compromised and conflicting parent and indicates the most drastic negation of family involvement. What is striking to readers, however, does not lie in Luke's exclusion from these family narratives as a mystery figure, but when it appears that he is unwilling to idolise his father, or even to naturalise his relationship as something other than a social construction. Unlike

his brother Michael who is “fond of the old bastard [Moran] in spite of everything” (McGahern 147), Luke ultimately disavows Moran by refusing to express love or even wonder at the horrible actions of his father who used to make the young Luke takes off his clothes to beat him (95). He explains to his brother Michael that “[he] didn’t choose [his] father. [Moran] didn’t choose [him]” and that if Luke had given the choice, he “would have refused to meet the man” (144). Luke’s refusal could be interpreted as a fictional manoeuvre expressed by this coming generation, in McGahern’s work, for contesting their fathers, whom they seek to build their identity for themselves outside home and Ireland. Such initiative is unfathomed by Moran, who wretchedly struggles to live unbridled or even publicly powerful, and it encompasses the nation’s generational disparities in men’s representation. Moran’s discomfort may promote the romanticised notion of his past, to be embraced by his sons, but the response to his uneasiness with how things have become in Ireland is weighed and rejected by them. If anything, McGahern’s exposure to this disparity, filled with a disproportionate sense of contradiction and never to move beyond the founded self-identification in a new state, makes it rather open to his readers that the vulnerability of traditional expectations, personalities, and hierarchies of patriarchs like Moran is a failing undertaking.

The failure to change from militaristic ethos to civil life, to adapt the Irish exposure beyond the borders and to recognise the ongoing social patterns stem from the critical roles Moran assumed for himself, and which mimicked the convention on Irish identity endorsed by Moran’s generation. As the Irish national struggle progressed toward independence was about to be a reality, their status was undoubtedly up hailed and recognised. Nevertheless, they unexpectedly found themselves relegated to insignificant ordinary lives from the halls of heroic battles. The struggle was certainly unsuccessful for those like Moran since peace was

disillusioning to them as they had been given trivial positions in the new state. The thought behind it is that the English ruling group had only been substituted for a new Irish one for Moran whom he was forced to withdraw from. In parallel, occupying a functioning role to empower oneself during peacetime has repeatedly proven to be more complicated than the thrilling yet simplistic guerrilla warfare lifestyle. Returning to Moran's comment about "things were never so simple and clear again" (McGahern 6), we can see how war engendered Moran's profound trauma, but we also see how these emotional complexities, social interactions, and aggressive responses emerge uncontrollably in comparatively peaceful Ireland. Despite his efforts to keep his family closed in Great Meadow, for a sense of stability, the resulting demeanours of Moran are similar to that of battlegrounds that he aspires to rejuvenate in a more peaceful nation.

In the novel, the substantial level of stability and peace after Ireland's wars with Britain affected the deeply intertwined economic, social, and personal domains. However, this observation certainly raises the question of whether change tends to affect the individual validity or whether the change in one enforces change on another. Moran, who is old enough to know the devastating effects of famine on Irish culture, particularly that of rural locus, as we come to know that his "racial fear of the poorhouse or famine was deep" (McGahern 68). He has lived through the different periods of economic depression caused by war which made him carefully cultivate and preserve his wealth from his property. Therefore, it is no wonder that Great Meadow's significance goes beyond the imagined financial security to be the Morans psychological comfort zone. Such close examination of Moran's financial account demonstrates that the psychological factors, in relation to Moran's self, are equally influenced by the economic circumstances of his time, not just by his social and political conditions.

Some of Moran's alienation has to do with the emergence of the economy itself, as Ireland adopted more capitalist directions for its growth. Moran acknowledges that McQuaid, who had a lower army rank, has made a decent fortune in the new structure of the economy, the same factor that alienates Moran. In that sense, Great Meadow is the engine of Moran's psychological structure and stability, where he retreats as his miniature republic, where his children and wife live, and where he must construct laws and punishment to suit his centralised ideology. Similarly, as Great Meadow is regarded as a territorial object of economic value, it is most likely one component in Moran's self-alienation. Moran's mystical land is a zone of hegemony, a land on which all of his control hinges, a realm where he is more with himself than with the outside world, but also considerably more disconnected.

We could indeed evaluate the actions of Moran that are significantly based on his economic concerns since he achieved a respectable degree of economic stability by the end of his life "but his hatred and fear of poverty were as fierce as his fear of illness (McGahern 9). Moran embodies the attributes of hard labour that would rather materialistically reap his reward. For Moran, however, it is difficult to accept certain attitudes that have emerged as part of the new economic order in Ireland. In an exchange with Sean, Sheila's husband, Moran is appalled at Sean's argument that a civil service job is "no big deal" (157). For Moran and his generation, these occupations, whether they offer security, stability, pension, respectability, and relief from the emigrant ships, are perceived by their materialist centrality rather than the associated personal growth. Sean represents generations distant from hunger, like Moran's sons, and changed by a kind of confidence formed of prosperity. He contests to Moran that "there's more to life than security. There are even people who think it is the death of life" (158). Then, this

affirms that Moran resides somehow in the past, during days when hunger still lingers, and where the general sense is that to be mindful of one's financial struggle.

As the nation's conditions are constantly changing, Moran discovers that some facets of change are almost beyond his understanding. He has always been a force for change in his own life whether as a freedom fighter, model farmer or household patriarch. Nevertheless, just as the story derives vitality from its profound understanding of being embedded in a time and place, Moran's self-identification also does. His perceptions and his moral points of view are drawn from the spatial and temporal limits of his own life, which expand and restrict his level of awareness at the same time. The younger generation in the story is shown to have different attributes that vary from older generations in the implementation of their reality. This is somehow true at least in the case of Moran, where his children do not attain his sense of time and are collectively unlinked to his hegemonic tendencies. Of course, as we read carefully their individualities, we arrive at the impression that their vision of the world is less irritating than Moran's, and that they exist with other people in hopeful pursuit of comfort rather than closing their walls in.

4. Exploring Generational Trauma to Recognise Irishness: Trauma Within Two Generations

If the presumption that war is a possible reference point in shifting the perceptions of two-generation (see the first chapter: *Trauma, Shift and Transformation in Irish Perception),* then upon drawing a link to McGahern's story, one can read Moran's character as seen in the previous chapter reflects his generation's time of uprising and war and to some extent the remnant impact of famine which drive him to be closed in himself. His children, who never

witness the horror of wars, react differently in concern to the outside. To comprehend this gap between two generations in one nation, as well as the shift from one centrality to variations, we must first identify two major points of view. One regards the frames that identify a character like Moran as a representative of the Irish revivalist paradigm but also as a man who is terrified with the outside, and the second concerned with the degree, or prospect, of the next generation's transformation as portrayed by his children. In this fiction, both father and children attempt to come to terms with a number of predicaments either in the family or in the society in a nation at peace. However, while the father is still imprisoned in the past because of unspeakable trauma (unworked through), his children appear to be finally able to challenge Moran's fear with the outside and working through the family trauma indicating a conception of the shift in this collective memory specific to their respective generations.

Moran's dominance is so permanent that the prospect of violence has become embedded in his nature as a father, leaving his wife and daughters frightened of him. Each one of Moran's five children gradually leaves Great Meadow, including his daughters who appear to be the most downtrodden by his temperament. Despite being outmanned, Moran maintains power over these women owing to his brute will and his role as the household spokesperson, with his family acting as a symbol for the national allegory. Moran's significance as literary representation adheres to the stereotypes of the Irish father figure, which are based on historical founding father figures, such as Eamon De Valera, who played a pivotal role in the revolution. De Valera, whose political opinions on women and families tended to solidify the national family allegory, proceeded on to become the first president of the post-independence South. Other figures, such as Padraic Pearse, who used the Mother Ireland myth in their political speeches to encourage Irish men to become heroes in the war with Britain, had a

tremendous influence on bolstering the national myth around the father's values (Mays 9). The story succeeds in connecting the traditions of fatherhood in the Irish household to Moran's inherent spiritual outlook on family. Before the realisation of an Irish nation as a possibility, the deeply rooted revolutionary rhetoric of nationalist magnitude, which fundamentally inhibits Moran's generation and cements their identity, was unnaturally prevalent in the Irish social structure. During a period of strife and conflict, the necessary national ethos was deeply embedded in the nation's unconsciousness, allowing for one of the most popular allusions: the tradition of the father's role.

Reading again some passages from the novel illustrates such fatherly roles, for instance, "Once he made Luke take off all his clothes in the room. We heard the sound of the beating" (McGahern 113). In this situation, we see an example of the Irish father's imprudent use of violence against the son as a rule of conduct, which only exacerbates trauma and widens the gap between their points of view, solidifying a tradition of family roles. Even though the nuances of Moran's and Luke's dispute are never described, and the reader is seldom certain of all explicit reasons for Luke's absence from Great Meadow, the ramifications and silence overshadow Moran's narrative. Luke's role in the story does not suggest a fully formed character but a disruptive unpinned force whose primary intent in the story is to threaten Moran's core identity and pervade his narrative. As a result, we do not only have a void of narrative, or, to put it another way; an effort to thwart out this crippling narrative in his house, but we also have an intrusive memory infected on Luke. If this is the natural case within Irish nationalist families, then we have a traumatic memory residing under the surface that is embedded in their history but seldom discussed. This not only corresponds to Moran's identity, but also to the extent to which the trauma's implication would affect his children.

Moran's unspoken narratives, whether about war or his son Luke, which he seldom shares with his family, can be explored using trauma theory. In this respect, Moran promulgates a voice on the unexpressed side of the Irish experience, especially that of his generation. By revisiting the novel's first scene, the meaning of Monaghan Day is read through traumatic lenses while also setting out the themes of tradition, history, and memory. The Monaghan Day is a repetitive ritual and habit that does not facilitate Moran in integrating his traumatic memory fully with that of his family, Luke's as an example. Furthermore, it certainly impedes Moran in working through his unspoken past within "the place of trauma" (Balaev 150), Great Meadow, as he creates a space where he can recover a sense of control, strength, and stability; and most importantly, a sense of ego that is lost in the outside. Since this was a violent past, he replicated it in violent demeanours for him to spiritually connect with its symbolism. His unspeakable yet unavoidable and unexplained traumatic past reappears in a set of patterns, rituals, or explicit violence that form his personality and, by extension, the dynamics of his family members.

As a former guerrilla commander, Moran's trauma has a significant correlation to the notion of disillusionment with post-independence Ireland, as has been noted in a number of instances. As Moran mulls about Ireland's situation, he wonders, "What did we get for it?" We can see that his discourse is heavily influenced by disappointment in the new state especially when he adds "A nation, if you believe them" (McGahren 5). Since "it was the priest and the doctor, not the guerrilla fighters, who had emerged as the bigwigs in the country Moran had fought for", he did not allow his daughter " to lay claim to such position"(5). His repression of the outside world, which he holds, represents traumatic unspeakability. This is a matter that Moran and those like him have been compromising since Independence, and have never found a healthy outlet to navigate that but their families. As evidenced by his daughter's inability to have

a university scholarship, Moran resents doctors and those like them who re-emerged after the horrors of the war. Within this particular view, Stanley Van der Ziel's, Robert Garratt's and Harte Liam's remarks assist in demonstrating that his repression, which affects his discourse and family, is a locus traumatised past that mirrors his generation and the nation's. Moran's harrowing past is a violent one that is imbued from his exciting and tragic experience of killing his enemies in the war. Moran was "a guerrilla fighter from the time he was little more than a boy" (163) and was recruited into a national mission of divine propositions which made him command of a lethal weapon and a soldier at a young age.

Accordingly, as Van Der Ziel argues in *Fionn and Oisín in the Land of Wink and Nod: Heroes, History, and the Creative Imagination,* Moran has absorbed the romantic nationalism ideologies of his generation to a large extent that his perceptions were muddled, finding it challenging for him to identify the war's true reality, its emotional myths or the deceptions of heroism (14). Whilst Van Der Ziel relates Moran's trauma to the idealism Moran installed in his mind by nationalist faculties, Garrat, in *John McGahern's "Amongst Women": Representation, Memory, and Trauma*, elucidates that Moran's recollections are the culmination of a struggle between the public and private worlds, as demonstrated by "his disappointment with both his family and his nation," which contributes to "his own trauma and suffering as a guerrilla " (Garratt 131). Additionally, another critique by Liam Harte, in *House Arrest: John McGahern's Amongst Women*, provides a very thorough reading of Moran's traumatic experience as an individual who represents a broader traumatised society, a carrier of intergenerational trauma and guilt; and who often switches between victimhood and enforcer (61). Although these interpretations carefully map out Moran's character as a traumatised father, the argument that Moran's trauma, and by extension Irish traumatic cultural memory, is a point of social shift

between Moran and the following generation, represented by his son Luke, certainly warrants further inquiry, which we expect to meet in this section.

The first two sentences of the novel inform us that Moran was "once powerful," but that he is now a weakened man whose control, that is supposed to be his legacy, "implanted" in the daughters and Great Meadow, a place "that they had never really left" (McGahern 1). Although his daughters have moved and only visit him on occasion, they have never forgotten their shared bond with their father and home to do rosaries and prepare for Monaghan Day. However, the control has shifted “now”, and that is why “Moran became afraid of his daughters” (1). By trying to revive Monaghan Day, the daughters restore their father’s power that he once had, hence to “start him back to himself” (1). The “fearful nail-biting exercise Monaghan Day had always been for the whole house” is substituted for a sentimental memory that purposefully forgets the pain, reassembles the past in order to incorporate the present with a mythical intensity, similar to a “Lourdes’ miracle” (2). Nostalgia, according to Nicholas Dames, is a type of "retrospect that remembers only what is pleasant and only what the self can employ in the present." As a result, it can be thought of as "an absence; what it lacks is what [...] has come to be regarded as memory in its purest form" (4). The daughters’ recollection of Monaghan Day is therefore not a direct reflection of a past event, but rather a projection of an ideal that is not being experienced at the moment through repetitive rituals.

Even though the daughters were not born during a time that is marked by wars with Britain, their father’s dissatisfaction with the conclusion of those conflicts lingers in the family past. As a consequence, and keeping up with Harte, who thinks in *Reading the Contemporary Irish Novel 1987-2007 that* from the outset of the novel, an implicit war rages in “ the narrative over the recollection and rendition of past events and their potential to answer specific emotional

and psychological needs in the present" (58). However, one thing is certain: Moran's daughters are attempting to resurrect "a memory of a memory" (Garratt 131). Monaghan Day serves as a personal record of the war in which their father served, and they treat it as simply his remembrance without a deep emotional connection. As McQuaid and Moran reminisced about their shared war experiences, the daughters are merely observers of the two and their narratives. Moran would only talk about the war in a restricted manner on this day. For Moran, Monaghan Day, including its various traditions and rituals, is thus " his ritualised escape into the clarity and simplicity of the past" (Van Der Ziel 12). However, talking about the past with McQuaid certainly did not help Moran assimilate its painful existence. According to Garratt concerning contemporary Irish fiction, a character, typically of old age, must re-enter his or her past life, usually a clear occurrence of violence in his or her youth that is related to events or circumstances, to come to terms with his or her present conditions (4). Moran's Monaghan Day ritual did not permit him to completely transmit the emotional part of his past to his children, which can be described as an act of suppression.

Because there is no direct access to the shared past, Moran's memory is exposed to the process of mythologisation, which is one of the symptoms of a traumatic experience. This is an example of the national obsession with filling in the gaps in Ireland's tragic history with ideals of pride in order to meet collective ego desires, even at the expense of historical reality. Moran mimics Patrick Pearse's use of the Cathleen ni Houlihan myth to entice participants to join the Irish revolution. He urged this generation of Ireland to fight Britain by promoting the concept of the victim mother figure in his speeches: that is, to masculinise Ireland, because Ireland was conventionally referred to as a Mother in Anglo-Irish literature. Thus, Pearse's discourse sought to hold the myth alive, as it had become a part of Irish identity and memory. De Valera, on the

other hand, was an integral part of the Irish Constitution's drafting, especially Article 41 (Beaumont 566), in which he expressed his opposition to women serving in the military. In De Valera's Ireland, women's place was in the home, and it was the sons' duty to fight for their mothers. Much of these concepts that are ingrained in Moran's high sense of patriotism, he employs in times of anger and petulance, as well as in times of family rituals like recitation of the rosary, simulating his house into a military code to keep his children under control. "The nightly rosary, decreed by Moran, is less a religious ritual than a means of asserting family unity ('the family that prays together stays together' was an old motto)" (Kiberd 104). When Moran's grown daughter Maggie arrives home late one night, this authoritarian rule is divulged, exposing the generational divide. The narrator indicates: "Maggie was even more startled to find [Moran] alone when she came in…' You're very late,' he said…' did you say your prayers on the way home?' 'No Daddy. I'll say them as soon as I go upstairs'" (McGahern 55). Moran imposes this Irish fatherly status as a spiritual figure in the family, compelling Maggie into the childlike role, similar to the structure nurtured by the State, where fathers have an implicit right to direct surveillance of the household.

His children collectively authorise Moran's authority by recalling his past in various means. In the case of the passionate Sheila, by discussing Moran's own version of his personal history with "borrowed vehemence". She asks in hopes that her ill father would open up to her: "They say you should have gone to the very top in the army after the war but you were stopped"(McGahern 5). However, later, as the family's women were gathered eating together without him, as he dramatically draws their attention by shooting a jackdaw from his bedroom window. Moran is agitated that women would enjoy spending time together in his house where he is not involved. This could be interpreted as a compensatory claim to phallic authority performed with

certain metaphorical theatrics with the sole purpose of re-establishing hegemony rather than discursive voices, as Garratt characterises it as evidence of Moran's lingering post-war trauma. Rose and the Moran girls come across a dead mother bird in a hewn field at one point, suggesting a traumatic memory that has been passed on to those around Moran. Moran's tractor wounded the hen's feet because she had sat so devotedly on her nest without moving from danger (159). This scene more or less allegorically represents the condition of the women inside Great Meadow, where their desire to leave the root of trauma, their father's tractor, is compromised for the idea of home. Although the hen's care for her nest is outlined, Moran is unconcerned about the devoting mother as a natural force. This assumption, nonetheless, does not suggest that the hen's reluctance to leave the eggs was a healthy commitment, as it culminated in Moran trampling on her body.

Gradually, Moran is becoming more fearful of his daughters as he grows older; even though they speak back to his past, and despite the fact that he has policed their voice during their time at Great Meadow, their willingness to speak together and defy his authority can be used against him. The daughters also imitate Moran, and at the end of his life, ~~they~~ speak up for themselves in a sequence of vocal pleas that are depicted in the first stage and last stage of the novel as being voiced by all three daughters, "You'll have to shape up, Daddy. You can't go on like this " (McGahern 3). Their authority is, as understood, resembles a feminine force "since they had the power of birth there was no reason why they couldn't will this life free of death" (3). Moran is once again overwhelmed with fear as a result of the strong likelihood of being dethroned. Moran's sense of self is not entirely monistic, and he leans on relinquishing some or all of his ontic presence to the world of meaning provided by the other' to some extent.

This emphasises the danger to Moran's subjectivity, which is an inevitable exercise in the centre of McGahern's writing when Moran seeks to address his children, particularly his absent son Luke, that puts himself at risk of denial or silence. That is to say, Luke's concealed presence in the narratives, which may be subversive to Moran's, reflects a different masculine authority paradigm that threatens him. Luke's resistance to enable his father's authority, mirrors that of two different generations, which is compounded by a patriarchal tone: Luke refers to himself as "a kind of Englishman"(McGahren124), an act designed to prevent his father from feminising him. While both believe that to dismiss the other's authority, the father and the son engage in the feminisation of the other where it is significant to weigh the adherent role of nationality which arbitrates gendered masculine position in each postulation. By acknowledging his father's identifying proclivity as a defiantly ashamed Irish man in Ireland and the fact that he only lives with women, Luke associates himself with the opposing postcolonial binary paradigm that generates a national identity based on his experience. By the same token, Moran maintains, in different ways but ultimately through the same scope of colonial discourse, that Britain is this threat, and that Irish national identity is only warranted by those who follow his generation's paradigms.

The notion of Irish nationality in McGahern's fiction, like many Irish postcolonial literary works, has a clear sense of both continuity and disruption that is played in the form of silence, which is empathised by a traumatic memory. Silence, or what the narrator symbolically refers to as an "embargo on the past," (McGahern 177) is typically Moran's method of practising history. From this particular point, Linden Peach relates Moran's identity as an Irish man to the representation of a complex culture and space where there is a strong sense of both continuity and disruption. It is a space of disrupting the continuity starting from the past to the present that

requires reclaiming rather than rejecting history (Peach 11). Very early in the novel, readers learn that Moran “resented any dredging up of the past. He demanded that the continuing present he felt his life to be should not be shadowed or challenged” (McGahern 3). Moran’s ‘embargo’ is only released when he informs his daughters about his experiences during the War of Independence, which is essential to his traumatised self and since “he waits almost an entire lifetime to confront and speak about his violent past,” it indicates elements of “belatedness and repressed traumatic neurosis” (Garratt 133). When Moran returns the gun to “its usual place in the corner of the room” (McGahern 7), the description of the gun affirms the unresolved past’s continued influence to intrude upon the perpetual current Moran inhabits and further reinforces a reading of his narrative as a locus of traumatic haunting.

Moran is troubled by the war’s appeal in Irish national mythology, but even if the act of killing is justified in these circumstances, it highlights the tragedy of human assassinations. Simultaneously, his inextricable disdain for this deadly component of his identity terrorises him, throwing back unprocessed memories. This fits the portrait in the description of trauma as "a symptom of history" by Cathy Caruth. The latter argues that those “traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history with them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (5). Such glimpses of his suppressed agony morph this allegedly authoritative dictator into history’s villain, a bearer of transgenerational trauma and guilt arising from the traumatic stress of an entire culture and generation. As a result, Moran’s inability, or unworked through memories, to talk about his wartime memories become a central component for investigating the nature of nationhood and national identity, which started as a latent Irishness peculiarity manifesting itself in social dynamics and developed into a homogenizing climate. This is the point at which the traumatizing effects of Moran’s identity would become

apparent with his family. This psychological condition, according to Garratt, governs Moran's willingness to live in the perpetual presence in Great Meadow where he wields supreme control over the house and home (133). That is to say, if Moran's identity, if recognised by national concept, is dependent on inconsistencies and therefore Moran's discourse, that upsurges his domestic narrative and prevents his self-integrating processes with the present.

This identity complexion grounded in nationalist narrative and traumatic experience represents not only his memories but his generation and community, and furthermore, it represents the medium of telling their own stories and the lens of identifying themselves in these stories. Inaccessibility to the past creates mythologised based propositions since memory is distrusted by facilities of trauma to the next generation. A nation is a product of a historical narrative that reflects the voice of the dominant group and if nationalism is seen as an idealised view of the past, stemming from the legacy of the Easter Rising in 1916 and the War of Independence (1919-1921) Moran's tyrannical need for control may indeed be the result of repression need of cohesive belonging to the notion of community that he left excluded from. Moran's unspoken remembrances, on the other hand, suggest that his attempt to live in the continuous present causes him to lose control over the family member who possibly matters the most to him, his eldest son Luke—an individual who has been estranged from him by the conclusion of the novel.

Another point to explore is that Moran acts as an agency of displacing trauma not only as a victim but also as an agency that affects those around him to be hunted by a collective traumatic memory. The lack of vocalisation keeps McGahern's female characters within the realm of acceptable behaviour. As we find in Rose's family's meeting with Moran, "...though her mother disliked him, the custom of hospitality was too strict to allow any self-expression or

unpleasantness" (McGahern 29). We see throughout the beginning of the novel that the village knows of Moran's repressed violent nature. The terms of acceptable behaviour require that Rose's mother refrain from expressing dislike, even if it saves Rose from a future with such a questionable man. Instead, the focus here is on upholding the rules of hospitality. Violence is a problem within the family and this is analogous with the violence in Ireland too. Many inhabitants choose to go and live in other countries. But this violence is kept secret within the family. This is revealed in a scene when Rose talks with the girls, "People say he used to beat ye. People said that because Daddy never let us mix with them. Did he not beat ye? No… now and again when we were bold, but like in any house! Shame as much as love prompted the denial." (34). Here, we observe clearly how Moran infects trauma upon his son Luke and in return, Luke's opposition to his father reinforces his father's alienation.

Luke is perceived as different throughout the novel. He is the English; he belongs to the "other" side: "Luke is different. You'd never know what he is thinking. He is turning himself into a sort of Englishman" (McGahern 148). At this point Luke is also aware of his position as he remarks on the two countries: "I am well here and I hope you are well there" (5). Michael goes to London too, with the difference that he does not deny and reject his father as Luke, but he admits that he is a tyrant and that they left because of him: "We all left Ireland. I'm afraid we might all die in Ireland if we don't get out fast" (155). Maggie goes to London and Sheila and Mona to Dublin and their identities fuse into one unit: "With the years they had drawn closer. Apart they could be breathtakingly sharp on the other's shortcomings but together their selves gathered into something very close to a single presence" (2). Their leaving stands for the struggle between dependence and independence.

We can see how ritualisation plays a part in Moran's religious identity, which undoubtedly has a number of manifestations in Moran's indescribable selfhood. Moran imposes Rosary ritualisation because he is unable to express himself rationally and responsibly among his family or wider community, so he employs spirituality as a moral shield to locate himself in a proper image within his family structure. We may draw parallels between the role of the state in determining Irishness and the propagation of Catholicism. However, the said emphasises Moran's disruption within his subjectivity, leading him to resort to the only oppressive form he knows. Because such hierarchy order could also be found in military installations, then, the same aspect in Moran's unspoken past continues to traumatise him. Moran is emotionally linked to the Rosary in the story through which praying is extremely important for him to have an impactful role in the family as it also reflects a regular symbolic identity for Morans. From this perspective, it appears that prayer is a law that connects them. When Moran says "they say the family that prays together stays together" (McGahern 137) the hint that praying is a significant part of their narratives is clear. People in Ireland traditional have similar identities in which religious discourse substitutes normative expressions. Therefore, when the expressed notions of unity, such as prayers, bring the Morans together, they become proxies of Moran's centrality. As a result, in the case of Moran, he renders his family dynamics with the Rosary as surrogates for his traumatic memory, rather than as a matter of moral practice.

The repetitive experience of prayer in the domestic sphere, rooted in rituals, becomes a sign of traumatic personality and alienation from the public, as Siobhan Holland argues, that causes Moran to use prayer to uphold his dominance claims (Peach 88). This eventually leads to the practice of hegemony over the children and wife as emphasised by the order of prayers in the Rosary. Moran's authority restores the divinely recognised hierarchy, which assigns sovereignty

to fathers at home, in the state, and heaven, by repeating the Rosary in an Irish household context. There is a connection between speech and action, the role of words on gender relations, the coercive implications of Catholic discourses regarding the Virgin Mary, and the unintended failure to effectively assess women's identity as a result of monolithic expressions stem from one man (Holland 57). The aspect that makes these prayers important is that they have symbolic meanings since every time he tries to start praying, something turns out badly or someone goes missing. McGahern's use of praying appears to imply that this is exclusively an Irish situation, in which things do not necessarily create meaning and, if they do, the result is not as desired. The Moran family would not be able to pray with the same people every day since there is always someone missing. The strangeness is highlighted when Mike, Maggie's husband, arrives from London, he and his father-in-law recite the prayer together but he finds this tradition strange because he is from another context.

Moran eventually plays both the coloniser and the colonised, as he loses his legitimacy, which becomes indicative of his traumatic tendencies. His dominance steadily dwindles as a culmination of these rituals being only observed by his family, namely the women, rather than real obedience: "They were mastered and yet they were controlling together what they were mastered by" (McGahern 46). Moran eventually loses the ability to monitor the Rosary's rituals. He is unable to keep the prayer from being recited in forms that emphasise the beneficence of the blessed and adored father. This is stressed in the Hail Mary prayer, which declares Mary, as a symbol of woman's purity, to be "blessed... among women". And, to some degree, Moran, who had been a blessed father among women, could be seen becoming substituted for a biblical representation that symbolises a shift in roles. He is, therefore, haunted rather than blessed because the current state, and the Catholicism that Ireland has adopted, as shown by the

Constitution, puts women at the forefront of family commitment. As long as his family remains unaware of the nature of his haunting, he is doomed to remain silent about it, emulating the reality of victims of unspeakable trauma.

Moran may seem to be a stereotypical Irish man and a representation of his generation's values, those who served in the independence war, but he proves to be a complex embodiment of an unexceptional traumatic identity. He is someone who has been through a violent experience without fully comprehending it, but his ignorance and mistrust of the past show the scars of trauma that lay its effects on his life. Dominick LaCapra claims that the emergence of a traumatic reality that differs from stereotypical conceptions, found in literature, allows for an occasionally disconcerting exploration of disorientation, its symptomatic aspects, and potential ways of responding to them (185-186). Moran's Irishness, whether we may term it that, is unquestionably a peculiar question of Irish literary reflection on history. If art is primarily fit for the prospect of empathy, an important quality in every writing of history, we should also incorporate certain memories that imitate Moran's and the colonial tragedies for a heather pathway. The concentration on the psychological and personal aspects of his trauma, assist us to rethink his past rather than minimize his subjectivity, as he contributes for himself. But to merge these stories into understanding, we must have recourse to their memories of pasts to see them not just from their own experiences, but also to gain an explanation for the colonial paradigms that reshape national identity.

Hence, the use of memory in *Amongst Women*, speaks explicitly to how we know information about the past and how we formulate historical reality. Caruth, upon revising the Freudian concept of trauma, suggests that " in trauma…the outside has gone inside without any mediation" (59). If this is the point, it reveals Moran's proclivity for incorporating anything

he desires to be outside of Great Meadow into a repetitive transcendent activity inside. He reintroduces spiritual products, consumable practices, from his past to his family, integrating elements of rites of passage into his memory, which then renders their collective memory. Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience*, comments that the process of "taking this literal return of the past as a model or repetitive behaviour in general, Freud ultimately argues, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* that it is traumatic repetition, rather than the meaningful distortions of neurosis, that defines the shape of individual lives" (qtd. in Caruth 59). That is, when it comes to describing cultural trauma, Irish consensus dismisses it as a valid experience at the time which, as Caruth continues to suggest, surfaces " the example of the accident neurosis as a means of explaining individual histories", and if this entails that to think about history as the narrative of trauma (59). When it comes to traumatic memories, such as when Moran takes the shotgun to kill the bird, the past always requests to be repeated or carried out again. He openly admits to his wife and daughters that he has assassinated men shortly after this. Typically, these memories will not become authentic memories, as a component of the past, until the mind is able to decipher them as such. This inclination may reflect what Joe Cleary meant when he reports that Irish history is traumatic and that it can only be addressed after the fact because of its sheer immediate force(Clearly 108).

When it comes to Irishness as a construct of identity, there tends to be an inclining attachment to the past as an unacknowledged phenomenon. Rethinking history through the prism of empathetic nationalism, rather than the binary of colonial factors, could even enable us gain a more nuanced understanding of the Irish experience from a truthful representation. This genuine perspective is formed around Moran's generational trauma since without understanding their narratives, the nation would be riddled with stereotypes, misinformation, and hegemonic

viewpoints. We are once again presented with the realisation that there can be no true sense of history unless the past is acknowledged as over, that is, not part of the continuous present. Here what we mean is that the past should not be excluded, but rather the horrible consequences of the past should not be woven into the ongoing present as a constant cultural memory; instead, it should be discussed where there are incidents of trauma so that the distress does not affect the current. In other words, Moran's distress over the abusive behaviour and suffering is further compounded by the resurfacing of his war memories, which later emerge as remorse over the deterioration of his relationship with McQuaid. The role of the past in the story is enabled by the concept of revival, which is analogous to Literary Revivals, first as an active part of the story's development, and then as an underlying fictive technique to create meaning: to connect the future with the past, forgotten components of one's identity should be recalled. Here, Moran stands as someone approaching the end of his life who has never known his past because he denied it, and even unfortunate to him, none of his children can relate to his perspective because he was unable to express it in meaningful narratives.

The concept of revival works quite effectively in this book, although ironically expressed. There is an allusion that before moving on ultimately, one must first bury the deceased. This is symbolised by Moran's daughters and Rose to bury Moran, which, apart from the ceremonial aspect, involves unearthing and unveiling the trauma passed on from generation to generation. Now, the story announces a new authority in Great Meadow as the perspective switches to his children, and we only have female narratives from this point on, as if the sons are subordinate. Since burying their abuser, the abused become agents of memory, able to tell each other stories that will be passed onto future generations. This is a story that showcases the generational shift in authority in typical Irish fashion, but there is an unspoken element to these changes that there

are also submerged painful facets that need to be reclaimed. The author of the story, McGahern, makes a number of observations about this generational shift in Irish social dynamics as he says in an interview:

> When I came to write *Amongst Women,* I thought I was writing a novel about that lost Irish generation of the 1950s and 1960s, a lost generation that disappeared into England. They included most of my family and most of the people I went to school with. I worked in England myself as a young man and again after the banning and the dismissal. (qtd.in Murphy and Anluain 149)

This speaks specifically to Luke's situation as a member of the "lost Irish generation," whose national identity distinguishes it from Moran's. Those others whose identities are aligned with Luke's probe the possibility of other unique experiences than the hegemonic perspective. In fact, as John Murphy indicates, in *Identity Change in the Republic of Ireland,* despite the Catholic ethos continuing to influence public morality laws today, few lawmakers in recent times would make the explicit hegemonic views that were widespread in the 1930s and 1940s. This was partially due to the rising secularisation of Irish life. The perception of being Catholic is also an influential aspect of Irishness in the context of belonging to a homogeneous society. However, the essence of Irish nationalism — its ritual and religious nature — is evolving substantially and differently two decades after the Famine. The causes of the shift can be traced back to a number of events in the early 1960s (146). About the fact that the reality of trauma continues to haunt multiple victims, Irish perceptions are slowly shifting to embrace more nationalist symbols being tarnished, rather than the stance that was once taken, such as the controversies involving religious and political leaders in the 1960s to 1990s. Changes in Irish culture take longer to manifest as "the nation's sexual repressions, in-turned emotional culture, and misogynist

containment of sexuality were strongly affected by a remarkable series of painful events emerging from the 1980s onwards" (176 Coughlan). The progressive shift in perception comes to Great Meadow in the form of Nell Monahan, a character who returns from America and has a passionate affair with Moran's Michael before returning to the United States. In comparison to the deeply conservative and silent Moran and Rose union, Nell's and Michael's liberal ideals are apparent in their intimate relationship. Both Nell Monahan and Luke, the two progressive exemplars of change, live outside of Ireland, announcing that attempts to reduce external intervention have obviously failed.

Human behaviour is fundamentally complex, inconsistent, and motivated by a number of dichotomous impulses such as superiority and insecurity in some situations. None would contend against the need for a collection of universally applied rules that ensure fair care, freedom, and obligations for all. Disagreements arise easily when the particulars of such processes are debated, especially regarding who has the authority to make norms, laws and principles; or the manner of enforcement and policing within a given society. Evidently, we see how these values crumble progressively as the scopes of powers move to the next generation since Moran takes the role of state authority, rooted in one man's vision, reflected in his generation. Therefore, McGahern manages to represent the Irish identity elements that were unacknowledged from national narratives which arise from the knowledge of trauma. Metaphorical Ireland in *Amongst Women*, is Great Meadow, where McGahern integrates silence as a symptom of cultural trauma. It becomes a rhetorical strategy that helps "the author structure the narrative into a form that attempts to embody the psychological 'action' of traumatic memory or dissociation" (Balaev 158). To account for this new cultural context, a new paradigm of identity is usually required. This is what Kuhn refers to as an essential precondition in a generational shift, where he argues:

"the discovery process is often drawn out because the paradigms and theories one accepts limits one's vision, and can even prevent one from noticing certain phenomena" (52). The "incommensurability of standards," as Kuhn mentions, is the product of these contradictions between the existing paradigm and its possible substitution. Old paradigms give way to modern ones, which provide much of the language and frameworks used in the new paradigm (77). Thus, communicating narratives to be understood in Ireland would aid in the expression of myths, reducing aspects of repression patterns by recognizing the sensitivity of psychologically traumatic perceptions in the social context.

Moran's life represents a narrative to explore the unspeakable vacuum left by a traumatic experience, even though it is never detailed and is hidden from the narrator point of view. McGahern crafts a narrative in which the psychological issues caused by suppressed recollection are accentuated via a social context brought about by the ramifications of the War of Independence. Moran's frustration with post-independence Ireland, coupled with his unresolved trauma, cause him to reduce his world to a symbolic nation. Moran's trauma is conveyed by repetitive acts, influence, and aggression, and Great Meadow becomes this the place of unfolding trauma. McGahern's utilisation of emotional components mimics the markings of rethinking Irish narratives, dramatizing an individual's psychological inability to deal with the collective traumatic nature of war. *Amongst Women* manages to portray what should be difficult to represent, registering the victims' fractured subjectivity, the unassimilable essence of suffering, and the haunting dimensions of its repetition that extends to a whole generation.

5. Conclusion

As a significant connection between the Literary Revival era of the early 20th century and the continuing literary retrospective attempts to look back to the Irish past, McGahern's work holds a substantial role in Irish literary history. In the sense of Revival legacies, *Amongst Women* is not only a locus of nationalist narratives that are profoundly embedded in the minds of former soldier-like figures, such as Moran, but it extends to the national discourse that derives from dialogues with Revivalists. The national dialogue, while frequently homogenised in principle, drew its idealisation forms at the time from the Revivalist conceptions on what distinguishes them as Irish wherein they sought to take their inspiration from the nation-building as an empowering motif.

In addition to that by depicting this facet of what the Irish family is like, the story exposes the nationalists' utopia that is grounded in mythical rural life, overly masculine identity and belligerent towards English identity. Thereof, by having recourse to conceptualisation the sources of these myths, that were once ubiquitous in Ireland's indorsed identity, we certainly comprehend the experiences of generations, such as Moran's, who were both casualties of the ongoing transformation and whose centralised views perpetuate oppressions in his private sphere that permeate to national levels.

Moreover, by reflecting critically on a time when the Irish people have begun to enjoy their independence from Britain, the former colonial oppressors, and touching on a variety of motifs created as a need to elevate the integrity of Irish, we come to conclude that novel's representations of the prominent homogenised concept of Irishness is encapsulated as the imagination of the Irish as a rural utopia, the cult of masculine centrism, and the glorification of the Catholic Church and the Irish State roles. On the contrary to this is the view of a compulsory

change in the nature of traumatic unspeakability that still has to be acknowledged. However, this shift in interpreting Irish identity also suggests a possibility of transformation and openness, as exemplified by the decaying ideals of a father and the emergence of a younger generation.

III. Coming to Know a Traumatised Self within an Imagined Nation: Imagined Ireland and Traumatised Irishness in Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* (1996)

1. Introduction

This chapter's premise is to support the overall research's argument that Irishness as an identity construct is dynamic, as opposed to the traditional paradigms of Irish identity that reside in national rationalisations. Therefore, to lay the groundwork for how the different aspects of nationalism operate in Northern Ireland, as Seamus Deane's novel, *Reading in The Dark*, represents, we will first attempt to show how national narratives adhere to hegemonic views of Irish identity. Be it Republicans or Unionists, these politicised and deep-seeded narratives contribute to the narrator's family traumatic situations. Secondly, to address the argument that there is a challenge with defining Irish identity—whether it is the historical/romanticised interpretation that seeks refuge in national tendencies or it is unique to the experiences of individuals, even if such experiences are traumatizing—we will explore the narrator's individual identification in this traumatised family.

Then, finally, we will have recourse to the psychological processes of such perception since this chapter takes a fair involvement in the character's means of understanding himself initially, then his environment via his research. As a child, he relies on post-memory available to him from his family, grandfather, mother and father, to develop a reliable knowledge about his own identity. Hence, the burden of knowledge associated with what he later comes to know is traumatic. We will illustrate how the child's identity transformation takes initiative as a member of the third-generation family, in this sphere, by employing Jacques Lacan's three perceptions categories: the Imaginary, the Real, and the Symbolic.

2. Coming to Know a Nation: Representations of Nationalism in Postcolonial Ireland

The question of Irishness is believed to be the concern of all Irish, regardless of political affiliations or religious views, and not simply exclusive to those from the Republic, since a similar attitude is also expressed in Northern Ireland. Hence, *Reading in the Dark* by Seamus Deane, unlike McGahern's *Amongst Women*, explores what it means to be Irish beyond the island's established political borders. Knowing one's self, for the story's young narrator, requires knowledge of his family's past, and hence knowledge of Ireland's history. The boy's search for identification and connection with his family's past reflects Ireland's obsession with history for building one version of national identity.

Reading in the Dark (1996), written by Seamus Deane who is considered an intellectual personality, acclaimed poet, and literary historian, is a novel that arguably describes effectively his artistic talents. Since its release, the work has earned several accolades and prizes: Guardian Fiction Prize winner, New York Times Notable Book, Irish Times International Fiction Prize, and Irish Literature Prize in 1997, as well as being shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1996. At first glance, the themes of the story appear to revolve around Irish traditional notions such as dysfunctional family, political strife, and religious affiliation during the 1920s; nonetheless, what sets this one different is it all is seen through the eyes of an unnamed boy as he looks back twenty years later. This is a story that covers a period that extends for twenty-six years, precisely from 1945 to 1971, and is presented from the perspective of this adult recalling his life as a boy in Derry, Northern Ireland.

Reading in the Dark tackles the often-contested issue concerning the potential polarisation of national narrative through cultural representation that emphasises trauma,

memory, and language as the enigmatic locus of individual and collective identity. Since Irish history is “a long colonial concussion”, as Elmer Kennedy Andrew states, the way through which colonial aftermaths still build a culture of secrets lies in both the political and personal domains (220). Deane’s representations of these elements are materialised by equipping the narratives with particular plot modes to meet the concept of secrets left by colonial existence. The representation of Irish identity via mysteries, which the narrator must solve, is a strategy to suggest that one should not subscribe to ideals from the past without contemplating their implications in the present. Thus, the narrator family’s secrets, while unique to them, are expressions of bigger symptoms: an imperialist controlling presence in Northern Ireland, as evidenced by colonial language and history; and a nationalist urge to resist and establish a combatant antidote.

However, what distinguishes this narrative is that it advances a spatial embroilment that is Derry, a town in County Derry, one of Northern Ireland’s six counties. The setting of this story, thereafter, is socio-political space as the story highlights a period of sectarian conflict that was decisive in determining the political reformation of the Island- it resulted in the Partition of Ireland. The story narrative is concerned, thus, with giving an account of a minority of Catholics living with Protestants who traditionally profess a political loyalty to the British crown. Given their status, these minorities, therefore, identify themselves with the pervasive antagonism to British identity. Hence, the carefully architected national narrative was vital to sectarian ideologies and one that was adopted in times of ‘the Troubles’ by Republicans, Catholics and nationalists against the majority of Unionists, known as Ulster Protestants in the south. Essentially, the story touches upon the Irish consciousness regarding the aftermath of this period of violence that persists in Irish memory.

The story enfolds an account of an Irish Catholic family in Northern Ireland between the late Forties and early Seventies. The unnamed narrator traces the path taken by a growing boy searching for and finding the truth about his family during this very tumultuous time and having to come to terms with what he discovers. The novel uses this family to illustrate the issues surrounding history that are central to the deeper understanding of his novel. Especially, concerning the British government and the Catholic Church, both flaunt differing agendas, which affect these people's history and the consequences of not dealing with their history and past resulting in their subjugation and passivity. The theme of haunting plays a major role in the history of this family and the overall society of these people illustrating the problems of not confronting and not knowing the past. The hauntings also further illustrate how various forms of authority affect the way history is written and hidden.

Reading in the Dark is a novel about unsettling mysteries and secrets that confirm Deane's opposition to endowing a radical outlook on anti-nationalist revisionism. Deane's novel raises the factual question of which circulation Irishness is linked in the Irish world of literature and political space. That is to say, the situation in Northern Ireland differs from that in Republic Ireland, where certain patterns of national identity — Catholic and Celtic interpretations – predominate. Given their diverse Irish literary tradition, Northern Irish representations of such a perplexing enterprise are challenging. As a result, nationalism and anti-nationalism are the two polarities of Irish political and historical representations. Nationalism, here, refers to the identity structure that espouses unification of Ireland as a Catholic and Celtic region as envisaged by Literary Revival.

To understand the flux of representation Deane expresses in his narrative about national identity, it is necessary to connect it to Joyce's view of Irishness. As Emer Nolan argues in

James Joyce and Nationalism, Joyce's status as the primary adversary of Irish nationalism should be explicitly debunked. She dismisses Joyce's interpretation as an anchor in nationalist and anti-nationalist dichotomies, and as a result, her work advocates a postcolonial analysis of Joyce's role in establishing national identity. She adds that Irish critics "tend to make sense of what they interpret as Joyce's 'moderate' nationalism," which is the argument she makes regarding Irish nationalist history. This moderate nationalist attitude has shifted dramatically from that period to Deane's, as the dichotomies have also evolved between radical revisionists who continue to identify a national identity in positive quality and reasonable revisionists who look back to elevate the ruins of the past (21). Being a child, the narrator is constantly in a state of epiphanies, Deane's *Reading in the Dark* aims to recall the Joycean principle of Irishness.

Throughout the novel, the notions of knowledge and truth are, thus, an obsession taken by the narrator; and they do in fact resemble the new revisionist's tendency to look back into Ireland's past, before their independence, for deconstructing a meaningful Irishness. The construction of a nation is transformative initiation, like the literary Revivals of Ireland, the possibility of achieving some kind of identity formation is relocatable by the narrator. The division in representing nationalism as an identity occurs between its representation as an original and authoritative concept and its articulation as imitative and genuine. Here, the story probes a fictional reality, where Deane's engagement with postcolonial theory is felt as asserted in his rejection of an obdurate imitative traditional nationalism.

The story begins with the concept of haunting that perplexes the family's private sphere. There is an early hint at the importance of history and the failure to deal with it: "there's something between us. A shadow. Don't move" (Deane 3). This is the first reference to the likelihood of something being 'dark' and sinister to this family. The 'shadow', here, is the ghost

that haunts the family, but in fact, represents the true history of the family that has not been exorcised. By calling it a shadow, this brings up dark and ominous connotations about what happened in their past. This shadow nests itself also between the narrator's mother and himself. As long as the shadow inhabits the atmosphere, its existence keeps the family apart emotionally. The secret of their history builds walls between the members which will destroy the relationships among their family. This parallels Ireland's haunting past of sectarian violence and colonial turmoil in which nationalists tend to avoid re-evaluating the principle that Irish identity is divinely expropriated. This is a nationalist idealism that revolves around looking back at their unstained history as rightfully won from the British. The narrator's mother illustrates this point further by ignoring the signs of the haunting past: "No, nothing, nothing at all? All imagination? There's nothing there" (4). The mother ignores the truth and fails to deal with it. She attempts to ignore it by burying the past inside her. The truth about their history becomes nothing more than a ghost in this family, festering inside those who know the truth but do not tell it, which in the long run will destroy themselves and others around them.

The house itself is haunted which is used by Deane to illustrate the strength and effect of history and the failure to deal with its effects. The narrator early in the novel establishes to the reader that his perception from naivety to maturity is encoded with ghostly-like notions that he slowly comes to uncover. The representation of ghosts also sheds light on the learning knowledge he extracts from his world which is blurry and never in the full picture: "we had a ghost, even in the middle of the afternoon? The house was all cobweb tremors. No matter where I walked, it yielded before me and settled behind me (Deane 5)". As a result, as the novel unfolds, there is an inherent indication that the narrator would come to perceive these ghostly narratives around his family through more rational lenses. We contend that the child narrator

depicts Ireland's transformation from nationalism to a mood of individual Irishness. Such transformations occur as a consequence of being nurtured as a proud irrational repertoire of a utopian nation.

The expressed representation of Irishness in the story is centred within the experience of a child narrator coming to perception about himself, first, then his family as a community of marginalised others -although they are not Other within the traditional postcolonial sense. Post-colonial novels are written to present the unequal relations of power based on binary opposition, namely the Self and the Other. However, the story tends to validate these dichotomy paradigms. In that sense, the narrator is the Self and the Other simultaneously. The story's narrator is a person who seeks identification, as Otherness, in a world split into rejecting pre-existing narratives of his culture as a Catholic; but, as the Self, he is the one who is already building the story, the ordered and reasonable. This construction of narrative is a process of decentralisation, to express "the ambivalence at the very heart of authority" (Ashcroft et al. 3). The child narrator, whose perceptions have been structured within an English, literate, empirical, rationalist educational system, undergoes a process of re-education into a deeper understanding of normative knowledge and strategies for survival in the postcolonial condition. Some fractures have to be healed between the lived experience and the learned awareness, the mythical past and the empirical history, the traditionalist ideals, and the revisionist importance. The narrator's internal realisation, as he aims to take authority over his story and reintegrate himself into the public space, is driven by his involvement in a rationalist impulse granting him a distance from the presented narratives in the story.

The narrator's background as a member of a minority community living in what has historically been an oppositional culture gives him the ability to describe himself as an

etymological attempt to control the represented self. Harte, in *History Lessons: Postcolonialism and Seamus Deane's Reading in the Dark,* makes the case that the narrator's capacity to "take charge of interpretation" is to reverse the status of the inflicted "illegitimate" political and cultural narrative of marginalisation as authority over linguistic options (157). In the context of the novel, as the story develops, the linguistic tools of the narrator improve, as much as his uncontrollable creativity. Henceforth, his uncontainable curiosity serves as a source of tension interfering in his ability to explore different social networks which undermines the conventional conception of affiliation in the public sphere. By immersing oneself in the multifaceted identifications of Ireland grounded within linguistic choices, the narrator would overcome convenient identity boundaries. Jennifer Miller writes that as the novel establishes the narrator's constantly evolving vocabulary, it also comforts the dominance of Standardised English spoken and spoken communication over Irish-English and Gaelic. The narrator, therefore, represents "an embodiment of the region's history" (35). The narrator's transformation from constant states of knowledge parallels the development of Irish "cultural, social and political complexity of a fledgling contemporary Ireland" (35). The story, thereafter, aims to question divisive notions of English hegemony and Irish nationalism affiliated with identity by rendering political representation through a literary depiction of certain linguistic particularities. In addition, by portraying different Irish-English traditions in conversation with Gaelic and Enlightenment English legacies of the twentieth century, the conveyed Irish representation is undoubtedly appreciated as it underlines the complex nature of identity formation amidst cultural and linguistic past. Hence, the narrator's desire for knowing more linguistic tools invokes Ireland's multifaceted linguistic representations.

In one scene, the linguistic representation serves as an intriguing intersection of political tension when the narrator comes to inform his parents about their family secrets in a language that none of them understands, Gaelic. As a result, the language in which the narratives are communicated becomes the conduit of truth through which these secrets are exposed. However, the narrator's revelation is rendered insignificant for his father, who cannot understand Gaelic, a language that is seen as a symbol of cultural purity. The narrator states: "My mother knew no Irish, but she had dismembered bits and pieces of poems and songs that were from the Irish (Deane 202)". The significance of this passage lies in its content. Because the narrator's mother knows no Irish, and the father presumably also has limited knowledge of the language, the circumstances lend the young narrator authority over his parents. Thus, the narrator is portrayed as an authority figure by acquiring more linguistic capacities than his parents, yet, he is left essentially ineffective by knowing and carrying the burden of his family's secrets while he struggles to communicate with them. Because in this scene, his father lacks the information, the narrator is, nevertheless, placed in the particularly uncomfortable role of consciously overpowering his parents. Similarly, the narrator is positioned as an agent to promote the nationalists' highest priority: communicating their identity in its purest form in their own language.

In these instances, while he talks to his parents in Gaelic, the Irish language frees the boy from the burden of truth and veils the story from his parents. Gaelic has been contested as the symbol which once again makes Ireland one or that it would handicap the nation's development throughout the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The representation of Gaelic addresses the precarious role of the language both integral and extrinsic in the region's future. However, there is an argument here that without such a sophisticated level of literacy, the

language would be all but unavailable even to the boy. Gaelic is not an accessible language to all Irish as highlighted with the narrator's parents. Even the narrator struggles to translate his family's dark history, "with the help of a dictionary […] taking more than a week to do it" (Deane 203). In the text, we only access it via the narrator who translates to Gaelic, but we read it in English. His endeavour to translate it only serves one function, admittedly, by making the narrator overpower his parents rather than disclose the truth.

Ironically, similar to Article 8 of the Irish Constitution, the role of Gaelic in Deane's novel is described in English. Ireland's connection with its mother language has become disconnected as a result of historical factors, which have been exacerbated by Britain's extended involvement in Northern Ireland. The various linguistic strands in the story serve as a metaphor for the nation's relationship to its multiple sources of social, political and cultural influence. The narrator states "then, one evening, when my father was there, reading his way through *Pear's Encyclopedia,* his hand-held education, as he called it" (Deane 203). While the narrator attempts to reveal his family's secrets in his mother-tongue language, his father is reading a classic British book as a reference to *Pear's Cyclopaedia* which is published in England. It is clear that the father is fond of education and knowledge but he is only invested in what he considers an education missing out on available knowledge that the boy wants to communicate about his brother, Eddie, in the process. Therefore, Deane's use of Gaelic raises a number of intriguing concerns about images of Ireland and nationalism, as well as the effectiveness of knowledge and education.

In the chapter entitled, "Eddie", we are introduced to the story of what may have happened to the narrator's uncle. The narrator comments on who writes history by stating "I wanted [my father] to make the story his own and cut in on their talk" (Deane 8). The story

referred to is related to the unfortunate fate of the narrator's uncle in the distillery shootout, something that remains a hidden history in the family. If the father finds out the truth about his brother, the mysteries of the past will become connected with the present, shared knowledge in the family rather than proprietary to the narrator. Making the story his "own" would give the father the authority he lacks in public because his brother's death is connected with betrayal, which is not what happened. The pressure of public perception on the family's image paints them as a family of informers, and by refusing to "cut in on their talk" (8) about their reputation, the father essentially empowers an outside group to define his history. That is symbolic of how Irish people were powerless allowing the British to write the image of Ireland. The narrator, on the other hand, represents a new generation that can find authority in understanding their history, and so questions the unspoken truth of their culture. This segment of the novel demonstrates how their past is constantly visible, no matter what, and how outside authority influences multiple generations of this country.

Northern Ireland's recent history appears to be perpetuating two extreme outlooks: nationalist and colonialist loops. In both doctrines, historical accuracy tends to come second to narratives designed to meet their political agendas. As a result, the essence of history is actively being formed to become mythologised in the Irish psyche. Deane comments in *Strange Country* about the mindless interoperations of Irish historical accounts that began from 1916 to the 1960s that were all given mythologised narratives. He states that nationalists in their goal to purify the guilt of the nation, do not "allow anything to happen 'accidentally': it is all recuperable within the capacious system of interpretation that it has produced and that also has produced it" (Deane 184). Therefore, history becomes a subject of revoking myths and not accessible to all facts.

Reading in the Dark addresses the mythical ideals of Ireland, especially the often deep-rooted in the Irish consciousness. The novel, thereby, relies on language representations for depictions of the hegemonic mythologisation of Ireland. Miller argues that Deane' representations of Ireland reflect the hybrid linguistic make-up of Irishness which is done to show substantial variation in the development of cultural, educational, socio-economic and political identity formation. The hybridity allows his work to act as a distinct challenge to nationalist mythologies. Therefrom, his work undoubtedly shows a case in which the powerful integrated linguistic representation can perform as a distinct response to nationalist mythologies (Miller 25). In Ireland, the colonial factors which prevail in Irish society still resonate. In reality, colonialism proportions also installed in Ireland a legacy of various forms. These forms found a process of purification, preservation of oppositional politics and sectarianism; a formulation of the ideal State and, more noticeably, a continued subscribing to popular beliefs and nationalist myths.

In his critique, Deane claims in an essay, *Wherever Green is Read*, that there is no such thing as objective history, and there is no innocent history. Both history and literature are forms of mythology (26). The construction of past based myths appeals to nationalism hegemonic centrism since their relationship is characterised by interdependence. Nationalism in Ireland lives in part owing to the propagation of myth, just as myth survives due to the development of national philosophy. In principle, this is an ideological application of history, detached from its historical context, readjusted with current interests in mind and justified by the occurrence of historical evidence that is to be understood in narratives.

It is unsurprising, then, that the outlook of mythologising history underpins *Reading in the Dark*, which is designed as a fictional world that likens to real historical situations and

engages in certain historically representations of Irish cultural identity, such as the multiple historical allusions ranging from Celtic myths to IRA uprisings. This is most explicitly shown by the text that the narrator reads in the dark, entitled *The Shan van Vocht*, from which the title of the novel originates. The political aim of the book is to recount the 1798 rebellion which fascinates the imagination of the boy narrator. In the dark, the narrator would sit and read the book "re-imagining all [he] had read, the various ways the plot might unravel, the novel opening into endless possibilities…" (Deane 20). There is a sensation of mythological presence that resides in the darkroom. Furthermore, the boy's access to Ireland's historical narrative is obviously through the book which leaves him exposed to its meaning of "endless possibilities". To inform a meaning to the story he reads, the narrator's imagination plays an important part. This type of imagination is then merged with a historical text through mythical interpretations. He joins this imaginary setting, conversing with Ann, the heroine, unwilling to abandon her in the rebellion. It cannot be presumed that the book conveys a clear, real past; but rather, history is mythologised and altered by the reader involved in its formation.

In the final section of *Strange Country*, entitled *Irish History: The Institution of Boredom*, Deane condemns revisionist historiography, particularly its dependence, "upon the standard positivist opposition between myth and science" (185). For Deane, the nationalist revisionist project, entailing the assumption of immediate and unmediated access to the truth. The narrator's epiphany at the end of the story bears Deane's conviction about the virtues of historical revisionism. The narrator's naive perception of his own history is met with certain truths, resulting in a sense of disappointment. This reason could be to leverage the idea of transformation in the narrator's perceptions: from romanticised to rationalised. The narrator begins the novel fantasising about his country myths, then, he gradually copes with his family

past as a haunting phenomenon grounded in metaphorical understandings. Eventually, his knowledge makes him self-aware with an impartial narrative, an individual who understands that his haunting past is one of secrets and trauma.

The inclusion of an impartial narrator devoid of ideological and political mystification is a narrative choice intended to denounce nationalist myths. The struggle of the boy to achieve a precise conclusion about the importance of knowing his family's secrets and how the truth transforms to fiction represents the symbolic conditions of human behaviour and the validity of indirect and figurative discourse to indicate any possibility of reality. Thus, in *Reading in the Dark*, Deane represents Ireland as a mysterious nation contending with myths before reality, where the traits of historical narratives and irrationality infiltrate each other without ever converging. Furthermore, it parodies nationalists' adoption of rational ideologies based on historical subjectivity that is intended to prohibit any colonial perpetuation.

Paul Kennedy claims in an essay entitled *The Decline of Nationalist History in the West, 1900-1970* that the work of historians is concerned with the correction of myths. Historians prefer to research literary materials to deny the empirical reliability and the collective agency of myth and tradition (51). Similarly, one of the most urgent issues involving the contemporary Irish postcolonial landscape is whether the myth that forms a nation enables us to identify the evidence of truth. When Ireland was portrayed in Revival literature, nationalists purposefully sought to conform to the demands of dichotomous post-colonial conceptions of Self and Other as moral narratives. For their systemic display of Irish culture, folklore and language such identity components were presumed not to be drawn from myths, for they represent a potential of the irrational (Deane *Strange Country*, 186). Deane addresses the issue in *Strange Country*, by arguing that, within colonialism, any system resistant to the post-Enlightenment rationality

engines was discarded from attention as a kind of myth that relied for its advancement on irrational thinking (183). That is to suggest reactionary movements, like nationalism, that appealed to the enforcement of authority or institutions intended to the recognition of rational moods. However, by doing so, as postcolonialism products, forms of nationalism resistance create their own myths based on various historical interpretations.

Because nationalists continue to compete for identity formation based on rational inclination to revive their history, thereof, in their attempt to dismantle the perpetuation of colonialist discourse, they tend to imitate the colonial. In a preface of *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*, Katie Trumpener notes that most studies of the colonial periods have rendered the Anglo-Irish literary and cultural representation, "as imitative footnotes to a broadly English culture or, although significant in their own right, as isolated from England and each other"(Trumpener xi). Often, the target is a superior hegemonic culture that undermines minorities as irrationals in the process. However, when the oppressed groups opt for the rational methods that have historically been used to silence them, the essence of the national discourse is revealed as ambivalent. It is within the narrator's voice; we witness his accumulation of the tools to have a certain independent agency in a pervasive setting: his family's history and reputation as IRA and Nationalist loyalists vs. the Unionist community of Derry which is loyal to the British crown.

From the outset of the novel, the narrator's discursive struggle for ownership of the subjectivity is clear. This is attributable to the hybridised locus from which the narrator attempts to establish his identity since his community and status regularly overlap. As in the example when we see the official attempts to interpolate him as a loyal, acquiescent citizen begin, which contrasts with the form of identification that prevails in his household. The ideological

hegemonic process, by Derry authorities, is retained in basic forms that seek the participation and the complicity from members of the Catholic minority community. This is seen with the character, Brother Regan, whose Christmas address in the narrator's school is a powerful parable on "the evils" of paramilitary intervention. What Brother Regan intends to convey, though not explicitly stated, has to do with a pacifist approach in the process of teaching —knowledge about the world— and injustice realities that choose the Unionists as moral pillars. Although Brother Regan states that his students will soon enter "a world of wrong, insult, injury, unemployment, a world where the unjust retain power and the ignorant rule" (Deane 25), he urges them to dismiss any ideas about militant protest but to believe in divine justice instead. Given that this is a time of aftershocks from the Troubles, his speech is effectively a reformation packed in a discourse for his followers to embrace the vision of Northern Ireland as a unionist part of the monarchy: they are the conductors of justice, while those who seek to destabilise this harmony are the oppressors.

Brother Rogan seeks to install the ideas that "injustice, tyranny, freedom, national independence are realities that will fade too, for they are not ultimate realities, and the only life worth living is a life in the light of the ultimate" (Deane 06-25). Ironically, just days after this sermon, a vigorous, openly repressive deterrent to republican activism takes place. The narrator, his father and brother are arrested and beaten by the police for possession of a gun which was a gift to the father from a German sailor detained in Derry during the Second World War (28-29). As seen by his active participation in a St Patrick's Day skirmish with the police these incidents lead up to the narrator's transformation to question the current utility of nationalism from both sides.

In another case, we find the state using educational institutions to disseminate and perpetuate dominant views in order to control minority Catholics. In the novel, in the section entitled “Political Education”, “ a priest in a British army uniform” visits the boy’s college. The priest is sent by the Ministry of Education to give a lecture on the need for collective responsibility to defeat ‘the international Communist threat’ (Deane 196). Because the IRA was about to launch ‘Operation Harvest,’ in November 1956, which would take a six-year guerrilla war against military and police in Northern Ireland, the visit was a highly strategic discursive action by the civil authorities. The priest’s speech, therefore, can be viewed as an exemplary practice of political and moral inculcation by the hegemonic authorities to encode the pupils as loyal British subjects within an expression of Christian teleology. Derry is, hence, represented as a homogeneous home of “imagined political community” that resonates a place of freedom-loving citizens committed to maintaining “that democratic system in which we all have the good fortune to live by authorities” (Deane 196). In Anderson’s words, the narrator’s classmate, this is the nation envisioned as "a deep, horizontal comradeship"(7) but in fact, it is disrupted by sectarian disputes and discriminatory practices. It is represented as "internal disputes" and just "family quarrels" (197) between Northern Protestants and Catholics who are both British citizens with political and military obligations to Britain first. In a discussion of the lecture afterwards, the history teacher reinforces the hegemonic universalist statement as he calls his pupils to “recognise the irrelevance of [their] internal differences in the face of the demands of world history(199-200)”. Thus, it is possible to infer that the prolonged, mournful stillness and repression that engulfs families like the narrator is the product of a dual tyranny affected by both unionism and republican beliefs.

In the context of postcolonialism, repression is officially launched as a form of depersonalisation in which the conspicuous power of the national hegemony assumes a natural position due to their colonial past, while those of minority role accept an ardent function. Precisely, such roles occur in the resisting nature concerning one of the narrator's republican classmates, Irwin, who perspicaciously deconstructs the political ideology of the teacher and the priest perorations by challenging its authenticity. Irwin declares that it is all a matter of British "Propaganda" that targets Irish people: "Propaganda…that's all that is. First, it's the Germans. Then it's the Russians. Always, it's the IRA. British propaganda"(Deane 200). In addition, it could be read that characters like Irwin represent a national resisting discourse that denies any attempt to bring the conflicted sectarianism in Ireland into one common ideology if that does not serve their national inclination given their history in part and their religion at large. Irwin continues "what have the Germans or Russians to do with us? It's the British who are the problem for us" (200). Therefore, as seen from these instances, the narrator, whilst being educated and informed about the political world view of Northern Ireland from a unionist perspective, also gets to interact with oppositional persuasions from his classmates and the Catholic community.

Initially, this unusual space induces the narrator to be removed from his community by engaging in discursive commotion, i.e.; either in the private or the public locus, he finds himself precluded into an uncanny position. He reaches liminal stages as he begins to learn about himself and the peculiar world he occupies. As a Catholic young boy who is expected to value the vision of the one Republic of Ireland, he finds himself as a member of Derry's Protestant community in the North. Yet, he is affected by the penetrating historical events that take place on the borders between the two opposing political peripheries which impact his family and himself in particular.

In that sense, the narrator resembles what Homi Bhabha introduces as the "liminality" principle with reference to the idea of "third space," grounded in nationalism with the postcolonial context (50). In his discussion, he proposes third space as a place of negotiation between two cultures, whereby liminality has special relevance to the processes of postcolonial nation formation. The liminal stage functions as an anti-structure in which the initiand (typically person about to be initiated), in this case, the narrator, in a particular culture finds a blurring of social divisions and deviates from the predominant order of the rest of the community. The initiands appear to live outside their natural world; through a series of challenges that often include acts of haunted painful experiences, they question one's self and the current social order. Therefore, the initiands tend "to feel nameless, spatio-temporally dislocated and socially unstructured" (50). Liminality, in the postcolonial view, is the non-space subject responsible for creating proxies of identity between the centre and margins in the locus of the national narrative. Both the destructive and constructive liminal phases are present in this setting, showing that the narrator's formative experiences throughout liminality prepare him to take on a new social sense of his place and status.

Reading in the Dark questions the legacies of representation in Ireland that have emerged directly from the turbulent past of the country as Deane positions several strands against each other for a contemplative representation of Ireland. One of these is the accessibility to one's Irishness through nostalgia or systematic education. Through language we access how this nostalgia is attained, as there is the obvious juxtaposition between Standard English and Irish-English. Both reflect certain legacies that are endowed in the past of Ireland: the legacy of Gaelic, and Enlightenment English associated with British imperialism. The narrator declares the truth when he speaks Irish to his father, that even though his father could not understand " [his]

father tapped [him] on the shoulder and said he liked to hear the language spoken in the house" (Deane 203). Due to nostalgic factors, the portrayal of the function of Gaelic in Ireland, in this instance, demonstrates the unreliability of Gaelic language to a whole generation who could not understand it, embodied in the ignorance of parents.

The narrator only connects with his father because of a nostalgic premise that holds a historical legacy in which the father feels is worth listening to. Evidently, in his attempt to speak a language that is both familiar and foreign to him, the narrator seeks an opportunity to gain his father's approval. Considering the degree of irony implied in telling the story in a way the narrator knows is inaccessible to his parents, he manages so in an attempt to shield them and to resolve his internal worries, by revealing the secret of his family. The boy's literacy certainly rewards him by leveraging the position of control to himself, even though his mother "listened carefully" and "knew what [he] was doing" but he kept speaking anyway (Deane 161). The educational empowerment of the boy is exemplified by language, enabling him to negotiate a stage for individuality. The narrator's attempt is a clear implication that the identification with national legacies is best obtained at the individual's level. The troubled historical emblem of Gaelic in Ireland imposes a significant question of simple assumptions that accessing the language would either imprison or empower the Irish people.

The fictional setting of Deane's story provides a cultural dilemma about Irish representations and a quest for adequate control over the act of self-representation. The representation of Northern Ireland by Deane penetrates the political, historical and national identification of Irishness, which, in part, introduces formulations of marginalised experiences that have taken the conflict of decades to shape. Deane's work displays Ireland's varied cultural past, but not as a hegemony as claimed by nationalist interests, and rejects conceptions of

cultural or linguistic purity associated with Unionist or Nationalist politics. *Reading in the Dark*, thus, brings to light the polarities in the island's traumatic historical narratives, which strive to establish an orientation towards Irish nation identification.

Reading in the Dark deals with several questions of Irish representations in Northern Ireland which emerge from the interactions of the narrator in his private or public spheres. The representations are entangled between both the collective desire for a proclaimed national identity and the consequences of participating in imperialist discourses that reject national propensity. Admits of all that, we contend with the suggestive notion that Irish individuality grows from negotiating the struggles on the part of the narrator that also mirrors Ireland's. The latter is essentially the case of the unnamed narrator whose narrative role in the story is very instrumental to decipher the multi-layered national representations. In comparison to the other characters, it is only through him that we access distinctive individuality as his perception of the Self and the Other mount simultaneously in tone with the linguistic choices of his language. As a result, he represents a form of Irishness that is progressively transformative, for it never denies or accepts completely the irrational or rational discursive narratives that are built from the ache of historic myths. That is to say, it only acknowledges these narratives through one's experience.

3. Knowing Oneself: One's Sense of Irishness

In *Reading in the Dark*, there is a great deal of subtlety in exploring the formation of national identity and personal identities, beyond the traditional straightforward models. Owing to the representations of individual and collective aspects as moulded in correspondence to historical turmoil and cultural trauma, Deane's work represents the encompassing state of the political sphere morphing into the familial sphere and eventually integrating into the individual.

Furthermore, the story focuses on the family's history of trauma which is kept by the process of storytelling: each family member is an actor of storytelling whereby their stories carry a traumatic violent past and mystery. The reader knows these stories from a child narrator who observes and interacts with them informing them about his world. The decision to have the narrator inform us about his childhood is purposeful in terms of thematic and aesthetic potentialities the narration serves. The act of authority, the child narrator delivers, proposes a sense of the world limited to one individual perceptions: the narrator's ongoing learning. As a result, the child's inquisitiveness to know his home and family past reveal the interwoven nature of the private spaces. More importantly, it questions if knowledge available domestically is an adequate antidote – in terms of how it is epistemologically performed – for a child whose sense of individualism transforms throughout the story.

Because the story takes place in Northern Ireland during the Partitions of 1922 to Troubles in the 1970s, these events shape the family's place in a larger setting as nationalists and Catholics living with a Protestant majority. The narrator's identity as a child is less uncontaminated by the different propagandas surrounding him, whether in family or school. He acts as an observer, making the effort to know certain mysteries buried in the memory of his family, but he slowly learns that knowledge comes with impactful consequences. The child's transformation, which is a part of his growing-up, occurs because of him knowing things about his family's past. Thereof, the repetitive act of knowing either with the family or in Derry where the story happens, brings him more to be isolated, which is the opposite of his initiatives. His family historical narrative is haunting and almost hidden from the public, confirming the argument that there is an underlying interconnection between the unexposed familial narratives of home and the ongoing uncontrollable political events influencing the national narratives.

In the novel, the narrator attempts to construct meaning from the Gothic and heroic stories, legends and folklore, all mingled with the reality of his family feuds and political assassination. In this context, he gradually reveals his fascination for words and for the textual nature of the reality that surrounds him*: "*as my mother called it. The feud. The word had a grandeur about it that I savoured". However, he is also curious to know beyond what he was told: "although it occurred to me that maybe there was more [about the Feud] to be told" (Deane 51). He realises that there is always something else to be told as he hears, overhears, repeats and sometimes complements the stories that are passed on to him, most of which he can capture only partially. That makes room for the in-need of completed truth to be installed at the heart of the narrative.

Deane's utilisation of a child narrator effectively conveys the concept that personal identity is a fluid prospect. Similarly, L. Peach agrees that, "Deane's work regularly opens on to a plethora of other narrative possibilities, not all of which are pursued or anchored successfully from a realism standpoint (Peach 52). Hence, the story unfolds the narrator's recollection of his past, creating a refined multi-layered scenario of riot, celebration, and commemoration that forms complex build-ups of mystery and meaning. The resulting atmosphere captures the anxiety behind the protagonist's desire to discover the truth behind his family haunting past: and as he becomes more intense, he gets to know more about himself.

The death of the grandfather of the narrator signals the disclosure of the boy to family secrets that compel him to explore the history of his family to discover the truth about their deeply disturbing past. On the night of an IRA shootout with British troops at a distillery in November 1922, the older brother of the boy's father, his uncle Eddie, disappeared. However, this is not what happened as the boy learns from his grandfather.

> The narrator's grandfather reveals, on his deathbed, the nature of Eddie's disappearance to the narrator and his mother, that he mistakenly ordered the execution of the boy's Uncle Eddie, believing him to be an informer. The grandfather found out too late that the real informer was his son-in-law, Tony McIlhenny, who was married to the narrator's Aunt Katie. Upon hearing his grandfather's deathbed confession, the boy reflects despondently that he must return "home, home, where I could never talk to my father or my mother properly again" (Deane 132). The narrator's paternal uncle was murdered by his maternal grandfather, yet the boy's father remains unaware and continues to feel ashamed that his brother was an informer.

The initial discussion the narrator makes upon hearing the revelation is not to talk to his parents, which is highlighted in his inability to speak openly with them again. Hence, knowing such information affects the narrator's decisions because he wrestles with the unknown outcome of what he just obtained. He, therefore, knows well that this knowledge could engender more conflicted narratives within his family enforced by his grandfather's actions. Moreover, during his illness, the grandfather talks to the narrator, giving him bits and pieces of information that his own mother and father have withheld, the knowledge he characterises as history, telling the narrator that "there's a lot of ancient history in this town they couldn't teach and wouldn't if they could" (Deane 122). This contrast between formal history and the intimate history of the family suggests the limits of historical meaning. Public history that the narrator encounters in school could not incorporate the family's private trauma, because the details of their haunting past are, in many respects, unknowable. Even if they are accessible, such private forms of knowledge are not valued in systems of public education that the nation incorporates.

Henceforth, being exposed to this horrified truth, one that his familial sphere buries, leaves the boy, for the first time, in a period of cynicism. The information he gains does not help him in making sense out of what he has believed as an authentic narrative so far. Moments like these provide a great deal of personal growth by considering how to act out. With this regard, the boy's growth, as G. O'Brien reads, comes from the ability of his consciousness to filter "intricate resources with which knowing his inherited story will furnish him" (O'Brien 130). Perhaps more importantly, his awareness of the complexities of his inherited story and history deepens as he remembers and retells his life, demonstrating that his perspective as a boy was more restricted. Hence, many of the intricacies that are now accessible to the adult, who narrates them, were not so to the boy who had lived through them. Living through experience is demonstrated by the outline of the book chapters. Each chapter is presented in chronological order. This structure offers the clearest confirmation of this development reflected in the organisation of the novel. The novel begins with the narrator remembering the incidents that unfolded in February 1945 and continue until the penultimate episode, dated June 1961. What then occurs between the latter and the ending chapter is a ten-year break dated July 1971. This coming-of-age novel contains a tone and perspective of a young boy emerging to adulthood, which led a few critics to situate the novel of Deane in the Irish tradition of Bildungsroman.

Knowing the genre of Deane's novel illustrates further the argument that the narrator progressively informs knowledge by identifying the adversities and privileges of being a Catholic in a Protestant community. According to renowned philosopher and theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, such genes are known as Bildungsroman since the story concentrates on the protagonist obtaining moral growth and character by searching for answers about one's self, which exposes psychological ordeals (Bakhtin 10). The answers that the boy wants to solve come in the

intricacies he encounters with some of his family members. As O'Brien continues to argue that, "as demonstrated by numerous instructional set-pieces featuring authority figures of church and state, [the narrator's] story is a Bildungsroman*"* (O'Brien 132). Similarly, Robert Hosmer argues, this was the case of *Reading in the Dark* as it "belongs to the tradition of the Bildungsroman: the story of a young, unnamed Catholic lad growing up" (Hosmer 533). Hence, the boy's growth does not suggest explicitly the narrator's moral compasses, but it includes the desire to know as he becomes increasingly consumed by accumulating details on his Uncle Eddie's death and his mother's role in it.

In that respect, the mother embodies that limitation of the complete story he wants to unravel in terms of storytelling. She becomes frustrated with the narrator's persistent search for finding out what happened, asking him, "can't you just let the past be the past?" However, the narrator asserts, "it wasn't the past and she knew it" (Deane 42). The narrator's assertion highlights the intertwining of the past and present, as the secrets of the past continue to affect the family and community. These secrets, whether known, form their interactions; thereof, finally, the narrator comes to his understanding that their past is always involved in their present as they cannot break out from it.

Keeping up with O'Brien, he makes an interesting assertion to the boy's expression of individuality. According to him, the narrator "has exercised the choice to inquire into his parents' stories". By doing so, the narrator announces "his expression of individuality and development, his stubbornness and callowness notwithstanding" (O'Brien 132). This could be also read as a deliberate effort to take charge of the narrative of their story. This kind of storytelling that concerns itself with growth to express oneself in a private sphere isolated from the public historic enfoldment is not strange to the Irish literary tradition. Both O'Brien and Hosmer assign Deane's

novel to a continuation of Irish tradition started by the Irish Revivalists, of which they take Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as the aesthetic paradigm. In short, they seem to suggest that *Reading in the Dark* is essentially a book about coming to age through learning one's place in the world that gives nothing but a sense of estrangement.

As the boy's family is ostracised from the public sphere due to their inability to break their silence, which causes transmission of trauma from one generation to another, the narrator finds himself, stranger, with the more he knows about them. Ostracism becomes more than just a context that is engendered by historical events to his family in Derry. Intrinsically, it is an inescapable unfortunate state which his family members suffer from in varying degrees. In the mother's case, the knowledge about Eddie's death details transforms her and her relationship with the family. That is because it was her father who ordered the execution of her husband's brother. More devastating is the other fact that she also helped the real informer, McIlhenny. McIlhenny is an IRA member with whom she had a relationship but he ended up marrying her sister, Katie. McIlhenny framed Eddie as the informer and escaped to Chicago after he was assisted by the narrator's mother. However, she does not tell her husband as the narrator indicates: "my father didn't know it all", "and she wasn't going to tell any of it" (Deane 194) which pushes her further into episodes of madness.

Amid all of that, the boy's father still thinks Eddie was the informer, making him thoroughly ashamed. Both the mother and father struggle to leave a feeling of shame behind, albeit for different reasons, which transforms into the narrator's perception, eventually. He describes himself as "ashamed" by his mother's distant state: "she was going out from us, becoming strange, becoming possessed, and I didn't want anyone else outside the family to know or notice" (Deane 143). The narrator knows his mother is living with guilt that her husband is

unaware of his innocent brother being murdered under instructions of his wife's father as punishment for a crime that Eddie had not committed. The information that the narrator thinks would help him locate a place for himself within his family creates substantial barriers between himself and his parents as it does to his family's place in Derry. Shame becomes encoded in the familial sphere where the patterns of sadness are observed in the house. Home is the whereabouts in which the haunted mental state of the mother mostly occurs as she wanders its spaces, "… touching the walls, tracing out scrolls of varnish on the sitting-room door with her finger," as though the materiality of the home might contain some cure for her haunted state (143). It does not help that when she realises her son knows the truth, it only blemishes their relationship and instead of sharing the burden, they become aloof from one another.

Even though the narrator does his best to reassure his mother that he would say nothing, she wishes he were not there: "'why don't you go away?' she asked me. 'Then maybe I could look after your father properly for once, without your eyes on me'" (Deane 224). He is transformed from an observer of his family's haunted past to one that shares their trauma, ostracism and shame. His eyes begin to symbolise his transformation since they are no longer reliant tools of observation of what is happening, but rather they are used as dramatic vehicles for emotion, agony, and guilt in the narratives. Whatever he is unable to express vocally, he expresses via his eyes. This is visible when he sobs over his failed attempt to tell his father about the family secret. He writes it in Irish and reads it aloud to his father, who does not understand Irish, telling him it is an essay "on local history" he had at school (203). While his mother grows angrier at her son for telling the story, the father is clueless. This incident worsens his plan in achieving some sort of revelation. First, he tells the story in inaccessible words to his father. Secondly, the mother is angry at the narrator for not being silent like herself.

As an observer, the boy watches his parents and because he cannot do anything to heal their wounds, or integrate with them, he retreats into himself as knows "what [he] did separated [him] from them both" (Deane 194). For much of the time, he is alone, alienated by what he knows and unable to confide in anyone. The narrator's childhood is transformed both by his mad mother and his desire to uncover the family's history. Ultimately, he becomes the most significant haunted self in the novel. He fails at expressing his desire to know his mother's suffering, to reach her emotionally at a point in their lives. When she is speaking to him and his brother, holding one of the other ones, "close to her breast and [bending] down to say things in her new voice into [narrator's] shy face, things that enthralled and mystified [him]" (150). He seems unable to have an in-depth conversation with any member of his family about their past. He is very much on his own with his thoughts and with his efforts to link up the things he knows but he cannot transform them into a meaningful context with his family. Therefore, he resolves to repress and be silenced. That is in part what engenders his isolation, and his family since they have no shelter in words. And whenever he feels under pressure, he does little to confront the source of his discomfort. He says: "I wanted to run away… But I also wanted to run into the maw of the sobbing, to throw my arms wide to receive it, to shout into it, to make it come at me in words, words, words and no more of this ceaseless noise…" (148). His mother's troubling silence assimilates his own by rejecting the few attempts of him voicing himself to her.

Finally, the narrator gets to know clearly that his mother would not open herself to him as he says in: "what did you know, Mother, when you married my father? What did he know? When did you tell each other? Why did you silence me, over and over?" (Deane 217). Their shared silence creates and enforces a distance between mother and son. Whilst he reaches out for her and is even willing to "throw himself" into the pain, her efforts to stop him are self-

preservation actions. Therefore, his knowledge seems unreliable regarding his connections with his family and his journey unravelling the mystery. The more he learns about their past, the more he is less satisfied with what he becomes aware of. The truth does not heal his family. His knowledge only involves him in the complex web of violence and betrayal that traps him. With the repetition of the phrases" haunted, haunted, "the narrator describes his memories by expressing that" now that everything had become specific, it was all more insubstantial " (243). This traditional conception of knowledge seems to be undermined by the narrator's frustrating incompleteness of the narratives that emerge. Thus, both silence and knowledge have the potential to haunt and thus transform. Here knowledge is just as frustratingly insubstantial as ignorance, causing increased fractures in the family structure, rather than healing the existing ones.

In *Fortnight*, an Irish magazine, Deane states that he finds that the ending of the novel challenges the traditional visions of uplifting knowledge: "there's no talking cure, no implication that by revealing everything you will somehow overcome it!" (qtd. in Rumens 30). Beneath this dense weave of facts and deceptions, the family's story remains unsatisfyingly incomplete. *Reading in the Dark*, thus, constructs a linear narrative of history-making; whereas the search for truth does not push the progress forward in a conventional manner. The intimate familial history that is ultimately revealed acts as another force to remind them of violence within the family. However, this traditional knowledge, as Deane calls it, is an irrational vehicle that drives the narrative infusing into the narrator's feeling of individual expressions.

When the narrator understands his family's suffering, he gains a sense of individuality. The growth is substantiated by observing the textual nature of his reality as the novel progresses, which is manifested in the language's tone that he uses. At the near end of the novel, the narrator

tells what he feels at the moment in dream-like mode as drawn to the window by the sound of horse-hooves. The vision of a boy riding a horse disappearing in the distance is given a ghostly gothic scenery (Deane 232). He, thus, realises that the present is not a location of concrete truths, and, like the past, it is a site of possible ghosts and weird unconnected apparitions. This illustrates that his overall discovery is that the past and the present could also occur in the individual's memory simultaneously. The novel's conclusion reveals that the narrator had embarked on a frustrating undertaking. Acquiring knowledge, for him, only serves to drive a gap between himself and both his parents.

Using the concept of childhood in *Reading in the Dark* enables an examination of the correlation between knowing and haunting. Many haunting stories conceive of the phantasmal as a danger to the home's physical domain. The representations of phantasmal intrusions associated with haunting offer a context for depicting the silent but pervasive domestic transformation process that takes place in the post-Partition nation. Therefore, if the truth about the past is not recognised by those who conceal it in the narrative, the ghostly-like discoveries will come to haunt them repressively. In the time following the reconstruction of national space, the gothic elements of the story are thus substantial in discussing the disorientation between public and private, but also permit the examination of trauma in relation to the family. For example, a "shadow on the stairs" seen by the narrator in a ghost-like scene may signify a disappearing uncle, a traumatised mother, and the narrator's narrative. Ghosts belong to the realm of the fantastic possessed individuals haunted by political traumas in their private homes. These ghosts and their bearers are embodiments of the truth hidden from a national shame. Although it is hidden and marginalised from historical narratives it keeps coming back, in a ghostly manner,

invoking stories about people who look to claim their place in the Irish national space and history.

In a final notion, the narrator himself resembles a ghost-like character that gradually vanishes from the familial and public spaces. He becomes more and more distant from his parents as he grows up. Eventually, the only way he could cope with what he knows is to remove himself physically from there. He leaves Derry, the place of his trauma, to Belfast in order to pursue education: "I went away to university in Belfast, glad to have so mishandled everything that I had created a distance between my parents and myself that had become my only way of loving them" (Deane 22). It is a place in which what he knows about his family does not matter. However, the narrator remains nameless throughout the story as Deane clarifies his view of the novel: "… is that it's about a young child who never earns a name. He never achieves sufficient identity (to use that terrible word) to deserve the name or the sense of self he's looking for in relation to his parents" (qtd. in Rumens 29). Thus, the narrator's act of knowledge comes with a ghostly presence in the text. He is the window through which readers come to understand the story about a troubled family in Northern Ireland, but he is also so ghostly that he can never mark a substantial presence in the novel. The novel ends in 1971 with the musings of a young adult who is home again for his father's funeral. As the family's grief is for more than just the loss of a member; the father dies still unaware of the dreadful truth. It is left to the reader to surmise how the young man is now feeling, and if he is still angry that his father died without knowing the truth.

4. The Burden of Knowing: Perceptions of Knowledge and Working-Through Trauma

As we established in the preceding section of this chapter, coming to terms with one's self is a transformative process steeped in various ramifications of repression, as seen by the narrator's withdrawal from his community. More specifically, by being committed to emotional detachment, such as silence or physical isolation, the narrator adopts a new identity that is unattainable at home. With a nation still looking to find its identity, this transformation, like the narrator's, is disrupted and interrupted by political, religious, and cultural polarisations. Ireland's noticeable transformation from the widespread notion of isolation among Irish to post-nationalist objectives is indicated by a shift in the Irish attitude toward the worldview of Otherness. This seems the case of 'the post-Troubles' generation and Irish foreign policies after the 1990s, as there is a cultural willingness for more enactment of foreign policies with its Western neighbours. Besides, Ireland's embracing of sympathetic narratives stemming from nations with similar colonial pasts emphasises the notion of recognizing the disenfranchised. This attitude is also encapsulated in its recognition of its own agitations, as well as the prospect of working through the bleakness of the past between the North and the South, as marked by the Celtic Tiger's economic success and the Good Friday agreement of 1998. If this indicates anything, it is that coming to terms with oneself means identifying the fundamental suffering cloaked in a narrative of shame and to bear the burden of knowing the past in its full truth in order to open dialogue rather than resolve into denial.

Acknowledging the silent traumatised narratives is a healing approach in identifying the perceived notions of imperfections as an uncommon antidote to encompass Irishness across broader senses than in its deliberate limitations. The cornerstone of our argument is that by comprehending the narrator's perceptions of traumatic experiences as a traumatised Irish third

generation through the idea of transgenerational trauma, we may draw parallels at national levels. The gradual learning and knowing are traumatising but the narrator through such a process hones individual sensitivity, which enables him read the unsaid and seek the truth beyond the assumed. In doing so, he bears a burden that no one in his familial sphere carries, which slowly traumatises him. However, unlike his father, mother and grandfather, as first and second generations, who share cultural trauma of haunting past mingled in memories, he channels efforts from "acting-out" to "working-through" this accumulated traumatic identity. While each one of his family members shares traumatic experiences, they cope differently because they access knowledge differently. Traumatic narratives and memories of the past become the engine that pivots their interactions and identity. While the grandfather and mother are silent, the father resolves to fill the gaps of what he ignores with unfounded narratives that resemble myths. As for the narrator, despite being the most traumatised character, he is the one who attempts to work through his trauma by acting it out differently than his mother and father.

As a Catholic family living in Northern Ireland, the national narrative's impact is a pervasive discourse that interlopes the narrator's familial communication and memories in Derry's predominant Protestant community. Their memories are netted to correspond to their own history and Ireland's. The nexus between Irish representations and the trauma as a cultural condition, history, particularly in Ireland, is influenced by authority inputs. As such, the contemporary historical narrative is substantiated from Ireland's change to keep in pace with three phases: colonisation, revivalism and nationalism. Thus, Irish memory provides a model for distorted narratives aimed at developing a common feeling of assumption as a method of affiliation. Barbara Misztal mentions in *Memory and History* that "memory is used strategically" as an impalpable identity provenance in the present than functioning as an aperture to the

collective past (3). Memories of previous occurrences that contradict the agreed-upon version of events are disregarded or suppressed for the manufactured narrative to preserve the dominant sense of reality. In both republican and Northern Ireland, history is a permeable web of incidents linked together by trauma and politics. In *Reading in the Dark*, the stories conveyed to the narrator by his family and other group members are exacerbated because of the delicate social matrix. In Northern Ireland, the reinforced national narrative carries memories from the past, often based on ideals and myths that call for national affinity from the minority Republican identified groups, and resist the cultural penetration from what they consider a threat to that identity from the predominant Protestant groups. In other words, memories are never completely available as they are because they are constantly disrupted by politics and agendas. They bear a heritage nourished by nationalist and colonial narratives, such as Mr. Doherty's memories.

Mr. Doherty, the grandfather of the narrator, is an autocratic IRA local unit leader who has an authoritative personality as he places his decision above his subordinates and the interests of the organisation. While he expects discipline from others, he shows little respect to the local Protestant community and authorities like the police. His behaviours entail impulsive temperaments and often narcissistic attitudes. The murdering of his close friend set their family tragedy in motion, as he retaliates against the police in Derry by killing one of their members. Despite not leaving any proof, the police suspect him for the killing and take it on his family for the next generation as evident with the narrator's and his brother's interactions with Sergeant Burke. In one incident, Burke, one of the few Republican Catholics respected in the police institution of Derry, says to the narrator: "once an informer, always an informer" (Deane 88), indicating that they are a mistrusted family. Because police indirectly report that Uncle Eddie is

an informer, who betrayed Mr. Doherty's IRA local organisation, the narrator's grandfather orders for Eddie's execution.

Instead of confessing these crimes, first, the truth about Eddie's death and second the killing of the policeman, the narrator's grandfather decides to hide them. Therefore, accessing these memories is only possible throughout Mr. Doherty's memories, who kept on repressing them until the day of his death. His actions make the family bear a residual reputation as a family of informers. The familial legacy of being distrusted Catholics shape their identity. This shows how ordinary family life in a Protestant community is torn down by a set of narratives engendered by the action of a nationalist IRA leader who could not open up to his old deeds due to feelings of shame. Befittingly, *Reading in the Dark* enfolds unspoken stories of ordinary life being impacted by politics generation after generation. Certainly, not only three generations of one family are impacted by the violence of the Partition before this story takes place but also the narratives that stem from ignorance to the truth. The impact is very devastating to the narrator's family as they aim to maintain balance and control in Derry where reputation is used to enforce the order. As the narrator's grandfather abnegates himself to speak the truth, the Protestant majority controls their ability, as Republican Catholics, to participate in the Northern Irish identity by identifying them as informers.

The information that is constituted from these narratives become obscure to all family members except the grandfather. Once the truth is revealed, its effects move from the grandfather to the daughter and the grandson. When the narrator's mother finds out about the nature of Eddie's death, she slowly begins to be haunted by this act of shame since she also holds another secret from her husband. The real informer was Tony McIlhenny, her former significant other. She accesses this knowledge from her father's memories. These clues, which pertain to her

father's secret, pile up with her own secret which then morph into her interactions in her marriage. Same as her father, she resolves to repress it and hide since "she wasn't going to tell [the father] any of it" (Deane 194). Because the narrator accesses the same information as herself, he becomes a reminder of that burden. Since she is trapped in a physical and psychological construction called home, the family seals a link between the victim of these secrets (her husband), the perpetrator (her father) and the reminder (her son). Secrets are not all accessible but once they are, they are hard to unburden as the narrator calls, "worse than the breaking of the laws of consanguinity in Christian doctrine class" (Deane 134). Neither the mother wants to tell the father, nor the narrator can inform him as both are afraid the outcomes of truth would break the family. Silence becomes the characteristic of their familial union as the narrator declares on more than one occasion "home, home, where I could never talk to my father or my mother properly again" (132). This unspeakable trauma surpassed from the grandfather seals all mouths in this Catholic familial sphere and more importantly shapes the narrator's perception and knowledge.

Within his familial sphere, the narrator's narrative, as the third generation, is shaped by the memories from the second and first generations namely his parents, and his grandfather, since he takes on himself to uncover the truth about his uncle's death. His journey, certainly, grants him the truth but it does not reward him as he would have hoped, instead, it solidifies a kernel in his consciousness, which is his family's traumatic legacy. This transformation occurs in the text, particularly, the lingual tools the narrator uses to develop his perception. In other words, to uncover the traumatic narrative of the narrator, one needs to have recourse to how the narrator's knowledge develops in correspondence to trauma and the elements which construct his perception. Therefore, Jacques Lacan's three elements of perception (the Imaginary, the Real and

Symbolic) serve as an exemplary psychoanalytic outline to explore the narrator's efforts to compromise between his perception to filter out the knowledge and the burden of the trauma he comes to bear.

Jacques Laquan's concept of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real probes that the psyche of the healthy individual aims to attain balance between these categories. The Imaginary is the narcissistic aspect of the psyche, the self-love which allows individuals establish themselves in a habitual, seeking a confident status of themselves and positive image of their values (Jullian 33-35). If this element of perception prevails, the I and fear of competition is prevalent. The symbolic element is concerned with the systems of language and its form under which it acts as a denominator. It is not only correlated with lingual forms, but also with the gestural and other modes of communication of the cultural system. Moreover, the Symbolic is a substituent of the law and the order of superpersonality. Thus, a great sense of duty is attested by people with high symbolic responsiveness (61). The Real is what endows the psyche in fear. It represents worries that prevent one's articulation and immediate forming of perspective. People with a strong Real perception, whose narcissism " Imaginary" is overwhelmed by emotions and allusions, are disoriented from normal interaction and subject to a disrupted unconscious(56-57). That is to say, the grandfather exemplifies the Imaginary one, his mother is the Real one, the father is the Symbolic.

As a first-generation, Mr Doherty, aligns himself to the imagined perception that the nationalist ideals can control the image of Ireland, and therefore themselves. Mr Doherty shares with the nationalists two aspects. First, their tendency to lead their nation depending on the Catholic and Republican identification works as an inclination that defies the perception of shame or self-hurt of their image. Second, its residence to competition and a strong sense of

rivalry manifested in withstanding the Protestant and colonial ideals. He aspires to be leader of the Catholic group in Derry and the main fighter of the Protestants. The grandfather embodies the perception of nationalist Irishmen, the IRA fighters and law, and whose identity endows trauma by engendering the narcissistic all-too-proud self at the expense of reasoning through their mistakes. The types of Irishness as shown in Deane's work are very comfortable at leading their community, but they are also successive at oppressing themselves. He recognises only one dimension of identity which involves himself and his perception as it is shown in his consideration that only Irish is worth knowing other languages are a waste of one's effort. He refuses to see any value in ancient history since he thinks it does not involve his own. This places his perceptions as a domain of discussion, because of his leading status, which branches other points of view in the family, mainly the father and son. That is evident in his belief that sports are political for taming and distracting the Catholic communities which is a belief that the narrator and his father think differently. Whilst the father sees it as a game, the narrator thinks of football as a matter of artistic value as he links it to "a dance, not a game. But [his] Grandfather didn't think so" (Deane 129). Therefore, both characters in this regard plead some sort of objection to his sense of narcissism and ideas of "cut off, by myself" (89), which run in the familial memories like a plague across two generations.

The narcissistic perception is prevalent in his orders to execute Eddie and secondly when he unburdens his mind of guilt by sharing the knowledge of Eddie's death to his daughter and grandson. Not only do their actions, in the private sphere, afterwards take their roots from his memories but also reinjects traumatic melancholy in the house that he refuses to bury with him. His narcissistic tendency is affirmed when he hears the Protestant Orange marching music since it is the trigger that initiates his confession (Deane 102). His final attempt to reject the local

Protestant cultural discourse, music, is achieved by revealing his true past to them. The revelation traumatises the narrator as his accusations of the secret render him a threat to the family union. His grandfather's memories are a matter of problematic perplexity living in the post-memories and perception of the grandson. Oona Frawley, in *Towards a Theory,* makes the argument that the post-memories, in this case, appear "to be immediately and personally received ... because of the weight attached to those memories and to the trauma [associated]" (30). The narrator begins to internalise the trauma of his uncle's death because he is experiencing, second-hand, the trauma of knowing of Eddie's innocence and being unable to appropriately process this knowledge without revealing to someone the extent of his awareness. His knowledge casts him outside the stability of home and takes him on a journey to survive through what he knows thus illustrating how "survival itself […] can be a crisis" (Caruth *Unclaimed* 9). For that, it is safer to continue the lie that Eddie was an informer.

The mother embodies the perception of the Real, the unspeakable and therefore the silent. She symbolises the condition of the Irish island dilemma which is split into North and South. She becomes schizophrenic reinforcing the idea of split personality, identity. She is no longer her former self after being traumatised by the events that occurred - Eddie's death and McIlhenny's escape - and is forever tormented by the ghosts of the past, like Northern Ireland. She is trapped in the 'real' perception, which indicates that both her father's and her actions traumatise her immensely. She lacks the ability to think, speak and act rationally; instead, she hallucinates, watching the flames of hell in every corner, and as the narrator observes their communication is limited to body language expressions. She is the second generation of cultural trauma whose decisions carry loads of guilt and shame of the past and is unable to move past that. As the narrator notes at some stage, her personality splits into two distinguished voices: the friendly and

stern. She is gradually absorbed into frantic episodes of schizophrenia scurried into her body language. The narrator surmises that, when his mother destroys his work on the radio, this action symbolises her demand that he should not communicate her story to others. Her gestures invoke her refusal to communicate with the narrator: she takes off and then puts “the gold ring [....] back and forth on her finger […] she’s switching me on and off” (Deane 129). Thus, he illustrates Gabriele Schwab’s observation that “Children of a traumatized parental generation […] become avid readers of silences and memory traces hidden in a face […] or chronic depression. Like photography, traumatized bodies reveal their own optical unconscious” (Schwab 14). The mother’s emotional life is so disturbed that normal perception and speech are interrupted.

The mother’s world of view is terrifying to her. She lives in a constant state of fear that her secret will be revealed, eventually exposing her to shame. Therefore, she aims to control the situation by distancing herself from any reminder of this narrative specifically, by distancing herself from her child. However, she fails as the world she lives in proves itself to be more chaotic in its nature than one can handle. The disorderly domain of narratives can only be described ironically, in a riddle, Crazy Joe: "There’s a place where a man died but lived on as a ghost [Eddie], and where another man lived as a ghost but died as a man [Mr Doherty], and where another man would have died as a man but ran away to live as a ghost [McIlhenny]. Where would that place be?" (Deane 221). Her responses to this perception are her body language as she is lingering in ‘in between’ places: near a window, on the stairs. She cannot properly articulate her speech as clearly; she stops praying lines to weep or when "she was always on the stairs…sometimes crying out in an incoherent noise…" (139). She lives in a perpetual state of paranoia, highlighted in the narrator’s assumption that she still considers his knowledge to be a threat behind the silence of his mother, despite his attempts to convince her he

has not revealed the secrets he has obtained. By observing, the narrator pleas against his mother's request, "can't you just let the past be the past?" (42). He is compelled to declare emotional dedication to one or the other of his parents by his promise to his mother to never expose the secrets they share; to maintain the precarious peace of the present, or to restore Eddie's reputation by exposing the truth. He avoids causing harm to his family relationships, regardless of his decision.

Frank, the narrator's father, has the habit of painting his narrative with legends, myths, and folktales from the past to convey and integrate himself with his culture, which are narratives imbued with his symbolic perception. Frank illustrates the Symbolic as a way to work through trauma. With this regard, the symbolic nature of his narratives represents the Irish cultural desire for continuity to thrive through myths, in absence of narratives about the past, and open up to conversations with foreign cultures. The father incorporates the self-taught characteristic with the welcoming demeanour to what is inaccessible, foreign, to him which is evidenced in his reading of the British *Pear's Encyclopaedia.* The father's experience of trauma, as the second generation, is different from the mother's experience. It is not the events of Eddie and McIlhenny's disappearance that inflicted emotional wounds, as he accepts that Eddie's death details are a matter of fact, it is the absence of their true narratives from the family and community history. The disappearance of Eddie and McIlhenny from the community creates inconsistencies and surmises about the family's narrative. Their narrative grabs on whatever details it has access to in order to fill those gaps, as the culture does, and generates folklore to interpret these absences. The disappearance of Eddie is associated with the potential of his betrayal; thus, he is executed in reality as well as within the community. There is one piece of evidence the story revolves around, Eddie's death, but there are multiple accounts of how this event unfolds which raises the

question about the historical interpretations in the public sphere. Since he lacks the vital knowledge about his brother's death, and because of his tendency of the symbolic understanding concerning narrative available to him, he resolves to lingual excitement as demonstrated in the stories he encompasses from his community or family.

Unlike the grandfather and mother, the narrator's father is the most reconciliatory figure of the three, though he lived a traumatic life. His parents died unexpectedly of fever when he was fourteen. When Eddie was executed, the truth of the true narrative was never revealed, and as a result, Frank's siblings and family were mistreated and shamed publicly and had no potential in their Catholic community. Because of their reputation as informers, the police raided his young brother's family. Moreover, when a severe illness immobilises him, he was rejected by his full pension, just days away from retirement. Yet, Frank subverts this violence through narration and tradition to seize his children's perception into their collective symbolic meaning of the past, as Kearney asserts by "indirect insights through the enigma of horror" (qtd. in Flannery 202). The narrator's father informs his children about the legend of the "Field of the Disappeared", using the folk culture accessible to him to express the notion that individuals who have vanished physically will still be relevant in the feelings that play amongst people. He often plans healing rituals, such as when he takes his children all the way across a river nearby his childhood church, a position carefully selected to confess to them his greatest guilt that his brother was an informer. Hence, in order to combat the traumatic history of his family, Frank attempts to rejuvenate the Symbolic significance of the past in a ritual-like approach, calling attention to the convenience of the individual's symbolic perception acknowledging the wounds of the past. In coping with his traumas, Frank is admirable in that he is mindful of the fact that his wife is seriously troubled by her memory, but he is also vigilant with his sensitivity. Unlike the narrator, Frank acknowledges

that his wife desperately wants certain privacy, therefore, he does not seem to impose narratives that might distrust her.

Whereas the narrator's grandfather's actions, as first-generation, penetrate a post-memory in the family that parallels the nationalists urge not to reconciliate the turmoil of the past, in presence of the narrative, the mother's traumatic status is the outcome of that impulsive desire for the strong sense of pride, stainless of any shame. Yet, in the absence of the memory of the past, the father's perception acts as a coping mechanism endowed in nostalgic, mythical and ritual essence of knowledge that Irish, those traumatised, use to act out their traumatic experiences. As a third-generation, the young narrator accumulates his knowledge from observing these perceptions as the I with the Other. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth foregrounds the significance of "the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" to psychoanalysis, literature and trauma studies (2-3). The question of knowing not knowing to mingle in narratives is crucial also for the narrator who tenaciously struggles to unravel the haunting secrets of his parents and grandfather. Unlike his father, the narrator knows and has direct access to that narrative from his grandfather's memory. The narrator's formulation of knowledge about the history of his family does not come from his community, like the father's. The community's narrative resolves into the symbolic reading of history in the absence of knowledge concerning a post-memory of a certain individual. The narrator has filters in forms of lacking discernment and indifference to the knowledge generated from his community since he gains explicitly the truth about the secret of Eddie's death. This positions the medium of constituting knowledge from familial post memories in a state of perception transformation.

The narrator is transformed from imitating his grandfather and coping in silence like his mother to finally working-though his trauma, like his father, but with the presence of the truth. The narrator's sense of identity, submerged like his mother in body language communication, replicates his grandparent. Therefore, he attempts to do efforts to dismantle this family's reputation as informers; the identity associated with them by the Protestant community; the manner to do it resembles his grandfather's attitude of pride and narcissism. The narrator is identified as an informer at some stage by his enemies in the local gang which in return infuriates his father. As a result, the father punishes the narrator and sends him to bed but the narrator could not accept the authority of the father so he takes an act of revenge on him by ruining his roses (Deane 178). By pulling them out and pouring cement on them, the narrator destroys the roses in a mannerism that involves the refusal of the narrator to be dictated to by the Protestant soldiers who raided the house and poured cement everywhere. Thus, the manner of subduing authority is identical to the nationalist tendencies of the grandfather to disregard authorities' control. The narrator replicates his grandfather's impulse when the Protestant marching music triggers him to confess his secret.

The narrator, however, will learn to know the risks of this naivety, being wary of the multi-layered symbols and signals such as the case of roses that invoke an emblem of nationalism. He comes to know empathically his father's deep sadness and remorse that the father can only communicate through "signalling", he says: "my father knowing something about Eddie, not saying it, not talking but sometimes nearly talking, signalling" (Deane 34). That is a perception that brings the father and son into a shared healing prospect, dissimilar to the relation between the son and his mother which ends in constrained silence leaving no agency to read her emotions in the manner he wants. He continues suggesting that his feelings carry the burden of

the father's sorrows with a deep act of thoughtfulness to the father's ignorance of the truth, "I felt we lived in an empty space with a long cry from him ramifying through it (204). The narrator, similar to the father, learns to work through his trauma and to cope with the repression and silence in the family by distancing himself from the events through engaging in symbolic perception. Unlike the father, as a third-generation affected by transgenerational trauma, the narrator sees beyond the symbolism of history. The father whose inaccessibility to the true details makes him view their family's shame through ritual symbolism as he questions: "is it a curse" What have we done to deserve this?" (101). The narrator now recognises their family trauma in the manner that assembles both the father and mother and makes him therefore with individual perception of his own. He replies to his father saying "no, I told [the father], there's something amiss with the family. The police were on top of us long before I was born" (103). With that in mind, the narrator understands first that silence is his mother's only mechanism to cope with what she knows. Secondly, revealing the truth would replace his father's process of acceptance of the past, which is symbolic, with a fresh trauma. Therefore, he takes the matter into his own hands and decides not to tell his father, aunt and anyone else about the truth so he attempts to interrupt the transition of trauma by blocking the knowledge about it.

The mother's refusal, then, losing the capacity to recognise the past in the same merit his son does, is not just a denial of its existence, but it is the inability to acknowledge its effects on their presence. The latter is the driving force behind the repeating of previous trauma through the children's generation in relation to their terrible experience in Northern Ireland. However, what sets the narrator to be different from his mother is that he does not resolve to silence in the way his mother does. He is a fiction reader, a curious learner, open to knowledge and others' perceptions, and most importantly, able to recognise the importance of history and reality within

the lenses of art. As he is accessible to knowledge from the Other, he is not constrained in a cage of the Real, nor he has distortion through the modes of thinking about the past. Indeed, in the Irish sense, the past is a place of horrifying uncertainty that occurs with trauma which *Reading in the Dark* emphasises. However, the story also brings attention to the power of perception of Irishness and the interpretation of the Irish elements that exist in the narratives. Through his journey to endow a certain development in the way he comes to understand his identity in the world, so he can better act out what he knows, the narrator's identity, Irishness, rather than being buried in connotations of shame, is empowering to its bearer.

Within the coming-of-age narratives, *Reading in the Dark* contains depictions of an evolving awareness of history as the characters must confront the political context shaping their reality and an increasing ability to come to terms with it and confront its effects. The narrator, as the centre of the story, becomes conscious of how the study of history selects certain events and aspects of history and can circumscribe understanding through historical discourse. The narratives offer antidotes emerging in memory, local lore, and family stories. The family history, thus, opens up historical issues within the region. In Deane's work, the family history intersects with the national history surrounding sectarian divisions within the community, the family's involvement with the I.R.A. and nationalist sentiments and ideas fomented and discussed within the home. These national and political experiences are often filtered through the perspective of childhood, which inculcate~~s~~ the reader into a growing awareness of how such experiences shape lives as the characters themselves struggle to understand the shaping effects of history and their community. Likewise, it demonstrates a process of transformation that occurs in the narrative, in three family generations, in Northern Ireland and within a boy coming to know his Irishness. As the novel produces versions of local and/or familial history in school lessons, the protagonist

becomes aware of the distance between the two. The haunting nature of the past may remain; however, the narratives underscore the possibilities for emerging from an engaged understanding of the haunting past to view historical and national traumas from a global perspective that no longer restricts portrayals of such history to divided and dichotomous understandings.

By exploring the familial and individual aspect of Irishness in the text presented to us by the experience of the narrator, the understanding of his identity reveals how such experience is connected to the national historical ones. His identity, on the one hand, undermines the assumption that familial experience is private and separate from the realm of official history and/or national politics. On the other hand, it begs for the urgency of the Irish identity to look beyond the dichotomies prevalent by the colonial and nationalist negotiations and second that there might be other paradigms of Irishness within the very context that is hidden. Because of his own traumatic experience, as a third-generation, the narrator becomes more empathetic towards those who resemble his own experience and as such this might be a way to move forward. This probes a case in which Irish national identity is not merely a causation of colonialism but there are many humanitarian, cultural and historical curiosities that are to be known and learned. Luke Gibbons notes how a view of Ireland's historical experience as a colonised nation led to sympathy with other nations experiencing colonial domination and exploitation. Gibbons explains that such examples serve not as general characterisations of Irish nationalism, as possibilities for nationalism allowing for a global view and international engagement. As he explains, the examples of Irish nationalists who found solidarity with third-world struggles for freedom from colonial domination, "contest the common assumption that preoccupation with one's culture and with the past, particularly an oppressive past, militates against international solidarity and an embrace of cultural diversity in a modern social polity" (102). Gibbons'

argument frames an understanding of how modern nationalism engages with others across the globe, which is only possible if this assessment is initiated from within. By recognising the identity of the voiceless, there is much healing prospect that can flourish in what is unidentified as attachment of shame to be an assemblage of cultural recognition.

5. Conclusion

Some of the conclusions made are symbolised in the machinery of the national narrative, which locates itself in a division that contributes to the narrator's family's suffering from both parties in North Ireland, Republicans or Unionists. These national narratives were fundamentally designed to construct a distinct sense of Irishness, as inspired by the events of the island's partition. However, when the accessibility to the real event of the past comes to be the norm, these narratives turn into myths serving only to reinforce solitude and incubate anguish inflicted by a haunting past, which in Deane's story survives in the memory of three generations of a family. Likewise, we investigated the concept of identity that emerges from individual decisions, which have been made available to us through the observations of the unnamed narrator. Therefore, we uncovered how the effects of knowledge about his history transform the narrator.

Finally, by observing the narrator's transformation regarding his perception from an observer of his family's veiled truths to a gatekeeper of these narratives, the principle of transgenerational trauma reveals that he eventually becomes a bearer of the family's traumatic legacy. It is only when he removes himself from them th e impact of his traumatic past on his identity transforms him into a healthier version of his father, mother, and grandfather. As previously indicated, all of their perceptions resemble a personality that he either denies or embraces. The key finding of the chapter is crystallised in two aspects: the narrator's quest for

knowledge is an act of identity construction and second, his quest for knowledge resembles a cultural demand to reclaim the marginalised identity from Northern Ireland's history, as well as the need to remember the past by publicising traumatised histories.

IV. One's Irishness against the Tides of Irish History: Crisis of a Traumatised Woman in Sebastian Barry's *the Secret Scripture* (2008)

1. Introduction

Revisiting the past and re-narrating the Irish experience are prominent themes across Irish literature and history writers, including Sebastian Barry, whose story in *The Secret Scripture* fits into this pattern. His characters, based on a number of real relatives from his own family tree, are effectively silenced for failing to conform to political and cultural norms deemed appropriate for Ireland's historical narrative. Barry's method of capturing the jumbled, yet unwavering scrupulousness of the Irish image, calls into question the foundation of generational memory - and Irish identity in general. Among all of these perplexing concerns, Barry delves into a rarely spoken part of Irish history: the unacknowledged traumatic experience of Irish people that subconsciously define nationhood. Trauma, in Barry's fictional universe, is more than a negative term or condition; it is a profusion of narratives in and of itself, whereby multiple events of Irish history, as unpleasant as they may be interpreted, may be encapsulated.

In that perspective, trauma is a haunting journey, as depicted by the main character's experience, Roseanne Clear, whose venture, as her testimonies unfurl, is petrifying. Similar struggles of traumatic storytelling are not exclusive to Ireland; it is a worldwide experience felt by all types of outcasts whose relevance is deemed superfluous to the fabric of larger national identity. However, as Cathy Caruth puts it, "[the] overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events" (11) may provide us with an eminent angle on Irishness, given that the story's shocking events were transpired around the time of the Irish troubled years, shortly after their independence. The aftermath of the Irish wars engendered enormous pain, which was not

only felt by specific individuals but has been permeated collectively, and as the story echoes, it is indeed absorbed by a succession of different generations. It begins with a deeply conservative generation who lived through the struggle for independence and ends in what appears to be a changed Ireland, in the decade following the twentieth century.

Hence, the interest of this chapter lies in revealing an unacknowledged case against the dynamics of the documented national narratives in Ireland, which can be only visible by identifying the representations of marginalised identity, namely Roseanne's. Irishness, national identity, and traumatic narratives in Barry's story will be addressed to provide a broader view of how history in Ireland operated in critical times. As such, the chapter will be divided into three sections, each mirroring the foregoing constructs: Irish identity, Roseanne's Irishness, and trauma and healing. Finally, we will apply Dominick LaCapra's trauma theory on recovery in his work, *Writing History, Writing Trauma.*

2. Identifying a Different Ireland in Revisiting the Past: Nation, Trauma and History

Amid Irish transformation into modernity, there exist buried narratives that pique the interest of those who read the history of the wounded, such as Roseanne Clear's testimonies, those she writes about and those we encounter. As the protagonist of Barry's fictional world, she is, therefore, a topic of trauma as an Irish who lived for nearly a century and witnessed some of the country's secret humiliations, failures, and malfeasances. Resultantly, the concept of generations, as we come to observe while reading this story, is a noteworthy one in order to grasp historical traumatic narratives in Ireland throughout tumultuous times. In this story, nevertheless, one of the eldest inhabitants of Barry's fictional world, and certainly the most important, are Joseph Clear and Father Gaunt. These two become more than typical portrayals of

men in Irish history, exemplifying the polarity of Catholic vs. Protestant identifications following the country's independence from England. Whilst we do not have direct access to their narratives, the impression of their roles in the early life of Roseanne is well established through her memories and writings. Although Roseanne's recollections of these specific individuals are recounted in her testimonies, they manifest themselves as more than memories since their representations serve as a tormentor reminder to her of that tragic episode in Irish history. When one memory interplays with the other, they portray a facet of Irish history and the corresponding generational norms.

In this section of the chapter, I will argue that her father, Joseph Clear, also known as Joe, and Father Gaunt, a priest, both symbolise the traumatic force in her life. Jos Clear, her biological father, epitomises the natural force of fatherhood. His representation assumes an unbounded, historically rooted Protestant identity, which is thwarted by traumatic events, resulting in his social image being branded as non-Irish. Father Gaunt, as the name implies, is a Catholic priest who assumes the role of fatherhood following Joe's death. Unlike the natural identifications Joe espouses, Father Gaunt embodies the national constructed image of Ireland, those religious, social, and historical constraints that perpetuate Roseanne's social status. Both men, under different historical circumstances and social standing, are enforcers of historical assumptions that have perpetuated the public's perception of Irishness for generations, with one bearing the burden of guilt and humiliation and the other reinforcing violence and bigotry. Therefore, we will concentrate on those two characters as a vehicle for Barry to critique the unfoldment of Irish history via convoluted perspectives. Consequently, Roseanne's social image as a traumatised individual is, thus, hindered, insinuating that historical narratives may conceal the truth and operate as a cause for suffering.

We learn from Roseanne's recollections that Joe grew up in Collooney and that he became a sailor at a young age, "sailing into every port in Christendom before he was seventeen" (Barry 6). While in England, he encountered Roseanne's mother, Cissy, and they eventually chose to marry and settle in Sligo, Ireland. Despite being a Presbyterian, in a dominant Catholic community, he secured a job in Sligo as the superintendent of the Catholic church, "keeper of the graves" (9). Roseanne portrays him as meticulous and orderly, noting that he is the "cleanest man in all the Christian world, in all Sligo anyhow" (5), and that he feels proud doing his job properly. He is shown as a loving and compassionate husband and father. From this point of view, we can detect the influence of Joe as a father figure in Roseanne's early life as she refuses to see him in a negative light. Based on Roseanne's memories, Joe appears to be the type of man who works hard to provide for his family despite his modest income. However, Joe's involvement with the Royal Irish Constabulary, RIC, which paints him as a traitor in his community, is a point of speculation throughout the novel as the plot unveils conflicting narratives on his life, one that Roseanne presumes in her writings and the other that we acquire via Dr. Grene's comments.

RIC was a police force that was administered by the British in Ireland when the country was part of the United Kingdom. As a consequence of rumours about his connection with a British organisation, the Sligo community was dubious of Joe, as they supported the nationalist group known as the Irish Republican Army, commonly known as irregulars. Irregulars opposed the 1922 treaty that partitioned Ireland because they felt the British retained quite enough control. This reflects the conflict in Irish society at the time, as well as the sentiment against English identity. To be concise here, the term "irregulars" refers to individuals who fought the

Anglo-Irish Treaty and the newborn Irish Free State through armed warfare since the treaty did not go far enough in terms of independence for them (Barry 38-44).

However, in contrast to the Protestant identity of the Clears family, Father Gaunt, who has known Roseanne since she was a child, assumes the role of her father following Joseph's death. He is portrayed as a "little perky darting man" (Barry18), who was still relatively young while Roseanne was growing up. Father Gaunt represents the Church and the political authorities that intervened in Irish lives, functioning as both a consulate and an antagonist to Roseanne's and her father's natural identity. Father Gaunt, whose attempts on many occasions to persuade Roseanne, by offering her religious salvation and social advice, parallels the nationalist inclination to frame how Irish people should behave and act. That is evident in Father Gaunt's consults to Roseanne about how she must conduct herself in public, and who? she should be marrying. Roseanne declines his attempts and commits herself instead to an independent life in the new-born nation which assumedly has promised equality for all citizens. Article 3 of the 1922 Constitution confirmed that, "every person, without distinction of sex, shall [...] enjoy the privileges and be subject to the obligations of such citizenship" (qtd. in Beaumont 96). However, as Roseanne grows self-sufficient in her lonely life, Father Gaunt's ruthless methods of tormenting her become more visible.

We obtain more information on Father Gaunt from Dr. Grene's writing as he comments on Roseanne's testimonies. He, after getting hold of Father Gaunt's notes, declares him as an old-fashioned morality, with a detest for women's sexuality (Barry 230). When Roseanne marries Tom McNulty, Father Gaunt unjustly accuses her of dishonouring her husband by having an affair with John Lavelle after overhearing them conversing. His concerns for her sexuality are highlighted as he regards her as morally corrupt and, as a result, psychologically unwell.

Father Gaunt undeniably plays a nationalist position in this conservatively controlled society, introducing the overwhelming power of hegemonic narratives and thereof monolithic form of Irishness imbued in the consciousness of the Irish. He cements the images of the period based on Irish dominant conceptions as informed by the Catholic Church and sought by the government. He acts as the lawful centre of morality since he polices Roseanne's normative behaviours. Similar morality nodes, among nationalists, according to O'Mahony and Delanty, were attributable to three likely reasons in Ireland at the time. First, the government acquired Church's support in the task of regime stabilisation. Second, the new government requires Church's endorsement for legitimacy because the revolution had ended in a violent civil war with thousands of dead. Third, whilst nationalism advocated by the Gaelic League had failed to take root, Catholicism gave a symbolic unity and authority in both cultural and political arenas (133). The Church wielded enormous authority over family life, as well as restrictive control over some of the feminine representations in the public: "the subjugation of the female body" (135). To accomplish this process, Catholic organisations sought spiritual, moral, and educational reforms regarding women's positions. In the story, such conducts are visible, given that Father Gaunt is the main reason for placing Roseanne in a mental institution, the Magdalene Laundries, as an unmarried mother.

After giving context to the frames that distinguish Joe and Father Gaunt as characters in the novel, as by-products of the Anglo-Irish war, the following discussion is founded on how Irish traumatic history stems from tangled manifestations of the Irish image. To do so, we explore Roseanne's testimonies as we assess her disconnecting narratives from two crucial events in her memory, which we refer to as the graveyard's and the tower's incidents. Nonetheless, it is important to note that these narratives are available to us via two accounts:

Roseanne's and Dr. Gene's. Moreover, these two events form unreliable memories which serve as the starting point for the many traumatic episodes in her life. Likewise, these two characters, Joe and Father Gaunt, who dwell in Roseann's memories, serve as paramount incentives of specific identifications, inconspicuously, engendering childhood trauma. Prior to these two events in her life, Roseanne had enjoyed fairly happy and safe family life, even though her family was exposed to different sorts of hostility due to their Presbyterian beliefs. The first event is based on her recollections that she writes, while the second is informed by Dr. Gene's reading of official documents on her case. Ultimately, the two events provide us with two overlapping narratives on the circumstances of her father's death when Roseanne was twelve years old.

Concerning the first event which takes place during the Irish civil war, the unstable era threatens the first stages of her story. Roseanne recalls a childhood memory of three young men carrying the body of a fallen companion into the cemetery, where she and her father had been waiting at the end of the day. Consequently, she is sent to find Father Gaunt in order to legitimise the funeral (Barry 35-36). When Roseanne and the priest return, the young men, who have been excommunicated by the church for their erroneous devotion, are confronted by the Free Staters. Due to Father Gaunt's suspicions that Joe had ties to RIC, Joe accidentally becomes a significant player regarding the microcosms of ideologies represented in this scene. This moment, thus, becomes a metaphor for the Irish fractured situation during that time when we consider the depictions of all parties involved in the war, including Free Staters, represented by the irregulars, the church, represented by the priest, IRC members, represented by Joe, and the innocent civilians represented by Roseanne.

Joe foolishly attempts to carry out his job as a gravedigger before the arrival of Father Gaunt with Roseanne. However, his action is unfortunately rendered offensive by historical

documented records. Roseanne says: “I think it was that my father embarrassed history” (Barry 54). The circumstances that led to her father, in her words, "embarrassing history" bewilder her immensely, as Joe’s image is framed as distrustful. Roseanne feels that his place in history has been tarnished, and he has been erased from any decent remembrance. This, in return, reinforces her to be sceptical of these official documents, particularly those relating to her father’s demise, which she reads as “belligerent history[‘s]” (111). Therefore, this particular scene at the graveyard has far-reaching implications for Joe and Roseanne’s identifications within their community in Sligo.

First, as seen by his actions throughout the story narratives, Father Gaunt leaves this incident feeling terribly humiliated and compelled to exact revenge on Joe for putting him in this situation. When the other soldiers leave, Father Gaunt informs Joe that he has done him wrong by dragging him into the graveyard (Barry 55). Shortly, afterwards, on Father Gaunt’s orders, Joe is dismissed from his office as superintendent, and eventually takes the job as the town’s ratcatcher (56-62). Roseanne, on the other hand, endures shame and humiliation in the Sligo’s community as a result of being wrongfully misidentified as a traitor like her father.

Although Father Gaunt insists that this was not his decision, the way he treats Joe in this situation shows that this is his revenge for being brought into this situation. Father Gaunt’s resentment is evident, for example, when he places his cigarette ash into Joe’s hand without hesitation (Barry 59). Furthermore, Father Gaunt implies that Joe should be grateful for his efforts in obtaining the position of ratcatcher - a career that, as Dr. Grene reads, is “surely the ultimate insult to such a man” (187). Father Gaunt thinks that “[Joe] had hunted down his fellow countrymen like rats, it might be said he was qualified for the job” (187). That adds weight to the speculation that Joe was a member of the RIC spying on his fellowmen. It is terrifying to think

that one man is accountable for both Roseanne's and her father's misfortunes, which entails that Father Gaunt is the villain of this story. Father Gaunt embodies the agency of intolerance that assaults them and attempts to conceal their histories. When she states her father "embarrassed history," she is alluding to the embarrassment he gave Father Gaunt, who is, according to all accounts, one of the most significant players in Irish history, while Joe, on the other hand, works as a direct force that circumvents him.

One of the pertinent concerns that Barry calls into attention in his discussion of Irish history is certainly that history is convoluted in its nature. As such, the claim that Irish nationalism was a product of a single inducement, namely Catholicism, is fundamentally debatable. This argument is carried out brilliantly by the representations that Father Gaunt and Joe Clear offer as two distinct forces that shape Irish history, even if Irish history, as recounted by Roseanne's narrative, is not exactly reliable. Father Gaunt is a nationalist with a Catholic identity, which historically places him resolutely within the traditional meaning of Irishness. Nevertheless, when we look back at Irish history, the meaning of modern Irishness could be attributed to the rise of nationalism in the 1820s, under the influence of "The Liberator," Danial O'Connell (Walker 204). He was a founding father, "who politicized the mass of the Irish Catholic people in the campaign for Catholic Emancipation". During his campaigns, the sentiment of nationalism linked with religious awareness evolved and assumed a political expression that was notably different in scope and intensity from that which was before (204). Due to this dominant force in the Irish context, Father Gaunt reacts with a similar combative incentive, since both have deeply-rooted allegiance to the Catholic faith, by striving to eradicate the foundation of Protestant identity by either filing negative reports against Joe or by actively inflicting distress to his daughter.

Joe, on the other hand, is a facet of Irish history that is commonly overlooked. This was exemplified by his religion being incompatible with the notion of the historical construct of Irish identity. We know Joe existed, but not how he vanished from records: his presence is like his death, a mystery. He signifies the marginalised protestant aspect in Irish history, a distinct Irishness that often historical narratives compromise. He, therefore, encompasses a broader image of Ireland than the Irish Literary Revival movement conceptualised. Unlike Father Gaunt, who resembles O'Connell's ideologies, Joe exemplifies the spirit of Thomas Davis, a Protestant, whose principles crystallise unity and "the need to win Protestants and Orange-men to the nationalist cause" (Walker 205). However, sectarianism remained a point of conflict, with the nationalist movement frequently advocating Catholic nationalism, whilst Thomas Davis urged a fresh approach to nationalism to all parts of Ireland's religious identities by encouraging people to abandon past divisions. Due to the nation's liberation movement in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, the objective of fostering awareness of the diversity of Gaelic Ireland's history and culture was never integrated. As a result, a link was forged between Young Ireland and the 1880s and 1890s Gaelic revival, which emphasised Catholic affiliations (205).

It is through our knowledge of Irish history as a source of pervasive hostility that we gain a glance at the antiquated perceptions of never-ending betrayals between different parties. Amidst the conflicts, there will always be examples of innocent individuals who struggle to break free from the rotten bonds of the past that their forefathers built. Civil war traumas have left the Irish with a legacy of lingering tensions, and the "sad, cold, wretched deaths of boys on mountainsides" (Barry128) simply serve to exacerbate this theme of enmities in Irish culture. Sectarianism's painful realities undermine the notion of Gaelic nostalgia and erode the innocence of Irish idealism. The emerging Irish State professed devotion to republican principles, but the

paradox is that liberty, equality, and fraternity have proven to be inimical to often what Irish yearned for. As Barry's work puts to light, the characters in Sligo feel that trust is too costly and love is a gamble. One's assassin may be another's trustworthy neighbour, and the old friend may be that enemy tomorrow. Therefore, it was unsurprising that when Roseanne's identity was tarnished, such unseasoned animosity would follow her around for the rest of her life.

In fact, sectarian ideologies left a sour impression on many Irish people's perceptions of their fellow Irishmen by shaping certain prejudices, which impacted lives and changed careers. Ironically, maybe the example of this is crystallised in one paragraph: when Joe promises to search the library for a book that would provide him with the skills he would need for his new career, in the hopes of overcoming his shame and the dismal social position to which he was consigned (Barry 60). Roseanne's sceptical response to this of "[a] rat-catcher's manual?" conveys her assumption that the job, and hence individuals who execute it, is too lowly and trivial to have been written about (61). Surprisingly, Joseph comes upon a book about capturing rats written by "a pseudonymous author, Rattus Rattus " (63). This might imply that Joe's history has been diluted and ridiculed to the point of insignificance.

In continuing the conversation on Joe's and Father Gaunt's representations of conflicting incitements in Barry's story, the second example, which we call the tower's incident, is thus equally important. Joseph, as Roseanne recounts, who "in a fit of educating enthusiasm," wants to demonstrate to his daughter that hammers and feathers fall at the same pace, 'All things fall at the same rate', Joe explains to his daughter. And he adds: 'in the realm of theory. And I will prove it to you. I will prove it to myself' (Barry 19). Such a "realm of theory" demands an emptiness, a void, in which falling objects encounter no resistance and are unaffected by atmospheric pressure. His endeavour, without a doubt, fails. Roseanne, who has been told to

watch what happens from below, narrates her experience as she makes the final realisation that the disappointment he brought into her life is not his fault, but rather the unfortunate " Irish air" (21) that does not allow objects to descend evenly. In this metaphorical statement, Roseanne links the objects to her father's image as the Irish atmosphere does not integrate properly compared to others. Because Joseph has a different identity and outlook on life than the prevailing traditional image of Irishness, he is rendered to feel insignificant seeing how his life has become stigmatised into a status of a rat catcher.

Similarly, Roseanne's ordeals were elicited by others, and she feels her father, for what he represents and induces, was a participant in dragging her life into a dreadful downfall, even though she does not directly declare this. However, she does not explicitly reprimand him as she realises he is also a victim of circumstances. For all the criticism she might level at him, she prefers to focus on the sympathy she still has for him, and therefore the memory of his death has been clouded. Although Joe brought her tremendous shame as a memory she feels, "it is no crime to love your father, it is no crime to feel no criticism of him, and especially so when [she] knew him into [her]early womanhood or nearly, when a child tends to grow disappointed in her parents" (Barry 21). Such strong disappointment might be interpreted as a potentially traumatic memory, which corresponds to what Caruth implies when she mentions the difficulty in interpreting traumatic narrative, i.e. the speech. The challenge of integrating a horrific incident into the victim's memory; and their narrating methods, may be revealed not in what speech cannot describe, but in how much information it conceals (Caruth154). Roseanne's speech, hence, appears to be little more than an attempt to "move away from the experience of shock by reintegrating it into a stable understanding of it." The prospect of integration into memory and historical awareness, therefore, begs the question of "whether it is not a sacrilege of the traumatic

experience to play with the reality of the past?"(154). This description foretells what the narrative eventually unveils and the tragedies Roseanne's account fails to express: her relationships with her father, his status that is passed down to her, and the circumstances surrounding his death.

According to Roseanne, the incident in the tower is a fragmented episode in her memory. As a child, Roseanne stood under the building where her father's "curious and protracted death" (Barry 163), occurred due to his ties to the RIC. Regardless, she expresses her deep love for her father despite the hardships he brought upon her and genuinely for the things he was a victim of: "It is no crime to feel your heart beating up to him or as much of him as I could see, his arm now stuck out the little window, and the bag held suspended in the Irish air" (21). While Roseanne never mentions that her father was part of this police unit, Dr. Grene recounts the "factual" account, which reads:

> His mouth was stuffed with white feathers [. . .]. Then alas he was beaten with hammers, and an effort made to push him out the little window at the top of the tower. Roseanne herself was below looking up. [. . .] And the feathers flew up and the hammers fell down, striking Roseanne as she stood gazing up a blow to the head, knocking her out cold. (Barry 180)

Roseanne appears to have blended two unrelated memories, influencing her conclusions, which is echoed in her narrative of her father's death, "suspended in the Irish air" (Barry 21) as she also makes self-reflective delusions based on her father's memories. So here we have two narratives on the father's story: one that Dr. Gene finds in the official documentations that her father was in fact a member of RIC, and Roseanne's claims. Roseanne's account about her father story of the

hammers and feathers, her recollection of the incident, and, by extension, her father's apparent denial that he was ~~a~~ member of the RIC, are not necessarily true: these things may be made up in her interpretation of them due to her traumatic condition.

Dr. Grene discovers paperwork of her admittance and mental condition, as well as facts about her upbringing and family, which effectively contradicts her own account of events. While Roseanne claims that her father was a gravedigger and afterwards a rat-catcher, Dr. Grene discovers conflicting material in which her father is described as a police officer who was killed by rebels. Dr. Grene questions whether his patient is telling the truth since "the fact remains that the evidence is against her about her father's work" (Barry 278). Hence, he concludes that Roseanne's varying accounts of her history are the result of traumatic experiences, due to witnessing her father's death and the subsequent episodes. The incident is depicted differently in Father Gaunt's documents, as read by Dr. Grene. Roseanne, according to his claims, watched Irregulars burying guns and secret documents in the graveyard (159). Father Gaunt feared he was put in a difficult, potentially dangerous, situation since he may be held to account for the incident, which casts a different perspective on the affair. It should be noted that the authenticity of such claims cannot be determined since Dr. Grene equally has concerns about Father Gaunt's reliability (159).

In short, Roseann's terrible journey reveals that her father's memories, as well as those of Father Gaunt, were among the traumatizing elements in her life. However, after reading her testimony and comparing it to Dr. Gene's other accounts of these events, we see that her journey goes beyond the simple consideration of one's emotional scars, seeing how historical events could forever denounce one's identity if circumstances allow it. Roseanne's recollections of her past and the events that traumatised her are overriding, overlapping, and never reliable, but there

is one truth to this- it is Ireland's history that has caused her tremendous suffering. In that, she serves as a reference, in all respects, that recounts some of the painful contexts of real history. As Barry writes: "History, as far as I can see, is not the arrangement of what happens," he adds, "but a fabulous arrangement of surmises and guesses held up as a banner against the assault of withering truth" (Barry 55). Identity is, therefore questioned, in this area of "murders so beyond gentleness and love that to be even in propinquity to them was ruinous" (54). Roseanne's identity, which is painted as wounded in a false array, renders her marginalised status as an insightful, though unreliable, a critic of her setting. Her story consequently epitomises the conflicting archetypes of Irish history, Father Gaunt and Joe, whose opposing allegiances and accompanying public motive would have terrible consequences for her own identity.

3. Reinforcing Traumatic History in Underrepresented Female Images: Roseanne's Identifications and Traumatic Memory

After addressing the first generation's national incentives in relation to Irish history in the first part, the following section will concentrate on the protagonist of the story Roseanne's self-identifications as a traumatised individual in this part. To achieve that, we will explore what it meant to be an Irish woman briefly after the Irish independence. Therefore, we will have recourse to Roseanne's experience as a case of her generation being a traumatised individual by giving an explanation concerning her traumatic situation. Then, secondly, we will uncover the ramifications of these traumatic experiences on women's bodies, images and expressions, notably in "fallen women," as well as the methods that the Irish nationalist agenda used to attain "purity" about Irishness, like those of Women Asylums. Finally, based on these discussions, we will draw attention to how Irish historical narratives, which are moulded by unacknowledged

trauma, as in the case of Roseanne, are unreliable, and how such understanding of history may permeate a wounded heritage.

One of the central themes in *The Secret Scripture* is how several forces entrenched women's status, all of which have to do with historical myths, i.e. spurious narratives around their identity. More specifically, how the fluxes of historical narratives protruding from the past, prominently propelled by strains of Catholic and nationalist impulses, moulded Ireland's modernisation. Women's economic, social, and cultural engagement in their respective communities were confined to traditional structures in order to attain an uncontested Irish image. In the most extreme consequences, as Roseann's story informs, such implication culminated in brutal and discriminatory policies being levied on female bodies and expressions targeting those women who were assumed to exhibit a non-Irish quality. Therefore, these limitations drove certain women to live in silence, experiencing trauma that has its roots in the Irish national building and whose purpose was to establish a hegemonic vision.

To begin exploring Roseanne's case as a traumatised individual, we must look into the details of her painful memories, making the argument that they are a representation of traumatic experiences. We contend that her personal history is a microcosm of particular patterns in Irish history following the foundation of the Irish State. When it comes to women's roles, these patterns imposed various intrinsically conservative, reductive and repressive pressures, particularly on those who were not assumed to be true Irish. Following Irish independence, more callous views on women's social roles led women like Roseanne to consider that their personal identity is inconsequential, if not irrelevant, in the context of Irish history.

Consequently, Roseanne begins writing her life story in order to express her exegesis of such evasiveness of history compared to her own, that she calls “honest-minded history” (Barry 5), before she would pass away. She does not want her writings discovered, however, while she is still alive. Roseanne is well aware that, regardless of how uncomfortable her story can be, it pales in comparison to how history is recounted in Ireland, and that her testimonies, like her buried body, will perish when she dies. Yet, she continues to write for no one but herself as the title of her account indicates, "Roseanne’s Testimony of Herself" (17). She says: “No one knows I have a story, next year, next week, tomorrow, I will no doubt be gone, and it will be a small size coffin they will need for me, and a narrow whole. There will never be a head, and no matter” (7). Her initiative to write her personal narrative is her final act of resistance in reclaiming her identity through the provenance of writing: “dearly I would love now to leave an account, some kind of brittle and honest minded history of myself […] I will tell this story, and imprison it under the floor board, Roscommon soil” (7).

However, Roseanne frequently doubts the veracity of her recollections. She admits she cannot recall the events of her admission whenever she attempts to remember them: "oh, I must remind myself to be clear, and be sure I know what I am saying to you. There must be accuracy and rightness now" (Barry 31). Roseanne’s inability to recollect specific instances from her past is a direct consequence of her trauma, a condition that several women like herself suffered during the suppression of broadly similar tragic stories in Irish history. As we read her childhood memories, which oscillate between fragmented and coherent, Roseanne’s capacity to relate to chronological events is hampered by overflowing memory with several emotional triggers such as the death of her father. As noted in the first section of the chapter, this memory is critical for Roseanne’s fractured identity and the overall narrative of the story. While Roseanne claims that

her father worked as a gravedigger and afterwards as a ratcatcher, Dr. Grene discovers contradictory evidence about her father being a police officer who was killed by a rebel. Along with an overwhelming sense of loss, she has unpleasant memories of the day she was admitted to the mental hospital: " I do remember terrible dark things, and loss, and noise" (101). This ultimately suggests that Rosanne's incapacity to recollect certain events from her past could be attributed to being betrayed by people close to her.

Roseanne's life is full of unfortunate turns and vicissitudes, including that when no one in the hospital had taken the time to learn about her background, that is, until Dr. Grene became her psychiatrist. It is, then, reasonable to suppose that her traumatic experiences were not appropriately 'worked through' during her long admission. After taking time to know her story, Dr. Grene identifies Roseanne's trauma by delving into her memory impairment, as the case of her father's death, which she has been haunted by since the instant it occurred. Her condition bears resemblance to that of trauma victims who show cognitive impairment. As a result, the exertion of severe painful memories affects how she interprets incidents from her past. With this in mind, Katherine Shobe and John F. Kihlstrom assert that repression and dissociation processes consolidate trauma memories, or at least specific forms of trauma such as betrayal, making them impossible to reconstruct meaning from such incoherent verbal narratives. Consequently, traumatic memories mostly present forms of isolated, nonverbal, cognitive, behavioural, and emotional fragments (74). Rosanne's inability to remember particular events stems from a chain of betrayals, she feels, that has wrecked her life, whether perpetrated by officials or acquaintances. This has left her to be insecure in social situations and anxious in surroundings that remind her of her terrible history.

Roseanne, who is continuously mystified by these betrayals, concludes that she is alone in a fabricated and untruthful portrayal of herself in such an unloving history. She rejects the world as she puts it: " I am completely alone, there is no one in the world that knows me now outside of this place (Barry 4)". Roseanne's self-evaluation is compromised by fear, loss and grievance and further exacerbated by poor health. Moreover, her anxiety disorder disturbs her from ascertaining an identity amid deteriorating mental and physical conditions. Since Roseanne could not confront her abusers, she has stayed trapped in the past: "And my persecutors are gone in the main I believe" (4). She knows she is an elderly woman and that this specific Irish generation may have vanished, yet, still, she silently strives for justice and above all sympathy: "the reason for all this is that I am an old, old woman now, I may be as much as a hundred, though I do not know, and no one knows" (4). She frequently expresses overwhelming melancholy about her situation like she cannot restore her identity nor that she can control her fate. Those tragedies coupled with Ireland's restrictive regime provide us further insight into her identifications as a traumatised individual.

According to LaCapra in *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* psychological trauma is difficult to overcome given that many victims may find themselves deprived of hope and feeling increasingly isolated. A traumatised individual is, therefore, unable to move on from the unpleasant recollections of the traumatic incident that has occurred, disrupting his or her feeling of security and calmness (22-33). Similarly, this is how Roseanne refers to her father's memories which have been tainted with resentment towards the officials. Since she believes they were the reason behind his death, the memory serves as a sort of projection for her own tragedy. They symbolise the same perpetrators, who wronged her father, and who induced just abuse to her. In general, we accept that her trauma may be exacerbated by a variety of factors and that the degree

of that traumatic memory varies based on the severity of the incident and its significance in Roseanne's life, but it is when she remembers those incidents that we can outline her cognitive stress.

One of the methods used in *The Secret Scripture* to encapsulate traumatic memory and its impairment is Roseanne's unreliable narratives. Sean O'Hagan concentrates on the matter, stating that the novel interrogates "these two intertwining and often contradictory narratives about the nature of memory and writing itself" (21). Regarding victims' memories as representations of trauma, Tal Kali explores the concept in his book *World of Hurt* advancing that mental journeys that are rooted in trauma literature, include a struggle of making meaning of memories from fragmentation to fullness in which survivors strive to wage ideological wars, as a response, with their external environment (65). This statement aligns with Roseanne's remark on some of her surreal testimonies involving herself, her mother, and her childhood, "I am looking for my mother in these memories and I can't find her; she has simply disappeared" (124). Such exiled childhood recollections are a typical depiction of trauma in victims of abuse, with memories emerging relatively unidentified by the survivors' minds.

Daniel Ariew presents the following position on trauma representations in his thesis *Representing the Unrepresentable: The Traumatic Affect*, which is consistent with Roseanne's memory reporting, "However, a traumatic effect, the mind and body's response to an extreme event, cannot be represented directly in the same manner as common thoughts and emotions." Ariew goes on to explain how the nuances of traumatic brain damage isolate the traumatic event from the unconscious mind, making the conventional first-person narrative inadequate at conveying both the historical and emotional context of an experience (3). In the text, Dr. Grene affirms such conclusions when he evaluates Roseanne's trauma based on their interactions or/and

her testimonies in her writings. Therefore, he comments that Roseanne is the victim of a traumatic experience that may have had long-term consequences on her memory, applying that her history is unreliable. Her muddled memory promulgates the unreliability of history, as her recollections of several events become inextricably intertwined with her suffering. Thus, having a clouded memory is a strategic identification of Roseanne by Barry. Like her father, she has no history, or for lack of a better word, their history is one of the secrets in this model of Ireland.

Knowing that some of these characters are drawn from the author's own family history adds to the conclusion that some of the most vulnerable victims of history are unacknowledged. In the name of the nation, national history has silenced and excluded them. Roseanne's life in particular has been recounted in a way that echoes the experiences of the vulnerable and traumatised in which her marginalisation has been kept for almost a hundred years. It is reassuring that her life has lasted long enough for her to finally reveal the failings of many tyrants. Among other things, her journey ultimately provides larger service to Irish women now than it did to women in the past. Roseanne's story is a nod to other women's struggles, those of her generation who have experienced repeated trauma as a manifestation of Ireland's seeking a grand identity formation.

Around the period of the Civil War, when England's complicated colonial relationship with Ireland was in upheavals, personal and national identities were all in disarray. Roseanne may have been born in Ireland, but she does not fit the right kind of Irish for Sligo, much less the post-independent Ireland. Several stories were strategically suppressed for the sake of a greater image of Ireland when it was on the quest for a national sense of Irishness. She became a symbol for countless Irish women who suffered the consequences of decolonisation and nationalism. As

a result, those individuals who straddled the borders of Irishness political and social architecture, such as Roseanne, were ostracised from the community.

In Barry's fiction, the meaning and impact of trauma fluctuate between the individual and the collective. Women, nonetheless, have a peculiar role in this story as the most targeted members of the community. This status, which potentially renders them susceptible to ideological penetration, underlines the fact that they are undeniably the novel's oppressed group. Roseanne's story resonates hereby presenting the underlying reality of a woman in Ireland at a time when the public's opinion of women's identity was quite critical. Other than the trauma caused by her father's death, Roseanne endures from oppression by the Catholic priest and abuse in the mental institution, as discussed in the first half of this chapter. Nonetheless, Roseanne is not the only female character who endures oppressive experiences as shown that many other females suffer mentally and physically in different ways. Reading their traumatic experiences closely elucidates that, regardless of their faith or social status in Ireland, these women were denied the right to self-expression, a situation that drove some of them into particular forms of insanity.

First of all, we have the case of Roseanne's mother, Cissy Clear, who slowly started losing touch with reality and became mentally unwell. Her mother suffers subsequently and eventually is confined to the "Silago Lunatic Asylum" (Barry 30). When Roseanne is admitted to the mental institution, she begs to see her mother, but is denied, "You can't see her, no one can see her, and she is beyond the seeing" (214). This implies that Roseanne's recollection of her mother still lingers in her memory, having resurfaced when she initially first entered the mental institution. Despite the fact that she, not her mother, is being admitted to the mental institution, she recalls her mother's time there. As a result, Roseanne's tragedy has similar misfortunes to

those of her mother although both circumstances and conditions differ. Needless to say, that Roseanne's inability to tell time and place resembles her mother's mental condition.

A motif is introduced here that extends to several other female characters and is modelled after the concept of psychological suffering. Notably the perception held by numerous scholars in the field of trauma studies which agree that in correlation to the Irish national psyche, trauma has the potential to operate as a multigenerational phenomenon imbued with cultural identity and traditions for individual, family, and arguably community. Certainly, in the story, this view is demonstrated further by another character: the alcoholic wife of Jack McNulty. Somehow similar to Roseanne, she is unable to recuperate from the death of her new-born child. Hence, the theme of suicide and death inhabi the Irish families in the narrative which, potentially, overwhelm male characters as Dr. Grene. Both Dr. Grene's adoptive mother as well as his wife, Betty, are female victims of a horrific experience. While his mother battles depression for years before committing suicide, his wife is unable to come to terms with her infertility and eventually dies from a disease she has refused to treat.

Drawing on these cases, the text reveals the pessimistic reality that Irish women find themselves in that period, presuming they had been subjected to extreme external psychological pressures. As a result, we can only surmise if these individuals would have been happier had they lived according to the accepted social norms of the time. Mrs. McNulty and her daughter, for example, notwithstanding their extreme commitment to the Catholic Church appear on the surface to be psychologically stable. Due to the fact that we do not have access to their internal thoughts, we may interpret their normative dynamics through their social interactions with other members of their community. It is quite evident that women had to express certain identifications and behaviours with 'the Other' in order to be recognised as Irishwomen. Irish women were

vulnerable to social imperatives, which led to a wide range of coping behaviours, traits and dispositions. Being different from the architecture of the Irish image meant that this generation's voices were suppressed or censored to meet the existing political agenda. Among those who were silenced, several women endured significant trauma.

Based on the American therapist Laura Brown's theoretical claims, this bleak depiction of women's fate in twentieth-century Ireland can be interpreted as a fictional example of insidious trauma. Laura Brown, writing from a feminist perspective on trauma, challenges the dominant definition of trauma in the Diagnostic Manual, which defines the event causing trauma as one that is "outside the range of human experience" (qtd.in Brown 100). She emphasises that the abuse of women cannot be viewed as an event "outside the range of human experience." Nonetheless, it is a stressor that has the potential to cause trauma. Brown explains that, unlike men who fight in wars, women regularly experience "insidious trauma" caused by "traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but do violence to the soul and spirit" (107). Several females suffer insidious trauma exacerbated by an intergenerational traumatic experience, particularly in the context of the Irish Civil War and the Irish War for Independence, which were predominantly waged by men.

Possibly Roseanne had the closest thing to a decent life when she was young and could have certain relationships with people in Sligo. Because women's attractiveness and vitality ensure that they are noticed and valued in society, Roseanne's beauty as "the most beautiful young girl…ever seen in Sligo" (Barry 95) was one of the major elements that allowed her to feel accepted. Even Father Gaunt feels that such traits in women should be attained, as his statement to Roseanne indicates, "I can find you a good Catholic husband as I say, and he will

not mind your origin eventually, as, as I also have said, you are graced if I may say again with so much beauty" (95). However, outside the impression of her beauty, there is no real attachment or connection Roseanne has built with anyone. Once she grows older, she is confronted with dire conditions: "I am only a thing left over, a remnant woman, and I do not even look like a human being no more" (4). Roseanne is enraged and traumatised by the fact that she is not treated as a human being like others in her community where human intrinsic values come first before how they appear to be. This is a tragedy from a gender viewpoint, as the text is filled with superficial gender discrimination.

In this respect, reading Roseanne's identification with her community reflects the idea that in order to be accepted within that society, women like herself had to maintain particular traits, opinions, and behaviours in mind. In a metaphorical sequence, Roseanne envisions herself as a bird that used to be able to sing, just as she was previously beautiful; however, the bird is now utterly silent: "I sit here in my niche like a songless robin". Yet, this further turns into a bleak image when she adds, " no, like a mouse that died under the hearthstone where it was warm, and lies now like a mummy in the pyramids" (Barry 4). Albeit written poetically, this comment by Roseanne suggests that women in Ireland at the time were regarded in the same way; through the prism of their physical traits.

Women's socialisation in Sligo's prevailing patriarchal society is rather distinguishable, seeing that they are driven to the margins in many aspects of life. *The Secret Scripture*'s representation of women in stereotyped patterns induces discomfort to its modern readers. Similarly, the representations of trauma are intended to reveal women's battles to establish themselves as contributing members of society other than being only housekeepers for their husbands or only possessing attractive physical features. Roseanne, who worked as a waitress,

brilliantly draws parallels to this facet with her own experience. She says: “Myself and Chrissie and the other girls from the Café Cairo… Mrs. Prunty always tried to employ good girls for the café, but good girls that looked good, which is a different thing. I think we looked like young goddesses” (Barry 146). Roseanne and other young girls like her are fully aware that they have such a job not because they are the most competent at it, but because they are regarded "good girls who look good." The fact that “Fr Gaunt was always there” (140) to keep an eye on how these younger girls behaved in front of males adds to how women’s bodies were governed.

In contrast to various images of Irish women possessing the goddess’ attributes, Virgin Mary’s purity, and the wife’s devotion, the fallen woman has been a recurrent image in current Irish literature that attempts to rebrand the narratives of these women. The objective of these narratives is to outline some of the hidden injustices of these women who are deemed morally aberrant. The pivotal point of this critique is to establish first-hand the unreliability of official reports and to propose that these appalling experiences as rightful Irish history. Historically, from the outset of the fledgling Irish state, the implicit marriage between Church and State manifested in the former exerting a tremendous influence on the latter in nearly every discussion. Looking back, it is unsurprising how saturated Irish education and family structure were with the promoted political and religious apparatuses throughout much of the twentieth century. To put it another way, some religious and political explanations have claimed the image of Ireland as their own duty.

Some of these Catholic bigotry tendencies are reflected in words like: “the fallen woman, the witch, the creature ‘gone over the edge’” (Barry 249) that were at some point given to Roseanne. Since the Catholic Church holds power in the state, national discourse is one understood through the prospect of religion as nationalists depend on such religious fidelity for

the unified version of Ireland. As a result, a nationalist like the priest Father Gaunt holds an important role in influencing the public opinion of Sligo's people. Roseanne knows this very well as she notes in her writings when Father Gaunt approached her hut causing her trouble by blocking the door. He orders her to open the door and sarcastically comments that a, "good woman" would do so. Roseanne knows that if a man like Father Gaunt is not on her side, then she is on the wrong side of history: "any proper, decent life [she had] was over. The word of a man like that was like a death sentence" (226). This death sentence is metaphoric for the injustice she encounters as Father Gaunt is seen as the judge upon her fate in this trial against her will. It invokes the idea of the national state and judicial institutions, as well as her own testimony against misrepresented truth taken for the value of one man.

Barry effectively captures the stereotyped pure/fallen duality that plagued the image of Irish womanhood for a long time in the character of Roseanne. Consequently, Father Gaunt ought to be written like Roseanne's villain in her story. Their contradiction exemplifies a dire situation where a woman is torn between traditional Catholic ideals and her individuality. This compels her to be a rebellious individual, but also highly conscious of how her community perceives her. Therefore, Roseanne's story is rampant with profoundly emotional thoughts of being terrified of rejection. She says when you "know your sentence, and then to hear it spoken by your judge" (Barry 226). The judge, here, is larger than Father Gaunt's verdict, it extends beyond one person's grip to encompass all misconceptions of that setting. Simply put, for Roseanne, the crime is that she has become a fallen woman. She is not only isolated from the people in Sligo but she feels as "the whole hinterland of Strandhill speaking against [her], the whole town of Sligo murmuring against [her]". She is also referred to as "the mad woman" who would be burnt in like "a witch", and " the truest of all things" is that no one came to her help

(226). Seeing how Ireland's society was at the time, facts had little weight against the words of people like Father Gaunt. One of the most egregious examples of this is when Father Gaunt accused her of having "nymphomania" (223), a condition that painted her as a threat to her community.

In this respect, the Church was concerned with sexual immorality as was the State. To address many of the issues related to sexual immorality the government set up what was known as the "Carrigan Commission" to report on issues that may require the attention of the legislature and the passing of laws to ensure that a high standard of morality was maintained (Finnane 519). The image of the New Ireland being promoted by the State and Church was that of rural hard-working people, but also pure people, in the sense of not engaging in sexual activity outside marriage. The smallness of local rural communities and the fairly isolated nature of these communities meant that they were effectively self-policed like the case of Sligo. Irish values that were advanced by such structure on what is considered moral had greatly downgraded women's place in society. In *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and The Nations Architecture Of Containment*, James M. Smith states that, "branded by the public as simultaneously a mother and a criminal, a family member and an outcast, the unmarried mother faced, shame betrayal and exile"(1). Public humiliation of non-conformers, like Roseanne, was a strong method of controlling a religion-dominated community.

In retrospect, Smith's book covers several intricate questions in recent literature regarding the Magdalen Laundries and their subsequent impact on Irish society. Similarly, Frances Finnegan's Do Penance or Perish (2001) addresses the issue, however, her research is limited to one institution: The Irish Good Shepherd asylums. Smith's research places the Magdalen laundries in the context of a number of overlapping and aligned discourses, ranging from religion

to politics to sexuality to the painful mistreatment these “fallen women” underwent. His discussion delves into the history of multiple major laws, acts, and reports that shaped the drafting of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1935). The Act was enacted in response to the committee’s report, which included “a general decline in morality” associated with a surge of unmarried women, as well as indications of sexual crimes against women and children (James 6). General O’Duffy, the Garda Commissioner of the period, while identifying the presence of crimes in the community such as infanticide, rape, paedophilia and defilement, urged the newly independent State to legislate against immorality according to “Irish Catholic principles” (Smith 12). The committee’s report presented a bleak description of the emerging Irish state that was deemed unfit for Irish well-being targeting Christian morality as its warranted centrality for the general public. However, the state had taken a number of legislative actions based on this report (9). Smith contends that the law set a precedent for church-state interference of sexual concerns of Irish society by prohibiting apparent expressions of “sexual immorality” while neglecting to address, or preferring to ignore, the social realities that accompany them (4).

Fallen women, as they were called, were consigned to the Magdalen Laundry institutions. It was not just women, who had babies outside her marriage, who were committed to these Magdalen Laundries but also women who were suspected of being of loose morals or even being sexually provocative by dress, word or action were liable to be placed in a Magdalen. Women who were thought insulted Ireland’s public image were silenced and invisible due to a long legacy of enforcing morality subservience. Smith’s argument regarding Ireland’s “architecture of containment” (Smith 46) demonstrates that the state’s dependency on the Church for institutionalised care resulted in the establishment of a two-branched system. Unmarried new mothers frequently entered mother and baby homes. These women were luckily sent to a

Magdalen asylum after giving birth, while their children were sent to an industrial school. The laundries had become both a source of punishment and a location of concealment. These women were given new names, and they were compelled to labour long hours for little or no pay, as well as expected to pray and seek redemption. They were buried in unmarked graves in order to be invisible as an attempt to hide the shame of the new nation. Their children were taken and placed in Orphanages or Industrial Schools and possibly placed for adoption.

In the case of Roseanne, her child was taken away from her by Father Gaunt who claims that Roseanne had killed her new-born baby in her madness episode (Barry 265). Thus, she is painted as a fallen woman, regarded as impure and she was detained out of sight to preserve the image of purity that the Free State had created for itself. Generations of women who were wrongly labelled as 'immoral' suffered traumatic experiences as their social image and individual identities were punctured by their authorities. At a macro-level, it was a public embarrassment for Ireland; nevertheless, as the country progressed towards modernity, the women who had survived their ordeals began to pass the matter forward. That is to say, since such concerns have recently been addressed in the political spotlight, Irish communities may have recognised the value of revisiting this invisible past in the Irish official history and rethinking these silent legacies.

Attaching immoral images to female bodies impacts the identity formation of these women within their respective groups on a larger scale, forcing them to be, or possess, anomalies. Furthermore, because the adaptation of Irish history sought to separate those who were viewed as immoral from the envisioned image, thus, infiltrating the public records, the image is only susceptible to wilful measures of those in authority. Roseanne's omission from mainstream adaptations of Irish history has created a vast vacuum that drives Dr. Grene to

resolve. Roseanne observes early on and understands that "[t]he terror and hurt in [her] story happened because when [she] was young, [she] thought others were the authors of [her] fortune or misfortune; [she] did not know that a person could [...] be the author [...] of themselves" (Barry 4). Until alarmingly recently, the perpetrators of her misfortune operated a network of institutions dedicated to concealment, punishment, and instilling trauma.

As time passes and history is written by tyrants or survivors, the story's underlying theme switches to cultural issues with the need to redefine a traumatised nation. It is in this context that we can fully comprehend how Roseanne's trauma is closely related to the ambiguities of reading history. In this shift regarding the story's narrative, one of the alluring questions that Dr. Grene must solve is whether or not to release the patients of Roscommon from the hospital, which is closing down. These women have spent most of their lives in institutions, so there is no guarantee that after they are released, they will be able to reverse the earlier wrongdoings brought upon them. In the life of people like Roseanne, this is only a small consolation. However, it suggests that Ireland as a whole is moving away from the old nationalist impulses to limit hegemonic generalisations and that the concept of freedom is becoming less terrifying. Roseanne's recovery is a process of reclaiming her voice, analogous to Ireland's erasure of historical blemishes, which Dr. Grene understands by listening closely to her testimony which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Although he is not an idealist when it comes to this prospect, he considers the overlying political context of the situations: "creatures so long kennelled and confined find freedom and release very problematic attainments, like those eastern European countries after communism" (Barry 17).

Roseanne has witnessed the unreliability of history first-hand, as her personal narrative of the events leading up to her father's death differs significantly from the one documented in

numerous official records. We accept Roseanne's initial statement that "history [...] is not the arrangement of what happens, in sequence and truth, but a fabulous arrangement of surmises and guesses held up as a banner against the assault of withering truth" (Barry 56). Dr. Grene identifies not just distortion of the facts in the official documents he has uncovered, but also what he refers to as a "wrongful desire for accuracy" (290). However, he quickly realises, to his dismay, that he is culpable of the same manner of deception when, in his attempt to recreate the correct narrative from the "competing histories" of Roseanne's testimony and Father Gaunt's deposition, he provides some context that neither documentation provides.

Dr. Grene, who has lived through the ambiguities of history writing, comments on his conflicting sources: "from both of them can be implied useful truths above and beyond the actual verity of 'facts'" and he goes on to doubt the possibility of "factual truth" (Barry 292). Eventually, his views on the nature of history mirror those expressed by Roseanne at the start of her testimony: " [...] I am beginning to wonder strongly what is the nature of history. Is it only memory in decent sentences, and if so, how reliable is it? I would suggest, not very. And that therefore most truth and fact offered by these syntactical means is treacherous and unreliable" (293). In addition, Roseanne's comments on the instability of history are highlighted when she states: "And yet I recognize that we live our lives, and even keep our sanity, by the lights of this treachery and this unreliability, just as we build our love of country on these paper worlds of misapprehension and untruth" (293). The comparison of her testimony to other papers and accounts included in the novel exposes substantial differences in her account.

The unreliability, in this case, emanates from a narrative that has been sifted via trauma caused by historical realities and is amplified by the impetus of constructing ideal official records. Hence, the gaps in the storytelling of Roseanne are a conceivable application that

transgenerational trauma exposes on how history under an oppressive system is represented. According to Kacandes, traumatic memory in the text can be indicated by anything that might express gaps, silences, and even complete stories that are unspoken (95). Even though Roseanne does not mention the abuse she experienced in the Sligo asylum, when she reaches the point of confinement, her testimony claims: “Now memory stops. It is entirely absent. I don’t even remember suffering, misery. It is not there” (Barry 276). Whether her testimony is believed to be reliable or not, one real aspect surfaces in her case: the awful trauma she has felt and undergone.

The 1990s shift, spurred by survivors of female-based violence seeking justice and healing throughout the twentieth century, brought a healing component in Ireland: listening to and reflecting on the past narratives of silenced individuals was critical. Roseanne’s story is an example of that period, and supplement to the experiences of other females whose identities were rendered as fallen. Irish traumatic history after the war of independence is the central focus of this novel not only because its main character and several minor characters have been traumatised, but also because Dr. Grene, the psychiatrist, recognises Roseanne’s symptoms early on and, thereof, his quest for her "true story" is accompanied by his reflections on trauma and the fate of women like Roseanne in Ireland. Dr. Grene’s conclusion is complemented by the fact that we, the readers, come to the view that twentieth-century Irish history was tragic. This corresponds to one of Dr. Grene’s longer historical observations on de Valera and the church: "It is a wonder the country ever recovered from these early miseries and traumas" (Barry 236). Barry’s approach to history in *The Secret Scripture* of Ireland becomes traumatic for the entire nation, not just a few. This work explores the theme of women as historical victims, yet it concentrates on Ireland’s past as the dominant tyrant.

With an abundance of themes intertwined in the story, the most visible commentary concerning Roseanne's journey is how narratives mobilise distressing but true histories, such as mental asylums, whilst simultaneously offering a possibility for recovery and forgiveness. One of the frequently expressed suggestions is whether we can accept that healing is not necessarily an institutionalised process. The subtle glimpses of openness and compassion that characterise Roseanne's and Dr. Grene's relationship, ironically, deliver the greater potential of rejuvenation than that of any clinical approach. This could also give insight into some of the problematic practices that were prevalent at the time in a number of mental rehabilitation paradigms. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s in Ireland, the recovery process was routinely suppressed as mental health institutions attempted to keep patients rather than help them recover. Nevertheless, in the 1990s, allegations of mistreatment in several recovery programs surfaced, spurring changes across the mental health system. With a series of scandals coming to the forefront, it became clear how vulnerable voices were suppressed systematically in the past.

4. Historical Revisionism as a Model for Working Through Trauma

To establish historical revisionism as a therapeutic method, we will first consider Roseanne's psychological model for overcoming national limits on her identity by presenting the perspective that healing is achievable. To do this, we will use LaCapra's theory on acting out/working through traumatic history, which was made possible in the novel with the help of Dr. Grene, a character Roseanne comes to admire. As a result, Roseanne reclaims parts of herself and reintegrates herself into her community. Then, through objective and subjective historical modes, we will explore what revisionism entails by claiming that Dr. Grene, as a character,

symbolises empowering generational perspectives and is capable of critically reconsidering the past as a form of recovery.

Literature has traditionally served as a potent means for increasing public awareness and healing personal traumas. Writing as a form of therapy is a testament to how literature stems from a plethora of healing narratives to cope with suffering. The act of writing one's story is one ancient human tradition, yet such enduring practice is among the most attested methods for psychological recovery and self-liberation. In Irish literature, Barry seems to engage with writing as optimisation for his passion regarding historical revisionism. While this is the case, his characters, notably Roseanne and Dr. Grene, however, represent writing as a two-fold process: one for empathetic healing and the other for rethinking the past. Dr. Grene is portrayed as a sympathetic psychiatric character who reconstructs the history of his patient Roseanne by reading her letters and writing his observations in his testimonies. Dr. Grene's aim, as Roseanne's therapist, is to assist her work through the trauma she has experienced, as a victim of a disturbing era in Irish history. Simultaneously, the story outlines actual events from documented Irish history by exposing them to subjectivity, making them just as unreliable as Roseanne's narrative. Hereby, Dr. Grene becomes a symbolic character, as a new generation, that encapsulates a strong case for the need to seek the past as a source of traumatic narratives that espouses polarity of themes rather than one incentive of Irish romanticism.

Certainly, definitions of trauma emphasise the psychological rather than physiological wounds. Furthermore, rather than the collective, its precise operation prioritises the individual's experience in defined conditions. Given their history with colonialism, these characteristics of trauma are not odd across several Irish modes. Recognizing these individuals' situations, stories, and memories, likewise, can serve to lift the veil on traumatic culture in general. Caruth states

that a traumatic, “event retains as trend pointed out insistently and against [survivors’] will”(6). As trauma lingers in one’s memory, it perpetuates their entire perceptions: how they think about others, how they connect with one another, and how they regard everyone else (6). She maintains that trauma occurs as uncertainties, and as a result, it persists in the thoughts through generations, making it difficult to dismiss the grief and to accept reconciliation. In the Irish context, the uncertainty of multiple accounts may signal a civilisation that needs to unmask its latent crises: those haunting tragedies that have gone unreported in official records.

According to LaCapra in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, acting out, which is different than working through, trauma causes one’s sensations to implode tensely as if the victim had relived the past again. But that is not to say that the victim is indeed unaware of tensions between the past and present, or that acting out cannot always offer closure (22). LaCapra writes that the Freudian distinction between ‘Melancholia’ and ‘Mourning’ is similar to the concepts of ‘Acting out’ and ‘Working through’. Whereas Mourning and reflecting modes of human emotions in response to traumatic experiences are crucial indications of coping mechanisms, melancholic states, and functionality in resolving trauma, are minimal. When acting out a traumatic past, the future is obstructed. However, when working through it, the victim’s desire to overcome the traumatic event is emphasised. LaCapra’s point is that by communicating victims’ history of traumatic experiences with friends, family, and others to the highest ability, they may be able to alleviate their suffering (22).

Indeed, writing down and critically evaluating a traumatic past as a commenter on one’s tragedy remains a key approach for victims to hypothetically communicate a traumatic past. That is to say, as, in the case of Roseanne, the act of authorship provides traumatised individuals with an avenue of narrating their traumatic experiences. Victims then relive a distinct memory, but

they will be able to articulate it—at least how it relates to them—even if their assessment is flawed. Reclaiming authority, in this fashion, over memory is referred to as 'an articulating practice' by LaCapra. When victims can articulate past experiences, they may feel more optimistic about their prospects, allowing them to reintroduce meaningful reconciliations into their lives (22).

Acting out, or melancholia, is a mental state in which a victims' perspective of time is conflated and imploded, whether consciously or subconsciously, requiring them to detach from memories in intensified distressing moods (LaCapra 21). Working through, on the other hand, is what LaCapra terms "articulating practice" which is necessarily an effect at testimony (22). Slowly, the process of mourning enables traumatised people to develop a narrative memory of the traumatic event. In its essence, acting out is related to the victim's stimuli, which drives them to repeat certain activities compulsively, even if repetition is not desired. However, working through, on the other hand, is a reactionary impulse in which the victim achieves a critical distance from the stressors of that event, thus compulsive repetition becomes unlikely (70). It is important to note that, it is not necessary to reject the past in order to work through it; rather, it is necessary to carefully immerse oneself in therapeutic activities when thinking of those memories.

Dr. Grene, Roseanne's psychiatrist, evaluates his patients to determine who will be transferred to the new mental institution and who will be released back into society, which drives him to learn more about Roseanne. Dr. Grene learns about some of the terrible realities of Irish history hereafter, including Father Gaunt's misogyny, mistrust, and disdain for women: he is, simply, Roseanne's doom. Gradually, Dr. Grene forms a bond with Roseanne, whom he sees as a product of an oppressive regime focused on sculpting a specific Irish image. He uncovers a

number of examples of Irish history being fabricated to fit the dominant Irish ideals: masculine national, and Catholic. He reasons that it is her low social standing that enables tyrants like Father Gaunt to assault her, culminating in Roseanne's fractured sense of self. Throughout the novel, it is evident that Roseanne could not critically assimilate feelings of shame and guilt as a protestant, a woman, but mostly her father's death. This particular memory of her past is what connects the two. Dr. Grene, who is an orphan himself, knows that the death of Roseanne's father is more than just a death of a close family member. Because her father was deemed a traitor, Roseanne had to carry that burden with her as well.

They do, however, develop an empathetic connection that goes beyond the typical patient and therapist relationship. Despite her old age, Roseanne gets herself a chance to defeat many oppressors of her past by writing. In this process, she speaks to herself and retells her memories poetically. Roseanne has an interesting story to tell, one that contradicts popular perceptions of Irish history as one of overwhelming certainty and reliability. But since Dr. Grene is enthusiastic in her story, she gains a new vitality, which she channels into writing about her youth. Thus, Dr. Grene, whom she comes to like, represents the character who brings about transformation and acceptance. He describes Roseanne's outlook toward life as substantial and meaningful, which he feels helped her work through her trauma. He states:

> So ancient, and yet, one of those facts that is so thin she bears the bears the look of her youth yet, what she was. Oh, she is shrunken as she must be, when the woman washes her no doubt she is skin and bone, everything that was once beautiful and fruitful about her empty and sere. Can I say, Bet was spared that? It is worthless talking about what we have been spared that? It is worthless talking about what we have been spared by death. Death grins at that I am sure. Death of all creation knows the value of life. (Barry 124)

Roseanne philosophises on the meaning of death and life, ensuring that death is the one that enlivens the value of life. Thus, she understands that both life and death are opposing poles that make sense in each other's presence. Roseanne's dividing version of the past is traumatic such as witnessing her father's death, her mother's insanity, being abandoned by her husband after a charge of nymphomania was brought against her, giving birth to a child alone on the seashore before being sent to the mental hospital without knowing anything about the child's whereabouts, and then being abused in the mental hospital.

Roseanne travels to the memory of her father, where she acts out her trauma, repetitively, as the example of the hammer and feather entails. It is, here, that we observe her trauma being acted out in her narrative and dreams in a repetitive compulsive manner, as LaCapra argues, and the reason why it is utterly incomprehensible, yet, recounted in a poetic tone. Nonetheless, by sharing these precise experiences with Dr. Grene, she is able to move past her repetitive impulses of revisiting the same moment in her memory. As a result, Roseanne becomes much more engaged in her rehabilitation, but she has yet to attain the necessary distance for complete healing.

When we return to her acting out trauma, it is evident that her unwillingness or inability to communicate narratives about that event to others causes her to repeat the moment of great grief and loss every time she is confronted with emotional triggers. Her behaviour is acting out process a victim's desire to retreat, to live physically in the present but psychologically in the past, and to be unable to let go of her looming thoughts. Her compulsive repetition is heightened whenever she obscures how she feels for the fear of shame and rejection. She seeks to re-narrate memories of the past, several times, which insulates that feeling of shame, seeing how she

merges two memories of herself with her father from different times. She suppresses her recollections of her father, but in her dreams, she is haunted by them: “in dreams and waking, a sense of privilege, as if such little scraps of stories and events composed for [her father] a ragged gospel” (Barry 11).

As stated, she regains a sense of relief and significance, only after sharing Dr. Grene the story of her father’s death and the society’s abandonment of her as a woman. However, at first, Roseanne is hesitant to accept her troubled history since she seems to hide under the bed and hide from the world most of the time. She mirrors what Freud refers to as the melancholic in her willingness to hide at this point. Therefore, Rosanne needed more than sharing specific memories to obtain critical distance from acting those memories out again. She eventually achieves that after writing her secret: her secret scripture.

Roseanne has no other means of articulating what she feels except to write it down, giving expressive and passionate writing that encompasses bits of history. Her attempt to “write out [her] life on unwanted paper - surplus to demand... some type of brittle and honest Minded history” will be valuable only to her (Barry 4-5). Even if she has no intention of anyone else reading it during her lifetime, she is hopeful that her written narrative will outlast her verbal protests against who wronged her. However, when interacting with other people becomes less grating, she eventually has a source of emotional relief in verbal declarations, wherein she begins to feel a sense of companionship in the hospital. Roseanne works through her horrific experiences after she finally holds writing as a route out of her grief: narratively ‘articulating’ her recollections. This assists her in becoming more viable to others around as well.

While Roseanne’s initiatives prove to be a noticeable alleviation in her discomfort, they also suggest trauma victims’ integration in a larger group and community is possible. She starts a

new path and, whether directly or indirectly, she wants to be ~~a~~ part of the current environment. Prior to Dr. Grene's spending time with her, she did not have an outlet to lessen the severity of the trauma. Then, as Dr. Grene becomes more aware of her predicament, she begins to attend a hospital support group for patients with traumatic backgrounds. Roseanne reads books and visits hospital patients with the support of Dr. Grene, whom she grows to idolise as a "very subdued, very quiet, very shiny" (Barry 97) type of man. She obtains some psychological comfort from there, and she has a few happy moments before she leaves the world. She keeps herself busy by talking, reading, and writing about her feelings and recollections, understanding that this is a different time: a changed Ireland.

Historical trauma theories have become increasingly entangled with personal and community identities, particularly in relation to marginalised individuals who have been subjected to a major crisis in the name of a greater nation. The current state of historical trauma research includes a diverse set of terminology and research techniques, with trauma functioning as an enigma in both history and literature. Because history serves as a public narrative for specific people or communities, both historians and readers of history may learn to integrate historical trauma into their worldviews. More explicitly, Irish history is no exception; in fact, it is full of similar paradoxes about individual identities being besmirched for the sake of fabricating the Irish image. As Roseanne's story tells us, Irish history unquestionably was subject to particular frameworks or constraints that could have been challenged in their immediate aftermath but the circumstances to establish such discourse were not yet met.

However, these limitations promoted by national ethos continue to interplay with more extreme proclamations on Irish identity that cannot be eliminated completely even today. It may allow us to better understand what LaCapra implies when he alludes to his attempts to interpret

history from this perspective as binary oppositions. If the oppressive dimensions of a particular history have not yet been unbound, it is essential to delve deeply into the inherent discrepancies between "objectivity and subjectivity, objectification and empathy, reconstruction and dialogic exchange, cognition and affect, thought and practice, excess and limits (94)". LaCapra, then, makes it apparent to consider "self-questioning" as a method "that enable a different understanding and practice of history writing" (94). Dr. Grene, who as a character represents an agent of healing, symbolises this self-questioning narrative. Undeniably, he is the antithesis of the traumatizing forces in the novels, such as Father Gaunt, who accepts Irishness for what it is and what it historically assumes. Dr. Grene is a product of another generation, and even though trauma is still permeating public consciousness, he guides the story's readers in conceptualizing what it means to be Irish from a rational point of view.

While Roseanne progressively pieces together her identity, Dr. Grene constructs his own by revisiting her past, and rather than surrendering to Irish national sentiments, his narrative is fashioned as a thoughtful reawakening. Despite Roseanne's story being skewed in the subjective narrative given her traumatic status, Dr. Grene provides an objective reassessment by comparing her history to the documented one. Similarly, he is a compassionate reader of history who understands the hurdles of resisting historical restrictions. He embodies the statement of LaCapra here, "if the existing limits are subjected to questioning, then at some point in the process one must confront the issue of how to generate newer intellectual and institutional limits-articulatory practices (94)". As some commentators have pointed out, Dr. Grene's desire to return to Irish histories, like Barry's revisionism, is an explicit desire to criticise the instinct of Irish nationalism for being unforgiving.

Kiberd, in *The Irish Writer and the World*, who reads the revisionist tendency of Irish contemporary writers, interprets these limitations as the Irish being fascinated with their control over the past, including the power to redefine its meaning whenever that appears required, rather than an inability or unwillingness to move on from the turbulent Irish history (280). This is evident not only in Yeats' and his compatriots' works, namely Irish Revivals, at the turn of the nineteenth century but also in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries when many Irish writers engaged with the past to navigate their experiences of the present.

Dr. Grene is an individual who, despite his lack of explicit insight, understands Roseanne's seeded traumas as he reads to us her testimony and comments back on her history. The act of commenting on one's history, untaken by Dr. Grene, is, in fact, Barry's method of rethinking how history is represented while unravelling the polarisation of ideas and perceptions. The novel's underlying meaning is to highlight that Irish independence was only a victory for those who regarded the Irish as a hegemonic identity, noting how it had put Protestants in horrific situations. Consequently, nationalists, like Father Gaunt, are often shown unfavourably, when seen through the eyes of Roseanne. In Barry's text, since Irishness ascribes to dominant discourse, the strategy to determine the critique of entrenched Irish identity is to adamantly plunge into revisionist reflections. By outlining this facet, i.e. revisionism of Irish history, the discussion on Irishness, which bounces between nationalists and traumatised individuals, surfaces as a direct aspect of Barry's work.

Returning to LaCapra's binary oppositions, objective and subjective reading of history, such a method of historical representation has two inclinations: fabricated history, which is what the written documents stipulate on Roseanne's past, and destructive history, which permeates as a traumatic history. In Roseanne's words: the "great wheels of history" have already constructed

Roseanne's life before she is born (Barry 68). Aside from being seen as a destructive force, history is also portrayed as a subjective and prudently manipulated account of events. The story constantly challenges the notion of history as an impartial and rational explanation of causally related events. Roseanne's story illustrates that historical objectivity is a myth and that the nature of any historical record is determined by a small group of people, most often those in positions of authority.

Roseanne's journey accentuates the critical question: "[h]ow does good history become bad history by and by?" (Barry 119). In this context, the question is most likely rhetorical, implying that history could be contaminated by certain institutions of power. The revisionist focus in *The Secret Scripture* swings from national history to personal history. Therefore, the novel narratives venture into an intricate discussion on Irish identity by denouncing the objectivity of historical narratives indicating that any historical account is an unreliable estimate of personal identities. Furthermore, historical fabrication can have a substantial influence on these identifications, which are a subject of politicised discourse. While the novel emphasises the importance of personal history, it derides the concept of national history. Dr. Grene begins researching Roseanne's personal history, and via her testimony, he learns about Ireland in the aftermath of the Irish Republic. Similarly, Dr. Grene's narratives are significant for the reader because, while Dr. Grene works to establish the facts of this history, the reader is made aware of the greater consequences of national history. The text reinforces this purposeful scepticism of personal account's reliability by portraying Roseanne as unreliable due to her traumatic conditions.

Simply put, the idea of history is handled in this novel as a form of writing that can only ever be as accurate to the actual events as the availability of sources on these events permits.

What is more, the examples of Roseanne's traumatic narratives previously have shown such perspective: personal experiences are subjective at minimum or downright convoluted. As Dr. Grene explores Roseanne's past, we are reminded of the ongoing debate about Irishness being historically sentimental. The reassessment of Roseanne's past by Dr. Grene parallels the revisionism of Irish history since both are fundamentally concerned with questioning existing narratives. Eventually, this embankment on history is rewarding for Dr. Grene as he finds the truth about Roseanne's personal history, and his own ancestry, as her son. He questions the nature of history:

> But I am beginning to wonder strongly what is the nature of history. Is it only memory in decent sentences, and if so, how reliable is it? I would suggest, not very. And that therefore most truth and fact offered by these syntactical means is treacherous and unreliable. And yet I recognise that we live our lives, and even keep our sanity, by the lights of this treachery and this unreliability, just as we build our love of country on these paper worlds of misapprehension and untruth. Perhaps it is our nature, and perhaps unaccountably it is part of our glory as a creature, that we can build our best and most permanent buildings on foundations of utter dust. (Barry 304).

Dr. Grene perceives history as a subjective assessment of several key events rather than a factual explanation of what happened. Within the context of the narrative, this is unsurprising, as Dr. Grene is continually confronted with Roseanne's and Father Gaunt's contradictory testimonies. Furthermore, in addition to questioning the veracity of history, he also links historical scepticism to the concept of national identity. His reflections pertain to the assumption that a person's national identity, which is made up of a collection of agreed-upon identifications in principle, is

partly based on that nation's past and thus on an unreliable foundation. Nations must be viewed as totally constructed concepts since they are built on such "unreliable foundations" (304).

We are left to wonder: how can hegemonic national identity, this abstract construct, be powerful enough to justify Roseanne's marginalisation? That is especially dubious if we discover the whole truth about Dr. Grene's ancestry and, more importantly, Roseanne's unfortunate and traumatic past. Despite the fact that both characters do not directly address the subject, Dr. Grene's internal monologue insinuates it at several points in the novel. There should be more rationalisation required when engaging with concepts of nations as merely imagined communities, with some of their distinguishing qualities dependent on unreliable and possibly prejudiced historical interpretations, on "foundations of utter dust" (Barry 209). After all, Roseanne's need for identity, particularly national identity, makes for another reading, as her narratives stimulate a kind of postmodern criticism of two interrelated concepts, "history" and "nation". That is a criticism that clearly delves directly into the question of nationalist versus marginalised groups.

Dr. Grene finally concludes that Roseanne could not do much against the existing social imperatives of the time after researching and commenting on her case. The Free State's disturbing implications on moral conduct, which labelled those who did not conform as mad, fallen, or downright non-Irish, are daunting but obvious: "Morality has its own civil wars, with its own victims in their own time and place. But once she became pregnant, she was utterly doomed. A married woman who had never been married. She could never have won that one" (Barry 278). Dr. Grene can be read as a historian working to untangle and make sense of the many parts of the past, and the reader becomes a co-historian in the process, attempting to stitch

all the pieces together to construct a broader vision. In that thread, a woman emerges as a victim of repression and marginalisation in a regime that appears to be at war with its own people.

In short, *The Secret Scripture* utilises the stories of victims and oppressors in the text to mimic the jarring manoeuvres of history itself, displaying trauma and post-traumatic experience in its full blatant, noticeable, and disturbing manifestations. Almost all of these are symptoms that have been rarely acknowledged in an Irish context during a notably uncomfortable time that lasted until the twenty-first century. In this upsetting story, the focus falls on one character, Roseanne, whose testimony, no matter how convincing, has little weight against the standing of the pungent prosecutors rationing her identity. Explicitly, here, Barry utilises another character, Dr. Grene, to leverage the revisionism of history as a technique to expose a profusion of stories that are formed by morality beliefs and firmly rooted in postcolonial nationalism. Unearthing voices like Roseanne's perpetuates the influence of historical narratives on Irishness and provides a context to how various generations interpret the past.

5. Conclusion

As we dive deeper into Roseanne's story, we learn about Roseanne's terrible history through her colloquial, yet poetic tone, along with her odd identifications with a broader community. Roseanne's half-forgotten phrases and fragments swirl through her head like a faded apparition, but as a subtext, her words serve as a reminder of a larger situation than just one individual. In this discussion that is based on her character and identifications as a traumatised Irish woman, we aimed to showcase some of the shrouded realities of the blind urges of a regime that sought to construct a specific frame of Irish identity. When we turn further into Barry's preoccupations with memory, the most obvious characteristics of historical unreliability are

prominently featured in *The Secret Scripture*, intensifying the connection between history, memory, and trauma in surprising ways. These preconceptions are; as we explored, immediately put into question by Roseanne's surprisingly articulate writing as she shows signs of working out her traumatic memory. In short, we conclude Roseanne's image, and hence identity, as an Irish woman is regarded as yet another misfortune in the recounting of the marginalised traumatic experience. Nonetheless, it establishes loudly pleas against Irish dominant historical/national narratives and it denounces certain methods of forging identity paradigms with prejudice toward feminine expressions.

V. Remodelling Irish Women Status: Irishness in Transition after the Celtic Tiger Phenomenon in Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007)

1. Introduction

The significant shift in society and culture in late-twentieth-century Ireland undoubtedly dictated that there should be a more critical view on the prevailing Irish image representations expanding from the past versus those of the current impulses. Enright, like several other genuinely outstanding contemporary writers, has absorbed a tremendous deal from her education and early experience in radio and television. She admired Sigmund Freud's books as a student of English and Philosophy before completing her BA at Trinity College Dublin. Enright is regarded as a brilliant storyteller, given that h er short stories offer fleeting epiphanies into the inner lives of modern Dubliners, whilst her novels are more complex depictions of Irish women in historical context. Enright, like the discussed authors in this research, reacts to the transformation embodied by the Celtic Tiger boom, but from a different perspective. Despite the fact that *The Gathering* captures the generational memory of Irish culture at various points in the second half of the twentieth century, much of Enright's portrayal of Irish identity is explicitly tinted through the trauma lens, particularly by embedding a narrative about a victim of sexual abuse. In this story, which won the 2007 Booker Prize, Enright's depictions of Irishness are more concerned with these idealised symbols of a nation as fundamental principles pressingly growing from Irish history.

As this chapter takes similar interests in exploring the multifaceted angles of nationalism, identity and trauma already dealt with in the other chapters, the objective, however, will be to extricate a peculiar sense of self-identification- to absorb Irishness- as provided by the female

protagonist, Veronica Hegarty. The struggle of Veronica to cope with her brother's suicide effectively is encapsulated by this emerging socio-economic model, which will be investigated to see whether new patterns of Irish identity still correspond to traditional hegemonic paradigms. By unearthing the fictional and psychological journey of Veronica, a fundamentally traumatizing experience, we draw a parallel to real political and social themes in the Irish collective consciousness, both current and historical.

Therefore, first, by circling this new socio-economic milieu, introduced by the Celtic Tiger phenomenon, we aim to answer whether new trends in Irish culture re-identified the purpose underpinning Irish nationalism as the story narratives advance. Secondly, our interest shifts to the main focus of the study, Veronica's Irishness, to contend closer with her transformational journey, which was urged by her brother's death. We argue that this circumstance, rather than describing a single event, defines a broader paradigm that comprises two sides of a long-standing pattern: victim and perpetrator dynamics. Finally, we investigate the motherhood-Ireland connection that underlies the formation of Irish nationalism, as proclaimed by the Irish literary Revivals, to inspect whether the Celtic Tiger Ireland has grown to embrace new Irish concepts whilst tarnishing others that have long hampered its progress. In meeting this concern, we claim that *The Gathering* provides a different method of recovery between two generations by linking trauma and motherhood, all of which reside in Veronica's own desire to battle her familial hunting experiences that subject women in this new Irish context.

2. Confronting Tarnished Irish Emblems During Ireland's Transition

The Gathering (2007), Anne Enright's Booker Prize-winning novel, features a wholly distinctive type of Irish protagonist than McGahern's tyrannical Moran, Deane's unnamed child,

and Barry's elderly Roseanne. Furthermore, the story raises related questions about the unreliability of one's memory, the haunting effects of the past, and most importantly, the struggle to find a tolerable private sphere beyond the collective traumatic history. In contrast to previous works, Enright's protagonist, Veronica Hegarty, or Vee as she is frequently called, contends with very contemporary challenges with national identity and Irishness at the frontline. We are no longer concerned with the war of independence as it transpired, but rather with its long-term repercussions on Ireland's modernisation, as well as some of the polarizing Irish enticements to correspond to the rapid economic transformations. The characters in Enright's world are fundamentally distinct manifestations of the Celtic Tiger phenomenon and indecisive consumers of its material products—an untapped venture that will soon identify Ireland as a global economic hub. Nonetheless, this is unquestionably a story of Irish generations, beginning with a grandmother, then a mother, and closing with a protagonist who is now a mother herself in new Ireland.

The female protagonist's point of view in this novel is distinct from those of previous works, specifically because Veronica's story utilises Dublin, Ireland's most culturally significant city, as its setting. Considering that *The Gathering* recounts Vernonia's history across different periods and generations, the story takes a great deal in promulgating how Irish identity is presented in two stages: before and after the Celtic Tiger boom. Thus, Enright's novel comprises a range of narrative strategies to illuminate this critical juncture in Irish history, including an insight into terrible tragedies, such as the painful past of Vernonia's brother, Liam. In the Irish context, what appears to be an economic boom obscures clots of traditional identifications with the nation being openly confronted for the first time, whether through the mainstream media or officially. Liam's tragedy as a child sexual abuse victim stands against the nation's idealised

conceptions, which, nonetheless; calls for more grounded perspectives of tolerance to similar experiences. As a result, the context in which we absorb Irishness, in the story, transforms into a revitalised national identity, which is presently encircled by two paradigms: concealment or coping with traumatic events.

The Gathering poses one significant supposition: if the nation's repressive symbols are transformed into images of idealised narratives, the catastrophic patterns that are shrouded in traditions remain unchanged. Thus, the argument is whether nationhood is still crucial in present Ireland, as Enright's story addresses it on some level, or whether this period of economic transition has succeeded in sculpting a visible growth in addressing fundamental issues about Irish identity. To be precise, in this seemingly post-nationalist environment that the story advances, we often wonder if there is an unaffected Irishness to serve as a reservoir for authentic national identifications, and thus questions of identity and the country are subordinated to a study of historical structures, on the one hand, and microeconomics operability on the other.

The unprecedented change in social structure, in late-twentieth-century Ireland, unquestionably, produces an appetite for literature that challenges the dominant Irish image representations with those of the present. Enright, like McGahern, Barry, and Deane, corresponds to this shift, but from a different perspective, even if, like some of her contemporaries, much of her representation of Irish identity is discernibly mediated via the trauma lens. Unlike other authors, however, the portrayal of Irishness in Enright's story is less concerned with presenting the excessive proclivity of nationalists to champion the Irish image, and more preoccupied with drilling down into issues regarding the jeopardy of these romanticised symbols of the nation as canons urgently emerging from the new Irish Republic. By constructing a socioeconomic critique of the newer environment, Enright's work is read within a

distinct framework that certifies the rawness and relevancy of the events recounted in *The Gathering*.

The story, set in 1998, offers an unnerving glimpse at Ireland's history through its female protagonist's search to uncover what happened in her family. The first-person narrator, Veronica, is one of twelve surviving children – "the whole tedious litany of Midge, Bea, Ernest, Stevie, Ita, Mossie, Liam, Veronica, Kitty, Alice, and the twins, Ivor and Jem" – who gather to bury their recently deceased brother Liam, who committed suicide by strolling into the sea until drowning in England (Enright 13-32). As the family members come together, Veronica travels to England to return her brother's remains to Ireland. On the surface, the story appears to be about Veronica physically journeying to England, but, essentially, it is a psychological voyage in which she recalls various episodes from her past that inform us about herself, her family, and her brother. While speculating on the causes of her brother's suicide, Veronica blames it on patterns of abuse he suffered as a child, the most prominent of which was alleged sexual assault by his grandmother's landlord, Lambert Nugent or Lamb. The work is a profound literary exploration of trauma and its haunting ramifications, with Veronica recounting unimaginable events from her past in her present setting of boom-period Dublin.

The title of the work, the gathering, alludes to a story about a process of reunion, which is, in effect, a meeting of the Hegarty family. However, the simple family reunion entails a gathering of unpleasant stories and uncertainties: a gathering of "the sudden convictions that uncertainty spawns" (Enright 7). Furthermore, the story weaves together horrible histories from the past with the new position of consumerism in recent Ireland, which contaminates the relationship with the family structure even more. The challenge of connecting with the mother,

as with the case of Veronica and her mother, is similar in the complex relationship of many Irish with Ireland's, as the motherland. Hence, Veronica's narrative is riddled with sensitive areas around family and Ireland as she recounts Irish history through the perspective of who lived through multiple generations and observed the challenging social climate against women. Via Veronica's upbringing, we know about her mother's and grandmother's discomforting experiences as Irish women since historically Irish society takes a firm position about female identities as equal citizens to their male counterparts. Such perspective is shrouded in subjectivity, or as Veronica puts it, "as I see it in my mind's eye" (79). She integrates this unpleasant Irish mask into her observation, resulting in distorted narratives and questions about objectivity. Nonetheless, the enduring subjectivity of Veronica bursts an emotional zeal around the uncertainty we acquire about her melancholy in regards to her brother's death.

Traveling from the past to the present is another strong indication that the overwhelming majority of the memories are Veronica's imagination, and that some of them are based on a merging of fantasies and returned memories. However, it is via narrative unreliability that we confront the idealised national identity: through a summoning of traumatic experience, specifically, the testimony of child sexual abuse. As previously revealed, similar experiences were prevalent in post-independence Ireland; nevertheless, a number of discoveries during the current economic boom brought embarrassment to the national image. This is about Veronica's brother Liam, a character who commits suicide, allegedly as a result of the stress caused by such assaults. The narrative voice is untrustworthy, yet, it is supplied as a method of determining the unresolved motives for the brother's suicide; and as a matter of fact, this strategy simultaneously works as a medium to tarnish the somewhat overwhelming national attitudes toward trauma victims through the use of jarring personal accounts. As a result, the novel's structure, which is

brief and to the point, maybe interpreted thematically as the chronological gathering into a prospect of therapy after receiving the shocking news of Liam's fate. There is a need for closure and comprehension, yet with each chapter, more discoveries are revealed and more frightening imagery is used.

As we look further into the text to determine whether conventional paradigms of national identity still make sense in the modern era, the clearest illustration that tackles this shift is provided through Veronica's recollections. One significant instance is when she draws a startling parallel between herself and her grandmother. Veronica, who believes that there are several assumptions about women that constrain their places, emphasises that she will not embrace her grandmother's role as a typical housewife. By noting her "stainless-steel Miele Dishwasher"(Enright 78), she insinuates that her grandmother had to wash dishes by herself without the assistance of her partner. Likewise, she has a flat-screen television, a sporty little convertible car, and a five-bedroom detached home elegantly decorated in "oatmeal, cream, sandstone, slate," all thanks to her husband's lucrative career in corporate finance (36). On the surface, Tom, the spouse, appears to be the ideal partner, and certainly the model Irishman in that sense, since he is described as "high-maintenance" rather than the image of Irishmen as idle. He is a successful businessperson who has allowed Veronica to give up her career as a journalist in order to be a full-time mother to their two daughters, Rebecca and Emily. The Hegartys appear to be living the bourgeois dream of upward mobility and material solace, but by the time the novel begins, that blandly successful façade is put into question.

The narrative advances the responsiveness to diverge from traditional models of identity, which is central to the concern of ostensibly modern paradigms around Irish nationhood—some of the raised questions are accordingly emblematic of how contemporary Irish authors express

Irishness. Furthermore, and particularly in Enright's work, Irishness is portrayed as a bundle of conditions, and possibly its most essential part is expressed in the resurgence of identity amid a socio-economic milieu. This conforms to Enright's narrative approach as presumably a new pattern in Irish writing. In the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Caitriona Moloney characterises Enright as one of the most promising authors to make her debut in Ireland in the 1990s (88). Moloney praised Enright's approach to fiction writing because it emphasises how vital it is to reimagine the outlining connection between different timeframes. Since the predominant themes of *The Gathering* call into question the prevalent paradigms and epistemologies of nationalism that have plagued Ireland for decades, the novel also serves as a reading for alternative structures that fuse numerous genres into a unified creative narrative. Given Enright's talent, be it as a journalist to a historian, a plethora of fiction writing qualities have been fashioned in her work, as she strives to stimulate conversation about the preservation of official records and widespread beliefs that persist within collective memory (88).

The Gathering scrutinises how Irish fiction has evolved to portray the transformation of the Irish economy from the inception of the Free State to the present day, while also acknowledging how the country continues to reconcile with the long-term consequences of its colonial history. Veronica's journey is an analogue for a nation that, despite hurdles, is still moving forward via collective initiatives—some reiterating a cultural desire that has been in Ireland for generations and will still likely occur in the future. Unlike the previous stories we explore, *The Gathering* asserts that even in contemporary Ireland, the repercussions of colonisation leave a lingering stamp on a civilisation long after the colonisers have left. Even though the nation has seemingly recovered economically and built a perpetual sense of

nationhood, its postcolonial underpinnings continue to put pressure on Ireland, subsequently, the coming generations and the new environment into which writers like Enright are born.

These human experiences, which are moulded around the enigmatic prospects of a nation, vehemently formulate the protagonist's hunt for her history as she travels across Ireland obtaining shards of Ireland's grim history. As a result, Veronica's exploration for herself, supplemented by her return to family, 'gathering,' exemplifies a latent and repressed desire to re-establish a sense of community and family. Veronica's home becomes a narrative element in and of itself, that includes the slew of estrangements, signifying that this protagonist must grapple with her family's fragmented identity, which this home fosters, while the outside serves as a stage for self-discovery. In this context, the novel uses the notion of small Irish unities, or gatherings, such as Irish homes, as a metaphor for Ireland, Irish society, and national identities, with the implication that some aspects of Irishness may surface outside of established relationships. Veronica says: "I wish I could remember what made me sit up and throw my things in the case, and leave: I fancy a piece of distant birdsong; the sense of someone calling me home, but the only person who might call was Liam and he was nowhere to be seen (Enright 105). Therefore, in Celtic Tiger Ireland, Veronica shows that it can be possible to question one's identity amid a crisis, which is also an ironic premise in itself, considering that she embarks on this initiative only after her brother has passed away. In doing so, she recounts a reality that should have been handled years ago by researching his history and delving into a traumatizing zone. She aims to recapture the lost emotional wholeness when she returns to Ireland and to her family, which is complemented by a physical reunion with people from her history transpiring under unfortunate circumstances.

To keep up with the underlying nexus between family and nationhood, one of Enright's most notable angles in this book expresses the amplification of personal sense of loss to represent familial dissolution. The expansion from a personal to a social perspective adds a political position to the narrative and reflects the profound structural upheaval that Irish society is facing amid globalisation. The reader is given a narrative about a fractured collectivity, which is reflected in the characters' past and individualisation. It is worth noting that the recurring theme of the family, and more specifically, the traumatised dysfunctional family, have been pervasively present in Irish literature ever since the 1937 Constitution, particularly in works that contend with family as a social construct broader than the collective entity. This family as "the natural crucial and fundamental unit group of Society," as Eve Patten notes, delivers genuine representations of the family that might extend symbolically to remarks on the state of the nation. In her study of modern Irish writing, Patten observes, in some respects, the imaginary disintegration of the family's body symbolises a state at odds amongst itself, replete with "discrepancies and misfit traditions"(Patten 17). The predominance of such Irish family representations has moved away from traditional tropes towards different patterns, such as prolonged attention on the context in which families contained and engendered trauma. Family members commonly fail to protect the most vulnerable individuals in these situations, which is a common theme in Irish literature.

In retrospect, the Hegarty family extends into the sensationalised family drama: a familial union that is shaped by the trauma of child abuse: " I don't know what wound we are showing to them all, apart from the wound of family. Because, just at this moment, I find that being part of a family is the most excruciating possible way to be alive" (Enright 202). The novel is, however, a tribute to representations of family life in typical Irish households, which serves as a

continuation rather than a contrast to the romanticised portrayal of family unions that was prevalent at the birth of the New Irish State. This is especially true as we learn in "the uncertain event" (202) how Veronica rediscovers how to live with her family despite the tragedy of her brother's abuse at the hands of her grandmother's landlord.

However, before Veronica comes to terms with her brother's death, his memory serves as a hunting aspect that resurfaces whenever Veronica finds herself in a mental uncertainty. Whilst other circumstances may also have contributed to her unnerving situation, Liam's death is the root of most of her grief. Much of her suffering derives from the conviction that she failed her brother both as a child and as an adult, filling her with an unbearable sense of guilt, unspoken resentment, and debilitating melancholy. Liam was more than a brother to her; she considers him a type of twin with whom she "overlapped" (Enright 15). The failure to help him in overcoming the abuse and coping properly in society reveals a bigger context of Ireland's reluctance to support traumatised victims in the past who were unable to come out with their testimonies to the public. As a result, his death pushes her to resort to unhealthy habits such as severe insomnia and excessive drinking. Her children grow emotionally distant from her over time, and while her marriage appears to be on the verge of breaking apart, Veronica's attitude begins to emerge as a defensive play, like "the unhappiness game" (150).

The novel's hunting passages are not just an application of trauma, but manifestations of the country's perplexity and uncertainty about who to believe and what to trust. Stories like Liam's as a victim of abuse were thought to be uncommon in Ireland, however, as dozens of new victim testimonies surfaced, particularly during and after the 1990s, their aftermath has shaken public perception. In reaction to these new testimonies, which some have described as scandalous and shameful to public Irish image, the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse was

founded in 2000 and in 2005 an executive summary of its conclusions was issued. It consists of five volumes that chronicle brutal incidents of abuse and trace their catastrophic repercussions, and it finishes with a warning that rings eerily true in *The Gathering*: "The lessons of the past should be learned" (305). This is often one of the difficulties that the victims experience and one particularly " Liam never learned how to do" (Enright 68). According to Harte, *The Gathering* is the most harrowing literary depiction of the terrible impact of child sexual abuse in Ireland to yet, ''and of the corresponding, profoundly difficult need to counteract silence and forgetting through disclosure". In the context of the story, Liam's abuse may be an isolated incident, but it represents a pattern of abuse and realisation that "the system failed the children" (221). The veracity of horrific Irish images that have gone unnoticed, in Enright's story, delivers a compelling narrative about traumatic events that were previously repressed and rejected.

The profound undertone of the story questions the undesirable borders of national identity, especially given how demoralised Irish felt with the scandals. After the 1990s, revelations of religious and institutional crises in Ireland, commencing in June 1994 when Father Brendan Smyth was sentenced to four years in jail for child abuse in Northern Ireland. Enright's book was published a decade after, but it still grapples with that period; hence, the relationship between sexual abuse, Ireland, and the Catholic Church is implicitly delineated. In one of Enright's interviews, she notes that Ireland was subjected to sexual oppression and that the Catholic Church attempted to prevent discussing it (qtd in Koyal 383).

After Colm O'Gorman's television documentary "Suing the Pope" aired in March 2002, child abuse allegations in the 1990s began to permeate Irish media. The account of O'Gorman's childhood traumas exposed the Catholic Church's indifference to repeated charges of child sex abuse by Fr Sean Fortune, a recently professed priest. The outrage of the public was largely

focused on conveying a hideously deceptive image of the Catholic Church, and it spurred a series of investigations, including the Ferns Report in 2005 (05-22). The Ferns Report, which was published two years before the novel provides essential context for Enright's character Liam.

The investigations, which looked at complaints or charges made against the Ferns diocesan clergy prior to 2002, highlighted not only the harmful act of child abuse but also the Church's terrible response to it. The detailed report was crucial to unearth the oppressive environment of the victims and what they underwent from concealment and humiliation. Catriona Crowe demonstrates how more disturbing than the tragic descriptions of the torture is the documentation of the long-term effects of the abuse on the witnesses: some range from suicide, despair, alcoholism, marriage breakup, family dysfunction, parental quarrels, self-blame, guilt, fear of exposure, to severe trauma (05-22). Crowe's description of the victims' symptoms can be used as a guideline to rethink the rather unpleasant themes that *The Gathering* underlies.

In an unsettling irony, Veronica embodies Celtic Tiger Ireland, and her projected image of shame is fracturing Ireland's national identity during the economic expansion. Veronica's night-time writing, walking around the house while her family sleeps, frequent drinking, and late-night driving around the city all reflect the devastating consequences of these traumatic memories coming to the surface after her brother's death. She says: "I am officially mad now, I am a mad housewife – I ease the car away from the kerb and, drinking all the while, move around the estate in first gear. I want to fling the empty glass into somebody's front garden, but of course I do not do this" (Enright 226). Therefore, it appears that, despite Ireland's economic boom, such remnants of the Irish past cannot be simply forgotten, as they continue to cause suffering to victims' families and thereby traumatise coming generations.

3. Irishness Amid a Transition: Veronica's Irish Image

Discussing one's identity and subjectivity entails theorizing on the various roles performed at the level of people interactions. Veronica exemplifies this concept as a witness to Lambert's molestation of her brother, which leads to her being traumatised and having compromised social performance. In this respect, the story illustrates why no other Irish problem has brought together academics from such a diverse range of disciplines and spheres as the dilemma that arises when one attempts to define the borders of Irishness: a subject that crosses the psychological to the political spectrum. In *"The Gathering,"* we may say that while Enright shows the Irish moving toward more freedom after the Tiger Celtic, the highlighted concern occurs when the Irish also react to the traditional forms whereby the habit around the restriction and globalisation processes, to which they are subjected, is prominent. These concerns are interlinked, in that they target certain individuals, notably those who have had severe traumatic experiences and for whom the status of anomaly demands additional restrictions on their roles in a globalised context. Hereby, *The Gathering's* portrayal of concern, through its protagonist Veronica, serves as a metaphor for Irish subjectivity and Ireland as a whole: Irishness at a critical crossroads.

Veronica, as a witness to Lamb's molestation of her brother, exemplifies the position of Irish casualty to traditional forms: these forms are substantially antagonistic restrictions to Veronica's subjectivity. Ultimately, this culminates in tormenting her and sculpting a memory of which she is unable to withdraw before assigning meaning to her identity. This calls attention to a national crisis leading to a significant shift in how we acknowledge trauma and, more importantly, how the Irish have been accustomed to coping with it. Veronica's transformative identifications, spurred by her brother's death, are effective in determining a broader paradigm

rather than a single event. The story's inclusion of Liam and Lamb's recollections helps to draw out Veronica's pathway to a personal identity while also displaying two sides of a long-standing pattern: dynamics of victims and perpetrators of violence. To adequately capture Veronica's Irishness, one must dwell in the centre of the vicious cycle that has operated throughout her life.

Veronica's Irishness plays a key role in unveiling the patterns of abuse that span generations in one family, in which her subjectivity bears a shift in perspective, occasioned by a derogatory catastrophe. This performance, which began as a personal journey, presents her experiences through the lens of a witness whose worldview has been profoundly affected by the victims in her family. When we consider Veronica as a character in this context, there appears to be two stages to her growth, where the loss of her brother catalyses transformation and a shift, which masterfully matches what is shaping up in Ireland at the time. She experiences the repercussions of emotional shock that linger in recent national history and not just her own. In fact, Veronica only remembers what happened to her brother because of the reports she hears about other cases, stating, "over the next twenty years, the world around us changed and I remembered Mr Nugent. But I never would have made that shift on my own--if I hadn't been listening to the radio, and reading the paper, and hearing about what went on in schools and churches and in people's homes" (Enright 144). The shift, she suggests, correlates to the national outrages as a number of victims who suffered sexual assaults were finally identified in what seemed unprecedented discourse in the Irish public sphere. Hence, in this way, Liam's story is viewed as more than a personal assault, but a national tragedy, disruptive patterns of abuse that necessitated addressing.

Veronica connects her family's experience to a national problem by equating their respective experiences of shame and guilt to the emergence of external moods, i.e., the national

scandals. Her identity resonates with some of the horrific Irish experience as a whole, expressing frustration with her environment seeing as she feels “this is what shame does”(Enright 141). The pleas of Veronica reveal that Liam and her situation is more than simply a private constraint as it bears underlying representations of what Ireland is like in its unfenced state. She continues to state, “This is the anatomy and mechanism of a family--a whole fucking country--drowning in shame”, which strikes the heart of the matter (141). As a result, the novel has a protagonist with a plausible fractured identity who raises concerns about some complicated issues regarding the Irish image, as well as, the social position she and her brother have been undertaking. Liam’s death, therefore, serves as a trigger for her to re-evaluate her own identity, while also instituting a physical journey in which documented narratives are met with ambiguities.

If we assume that Veronica employs her brother as a referential point to herself throughout the novel since they are close, Lamb is, by the same token, the complete antithesis of this premise. Lamb, she thinks, is the origin of her family’s misfortunes as she frequently conjures his memory to question her self-assurance since it is rather evident that she has been unable to mitigate his authority. The authority here applies to his narrative control over her family, in which he appears to have dictated how they identify to themselves, especially the females: the mother and grandmother. Lamb symbolises these instances of abuse in hindsight, and his memory perpetuates some of the antiquated forms of female subjectivity that Veronica strives to overcome. In order to change that pattern, she has to challenge the authority this figure’s narrative commends. Therefore, she combats habitually the feelings of inadequacy, shame, and anxiety that this character fosters by rejecting to internalise his memories. Consequently, the central trauma in Veronica’s narrative is her family’s historical association with Lamb Nugent, her grandmother’s landlord. This experience, however, has far-reaching

effects because, as an unreactive witness, the duality of Liam and Lamb characters serve as an uncertain vigour that torments Veronica greatly.

In Veronica's estimation, Lamb's association with her family has always been one of exploitation: "a sickening" pattern that has been passed down through the generations. We can explicitly see how Lamb's presence as memory continues to haunt the family's impressions of one another. For instance, when Veronica goes through her grandmother's rent books, which she finds in her mother's house years after her grandmother has passed away, she wonders: "Why should anyone keep these things, except out of fear – of the long arm of the law, or the Revenue Commissioners; investigating the tax situation on a house you never owned, and that your mother did not own before you?" (Enright 180). Lamb's memory is not just psychological provocation but it takes a physical presence in the house or the rent books, which to Veronica's views creates "a sickening sense […] to the possessor" (180). Furthermore, these rent books indicate that Ada Merriman, her grandmother, never felt ownership over her home or felt that she could prove her right to live there. This viewpoint makes the case that Veronica's mother and grandmother become victims of Lamb's authority due to their insignificant and uncertain roles, economically or politically, as females in their respective periods, a position instils in them a long-term fear of deportation. The only justification Veronica can think of for her grandmother and mother to preserve these papers for fifty years is because they are afraid of being abused.

Lamb was the landlord, he had rights to the house and to the occupants a position that places him as the perpetrator of "sudden pique and petty cruelty" (Enright 195) to Veronica's family. Lamb's profile as a landlord, which is founded on a socioeconomic context, enables him the authority to trespass into the family's borders because he owns the property. Moreover, this grants him a couple of advantages within their private sphere, one being a direct interaction with

the children, which results in Liam's molestation. Lamb, as Veronica points out, does not just infiltrate into their daily lives; he is present all the time "working in the garage, that he owned, at the back of the house and then walking round to the door, that he owned, at the front" (195). While Liam's molestation goes unnoticed by them, except for Veronica, Lamb had a peculiar relationship with the grandmother that Vernonia questions throughout the story. "The ritual of the tea and biscuits" Lamb receives from "Ada at her most charming" when he visits is described as "savage" by Vernonia (196). Ada's utilisation of her sexuality to protect her rights displays the home as an abusive environment in which the occupants are subjected to exploitations, everyday trauma, and shame. As Veronica points out, for thirty-eight years the monthly payment to Lamb is more than money; it is Ada's "whole life dribbled away" (196). Ada and the children were taken advantage of and abused and could do nothing to free themselves from a life of oppression because they had no other home to retreat to and no means of gaining the rights to their home and lives from Lamb. It is "thirty-eight years of *bamboozling* him with her female charms, while he sat there and took it, and liked it, because he thought it was his due" (196).

Henceforth, Veronica struggles to navigate two directions in which the cultural machinery that models Irish identity exhibits itself. The first is based on Lamb's oppressive historical conditions, while the second is based on Liam's victim status. Both of these established paradigms have been espoused in the past, and possibly Enright's emphasis here is to draw a link between the colonial past and Irish nationalism, which was founded on restrictive measures that manifested in amplifying traumatic consequences. Hereby, Lamb embodies colonial oppression which contributed to the hostility of Irish identity through oppositional impulses. By restricting their identification to recognised paradigms in their social roles, the mother and grandmother

represent how the Irish felt and reacted. Therefore, Liam becomes a symbol for the outcome of the dichotomist dynamics, which bear often victimised orientation.

Lamb's role as a landlord exploiting his tenants in their own house is a reference to England's position in Irish history and also on how Irish nationalists regarded themselves in relation to it. In contrast, by restricting themselves to defined roles, Ada, her husband Charlie Spillane, and Veronica's mother embody the Irish efforts to overcome this status, and the negative image of the colonised as people who underwent degradation and oppression throughout colonialism. This relationship is further hinted at by drawing a biblical allusion when Veronica states that the first day that Ada and Lamb spent the day together was the day " Christ says, '*Noli me tangere*,' to the woman in the garden. Do not touch me. It is too soon. It is too soon to be touched. Oh Nolly May" (Enright 91). The Latin name, Noli me tangere (do not touch me) suggests that Lamb's presence is meant to signify an overbearing and invading authority that must be resisted. Additionally, Veronica in another recollection speculates that " Charlie owned the house once, but lost it to Nugent on a horse"(91). While she doubts this, the point that is made here is that Lamb's narratives establish a sense of manipulation and imposed control on her grandparents. The dialectic display between these characters is a miniature representation of opportunistic approaches the colonisers applied in Ireland.

Liam is the microcosm of what the Irish people went through under their colonial oppression. Unlike Lamb, who may be read as a coloniser's intensive centrality, Liam's experience serves as a receptacle for the narrative to bring forth the contaminated Irish image. Lamb's association with the Hegartys, thus, placed Liam at the biggest risk of being abused by him. The reader is, however, almost certain to find these revelations uncomfortable and difficult to absorb, but the underlying brutality and elimination of innocence toward children is done

intentionally to re-evoke the impact of civilisation's deadliest attributes: wars on innocent civilians. Similarly, colonialism had resulted in vast traumatic fallouts as England had rampaged Irish culture for the growth of their empire over centuries. Irish nationalists, on the other hand, emphasize the concept of romanticised purity and ideal image because they consider that such values that have been forcibly subtracted should be returned, which is similar in many ways to Liam's circumstance. Lamb's conduct of exploiting Liam, and so undermining Liam's prospect for a decent future, reflects cultural wreckage considering Liam was born into it. Here, as Vernonia remembers about her little brother, " Liam would never come home now, either to this bed, or the bed in Griffith Way, or any other bed he made for himself" (Enright 104). Beyond the underlying meaning of Irish homes, it would seem natural that Irish people, such as the Hegarty family, reconstruct their homes, much as Ireland undertook after independence.

Some of the story's insensitive themes can be viewed as a display of the colonial oppressive pattern that was left behind by colonialism and incubated in Ireland by Irish nationalists. Although the generation of Ada, Charlie, and Lamb is no longer alive, the consequences of their dysfunctional relationships continue to affect their children and grandchildren. This is the situation that crippled the Hegarty family, pressuring the women to bear the burden of a tyrant-like centrality as Veronica notes, "the explanation for all of our lives, and I know something more frightening still--that we did not have to be damaged by him in order to be damaged" (Enright 186). Like the Irish with their former colonisers, the Hegartys' activities in their home were subjected to a pervasive hegemonic sway that remodelled social aspects in their everyday lives: "It was the air he breathed that did for us. It was the way we were obliged to breathe his second-hand air" (187). Although England is no longer actively exploiting the Irish in contemporary Ireland, the paradigms of the past still persist. Hence, Veronica's

journey is compelling since she aims to break away from that loop and regain an authentic identity following the turmoil of her brother's death, which testifies to the trauma of cultural history in general.

Several postcolonial patterns of Irishness have become fragmented as a result of the decolonisation process, evidently, their connection to centralisation, whether introduced by English or those who followed the same forcible means to combat English hegemony in the Republic. Lois Tyson characterises these dynamics as a "constantly evolving hybrid of native and colonial cultures" (422). Therefore, the romanticised view of this concept upholds that the colonised subject would emerge with a hybrid identity that incorporates both cultures to create a fluid identification that meets an invulnerable sense of the self. However, as the Hegarty family reveals, this is not necessarily the case in postcolonial settings when it comes to how subjects, particularly those under centralised control, react to that condition. Thus, according to Stephen Bennycastle, the following are probable outcomes in constituted identities for the subjugated: Individuals may abandon their own culture in favour of the other, or they may construct a reactive identity that incorporates elements of both cultures (234). Tyson adds that under such situations, the idea of "double consciousness" may lead to "an unstable sense of self" and a "feeling of being caught between cultures" (234). Ada and her husband are part of the generation that had already experienced this outcome as firsthand eyewitnesses "of belonging to neither rather than both, of finding oneself arrested in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological disorder but from the trauma of the cultural displacement within which one lives" (Enright 421).

Although not all of these patterns have persisted to Veronica's generation, their "sickening" imprint is still recognised. Veronica seeks to devise a method out of this

psychological limbo in Enright's novel, a battle that mirrors a cultural divide. With the death of her closest brother, Liam, we realise that Veronica's Irishness is not a well-off blend of cultural values, but rather a configuration of identities ascribed to her from a dysfunctional family. The death of Liam is a catalyst for Veronica to rethink the merits of her identity and the veracity of the roles she assumes. She says: "I was living my life in inverted commas. I could pick up my keys and go 'home'[…]This is what I had been doing for years. And I didn't seem to mind the inverted commas, or even notice that I was living in them, until my brother died" (Enright 151). She does, in fact, struggle to fulfil the roles of her grandfather and mother, who never questioned their place in Irish society, even if it was unpleasant, preventing them from discovering who they are underneath the masks of their roles. Unlike them, Veronica additionally exhibits a genuine concern over her loss of identity, the most prominent of which is in her relationship with her mother. Veronica professes that her mother has no idea who she is: "she knows who I am," Veronica says, "it's only my name that escapes her." 'Veronica!' I want to scream it at her. 'You referred to me as Veronica!' (10). Another reason Veronica's mother's name is never revealed is that she is unwilling to assume her mother's role.

The vague relationship between the mother and daughter reinforces the fact that Veronica was not a noteworthy child among the other several siblings. She is just another name on the list, with no identity outside of her family. Veronica nevertheless acknowledges that she is like her mother who cannot tell the difference between the siblings, just as her mother cannot tell whose daughter she is. The mother's failure to know her own daughter is more crucially a mirror of Veronica's shattered identity. Despite her detachment from her family, she only has a substantial bond with her brother Liam.

Throughout the novel, Veronica's narrative merges her predicament with that of her brother; in this manner, he reflects a harsher sense of identity that she could not acknowledge about herself. For instance, Veronica says: "there were eleven months between me and Liam. We came out of her on each other's tails; one after the other […] Sometimes I think we overlapped in there, he just left early, to wait outside" (Enright 15). Moreover, she confuses their ages at the start of the novel, declaring that she wishes to recount events that occurred when she was "eight or nine," but later clarifies that she was "eight and Liam was barely nine" (44, 121). Therefore, her account conflates her own identity with that of her brother, who represents her fragmented self and her mistrust in others by embodying elements she denies. As she says: "[he] blamed me for my nice house, with the nice white paint on the walls, and the nice daughters in their bedrooms of nice lilac and nicer pink. He blamed me for my golf-loving husband [. . .] He treated me like I was selling out on something, though on what I do not know" (140).

While he was alive, Liam carried a fraction in Veronica's self she did not recognise yet, which masked and compromised her fragile individualisation. When he dies, nonetheless, the burden of doubt falls back on her, and she must determine what aspects of her world she assumes: what is real and what is inverted commas. Veronica's troubles with her and Liam's entanglement might be interpreted as the necessity for current Irish nationalists to readjust these flowing patterns following the demise of colonial Ireland on a symbolic level. Because he is the one who suffers the most directly from Lamb's persecution, Liam represents a tortured and traumatised Ireland.

Veronica undertakes a journey into herself in order to build this distinction of Irishness and determine whether her home and life genuinely have 'blood' in them or not. On this outward

journey, she acknowledges, “There is nothing illegal about driving, but it all feels forbidden to me, the housewife in her Saab, abandoning her children while they sleep, leaving them unprotected from their dreams” (Enright162). By travelling Ireland and uncovering her family history, Veronica can reattach herself to identity and reconfigure who she is beneath the roles she has been assigned. As an outcome of her discovery, she is willing to leave the “inverted commas” in which she has been experiencing. *The Gathering* depicts the long-term trauma of colonisation and the impacts it has on Irish individuals on a personal level. Whilst Enright represents the ongoing necessity of Irishness to be assessed at the level of their history in an effort to shift forward into a meaningful future in this respect, the significant impact of the economic boom reveals that Irishness as an identity construct has yet to fully heal from the wounds carved into its roots. Unlike Liam’s experience, these collective traumas do not have to be endured in silence and torment. These scars can be used to create fictional worlds that exhibit resiliency and creativity amid suffering.

4. Growth through Trauma: Transition after a Tragedy

The Gathering weaves a meaningful outlook on women’s experiences in Ireland amid two phases, namely The Irish Independence and the Celtic Tiger, and illuminates some of the grim realities of Irish themes across generations. This evocative representation of Irishness encompasses complex familial dynamics, buried emotions, and psychological trauma. Remarkably, Enright politicises the domestic by chronicling three generations of Hegarty women from post-independence to the Celtic Tiger to reimagine the imprint of motherhood in Ireland. The motherhood-Ireland relationship perpetuated a pattern that predates the emergence of Irish nationalism, as championed by the Irish literary Revivals, whose objective was to purify the Irish

from oppressive colonial disruption. What was thought to be a positive outlook on Irishness morphed into a multitude of unspoken multigenerational trauma that sweep through generations of women. This pattern is quite obvious in Enright's fiction, as it was in the case of Roseanne and her mother in *The Secret Scripture*. Though the association between trauma and motherhood is more explicit in Sebastian's novel, *The Gathering* ties trauma and motherhood in areas other than the direct implication of psychological turmoil.

Veronica, unlike Roseanne, appears to be more actively involved in the considerations between adhering to established archetypes on her feminine images, particularly motherhood, on the one hand, and reconfiguring one's identity, on the other, by challenging the persisting narratives that have plagued her mother's and grandmother's roles for so long. By attempting to overwrite the long-held traumatic connections with the construct of motherhood that perpetuates "the undesirable haunting" in her family, Veronica's objective is to endow an attentive trajectory to reclaim oneself. The initiative, here, in our last discussion of this chapter, is to explore the relation between a mother's love and female desire in the Hegarty family, a concept that has been tarnished by historical wounds rather than natural human bonds. Hence, Vernonia's Irishness is set apart from others around her, accentuated by the impact of the Celtic Tiger consumerism boom, and the death of her brother leading her to enhance different models with her own daughters. That said, it is this new and unfamiliar position that allows her to accentuate the singularity of Irishness, which still demands to be acknowledged.

The most essential role that Veronica begins to confront is motherhood, which has defined her grown-up experience. The memory of Veronica's mother, who is not given a name in the story, symbolises her insecurities for herself had she genuinely wanted to embrace her traditional role as a mother. Veronica is resistant to the role of motherhood, which is

understandable given Ireland's history of women's rights. In his book *Double Visions: Women and Men in Modern and Contemporary Irish Fiction*, James Cahalan claims that sexism, which was encoded into the 1937 Irish constitution, affirmed the Catholic Church's "special status" in the Republic of Ireland, prohibited divorce, and maintained that a woman's place was in her man's home. While censorship and many other traditional elements of the Free State began to dislodge in the late 1950s, reform in essential gender relationships, such as divorce and birth control, has taken much longer, and in certain cases has still yet to materialise (20). Instead of conforming to the constraints of a society that subjugates them, women have had to defend the right to a meaningful identity. Veronica represents the contest to reconstruct and re-vision social position after Irish independence as a reflection of one rendition in a voiceless Ireland in the novel.

The story's advancement of the motherhood concept is a puzzling juxtaposition that transcends two manifestations in various times in Ireland as embraced by Veronica and her mother. In Veronica's perspective, her mother, or simply called Mammy, exemplifies Ireland's convoluted view of motherhood: "My mother had twelve children and--as she told me one hard day--seven miscarriages. The holes in her head are not her fault" (Enright 12). According to Veronica, the mother's acquiescence of this traditional perspective of motherhood transforms the motherhood identity into an unidentified " creature" with no genuine established self-identification (Enright 44). Therefore, the motherhood identity has been rendered as a "piece of benign human meat, sitting in a room" (44). She furthers her unyielding stance on motherhood by stating "My mother is such a vague person, it's possible she can't even see herself," implying that motherhood has deprived her of humanity and erased her (9). The manner in which Veronica feels about her mother, and hence motherhood, illustrates how abnormal mother-daughter

connections are in this milieu. The mother's concealment here presents women's historical subjection by external pressures that put a strain on harmonious family ties: this is one symptom of multigenerational trauma.

Because this is a story about a female journey, a feminist interpretation may conclude that the mother's absence is a mirror for how women have historically been victimised in Ireland. This environment dispossessed women of their authority and selfhood, requiring them to adhere to the expectations of their husbands and society, and robbing them of genuine authenticity. While this view is applicable in the story, a closer psychoanalytic reading of the subject, Veronica, may reveal that she has had a traumatic experience that goes beyond the gendered or economic divide. Veronica's insecurities stem from historical residues that linger in her familial traditions, even in seemingly contemporaneous modern Ireland, that is, of the Celtic Tiger, which guarantees equal rights to all citizens. The burden she must bear, that she should perish like the other women in her family, is an introspective lens that captures how daunting it is for women to adopt historical roles, including motherhood. Vernonia is concerned that if she would embrace the same role, she will be in a similar position with her daughters, or, as she describes it, "irrelevant": "I like to talk to them. If I don't talk to them I think I will die of something--call it irrelevance--I think I will just fade away" (37).

Veronica's riddles are immensely symbolic of who she is, a woman who is constantly contemplating the role she serves: If she is only a mother, according to her conceptualisation, she will vanish after her children lose interest in her. Veronica believes that being a vague "creature" like her mother implies that the role of motherhood is inadequate to be perpetuated as a traditional social role, yet, the contradiction occurs when she also craves the affection of her children as a mother. After the death of her brother, Veronica becomes more critical of her role

as a mother: “everything shuts down, and all the ways you thought you were vital are not even vaguely important. Your husband can feed the kids, he can work the new oven, he can find the sausages in the fridge, after all[…] most of the stuff that you do is just stupid, really stupid” (Enright 28). Veronica’s remark on her husband’s use of technology to undermine her traditional role as a wife is revealing. This is the underpinning critique of how consumer culture has fuelled transnational movements of people, capital, goods, and information, transforming Ireland as a whole and reforming and reversing a number of cultural aspects. Here, the term “globalization” refers to a phenomenon that has drastically transformed the Western world (Ritzer and Malone, 97). After the tragic tragedy of her brother’s death, and during the transformative moment in Ireland designated as the Celtic Tiger, Veronica suddenly realises that being a “Mammy” is insufficient to define who she is and leaves her without a role, “I used to be a journalist. I used to write about shopping (well someone has to). Now I look after the kids--what’s that called?” (39). As much as the environment in modern Ireland has softened prejudice towards women, it has also confounded many long-held Irish beliefs, such as the motherhood role. Vernonia has no name for her mother, and she has yet to identify motherhood in general, and it is this scenario that forces her to physically remove herself from her girls and husband in an attempt to elucidate what this all means when she travels to England.

Going back to Veronica’s upbringing, the siblings’ squabbles for material scarcity in this large family which highlights the struggles to have modest living conditions before the economic boom. Furthermore, their emotional deprivation, exacerbated by their mother’s indifference, adds to the scarcity of material necessities, which, in Veronica’s case, was substituted by undefined sentiments of love to the value of motherhood. Because Veronica’s mother, in addition to having given birth to twelve children, had seven miscarriages, she never had the enthusiasm or warmth

to adequately care for her children, and as a response, Veronica and her siblings spent a lot of time at their grandmother. This lack of motherly love has emotionally wounded all of the young Hegartys, who grew up unable to express their emotions, let alone to make sense of their singularities. One of the story's objectives is to level an accusation against the motherhood incompetence, which Veronica still cannot forgive after all these years. Veronica blames their absent-minded mother at the funeral, saying, "you were not there to comfort or protect [Liam], and that interference was enough to send him on a path that ends in the box downstairs" (Enright 177). Once again, the connection between Liam's suicide and the mother's neglect of her child is conjured in Veronica's rationalisation of motherhood role: "Because another's love is God's greatest joke [...] who is to say what is the first and what is the final cause?" (177).

This traditional worldview on what it means to be a mother in Ireland, which Veronica actively seeks to disrupt, is laced with painful ordeals. Hence, her odyssey to another realm, i.e., England, parallels these emotional outbursts overturning the immediate climate as she seeks to resolve to a different perspective on motherhood than what has been promoted to her. All of these unnerving turbulences around her eventually make her comprehend that her family is a secluded space full of haunting pain that spans generations. Her private environment fosters traumatic prognostications that refashion the subject, especially females, into undefined "creatures," such as her "hysterical" mother or the victims of sexual gravitation and assault her grandmother or brother. As a result, Veronica incorporates these early childhood signs of post-traumatic symptoms into her subjectivity, only to be triggered by the death of her brother, whose "main gift" in life was "exposing the lie" (Enright 108) and whose memory now unmasked this concept of motherhood. Liam's death makes her realise that she has lost an unmovable piece of herself and that she must begin telling the story of that loss "long before he was born" (17).

One of her traumatic signs is Veronica's difficulty tracing her personal history, partially because she knows that her actual memories are equally as fictional as the ones she imagines, given that her entire identity has been constructed through fiction. She says: "The only things I am sure of are the things I never saw – my little blasphemies" (Enright 66). This behaviour matches Lacanian idea that language's nature as an unstable medium structured around a deficiency - words can only signify absent things – is exemplified by the fictional fabrication of her identity and history. The editors of the English translated version of Lacan's seminal book on female subjectivity, Jacqueline Rose and Juliet Mitchel, explain in the introduction that Lacan's theories on language must be carried in two directions. The first direction is "towards the fixing of meaning itself (that which is imposed on the subject)", and the second is "away from that same fixing to the point of perpetual slippage, the risk or vanishing-point which it constantly contains (the unconscious) " (43). This speaks to the meaning that Veronica aims at reconstructing – which "slips" from her the more she conjures her childhood memories. She wishes that that as history "would just stop sliding around in [her] head" (Enright 17). As a reactive mechanism she tries " to slow down to the pace of [her] memory, but it is slipping by [her] too fast (133). This condition is further illustrated when she states that the landscape in front of her "refuses to move" while it "slides backwards instead, and that is where I fix my eye"(44). She expresses this while on the phone with her sister Bea, fixating her gaze on the past to offer it significance because she still recalls Bea as a child.

Veronica discovers that she did not allow her sister to grow up as it is "impossible" for her to say what she wants since language will always slip off of anything she attempts to connect it to, resulting in the meaning she seeks (Enright 153). Her unconscious mind will constantly remind her of this lapse, undermining her conscious mind's efforts to organise her experience

according to temporal, spatial, or historical reality. Albeit an imaginative abuse, Veronica imagines herself being sexually abused like her brother which indicates further that her subjectivity is at a terrible fragmentation, and that she has no subjectivity on her own. She notes that the imagined image " comes from a place in my head where words and actions are mangled " and such an image is made up of the words that describe it as everything originates from "the very beginning " (184). This "beginning" refers to the time when Ada and Lamb had ownership of the house, which is the moment at which their narrative fragments her subject in a traumatic manner. It is the image of Ada as she understands herself as a woman, in which she had sacrificed her motherhood, her social position, and her identity as an Irish woman to Lamb. Veronica continues ruminating about the phallus as she says: " but it is a very strange picture. It is made up of the words that say it. I think of the 'eye' of [Lamb's] penis, and it is pressing against my own eye" (184). Lamb's presence has degraded her subjectivity and as the irrational, yet idiosyncratic implication of such recounting emphasises, her interpersonal sphere has an explicit gender-based association: Lamb not only signifies a penetrator of trauma but the unchecked patriarchal dynamism as a whole.

In such a climate, where there is a lack of substantial father and mother roles, Veronica wrestles with the Lacanian notion that love is founded on desire. Even a child, like Liam, must have struggled to grasp this concept. A short outline of Lacanian ideas of trauma may assist us to clarify the applications in this discussion. Lacan, who expands Freud's ideas about oedipal trauma, relates his concept of trauma to the situation where the subject bears the first encounter with language, specifically what he refers to as "the law of the father,". Here, the language establishes the role of sexes and thus divides the subject, as in Veronica's case when she identifies a distorted image of her "self." The subject, thus, recognises herself based on the

beliefs of those around her. As a consequence, the subject is reduced to only a symbol or imaginative construct, functioning solely within the limits of language (Lacan 36, 122). Considering "love" is a meaning we attribute to desire; Liam learns early on that desire is not the same as love. According to Lacanian theory, his scepticism about love reveals the inadequacy of languages to grant him the image of a fixed identity while it conceals his shattered subjectivity.

This contrast between love and desire has become entrenched in her understanding of the motherhood paradigms that she currently attempts to navigate while worrying about Liam's tragedies. She expresses surprise at the idea that humans can love each other at all at the start of her story: "What amazes me as I hit the motorway is not the fact that everyone loses someone, but that everyone loves someone". To Veronica's own views, this is "a massive waste of energy", yet, most humans do it. She has the impression that love, in the sense that language assigns to an insatiable yearning, can only be an overflow, a waste. What she wants to know here, and what she learns at the end of the novel, is how this excess defies its own rules: how love continues in the face of harsh realities. She adds, "We each love someone, even though they will die. And we keep loving them, even when they are not there to love anymore. And there is no logic or use to any of this, that I can see (Enright 28). Veronica's issue is one of conviction in the roles she must participate in: she fights to keep her optimism in love intact as the external world, induced by Lamb, that constructed it crumbles around her.

Eventually, Veronica has been forced to remodel her concept of what constitutes a mother's love as she sits in the church during her brother's funeral, she "tries to believe in love," but finds it "Not easy" (Enright 190). Veronica reflects on her love for her children in the face of her new understanding: " I bow my head and try to believe that love will make it better, or if love won't then children will. I turn from the high to the humble and believe, for many seconds at a

time, in the smallness and the necessity of being a mother" (190). At the near end of the story, the reader knows that Veronica thinks of the family institution differently as she realises her relationship to her children is inevitably what "saves" her; "because, just at this moment, I find that being part of a family is the most excruciating possible way to be alive" (202). However, she must put this connection into words to reconcile with it, with the stable sense-of-self that language has allowed her to construct. Therefore, she feels something "hot and struggling" in her chest as she attempts to believe in love: "The chest thing is like fighting for words, and the forehead thing is pure and empty, like after all the words have been said [...] Belief." I'm well-versed in biology. All I need now is the items to put inside. "I only require the words" (190). In the Lacanian sense, Veronica requires words because only words can reattach love to desire, patching over her torn subjectivity and allowing her to live with her family and "self" again.

Veronica has finally realised what she desires: the ability to continue living the life she has created. She must recover from the initial anguish that Liam's death forced her to face, and come to terms with the human subject's inherent flaw and come to terms with the failure that lies at the heart of the human condition. Veronica realises " I know [Lamb] could be the explanation for all of our lives, and I know something more frightening still – that we did not have to be damaged," (Enright 186). Even though she now realises this, she retreats to the shelter of dogma and family. She says " I just want to be less afraid" (217). Enright leaves the circumstances of Veronica's fate unexplained but the present work all show that she believes in a bond of family that is greater than culture than anything else, even if she concedes that family relationships are seen as more binding in Ireland. While Enright's book delves deeply into Lacan's understanding of identity and trauma, it also highlights that models that persist in history, which Veronica

refuses to embrace, are in fact how Ireland had been moulded and given to Irish by historical and social factors.

Veronica's extensive list of injustices, which she believes her mother perpetrated, will not be embraced as she searches beyond the conventional mother-daughter bond. For Veronica, this relationship should be driven by a desire to be the centre of something more than just a number in her family. This reflects how the Irish should think about their motherland and obtain a formula to reconcile with the concept of a nation by identifying new obtainable ideals rather than being remembered as statistics that serve a centralised identity. The mother's multiple births, her failure to archive family history, and her inaccessibility all lead to the bolstering of stronger echoes of traumatic identification, which Veronica must reframe. This is especially in comparison to the model she believes has been insufficient to her desires, as she recognises, she may "die of unfairness" (Enright14) toward her children. Eventually, the chain must be halted, or she will die "of something—call it irrelevance" like her mother (37).

Enright's implications of Irishness to explore the themes of mothers and daughters appeal to a readership that still exists in the world in which her work is set. Ireland in the twenty-first century is increasingly influenced by consumer culture, and what those inclinations represent is modernity. Desire in this context is the driving force behind all of it, from what clothes to wear to what the definition of success is. As *The Gathering* retreats to the not-so-distant past to confront the failure of previous generations and their inability to develop a healthy relationship with a genuine desire, the present must renegotiate its claim to it. Veronica addresses this dysfunction, "it is not that the Hegertys don't know what they want, it is that they don't know how to want. Something about their wanting went catastrophically astray" (Enright 156).

Veronica's difficulty with desire, the distortion of her ability to express her wishes, and understand those of others, are expressed through her need for relevance.

Veronica's two measures of success, material wealth and motherhood, are responses only to what family culture and Celtic Tiger consumerism recommend as the pinnacle of satisfaction. She is actively involved in her children's lives, but they no longer need her, and although she has the ability to buy anything, she does not want anything she can buy. The misplaced desires of the past have been inherited by the present, but they cannot be properly assimilated because there is a gap, where, in this text, Veronica's challenges to articulate her experience as witness and victim to trauma, and her mother's incapability of protecting her from trauma. This transmission of the traumatic condition is expressed outside of the novel as Ireland tries to address its own history of domestic, and national, traumas. Enright, unlike McGahern, Deane and Barry, does not offer an explicit perspective of how to resolve the issues of memory and forgetting to work through trauma, but reading this story, we often wonder if simply acknowledging the presence of such trauma is enough, without requiring action in one direction or the other, or if, even more genuinely, it is the psychological journey that should be sought

Finally, *The Gathering*, as we discussed throughout this part, brings to light an experience of a damaged family narrated by the most sensible member, Veronica, whose comments grant us that transformed perspective on selfhood. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is when, as she stands in Gatwick airport waiting to travel home to Dublin, she considers having another child, a boy "whose name [she] already [knows]" (Enright 271), and simultaneously feels that, more than desiring another kid, she wants to be "less afraid" (272). Veronica concludes that she must invest at the moment, choosing to live second by second, as her uncertainties meld into a critical fixation over what will happen next. Veronica, in the end,

appears to have achieved acceptance and absorption of her family traumas into established awareness that she should look forward and, hopefully, eventually boom into a better mother than her own.

5. Conclusion

As her novel speaks to us about a tragedy that involves different generations, Enright appears to be arguing the status of modern Irish women, implying that post-colonialism continues to reek of historical modes, most of which are destructive, and that neo-capitalism and the global economy are not the satisfactory outlets for one's discovery of their true self. As the text advances, we realise that following the Celtic Tiger, the old paradigms still pose additional oppressive hazards to women, defining what constitutes normalcy in many aspects of their lives. Only when these targeted identities endow transformation, potentially meaningful, some optimistic contexts may emerge. That reflects what Liam's funeral entails, which is that some associations to Irish history should be buried.

Another conclusion we draw from this discussion is that the construct of Irish identity is fluid in nature, rather than being entrenched in purity and romanticism as Irish nationalists uphold. This notion is confronted in a metaphorical sense as the grandmother's house, a construct that was designed to resemble a traditional British rental house, equipped with an aura of moral purity on the outside while concealing what happened to Liam within its walls. The Hegarty house, with all its adornments, is a symbol of Ireland's independence, yet its proportions echo traumatizing, unspeakable cries, within which traditionally the paradigms of what a mother ought to be is incubated.

Finally, the story narratives weave the heaviest burden: what it means to be an Irish mother. Such a concept implicitly evokes "forgetfulness itself," where a mother is depicted as a creature who has no idea where she is going or even recognises her children's names. Hence, we have a protagonist who must challenge this outlook and piece together her identity as an Irish woman while also hoping to establish a fulfilling life for herself in the house she purchased during the Celtic Tiger. Traditions, conventions, and a particular antiquated way of being a woman are being faded away. Above all, perhaps this signals the end of the colonial discourse and the beginning of a new era of several possibilities.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In the general introduction, we referenced Casanova's observation on how Irish traditional paradigms aimed at defining Irish identity in the wake of Irish nationalism, which thrived in three literary philosophies: Yeats', Joyce's, and Shaw's. Instead of incorporating them as a growing extraordinary literary tradition, typically these were branded as envelopes in which Irish identity was safeguarded and fomented. Each of them represents Irishness in unique proportions, whether stemmed from the Revival visions, the individual aspirations, or the Anglo-Celtic affinities. That said, it has long been assumed that the Irish should be ascribed to one of these projects because there would be no unanimous understanding of the stipulations of Irish identity. For this reason, regardless of how comprehensive any research on Irish identity is, the most consistent supposition is that Irishness is more than simply one person's perspective.

Putting aside the concept of nationalism, identity in its most basic sense is a changing ontological configuration that amasses epistemological structures because, to connect with an idea, one must recognise its possibility in the real world, which demands the method of becoming rather than being. Without a doubt, this is a common theme felt all across the world, not only at one point in time. When we consider how the world is continually changing, as well as the desirability of collectiveness, the concept of identity becomes more than just a natural conclusion. Consequently, we would not be unreasonable to assume that if academics and politicians were allowed to define truth in their own way, objectivity, which is much beyond human accomplishment, will regress. Authors, like Yeats and others, may choose their literary traditions or invalidate them all together, and the endless possibilities of narrative do not oblige them to embrace an actual historical framework for their works. Yet, for a century in Ireland, the image of the Irishman was fixated on historical assumptions that failed to be re-examined until

around the end of the twentieth century. It is from this latest influx of revisionism, which was enabled by a shift in Irish perceptions of themselves, that Irish contemporary authors, while not being objective, were creative in implementing areas where plausible discussion of identity, history, culture, and the substantial human experience was given an endorsement.

Therefore, in this thesis, we opted to consider four prize-winning Irish works of fiction, John McGahern's *Amongst Women*, Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture*, and Anne Enright's *The Gathering*, all of which coincided to this transformation in Irish representations. While each story is distinguishable from the others in terms of time, space, and characters it portrays, we obstinately argued that, as trauma novels, they all contribute to the tradition of expressing an Irishness that is rooted in traumatic experiences. It was probably difficult to establish a realistic lens on the events that repercussions of the entire nation bore for many years after its emancipation from Britain. As the twenty-first century advances, there may be a feasible and continuous decrease of tensions, lessening of suffering, and, finally, recovery from traumatic memories. Nonetheless, for the time being, Irish contemporary authors—perhaps even more so in Northern Ireland—refuse to dismiss the colonial aftermaths; and in Caruth's language, they are self-aware of the need in representing Irishness as "a symptom of history" in both literal and metaphorical dimensions.

To support our main argument, we established that all of these novels represent a different meaning of Irish identity, whether in the north or south, be it Catholic or Protestant, a child or a woman, a civilian or war veteran. The victim status overshadowed the Revivals vision of Ireland, hence, we argued that the underlying narratives these novels advance allocate instances of substantial transformation in terms of individual identification to negotiate multigenerational traumas. By doing so, we determined that the novels portray a traumatic model

of history that calls into question the idea that Ireland's unresolved histories and conflicting political identities can ever be completely buried.

First, in McGahern's novel, *Amongst Women*, Moran's severe qualities remain repugnant, throughout the story since his unwavering support for some components of Anglo-Irish military culture foreshadows the long-awaited transformation that would later be accepted by Irish progressive views on their identity. That is to say, exploring this novel leaves an evocative sense of how rightfully it expresses the predefined cultural and historical facts that are seldom immaculate. This is why a large portion of the second chapter was set to uncover the difference between two generations, Moran and his children, that will soon be obvious today. As a result, the chapter devoted to *Amongst Women* aimed to negotiate the ostensibly constant set bounds of national identity, which are often disrupted. This is accomplished by demonstrating how densely afflicted Moran's generation was with myths, assumptions, and generalisations upon which popular concepts of nationhood were inscribed and then juxtaposed with projections of contemporary identity paradigms.

Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, published six years later and set in a different context than McGahern's fictional setting, remains true to its revisionist message and contradicts the concept of McGahern's Moran by presenting us with two distinct images of Irish identity. The first is that this narrative is placed in Northern Ireland, and the second is that, by continuing the Joycean legacy, it empowers a child narrator. As we demonstrated in *Reading in the Dark*, coming to grips with one's self is a transformative process that has been entrenched in numerous aspects of self-concealment. That is, resolving into isolation such as silence or physical distance, reflects the situation of Northern Ireland as it still struggles to find its solution. Even so, although today

Northern Ireland seems to welcome the prospect of unity, this transformation, like the narrator's, comes late and is disrupted by political, religious, and cultural polarisation.

Sebastian Barry's status as a distinct literary voice as a historical revisionist and symbolic therapist illuminates through in his novel, *The Secret Scripture* — particularly by allowing his emotionally damaged character, Roseanne, to endow retrospectively a sympathetic narrative in the hope of emancipation from the tragic past. For this reason, we developed, in the fourth chapter, the sensitive issue of unreliability roving around both Roseanne's story and concurrent official documents, namely of Father Gaunt and Dr. Grene. We uncovered an equilibrium that sets Roseanne's narrative in perspective by deconstructing the gaps of the unreliability of Irish history, as documented by national institutions that manifest in these official records surrounding Roseanne's past.

Enright's *The Gathering* was the final work considered in this thesis. We found it particularly impressive in the portrayal of the transformations in Irish culture in Enright's writings since she is a witness to the shift in Irish culture seeing how most of her story takes place in modern-day Ireland. This last novel, without a doubt, complements our main thesis that today's Ireland is quite different from what it was fifteen years ago in many respects. As we discussed in the fifth chapter, most notably how there is a room to embrace individual identities rather than shunting them. Another conclusion we attained from our discussion of Irishness in this chapter is that the notion of Irish identity is dynamic, as opposed to being rooted in purity and sentimentality, as Irish nationalists espouse. This idea is addressed metaphorically by Veronica's quest to re-identify her identity as a mother following the aftereffects of her brother's death.

Our thesis presented four study cases in Irish literature that exemplify the initial interest in reading Irish identity in relation to the psychological understanding of trauma experience that shapes broader structures of identity such as a nation. Hence, we explored the various literary representations of traumatic experience in modern and contemporary Irish fiction throughout five chapters. McGahern's, Deane's, Barry's, and Enright's novels feature purposeful representations of commonplace forms of tragedy and violence that are often overshadowed not only by the characters in the novels, but also by historians and literary critics. In Moran's case, the war memories mould his identification with what he perceives to be a different Ireland—a constant haunting urge to inflict suffering on his children to restore domestic control that has been publicly lost. In contrast to this condition, the unnamed narrator is the one who must negotiate his grandfather's buried traumatic memory, which is passed to the rest of the family in metaphorical paradigms. Moreover, we observed how some single women had to confront these harsh circumstances, by having recourse to Roseanne's traumatic memories, which speak to an empathic yearning to re-establish relationships when identifying the mending of constrained past to her. Finally, Veronica, who grew up in a fractured home, had to understand early on that the traumatic memories that surrounded her beliefs about motherhood would not disintegrate unless there is a substantial ground for the concept of love.

Our endeavour had a plethora of aims that we attempted to meet, at least in the broadest sense. Furthermore, given the number of different theories that enabled us in scrutinizing our ideas, our journey into unfamiliar surroundings was admittedly ambitious, but fruitful even so, knowing that our project is never intended to be an end in itself, but rather the beginning of continuous involvement in Irish representations, as far as literature is concerned. As a static document, we believe this undertaking to be a humanitarian project since it represents a lifelong

desire—personally, politically, and academically—to identify and help individuals who suffer but are never visibly recognised. As a result, the findings of this thesis require not just studying literary fiction but also comprehending and participating in real life, as well as urging others to do so. For that and more, this thesis will continue to shape our conscientious involvement with latent fragility, especially the underrepresented.

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