

**HEROINES OF THE WORKING CLASS:
THE REPRESENTATION OF MOTHERHOOD
IN RODDY DOYLE'S WORK**

PhD Thesis

Burcu Gülüm Tekin



Supervised by

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and
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Universidad de Granada
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Departamento de Filologías Inglesa y Alemana

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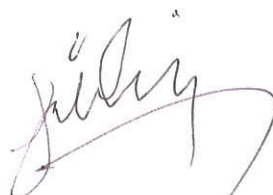


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1. INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

My acquaintance with Irish literature goes back to my undergraduate years in Turkey, where I studied brief excerpts from canonical Irish writers such as Jonathan Swift, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and Oscar Wilde. However, when I first took my Master's classes on Irish culture and literature with Dr. Pilar Villar-Argáiz, in the academic year 2010-2011, I began to fathom the intricate dimensions of Irish Studies. To my surprise, I discovered that Irish literature is not limited to canonical writers from the past, but also includes many contemporary voices (i.e. Seamus Heaney, Sebastian Barry, William Trevor, Eavan Boland, John Banville, Emma Donoghue, Kevin Barry, Colum McCann, Lisa McInerney). What is more, if we focus on works highlighting Ireland's contemporary multicultural reality and the country's changing cultural landscape we can see that the list of names has become even longer (i.e. with writers such as Dermot Bolger, Cauvery Madhavan, and Hugo Hamilton, among others).

Specifically, writers such as Patrick McCabe, Edna O'Brien, Anne Enright, and Colm Tóibín shaped contemporary Irish literature from the beginning of the 1990s until the late 2000s. Among the dominant themes that unite these authors is the question of belonging, overwhelming memories of the past, and the paradoxes of being Irish in a global context in which all sorts of identities are constantly being questioned and/or challenged. Furthermore, some of their work deals, in particular, with the dysfunctions taking place in domestic spheres and the private realms of experience, as observed in various literary portrayals of tormented characters in dysfunctional Irish households [for instance, McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992), O'Brien's *House of Splendid Isolation* (1994), and Enright's *The Wig My Father Wore* (1995)]. Writers such as these provided fresh insights into Irish culture, which has often been defined solely by nationalism, religion

and the sense of place. However, the notable tradition of Irish literature was largely mute regarding the reality of the working class, with the exception of prominent writers in the past, such as the dramatist Seán O'Casey.

Among the abovementioned contemporary literary figures, Roddy Doyle is particularly keen to reflect the modern day working-class life in Dublin. As a writer who has found himself in an Irish setting where everything is defined in rather reductive terms (Longley 1994: 194), Doyle has probably felt the need to reformulate and explore the social and cultural critique of his society. In addition to Doyle's interest in portraying the experience of working-class people in modern Dublin, his "innovative treatment of narratorial voice" is highly original (Harte 2013: 30). In other words, Doyle has unearthed a subaltern reality on the margins of Irish society, whilst at the same time articulating it through a working-class colloquial, vernacular language. Not surprisingly, his novels have had a great impact on the contemporary Irish literary panorama. Furthermore, he has not limited his writing to a certain genre as he has produced short stories, plays, memoirs, children's books, and screenplays. His themes are as varied as the wide range of literary genres observed in his work, and they reflect the current socio-cultural changes in contemporary Ireland. The above mentioned factors—his focus on the working class, the multifaceted, versatile nature of his writings and his use of vernacular language—make his work unique in the contemporary Irish literary scene.

Doyle's work has not only had a national impact, but his reputation has consolidated worldwide. Many of his novels have been adapted to film and have reached an international audience. Similarly, his books have been translated into numerous languages such as German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, and Turkish. As I will indicate in the following chapter, he has won several prestigious awards, such as the Booker Prize (1993), the Royal

Television Society Award (1995), the Irish Pen Award (2009), and the Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Award (2013).

Even though my first research project on Irish literature focused on subversive representations of Irish femininity in James Joyce's two short stories "Clay" and "The Dead" (*Dubliners*, 1914)¹, my curiosity over one of Doyle's short stories read in one of the Master classes reshaped the direction of my PhD research. That short story was entitled "57% Irish", included in his 2007 collection *The Deported*. It was about an Irish doctorate student who conducts experiments to measure the level of Irishness of his country's population in the late 1990s. The story is highly ironic, as it mocks the reaction of some Irish natives towards the increasing wave of immigrants in the Celtic Tiger period, as a result of the rapidly growing economic prosperity of Ireland. However, what triggered my curiosity was something else. Throughout the story, the protagonist Ray called to his Russian girlfriend as Stalin whenever he was annoyed with her. Although it was meant to be amusing, I considered that nicknaming a girlfriend after such a notorious political figure enclosed a gender-biased approach against women. From that moment onwards, I decided to focus on Doyle's literary production to explore how he portrays female characters in his work.

At the beginning of my research, I was expecting to encounter a writer whose approach would be discriminative in terms of his treatment of women. However, as I delved into Doyle's overall work, I came across contradictory cases which I will explore throughout this study. In fact, there were two defining moments in my research. The first one was my three month visit to (now extinguished) the Women's Education, Research, and

¹ This was the focus of my Master Thesis, whose title is "Subversive Representations of Irish Femininity in James Joyce's "Clay" and "The Dead", 29 September 2011, Grade: 9/10.

Resource Centre at University College Dublin. There I had the chance to be supervised by Dr Katherine O'Donnell and to gradually immerse myself in the fascinating field of feminism and gender studies. The second remarkable moment was, without a doubt, my interview with Roddy Doyle in June 2013. During that interview, it became evident that his work would be highly complex to analyse, as Cosgrove (1996: 231) also acknowledges when he remarks that Doyle never reveals any details about his ideological stance. Likewise, Doyle highlighted in our conversation that he was not a spokesperson of any specific community or group in Irish society, a fact that I will address further on in my study.

Doyle's writing has caught the attention of many literary critics (such as Piroux 1998; McGlynn 1999, 2008; O'Toole 1999; McCarthy 2003; Persson 2003a, 2005, 2006; McGonigle 2005; McGuire 2006; Praga Terente 2008), who especially focus on his portrayal of the Irish working-class milieu. However, there are some issues which are either disregarded or which have not been treated in detail up until now. Considering this research lacuna, the main objective of this Dissertation is to explore Doyle's characterization of gender roles in his work within the changing social and cultural realm of Ireland. Hence, firstly I focus on how Doyle portrays women, particularly mothers, in his novels, short stories and children's fiction; and secondly, I analyse how Ireland's cultural transformation has had an impact on the gender roles represented in this work.

When we focus on the critical studies on Doyle's work, the key issue that comes to the fore is that his writing embraces a particular social class in Irish culture. However, the term "social class" within the Irish setting is highly complex, as it embodies different social realities which actually "overlap and interact" (Tovey and Share 2003: 171): "[the] inequalities of wealth, property and income to the work people do, the education they

receive and the housing they occupy, their values, attitudes and political beliefs and practices”. Bearing this in mind, the analysis of Doyle’s work should not be limited to a singular theoretical framework. In order to assess his stance towards motherhood, I apply the psychoanalytical frameworks of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Melanie Klein, while also acknowledging the perspective of feminism (i.e. Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Nancy Chodorow, and Rosi Braidotti) and of prominent gender theorists (i.e. R.W. Connell, James W. Messerschmidt, Henry Ferguson). Additionally, as a means to understanding the traumatic consequences that some of his characters experience, it is also necessary to take into account the proposals of outstanding names in Trauma theory (i.e. Cathy Caruth, Roger Luckhurst). Finally, several prominent social and literary critics within the field of Irish studies (i.e. Diarmaid Ferriter, Clare O’Hagan, Pat O’Connor, Jennifer Jeffers, Gerardine Meaney, to name but a few) have been accessed to shape my research on the social condition of Doyle’s characters.

Following this introductory section, chapter two provides an overview of Roddy Doyle’s life and literary production. Tracing his publications chronologically, I aim to give an insight into the aesthetics of this author, starting from his first published work, *The Commitments* (1987), and up to his most recent piece written for children, *Rover and The Big Fat Baby* (2016). Hence, this chapter offers a general panorama of his whole oeuvre, revealing the multi-faced nature of his writings and the impact of some personal events in his life.

The third chapter aims to contextualize Doyle’s work by discussing gender issues from alternative perspectives. First of all, I introduce the main tenets of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, which will be later applied to explain the inner selves of Doyle’s female characters. Considering the limitations of this psychoanalytical approach, I point out issues that feminist

critics such as Irigaray, Cixous, Chodorow, and Braidotti highlight. Subsequently, I discuss the controversies surrounding the concept of motherhood in Ireland. I here examine the continuous reformulation of images of Irish femininity and maternity by the Church and the State. Lastly, I also consider the role of women in present-day Ireland, and the shifting gender roles affecting masculinity and fatherhood.

Chapter four offers an in-depth analysis of the victimized position of mothers in two novels by Doyle, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993) and *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1996), which engage with the issue of domestic violence in different time settings in Ireland. I examine Doyle's adoption of a child's perspective in the first book, whereas the second novel is narrated from the viewpoint of a battered wife. Under the critical lens of feminist scholars such as Adrienne Rich, Donna Haraway, and Jane Flax, this chapter contextualizes the position of the submissive mothers in both novels. The trauma of domestic violence is also examined from the perspective of Cathy Caruth and Roger Luckhurst. In addition to this, the studies of Hedwig Schwall and Danny Nobus are referred to, so as to provide an insight into the traumatic disorders caused by domestic violence. Alternatively, R.W. Connell, Diarmaid Ferriter and Jennifer Jeffers' perspectives enlighten the socio-historical background of my analysis to discuss the traditional male dominance over women. As I show, Doyle depicts spousal abuse as an unarticulated, almost taboo subject within the working-class environment.

Chapter five deals with the presence of unconventional mother figures in *The Barrytown Trilogy*, constituted by *The Commitments* (1987), *The Snapper* (1990), and *The Van* (1991); and in *The Last Roundup Trilogy*, constituted by *A Star Called Henry* (1999), *Oh, Play That Thing* (2004), and *Dead Republic* (2010). I here explore how female characters in these novels challenge the social codes attributed to womanhood and motherhood. This

chapter examines the huge impact that patriarchal stereotypes of Irish femininity have had in the lives of Doyle's characters, while also analyzing the representation of conventional notions of "masculinity" and "hypermasculinity", as theorized by R.W. Connell, James W. Messerschmidt and Henry Ferguson. A discussion of the shift in gender roles in recent decades enables us to situate the changing social position of male and female characters in Doyle's work. On the other hand, the last sub-section of this chapter explores three types of mother figures, which I identify respectively as 'submissive', 'mythic' and 'heroic'.

Chapter six centres on the impact that multicultural Ireland has exerted upon Doyle's female characters. In the first two sub-sections, I focus on *Paula Spencer* (2006) and "The Pram" (2007), to examine Doyle's adoption of native and immigrant voices reflecting the social and economic phenomenon of the late 1990s in Ireland, a period known as the Celtic Tiger. My analysis relies on the theoretical framework of social critics such as Ronit Lentin and Fintan O'Toole, as well as the psychoanalytical perspectives put forward by Chodorow, Cixous, Freud and Daniel Berthold-Born. In my study of "The Pram", I focus on the marginalized position of the immigrant character, basing my analysis on these theories. Furthermore, maternity and motherland are explored through the application of theories by feminist literary critics such as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and contemporary Irish scholars such as Gerardine Meaney.

The last part of chapter six is dedicated to Doyle's children's fiction. In my analysis of *Wilderness* (2007), I focus on the significance of the personal dilemmas of each character applying the theories of literary scholar Michelle Superle, psychoanalyst Melanie Klein and feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000). Lastly, I examine *A Greyhound of a Girl* (2011) and *Her Mother's Face* (2008), children's books which portray the

mother-daughter bond across different generations. In *A Greyhound of a Girl*, Julia Kristeva's and Alison Stone's theoretical frameworks can serve to represent the mother-daughter dyad. *Her Mother's Face* is examined through the feminist perspectives of Luce Irigaray and Adrienne Rich, in order to focus on the female protagonist and how she overcomes her mother's absence. More significantly, I will explore how the Lacanian "mirror stage" is overturned in this story.

The seventh chapter provides an overview of my main findings and details how I arrive at a number of pertinent conclusions. I point out the original contribution of this Dissertation to the field of Irish Studies, highlighting the gaps of previous research regarding Doyle's mother characters. Subsequently, I touch upon potential future research topics that this study might lead to.

Throughout this research, I explore the literary adventure of a contemporary male Irish writer. As I claim at the beginning of this Introduction, my initial prejudices soon vanished when I began to envision Doyle's stance towards women in Ireland. This writer, as I intend to show, offers various portrayals of mothers, revealing the patriarchal stereotypes associated with them, the difficulties that they may face, and their strength and accomplishment to overcome them. In doing so, my intention is to highlight the fact that the notion of motherhood is socially constructed, and that, therefore, social codes in relation to women are not fixed and are constantly being altered.

2. RODDY DOYLE: THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK

2. Roddy Doyle: The author and his work

Roddy Doyle, one of the most prolific and multifaceted writers of contemporary Ireland, was born to Ita Bolger Doyle and Rory Doyle on 8 May 1958 in Kilbarrack, North Dublin, where he grew up. His home town was the main inspirational source for the imaginary suburb he fictionalised under the name Barrytown in his early well-known work entitled *The Barrytown Trilogy* (comprised by *The Commitments* [1987], *The Snapper* [1990], and *The Van* [1991]). Nowadays Doyle still lives in North Dublin, in Clontarf, with his wife Belinda Moller and their daughter Kate and two sons, Rory and Jack. He has two sisters and two brothers (one of whom died before Doyle's birth). As Doyle admits, he started reading before going to school thanks to his mother (interview with Tekin 2014: 107). Between 1964 and 1976 he attended a National School in Raheny and St. Fintan's Christian Brothers School in Sutton, County Dublin (McCarthy 2003: xiii). Later, he gained bachelor degrees in English and Geography from University College Dublin. Although he started writing when he was a teenager, he first stepped into professional life as an English and Geography teacher at Greendale Community School in Kilbarrack. Doyle continued to write during his summer holidays, and even though he worked on his first novel, *Your Granny is a Hunger Striker*, he did not publish it until four years later. This section aims to provide an overview of Doyle's entire oeuvre from a chronological perspective, explaining the context in which he produced his writings and the impact of some personal details in his life.

Together with his college friend (and his literary agent today) John Sutton, he founded King Farouk Publishing and published his groundbreaking novel *The Commitments* in 1987 (McCarthy 2003: xiv). Written in six months, *The Commitments* was a huge success and was soon re-published by Heinemann (London) in 1988 and Vintage (London) in 1989.

Doyle's daily routine consists of him writing in his office at home from early morning until evening unless he has to go on trips for his public book readings. He usually divides his time by working on various texts; he wrote, for instance, his first play *Brownbread* and *The Snapper* simultaneously. Doyle's first play *Brownbread*—which, as he explained, is about “three lads kidnapping a bishop”—was staged at the SFX Centre Dublin in 1987; his second play *War* was produced two years later (in 1989); it was inspired by “the pub quizzes that [Doyle] had participated [in]” and its first encounter with the SFX Centre audience was in 1990 (Doyle 1992: 2). The publication of *The Snapper* followed in 1990. 1991 was a busy year for Doyle as his third novel, *The Van*, was published and shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

That was also the year when Doyle's fictional characters first appeared on the cinema screen as the film adaptation of *The Commitments*, directed by Alan Parker, was released. Set in an imaginary Northern Dublin suburb called Barrytown, his three novels *The Commitments*, *The Snapper* and *The Van* were published under the title *The Barrytown Trilogy* for the first time in 1992, the year when the screenplay of *The Commitments* earned a BAFTA Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. Roddy Doyle shared the award with his other two co-writers: Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais. *The Commitments* was not the only work by Doyle to be adapted to the screen: the film version of *The Snapper*, directed by Stephen Frears, was broadcast on the BBC in 1993 and won a Goya Award for Best European Film in 1995. Frears also directed *The Van*, the film adaptation of Doyle's third novel, which appeared on screen in 1996.

1993 was a turning point in Doyle's professional life. He resigned from his teaching position at Greendale Community School to dedicate himself to writing full-time. In the same year, his fourth book *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* was published. Narrated from the point of view of a ten-year-old

boy, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* was very different from the author's previous Barrytown novels. The work earned Doyle one of the most prestigious literary awards, the Booker Prize, in 1993. The following year, Doyle received an open invitation from the BBC to write a piece and he wrote the script for *Family*, a four-episode television series. Each part was told from the point of view of a different family member. However, in Doyle's attempt to present the working-class environment of the Northern Dubliner Spencer family with an acute sense, the author was accused of misguiding the audience about traditional Irish family bonding.² In one of his interviews Doyle explains the cultural impact of this controversial series as follows:

[I]t was the television series of *The Family* that caused the outrage, but half the adult population of the country watched it on a Tuesday night. Everybody reacted in some shape or form. The political engagement was on television. (Costello 2001: 91)

Furthermore, in the DVD interview of the television series, Doyle admits to having received death threats for the first time in his life. Despite the controversy caused, *The Family* won the Royal Television Society Award in 1995. As Doyle admits (interview with Tekin 2014: 110), after the series was released, he wanted to find out what happened to Paula (the wife in *The Family*) and decided to write about the development and consequences of her life with Charlo (the husband in *The Family*). The result was one of Doyle's most critically acclaimed works, *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, which was published in 1996.³

Moving away from the life of Paula Spencer (the protagonist of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*), Doyle began to work on a historical trilogy called *The Last Roundup*.⁴ The first book of the trilogy, *A Star Called Henry*,

² White (2001: 32) and Fay (1996: 19) mention this controversy.

³ As Drewett (2003: 337) indicates, Joe O'Bryne adapted the novel for the theatre and it was first staged on 1st May 2003 in the Public Communication Centre (Dublin).

⁴ In spite of the fact that *A Star Called Henry* (1999), *Oh, Play That Thing* (2004), and *The Dead Republic* (2010) have never been published in a single volume so far, various critics (i.e. McMullen

was published in 1999 and was nominated for the Irish Times International Fiction Prize. *Oh, Play That Thing* followed in 2004. Before the publication of the third novel of the trilogy, *The Dead Republic* (2010), Doyle went back to write about the life of the protagonist of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, to record her emancipation in his novel *Paula Spencer* (2006).

As was the case with other contemporary authors in Ireland (i.e. Cauvery Madhavan [*Paddy Indian*, 2001] or Hugo Hamilton [*The Speckled People*, 2003]), the Celtic Tiger phenomenon influenced Doyle's works and the multicultural reality of Ireland emerged in his writing from the beginning of the millennium onwards. In 2000, his short story "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner?" first appeared in *Metro Éireann*, a multicultural newspaper published by the Nigerian journalists Abel Ugba and Chinedu Onyejelem. Doyle's screenplay *When Brendan Met Trudy*, a romantic comedy containing visual references of the multicultural changes on the island, appeared on the screen in 2001. Furthermore, *The Deportees and Other Stories*, a collection of short stories dedicated mainly to this Irish sociocultural transition, was published in 2007. The author also co-wrote a multicultural adaptation of John Millington Synge's famous play *The Playboy of the Western World* (2007) with Bisi Adigun that very year. As Jason King (2016: 69) underlines, the storyline is loyal to Synge's original text. However, the significance of the adaptation lies in the fact that "by equating asylum seekers with the archetypal figure of the itinerant storyteller, Adigun and Doyle represent them as the most recent incarnations of the *seanachie* whose claim to hospitality is deeply rooted in Irish culture".⁵ Some controversies arose following Adigun's claims concerning the unauthorized staging of the play at the Abbey Theatre. Adigun sued Doyle for breaching their contract and

[2004: 128]; Jacklein [2005: 135]; and Moynihan [2011: 50]) refer to the three books as a trilogy project called *The Last Roundup*.

⁵ "Seanachie" is an Irish word for the person who tells tales and/or legends.

permitting the staging of a different version of the text between December 2008 and January 2009. As indicated on Adigun's personal website, the Abbey Theatre paid "the sum of 200,000 Euros in February 2013 as compensation for breach of contract and the infringement of Adigun's copyright".⁶

In his second short story collection *Bullfighting* (2011), Doyle begins to reflect on more intimate issues such as marriage problems, the loss of youth, the stagnation of daily life, and male mid-life crisis. This last concern is also present in his following work, *Two Pints* (2012), which presents the conversations of two men who are chatting about women, football, and old age while drinking their pints.⁷ A year later, Doyle published *The Guts* (2013), a unique book which revisits the late life of the main character of *The Commitments*, Jimmy Jr. Rabbitte, who in this new novel is now struggling to overcome cancer. *The Guts* was also awarded the "Book of the Year" prize at the Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Awards in 2013. Doyle's widely acknowledged publications and prestigious literary awards reflect his achievement as a writer. In a humorous tone, David W. Brown summarizes this writer's successful literary life as follows:

Doyle's growth as a writer has been so pronounced over the course of the Barrytown series and Paula Spencer novels that reading his work is like watching the basketball career of Michael Jordan—from first learning to dribble to earning his sixth MVP—all in the span of a single game. *The Commitments* was a great book and a demonstration of talent. *The Van* was the work of a master. *Paula Spencer* was the dazzling work of a genius. As for *The Guts*, it is the continued promise of Dublin soul, and reason enough to book a flight and visit an Irish bookstore. (2014)

⁶ See Adigun's personal website for further information: <www.bisispeaks.com>. Accessed on 23rd September 2015.

⁷ The dialogues in this novella first appeared in Doyle's Facebook page and they were turned into a book following the huge online appraisal of the public. The second version of the novella was published in 2014 with the title *Two More Pints*. Doyle dedicated the second book to his father Rory Doyle, who had passed away that same year.

Apart from the abovementioned novels, plays, short stories and screenplays, Doyle has also written several children's books, most notably *The Giggler Treatment* (2000), *Rover Saves Christmas* (2001), *The Meanwhile Adventures* (2004), *Wilderness* (2007), *Her Mother's Face* (2008), *A Greyhound of a Girl* (2011), and *Rover and The Big Fat Baby* (2016). Among his children's books, *Not Just for Christmas* (1999) and *Mad Weekend* (2006) took part in an adult literacy project called the Open Door Series, which was conducted by New Island Books. Doyle released his latest children's book, *Brilliant*, in April 2014. A short version of this work had previously appeared online for the St. Patrick's Festival Parade and the Dublin UNESCO City of Literature webpage in 2011. As Caramine White (2012: 4) underlines, "Doyle had a specific audience in mind for his children's books, namely, his own children". However, Doyle aspired to more than merely writing for children and he set up a writing place specifically for them. As a result, Doyle and his close friend Seán Love established a creative writing centre in the North Dublin area called "Fighting Words" for children and teenagers.⁸

Without doubt, Doyle's parents were also an important source of inspiration, as reflected in his first non-fiction work, the memoir, *Rory & Ita* (2002), which revolves around the lives of his parents and the Ireland of their time. However, the country Doyle's parents lived in has changed culturally, socially, and politically. As a consequence of the Celtic Tiger phenomenon and the boost of inward migration to the country, the meaning of 'being Irish' has altered throughout Doyle's lifetime. In Fintan O'Toole's terms (2010: 3), "the old landmarks" of Irish identity such as Catholicism and nationalism "were already teetering". In an interview (Firetog 2012: 65), Doyle states that

⁸ This centre was inspired by a similar charity establishment in San Francisco, called "826 National". The writing classes are taught by volunteers such as journalists, poets, writers and retired teachers. See the centre's webpage: <www.fightingwords.ie>. Accessed on 4th February 2016.

“I happen to be Irish but I don’t feel any need to define what it is to be Irish. I’m more of a Dubliner than an Irish person. I’m quite content to be Irish but I love being a Dubliner”. Doyle especially appreciates being from the North side of the city and strongly believes that his writing has been shaped by this fact. As he admits, “if I hadn’t grown in Dublin, and in my part of Dublin, I wouldn’t write in the same way” (interview with Tekin 2014: 112).

Contrary to his Catholic background, Doyle is an atheist. He thinks that the impact of religion on the lives of the Irish people has changed enormously over the last decades:

[In the past] being religious was almost an existence for everybody but that died out in the 80s. More and more people decided that religion was not their thing. And then it brought out whole issues like the papal abuse, the Magdalene Laundries, etc. The Catholic Church somehow became the enemy in the eyes of all the people. I think people were quite religious ... but now religion is irrelevant... . When I got married in the late 80s, my background was Catholic and my wife was Protestant and people kept pointing it out and nowadays they don’t even care. It is not interesting; nobody gives a toss really. Nobody really cares. (Interview with Tekin 2014: 114)

As indicated above, in addition to Doyle’s short story excerpts written for the multi-ethnic newspaper *Metro Éireann* during the period spanning from 2008 to 2013 with a view to reflecting his country’s shifting cultural scene, he also contributed numerous short stories to various publications and collections.⁹ One of his most recent publications is *Roy Keane: Second Half* (2014), a memoir of the Irish midfield soccer player Roy Keane. The book was written in collaboration with Keane and required long tape recordings as well as numerous visits to the footballer’s hometown in Manchester. Doyle finds the use of his name to authorise the book ironic, since he considers himself a ghost writer “completely and utterly absent from the book” (interview with

⁹ Doyle’s work has appeared in many collections. See, for instance, *My Favourite Year: A Collection of New Football Writing* (edited by Nick Hornby 1993); *Finbar’s Hotel* (edited by Dermot Bolger 1997); *Yeats is Dead! A Mystery by 15 Irish Writers* (edited by Joseph O’Connor 2002); *Click!* (edited by David Almond and Eoin Colfer 2007); and *From Republic of Conscience: Stories Inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (edited by Seán Love 2009).

Herbert, 2014). He sums up his second memoir writing experience as “[i]t’s like having a fictional character come out of the book and say what a pleasure it was to work with you” (interview with Bland, 2014). In 2015, Doyle published *Dead Man Talking*, an adult novel which, in its portrayals of isolated male characters, examines the fine line that separates life from death, which Doyle calls “the shadow land” (interview with Akbar 2015: 38). As the author admits, he was influenced by his father’s death, a loss that took place at the beginning of the writing process of the book. The plot mainly develops around two childhood friends, now very old men, and how they are finally reconciled after years of not talking to each other.

3. GENDER ISSUES WITHIN A SOCIO-LITERARY CONTEXT

3. Gender issues within a socio-literary context

3.1. Psychoanalysis and gender

In spite of the issues addressed in Doyle's works, a close look at his production reveals the significance and prevalence of female characters, mostly mothers. Indeed, motherhood tends to empower his female characters. Doyle provides, with keen observation, a thorough psychological insight into the experience of motherhood. As it will be discussed throughout my study, some of Doyle's female characters have caught the attention of literary critics and academics while many others have not been thoroughly examined up to now. Therefore, it is useful to carry out a critical analysis of this topic, bearing in mind the framework of psychoanalysis, which will allow us to examine in depth how this writer portrays issues such as domestic violence among others. However, this psychoanalytical framework is often disregarded when discussing the inner worlds of Doyle's female characters. In addition to applying a socio-literary framework for my analysis (which will be explained in due course), I have considered some of the main tenets of psychoanalysis in order to look into the author's mirroring of the reality of women and mothers within the Irish working-class society. Nevertheless, I also acknowledge the limitations of the psychoanalytical framework used, namely the findings of Freud and Lacan, in my analysis of this topic. Due to these aforementioned limitations, I also refer to gender and feminist theorists in order to complement such analysis. This chapter thus introduces the term psychoanalysis and what it implies. It also aims to give an overview of the main elements of the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical framework. Additionally, I discuss these psychoanalysts' critical stance towards gender-related issues regarding womanhood and motherhood.

The term psychoanalysis is the combination of the words "psyche" (which means "mental" in Greek) and "analysis" (which stands for "the

resolution" in Latin). The term was first used by Sigmund Freud in 1896 (Gay 1989: xi; Akhtar 2009: 229). It not only refers to a distinct method used by the science of psychology but it also constitutes the core of his theory. Freud (2001: 145-147) mentions three main agencies of the self when outlining the function of psychoanalysis and how the mind works: 1) The primal, instinctive and hereditary side of the individual's development is called 'id'; 2) the second agency is the 'ego', which mediates between the id and the superego and organizes the experiences within the memory of the individual; 3) and finally the 'superego', defined as the parental and environmental moralising influence. Internal conflicts may occur in the functions of these agencies. The ego tries to find a compromise between the demands of the id and the moralising factors or entailments of the superego. Its task is to balance the two and the failure to do so may cause some dysfunctions. Indeed, if the ego is deficient in suppressing demands or entailments this may result in traumatic consequences: 1) "the return of the repressed" (the abrupt re-occurrence of the suppressed elements through different modes such as speech); and 2) the loss of the individual bonds with reality. It is here that psychoanalysis takes the stage as an investigation method for the human psyche and serves to interpret the dysfunction of the ego. Later on in this Dissertation, when I focus on the suppressed elements that create the characters' traumas, the aforementioned Freudian concepts—"the return of the repressed" and "turning away from reality"—will be further developed.¹⁰

Freud has been acknowledged as the father of the psychoanalytic method but the French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan developed Freud's heritage to a further level. According to Lacanian thought,

¹⁰ It is pertinent to note here that the theoretical approaches of Daniel Berthold-Born (1995), Cathy Caruth (1995; 1996), and Roger Luckhurst (2008) will also frame my analysis when discussing the traumatic experiences of the female characters in Doyle's works.

all human beings are born with a lack that they desire to fulfil. In Elizabeth Grosz's interpretation of Lacan's work, this gender studies scholar explains this concept of "lack" as follows: "[e]ach self conscious subject desires the desire of the other as its object. Its desire is to be desired by the other, its counterpart" (Grosz 1990: 65).

With an urge to chase an unattainable desire and, more importantly, to become a complete subject, the human psyche goes through various stages.¹¹ It is important to note here that one of Lacan's contributions to psychoanalysis is that he referred to the unconscious as being structured like a language. Hence when he refers to any of the stages that the human psyche experiences, he mentions which language structures are present during each phase. In Lacanian terms, the stages that an individual psyche goes through are named according to these three Orders: the Imaginary Order, the Symbolic Order and the Real Order. The Imaginary Order refers to the process which entails the formation of the ego. Lacan (1988: 243) underlines the indispensability of this order, given that "if it weren't imaginary, we wouldn't be men, we would be moons. [...] A madman is precisely someone who adheres to the imaginary, purely and simply".¹² The Imaginary Order is a "pre-Oedipal stage" in which a child cannot separate himself/herself from the world, believing that both the youngster and his/her mother constitute a whole. As regards language structures, Lacan described the Imaginary Order as involving pre-verbal language structures as well as "various primitive fantasies" which could be "uncovered by the psychoanalytic treatment" (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 81). Lacan linked this stage to what is called

¹¹ Lacan's approach to "desire" is highly complex. He indicates that "[i]t is only through a speech that lifted the prohibition that the subject has brought up to bear upon himself by his own words that he might obtain the absolution that would give him back his desire. But desire is simply the impossibility of such speech" (1977: 269). In other words, human beings have to articulate words to reach their absolute desire; however, this desire is never attainable due to the inexistence of such speech and yet, being a complete self is only possible through speech.

¹² Lacan often expresses his views in "masculine" terms, even though he refers to the human species.

the semiotic dimension. Jean Graybeal—a scholar within the field of psychoanalysis and feminism—explains this dimension as follows: “the semiotic dimension signals [itself] in discourse through effects of rhythm, nonsense, alliteration, wordplay, repetition, musical effects, laughter, or a dominance of sound over sense” (Graybeal 1992: 130). This Imaginary phase blurs what Lacan called “the mirror stage”, in which the child sees himself/herself as a separate entity, a realisation which takes place when the child begins to gaze at his/her reflection in a mirror. At this point the child also begins to refer to himself/herself as an “I” and sees his/her relationship with the world as one of “self” and “other”. As a new “self”, the child shifts away from the mother, attempting to emulate the father.

The second order, the Symbolic, is reached at “the mirror stage”. Lacan (1988: 29) defines the Symbolic Order as an immediate and inescapable formation: “[a]s soon as the symbolic arrives, there is a universe of symbols. [...] Everything is ordered in accordance with the symbols once they have appeared. Everything which is human has to be ordered within a universe constituted by the symbolic function”. For Lacan, this is the phase when the child begins to recognize a mature language, unconsciously suppressing the previous “semiotic” stage of communication and unconditionally adopting the “symbolic” realm of language. Lacan, arguing from a male viewpoint, labels this phase as “symbolic castration”. He does so in order to refer to the stage when the child attempts to identify with the father since he fears castration and wishes to emulate the apparent power of the father as a “self” in the world. In this sense, at the mirror stage, the child begins to become detached from the maternal realm and recognizes his/ her own self. As another “self”, the child moves a long way from the mother, attempting to duplicate the father. As we will see in the discussion of *Her Mother's Face*, Doyle presents a contrary mirror stage process. As the

protagonist Siobhán looks at herself in the mirror, she not only finds her own self, but she also re-encounters her mother. In this case, the formation of identity is thus grounded on the self's identification with the mother figure, and not with that of the father, thus challenging Lacan's theories.

For Lacan, however, while the Imaginary Order symbolizes the tie between the child and the mother, the Symbolic Order functions as a paternal—at times, patriarchal—realm, allowing the child to be a subject and to take part in speech and society. It also serves the subject with what Lacan refers to as “a phallic enjoyment” through language (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 188). Entering into the Symbolic Order also means accepting the concept of “the Name of the Father” (Fuss 1989: 7). According to Fuss, the Symbolic stands for “the order of language which permits the child entry into subjectivity, into the realm of speech, law, and sociality” and this is realized through “the paternal function—the ‘Name-of-the-Father’” (Fuss 1989: 7). Therefore, Lacan's approach brings new insights into a subject's development as the latter is “[opened up] to the play of language, symbol, and metaphor” (Fuss 1989: 7). Furthermore, the Lacanian phrase “the Name-of-the-Father” refers to the acceptance of the child's disengagement with the mother and the youngster's connection to the paternal realm, which represses the Oedipal desire. A scholar working in the field of psychoanalysis, Danny Nobus (2000: 18), states that the Name-of-the-Father signifies the acknowledgement of some social rules that parents disseminate amongst their children. That is, the parents explain to their children that they are supposed to follow some social rules “for example, the basic ‘Freudian rule’ of the incest prohibition”, and these rules are also valid in the parents' case even though “they are in a parental position” (Nobus 2000: 18).

Apart from the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order, Lacan describes a third stage in the human psyche's development, which he identifies as the

Real Order. The Real Order is not related to the concept of reality, although it tends to be misunderstood as such. In his work, *Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (1995), Bruce Fink interprets this order as something “which has not yet been symbolized, remains to be symbolized, or even resists symbolization; and it may perfectly well exist ‘alongside’ and in spite of a speaker’s considerable linguistic capabilities” (Fink 1995: 25). Furthermore, Fink claims that the Symbolic divides the Real into different parts, and therefore extinguishes it: “the division of the real into separate zones, distinct features, and contrasting structure is a result of the symbolic order, which in a manner of speaking, cuts into the smooth facade of the real, creating divisions, gaps, and distinguishable entities, [that annihilates the Real]” (24). It would be accurate to claim that the Real is placed at a stage beyond language and, as a result, beyond the subject’s reach and perception.

A close examination of both Freudian and Lacanian approaches to psychoanalysis reveal that Lacan’s perspective differs from Freud’s by relating the transition into the language realm to its possible consequences on the psyche. Unlike Freud’s sexuality-oriented technique of analysis, Lacan deals with the first steps human beings take into the language realm. He does not limit his analysis to one’s sexuality or sexual orientation. The two main tenets of Lacanian psychoanalysis—“the mirror stage” (the child’s recognition of itself as an individual being) and the Name-of-the-father (the child’s separation from the maternal domain and acknowledgement of restrictions regarding social rules)—together with Freudian psychoanalytical concepts such as “the return of the repressed” and “losing the bonds with reality” provide a particular medium for analysing the initial motivation of the female characters’ thoughts and/or actions within Doyle’s work. On the other hand, as discussed in the following section, it is crucial to note that both Freud’s and Lacan’s critical stances regarding the issues of womanhood and

motherhood involve problematic points which are criticised by several feminist scholars. Hence, bearing in mind some of the limitations of Freud's and Lacan's psychoanalytical framework regarding womanhood and motherhood, I will complete my theoretical foundations with the support of the gender and feminist approaches in order to provide a multi-faceted analysis of motherhood in Doyle's literary production.

3.2. Womanhood and motherhood: Two problematic concepts

Throughout his career as a writer, Roddy Doyle has given voice to marginalised groups (i.e. the immigrants), and the working-class woman is one of them. Furthermore, I would like to prove along this Dissertation that his literary production dislocates the traditional notion of motherhood as a pillar of Irish female identity (a topic that will be discussed later), by showing a multidimensional vision of maternity (i.e. different kinds of mothers, ranging from submissive women to empowered single mothers). In many cases, his work accommodates female experiences which have traditionally been silenced and oppressed (i.e. domestic violence). Furthermore, his writing challenges the commonplace belief in the past that women are content when fulfilling a traditional mother role. As we will see, unconventional and single mother characters are crucial protagonists in his literary production. Although this Dissertation makes use of the aforementioned psychoanalytical approaches of Freud and Lacan with an aim to offering an analysis of the female characters' inner worlds, it also acknowledges the limitations of these approaches. Consequently, this section aims to show the criticisms that are targeted against Freudian and Lacanian approaches to womanhood and motherhood by several feminist critics such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Nancy Chodorow, and Rosi Braidotti. Furthermore, I will introduce the theoretical approach of various critics

regarding the mother-children relationship as Doyle questions the mother-daughter bond in many cases, specifically in his children and young adult fiction.

Although it is acceptable to say that psychoanalysis can be considered a ground-breaking theory in the early 21st century, it also embodies some controversial views related to women that cannot be ignored. Freud's theory is mainly built upon a binary analysis of the sexes: their mutual relationships, their past memories, repressions, and traumas. However, he considers the female sex to be naturally deficient and lacking in many ways. According to Freud (1986: 418), women have a tendency to "be dependent on a paternal object", adding to this that "[r]egressions to the fixations of the pre-Oedipus phases very frequently occur" in women's lives (428). He explicitly states that narcissism is related to femininity and that women have a greater need to be loved than to love (430). What is more, he affirms that women tend to be "hysterical" and to search in vain for "the phallus". In their introductory study to Lacanian psychoanalysis, Benvenuto and Kennedy (1986: 188) define the phallus as "the symbolic and idealized substitute for the missing sexual unity, or oneness". Although according to this view the phallus is non-existent for both sexes, women are deemed to suffer its lack more than men. As a result of this "lack", the female sex is believed to be incomplete throughout their whole life. Freud has been criticised for these rather harsh views by numerous feminist critics, who argue that he is degrading women, who are portrayed as mere objects of desire in his work (Cixous 1981; Freidan 1983; Chodorow 1991; Beasley 1999; Braidotti 1991, 2003). In her essay "Freud on Women", Nancy Chodorow (1991: 238) notes that "Freud was, after all, a man. Any account of women that he produced is, finally, an account of women viewed through the mind of a man".

3. Gender issues within a socio-literary context

Freud's concept of lack in the female sex is widened in Lacan's view of unity. Lacan claims that human beings are engaged in a constant search to be completed, or in his terms to be "One". However, as Lacan implies, being "One" is impossible without the other sex since the woman needs a paternal subject. It is the woman, in Lacanian terms, who "unchains the desire to be One again, the desire to embrace the other" (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986: 189). Similarly, Lacanian thought also claims that women "naturally" suffer from a lack of a phallus, and are doomed to experience a lesser level of *jouissance* in comparison to men:¹³

The fact remains that if [woman] is excluded by the nature of things, it is precisely in the following respect: being not-whole, she has a supplementary *jouissance* compared to what the phallic function designates by way of *jouissance*. (Lacan 1998: 73)

Being defined as incomplete, hysterically in search of a phallus, and deprived of an ultimate phallic pleasure, the woman is encapsulated in a subordinate sex role in the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical frameworks.

Considering the limitations of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, my study subsequently does not rely solely on their theoretical scope to explore the issue of womanhood and motherhood in Doyle's work. As Doyle reflects the reality of womanhood and motherhood within the working-class milieu, exploring his literary production requires various theoretical perspectives. As a result of this, the works of feminist critics, gender theorists and sociologists will be employed as Doyle does not approach such topics from a single perspective. He delves into the sociological reality of his female characters and mirrors the gender inequality that is created and sustained by different forces. As Judith Butler (1990: 40)

¹³ The French term *jouissance* cannot be fully translated into English. There are different equivalents, such as "joy", "enjoyment" or "pleasure". Lacan adapts the term in such a way that it goes beyond translation and for him it is "buried at the center of a field and has the characteristics of inaccessibility, obscurity and opacity" (Lacan 1992: 209). What is more, he tends to connote the term with the female orgasm, an approach criticized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988: 358).

claims in her well-known study *Gender Trouble*, gender and sexuality are constructed entities within society and the establishment of these entities should not be reduced to an idea of heterosexual hegemony. Butler states that "if sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations" (1990: 40), then it should be open to subversion. In Doyle's novels, gender roles are reversed, and the traditional images of Irish femininity and masculinity are constantly challenged.

Although Doyle does not see himself as "a spokesperson of anybody" (interview with Tekin 2014: 112), his work thematically traces the empowerment of women within Irish society. Doyle's critical stance against the subordinate position of women within society can be read through Rosi Braidotti's definitions of feminism. According to Braidotti, feminism is a reaction to the dominant patriarchal oppression of women, and it has evolved to become "non-linear and web-like", "functioning in a net of interconnections" (2003: 44). Hence, feminism should not be reduced to a single-sided approach; it should be interpreted as a nexus between various social movements as well as one's personal stance in favour of gender equality. Doyle's work supports the improvement of women's position in society as he grants narrative spaces for women to talk and exert their own empowerment.

Regarding the limited portrayal of women by Freud and Lacan, Hélène Cixous adopts a critical stance in her well known essay "The Laugh of Medusa" (1981). Here Cixous advocates that women should write and repossess their bodies and voices in order to fight against the male dominated medium of writing (1981: 246-247). The title of her essay is an allusion to Freud's essay "Medusa's Head", in which Freud (1963: 212-213) interprets the Greek mythological figure of Medusa as a horrifying female icon, surrounded by phallic symbols. Cixous transforms the Medusa into an

empowering, positive model for women. As Cixous (250) notes, “by writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display”. Cixous is the first critic to coin the expression *écriture féminine*, a kind of writing which is non-linear, cyclical, and often free from punctuation, as opposed to ordered, punctuated and symbolically traditional types of writing, and as a subverted version of “the discourse that regulates the phallogentric system” (Cixous 1981: 253). The *écriture féminine* subverts the rigidity of Lacan’s Symbolic realm, offering an alternative kind of female writing (and perception) free from masculine dominance.

Womanhood and motherhood have always been controversial concepts in psychoanalytic and gender theory. The woman’s domain within the semiotic realm as a mother and the child’s attachment to her were concerns for psychoanalytical theorists such as Freud and Lacan. Freud acknowledges the bond between a mother and child as he tries to clarify the maternal process in accordance with the mother-child relationship. For him (1986: 431), being a mother is “an alteration in woman’s nature” that recalls the clash between the woman and her own mother.

Contrary to relating motherhood to a clash between a woman and her own mother, several critics comment on the significance of the mother-daughter bonding. For Nancy Chodorow (1978), the daughter’s connection to her mother is essential in the acquisition of identity. Chodorow states that the daughter gradually learns to be a mother in order to take care of her own children and that in the end she resembles her own mother (1978: 31). Bringing new insights into the mother-daughter relationship, Cixous acknowledges that a woman can help another woman to love herself and thus assist the latter to recuperate her disrupted psychological state (1981: 252). It is possible to interpret the daughter-mother portrayals in Doyle’s fiction

through Cixous' lens as this represents mothers and daughters who contribute to each other's wellbeing in various ways.

On a similar note to Cixous, feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray stresses the significance of the strong relationship between mothers and daughters. In her chapter "The Gesture in Psychoanalysis" (1989), Irigaray explores the importance of gestures during psychoanalytical practice and also offers insights into the mother-daughter dyad. According to Irigaray (1989: 133), the mother's place in her daughter's life is special as the daughter essentially conveys some of her mothers' attributions that she retains throughout her life. Furthermore, what makes mothers unique for daughters is the circular relationship that is created between them (134). If the daughter experiences her mother's absence, she cannot replace her unless she replicates her mother (134). Irigaray also comments on the trauma that the mother's absence creates in a daughter's psyche. Moreover, she points out that in the case of a maternal absence, a daughter can protect her mental well-being by performing an activity which reminds her of her mother (133). In other words, engaging in this practice sporadically provides the daughter with a means to fulfil her mother's absence, preventing her from becoming traumatised.

Luce Irigaray's view on the circularity of the mother-daughter relationship is extended in the work of other feminist literary critics such as Julia Kristeva and Alison Stone. Kristeva states that there is a cyclical repetition in the mother-daughter relationship. In "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini", Kristeva points out that giving birth signifies a means of interacting with one's own mother. For her, this experience provides a link between a mother and her daughter (1980: 238-239). Feminist philosopher Alison Stone also explores, in her chapter "Feminism, Psychoanalysis and Maternal Subjectivity" (2014), the complex issues related to being both a

mother and a daughter. Stone (2014: 338) states that through the psychoanalytical approach it is possible to see the mother-daughter relationship as a co-existent unity, which enables us to “differentiate ourselves from others (our mothers, in particular), and acquire unique individual personalities, while continuing to identify with those others (our mothers)” (336). Furthermore, she underlines that we do not need to set our mothers aside to become authentic selves (Stone 2014: 336). For Stone, there is continuity between the past and the present in the sense that mothering is part of the process of once being a daughter (337). In other words, mothering provides the woman with a similar experience to that of her own mother.

Setting aside the mother-daughter relationship, Freud views motherhood as a route for a woman to attain her unfulfilled desires. Taking a step further, he also claims that marriage is only “secure” if the woman is a mother not only to her own child but also by “behaving like a mother” to her husband (Freud 1986: 431). Not surprisingly, Freud’s peculiar approach to motherhood is challenged by various critics. For instance, in her article “Stabat Mater”, Julia Kristeva (1985: 146) claims that “about the complexities and difficulties of the maternal experience Freud has absolutely nothing to say”. According to Kristeva, Freud’s approach does not offer an insight into either the experience or the problems of motherhood. Furthermore, she objects to Freud’s interpretation of motherhood as a way of recovering from neurosis (146). Similarly, one of the most prominent gender scholars of our time, Jane Flax, rereads the theories of Freud, Lacan, Chodorow, Derrida, Irigaray, and Foucault from a postmodern perspective. Her work *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (1990) provides a broad interpretation of psychoanalysis, feminism and gender. In a similar vein to Kristeva, she criticizes psychoanalytical theories for their disregard of female

sexuality. For Flax (1990: 160), the interaction between the baby and the mother is "our first major social encounter and our first experience of love". Furthermore, even though this encounter occurs before we learn to speak, "the experiences remain alive in our unconscious in the form of fantasy feeling states, and desire" (Flax 1990: 160). In this sense, Flax also underlines the significance of the role of the mother within the child's development.

Lacan, on the other hand, problematizes motherhood through language. Similarly to Freud's approach, Lacan portrays the mother as a threatening subject for the child. According to him, psychosis or perversion stems from the child's attachment to his/her mother's love. It is the father who places a symbolic barrier between the child and the mother. In his interpretation of Lacan's seminars, Bruce Fink (1999: 80) defines Lacan's paternal barrier as follows: "the father keeps the child at a certain distance from its mother, thwarting the child's attempt to become one or remain forever one with the mother, or forbidding the mother from achieving certain satisfactions with her child, or both". The father fulfils this task through his "law at home, telling both mother and child what is allowed and what is not" (Fink 1999: 80). The Name-of-the-Father concept previously mentioned above can refer to the recognition of some social rules that parents transmit to their children. Interestingly, the Lacanian approach does not always require a biological father and, what is more, paternal impositions can be realized through the mother's language. Fink (1999: 80-81) points out the fact that Western society has a tendency to see the father as the supreme figure of authority but mothers also contribute to this paternal dominance using the father's authority to assist them. For instance, imposing the father's restrictions on the child when he is absent serves as a valid example of the mother's perpetuation of the father's authority over the child (Fink 1999: 81).

This Lacanian model has been subject to much criticism, particularly from the point of view of feminism and gender studies. In her work *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, philosopher and feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti (1994b: 11) claims that Lacan's psychoanalytical model neglects the mother tongue by taking for granted that "all tongues carry the name of the father and are stamped by its register". Alternatively, Braidotti's approach considers motherhood as transcending a fixed identity. This critic regards womanhood as a nomadic identity, on the grounds that its meaning is not stable and should not be restricted to boundaries (1994b: 30). The word "nomadic" means "moving from place to place rather than staying in one place" (Rundell 2002: 960). Braidotti adopts the word to support her claim about the fluidity of boundaries between the different constructed identities. She defines this concept as follows: "[n]omadism is an invitation to dis-identify ourselves from the sedentary phallogocentric monologism of philosophical thinking and to start cultivating the art of disloyalty to civilization" (Braidotti 1994b: 30). Through nomadism's superiority against rigid and constructed boundaries, it is possible to envision "the transformative power of all the exploited, marginalized, oppressed minorities" (Braidotti 2003: 52). If we look at Doyle's portrayal of his female characters, we can see that this writer does not approach womanhood and motherhood as defined entities in a way that is similar to Braidotti's line of thought. In *A Star Called Henry* (1999), for example, Doyle presents the reader with an unconventional heroic mother who uses "the transformative power" of transcending boundaries in her role not only as a mother but also as an activist struggling for her country's independence.

As we have seen, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical theories see motherhood as a voiceless entity and limit its boundaries through paternal

power. However, leading names within the field of feminist and gender theories such as Nancy Chodorow, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Alison Stone and Rosi Braidotti reveal that womanhood or motherhood cannot be regarded as subordinate realities. In this respect, Cixous draws attention to the possibility of psychologically healing with the help of another woman (1981: 252). In a similar vein, Kristeva, Irigaray and Stone comment on the circularity of the mother-daughter relationship explaining that the reality of motherhood is linked both to past and present. On the other hand, Flax affirms that the mother is significant in a child's life because the child's initial encounter with the world is generated through his/ her mother. Braidotti's concept of nomadism is also helpful when reconsidering the rigid, fixed portrayal of mothers often depicted in traditional psychoanalysis. As we will see in the following chapters, Doyle's work can be interpreted through the perspectives of these feminist theories as his work accommodates various types of mothers (i.e. submissive, unconventional, independent), bringing them to the fore in his narrations and reclaiming the voice of working-class women in Ireland.

3.3. Motherhood in the Irish context

Motherhood has been a controversial issue within the Irish context, particularly by the association between motherhood and nationalism, which has been sharply problematized by feminist critics from the 1960s onwards (Valiulis 1995; O'Connor 1998; Fogarty 2002; O'Hagan 2006; Meaney 2010). In order to analyse the mother figures in Doyle's fiction, it is first necessary to focus on how motherhood has been conceptualized both culturally and politically in Ireland. This section examines recurrent representations of Irish femininity and maternity as transmitted by the Church and nationalism from the end of the 19th century onwards. I will often refer to

these representations when contextualizing Doyle's work in the following chapters of my study. Additionally, this section examines the work of a variety of literary scholars and sociologists to explore the significance of motherhood in the Irish context. As we will see throughout this study, Doyle's work illustrates the gradual socio-political improvement of Irish women from the second half of the 20th century onwards. Significantly, the mother in *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993)—which is set in the 1960s—echoes traditional Catholic values as she does not work and she is expected to take care of the family. Furthermore, in spite of her husband's physical abuse, she maintains her silence. Such portrayal of subordinate motherhood continues in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, which is set in the 1990s. Doyle's later work, however, depicts mothers as independent, empowered figures within their working-class society, a change which parallels the drastic social, political and economic transfiguration Ireland experiences at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Taken as a whole, Doyle's work reconfigures the ideal stereotype of a monolithic Irish family, in which mothers are supposed to fulfil the role of religious and political models such as the Virgin Mary or Mother Ireland.

In her iconic work *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1995), Adrienne Rich observes that economic dependence, domestic responsibilities, and child care are patriarchal mechanisms that encapsulate women within the home. Furthermore, Rich states that the real experiences of women as mothers have not been recorded in the "histories of conquest and serfdom, wars and treaties, exploration and imperialism" (Rich 1995: 33). Rich's ideas can be adapted to the traditional conception of motherhood in Ireland, where an idealized image of maternity (an abstract notion of mother-woman) has been imposed, at the expense of the reality of women in their day-to-day life (and therefore the experiences of flesh-and-

blood mothers). The image of the Irish woman has been employed as an iconic symbol of the land and as a kind of religious and nationalistic defence against the British colonizer. In this respect, both Catholicism and nationalism have constructed an idealized image of Irish femininity which has simplified the reality of ordinary women.

Catholicism, both as a hierarchical power in day-to-day Irish life and as a conservative ideology allied to nationalism, has shaped the cultural perceptions of womanhood in Ireland. In his work *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger* (2009a), Fintan O'Toole explains that "[t]he institutional Catholic Church had dominated both the public identity and the personal values of a majority of the population from the middle of the nineteenth century until the institution itself began to implode in the 1990s" (2009a: 182). The Church also assisted the Irish nationalist movement, acting as a shield against the influence of British supremacy. Throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the religious icon of the Virgin Mary—an ideal which embodies obedient motherhood and pious chastity—was imposed. The Catholic Church expected women to be submissive mothers while simultaneously suppressed their sexuality. This female behaviour was assumed to act as guarantee of "the purity and alterity of the Irish nation" (Ingman 2007: 7). In this respect, Irish women were expected to be detached from their own individuality and sexuality, while those natural characteristics were "replaced by attributes of fecundity" (Villar-Argáiz 2006: 155). For some critics, the image of the Virgin Mary is both enigmatic and unattainable. According to Kristeva (1985: 140-141) "several fundamental features of western love converge in Mary [...] combining the qualities of the desired woman and the holy mother in a totality as perfect as it was inaccessible. Enough to make any woman suffer and any man dream".

Irish nationalism also contributed significantly to the construction of such ideal notion of womanhood. As Valiulis (1995: 172) notes, women were assumed to have the ultimate responsibility of “national identity and the moral health of the nation”. Similar to the traditional image of femininity imposed by the Catholic Church, women were associated in nationalist discourse with humbleness (in every sense, including their outlook) and “sexual purity” (Valiulis 1995: 172). They were expected to fulfil the primary task of “[producing] sons and [educating] them in the nationalist tradition to be good and virtuous citizens of the new state” (Valiulis 1995: 170). As Karen Steele highlights in her study *Women, Press and Politics During the Irish Revival* (2007), the Catholic Church and Irish nationalism prescribed “[the] ideals of what constitutes feminine identity and behaviour” (Steele 2007: 188).

A brief look at the historical development of nationalism and its collaboration with the Church is crucial to understanding how the idealized Irish woman figure has appeared in the Irish literary scene. In his work *Nationalism in Ireland* David George Boyce (1991: 228-258) mentions three different types of nationalist formations which dominated Ireland from the late 19th century onwards. The first type is called “Literary Patriotism”. Its main concern was to engage the Protestant Irish with the historical richness of Ireland, in order to plant the seeds of a respectable national literary tradition. This led to the movement of the Irish Literary Revival, which aimed to rejuvenate the Irish identity, which was at risk of vanishing (Villar-Argáiz 2007: 66). Protestant literary figures such as William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory, George Moore and Edward Martyn supported Irish nationalism through the re-appropriation of Celtic myths and legends, and the attempt to create a national literature that was genuinely Irish through the medium of the English language.

The second type of Irish nationalism is that shaped around the "Gaelic League". As opposed to "Literary Patriots", figures such as Father Eugene O'Crowney, Eoin MacNeill and Douglas Hyde insisted that the real national literature could only be possible through the employment of the Irish language. They strongly advocated the idea that Ireland should stay Irish (Boyce 1991: 242).

The third type of Irish nationalism is defined by Boyce (1991: 66) as "Literary Nationalism". It was founded by Thomas Davis, a chief member of the Young Ireland movement¹⁴, who supported the political value of literature and the promotion of the Irish language to preserve cultural values. This form of nationalism is reflected in patriotic poems that support national self-consciousness: James Clarence Mangan's "Dark Rosaleen" and Patrick Pearse's "I am Ireland" are some representative examples.¹⁵ Alternatively, "Literary Nationalism" strongly challenged the control of British hegemony over the island. It evolved into a social, political, and cultural force which played a crucial role in the history of modern Ireland. Within this third nationalist movement, we can mention the significant political figure of the 1800s, Daniel O'Connell, who merged nationalist ideology with Catholicism (Welch 2000: 55). As McCaffrey (1976: 322) explains, this form of "nationalism was designed to isolate Ireland from the contaminations of the modern world". Its goal was to use the Catholic Church's social power to maintain old values and to encourage the public to stand up against the supremacy of the British. In turn, the Catholic Church supported this nationalist movement because they believed that its leaders would preserve the Irish language and culture, with the Church at the centre.

¹⁴ As a chain of Irish nationalism along with the participation of Irish intellectuals, the Young Ireland movement began in the middle of 1800s and supported the use of Gaelic language to achieve an independent Ireland. For further information, see Davis (1987).

¹⁵ Both poems were retrieved from Kennelly (1970: 149-295).

In both the writings of “Literary Patriots” and “Literary Nationalists” we can find fixed constructions of gender at the centre of their propaganda (Ingman 2007: 7). One example of this is found in the nationalist transformation of Celtic representations of female Ireland. One illustration of this is found in Patrick Pearse’s famous poem “The Mother” (1916)¹⁶, which centres around the image of Ireland as a mother whose sons give away their lives for the sake of the nation (McMahon and O’Donoghue 1998: 183). This poem not only employs the idea of Republican blood sacrifice but also adapts the nationalist tendency to personify Ireland as a woman. The Irish Literary Revival also relied on traditional images of femininity in order to express their ideological claims. The female personification of Ireland—which appeared as a beautiful woman revealing herself to be Ireland in the poetry of the Jacobite poets¹⁷—was recovered in Yeats’s play *Cathleen Ní Houlihan* (1902), where the heroine, Cathleen Ní Houlihan, inspires the men of Ireland to fight and die for the country she personifies.¹⁸

All these works are highly inspired by the pagan sovereignty goddess of Caileach Bhéarra (the Hag of Beara), a figure which became essential in modernist Catholic-nationalist culture. As “an archetypal Goddess of sovereignty,” Caileach Bhéarra demanded a kiss or a sexual encounter with the young man aspiring to the throne (Niall of the Nine Hostages,¹⁹ for instance) offering in return the great kingdom of Ireland (McCoy 1995: 211). In the original myth, she is an old woman who can turn into a beautiful young maiden again if the man accepts her sexual invitation. Caileach Bhéarra was the prominent figure of the poem “I am Ireland”

¹⁶ Pearse’s poem was retrieved from Kennelly (1970: 296).

¹⁷ As Welch (2000: 170) notes, the Jacobite poets were the most popular poets of 18th century Ireland.

¹⁸ There were of course some works at the time (i.e. *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) by John Millington Synge) which offered subversive images of women. For an in-depth analysis, see Hidalgo-Tenorio (1999).

¹⁹ Niall of the Nine Hostages is the title given to Niall, the legendary son of King Eochaid. He pursued this title by “taking hostages from prominent kings to secure their loyalty when conquering their countries” (Donoghue 2015: v).

(1912), by Patrick Pearse. In this nationalist poem, written originally in Gaelic ("Mise Éire"), Ireland is personified as the once glorious but now lonely old figure, a mother deserted by her children.²⁰ However, in the Catholic-nationalist position, she is reborn as an elderly Christian nun who mourns her lost youth (Welch 2000: 47). Stripped of her sexuality, her gift is the unity of Ireland. McCoy (1995: 188) observes that her image has been distorted to represent a type of witch traditionally associated with Halloween. The source of her power, youth and beauty has disappeared in her transformation to become a symbol for nationalist propaganda. Through time, her youthful appearance became old and grim, with a pale face, decayed teeth, a dishevelled haircut and a hunchback. As McCoy (1995: 188) concludes, the former supreme goddess becomes the bearer of death, rather than a divinity in charge of making dreams come true. She also occupies a disempowered and vulnerable position, an idealized mother who, in words of Valiulis

is also passive. She has no work of her own to do, but rather fulfils the wishes of her sons. She performs her role in public not with an agenda of her own, but rather as a living vessel through which the dead may speak. [...] What it lacks is passion, vitality, independence and assertiveness. (Valiulis 1995: 170)

In *A Star Called Henry*, which I discuss in section 5.2., Doyle introduces an old intellectual grandmother figure which can be interpreted as a modern representation of Caileach Bhéarra, this sovereignty goddess of Celtic mythology. Indeed, the representation of Ireland as a female figure reappears in many contemporary artistic representations, ranging from the stereotypes

²⁰ A critical feminist re-writing of the same poem is penned by Eavan Boland in "Mise Eire". For a detailed analysis of this poem, see Pilar Villar-Argáiz (2007: 170,246). An alternative reading of Caileach Bhéarra in the context of Ireland's multicultural scene is provided in Doyle's short story "The Pram". See section 6.2. of this Dissertation, "'The Pram': The Immigrant (M)other".

of the “sweet, wild girl” to the image of the “nurturing mother” (Meaney 2010: 27).²¹

Evidently, this objectification of women serves the purposes of political propaganda. Nationalists embodied women as fragile creatures in distress, either as a waiting-to-be-saved “Mother Ireland” or as one of the mythological figures emerging from the Celtic legends. As Steele (2007: 188) notes, Mother Ireland “is a ubiquitous nationalist image of suffering or self-sacrificing femininity”. Whilst Mother Ireland’s roots trace back to empowered female deities (i.e. Érin, Fodla, and Banbha) of the Celtic land, she appears as dispossessed in the nationalist writings of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Similarly, as we have seen, the Church imposed the emblem of the Virgin Mary, with its attributes of obedience and submission. Steele (2007: 188) underlines that “[i]n its emphasis on Mary’s ‘sinless’ fertility, however, the Church sent an unrealistic message to women: be fruitful but do not enjoy becoming so”. In Fogarty’s terms, such religious construction of motherhood, in addition to the image of the country “as a hapless abandoned maiden, a homeless crone, an exacting, tutelary spirit who needs to be propitiated, and as a melancholic mother who demands unceasing sacrifice and devotion from her children”, affect the construction of femininity in contemporary Ireland (Fogarty 2002: 87).

In this sense, both Catholicism and nationalism imposed a vision of women as fragile creatures in need of men’s guidance and protection. As several critics have noted, this ideal image of the Irish Catholic woman is preserved with the new Irish Free State. As Valiulis claims,

Any description of the ideal Irish Catholic woman of the 1920s and 1930s must begin in that bastion of domesticity, the home. Overwhelmingly, political and ecclesiastical leaders in the Irish Free

²¹ Interestingly, as Meaney’s study (2010) shows, this Irish female imagery has a great effect upon contemporary cinematic representations of Ireland.

State constructed an identity for Irish women solely in domestic terms—women were mothers, women were wives. More than that, women were subordinate to their husbands, inferior to men. That was the 'natural' hierarchical order of the world. Certainly, the dominant political belief was that the proper function of women was motherhood, that their place was in the home, tending to the needs of their husband and children. (Valiulis 1995: 169)

It is crucial to note that several women activists from different social backgrounds participated in the Anglo-Irish War of Independence and the Civil War.²² According to Valiulis (1995: 154), their active position in the political and social domain was not curtailed until the political leaders of the Irish Free State took charge. Furthermore, as Valiulis' above quotation suggests, with the arrival of the Irish Free State, women were encapsulated within the domestic boundaries defined by the Church and the State. Pérez Vides also notes how female chastity and submission are imposed as morally correct attitudes for women, once the Republic of Ireland is constituted:

The female experiences in Ireland were codified by the concept of "the Irish woman", reduced to the mere role of a national muse, whose sexuality had to be controlled with the intention of achieving a perfect implementation of Catholic ideology as far as marriage, motherhood and family were concerned. With the independence of Ireland, the manipulation of the female body was emphasized by the predominance of the male figure, so that women have been denied any sexual visibility in Irish society ever since. (Pérez Vides 2003: 75)²³

The Church also framed the role of the woman within the borders of the home. In her article on how the 1937 Constitution shaped gender and ethnic stereotypes, Ronit Lentin (1998: 9) notes that the Constitution "constructed a monolithic 'woman' as mother and carer whose place is firmly within 'the

²² For the biographies of a number of these women activists and their war time experience see *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in Revolutionary Years* (2004) by Sinéad McCool.

²³ The original quotation is in Spanish: "Las experiencias femeninas en Irlanda quedaron codificadas en el concepto de "la mujer irlandesa", reducida al mero papel de musa nacional, y cuya sexualidad *debía* ser controlada con la intención de alcanzar una perfecta puesta en *práctica* de la *ideología* católica en lo que al matrimonio, la maternidad y la familia se refiere. Con la independencia se acentuó la manipulación del cuerpo femenino por parte de figuras exclusivamente masculinas, de tal forma que a las mujeres se les ha negado toda visibilidad sexual en la sociedad irlandesa desde entonces hasta la actualidad" (Pérez Vides 2003: 75). My translation.

Family’”. Specifically, Article 41.2.2. ensured “that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home”.²⁴ Anne Fogarty (2002: 87) also notes that Article 41 offered a superficial reassurance of “the importance of maternal work”, manipulating the assumption that “motherhood formed the very basis of women’s social and political identity”. Motherhood was promoted, and thus, commonly perceived as a dignified social position.²⁵ Therefore, Irish women were supposed to act as “the angels in the house”; they could not work outside the house and when they were able to do so they were expected to replicate the kind of services they provided to their own families. Quoting from Adrienne Rich, we can thus conclude that “the idea of maternal power [was] domesticated” in Ireland (Rich 1995: 68).

Catholicism’s conservatism had a heavy impact on family life. In her article on literary representations of maternity in the work of Irish women poets, Pilar Villar-Argáiz (2009: 128) states that the new Irish Republic was indigenised, with “the family as the basic social unit”, which would enable “the consolidation of a highly conservative Catholic community and the revival of the old representation of Ireland as Mother-land”. The traditional ideology of motherhood went hand-in-hand with the construction of the family, which also brought with it social and economic stability. Mothers were obliged to fulfil duties prescribed by the State and religion. As Clare O’Hagan notes, the Irish woman was traditionally perceived as “a full-time mother and homemaker” and the man as “a life-long good provider and

²⁴ Article 41 is cited from *Abortion and Divorce Law in Ireland* by Jennifer E. Spreng (2004: 52).

²⁵ The literary scholar Marianne Hirsch (1989: 14) observes that the ideology behind this bolstered position of motherhood was also influenced by ideal Western images of femininity during the 18th and 19th centuries. During this time, considering that the child was increasingly represented in need of being fed and protected, “motherhood became an ‘instinct’, ‘natural’ role and a form of human connection, as well as a practice” (14). The concerns regarding one’s status also played a role in women’s encapsulation within the private sphere as motherhood elevated the personal status of a woman although it decreased her social power.

father” (2006: 67). Mothers were not seen as individuals but as submissive allies of their husbands and other family members. In O'Hagan's terms (2006), mothers have been conceived as “patriarchal gatekeepers” (69). Likewise, the Church preserved its supremacy by “developing an alliance with mothers”, reinsuring that “women promoted Catholic ideology within their large families” (2006: 69). In order to preserve the survival of the nuclear Irish family unit as the symbol of the nation, the Catholic Church intervened within domestic boundaries and imposed various limitations on the family's privacy. In their introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, Cleary and Connolly explain (2005: 14-15) that the Church was opposed to “various forms of social liberations”, especially divorce, contraception and abortion. Sexual relationships outside marriage were out of the question. In particular, the prohibition of contraception and abortion constituted a direct interference not only in the rights of women but also in their bodies and health. On a social level, the personal lives of women during most of the 20th century were curtailed by laws (O'Hagan 2006). They were deprived of working after marriage and from divorcing.

The pervasive relationship between nationalism and gender in Irish culture has been examined meticulously by Gerardine Meaney in her study *Gender, Ireland, and Cultural Change: Race, Sex, and Nation* (2010). Here, Meaney underlines how female sexuality has posed a danger to Irish nationalists. Any form of disobedience—such as having a child out of wedlock—was met with a cruel response by the institutions on power (Meaney 2010: 10). The collaboration of the Church and State led to the creation of the Magdalene Laundries, where “disobedient” or “fallen” women would be kept for “the sake of being disciplined” for the rest of their lives.²⁶ These homes for single mothers began as “charitable institutions”, but

²⁶ The last Magdalene Laundry did not close in Ireland until 1996 (Luddy 2007: 95).

through time they “became institutionalized, administered and controlled by the Church of Ireland, while being financially and legally supported by the Irish State” (McCarthy 2010: 93). While the goal of the homes was the moral redemption of all women in Irish society who required their help, the overwhelming majority of the women gathered there had been previously forced onto the streets for several different reasons (i.e. poverty, pregnancy outside marriage, rejection by their families, etc.). For the first 150 years of their existence, and especially after 1830, the laws ensured that the homes would always be full of “wayward” women from the lower classes (Luddy 2007: 52). Throughout the 20th century, these houses continued “sheltering” unmarried mothers (111).²⁷

The above mentioned overview of how motherhood has been construed in Ireland is essential for a better understanding of how Doyle portrays motherhood in his work. As I will discuss further on, the mother figures Doyle portrays also mirror the social shift within Ireland. Once victimized and marginalized by patriarchy, mothers in his later work become empowered and autonomous characters. It is possible to say that he challenges the idealized image of motherhood that was constructed, manipulated and imposed by the Church and nationalism in Ireland.

3.4. Irish womanhood and masculinity in contemporary Ireland

As already explained in the previous section, womanhood and motherhood have been highly contentious issues in the Irish context. For decades, the

²⁷ For an in-depth survey on Magdalene Laundries see *The Justice for Magdalenes Campaign* (<<http://www.magdaleneorallhistory.com/>>, accessed 11 November 2016), and Katherine O'Donnell's essay “Academics Becoming Activists: Reflections on Some Ethical Issues of the Justice for Magdalenes Campaign” (forthcoming, Palgrave Macmillan). Additionally, for a recent chapter on a critical metaphor analysis of the accounts of the Magdalene Laundries victims see Miguel Ángel Benítez-Castro and Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio (forthcoming, Palgrave Macmillan).

Church and the nationalist movement manipulated the way in which femininity was construed in the new Free State, through imposing images of womanhood that were both socially and politically driven. On a literary level, the female characters that Doyle portrays gradually strip out of these fixed roles that have been cast upon them. In view of the reasons surrounding why traditional roles have spread and become accepted historically, this section touches upon the image of Irish womanhood in contemporary Ireland. It specifically covers the recent problems that women in Ireland face on a social level. I will also provide an overview of men as fathers and their relation to women within the contemporary setting of the country so as to contextualize the position of the working-class women in Doyle's work. In order to do this, I will refer to various social critics and gender theorists to explore the contemporary social scene that recurrently seems to inspire Doyle's work.

From the beginning of the 1970s onwards, the social scene began to shift in Ireland. For instance, the marriage bar, which prevented women from working after getting married, was lifted in 1973.²⁸ The country's entrance into the European Union in 1973 triggered not only an economic change but also a social one. Starting from the middle of the 1990s, the country's economic prosperity remained for a decade at the highest point in the country's history. As mentioned in the first and the second sections of chapter six, this phenomenon was called the Celtic Tiger. Fintan O'Toole (2009a: 16) defines this economically remarkable period as Ireland's catching up "with the living standards of the region it belongs to—Western Europe—and got to where it should have been all along". This brief but spectacular process also influenced the dynamics of the social classes. Due to the country's high economic progression as well as the general rise in the

²⁸ The marriage bar was a policy held by some Western countries such as the Netherlands, The United Kingdom, and Ireland. This policy "forced women in public sector employment to leave paid employment on marriage" (O'Connor 1998: 37-38).

income of the population, the Irish shared a common feeling of wealth (O'Toole 2009a: 91). As I discuss in section 5.1.3, Doyle illustrates such social and economic shift in his novel *The Van* (1991), where we perceive the changes in Dublin from the perspective of the characters. Furthermore, the Celtic Tiger's effects appear clearly in *Paula Spencer* (2006) and in "The Pram" (2007). Whilst *Paula Spencer* portrays the rapid social change of Celtic Tiger Ireland from the viewpoint of a working-class Irish woman, Doyle examines another aspect of this economic boom in "The Pram" where he presents the harsh experience of an immigrant woman within the new multicultural reality of the country.

Ireland's prosperity during the Celtic Tiger period allowed the country to catch up with other developed Western countries, which in turn opened new paths for women in the country. Moreover, the divorce law was introduced in 1997 (O'Connor 1998: 1).²⁹ Furthermore, the number of single mothers has increased specifically in the 1990s and thereafter. According to Clare O'Hagan, at the beginning of the 21st century more than 30% of infants were raised by unmarried mothers in Ireland (Hagan 2006: 65). However, as opposed to other European countries, abortion is still a heated debate in Ireland. Indeed, similar to Article 41.2.2 which directly limits mothers' economic independence within the country, the Eighth Amendment—added in Article 40.3.—interfered with the sexual freedom of women by prohibiting abortion. Following the approval of the Eighth Amendment in 1983, Article 40.3.3 states the following:

The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.³⁰

²⁹ Divorce was prohibited by the 1937 Constitution with Article 41.3.2 stating that "No law shall be enacted providing for the grant of a dissolution of marriage". Since the new divorce law of 1997, spouses can divorce without any restrictions.

³⁰ The Article is cited from *Abortion and Divorce Law in Ireland* by Jennifer E. Spreng (2004: 88).

Although there have been several protests together with a strong movement to invalidate the Eighth Amendment, the government continues to neglect the issue. As Meaney underlines, there is still a significant number of women "travelling to England for abortion" (2010: 12).³¹

Doyle's personal stance regarding the abortion ban is explicit. He defines the debates in favour of this issue as "reasonable" (interview with Tekin 2014: 114). He also draws attention to the social change related to the social movement against the ban stating that "[t]hirty years ago, the word abortion [could not be mentioned]. It would have got people upset. They would start screaming and shouting; some people still do, but the majority of people don't" (114). If we look at how abortion is mentioned in his work, we see that he brings up the issue only in *The Snapper* (1990), when referring to the unexpected pregnancy of the young protagonist, Sharon Rabbitte. More importantly, Doyle reflects on the theme of unmarried motherhood in this novel. As discussed in detail in section 5.2., Sharon Rabbitte does not even contemplate the possibility of having an abortion and she does not consider marriage relevant to raise her baby. As a result, she chooses to be a single parent. Other works by Doyle, analysed in chapter six, similarly empower single mothers. In these texts, the fathers are either absent, silent or disempowered characters. They are figures who are behind the shadow or the strong presence of the mothers (even though in some cases the mother is not even physically present). As we will see specifically in the case of *Wilderness* (2007) and *Her Mother Face* (2008), Doyle portrays mothers who choose their own independence instead of staying with their families.

³¹ Even if the woman is made pregnant through rape or her health is endangered, abortion is not possible. For an idea of the tragic cases due to the abortion ban see for example, the X Case issue *The X Case: How Abortion was Brought to Ireland* (1992) by Clement Loscher; the case of Miss D in 2007 (see: Bowcott 10th May 2007); or recently, the death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012 (see: McDermott 14th November 2012).

Apart from abortion, the problem of domestic violence is another serious issue in the country. In *Emerging Voices: Women in Contemporary Irish Society* (1998), the sociologist Pat O'Connor provides an extensive social analysis of various issues such as paid work, family responsibilities and child care in contemporary Ireland. O'Connor underlines how domestic violence and rape have been perceived as devices to restrict women's lives (1998: 19), and she emphasizes that this problem still prevails in Ireland according to the reports of several public surveys that are mentioned in the Women's Aid website. For instance, a national survey report on domestic abuse conducted by the National Crime Council and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ERSI) in 2005 indicated that "1 in 7 women have experienced severe abusive behaviour of a physical, sexual or emotional nature from a partner at some times in their lives. The survey estimates that 213,000 women in Ireland have been severely abused by a partner".³² Likewise, a more recent survey in 2014 carried out by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, revealed that "14% of women in Ireland have experienced physical violence by a partner since age 15. 6% of Irish women have experienced sexual violence by a current or former partner and 31% of women have experienced psychological violence by a partner".³³

Bearing in mind these statistics, it is perhaps not accidental that Doyle situates the problem of domestic violence at the centre of novels such as *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993) and *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1996). Although the mothers in these two novels belong to different decades (i.e. the 1960s and the 1990s respectively), the violence they are exposed to is striking in both cases. Furthermore, as discussed throughout the following

³² This information is taken from the Women's Aid website. For further information about the reports and their results see <<https://www.womensaid.ie/about/policy/natintstats.html>>, accessed 10 December 2016.

³³ Cited from the Women's Aid website.

chapter, there are significant similarities between the mothers he portrays as they put up with domestic violence for years. These novels can be read as sharp critiques against society's hypocrisy for turning its face away and ignoring the suffering of victims of domestic violence. When analysing these novels, a recent study by Marisol Morales-Ladrón et al. (2016) will be referred to as this scholar and her colleagues highlight problems of dysfunctionality within Irish families due to domestic violence, among other issues.

Like feminine images, the representation of Irish masculinity has also undergone a series of changes throughout history, and it is also relevant to include a brief discussion here. First, it is necessary to define the concept of masculinity and hyper-masculinity when discussing the re-evaluation of the role of men in Ireland. The *Cambridge Dictionary* definition of the term “masculinity” refers to “the characteristics that are traditionally thought to be typical of or suitable for men” (Walter 2008: 879). However, the term has a more complex definition and there are potential meanings attached to it. In their two-volume encyclopaedic work *Men and Masculinities* (2003), Michael Kimmel and Amy Aronson focus on this concept within the American context. They consider the importance of masculinity (and gender in general) as key to understanding America on a social (and political) level (2003: xvii). First of all, they point out that masculinity may “vary across cultures” and that it is subject to shifting “considerably over time” (503). Secondly, its definition is not fixed as it might change throughout a person's life (503). Lastly, “at a given moment, several meanings of masculinity may coexist” (504). It is significant to note here that Kimmel and Aronson's

approach to the term relies on the work of a leading name within the field of gender studies: Raewyn W. Connell.³⁴

In *Gender and Power* (1987), Connell explores how gender relations are formed. This gender theorist underlines that all types of femininity are developed in relation to the social submission of women to men (1987: 186). On a similar note, in a later work *Masculinities* (1995), Connell defines the term masculinity as “a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell 1995: 71). This critic introduces the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’, adopting Antonio Gramsci’s understanding of hegemony as a crucial factor when explaining cultural class differences. Connell defines ‘hegemonic masculinity’ as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell 1995: 77). This critic also adds that “at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted”. Thus, hegemonic masculinity, which is strongly approved at present, embodies the notion of a dominant male figure (77). In her later study co-written with James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept” (2005), Connell underlines that “[m]asculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals” (836). Additionally, hegemony does not always imply violent or forceful actions, as it adopts “ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832). It is not only related to physical or sexual practice. The hegemonic masculine position of a man is defined by the validity of a certain type of masculinity within his social realm. For instance,

³⁴ For a linguistic approach to masculinity see *Language and Sexuality* (2003) by Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick.

a man with a well-paid job can be referred to as more masculine than an unemployed man.

Connell's work has influenced several scholars working in the field of gender studies, and this is reflected in those studies that specifically analyse the position of masculinity within the Irish context. In his study "Men and Masculinities in Late-Modern Ireland" (2001), Henry Ferguson—developing Connell's concept of masculinity—revisits the notion that power relations do not remain stable within the gender order (119). Ferguson explores the different forms of masculinities in Irish culture. For him, each era has a different notion of masculinity. For instance, men's position as economic providers for their families has dramatically changed through time (i.e. cultivating the land has become less prestigious when compared to managing a bank). While the Catholic Church and the State promoted "the ideal of the virtuous Irish mother", they also imposed the stereotype of "the disciplined, chaste working man who would become the god-fearing priest or good breadwinning father" (Ferguson 2001: 122). A key endeavour of the Church and the State was to control sexuality and class to deliver their particular parameters for both femininity and masculinity. Hence, the woman was supposed to be a dutiful and upright Irish mother; the man, on the other hand, was expected to be a devout pastor or, else, the wage-earner of the family (122). Without a doubt, these ideal notions fuelled patriarchy and the submission of women as they drew a strict line between the stereotype of the breadwinner and that of the housewife. While men were expected to work and have economic power, women were supposed to stay at home and take care of the children. As we will see, Doyle mocks this patriarchal notion of the breadwinner specifically in his novel *The Van*. As explored in chapter 5.1.3, the female figures in the novel constantly challenge the expectations on masculinity of their husbands. For example, Doyle dislocates the expected

gender roles as the male characters are in charge of the van's kitchen, a place which often has domestic and thus feminine connotations, whereas a female character manages the business and decides on the location of the van.

In "Trans-formation of Gendered Identities in Ireland" (2014), Jeannine Woods offers an interesting analysis of what, recently, is considered to constitute Irish masculinity. Woods underlines the fact that, as with other postcolonial states, the Irish State has provided a definition of what female sexuality infers. Meanwhile, what is meant by male sexuality is, instead, considered evident and, thus, established within the familial context. Moreover, Woods observes that heterosexual marriages and patriarchal family structures have more authority over other possible family formations in Irish society. However, different sexualities may not fit with the norm and subsequently face social neglect (29). Woods focuses on the Celtic Tiger influence and asserts that Irish masculinity is now formulated with "the acquisition and display of affluence" (29). In other words, wealth has been associated with a masculine identity model during the Celtic Tiger period. The Celtic Tiger influence is striking in Doyle's reconfiguration of the mother character in the short story "The Pram". Interestingly, as analysed later in section 6.2, Doyle defines the mother in this short story as "a hypermasculine woman" (interview with Tekin 2014: 115). For him, she "is riding that crest of the Tiger" (115). On a similar note, in his critical essay on Doyle's oeuvre, Brian Donnelly states that this writer successfully manages "to record and preserve the spirit of the times" (2000: 23). Indeed, Doyle's vivid reflection of the working-class experience and the shift among gender roles in recent Irish history is compelling. While working-class women are pushed to the margins as voiceless entities subject to violence in *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* and *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, in Doyle's later

fiction he displays female characters whose presence gradually takes over the space of the male figures.

As we have seen, the problems that women face in contemporary Ireland are highly complex. The country approached more modernized social and economic standards following its membership of the European Union in the mid 1970s together with The Celtic Tiger phenomenon of the late 1990s. Although previous legislation largely restrained how women lived their lives, times are clearly changing, as indicated by their improved social and economic status, the abolishment of the marriage bar, and the fact that divorce has been introduced. That said, given that the abortion ban is still upheld in Ireland, the sexual freedom of women continues to be restricted. In fact, national surveys, as previously mentioned, show that domestic violence against women is still prevalent in Ireland. Doyle's work illustrates these historical and social issues affecting women in Ireland. For instance, the rise in single motherhood is a fact that Doyle reflects in his empowerment of single mothers, specifically in his children's fiction. Moreover, Doyle's writing not only challenges the role of women as mothers but also questions that of fatherhood considering that in some of his novels men appear as dysfunctional figures, and fathers who are socially cast aside. Therefore, his work can be read as a social documentation of a specific social class.

**4.VICTIMHOOD: DOMESTIC
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HA HA* AND *THE WOMAN WHO
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4. Victimhood: Domestic violence in *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* and *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*

4.1. *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*: A silent representation of domestic violence

Roddy Doyle's first novels *The Commitments*, *The Snapper* and *The Van* (also known as *The Barrytown Trilogy*, 1992) take place in the fictional suburb of Barrytown, an Irish working-class setting in the 1990s. The Booker Prize winner *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993) is also set in Barrytown, but unlike the first three aforementioned novels, the action takes place in the late 1960s. The novel portrays the gradual disintegration of the Clarke family formed by a distant and neglectful father, a vulnerable, religious housewife and mother, and their four children. My analysis of this work will be framed within the theories set forth by Adrienne Rich and Donna Haraway when I deal specifically with the gendered position of the figure of the mother at home. Furthermore, I will discuss the traumatic experience of domestic violence in light of Cathy Caruth's views. Another crucial point of my examination will be Doyle's portrayal of the Clarke household as an example of a dysfunctional family.

I will use throughout this chapter the term "dysfunctional" in order to define the family in *Paddy Clarke* and it is necessary therefore to begin with an explanation of what this expression refers to. Indeed, this is the term used by Rüdiger Imhof (2002: 246), in a chapter dedicated to Doyle's oeuvre in his book *The Modern Irish Novel: Irish Novelists after 1945*, where he qualifies the Clarks as "a dysfunctional family". The significance of the dysfunctional family within the Irish context is thoroughly examined in the recent collection of essays *Family and Dysfunction in Contemporary Irish Narrative and Film* (2016), edited by Marisol Morales-Ladrón. Here, the authors discuss how the ideal of the family, an iconic symbol of the Irish nation, and more specifically, the nuclear family, is influenced by ideological

forces such as religion and politics. For example, legislative enforcements such as the marriage bar have forced women to quit their occupations to fulfil their domestic duties and tend to the needs of their husbands and children (2016: 6). The possibility for women to have economic independence, be able to divorce, or opt for contraception or abortion, were all out of the question. In such limited context, "the heterosexual and patriarchal caged family was bound to become dysfunctional" (6). As the authors explain, a dysfunctional family inevitably occurs "when [the family] fails to fulfil the role society has assigned to it, turning into a repository of trauma, emotional deficits and distress affecting any of its members" (9). In the case of *Paddy Clarke*, the father silences the mother by physically and psychologically abusing her. This inevitably leads the Clarke family to dysfunction.

Doyle's novel recounts the life of a ten-year-old boy called Paddy Clarke. It focuses on Paddy's interactions with his friends, his parents, and his brother Francis (although he calls his brother Sinbad since he likes that name). With his friends from school and the neighbourhood, Paddy explores the streets and plays dangerous games such as starting fires with small bushes or torturing small animals. At first, he is a good student and the best friend of Kevin, who is the leader of the school gang. They often harass other children including Paddy's brother Sinbad. However, as soon as Paddy notices that his father ill-treats his mother, his life begins to change dramatically. His success at school decreases, and he does not enjoy spending time with his friends on the street any longer. While his parents' relationship deteriorates, Paddy starts to lose friends and draws closer to Sinbad because his friends begin to tease him. As regards his psychological wellbeing, he struggles against the fear of his father hurting his mother. Paddy consequently suffers from sleeping disorders as he listens to his parents' discussions. One day, he witnesses his father battering his mother. This incident is the turning point of

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the book as Paddy's father leaves home and Paddy begins to act as a grown up.

One of the most striking aspects of the novel is Doyle's narrative technique, considering that the book is told from Paddy's perspective. The narrative style is nonlinear (as if mainly written following the form of an interior monologue). Unsurprisingly, various studies (Cosgrove 1996; McGlynn 1999; Donnelly 2000; White 2001; McCarthy 2003; Reynolds and Noakes 2004) have focused on the voice of the young protagonist and his extraordinary narration. They also offer comparisons between *The Barrytown Trilogy* and *Paddy Clarke*, in order to pinpoint the dissimilarities between their diverse narrative styles. For instance, White (2001: 99) underlines the "intensity" of the narrative and claims that "[Paddy's narration] provide[s] the reader more insights into [Paddy] than the trilogy's rapid-fire, profanity-laced, multi-character dialogue affords the Rabbittes". Dermot McCarthy (2003: 120) draws parallels between *Paddy Clarke* and the trilogy's final instalment, *The Van*, and puts forward the idea that "the estrangement between Paddy and his father emerges from plot elements latent in *The Van* and in the relationships between Jimmy Sr, Veronica and Darren". The comparisons are not limited to Doyle's own work. *Paddy Clarke* can be interpreted as a distinct type of Bildungsroman in the sense that it traces the journey (and also the evolution and transformation) from childhood to adolescence. McCarthy (2003: 122) underlines that *Paddy Clarke* is not a typical bildungsroman in which the climax "involves the protagonist's triumphant confrontation with an adversary, successful response to a challenge, or solution of a troubling mystery"; on the contrary, "[it] ends with a marital break-up and the protagonist's unrelieved mystification by the seemingly intractable problem of trying to understand why his parents no longer love each other".

Indeed, *Paddy Clarke* does not provide a happy ending that fulfils the ordinary reader's expectations. Furthermore, Doyle leaves the reader alone with "unresolved narrative tensions" (McGlynn 2008: 123) and "an awkward nonending" (128). As literary scholar Mary McGlynn points out in a chapter dedicated to Doyle's early novels (2008: 128), "[t]he coming of age that we might expect from a conventional Bildungsroman is left uncertain" in Paddy's case, and the resolution between self and society remains absent. Critics have wondered to what extent this novel has been influenced by the well-known Künstlerroman of the modern Irish literary tradition: Joyce's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916).³⁵ In *Roddy Doyle: The Essential Guide* (2004: 151), Margaret Reynolds and Jonathan Noakes draw parallels between the two works in terms of their portrayal of "protagonists with acute sensibilities" within "dysfunctional families". Taking a further step, Caramine White cites the first sentences of the two works, claiming that Stephen Dedalus is "the notable literary ancestor" of Paddy Clarke as this particular work by Doyle "directly echoes the beginning of *Portrait*" (2001: 100-101). Doyle himself does not deny the possible influence of Joyce; as he states:

I wasn't thinking of *The Portrait of the Artist* when I wrote the first chapters. I was pointed out by some critics for making similarities which are there to be seen, but I wasn't consciously doing it. I don't know if I'm unconsciously doing it. I admired Joyce's *Dubliners* hugely. It's magnificent and *Portrait of the Artist* is great. (Interview with Tekin 2014: 117-118)

Indeed, Doyle's Paddy might contain traces of Stephen Dedalus. Similar to the densely religious images that Stephen is exposed to, "the world of *Paddy Clarke* is one which, if not entirely saturated with references to religious practice and icons, is certainly thoroughly permeated by them" (Cosgrove

³⁵ In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1981: 121), Meyer H. Abrams defines the Künstlerroman (or "artist-novel") as "[a]n important subtype of the Bildungsroman", "which represents the growth of a novelist or other artist into the stage of maturity in which he recognises his artistic destiny and masters his artistic craft".

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1996: 237). In the 1960s setting of Doyle's novel, religion still had a dominant impact in Irish society.

Paddy Clarke contains glimpses of other works besides that one by James Joyce. Doyle has pointed out that one influential source in the novel was Richard Ford's *Wildlife* (1990), which is about a man who is recalling his past memories, specifically the separation of his parents (interview with White 2001: 163). Ford's *Wildlife* is about a family breakdown and the protagonist's (Joe Brinson) decisions as a young person following his discovery of his mother's unfaithfulness to his father. Apart from *Wildlife*, *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding is another reference for *Paddy Clarke*. In his interview with McArdle (1995: 115-116), Doyle reveals his admiration for the simplicity of Golding's narrative and states that "the whole idea of him capturing kids, seeing how far they can go, looking over their shoulders to see if there's an adult looking at them, that kind of thing, I think, had an impact". Doyle's comment sheds some light on the shifts within the narration: as Paddy gets older the simple descriptions lend themselves to a more in-depth analysis of his bitter experiences. Furthermore, Doyle is influenced by the reality of how children can be curious, cruel, and violent without parental guidance. He describes them as "little savages" (interview with White 2001: 174-175). An example of this is when the author conveys this view through Paddy's and his peers' outrageous games [(i.e. Paddy and his friends cut pieces of paper into a man's shape and burn holes in the paper man's body (1993: 9)].

Interestingly enough, very few critical studies have analysed one of the most dominant themes in *Paddy Clarke*: domestic violence. This theme has been thoroughly examined in other works by Doyle, specifically in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, by critics such as Jackson (1999), Mildorf (2005), Persson (2006), and Morales-Ladrón (2007), in their analysis of

Paula Spencer's terrible exposure to abuse and violence. However, this theme seems to be absent in studies devoted to *Paddy Clarke*. As Patricia Lynch claims in her essay "Change and Continuity in Recent Irish Writing" (1997: 266), *Paddy Clarke* contains more violence than the previous work by Doyle, and the novel encapsulates "bullying especially of younger children, corporal punishment at home and at school". As the unchronological narrative begins, we are introduced into the world of a ten-year-old boy who perceives and sometimes misunderstands every single detail around him. The narrative develops around the gradual deterioration of the marriage of Paddy's parents and his efforts to understand the meaning of it. By the end of the novel, through this experience, Paddy achieves a certain personal and psychological growth and becomes a wise adolescent.

Paddy Clarke depicts an Irish family highly influenced by a conservative, religious society. As the writer admits, "*Paddy Clarke* is filled with religion—a childish version of it, because it's a different time, the 1960s. Everybody goes to a Catholic school" (interview with White 2001: 168-169). Throughout the novel, religious references are distilled through a child's perspective. For instance, Paddy hears rumours about the religious punishments and quickly comes to the conclusion that every single sin has horrible penalties:

It was about a million years for every venial sin, depending on the sin and if you'd done it before and promised that you wouldn't do it again. Telling lies to your parents, cursing, taking the Lord's name in vain—they were all a million years. (Doyle 1993: 85)

Through Paddy's innocent, vulnerable thoughts, Doyle reflects the pervasive influence of the Church. This influence can be found not only in the streets but even at home, in the bedroom. In a scene at the very beginning of the novel, Paddy enters his parents' bedroom and starts to examine the picture of Jesus and the children's names on it hanging on the wall above his parents'

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bed. The picture displays the names of all children that the Clarke couple have had so far. When Paddy counts all five names (including his own) he finds out that “[t]here was room for six more names” (38). The picture reveals that even though Mrs. Clarke has carried five children so far, according to the Catholic ideology Irish women were expected to have as many children as possible. The Church dominated the lives of women, urging them to be perfect mothers, and framing their role within the boundaries of the home. As Gerardine Meaney (2010: 10) underlines, “[m]otherhood was overtly idealized and venerated in its social and religious aspects”. Moreover, the political influence of Éamon de Valera, which lasted over half a century between 1917 and 1973, imposed the myth of perfect motherhood (McGlynn 2008: 79). Working was out of the question for married women; it was illegal with the marriage Bar (until this was banished in the early 1970). Women’s domestic enclosure was sanctioned by the 1937 Irish Constitution. As dictated in Article 41.2.2 (cited in the previous chapter), the State ensured that mothers should not engage in working not to hamper their domestic duties. That is why women were doomed to stay within the domestic sphere to mother the large families expected within such a patriarchal ideology.

In this respect, Irish women, echoing the universal lines of Adrienne Rich (1995: 52), were shouldering “by far the heaviest of social burdens”. Their inferior position in comparison to men was a source of pride for the patriarchal order. Maryann Valiulis (1995: 169) points out that more than being mothers “women were wives and [they] were subordinate to their husbands, inferior to men”. She also adds that women’s subordination to their husbands was perceived as “the ‘natural’ hierarchical order of the world” (169). Similarly, Pat O’Connor (1998: 21) underlines that such “fundamental ideas about the nature and value of womanhood are seen as part of the mechanisms of patriarchal control”.

Such 'patriarchal control' is exercised in Paddy's society from a very early age. As we learn, the eldest son of the family is expected to follow the role of the patriarch. In a dialogue with his mother, Paddy finds out the reason why he is called Patrick:

—Are unusual names nice?

—Yes.

—Then when am I called Patrick?

[...]

—Because your daddy's called Patrick, she said.

I liked that, being called after my da. (Doyle 1993: 138)

Traditionally, children are named after their fathers (or at times their grandfathers), which can be interpreted as a way of transmitting family values. Possessing the name of his male ancestor, the child is symbolically expected to maintain the patriarchal power of his father/grandfather. At first, young Paddy is unable to see that he is a victim of the patriarchal order. With a childish urge, he wants to grow up quickly to be physically just like his father. That is why he feels so proud when his mother tells him that he will soon be "the same size as [his] father" (96).

Paddy's desire to be like his father can be explained from the perspective of Donna Haraway's theories. Haraway is one of the leading figures in postmodern feminist theory. In her study *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), she discusses gender in relation to science, and defines the inherited patriarchal tradition as a western "regulatory fiction", which "insist[s] that motherhood is natural and fatherhood is cultural: mothers make babies naturally, biologically. Motherhood is known on sight; fatherhood is inferred" (1991: 135). Haraway also adds that "[t]he law of the father might be a myth, but its very real potency is hard to deconstruct" (ibid). In Paddy's case, the deconstruction of such a myth of patriarchy will occur through him witnessing his mother's

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situation at home: a woman who is bound up within a conservative society and oppressed with domestic violence.

The most potent image of patriarchy in the novel is embodied by the figure of Paddy's father, Mr. Clarke. According to Paddy's observations (which are confused at times), his father was "mean for no reason" (Doyle 1993: 37). Moreover, "he wouldn't let [them] watch the television and the next minute he'd be sitting on the floor beside us watching it with [them], never for long though. He was always busy. He said. But he mostly sat in his chair" (37). Paddy's struggle to make sense of his father's ill treatment strengthens the reader's empathy, as one finds out that the chair occupied by the father, which he never shares with anyone, is a symbol of his authority, only to be possessed by him: "We had to get out of it when he came home from work. Me and Sinbad and our ma with the babies on her lap could fit into it" (188). Moreover, Paddy's narration reveals that his father only plays with his children when he feels bored, mostly on Sunday afternoons (87). According to McGlynn (1999: 99), "Patrick Clarke Sr. certainly comes across to the reader as a passive father figure. He appears to spend most of his time at home reading the paper or watching the news; when his wife takes ill he cannot even prepare his children for school". What is even more striking is that at first Paddy seems to accept his father's neglect, trying to justify him as follows:

He was good sometimes and useless others and sometimes you could tell that you couldn't go near him to ask him or tell him anything. He didn't like being distracted; he said that word a lot, but I knew what it meant, Distracted, and I didn't know how he was being distracted because he wasn't doing anything anyway. I didn't mind, only sometimes. Fathers were like that, all the fathers I knew [...]. (Doyle 1993: 202-203)

The wide gap between Paddy and his father emphasises the issue of child neglect in the novel. Paddy's interiorisation that "fathers are all neglectful" echoes Gerry Smyth's claim (1997: 66) that Doyle is "offer[ing] a range of

perspectives on the ideology of the family as it operates in modern Ireland". Doyle, therefore, successfully portrays the issue of family dysfunction through the disentangled childhood memories of a reflective ten-year-old boy. It can be claimed that family dysfunction here stems from a wider malfunctioning structure: a dysfunctional society. In Paddy's environment, women are forced to be submissive figures, which is a clear sign of a dysfunctional society. On the other hand, this society is indifferent to men being abusive towards women and children in their private lives. As Åke Persson (2003b: 275) acknowledges, Paddy is surrounded by "figures of power who rely on their physical strength to assert their authority". In addition to the powerful adult figure of Paddy's father, the protagonist is constantly exposed to the violence exerted by merciless teachers at school such as Mr. Henno. Paddy distracts detaches himself from such a violent environment created by the adult world by means of exploring his surroundings (Persson 2003b: 276). He sets up little excursions around his neighbourhood and escapes from his life's harsh realities. However, these excursions often involve violent games (i.e. making fires, or teasing/hitting other boys etc.) until Paddy recognizes (once he has witnessed his father's battering of his mother) that engaging in violence can hurt people. In other words, he eventually ensures that he is not going follow in his father's footsteps.

In her seminal book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich (1995: 36-37) notes that motherhood is not an everlasting identity for women. This can infer that when women become mothers, their identity should not only be limited to their motherhood. However, if we try to apply this line of thought to the mother figure, Mrs. Clarke, in Doyle's novel, this idea seems not to be valid, as her identity is solely that of a mother, serving the household without a single complaint. She

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can only reassure herself by symbolically opening the doors of her house on a clear day: “whenever there was even a bit of blue in the sky [she] opened the back door and brought the whole house out” (Doyle 1993:137). Mary Ryan (2010), in her study on the Irish Women’s Movement, describes the dilemma of numerous Irish women, stating that they were “often trapped in damaging and unhappy situations, from which they could see little escape” (2010: 97). This seems to be the case of Mrs. Clarke, as a woman who is constantly blamed by her husband, for trifle things such as blocking the bath pipe with her long hair (Doyle 1993: 105) or spoiling the children by allowing them to talk “rubbish” (52-53).

As one can infer from Paddy’s statements, his mother’s silence is the link that holds the dysfunctional Clarke family together, although not forever. As a typical oppressed female figure, Mrs. Clarke “always stopped and listened” (164). Her search for an identity can only be implied through young Paddy’s limited understanding. Her entrapped wisdom is reflected through his narrative voice in the following terms: “She listened to [his father] much more than he listened to her. [...] She wasn’t a bigmouth though, not nearly; she was just more interested than he was [...] I knew she was better at talking than him” (202-203). Despite the tiring housework, Mrs. Clarke finds comfort in books although she often cannot manage to read many pages. As Paddy admits, “[his] ma read books. Mostly at night. [...] In the mornings [Paddy] found her book marker, a bit of newspaper, in the book and counted back the number of the pages she’d read the night before. The record was forty-two” (61). This “record” implies Mrs. Clarke’s effort for self-development. However, her achievement is limited by her daily responsibilities as a mother and housewife. Notably, there is another way for her to become useful: by giving practical advice to her children. She manages to educate Paddy and his brother by explaining to them curious details about

how to fill a water bottle without trapping any air inside (33), how to zip up their trousers properly (96), or explaining what fish fingers are made of (140). Traditionally, she is expected to be the angel of the house: a decent and mostly silent figure. Therefore, she is not able to express herself freely and she "always said nothing when she was being annoyed" (125). Her hate for "half-words and bits of words and words that weren't real ones" (209) and her subsequent admiration for full sentences can be interpreted as her wish to be a complete individual. Furthermore, Mrs. Clarke can only convey her emotions to her husband by crying, not through verbal communication. The dramatic passage below emphasises how Paddy's mother suppresses herself and even acts out the role of the contented mother:

She looked at him all the time. When he wasn't looking; like she was searching for something or trying to recognise him; like he'd said he was someone whose name she recognised but she wasn't sure that she'd like him when she remembered properly. Sometimes her mouth opened and stayed there when she was looking. She waited for him to look at her. She cried a lot. She thought I wasn't looking. She wiped her eyes with her sleeve and made herself smile and even giggled, as if the crying had been a mistake and she'd only found out. (245)

Mrs. Clarke's act of wiping her eyes can be read as a sign of how she suppresses her feelings. In other words, she probably thinks that, as a mother, she should stop crying and cope with her problems in private. This can also be read as a social imposition, which demands from her to act as an inexhaustible servant of the family and conceal her emotions.

The stereotypical notions imposed on women by patriarchy are evident in Paddy's immature perspective. His mother's fulfilment of all the stereotypical female tasks, which are merely rewarded with his father's lack of appreciation, confuses Paddy. The following lines reveal his struggle when accepting the fact that his father does not love his mother:

Why didn't Da like Ma? She liked him; it was him didn't like her. What was wrong with her? Nothing. She was lovely looking, though it was hard to tell for sure. She made lovely dinners. The house was

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clean, the grass cut and straight and she always left some daisies in the middle because Catherine liked them. She didn't shout like some of the other mas. She didn't wear trousers with no fly. She wasn't fat. She never lost her temper for long. I thought about it: she was the best ma around here. She really was; I didn't just reach that conclusion because she was mine. She was. (257)

Although Mrs. Clarke is “a perfect mother”, as Paddy senses, he passively tries to agree with his father. This suggests the unquestionable patriarchal notion that the father is always right: “There must have been a reason why he hated Ma. There must have been something wrong with her, at least one thing. I couldn't see it. I wanted to. I wanted to understand” (259). Paddy's innocent observations create empathy in the reader when he admits that “[he] wanted to be on both sides” (259). As a child, Paddy perceives the dissonance between his parents as a game of taking sides. Therefore, his first interpretation of their serious quarrel is depicted in terms of a winner and a loser: “[t]he first fight had ended. My da won because my ma cried; he made her” (179). Doyle stresses Paddy's perspective, as a boy incapable of assessing reality, who can only reflect on his parent's conflict as a childish game. In the eyes of little Paddy, the one who cries first loses the game, and at times their quarrels are similar to a dance in which the children are not allowed to participate: “It took two to tango. It didn't take three; there was no room for me” (255). Moreover, he likens his parents' fights to boxing “where they [wear] no gloves and they [keep] punching till one of them [is] knocked out or killed” (256). At times, he wishes to go through an epiphanic moment in order to make sense of his parents' fights:

Sometimes, when you were thinking about something, trying to understand it, it opened up in your head without you expecting it to, like it was a soft spongy light unfolding, and you understood, it made sense forever. They said it was brains but it wasn't; it was luck, like catching a fish or finding a shilling on the road. Sometimes you gave up and suddenly the sponge opened. It was brilliant, it was like growing taller. It wouldn't happen this time though, never. I could think and think and concentrate and nothing would ever happen. (256)

Through Paddy's comparison of "brains" and "luck", Doyle reflects the duality between the so-called rational adult world and Paddy's immature perception. Moreover, the symbols that Paddy attributes to luck (i.e. "catching a fish or finding a shilling") underline his childish vision. Additionally, although Paddy dreams of finding a solution that will resolve his parents' conflicts, he is aware that this issue is out of his control.

Paddy's paralysis reveals the vulnerability experienced by children in the face of spousal abuse. As Paddy states, he feels as if he were a "deaf", "dumb" and "invisible" referee of his parent's fights (256). These words ("deaf"; "dumb"; and, "invisible") define his position as insignificant and mirror his father's indifference to the dramatic impact that he may leave on his children. Here, Doyle not only displays Paddy's despair as regards his parents' quarrels; his childish vision also provides a defence mechanism against the harsh realities of his parents' unhappy marriage. When the parents' disagreement turns into violent fights over time, Paddy understands the reality and he learns how to accept it. As Doyle states, "[Paddy's] parents are going through a breakup and that's plain but it doesn't become plain to him until quite late" (interview with Tekin 2014: 110-111). Through Paddy's childish lens, Doyle displays the parents' conflict explicitly and criticizes the dysfunctionality of the Clarke's family.

As he grows older, Paddy realises that her mother is repeatedly exposed to violence from his father. He bitterly admits "[my] da had more wrong with him than my ma. [...] My da sometimes lost his temper and he liked it" (Doyle 1993: 258). This line implies that Mr. Clarke deliberately becomes furious with a sense of satisfaction. When asked about Mrs. Clarke's deliberate silence, Doyle has stated that there may be signs of violence such as "the throwing of things, the stomping at the table, thumping on the table but I don't think that there is any overt proof that there is any

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physical violence” (interview with Tekin 2014: 110-111). Mr. Clarke’s violence may seem to be only verbal at first: “she was always the first one to cry and he kept stabbing at her with his face and his words” (Doyle 1993: 178-179). The word “stab” intensifies the effect of her husband’s disturbing gaze and gives away his practice of “masculine superiority” over his vulnerable wife. In her essay on the effect of verbal abuse in Doyle’s *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Jarmila Mildorf underlines the different types of abuse victims can experience and claims that “[a]mong [...] forms of domestic violence, verbal abuse is often neglected because it hurts psychologically and emotionally rather than physically and thus remains ‘invisible’” (Mildorf 2005: 108). Indeed, Mrs. Clarke probably carries psychological wounds apart from the physical scars. But the verbal abuse she experiences is later incremented by physical abuse. In spite of Doyle’s claim in an interview that physical violence was absent in the novel, Paddy depicts such a circumstance:

Ma ma and da were talking. Then I heard the smack. The talking stopped. [...] Ma came out. She turned quick at the stairs so I didn’t have to get out of her way, and went upstairs, going quicker towards the top. [...] Da was alone in the kitchen. He didn’t come out. Deidre was crying in the pram; she’d woken up. (Doyle 1993: 190)

The first sentence of the above passage is symbolic as the father’s slap interrupts the couple’s communication, but more significantly silences the mother. Paddy’s articulation of his parents’ fight is impressive, embodying the confusion of the mind of a child.

Paddy’s confusion is normal for a child as he is probably traumatized by the violence he witnesses. Cathy Caruth, a literary scholar and a leading name in Trauma theory, has interpreted in *Unclaimed Experience* mental trauma within a wide range of psychological and literary texts. Caruth’s aim is not only to offer new definitions of the term, but to examine the impact of traumatic experiences upon an individual. This critic defines

trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which response to the event occurs in delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth 1996: 11). Doyle does not provide any clues as to whether Paddy has psychological problems in his adulthood due to his traumatic experience. However, Paddy starts to experience sleeping disorders (191) and often blames himself for his parents' quarrels. In his introduction to *Trauma, Explorations in Memory* (1995), Caruth underlines that traumatic events do not affect everyone equally, yet the sufferer of trauma “is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (4-5). In Paddy's case, his recurring anxiety introduces itself in the form of staying awake at night so as to be ready to guard his mother against his father: “I spent ages doing my homework so I could stay up longer. [...] I learnt spellings I hadn't been given. I got her to check me on them, never him” (191). Another prominent critic in trauma studies, Carine Mardorossian, reminds us that in the 1970s “domestic and sexual violence” was “not yet identified as crimes” (Mardorossian 2002: 767). Indeed, the fact that this kind of violence was not criminalised is behind Pat O'Connor's (1998: 19) claim that domestic violence has long been naturalised as a way of “controlling women, both individually and collectively”. Thus, impunity seems to be a factor which perpetuated such violence.

The scene following Mr. Clarke's first blow is a turning point in Paddy's journey into adolescence. He is terrified by the idea that his father has slapped his mother and superstitiously believes that keeping awake might save her from the abuse:

He'd hit her. Across the face; smack. I tried to imagine it. It didn't make sense. I'd heard it; he'd hit her. She'd come out of the kitchen, straight up to their bedroom.
Across the face.
I watched. I listened. I stayed in. I guarded her. [...]
I didn't know what I'd do. If I was there he wouldn't do it again, that was all. I stayed awake. I listened. (Doyle 1993: 190-191)

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The short sentences quoted above create a cinematic effect and the morbid images that flash across Paddy's mind gain more meaning, as the childish tone of previous descriptions is replaced by a more realist voice, signalling Paddy's growth. In a way, the first slap his father gives his mother not only inflicts a deep wound on his mother's soul but also on Paddy's childhood. From then on, Paddy is alert and tries to interpret every single voice he hears downstairs:

I wanted to look at my ma and da and not feel anything. [...]
He shouted downstairs, my da did, a roar.
—Fuck off, I said.
I heard tears being swallowed down in the hall.
—Fuck off.
A door slammed, the kitchen one; I could tell it by the whoosh of air.
I was crying now too, but I'd be ready when the time came. (250)

The most touching part of the above passage is perhaps when Paddy "hears" the sound of his mother's tears "being swallowed". He seems to be torn between a sobbing little boy and a brave, ever-vigilant hero, but what he really goes through is a psychological transformation through trauma. White (2001:100) summarizes Paddy's transformation as follows: "[a] change from a happy, mischievous, curious little boy to a needy, solitary, worried, friendless outcast". The trauma that Paddy goes through surfaces in his weird fantasies: he dreams of running away from home "to frighten [his parents] and make them feel guilty", as he "come[s] home in the back of a police car" (269). Indeed, Wendy S. Hesford, in her study on the representations of rape trauma, notices that "fantasy can be read as an articulation of trauma—a devastating and not-worked-through experience" (1999: 195). Without a doubt, the most horrifying part of Paddy's traumatic experience is when he is an eye witness to his father hitting his mother:

In the kitchen. I walked in for a drink of water; I saw her falling back. He looked at me. He unmade his fist. He went red. He looked like he was in trouble. He was going to say something to me, I thought he was. He didn't. He looked at her; his hands moved. I

thought he was going to put her back to where she'd been before he
hit her. (Doyle 1993: 280)

Extremely shocked by what he witnesses, Paddy takes refuge in the idea of his mother as an inanimate object that his father "was going to put back". This unconscious attribution signifies his urge to seek relief in the thought that his mother cannot actually be hurt by anything unless she is made of flesh and blood. As part of his defence mechanism, Paddy dissociates her mother's body from herself, since the idea of her suffering by his father's fist is unbearable.

Paddy's method of coping with the shock by way of imagining his mother as a lifeless entity ironically echoes her predominant description as a silent woman. Doyle expresses Mrs. Clarke's muteness through Paddy's perspective. Here, Haraway's interpretation of a woman's experience is pertinent: "What may count as 'woman's experience' is structured within multiple and often inharmonious agendas. [...] Experience may also be re-constructed, re-membered, re-articulated" (Haraway 1991: 113). In Mrs. Clarke's case, her "experience" is reconstructed, remembered and re-articulated through her son's eyes. Furthermore, Haraway claims that it is only possible to have insight into other people's experiences through the "reading and re-reading of fiction in such a way as to create the effect of having access to another's life and consciousness" (113). Haraway underlines here the influence of the narration and its interpretation. By reading Paddy's recollections, the reader can approach the unarticulated reality of a battered wife. In other words, the reader has an insight into Mrs. Clarke's experience through Paddy's view, as his perspective mirrors Mrs. Clarke's unspoken discourse. For example, when Mrs. Clarke's horrible experience is considered, the gaps in Paddy's narrative (particularly the flashing scenes of domestic violence) represent her recurring silenced position.

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Throughout the narrative, Paddy struggles hard to make sense of the conflict and subsequent violence between his parents. In his essay on *Paddy Clarke*, Brain Cosgrove (1996: 239) interprets the effect Mr. Clarke exerts on Paddy as a traumatic transformation. He states that Paddy goes through “a rapid and traumatic development out of a childhood innocence into a more mature and problematised consciousness” (239). It is possible to say that, with his father’s leaving, Paddy accepts everything as it is. Moreover, he is now sure that eventually his mother will never be battered again. That is also why he is not bothered by the disturbing rhyme with which his peers tease him:

—Paddy Clarke—
Paddy Clarke—
Has no da.
Ha ha ha!
I didn’t listen to them. They were only kids. (281)

Indeed, the title of the novel is highly sarcastic and reflects society’s negative reception towards a family breakdown. From the children’s disparaging approach to Paddy, it can be concluded that family breakdowns are not considered normal in Paddy’s dysfunctional society; he is rather viewed as an outcast to be pointed at and mocked.

All in all, *Paddy Clarke*’s success lies in the fact that it is narrated through the voice of the young protagonist, who attempts to comprehend—when recording his parents’ marriage—the reasons why they fight and eventually split up. Contrary to *The Barrytown Trilogy*, which is analysed in the following chapters of this Dissertation, this novel is distinct in terms of its theme of spousal abuse. Through Paddy’s narrative voice, Doyle provides an insight into the horrific experience of a battered, silenced housewife in the northern part of the Dublin of the late 1960s. By means of the immature perspective of the narrator and his confusion as regards his father’s violence,

Doyle mirrors the parents' conflict and criticises the dysfunctionality of the Clarke's family. He also mirrors the widespread effect of religious and social forces on people's lives. Dysfunction, for instance, easily emerges in a society where women are imprisoned as servants in their homes, subjected to abuse and violence, and unable to articulate their suffering. This very same dysfunctional society overtly ignores the abuse that women and children suffer in the hands of men at home. As a result of Paddy's narrative, Mrs. Clarke's story is revealed. In view of the above, the novel can be said to reflect the growth of a little boy into an insightful adolescent, who strives to come to terms with the family and the society in which he is raised.

4.2. *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*: Shattered female selves

Following *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993), *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* was published in 1996. This novel deals with the harrowing experience of a victim of domestic violence called Paula Spencer. As Doyle admits (interview with Smyth 1997: 105), the inspiration of the novel was triggered by the proposal of writing the BBC series *The Family* in 1994. Paula's story (the wife in *The Family*) appeared in the last episode of the television series. The novel was written as a result of the author's sensing that there was a lot more that Paula needed to say and that is why he gave her the full protagonism in the novel. As Doyle claims (interview with Tekin 2014: 110), after the four-episode-series, he wished to find out what had happened to Paula and he thus decided to write about the development of her life with Charlo (the husband in *The Family*). Therefore, the names in the novel were familiar to some people when the book was released.

Doyle introduces the reader to a woman who has been subjected to verbal and sexual abuse throughout her life. The novel opens with the

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shocking news that Paula's husband, Charlo Spencer, has been shot and killed by the police after he had murdered an old woman. Following the news, Paula is faced with the burdening memories of her marriage and her childhood. She reflects on her school days, her father's horrific treatment of herself and her sister, and her love for Charlo, who is portrayed as a bully who does not even have a proper job. She reveals the details of Charlo's endless abuse, which started the first day of their honeymoon, even though signals were always there, much before. Whenever they went to hospital due to Paula's bruises, she feels she has to lie saying she walked into a door instead of confessing that she had been subjected to spousal abuse. Paula gradually becomes an alcoholic, her resource to fight her unbearable reality and evade herself from it. Moreover, she has a miscarriage due to Charlo's brutal treatment. They have four children, and each one of them suffers from the violent atmosphere of their home. Their eldest son John Paul is a drug addict, while their younger daughter Leanne wets the bed. One day Paula witnesses Charlo's gazing at their eldest daughter Nicola, which she interprets as Charlo musing over the idea of sexually abusing her. After hitting him with a frying pan, Charlo collapses unconsciously on the floor and Nicola helps Paula carry him out. Although her youngest son Jack cannot make sense of his mother's action at first, he later realises that she has taken the right decision by throwing Charlo out of the house. Fortunately, Paula manages to survive and take care of her children working as a cleaning lady.

This section aims to explore Paula's traumatic experience on a psychological and social level. I will particularly discuss Paula's inner recollections in light of Roger Luckhurst's views on trauma. Furthermore, in order to provide an insight into the society of the time, the socio-historical perspectives of Diarmaid Ferriter and Jennifer Jeffers will be introduced. Additionally, I will explore Doyle's critique of society's uncommitted

position as regards male dominance and abuse power through the theories of R.W. Connell and Jane Flax. Lastly, the disorders of the Spencer family will be examined from the perspective of Hedwig Schwall and Danny Nobus.

The Woman Who Walked into Doors is also set in the fictional suburb of Barrytown, just like Doyle's previous novels, but this time the action takes place in the late 1990s. Thus nearly thirty years have elapsed as regards the time span of *Paddy Clarke*. However, the social reality that ignores domestic violence and male power has not changed throughout those three decades. One of the most striking aspects of Doyle's narrative is his use of the female perspective. As in the novel discussed previously, Doyle uses ventriloquism (which allows him to express the thoughts of a fictional literary persona), to write about domestic violence, this time from the perspective of the female victim. The author uses flashbacks when recording and reflecting the events around the female protagonist, Paula Spencer. As Doyle states (interview with Smyth 1997: 105), after "having written about a ten-year-old boy I wanted the challenge of getting into the head of the woman, something I felt would be even more difficult". Several critics have underlined Doyle's success in his use of the first person singular point of view of a female character. Brian Donnelly describes Doyle's particular writing practice as an "extraordinary insight into the psychology of a woman" (2000: 27). Charles Foran, on his part, defines the novel as an "an extended soliloquy that is authentic and obsessive and terribly sad" and further adds that "the book belongs to Paula" (1996: 61). Disagreeing with Foran, Rüdiger Imhof emphasises that the narrative is not a "soliloquy", but "a heart-rending, deeply agonising monologue", as Paula yearns to tell her awful experience and be heard (2002: 248). According to Ann Jay's analysis, this female character "is so well written that it is actually quite difficult not to regard her as real" (2000: 58). Nevertheless, and in spite of the realism of the

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novel, Doyle has remarked that he did not have any “direct experience of domestic violence or any other sort of violence” while writing about Paula’s experiences (interview with Tekin 2014: 108).

Doyle was inspired by other works when writing this book. He admits being influenced by the protagonist in *Black Water* (1992) when presenting Paula’s horrible experience of domestic violence and her subsequent traumatized state of mind (interview with White 2001: 163). In this novel by Joyce Carol Oates, the events that lead to a car accident and the drowning of the protagonist Kelly Kelleher are narrated through recurrent flashbacks. The effectiveness of the book, as Doyle underlines, is that “it goes back to key moments and goes over them again and again. It’s a short book but the repetition is part of its power” (interview with McArdle 1995: 114). Similar to the narrative of Oates’s *Black Water*, that of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* is non-linear. As Doyle claims (interview with Smyth 1997: 107), he started to write “in the old traditional A, B, C, D linear way” at first, but then changed the structure for the sake of avoiding monotony. Unlike *The Barrytown Trilogy* novels, which rely heavily on dialogues, *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, as Suzanne Keen explains in her review (1996: 21), is built upon “pure scene” and displays the insights of a female character.

While reflecting openly on her thoughts, Paula’s non-linear text might be confusing at times. As Doyle claims, “[o]ne of the problems [Paula] has is sorting out memories, deciding what are real and what are fiction” (sic; interview with McArdle 1995: 114). In Peach’s comparative literary study (2004a: 171) he asserts that the intermittent recollections of Paula’s life create “a level of false consciousness where the reality becomes a ghost presence that haunts the text” (2004a: 171). What definitely permeates Paula’s story is her trauma. In *The Trauma Question* (2008), Roger

Luckhurst explores trauma from different angles and provides examples of the treatment of traumatic experiences in literature, photography and cinema. Luckhurst states that—apart from social traumas emerging from national collective memories—there are personal traumas which can occur as a result of an individual's exposure to different forms of violence (e.g. sexual, racial assault). For him, the presence of trauma disrupts one's memory and identity, and, as a result, “[n]o narrative of trauma can be told in a linear way: it has a time signature that must fracture conventional causality” (Luckhurst 2008: 9). Indeed, Paula's non-linear, fragmentary narrative reflects the impact of her traumatic experience. As extensively discussed by Trauma theory, traumatic experiences sometimes appear in the form of flashbacks, through the recurrence of disrupted memories (Caruth 1995: 4-5; Luckhurst: 2008: 9). The close reading of these flashbacks to Paula's childhood and youth disclose how her problematic life does not only derive from her marriage with Charlo but it emerged in her family and social ties.

R.W. Connell in her work *Gender and Power* (1987) traces the form of gender relations in history and offers ways to deal with the constructions of both femininity and masculinity. According to Connell (1987: 186), “all forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men”. Similar to Connell's idea, Jane Flax (1990: 23) states that male dominance is “a dynamic force” that “it has material bases in men's violence against women (e.g., rape) and in their control of women's labor power, sexuality, and reproductive capacity”. Men thus exert active oppression on women in distinct ways. Likewise, Flax (1990: 23) notes that the social construction of gender masks the male dominance and provides a disguise for men's labelling of women. In Paula's case, male dominance is visible on physical, verbal, and psychological grounds. As far as verbal abuse is concerned, she remembers it from her

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childhood and it is sustained throughout her life. Her family home is dominated by patriarchal gender codes as perceived in the following passage:

My father called me a slut the first time I put on mascara. I had to go back up to the bathroom and take it off. My tears had ruined it anyway. I came back down and he inspected me.

—That’s better, he said.

Then he smiled.

—You don’t need it, he said.

My mother stayed out of it. (Doyle 1997: 46)

Paula grows accustomed to being called “a slut” since her father calls her this and her mother does not (or arguably cannot) react. Jennifer Jeffers (2002: 58) notes that “Paula’s narrative does not account for the fact that her father was most likely abusive to her mother; if she knows, she cannot narrate it”. From this perspective, it is possible to deduce that the paternal figure in the novel is one that silences women in several ways.

What is more striking about Paula’s childhood, in addition to the verbal mistreatment she experienced, was the physical abuse perpetrated by her father on his children. Paula remembers the fights between her elder sister Carmel and her father: she recalls “the screams and the punches” (46), even though Carmel declines to remember those awful memories. Paula’s memories include her father tearing Carmel’s clothes, burning her blouses, dragging her to the bathroom, and washing her face with a nailbrush (46). These moments are defined by Paula not as mere fights, but “wars” (46). Her father’s violence includes sexual abuse on his daughters. Jeffers (2002: 58) explains that Paula knows very well what she is going to face soon after her sister Carmel gets married, which is that “she is next in line for her father’s abuse” (58). Likewise, although they were not children anymore, her father put Paula and her younger sister Denise on his knees, and swung them. In Paula’s terms, “it was embarrassing; [she] was much too old” (46).

Paula’s brother Roger internalizes such male abusive behaviour. As Roger grows up in a house where masculinity is exercised through abusive

power, his behaviour is not surprising: “[m]y brother, Roger, called me a slut when I wouldn’t let him feel me. I was fourteen; he was twelve” (47). Once again, Doyle deconstructs the utopian ideal of a happy Irish family, by presenting a dysfunctional family in which men ruthlessly impose their power over women, who were supposed to be the pillars of Irish society in the 20th century. We know that Paula is familiar with gender inequality as she tells the story of the mother of her neighbour, who was raped and robbed. As she states, “[l]ooks and age had nothing to do with it. Men raped women” (159). In *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland* (2009) historian Diarmaid Ferriter touches upon issues related to sexual abuse in his analysis of abortion, pregnancy, and the prohibition of contraceptives in Ireland. Ferriter gives an account of the position of Irish women in the last decades of the 20th century, and concludes that “what the 1980s and 1990s made clear was that illegitimacy, abortion, rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation were emphatically already a part of the ‘Irish heritage’” (2009: 524). In this sense, Paula’s experiences would be part of the common social reality of many Irish women at the time. Indeed, her surroundings are similar to those of the dysfunctional family portrayed in *Paddy Clarke*. Both novels reveal how when the existence of domestic violence is ignored or repressed in society, this leads to the occurrence of dysfunctional families. In this respect, the dysfunctional family was not the exception, but the norm of Irish society (Morales-Ladrón et al. 2016: 2). Evidently, Doyle mirrors the hidden deficiencies of Irish society as Paula becomes hardened as a result of the abusive behaviour she experiences throughout her life.³⁶

Starting from her childhood, Paula’s body, as well as her personality, have been constantly defined by all forms of patriarchal

³⁶ Even when she gets married, she develops strategies against physical abuse from her brother-in-laws such as making sure not to be caught alone in the hall or bathroom; otherwise, they would touch her, and she would be blamed for it (Doyle 1997: 166).

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standards. Growing up in the O'Leary household is associated with remaining silent and being ashamed of one's own female body. As Paula begins to grow up, she catches the blushing and panicking face of her mother, staring at her breasts (16). Her uneasiness following her mother's awkward gaze can be explained in terms of Rosi Braidotti's theories on the body. In her study "Becoming woman: Or sexual difference revisited" (2003), Braidotti underlines the necessity of revaluating the body as an entity which is neutral and gender free. As this feminist critic acknowledges, "[t]he body is [...] an interface, a threshold, a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces; it is a surface where multiple codes (race, sex, class, age, etc.) are inscribed" (2003: 44). Braidotti's approach reflects the fact that the body—a domain where various biological and social features lie—also consists of codes that are constructed and/or imposed on people by society. These "multiple codes" identified by Braidotti are indeed inscribed in Paula's body, which she often views negatively. At times, she even uses scornful words to define her own body.³⁷ Paula's body, similar to the critique of Bradotti, reflects the pre-inscribed codes of femininity within her patriarchal society. Therefore, she has to assure her husband that "[she'd] soon have her figure back, after the baby was born" (Doyle 1997: 172).

In addition to the paternal mistreatment she experiences at home, Paula is also verbally abused by the boys at school. As a consequence, she is constantly confused: at times she is called "a slut" (48); some other times, she is compared to the "Virgin Mary" (48); a duality which shows the influence that patriarchy exerts in her environment. Besides, being called "a slut" is highly common, which bewilders her. As she states (45-46), "you didn't have to do anything to be a slut. If you were good-looking; if you grew up fast. If

³⁷ Here, she is clearly not content with her body parts as she refers to "my big feet"; "my big mouth", "my butter fingers", "my fat ugly face" (197).

you had a sexy walk; if you had clean hair, if you had dirty hair. If you wore platform shoes, and if you didn't. Anything could get you called a slut". In her study on the negative influence of verbal abuse in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Jarmila Mildorf (2005: 110) interprets men's labelling of women as 'slut(s)' as a means of defining them "as sexually available" and in this, "[men] condone their own desires and sexual power over women". In this sense, the degradation of women offers men a space where they enforce their sexual desire and power. In Paula's environment, where social values are closely attached to one's sexual status, insult is a common tool for men to practice their masculinity.

Paula's characterization as an inferior character with respect to men is a central issue in the novel. In Åke Persson's terms (2006: 67), Paula can be interpreted as "a metaphor for the experience of many Irish (working-class) women, who have been denigrated and victimised in a system arguably steeped in rigidly patriarchal, top-down values". The issue that Persson points out is visible also in the case of Paula's mother. Although Paula does not construct a coherent story for her mother, she gives hints of her frightened reactions towards her father's abusive behaviour. The absence of her mother's full account symbolises the silenced position imposed on her. Therefore, it is easy to see how Paula has followed in her mother's footsteps as regards her submission. Like her mother, Paula is born into a household where women have to remain submissive as a result of the domestic violence, insults and various types of mistreatment they are exposed to by their husbands (and even at times by the other male members of the family). Furthermore, they are usually confined at home and have to follow their husbands' orders. Indeed, when narrating the fights between her sister and her father, Paula notes that he often "told [her] mother to stay where she was" (46). In her study on *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Hedwig Schwall

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explores the deficient areas of Paula's life and their psychological roots. Schwall (2003: 126) draws attention to similar choices made by women within Paula's society. Due to their inability to explore "any path of their own" during their childhood these women cannot escape being a copy of their mothers. Not surprisingly, "[a]ll the women marry early, mostly to switch from one male ruler to another" (126). The disempowerment of her mother is visible when Paula states that "[s]he looked so sad. [...] she didn't do anything except sit in front of the telly and watch the programmes that [her father] put on and say yes and no when he spoke to her: she didn't even knit" (Doyle 1997: 120). Under his unquestionable authority, her mother's life decays.

As far as the title of the book is concerned, some critics (Gordon 1996: 7; Smyth 1997: 85-86; Persson 2006: 66; Morales-Ladrón 2007: 103) have pointed out that it stands for the common excuse of battered wives when they are brought to hospital after physical abuse. Instead of revealing that they have been exposed to domestic violence, some women lie by saying they have walked into a door and become injured. Besides, in Paula's case, nobody asks her about the real story behind the bruises on her face (Doyle 1997: 164). However, Paula urges to be asked what has happened to her. As Elaine Weiss (2000: 256) claims, what Paula simply wants "is recognition from someone—from anyone—that her husband beats her". Jeffers (2011: 263) considers the ignorant attitude of others as a form of institutional complacency: "Charlo's behaviour is sanctioned by the authorities and by Irish culture". Figuratively speaking, the door that Paula (and the working-class woman she represents) recurrently hits is that of the rigid patriarchal system. That is, only when she is under male dominance, can she escape from being called abusive names by society. Paula underlines that "[she] stopped being a slut the minute Charlo Spencer started dancing with [her]. [She]'ll

never forget it. People looked at [her] and they saw someone different" (45). Her account clearly reveals how social values place women within patriarchal domains. Being in the arms of Charlo suggests that she is under his protection, and under his particular patriarchal domain.

Similar to the sense of protection that Paula feels in the arms of Charlo, marriage provides a socially accepted space for women in her environment. Jeffers (2002: 58) interprets Paula's choice of getting married as "perhaps instinctively out of a sense of survival – to find a man who will take her away from her father". Following the systematic physical and verbal abuse of their father, Paula's sister Carmel also escapes from home, and she gets married when she is only seventeen (Doyle 1997: 47). As she confesses, "[she]'d have any invalid that asked [her]" (47) so as to escape from the patriarchal home setting she grew up in. Likewise, Paula notes that "[she] couldn't wait to stop being Paula O'Leary, to become Paula Spencer. [...]. The wedding was [her] great escape" (133-134). As Ellen-Raissa Jackson explains (1999: 227), Charlo gives Paula a name (Missis Spencer) in order to prevent "her from being other names" (Doyle 1997: 227). Here, once again, Doyle reveals that Paula is only ensured not being categorized negatively as a "slut" within her society if she lives under the dominion of a man. Moreover, Paula's perception of love is built upon a false image of her father. She tends to associate cruelty with love and care, considering that her father "meant it for the best, being cruel to be kind" (Doyle 1997: 47). Therefore, unsurprisingly, she falls in love with someone very similar to her father, thinking that Charlo could provide her with the affection and security she needs. What is more, Paula admits that she "swooned the first time [she] saw Charlo. [...] [Her] legs went rubbery on [her]" (3). Given Paula's quivery experience the minute she saw Charlo, she implies that she will not be able to stand on her own feet when he is around.

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Paula does not mention the very first assault she received from Charlo almost until the end of the book. However, from her first description of him it is easy to conclude that Charlo is a stereotypical bully (i.e. his hands are in his denim pocket and a cigarette is hanging from the edge of his mouth). As Grey Gowrie (1996: 6) argues, “[i]n Dublin terms, [Charlo] was a dude with style”. Paula also informs us of some of his physical features: in comparison to the other boys who “looked thick and deformed beside him”, her husband was “[t]allish, tough looking and smooth” (Doyle 1997: 3). In Schwall’s (2003: 126) terms, Charlo reflects “the violent feelings with which Paula grew up, and a potential for power which she can only admire”. Paula does not know how to survive any other way but surrendering to paternal power. Likewise, she identifies love with violence, and her confusion of the two concepts can be seen in various instances. For example, at her first sighting of Charlo, Paula “wanted to go over there and bite him” (Doyle 1997: 3). The disturbing urge to bite him, as she thinks, “wasn’t a crush – [...] it was sex” (3). Similarly, her description of their sexual encounter sounds more like a fight than a pleasant time for a couple: “I sucked him, I bit him. I pulled his hair. [...] I hit him. I nearly died” (101). In another instance, she states that “[she] was tired and sore but [she] didn’t care [...] [she] wanted the ache” (155). Not surprisingly, she associates violence with love, which can be interpreted as a side effect of her growing up in an environment where affection is in fact inflicted through abuse. Jackson (1999: 226) remarks that “gender relations characterised by violence and aggression provide a context both for Charlo’s violence and for Paula’s acceptance of it”. Her perception of a love relationship, marriage, and violence are so intertwined that she feels disappointed when she finds out that Charlo has hit another woman: “But why did he whack poor Mrs Fleming? He wasn’t married to her” (Doyle 1997: 158). In other words, she does not

feel resentful for her lost years under Charlo's torment; on the contrary, she sounds jealous because he hit another woman.

Paula unconsciously employs writing as a survival strategy against her troublesome memories. As Doyle states, her adventure of penning down her experience "may have started with a sense of therapy of writing but actually she is a very good writer", and she starts to recognize how writing works (interview with Tekin 2014: 111). Luckhurst (2008: 3) has stressed the need that victims experience to articulate their traumatic experience as a means of dealing with their situation: "[t]rauma violently opens passageways between systems that were once discrete, making unforeseen connections that distress or confound". As a way of coming to terms with the constant violence and abuse she is subjected to, Paula narrates her life story on paper. Persson (2003a: 54) considers Paula's act as "a part of her attempt at taking control of her own life". On the other hand, writing helps her to re-construct the harsh reality of her life, and she preserves her own fantasy of being loved by Charlo through writing. In Mary McGlynn's terms (2008: 128), "the act of composition of her own narrative is part of what renders Paula complete". Furthermore, she makes an effort to seal off Charlo's love at least on the page since she cannot control or maintain it in any other way. She often restates that Charlo really loved her as "he proved it again and again" (Doyle 1997: 191) and he does not mean to hurt her although "he just lost his temper sometimes" (158). Here, her need to insist on Charlo's love serves as a way of making herself believe in a lie because only through lying to herself, she can endure Charlo's abuse.

Doyle's portrayal of Paula mirrors the psychological experience of many working-class women at the time. In *The Irish Novel at the End of Twentieth Century: Gender, Bodies, and Power* (2011), Jeffers explores how sexuality and the body have been controlled in Ireland through external

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mechanisms such as religion, gender order, and the practice of violence. Like Ferriter (2009: 524), Jeffers (2011: 262) points out that domestic violence is highly frequent in the working-class milieu, where it is accepted by society. According to Jeffers (262), society's neglect of domestic violence is widespread, and it leads women to suffer "the battered woman syndrome", according to which victims blame themselves for all the harm to which they have been subjected. Paula is particularly affected by such a syndrome, as she constantly feels guilty of the physical abuse she has experienced:

I keep blaming myself. After all the years and the broken bones and teeth and torture I still keep on blaming myself. I can't help it. [...] He hit me, he hit his children, he hit other people, he killed a woman—and I keep blaming myself. For provoking him. For not loving him enough; for not showing it. (Doyle 1997: 170)

Paula's continual self-blame can be interpreted as an indication of her self-humiliation. She describes herself as "a ruin, a wreck, a failure" (170) and, at the same time, she assures that she is not responsible for Charlo's actions: "it had nothing to do with me" (170).

For Pat O'Connor (1998: 19), domestic violence and sexual abuse have been crucial means for "controlling women, both individually and collectively" and this type of behaviour has not been regarded as a serious problem by society (19). As a consequence, women who have been exposed to the aforementioned traumatic experiences tend to perceive themselves as worthless (O'Connor 1998: 19). Likewise, Paula is not aware of the patriarchal abyss in which she has been stuck. That is why she makes an effort to prove to herself that she is worth being loved since she fulfils the role of a good housewife (Doyle 1997: 191). She expects to be praised as regards her diligence with the housework, and yet, her efforts devalue her in Charlo's eyes. As Schwall (2003: 126) points out, Charlo's humiliation of Paula reaches the extent of "systematic sadism", for instance, when he asks where she has got the scars from (181), ironically addressing the bruises that

he has caused. Similarly, Paula draws our attention to the large number of people who ignore her visible bitter experience: "[she] could walk through crowds. [She] could see all these people but they couldn't see [her]" (Doyle 1997: 187). Paula's society is indifferent to her bruises and, what is worse, they do not even consider asking her what she has been through. The neglect that she experiences at a social level ironically parallels Charlo's sadistic behaviour at home.

In Paula's dysfunctional society, where women are often humiliated and silenced, it is not surprising to observe that they also are infantilised. Starting with the awkward games that her father plays with his daughters, Paula continues to be treated like a child in her marriage. Following his beatings, Charlo redeems himself with "[a] tiny piece of generosity—a kiss, a smile, a joke" (Doyle 1997: 186). Moreover, as if she were a little girl, he brings home a piece of chocolate, and hides it in the fridge so that she could find it and feel happy (186). For the sake of maintaining her family unity, Paula seems to internalize the role, and acts as a little girl devoted to her father when she insists that she does not stop loving him, not even for a minute (26). The baby she miscarries due to Charlo's abuse triggers Paula's traumatic recollections. Interestingly enough, she mentions the baby as if she were still alive: "A girl. I never saw her. Her name is Sally" (203). Doyle justifies Paula's employment of the present tense as an implication "that Sally ... is still there, a whole life that's gone missing" (interview with Smyth 1997: 99). On the other hand, it could be argued that Sally also symbolizes a part of Paula's self that has died through the miscarriage, caused by the violence.

Without a doubt, Charlo is not a caring husband, nor a responsible father. He does not help Paula with the children and never bothers to teach them anything (Doyle 1997: 96). Schwall's (2003: 124) psychoanalytical

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reading of the novel provides an insightful analysis for the lack of psychological development within the Spencer family. As in the case of Paula's parents, Paula and Charlo fail to generate a suitable parenting role model. Schwall, implies that the occurrence of what, according to Lacanian psychoanalysis, is called "the-Name-of-the-Father" (123), is necessary for the development of a child as it requires that all figures of authority perform their role to properly instruct the children in rules and regulations. Schwall states that in Doyle's novel these figures of authority (at home and in the external social milieu of the school, for instance) are deficient. Doyle's child characters, hence, are not properly educated, and they move from "jouissance to desire" turning "fixed and imprisoned instead of educated" (123). The four Spencer children live in a household where the parental figures physically exist, but totally lack guiding and parenting abilities. Their sixteen-year-old-son John Paul is a replica of his father and, in Paula's terms, he is "a druggie" (Doyle 1997: 86). Apart from Charlo's lack of communication with him, Paula also fails to connect with her son. She attempts to win John Paul's heart by buying him a tattoo for his birthday so that she can "stop him from hating [her]" (87). However, her attempt only diminishes the guilt of her neglect. In fact, John Paul's birthday present (the tattoo) can be interpreted as Paula's effort to recuperate her deficient mothering of her son and leave a mark that John Paul would fondly remember.

The lack of fulfilment of the Name-of-the-Father stage is not limited to the older son John Paul. Danny Nobus revisits this Lacanian term in his work *Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis* (2000). According Nobus (2000: 18), the Name-of-the-Father refers to the recognition of some social rules that parents transmit to their children. As Nobus (2000: 18) states, "the parents [tell] their children that they are expected to observe certain social rules (for example, the basic 'Freudian

rule' of the incest prohibition) and that this expectation also applies to them, despite the fact that they are in a parental position". In the case of the Spencers, this recognition cannot be achieved; first of all, due to the recurring violence between the mother and the father. Paula admits that the only thing that her children can witness is a cruel future: "violence, fat and an empty fridge. A bottle of gin but no meat. Black eyes, no teeth; a lump in the corner" (Doyle 1997: 204). Furthermore, there have been days when her children "have gone without good food because of [her] drinking" (88). Not surprisingly, the children develop disorders which reflect their fear and trauma: while their younger daughter Leanne wets the bed (197), their younger son Jack develops speech problems. The only one to withstand the problematic family environment is Nicola, their elder daughter, who manages to have a proper job and a decent partner.

Secondly, Charlo disobeys the incest rule, which in turn awakens Paula's maternal instinct. As she catches Charlo gazing at their older daughter Nicola, Paula dares to take action against him and hits him with a frying pan. Thanks to Paula's strike, Nicola is saved, and this enables her to build a respectable life for herself in the future. As we will see in my analysis of *Paula Spencer* (the follow up of Paula's life), it is plausible to interpret this in light of Hélène Cixous's theories on the psychological recovery of women through mutual support.³⁸ On the other hand, the image of the frying pan is significant in the sense that it is associated with the kitchen, the domestic sphere. In this sense, Paula regains her power over Charlo with a device that she is supposed to use to fulfil her housewife duties. In Paula's terms, the pan is an accumulation of all her painful memories: "[a]ll the years, the stitches, all the cries, the baby [she] lost—[she] could feel them all

³⁸ As it will be explained later, Nicola's mothering of her own children enhances Paula's perspective as regards her role as a mother. She begins to re-evaluate herself as a mother and more importantly, she begins to accept her deficits. Through Nicola's support, Paula will work through her psychological recovery and will start to accept herself.

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in [her] arms going into the pan” (213). She describes her revengeful moment as “[her] finest hour” (213); and from this moment on she feels that “[she] was something” (213). Mary Gordon (1996: 7) summarises Paula’s victory in terms of her ability to cease “being a battered wife” in order to become “a protective mother”. Following her fatal hit, Paula manages to drag Charlo out of the house. By dislocating the supreme power of the oppressor, she creates her own space and certainly becomes a subject, and at the same time she recalls her maternal responsibility by saving Nicola from Charlo’s abuse. Moreover, the following sentence, which appears twice “[i]t was a great feeling. [She’d] done something good” (Doyle 1997: 225-226), reminds the reader of Paula’s reassurance. Morales-Ladrón (2007: 104) interprets Paula’s and her daughters’ new future as a promising one: “While father and son share violent and destructive attitudes, the mother and daughters represent hope, a new concept of motherhood and family that originates from the traps of patriarchy” (Morales-Ladrón 2007: 104).³⁹ In this sense, Doyle offers an uplifting ending for a battered housewife eventually free from the hands of her tyrant.

To conclude, *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* explores Paula Spencer’s life after the TV series *The Family*. One of the most striking points of the novel is that Doyle successfully enters Paula’s mind. From her perspective, we observe how, from early childhood, she feels trapped by patriarchal labels and thinks that only marriage can liberate her from the verbal assaults. Although at first Paula regards marriage as a decent escape, this turns out to be a repetition of her nightmarish experience at her father’s house. Instead of having an opportunity to create her own means of survival and stand up for her own rights, Paula is doomed to be a copy of her mother.

³⁹ The original quotation is in Spanish: “Mientras el padre y el hijo comparten actitudes violentas y destructivas, la madre y las hijas representan la esperanza, un nuevo concepto de maternidad y de la familia liberado de las trampas del patriarcado” (Morales-Ladrón 2007: 104). My translation.

As well as a lack of mutual understanding and care, The Spencers do not have a peaceful home. Not surprisingly, Paula and Charlo fail to teach or mould their children in any sociable way. Therefore, all of them, except Nicola, suffer from serious disorders such as wetting the bed, being unable to talk properly or being addicted to drugs. On the other hand, the title of the novel also echoes society's ill-treatment of a victim of domestic violence. Figuratively speaking, Paula repeatedly crashes against society's irresponsible attitude towards domestic violence, as it both hides and perpetuates patriarchal tyranny. Through his female protagonist's experience, Doyle mirrors society's unresponsive attitude towards spousal abuse. By showing how others ignore Paula's injuries, Doyle underlines the fact that the normalisation of domestic violence leads to more dysfunctional families in Irish society. Eventually, Paula stands up against her husband when Charlo intends to abuse Nicola. As a result of this particular incident, Paula's mothering re-awakens and she saves her daughter. The act of hitting Charlo with a frying pan can be interpreted as the ultimate victory of a housewife over her patriarchal tyrant. By throwing Charlo out of the house, Paula becomes a subject, an individual who manages to create her own private space at last. Eventually, Paula unconsciously manages to deal with her bitter memories through writing. At the end of the book, Doyle signals an optimistic future for her since she repeatedly states that she has "done something good" (Doyle 1997: 226).

5. UNCONVENTIONAL MOTHERS
IN *THE BARRYTOWN TRILOGY*
AND *THE LAST ROUNDUP*
TRILOGY

5. Unconventional mothers in *The Barrytown Trilogy* and *The Last Roundup Trilogy*

5.1. *The Barrytown Trilogy*

5.1.1. *The Commitments*: The voice of the Irish working-class woman

The first and the best well-known novel included in *The Barrytown Trilogy* is probably *The Commitments* (1987).⁴⁰ Apart from its dialogue-based style, the book has distinct characteristics in comparison to the other novels in the trilogy. First of all, it does not deal with family issues as *The Snapper* (1990) and *The Van* (1991) do. In *The Commitments* Doyle captures northern Dublin youth and their struggle to voice their ideas through their soul music band. Furthermore, the novel deals with social and gender issues specifically through the character of Imelda, one of the most powerful symbols in the author's oeuvre of working-class womanhood. An important concern in Doyle's work is to place working-class female characters from the margins to the centre of the narrative. Michael Piersie's views on class division in Dublin provide an insight into the socio-literary framework of the novel. As I intend to show in my analysis of *The Commitments*, the female band members succeed in challenging the strong masculinity of their male colleagues. When discussing the problem of masculinity and hyper-masculinity in this work, the theories by R.W. Connell, James W. Messerschmidt and Henry Ferguson will be invoked.

As far as the characters are concerned, the narrative is highly colourful. The story begins when two friends, Outspan (a guitar player) and Derek (a bass player) wish to set up a band and ask their school friend Jimmy Jr. Rabbitte to be the manager of the group. Through Jimmy's negotiations with various people, the band is formed and called "The Commitments".

⁴⁰ Throughout my study I have used an edition that was published in 1993.

James Clifford plays the piano, Dean Fay the saxophone, Joey Fagan the trumpet and Billy Mooney the drums. Together with the leading vocalist Declan, they begin to play in some bars along with Imelda, Natalie and Bernie, the female members in the band who call themselves "The Commitmentettes". The band "The Commitments" does not last long due to the quarrels among its members and the harsh economic conditions of the music market. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to claim that these are the only reasons for the dissolution of the band. As it will be shown later, the male members' admiration for Imelda is another reason for the band's breaking up. At the very end of the novel, Imelda claims that she is pregnant. Afraid of the potential responsibility of being a father, Joey Fagan escapes to America, and this precipitates the dissolution of the band.

Doyle's book is told from the third person singular point of view of an omniscient narrator. While some critics find the novel "hilarious, irreverent and appealing" (Anna 1991: 24), others qualify it as accessible as it includes "lengthy excerpts from the [famous] songs" (White 2001: 44). However, some others criticize it harshly by saying that *The Commitments* can "not be taken seriously" as a novel (Imhof 2002: 240). For a reader who is not very familiar with Irish working-class vernacular slang, the novel's language can be considered troublesome as it densely employs words such as "culchie" and "gobshite", as well as four-letter words and other slang terms. Furthermore, some words, phrases, or song lyrics are spelt as they are pronounced (i.e. 'yeh', 'fella', 'righ'). As Doyle states, "[he] tried to capture and celebrate crudity, loudness, linguistic flair and slang, which is the property of working-class people" (Costello 2001: 91).

Without a doubt, an overview of the working class in Ireland is essential to discuss the characters in *The Commitments*. Due to unemployment and/or low paid jobs, poverty and marginalisation, working-

class people have been ostracised at economic, cultural and social levels in Ireland. In *Writing Ireland's Working Class: Dublin After O'Casey* (2011), Michael Pierse touches upon this issue, and focuses on this often disregarded class in Irish canonical literary works. Pierse (2011: 20) underlines that there is an increasing gap in terms of "class inequality in Ireland since the middle of the twentieth century". Furthermore, he notes that the high unemployment rate has often hit Dublin's economically poorest communities, the northern Dubliner working-class people especially (20). Pierse discusses how such class division has shaped the Irish literary scene, with names such as Seán O'Casey, James McKenna, Brendan Behan, and Roddy Doyle, writers who, in various ways, have displayed the working-class experience intensively. by concentrating on lower ranks of society who are searching for their unique voice to be heard. In *The Commitments*, Doyle precisely strives to give voice to a subaltern community which has traditionally remained silent, by recording the efforts of a group of working-class characters to create a music band that yearns to be recognised and acknowledged.

The band's name echoes the need for a musical unity which the band members think the north side of Dublin lacks. Jimmy considers the north-siders as belonging to an outcast community within the city, and he emulates the Afro-American singers, who stand against oppression through their soul music. According to Fintan O'Toole (2009b: 103-104), soul is "a perfect metaphor for the international, the cosmopolitan; it is part of the Anglo-American culture, but it is also localized in a very particular part of Dublin". Likewise, Jimmy Jr. considers soul as the perfect genre for their band's original integrity. He puts a lot of effort, as White (2001: 45) observes, "[to] establish the same sense of brotherhood among Dublin youth as soul music did among African Americans". Although Outspan and Derek are only

concerned with financial benefits, Jimmy is more immersed in the need to use music to reflect the voice of the north-sider working class:

—The Irish are the niggers of Europe, lads.

They nearly gasped: it was so true.

—An' Dubliners are the niggers of Ireland. The culchies have fuckin' everythin'. An' the northside Dubliners are the niggers of Dublin. —Say it loud, I'm black an' I'm proud. (Doyle 1993: 9)

This famous quotation from the book sheds some light on the cultural context of the city. Åke Persson (2006: 63) adopts Homi Bhabha's concept of "the third space" to interpret the duality between the privileged and the oppressed in Dublin. In his work *The Location of Culture* (1995), Bhabha states that the migrant occupies a space which he calls "an 'in-between' reality" (1995: 13), a subversive, hybrid space outside the conditions imposed by the colonizer. As far as Dublin's social realm is concerned, there is a visible distinction between the north and south side of the city. The northern part is associated with a lower unemployment rate and poorer social status, whereas the southern part symbolizes the privileged and wealthy population (Persson 2003a: 49). Under the influence of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theories, Åke Persson asserts that the symbol of "the setting up of a band constitutes the third space, in that it is an act to set up an alternative space to the one offered by official Ireland at an economic, political, social and cultural level" (2006: 63). Similarly, for "The Commitments", who are part of a minority group in comparison to wealthier southern Dubliners, forming a music band signifies having a voice to accommodate their marginalized position within their native land. Their alternative space only accommodates the working-class north-siders. Therefore it is not surprising that their advertisement to recruit band members specifies that "southsiders need not apply" (Doyle 1993: 11).

The band's dedication to soul music stems from their emulation of Afro-American bonding.⁴¹ As they wish to possess an authentic voice, they make covers of internationally acknowledged songs with "more Dubliny" lyrics (Doyle 1993: 20). In fact, these lyrics are not only more distinctively local; they also portray the gap between working-class men and women. Such a gender difference is perceived, for instance, when they change the lyrics of "It's a Man's World" (a song by the famous American soul singer James Brown), in order to fit in their working-class reality.

AN' MAN WORKS IN GUINNESS—
 TO GIVE US THE PINTS O' STOU—OUT
 [...]
 —AN' MAN—
 MAN HAS ALL THE IMPORTANT JOBS
 —
 LIKE HE COLLECTS ALL THE TAXES
 —
 BUT WOMAN—
 WOMAN ONLY WORKS UP IN CADBURY'S—
 PUTTIN' CHOCOLATES INTO BOXES—
 SO—
 SO—
 SO—
 IT'S A MAN'S—MAN'S WORLD—
 BUT IT WOULD BE NOTHIN'—
 NOTHIN'
 FUCK ALL—
 WITHOU' A WOMAN OR A GURREL [sic]—(Doyle: 1993: 136)

As the modified lyrics suggest, the well-paid or prestigious jobs are fulfilled by men, whereas women are entitled to only manual labour jobs such as packaging goods. Here, they draw attention to the unequal working conditions between working-class men and women. Moreover, the song is sung by the working-class female members of "The Commitments". By singing the modified lyrics above, these women not only articulate their

⁴¹For an enlightening study surveying recently scholarship on music in Ireland, and the influence of music upon Irish culture, see Blake (2017).

marginalised position; they also challenge their social position placing themselves at the centre of the band.

Apart from the spot lights on the female band members, the band's choice of soul as a music genre is remarkable. Jimmy provides various definitions of 'soul' throughout the novel: soul means "sex" (Doyle 1993: 36), "rhythm" (36), "politics of people" (39), "dignity" (40), and, revolution (41).⁴² For Jimmy, soul is the answer to various concepts that he finds complex. What is more, he strongly believes that "The Commitments" can provide Dublin people with a soul. As he claims,

The Labour Party doesn't have soul. Fianna fuckin' Fail doesn't have soul. The Workers' Party ain't got soul. The Irish people—no.
—The Dublin people—fuck the rest o' them.
—The people o' Dublin, our people, remember need soul. We've got soul.
—Fuckin' righ' we have. (Doyle 1993: 40)

Jimmy's utopic mission of bringing soul to the people of Dublin is a symbol of his attempt to dominate the band members. Significantly, he assures himself that the band's main female singer, Imelda, has soul (145), and what is more, he has a high regard for her. Doyle portrays Imelda as an object of desire which unifies the band together. Although she occupies such key role in the band, she refuses to be regarded as a sexual object. As Jimmy states, "Imelda might have been holding The Commitments together. Derek fancied her, and Outspan fancied her. Deco fancied her. He was sure James fancied her. Now Dean fancied her too. He fancied her himself" (144). In an interview with Smyth (1997: 104-105), Doyle affirms that Imelda knows that she is beautiful and she is aware that the male band members are "all goggle-eyed at [her]". However, she does not "answer to that Miss Ireland kind of behaviour or demeanour" (105). With her charm and independence, Imelda becomes an object of desire among the male band members and produces,

⁴² In this respect, Mary McGlynn (2008: 95) criticises Doyle for overlapping distinct concepts to define soul and "[emptying] out soul by overinflating it".

what Doyle calls, “the inevitable sexual jealousy” (105). In other words, Imelda turns into an image that the male band members seek in vain and have a rivalry for, as she is a projection of their desires. However, the very fact that Imelda’s position in the band places her in the public limelight challenges one of the patriarchal stereotypes (i.e. the pure and submissive female image) as she represents an antithesis of the traditional expectations held about Irish women.

Doyle reflects how the members of “The Commitments” simplistically view women. Reynolds and Noakes (2004: 52) claim that female band members are merely targeted to be “looking good on stage and being attractive to the band”. When looked at closely, The Commitmentettes, as they are often referred to in the novel, play an important role. They mainly fulfil an alternative female patriarchal stereotype (i.e. that of the femme fatale), as they are often referred to as manipulative. Contrary to the former patriarchal stereotype within domestic borders, their outfits for their concerts in pubs are described as eye-catching and assertive: they wear “very tight black skirts to just above the knee [...], black sleeveless tops, hair held up, except the fringe [...], black high heels, loads of black eye shadow, very red lipstick” (Doyle 1993: 84-85). The emphasis on the black and red colour supports the common patriarchal view of the femme fatale image. These colours in their outfit clearly contrast with the white colour, traditionally associated with feminine purity and chastity. Furthermore, The Commitmentettes are described provocatively as sexual objects. Their position in front of the public is highlighted as “they looked great, very glossy [...]” (133). Not only their appearance, but also their personal choices imply that these female characters are subversive to male standards of purity, and at the same time, they respond to patriarchal stereotypes of femininity with their manipulative actions. Natalie, Bernie, and Imelda are independent

enough not to follow common social codes. As Persson (2006: 63) claims, "they are in control of when and with whom they can have sex". This power often creates tension among the male band members. According to M. Keith Booker, these "sexual tensions in the band ... are a major source of the dissension that eventually tears the band apart" (1997: 31).

As femme fatale figures, the female band members are not submissive women at all. The reader can often hear their voices not only through the lyrics of their songs, but also through their speech. Doyle underlines that the language of the Commitmentettes is "as coarse and as courageous as the lads" (interview with Smyth 1997: 104-105). Just like the male band members, The Commitmentettes use vulgar or slang words in their speech. At various instances throughout the novel, we hear the girls swearing with words [i.e. "fuck off slaggin'" (34), "dirty bastard" (34), and/or, "fuck off sap" (97)]. Yet with all their brashness, the pianist James underlines that "The Commitments don't mean nothin' without a woman or a girl" (Doyle 1993: 85). In this sense, the reader is often reminded of the significance of the female band members, as they hold the rest of the male members together.

The Commitmentettes (especially the most desired one, Imelda) play an important role in the construction of the masculinities of the male band members. The definition of masculinity has already been explained from different perspectives in chapter three. In their study "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" (2005), R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt expand on the concept of masculinity and propose its reconfiguration according to four main issues: the function of gender hierarchy; "the agency of women" within the topography of masculinity; the procedure of social encapsulation of men and women; and the progression of masculinities. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 848),

“women are central in many of the processes constructing masculinities—as mothers; as schoolmates; as girlfriends, sexual partners, and wives; as workers in the gender division of labor; and so forth”. Likewise, as sociologist Henry Ferguson (2001: 119) points out, the “ways of being men are constructed in relation to one another and the broad gender order [...] But while there is diversity in men’s practices, each era has a hegemonic form of masculinity that dominates what manhood is meant to be”. These theories are pertinent in the analysis of Doyle’s novel. Each male band member asserts his masculinity so as to survive within his social community through music as well as through flirting with the girls. Moreover, Jimmy renames the band members, which could be seen as an attempt to exert his authority over them. As Persson notes, “James Clifford becomes James the Soul Surgeon Clifford, Dean Fay becomes Dean Good Times Fay; the female singers Imelda, Natalie and Bernie are given the names Sonja, Sofia and Tanya” (2005: 210). Specifically, Jimmy’s act of renaming the female band members resonates with the controversial legislation against women’s freedom within the Irish Constitution. This in reality functioned as a means of oppressing women in the disguise of protection and care. Likewise, there are various references to the music abilities of the male band members. For instance, the very first page of the novel reveals Jimmy’s gift as a musician: “Jimmy Rabbitte knew his music. He knew his stuff alright” (Doyle: 1993: 1). Declan is defined as “a right prick” (11) while Joey Fagan is described as “a terrific teacher, very patient” (33). In this sense, their masculinity is constructed upon their talents, as well as their struggle to persuade the female band members to meet their demands. Although all of them admire Imelda, not one of them manages to have a relationship with her. That said, Imelda does not want to be anyone’s trophy and refuses to conform to male expectations. Mary McGlynn (2008:

96) relates this fact to traditional parodies where men fancy the same woman, "but nobody ends up with her".

By making Imelda inaccessible to men, Doyle challenges the expectations about the availability of women. Sociologist Sarah Diefendorf has explained how notions of masculinity are altered by marriage, and underlines that "hegemonic masculine men are considered highly sexual beings who exert certain amount of control over women, who are seen as less sexual beings" (2015: 649). If read through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, Joey does not follow this behavioural pattern as he does not probably know how to handle the unforeseen actions of The Commitmentettes. Likewise, Imelda confesses to Jimmy that she, Natalie, and, Bernie want to seduce Joey Fagan, since "he [is] scared of [them]" (Doyle 1993: 159). In fact, Joey is not afraid but probably lost as regards their unexpected female behaviour. Furthermore, she admits to Jimmy that they do not fancy him but "[they] were messin', [...] just messin' [and it] became a sort of joke between [them]. To see if [they] could all get off with him" (159). Ironically enough, Joey's physical appearance does not correspond to the image of masculinity that The Commitmentettes expect. On the contrary, he "looked like a da, their da: small, bald, fat, making tea (27)". As the bass player Derek ironically claims, "I think Joey was the oney one of us tha' didn't fancy Imelda an' he's the oney one of us tha' got off with her. Fuckin' gas really, isn't it?" (155). By picking out the most unattractive man in the group and seducing him for fun, Doyle makes Imelda effectively subvert conventional expectations of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, Imelda's female influence on the male band members comes to the surface when Joey asks Jimmy for help as he tries to explain to his friend just how irresistible Imelda is:

—Rescue me. —I am a man in need of rescue.

—What're yeh on abou'?

5. Unconventional mothers in *The Barrytown Trilogy* and *The Last Roundup Trilogy*

Jimmy looked behind him.

—That woman is driving me fucking crazy, said Joey The Lips. —She won't get off my case.

—I think that's the first time I ever heard yeh say Fuckin', Joey.

—She won't leave me alone.

—Well, Jaysis now, Joey, yeh shouldn't of gotten off with her then.

—I had no choice, Brother, Joey The Lips hissed.

—She had me pinned to the wall before I could get on my wheels. (Doyle 1993: 71-72)

Joey's remarks clearly reveal that Imelda has an overpowering influence, as he complains about being "pinned to the wall". As a result of the powerful attraction Joey feels for her, it seems he cannot escape from her. At this point, once more, Doyle underlines the fact that Imelda, a working-class woman, is not subordinate to men.

In opposition to the bonding that their name suggests, "The Commitments" cannot stick to its goal of being a famous band and finally splits up. Their inability to deal with their own individual weaknesses accelerate this break up. One source of conflict is placed in its male members, and their lack control over their desires. Following their final concert, they fight over Imelda. Declan "gives [Joey] a dig" when he sees him kissing her (154). Apart from Declan's heavy kick that breaks Joey's nose, it is Imelda's apparent pregnancy that plays a role in the dissolution of the band. Joey returns to America, giving Jimmy the excuse that "America calls, Brother. I'm going back. Maybe soul isn't right for Ireland. So I'm not right. I'm going back to the soul" (157). In reality Joey escapes to America because Imelda announces him that she is pregnant. She apparently uses this as a game to see his reaction. After realizing that Joey is not ready to take on this new responsibility, Imelda states firmly, in a conversation with Jimmy, that Joey does not have "willpower":

—I didn't really think I was pregnant. [...] I just wanted to see wha' he'd do.

—He fucked off to America.

—I know, said Imelda. —The shi'e.

Jimmy giggled. So did Imelda.

—He hadn't much, willpower, d'yeh know wha' I mean? said Imelda.

—He was a bit of a tramp. Joey was. (Doyle 1993: 160)

In this respect, Imelda connects true masculinity with patriarchal values such as willpower and strength. Her disguised pregnancy poses a threat to Joey's existence and he feels obliged to escape. Despite the fact that the ending of the book depicts the termination of the band, it also conveys a significant message about gender relations. Imelda represents a working-class woman, who can stand under the spotlight and make her voice heard.

Although the novel is about a group of young people involved in setting up a soul band in order to create a unique voice for the working class in north Dublin, and the reader sees that this dream results in frustration, Doyle, succeeds in creating a voice for working-class women who are on the margins of society. His female protagonists are assertive and self-assured women who occupy a prominent space. Although, the female band members respond to the demands of a patriarchal society in their appearance as femmes fatales, they are independent as they make their own sexual choices. Whilst providing the motivational force behind the male band members, the girls challenge their male counterparts' hegemonic masculinities. The existence of Imelda (as well as the other female band members) provokes a crisis of masculinity among them. Moreover, Imelda, who is forever centre-stage, puts Joey in a compromising situation when she announces that she is pregnant. In fact, this expedites the band's end. Without a doubt, *The Commitments* is an initial step within Doyle's oeuvre towards the relocation of working-class women from the margins to the centre of the narrative.

5.1.2. The lone mother in *The Snapper*

The Snapper (1990) is the second book included in *The Barrytown Trilogy*. This novel is linked with the previous one in the trilogy as the action revolves around the Rabbitte family, the home of Jimmy Rabbitte, the manager of “The Commitments”. However, *The Snapper* is built around the story of Jimmy’s daughter, Sharon Rabbitte and her pregnancy outside of marriage. The novel acts as a perfect mirror of an Irish working-class community and its gradual change regarding social codes. Doyle depicts working-class’s life with a keen sense, and also emphasises its deceitfulness when dealing with the experience of single mothers. Apart from the attention placed on a lone mother, another significant aspect of the book involves Jimmy Sr.’s exploration of mothers as well as his coming to terms with his daughter’s motherhood out of wedlock. This chapter’s socio-critical framework is based upon the work of several critics, most notably Jacques Lacan and his conclusions regarding the significance of the Name-of-the-Father. I also rely on Rosi Braidotti’s perspective on the loss of paternal authority; on sociologist Linda Connolly’s views on the issue of abortion in Ireland; and on Henry Ferguson’s approach to the shifting gender roles in the country.

The definition and significance of the term “lone mother” needs to be clarified in order to contextualize the social conditions which Doyle creates in *The Snapper*. In *Lone Mothers in Ireland* (1996), Anthony McCashin provides extensive sociological and statistical findings of his research concerning single motherhood. He (1996: 2) points out the possibilities of different definitions of the term “lone mothers” according to the unique experience of each woman: “for example an elderly widow living in her own home with her adult son or daughter, a young, teenage mother caring for her small child, or a separated woman with custody of her children”. Furthermore, McCashin draws attention to the rapid rise of single

motherhood in Ireland in the last decades of the 20th century and underlines that it specifically “occurs disproportionately among poorer, working-class women” (1996: 117). As pointed out in *The Commitments*, in addition to the limited financial opportunities that were available to working-class people, working-class women in particular have suffered from the hypocritical attitude of society against them. This fact may have motivated Doyle to explore this issue in the *The Snapper*.

The novel opens with the unmarried twenty-year-old girl, Sharon Rabbitte, (Jimmy Jr.'s sister) confessing to her parents that she is pregnant. Although her father Jimmy Sr. and her mother Veronica demand to know the father's identity, Sharon refuses to reveal it. In addition to her refusal to get married, she reveals to them that she wishes to raise the baby as a single mother. When rumours begin to spread about who the father of her baby is, she lies, stating that it was the result of a one night stand with a Spanish sailor; but, the truth comes out and everyone including the Rabbittes find out that the father is the middle aged next-door-neighbour George Burgess. Throughout Sharon's pregnancy Veronica keeps her daughter at a distance while Jimmy Sr. tries to delve into the details of her pregnancy. In the end, Sharon gives birth to a baby girl and names her Georgina. The story revolves around how the family comes to terms and adapts to this dramatic change in their lives.

Narrated from the third person point of view, the novel relies heavily on the use of dialogue, just like in *The Commitments*, and these dialogues mainly take place among the Rabbitte family members. In the novel, Doyle not only depicts the physical and mental changes of a woman throughout her pregnancy, but also portrays what it means for a father to come to terms with the pregnancy of his daughter. He questions himself what pregnancy means for a woman, but he explores its significance from a male perspective. In a

comparative essay of outcast mothers in Doyle's *The Snapper* (1990) and Mary Morrissey's *Mother of Pearl* (1995), Linden Peach (2004b: 145) affirms that *The Snapper* "is a more overtly feminist text than *The Commitments*". As Doyle admits, the inspiration for the book came from his desire to explore more of the Rabbittes. Additionally, he endeavours to write about the social reality of being an unmarried, working-class mother:

It's just that I felt, when I finished *The Commitments*, that I liked the style and I liked the world, and I liked Jimmy Rabbitte, and I thought there was potential in the glimpses of the family that they'd had, and I thought I'd like to write something more intimate. So I thought I'd tackle pregnancy as I saw it—as it was!—outside marriage, and the reality of it in working-class Dublin in the mid to late 1980s. I don't know why but I just chose Sharon. It just seemed that I could do something fresh, but continue with what I was doing with *The Commitments* because I'd enjoyed it so much. So she ended up having a book of her own. (Interview by Reynolds and Noakes 2004: 20-21).

Doyle's choice of a working-class milieu in his novels brings him close to one of the most prominent writers who delved around this social class: Seán O'Casey. As stated in the previous chapter, O'Casey's plays specifically focused on the lives of working-class families. His work accommodated female characters who were unconventional, or at times subversive in their actions. According to some critics, Doyle's writing exhibits traces of Seán O'Casey's work (Smyth 1997: 66; McCarthy 2003: 19; Farquharson 2012: 415). Specifically, the Rabbitte family in *The Barrytown Trilogy* seems to echo O'Casey's Boyle family in *Juno and the Paycock*. This play was first staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1924 and relates the tragedy of the Boyle family, who lived in working-class tenements during the Irish Civil War. Like the Boyle family, Doyle's Rabbittes live in north Dublin. Both families belong to the working class and use a vivid form of colloquial language.⁴³ Furthermore, the daughters of the two families (Mary Boyle and Sharon

⁴³ See Hidalgo-Tenorio (2000) for an extensive analysis of the subversive, empowering role of women in O'Casey's plays through a detailed examination of the characters' use of language.

Rabbitte) stick to their own decisions. While Mary Boyle repeats her constant motto "a principle's a principle" (O'Casey 1957: 9), Sharon Rabbitte is highly decisive and powerful in adhering to her own principles and decisions such as having a baby outside wedlock. As she claims, "[t]he baby was nothing. It happened. It was alright. Barrytown was good that way. Nobody minded" (Doyle 1991: 119).

Numerous critics have analysed the novel in terms of its thematic significance (i.e. Smyth 1997; White 2001; McCarthy 2003; McGlynn 2008). These studies often deal with the issue of Sharon's pregnancy out of wedlock and how it is perceived within her working-class environment. Despite having endured a sexual assault, her determination to keep her baby is highly subversive. In the collection of essays *Single Motherhood in 20th Century Ireland: Cultural, Historical and Social Essays* (2006), literary scholar Dervila Layden focuses on the conflicts surrounding pregnancies of single women in Irish society and the portrayal of this in the filmic adaptation of *The Snapper*. As Layden (2006: 166) states, the novel can be read "as a projection of an emergent construction of unmarried motherhood". However, the aforementioned studies do not state that *The Snapper* can be read as an advocacy of women's autonomy nor that Doyle puts forward a critique of social bigotry. Initially, the baby's father is unknown, which could be interpreted as unconventional in Sharon's social environment. Furthermore, Dermot McCarthy (2003: 55) underlines that "*The Snapper* is another facet of Doyle's image of a society and culture which in his view were breaking free from the dark institutional shadows of the past". In other words, Doyle looks at social conventions which had previously been influenced by religion and which impacted upon an individual's life choices, which may change with time.

Doyle might stand at a certain distance from the issue of abortion in *The Snapper*. As Layden (2006: 159) notes, “Doyle does not debate the abortion issue” in the novel but gives an account of a modern, working-class Irish girl, as well as the “social acceptance and regulation of her sexuality and maternity within the community”. Furthermore, the details of Sharon’s sexual assault are not revealed. Through this ambiguity, Doyle effectively criticizes the hypocrisy of society. Significantly, Sharon does not hesitate to have the baby outside of marriage, but she is concerned about the social reactions she might face. Here again, Doyle reflects on the social pressure placed upon an individual’s autonomy, and specifically on women. Furthermore, Sharon’s willingness to proceed with the pregnancy from an unplanned sexual incident reflects Doyle’s advocacy of women’s independence. Additionally, he suggests that fathers are mostly absent, physically or emotionally speaking. Furthermore, Sharon’s own experience serves to project the changing social codes regarding single mothers within a working-class environment.

As regards social pressure, Sharon’s pregnancy outside marriage is not approved of. In that vein, Meaney (2010: 10) calls attention to women’s oppressed position in Ireland and states that “[m]otherhood was overtly idealized and venerated in its social and religious aspects, but also ruthlessly demonized if it occurred outside the legalities and control of church and state”. Furthermore, Sharon’s preference to keep the father’s name anonymous until the very end of the novel is highly rebellious. The first reaction of her father Jimmy Sr. as “—That’s shockin’” (Doyle 1990: 1), also reflects the huge impact of her maternity on the family. Not surprisingly, Jimmy Sr.’s next concern is related to marriage, whether the unknown man will marry Sharon or not (5). On the one hand, Sharon states “[t]here’s no way [she’d] have an abortion” since “abortion is murder” (6) and, on the other hand she does not consider marriage relevant for the raising of her baby

and does not care what other people will think about her decision to be a single mother. Despite not being socially accepted, the concept of lone motherhood was already an issue which was being addressed in the Ireland of the 1990s. Layden (2006: 160) acknowledges the social change in the country and underlines that Ireland has “come a long way from 1956, where unmarried pregnant women terminated their pregnancies by any means available, to 1990 where Sharon could remain within her family and community”. Similarly, in her chapter “Ideologies of Motherhood and Single Mothers”, Clare O’Hagan draws attention to the tangible fact of “the rapid social change” and states that at the end of the 1990s, “31.82% of all babies were born to single mothers in Ireland, as opposed to 2.7% in 1971” (2006: 65-66). In *The Snapper*, Doyle hence envisions a moment in Irish society when single motherhood becomes more visible and acceptable.

It is very likely that Sharon’s refusal to have an abortion is a reflection of the lack of choice women had at the time. As White claims (2001: 81), Sharon’s decision to continue with her pregnancy is not related to her faith. Here, her decision to keep her baby mirrors the controversy regarding the social conditions of the time. Linda Connolly, in *The Irish Women’s Movement: From Revolution to Devolution* (2002), provides an in-depth examination of the rise and growth of the Irish Women’s Movement and, more importantly, she emphasises the social restraints that women have faced throughout the decades. She specifically discusses the taboo of abortion and its impact on women’s lives (2002: 160; 164). In the very same work, Connolly considers talking about abortion as courageous option since “most women had never discussed abortion in public—indeed, not outside an intimate circle of friends” (164). Moreover, her determined choice to be a single mother not only alters her situation within the Rabbitte family, but also triggers a change in Jimmy Sr.’s masculine egocentrism. To begin with,

Sharon's decision shows her as a determined character in the eyes of her family by challenging the conventional image of submissive femininity. During Sharon's pregnancy, the gender roles amongst the Rabbitte family change: Sharon gains a voice and proves to be an independent woman who has decided to be a single mother. On the one hand, Jimmy Sr. goes through a transformation as regards his fatherhood and he begins to explore himself both as father and grandfather. While all this is happening, Veronica begins to feel ignored by her daughter and her husband and tries to regain her own independence. As we will see in the discussion of the following novel of this trilogy, Veronica shows the first signs of her self sufficiency by attending educational courses.

Doyle does not clearly mention what exactly has taken place between Sharon and Mr. Burgess. He only dedicates a few paragraphs to describing the nature of the sexual intercourse. For some critics (White 2001: 63; Peach 2004b: 149; and McGlynn 2008: 107), it is not rape in strict terms but it is not consensual sex either. From Sharon's mixture of guilt and confusion, which arises from her drunken state that night, we can infer that she has been sexually assaulted. Furthermore, her pregnancy is problematic as she is not sure what she has been through exactly nor how she feels about it: "she'd wondered a few times if what had happened could be called rape. She didn't know" (45). As Layden (2006: 164) acknowledges, "[Sharon's] memories suggest that she isn't quite sure how much resistance, if any, she offered and yet her participation was minimal". Moreover, Sharon feels hesitant to share her experience even with her best friend: "if she couldn't tell Jackie the whole lot—and she couldn't—then she couldn't tell anyone" (43). Furthermore, her anxiety and hesitancy stems from the possible negative reaction from society: "[w]hat was she going to tell them; how much? Only that she was pregnant. But what was going to happen after that, and what

they were going to ask and say, and think; that's what was worrying her" (40-41). Here, it is clear that Sharon cannot be open about the incident because she is determined by a patriarchal society which will punish her. According to Peach (2004b: 149-150), Doyle unveils the unsaid truths about "the behaviour of so-called respectably married men and the issue of what today might be called 'date rape'". Peach (150) also notes that "George Burgess, once aroused by Sharon, is unable to do anything but surrender to his animal urges, accepting in a sense that his body is not fully involved in his definition of himself". George Burgess is an abuser since he admits that "I've always liked the look of you, Sharon" (45). Here, Doyle also highlights the so-called justification of the sexual assault as well as the victimization of women.

Following their sexual encounter, Mr. Burgess tries to overcome his guilt through infantilising Sharon. He offers her money to buy sweets and treats her as if she were a child: "—We made a mistake, Sharon. We were both stupid go an' buy yourself a few sweets—eh, drinks" (90). Yet, in fact it is clear to the reader that Mr. Burgess is very well aware of Sharon's state at the moment of his assault, and it is her vulnerability which triggers his desire to possess her. In this aforementioned scene, Doyle reveals Mr Burgess's hypocrisy as he tries to share his blame with Sharon. Although later Mr. Burgess confesses his guilt and suggests to her that they could escape together to London (128), Sharon talks about the event as a mere sexual encounter. Despite the fact that Sharon is highly confused and does not even know how to describe the assault, her refusal of Mr. Burgess's offer as well as her acceptance of its consequences can be interpreted as an act of subversion. In other words, she does not allow society to victimize and infantilise her. She stands up against the traditional, accepted rules of motherhood and decides to have the baby on her own.

In her book *The Irish Novel at the End of Twentieth Century: Gender, Bodies, and Power* (2002), Jennifer Jeffers focuses, in her examination of Irish literary texts, how society, culture, politics and religion can manipulate an individual's gender and sexuality. Jeffers (2002: 50) points out that "[s]ex and sexuality constitute an arena of power that is used to create and maintain male domination". Hence, pregnancy, evidently linked to sex and one's sexuality, is perceived in a male dominated society as acceptable only when the pregnant woman is married. Sharon's decision not to have an abortion constitutes a reaction against this enforced patriarchal authority. Her final choice thus comes centre of stage. What is more, Sharon continues to defy male dominated reactions by highlighting, in a conversation with Mr. Burgess, how her pregnancy is hers alone, underlining the fact that the baby only belongs to her: "it's not YOUR baby [...]. It's not yours or anyone else's" (129). Certainly, Sharon decides to raise the baby without the presence of the biological father around, what reflects her disdain for the baby's father.

Sharon keeps Mr. Burgess' name anonymous until the end of the novel. If we try to understand why she does this, it is pertinent to interpret this reaction through the idea described in chapter three: Lacan's concept of the "the Name-of-the-Father". This term refers to the child's entry into the paternal realm and his/her abduction from the mother. Lacan (2013: 44) also notes that "before we can know who [the father] is with certainty, the name of the father creates the function of the father". In the case of Sharon's baby, the father is not present either in body or spirit. Furthermore, Sharon plays around the father's name by calling her baby girl 'Georgina'. By doing this, Sharon prevents her baby from entering into the paternal domain, and ridicules the girl's father by giving her daughter a feminised version of George Burgess' first name. In this sense, the baby's name only encompasses

part of "the Name-of-the-Father", which is related to paternal domain. Nonetheless, it is the mother who acquires total control of the baby's development. This wordplay can be interpreted as Sharon's symbolic domination of social conventions. Here, again, Doyle touches upon the concern with the defective paternal figure and enables Sharon to break with socially accepted principles. Layden (2006: 171) agrees that Sharon is not forced to take moral codes for granted; on the contrary she mocks these codes and shows the power of her single maternity. Significantly, Sharon ridicules the social pressure that has been put upon her and, as White (2001: 64) states, "thumbs her nose at all of Barrytown by naming the baby Georgina". The narrator conveys Sharon's thoughts as "[the baby] was gorgeous. And hers." (215). In fact, she manages to reduce the social pressure; firstly, by going through her pregnancy alone as a single woman, and secondly, by naming her daughter with a female version of the father's name.

Sharon's new status as a lone mother changes the relationship she has with her father. As a lone mother, she adopts a new identity at home. The baby increases the understanding and emotional exchange between Jimmy Sr. and Sharon. Upon learning of his daughter's unexpected pregnancy, Jimmy Sr. offers her a drink at the pub (Doyle 1990: 8). McCarthy (2003: 57) states that Jimmy Sr.'s "unsuccessful questioning [of] Sharon about the father's identity" leads him to the pub, where he can give himself a break. For Jimmy Sr., the pub signifies an escape from his family responsibilities. In other words, the pub provides a masculine domain where Jimmy Sr. can distance himself from home and pour out his problems to his peers. Inviting Sharon into a traditionally masculine place is a highly significant act. This could be interpreted as a stripping away of Jimmy Sr.'s negative attitude towards his daughter, for the very first time. Additionally, this scene also marks the

beginning of Jimmy Sr.'s reconstruction of his idea of fatherhood and his perception of gender, both triggered by his daughter's pregnancy.

Sharon's lone motherhood dislocates the gender relationships within the Rabbitte family. In this respect, Henry Ferguson's sociological study "Men and Masculinities in Late-Modern Ireland" is significant as he describes what he calls "the shifting nature of power relations within the gender order" (2001: 119). Ferguson underlines that the Church and the State have been working hand in hand, since the foundation of the Irish State and "for most of the 20th century", to impose their idealist notions of masculinity and femininity in Ireland (120). These notions drew a strict line between the stereotype of men as fathers and women as mothers. Whilst men were expected to work and, hence, have economic power, women were supposed to stay at home and take care of the children. Moreover, the mother was presumed to show a higher degree of empathy for family members. However, in the case of Jimmy Sr. and Veronica, it is Jimmy Sr. who is more accepting of his daughter's pregnancy whereas Veronica is less inclined to support her. Indeed, we often witness serious reactions from Veronica against Sharon's maternity. For instance, she warns Sharon by saying that "[pregnancy] is not a game!" (5); or again, it is Veronica who is concerned with gossip coming from the neighbours (7) and with how society at large would react to her daughter's pregnancy:

[Veronica] couldn't really go on. She thought that Sharon's news deserved a lot more attention, and some sort of punishment. As far as Veronica was concerned this was the worst thing that had ever happened the family. But she couldn't really explain why, not really. And she knew that anyway, nothing could be done about it. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad once she got used to it. (7)

Here, Veronica finds Sharon's pregnancy an issue that is hard for her to come to terms with and this is probably the reason why she does not know how to define her awkward feeling. Additionally, the narrator implies that Sharon's

unmarried condition will be eventually approved by Veronica. Here Doyle is reflecting upon the pressure of social expectations on an individual.

Pregnancy and maternity might be familiar subjects for Veronica; however this experience is distinct for every woman as far as social conventions are concerned. For instance, Veronica is surprised when she witnesses Sharon reading a book about pregnancy and reacts “—Jaysis, d’yeh need a buke to be pregnant these days?, —I didn’t have a book” (Doyle 1990: 15). In other words, Sharon’s maternity demonstrates new ways of dealing with the maternal experience as she belongs to a new generation. As McCarthy (2003: 64) points out, “Sharon’s character presents a new sensibility, new values”. Unlike Veronica, who is stuck in the old methods of mothering, Sharon is determined to listen to herself and embrace a new experience. Furthermore, the role of being an unmarried mother is challenging in many ways. McCashin (1996: 180) states that single women with a child or children living in their parental home play the two contradictory roles of daughters and mothers at the same time. Similarly, these women have to endure the pressure of “their parents”, while “trying to develop the individuality, confidence and judgement required to be a parent” (180).

Veronica deliberately fails to be involved in her daughter’s pregnancy and stays distant. But this is not the only way she remains distant from Sharon and the rest of the household. From a linguistic point of view, she is different to the rest of the Rabbitte family, whose members use an utterly chauvinistic language which she does not approve of. She often interferes to correct their speech or stop them from using abbreviations and slang. For instance, she does not like to hear the word ‘ma’ but prefers to be called ‘mammy’ (Doyle 1990: 16). In her study “Roddy Doyle’s ‘Bad Language’ and the Limits of Community”, literary scholar Kelly Marsh

indicates that “Veronica acts as family censor” since she does not want her children to be “corrupted by the language of Jimmy” (2004: 149). We often hear the children apologizing to Veronica for using slang, as in the following example of Sharon: “Ah, look, I was really drunk . . . Pissed. Sorry, Mammy” (131). In other words, one could say that Veronica is trying to steer clear from the male jargon with which she does not identify. Ironically enough, the title of the book is *The Snapper*, a slang term meaning “baby”, and also used to describe the female sexual organ.⁴⁴ In this sense, the word carries connotations of female sexuality, privacy, giving birth, and the baby itself. The title can be read as an ironic reference to Veronica’s rejection of a male chauvinist language. Furthermore, as I will discuss further on, in chapter five, Veronica’s distant and unconventional stance could be interpreted as a sign of her own personal transformation which will be seen clearly in Doyle’s last volume of the trilogy, *The Van*, where she becomes more autonomous and challenges Jimmy Sr.’s masculinity.

During Sharon’s maternity, her family, and in fact, her community eventually learn to respect her decisions. At first, she feels very lonely and wishes she could share her experience with her friends. However, issues related to sex and pregnancy are taboo amongst the women of the community and are usually mentioned only superficially and for fun. Sharon wants to talk with her best friend Jackie, but as the narrator admits “they’d often talked about fellas; what he did and how he did it and that sort of thing, but that had only been for a laugh; messing” (Doyle 1990: 42). Besides, the two friends “hadn’t spoken seriously about anything to do with sex since—Sharon had her first period” (42). Therefore, pregnancy can be read as a new side of Sharon’s life as well as of her own social conventions.

⁴⁴ For the different slang connotations of the word, see *The Routledge Dictionary of Modern American Slang and Unconventional English* by Tom Dalzell (2009: 908).

The Snapper provides a detailed physiological and psychological account of the period of pregnancy. Sharon is aware that she might experience distinct feelings such as shock, loss of individuality, lack of love, fear, and sickness (17). The different changes in Sharon's body are commented on throughout the narrative, as she discovers that "her nipples were going to get darker. [...] The veins in her breasts would become more prominent. [...] The joints between her pelvic bones would be widening. [...] Her uterus would soon be pressing into her bladder" (13). As the delivery day approaches, she feels these physical changes more intensely: "[...] she looked terrible. [...] Her tits were hanging like a cow's. [...] She looked like a pig. [...] the baby was throwing wobblers inside of her now" (152). Moreover, all these changes also seem to affect Jimmy Sr. psychologically. He questions his own identity as a father as his moods and thoughts evolve and while a part of him embraces Sharon's maternity, the other part harshly rejects it.

Maintaining her privacy becomes harder for Sharon as the rumours about the identity of the father spread around Barrytown. The rapid spread of gossip related to the incident holds her back from visiting the local pub (119). Due to the social pressure that she faces, and for the sake of her privacy, Sharon hides behind a lie. She begins to tell everyone that she had a one night stand with a Spanish sailor who was in Dublin for a day and who is the father of her baby. However, Jimmy Sr. is not totally convinced with the sailor story and eventually finds out that the next door neighbour, Mr. Burgess, is the father. Upon this discovery, Jimmy Sr. feels furious with the thought that Mr. Burgess, who is the same age as himself, has abused his daughter and made her pregnant. In "Pregnancy, Privacy and Domesticity in *The Snapper*" Mary McGlynn (2005: 147) recalls that "in patriarchal systems daughters are seen as somehow belonging to fathers as both children and as females". Indeed,

Jimmy Sr. feels that his daughter has been taken away from him by Mr. Burgess without his consent. Jimmy Sr.'s sense of loss can be interpreted through Rosi Braidotti's work *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis* (1994a). Here, Braidotti comments on the gender construction of paternal supremacy:

[T]he gender-system, which constructs the two sexes as different, unequal and yet complementary, is in fact a power system that aims at concentrating material and symbolic capital in the hands of the fathers, that is to say older men who control younger men and the women. The family is thus the power unit which seals the wealth of (older) men. (Braidotti 1994a: 38)

In other words, the gender-system identifies fathers as the dominant figures. However, Doyle subverts this convention through his portrayal of Jimmy Sr. The loss of his paternal power strikes him firstly on a social level. Various rumours spread about his daughter, claiming that she is "messin' around with [George] Burgess" and that "[Burgess] is the father" (Doyle 1990: 118), amongst other comments. Secondly, due to the fact that the father of the baby is a man of his own age, Jimmy Sr. is reminded that he is getting old. Consequently, Sharon's pregnancy begins to make Jimmy Sr. aware of his age. The narrator describes the state of mind of middle aged men (such as George Burgess or Jimmy Sr.) as "funny" from Sharon's perspective: "She'd noticed the same thing with her father. They went silly when there were girls near them [...]. They tried to pretend that they weren't getting old and made eejits out of themselves" (118). In other words, Sharon's unexpected pregnancy not only jeopardizes Jimmy Sr.'s paternal authority but also makes him feel old.

Sharon's pregnancy constitutes a turning point in the novel as it effectively signals the loss of Jimmy Sr.'s patriarchal authority. McCarthy (2003: 57-58) acknowledges that "[a]s Sharon's condition becomes public knowledge and the rumour of the father's identity circulates, Jimmy Sr.'s

pride takes a beating and he begins to take his embarrassment out on Sharon". Jimmy Sr. thinks that "she had to realize all the trouble she'd caused, the consequences of her messing around" (Doyle 1990: 153). Sharon's personal decision is still difficult to accept for a father who is stuck between the conventional and the modern. Despite the fact that Jimmy Sr. cannot articulate his concern openly, he considers Sharon's act as degrading the family's honour:

—Did I do somethin' to yeh?
Jesus, she was asking him had she done something: had she done something! She could sit there and—
—You've done nothin', Sharon.
—I'll tell yeh what I've done.
[...]
—I'm pregnant. —I saw yeh lookin' at me.
Jimmy Sr said nothing yet.
—I've disgraced the family.
—No. (156)

Sharon's self-blame provides a sense of victory for Jimmy Sr. As he reassures himself that she has confessed her fault (157). However, as soon as Sharon pretends to pack and leave home, Jimmy Sr. faces the risk of losing his daughter forever. In order to improve the situation, he claims "—No. Fuck it, Sharon; this is your home [...] —You should stay —stay with your family" (159). Sharon's pretentious departure reminds Jimmy Sr. that "[s]he was the only civilized human being in the whole fuckin' house" (160). For all these reasons, I would contend that Sharon's attitude towards pregnancy subverts the conventional submissive image of a pregnant girl that is often disregarded by her family. On the contrary, she is genuinely accepted and embraced by her father.

Sharon's position as a single mother forces Jimmy Sr. to reconsider his perspective towards motherhood. In a way, he begins to question the patriarchal realm he lives in. His acceptance of the baby is striking to the

extent that he declares his unconditional love towards the infant and states that he will love it even if “it looks like Burgess’s arse” (163). Peach (2004b: 151) acknowledges that Sharon “[prompts] him into thinking about how men’s relationships with the body have been developed, or have failed to develop, over time”. Sharon’s pregnancy arouses Jimmy’s curiosity towards the alterations of the human body which he had never thought about before. He wonders about the physiological and psychological aspects of pregnancy to the extent that he develops a great interest in learning about the pregnancy process. He borrows for instance a book entitled *Everywoman* from the library and begins to read it to find out about the changes that take place in the pregnant woman’s anatomy (Doyle 1990: 170).⁴⁵ As a consequence, the bond between Sharon and her father is strengthened. In this sense, again, Sharon’s conclusion about friendship among women is challenged: “[s]he’d often read in magazines and she’d seen it on television where it said that women friends were closer than men, but Sharon didn’t think they were. Not the girls she knew” (43). In the chapter dedicated to Doyle’s oeuvre, Rüdiger Imhof (2002: 243) defines the relationship between Jimmy Sr. and Sharon as a symbol of “the newly won intimacy between father and daughter”. Similar to the umbilical cord that unites a baby to its mother, a solid emotional bond is built between daughter and father. This bond also symbolises Jimmy Sr.’s acceptance of Sharon’s position as a single mother. He begins to feel closer to his daughter than to the rest of the male characters in the family. In fact, he asks Sharon to hide from the others that she has witnessed his tears (Doyle 1990: 163). In his article (2004), Robert J. Cannata claims, Jimmy Sr.’s transformation is singled out by the fact that he “breaks out of his comfortable, stereotypical shell and embraces the new reality his family faces” (13).

⁴⁵ Although the narrator refers to Derek Llewellyn-Jones’ book as *Everywoman* (1971), the title in full is *Everywoman and Her Body*, which includes information about gynaecology and pregnancy.

As far as the portrayals of fathers are concerned in the novel, it is evident that Doyle plays with the idea of their absence. While Jimmy Sr. ends up fulfilling a proper role as a father, Mr. Burgess serves only as a biological father to Sharon's baby. Although Mr. Burgess is married and has children (with similar ages to Sharon), his paternity can be qualified as ineffective. On the contrary, Jimmy Sr.'s acceptance of the baby puts him on a higher plane, as he becomes a caretaker, a provider, or as McCarthy (2003: 70-71) defines him, a "surrogate father". His support to Sharon becomes evident when he regards the birth of the baby as a way of recuperating his imperfect paternity:

—When your mammy was havin' Jimmy I was in work. An' when she was havin' you I was in me mother's. When she had Leslie I was inside in town, in Conways, yeh know, with the lads. The Hikers wasn't built then. For Darren, I was—I can't remember. The twins, I was in the Hikers.

—You've a great memory.

—Nowadays the husbands are there with the women, said Jimmy Sr.

—That's much better, I think. I'd— (Doyle 1990: 201)

Jimmy Sr. has not been present at the birth of his own children, but now he is highly concerned with his grandchild. In this sense, Sharon's pregnancy also reflects the different expectations of society. The idea that the mother is the only one responsible for child care is no longer valid as times have evolved. Therefore, Jimmy Sr. wishes to be present to support his daughter in every way he can.

To sum up, unlike in *The Commitments*, Doyle touches upon real family issues in *The Snapper*. He draws the reader's attention to the struggles and victories of single motherhood, despite its unfavourable reception by the family unit and the Barrytown society as a whole. The novel offers a detailed account of psychological and physiological aspects of the pregnancy process from different angles (i.e. from the father's perspective as well as that of the daughter's). Additionally, Doyle deals with the issue of being an unmarried mother as a result of an undisclosed sexual assault. This ambiguity can be

interpreted as Doyle's critique of the hypocritical attitude of society. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as Doyle's exploration of the evolution of the society in the last decades. Similarly, through the different reactions from various people to Sharon's pregnancy, the author explores social conventions as regards women's autonomy. Although Sharon is bewildered and trying to come to terms with what she has experienced with Mr. Burgess, she accepts the responsibility of bearing a her baby on her own. Her decision not only dislocates gender roles within the family but it also challenges Jimmy Sr.'s paternal authority. Thanks to Sharon's pregnancy, Jimmy Sr. evolves as a father. Sharon's pregnancy serves for both an awakening and learning experience for him. Doyle also emphasises that mothering does always require the existence of a biological father. By naming her daughter with an altered version of the father's name, Sharon openly challenges social conventions and moves away from the submissive role traditionally assigned to mothers. All in all, Doyle projects in *The Snapper* the shifting social reactions regarding motherhood and its gradual acceptance by society as a whole.

5.1.3. Subversive motherhood and unconventional masculinity in *The Van*

The last novel in *The Barrytown Trilogy* is *The Van* (1991). It is a follow up of Jimmy Rabbitte Sr.'s story in the *The Snapper*. In this present chapter, my analysis revolves around theories of masculinity. I will discuss how the economic conditions have shifted the gender relations in Barrytown, specifically with respect to the Rabbitte family. While the fathers are emasculated, the mothers gain more authority within society. *The Van* focuses on the adventures of Jimmy Rabbitte Sr. and his best friend Bimbo,

when the latter decides to use his redundancy pay to buy a very old van and transform it into a chipper van in northern Dublin. Although reluctant at first to enter into business with his friend, Jimmy Sr. agrees to help him. Thanks to the management of Bimbo's wife, Maggie, and the assistance of Jimmy Sr.'s wife, Veronica, they renew the van and start selling fast food. However, as they progress and make profit, Jimmy Sr. begins to feel that he is not given any initiatives while Bimbo and Maggie take decisions. The attack to the van by a group of young people raises tensions between Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo and provokes the end of their friendship. Following their final quarrel, Bimbo drives the van into the sea as he blames the presence of this vehicle for their failure.

Unlike the previous two novels included in *The Barrytown Trilogy*, *The Van* includes few dialogues. The narrator tells the story in the third person singular and, at times, uses Jimmy Sr.'s own words. With this, the novel reveals internal conflicts within Jimmy Sr. that he cannot share with anyone, not even with his best friend Bimbo. Various studies have analysed the novel in terms of its portrayal of social mobility, Ireland's temporal economic shift into prosperity, and eventual unemployment (Persson 2005: 213; Lynch 1997: 265; and, McCarthy 2003: 114). In addition to these concerns, *The Van* stages more complex issues about Jimmy Sr.'s masculinity and his alienation from the family, following the conflict he experiences when he becomes a grandfather in *The Snapper*. Doyle portrays Jimmy Sr. as a man struggling to maintain his masculine identity, which is threatened by his wife. Despite the fact that the male voices are dominant in the plot, the threat of Veronica and Maggie upon Jimmy Sr.'s masculinity are prominent in the novel. They are both described as subversive women as far as their independence and maternal authority are concerned.

Following his acceptance of Sharon's maternity in *The Snapper*, now Jimmy Sr. experiences the disappearance of his hegemony, as the dominant position is now held by the female members in the family. In his analysis of traditional gender roles within Irish society, Harry Ferguson (2001: 121) states that men's hegemonic position is determined in relation to their occupation in Irish society. While women are acknowledged as "home-makers",

The assumption of the male breadwinner was so enshrined in Irish society that the 'marriage bar' legally required women, once married (and irrespective of whether or not they had children), to give up their jobs in public service employment, such as teaching and the civil service, a law that was repealed on in 1973. Underpinning such social policy is the pivotal position given to women—or, more accurately, mothers—as home-makers in the Irish [C]onstitution. (121)

The Van is set in the early 1990s when the Irish economy starts to grow.⁴⁶ It foresees the future in its reflection of the changes taking place within the working-class, specifically with respect to gender roles. Unlike her position in *The Snapper*, Veronica's growing personal development and rising independence becomes more visible in *The Van*. McCarthy (2003: 93) acknowledges that "Veronica emerges as a much stronger character in *The Van*. [...] Even more than in *The Snapper*, she begins to assert her impatience with Jimmy Sr., but now a new independence as well". As the narrator states, she "was doing night classes, two Leaving Cert subjects" (Doyle 1991: 16). According to Roddy Doyle, Veronica's determination to succeed is "a big thing for a working-class woman of the age to do" (interview with Smyth 1997: 105). Moreover, she wishes to achieve success without any help from a companion. Therefore, when Jimmy Sr. tells her that he also wants to attend night classes, she realizes that "she wanted to do it on her own, even going up to the school on her own and walking home; everything" (Doyle 1991:16).

⁴⁶ In the screen adaptation of the novel, which was released in 1996, the arrival of this rapid economic growth of Ireland, colloquially called the Celtic Tiger, and its consequences are more visible than in the novel.

Veronica is not convinced that Jimmy Sr. would attend the classes as he sometimes makes fun of this decision adopted by her, as when he makes jokes relating Geography with finding the kettle in the kitchen (281). Although Jimmy Sr. does not notice it at first, Veronica puts distance between herself and her husband. As McCarthy (2003: 109) observes, she “seems to want more from life than Jimmy Sr. is prepared to settle for—or more precisely, to want more from herself”. She desires to explore the limits of knowledge and to find a space of her own. In Lynch's terms, “[studying] is a pursuit which isolates her in time and interest from Jimmy” (1997: 265). Therefore, her indifferent attitude when Jimmy Sr. comes home late at night (Doyle 1991: 66) evidently reveals her flourishing autonomy within their relationship.

Veronica's independence at home stiffens when Jimmy Sr., as McCarthy notes (2003: 90), begins to feel insecure about Veronica's attention to her studies. Thus, he intends to keep up with her progress, endeavouring to achieve the same level of intellectuality as his spouse: “he'd have to finish [the book] because he'd told Veronica he was reading it, told her all about it, shown it to her; the fuckin' eejit” (28). Furthermore, most of the time, Jimmy Sr. is hesitant and insecure, as when he thinks twice before spending his money on a singing studio fearing that “Veronica would fuck him from a height if he came home with a tape of himself singing and she found out how much it'd cost” (13). Significantly, Veronica's portrayal goes beyond that of the traditional housewife figure. In the aforementioned study of traditional gender roles in Irish society, Henry Ferguson (2001: 122) stresses that Irish women have been expected by the Church and the nationalist agenda to be “the well-trained domestic servant who would become the ideal of the virtuous Irish mother”. Likewise, men have been expected to fulfil the role of “the disciplined, chaste working man who would

become the god-fearing priest or good breadwinning father”. As Veronica strips herself of the traditionally expected role of the submissive spouse and mother, Jimmy Sr.’s traditional gender role as a husband and father is endangered.

Hand in hand with the Church, patriarchy has provided a comfortable sphere for men in Ireland. However, the consequences of the Celtic Tiger have involved a shift in Irish men’s position in society. In her study “Trans-formation of Gendered Identities in Ireland” (2014), Jeannine Woods notes that the Celtic Tiger period has reformulated conventional notions of Irish masculinity: Ireland “became increasingly defined by the acquisition and display of affluence [and it was] channelled in the pursuit of wealth and the accumulation of consumer goods, through which identity is constructed and affirmed” (2014: 29). Woods links money-making and profit with identity as they are elements which have marked men’s degree of power. Persson (2005: 213-214) likewise highlights that the construction of male identity is formed and closely related to the concept of wage-earning in society. The very first signs of the Celtic Tiger and Jimmy Sr.’s longing for a wealthy position are reflected in his visit to town several years later. As he realizes, the town, “had changed a lot; pubs he’d known and even streets were gone. It looked good though, he thought. He could tell you one thing: there was money in this town” (Doyle 1991: 68). That said, although the country has become prosperous, Bimbo is still made redundant. On the other hand, Jimmy Sr. is discreetly happy to hear that Bimbo has lost his job “so the two of them might as well hang around and do fuckin’ nothing together” (87). Nevertheless, Bimbo is reluctant to be unemployed, probably due to the very reason that wealth sets the standards for masculine identity and he soon comes up with an idea of buying a van to start a new business.

As we have seen, Jimmy Sr. evolves into a supportive father in *The Snapper*. His emasculated masculinity continues throughout *The Van* where he seems to fulfil an infantilised position in relation to his wife. In his analysis of the novel, McCarthy (2003: 94) underlines that Irish culture appraises “infantilized” spouses and it is this same culture that “encourages Veronica to mother [Jimmy Sr.]”. Similarly, Jimmy Sr. interprets Veronica's comments and help as if she were mothering him, and he is peculiarly fond of this:

—Can you not tie your laces properly yet?
And she put his foot in her lap and got going on the knot. He nearly
fell off the bed turning for her.
—You're useless, she said. —You really are.
[...]
It was nice as well sometimes, being mothered by Veronica. (41)

In this quotation, Jimmy Sr. is likened to a little boy incapable of tying his shoes. The shoe being laced by Veronica symbolically suggests that Jimmy Sr. can only walk properly with the help of his wife. Veronica's maternal attitude towards Jimmy Sr. lies far from the definition of paternalism that Adrienne Rich (1995: 64) explains in her book *Of Woman Born*. Rich acknowledges that a man proves himself and his power by controlling his wife and children and thus insuring “the disposition of his patrimony” (1995: 64). Ironically, in the case of *The Van*, the roles of Veronica and her husband are reversed, as Veronica is the one who controls her husband.

Veronica's growing interest regarding her self-development further intensifies Jimmy Sr.'s infantilized position within home. Besides Veronica's new and evident independence, his son Darren infantilizes Jimmy Sr. by taunting him about his lack of economic power. In a scene where the family gathers for dinner, Jimmy Sr. brings up the topic of some women's spectacular appearance despite their old age. Darren finds Jimmy Sr.'s comment irrelevant and he verbally attacks Jimmy as follows:

—Look at the state o’ you.

Jimmy Sr. looked at Darren. Darren was looking back at him, waiting for a reaction. Jimmy Sr. wasn’t going to take that from him, not for another couple of years.

He pointed his fork at Darren.

—Don’t you forget who paid for tha’ dinner in front of you, son, righ’.

—I know who paid for it, said Darren. —The state.

Jimmy Sr. looked like he’d been told that someone had died. (102)

Darren’s harsh critique of Jimmy Sr.’s unemployment reveals how paternal authority is legitimised mainly through employment and money. Moreover, Darren possesses different intellectual and social traits to Jimmy Sr., and he symbolizes the positive and efficient features that his father lacks as a disempowered male figure. However, Jimmy Sr. interprets Darren’s attitude as “a phase young fellas went through, hating their fathers” (105). Darren’s resentful approach echoes the common theme of the dispute between fathers and sons, which Kiberd mentions in his discussion of the father figure in canonical works on Irish Renaissance in *The Irish Writer and the World* (2005). Kiberd underlines that the work of Joyce, Synge and O’Casey represents the overall “disenchantment with the Irish male father” (2005: 181). Furthermore, he notes that the father-son conflict in the Irish setting has a distinct meaning (246). While it may suggest social progress in other European countries, “in Ireland that conflict [has been] turned back on itself, unbearably intensifying the stresses of family life” (ibid). McCarthy (2003: 92) interprets this father-son relationship by saying that Jimmy Sr. cannot understand how Darren “[imagines] a different way of being in the world than that modelled by his father”. Even after his fresh financial start with Bimbo in the chipper van business, we are reminded about the prominent presence of mothers at home. For instance, Jimmy secretly searches for information from Sharon’s magazines (i.e. striped shirts “[makes] you look thinner” [175]). Furthermore, the reader sees that he hands over his earnings

to Veronica (175). In this, again, Jimmy Sr.'s masculinity is constantly challenged through the mothers in the Rabbitte family.

As discussed from different theoretical viewpoints in chapter three, the problem of masculinity, hyper-masculinity, and therefore emasculation in contemporary Ireland is a real issue. Similarly, the problem of emasculation is a tremendous obstacle in Jimmy Sr.'s life. Caramine White (2001: 87) acknowledges Jimmy Sr.'s lack of supremacy and she points out that "he feels impotent even in situations unrelated to money". Not surprisingly, due to his emasculation at home, he wishes to reinforce his masculinity to the outside world. As Connell notes in *Masculinities* (1995), the concept of masculinity is gender constructed, and it is not fixed. As such, this concept is prone to redefinition within society "in terms of its practical relationships to collective images or models of masculinity" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 841). Furthermore, the ideal models of masculinity, using Ferguson's terms (2001: 119), are "diverse [and] each era has a hegemonic form of masculinity that dominates what manhood is meant to be". Likewise, the economic prosperity resulting from the Celtic Tiger ensured Irish men a hyper-masculine position. In Jimmy Sr.'s case, his emasculated identity at home clashes with his financial comfort in the chipper van business. Therefore, this conflict of identity within and without the home serves as the basis for an awaking of his suppressed masculinity. He and Veronica do not have sex often and even if they do Jimmy Sr. describes it as "riding" or "business" as "he could never have said Let's make love to Veronica; she'd have burst out laughing at him" (64). In this instance, Jimmy Sr. cannot allow himself to break the pre-coded notions of masculinity (i.e. being a tough man rather than a romantic one). Therefore, he employs slang such as "riding" (64) when he is referring to sex in order to ensure himself of his sexual potency.

Jimmy Sr.'s sexual concerns are not limited to home. He pays attention to other women and sometimes compares them with Veronica. For instance, he considers his friend Bertie's wife Vera as "a fine thing" (58); "a fine looking bird" (63); even "look[ing] healthier than Veronica (63)". In an effort to prove his vigour to himself, he fantasises with extramarital affairs. He envisions himself with other women (and even secretly gazes at them) but he fears that Veronica might catch him:

The sewing factory girls got a half day on Fridays. The first time Jimmy Sr'd looked at them on a Friday, from his bedroom window, he'd felt the blood rushing through his head, walloping off the sides, like he was watching a blue video and he was afraid Veronica would come in and catch him. (Doyle 1991: 111)

Jimmy Sr.'s voyeuristic tendencies gain more significance following his night out with Bimbo to celebrate their profits. "[Their] use of some of their new-found prosperity to spend an evening in a trendy Dublin wine-bar", as Patricia Lynch describes it (1997: 265), can be read as their effort to find a place for themselves within a new and wealthier social milieu. Being deprived of his masculinity at home, Jimmy Sr. wishes to recuperate his bruised authority with one of the glamorous looking women in the bar: "Maybe just the once he'd like to get the leg over one of these kind of women, only the once, in a hotel room or in her apartment, and then he'd be satisfied" (256-257). Moreover, "[w]hat he wanted was to see if he could manage" (267) to dominate a woman in sexual terms. In other words, his concern is not with experiencing something new but with the desire of overcoming his disempowered masculinity in a new prosperous milieu. In his comparative essay of Doyle's *The Snapper* (1990) and Mary Morrissey's *Mother of Pearl* (1995), Linden Peach (2004b) notes that Jimmy Sr.'s extramarital fantasies affirm the fact that the codes of male sexuality, "[have] traditionally been constructed around notions of conquest and performance as a way of proving itself to other men" (Peach 2004b: 147). The references of

the pub and pint are also closely related to the traditional notion of Irish masculinity. Clearly, the pint provides Jimmy Sr. with relaxation so that he can come to terms with his crisis of masculinity. In his work *Drinking Cultures* (2005), Thomas Wilson traces a close relationship between identity and alcohol consumption in different cultures. He points out that pubs are indispensable places in terms of the sustainability of Irish culture as they provide masculine spaces where “the questions of identity and identification continually matter” (2005: 3). In light of this, it is not surprising that Jimmy Sr. negotiates with his masculine identity crisis in the pub. Besides, he witnesses the same distressing male experience in his counterpart Bimbo. Sharing a similar experience with his friend relieves Jimmy Sr. of his own anxiety.

Jimmy Sr.'s and Bimbo's have a very simplistic view of what women are. In a conversation they have together they classify women in two ways, as wives and “more women than wives” (Doyle 1991: 259). It is implied in this dialogue that women who are wives fulfil traditional female roles: indeed, wives are mothers and this connotes for them ideas of purity, decency, modesty, and passivity. Their image of women cannot include any skilful, active, or sexual implications as these are attributes which they associate with their image of men. Summarizing this simple patriarchal notion of women, Braidotti explains that the domestic realm where women are thought to belong to is seen as secondary to that of men's (1994a: 30):

Women were consequently both defined as and compelled to be closer to a private realm that was seen as synonymous with nature, feelings and emotions, and caring for others. Conversely, men were defined as those best suited to the usage of reason and consequently fit for public life. (Braidotti 1994a: 30)

Hence, in the eyes of Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo, their wives are domestic beings and it is this patriarchal fallacy that they apply when they encounter women who are enjoying a night out in a pub as they do. Jimmy Sr. underlines his

appreciation that they are both lucky to have wives like Veronica and Maggie who are unlike the ‘eye-catching ladies’ at the pub:

—Veronica an’ Maggie. We’re lucky fuckin’ men. But—they’re wives. Am I makin’ sense?

—Yeah.

—Those ones back there aren’t. They might be married an’ tha’ but—they’re more women than wives, eh—Fuck it, that’s the only way I can say it.

—I know wha’ yeh mean, said Bimbo. (259)

What does Jimmy Sr. mean by “more than wives”? It seems that he is making a distinction between married women as traditional housewives and their more independent counterparts with their glamorous and attractive outlook. The former may seem more attractive and glamorous to Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo because they see their own wives at home in a subordinate position. As Luce Irigaray notes in her essay “Women on the Market”, women could be interpreted, from a Marxist perspective, as “commodities” subservient to men (1985: 171). Similarly, they are acknowledged as “a mirror of value of and for man” (177). In this again, they are often degraded by means of men’s sexist labels. Jimmy Sr.’s sexist attitude towards women at the bar is an example of what Irigaray calls “the standardization of women according to proper names” in order to “determine their equivalences” (1985: 173). In other words, stereotyping women is a way of simplifying reality and it is a patriarchal fallacy. What is more, society’s false classification of women into certain categories by re-naming them (i.e. in Jimmy Sr.’s approach: ‘wives’ versus ‘more than wives’) provides satisfaction for them. Their erroneous perception of women at the pub as ‘more than wives’ is a way of accommodating their own superiority over their spouses, while at the same time viewing these women at the bar as available commodities. In that sense, Doyle portrays Jimmy Sr. as someone who marginalizes women according to their outlook.

Similarly to Veronica, who shapes Jimmy Sr.'s life with her presence, Maggie plays an important role when making decisions for Bimbo. She assumes the economic responsibility of both Bimbo's and Jimmy Sr.'s business in their chipper van adventure. Maggie encourages the purchase of the van and helps them renew it; she also decides on the critical locations where they can sell more food and make more profit. In this sense, Maggie is portrayed as an assertive female figure, smartly aware of the rocky paths of business and capable of finding quick solutions to their problems. Furthermore, just like Jimmy Sr., who is incapable of tying up his shoe laces without Veronica's help, Bimbo is portrayed as a child under Maggie's orders. For instance, when they are about to purchase the van, Bimbo seems to think like a teenager:

Maggie stayed where she was, as if she was afraid to go closer to [the van]. She brought her cardigan in closer around her shoulders. Bimbo beside her, looking at her carefully, hoping, hoping. Like a kid, the fuckin' eejit; buy me tha', Mammy, he'd say in a minute, the fuckin' head on him. (Doyle 1991: 118)

In addition to keeping the account of the van's profit, Maggie decides on the promising locations for the business. The accuracy of her decisions is reflected in the following lines:

Maggie had bought them a space in Dollymount, near the beach, for the summer; she'd found out that you rented the patches from the Corporation and she'd gone in and done it. It was a brilliant idea, and a great patch; right up near the beach at the top of the causeway road, where the buses ended and started. It couldn't have been better. (Doyle 1991: 185)

The novel thus subverts traditional gender roles in its reconfiguration of spaces that are stereotypically attributed to women and/or men. For instance, the van symbolically stands as a masculine vehicle as it is often driven by men. Nevertheless, in the novel it is relocated following the instructions of a woman, who advises the men where to drive it in order to make more profit. Furthermore, the leading male characters in the novel are in charge of the

van's kitchen, "a feminine private space" as Mary McGlynn (2008: 115-116) calls it, a place that has traditionally had domestic and feminine connotations. Significantly, Maggie is the brain behind the chipper van, and as McGlynn (2008: 115) acknowledges, she is "the force of planning and innovation, seeing ways to expand the business", such as offering wine and candlelight service for romantic couples in addition to burgers. The narrator underlines that this female character "was brilliant [...] She'd a great business head on her" (134). Maggie even purchases aprons for Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo with World Cup prints (149) to attract "the hungry soccer fans" (Imhof 2002: 240).⁴⁷ Moreover, she skilfully deals with the complex tasks that are traditionally recognized as men's occupations. For instance, she gets the "permits and licences [of the van]" that Jimmy Sr. "couldn't have been bothered looking into, and Bimbo wouldn't've been able to" (134).

Jimmy Sr. endeavours to repair his emasculated identity through his new occupation in the van. However, the narrator repeatedly emphasises his fragility in front of Veronica. Like a child who reveals his feelings and thoughts in a simple manner, Jimmy Sr. cries when telling his wife about his work day in the van:

Veronica was in the kitchen and she did a fry for him, and he cried again when he was telling her about the pub and the match and meeting Jimmy Jr. And she called him an eejit. It was the best day of his life. (Doyle 1991: 183)

In addition to being named an "eejit" at home, Jimmy Sr. is a dependent puppet at work. Furthermore, he deeply feels that he loses control of his friendship with Bimbo. Unlike the old days when he used to make plans to spend time with Bimbo, he does not have any initiative in their friendship

⁴⁷ Imhof (2002: 240-241) points out that "[t]he time is the summer of 1990", when "all of Ireland is fanatical about the Italia '90 World Cup, which the Republic of Ireland team has qualified for. Reasoning that during the event no Irish person will have time to cook dinner, Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo expect to make oceans of money when the hungry soccer fans leave the pubs at closing time".

now. The times when Jimmy Sr. saved for the two of them are now dusty memories:

Jimmy Sr. had always been the one who'd made the decisions, who'd mapped out their weekends for them. Jimmy Sr. would say, See yeh in the Hikers after half-twelve mass, and Bimbo would be there. Jimmy Sr. would put down Bimbo's name to play pitch and putt and Bimbo would go off and play. (254)

“[T]he dominant position that [Jimmy Sr.] had previously”, in White's terms (2001: 49), disappears as a consequence of Maggie's actions, and the reader is reminded once again of the predominant situation of women over men in the novel. Doyle highlights Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo's inferiority as a result of their wives' controlling positions both at home and in business. Furthermore, Jimmy Sr. blames Maggie for ruining his friendship with Bimbo as a result of her interference in the business: “[t]hat wagon of a wife of his had ruined him. She'd taken her time doing it, but she'd done it” (Doyle 1991: 293). Doyle acknowledges Jimmy Sr.'s isolation and highlights that for him, it is easier to make Maggie a scapegoat “than blaming Bimbo” (interview with White 2001: 159). As discussed previously through the portrayals of The Commitmentettes in the first section of this chapter, patriarchal binary oppositions are inescapable (i.e. innocent virgin versus femme fatale). As Mary Ryan examines in her study of contemporary Irish women's writing, men traditionally tend to categorize women “in only two distinct ways—as angels or as monsters. The so-called ‘angelic’ women were those who abided by [the] idea of passivity, and, without question, allowed themselves to be treated as objects by men” (2010: 93). Maggie's portrayal as a dominant character who has power enough to control the men's business is opposed to the iconic submissive female image. As mentioned above, she is not a traditional female figure, and therefore she represents a patriarchal threat. Similarly, Jimmy Sr. cannot bear the superior position of women; therefore he tends to call them “bitches” whenever he feels inferior or neglected (Doyle

1991: 278; 290). For instance, he thinks Veronica is a “selfish bitch” when she does not listen to him (278) and he considers his daughters “bitches” when they refuse to buy what he wanted (290).

In *The Van*, Doyle foresees that there will be a shift in gender roles prior to The Celtic Tiger. It is neither Jimmy Sr. nor Bimbo who attempt to provide a bright future for their families, but Veronica and Maggie. Thus, Doyle’s portrayal of these families is innovative as far as the traditional construction of male identity is concerned (for the very reason that the development of male identity is shaped and firmly identified with the idea of money making). Significantly, at the end of the novel, both Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo push the van into the sea. This is a symbol that can be read in two distinct ways: firstly, as the collapse of the dominant male image of the breadwinner; and secondly as their loss of hope in managing a business. In this sense, Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo embody the failures of Irish masculinity in an era when The Celtic Tiger is at its climax. Moreover, the wives in *The Van* subvert the traditional image of Irish femininity both in the domestic sphere (through Veronica’s autonomy and need to educate herself) and in the public sphere (through Maggie’s leadership in the van). Likewise, both Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo suffer from an identity crisis and, as Persson (2005: 213) states, their “self-worth” is “slipping away”. Their “need to belong and be accepted” and their “need to be different and free”, as McCarthy affirms (2003: 113), is not fulfilled. They fail to reconfigure their masculinities in accordance with the shifting economic situation and repeatedly fall into the abyss of being infantilised. The very last scene of the novel reminds us once more of Jimmy Sr.’s vulnerable position and his urge to find solace in the arms of Veronica: “—Give us a hug, Veronica, will yeh. —I need a hug” (Doyle 1991: 311).

To sum up the ideas presented in this section, it has been explored how Doyle displays subversive working-class wives in *The Van* and how,

through the final image of the van in the sea, he underlines Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo's emasculation. Likewise, *The Van* presents characters who dislocate the patriarchal notion of the breadwinner. Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo are in charge of the van's kitchen, a place which has often had feminine and domestic connotations, whereas Maggie manages the business and decides on the localization of the van. On the other hand, Veronica is determined to fulfil her night classes. In this sense, Doyle situates Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo in more domestic settings than their housewives. Furthermore, Veronica and Maggie are more proactive than their husbands, not only in the domestic sphere but also outside their homes, highlighting their husbands' infantilised position. The women in the novel are not only wives but also mothers of their husbands. In this respect, Veronica and Maggie are successful illustrations of Declan Kiberd's statement (2005: 180) that "[t]he space vacated by the ineffectual father was occupied by the all-powerful mother, who became not just 'wife and mother in one', but surrogate father as well". Although Kiberd develops this idea through his interpretation of the father image in Irish Renaissance texts, his words can also be applied to this modern day novel due to its portrayal of the debilitated position of fathers. In short, Jimmy Sr. and Bimbo are presented as hollow representations of Irish masculinity.

5.2. Submissive, mythic and heroic mothers in *The Last Roundup Trilogy*

Following the publication of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1996), Doyle started to work on a historical trilogy called *The Last Roundup*, constituted by *A Start Called Henry*, *Oh, Play That Thing* and *The Dead Republic*. Although the three novels are often referred to as *The Last Roundup* trilogy, they have never been published as a collective volume. The

first book, *A Star Called Henry*, was published in 1999 and was nominated for the Irish Times International Fiction Prize in the same year. *Oh, Play That Thing* followed in 2004. The last book of the trilogy, *The Dead Republic*, was released in 2010. The three novels revisit not only mythical heroes and heroines in the construction of the Irish Republic, but they also touch upon historical famous figures such as actors and musicians. Mother figures densely appear in the first book whereas the last two are dedicated to Henry Smart's (the protagonist) lone adventures in the United States.

Irish literature has shown a significant tendency to rewrite the historical events of Ireland so as to accommodate different ideological positions throughout history. One historical event which has received constant attention in this sense has been the Easter Rising (April, 1916), on which many works offer different versions. For example, Seán O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926); Elizabeth Bowen's *Last September* (1929); Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green* (1965); Julia O'Faolain's *No Country for Young Men* (1980); and Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim Two Boys* (2001) propose diverse readings of this episode. In *A Star Called Henry* Doyle uses it to parody the myth of Republican activism during the Easter Rebellion. He reminds us that our interpretation of history is open, and that it can be reviewed and transformed according to the interests of a nation at a certain time. On the one hand, he mocks the sacred image of the protagonists of the Easter Rising through his novel's main character, Henry Smart by showing that they are also fallible human beings. Furthermore, the novel accommodates three different portrayals of motherhood on which I will focus specifically, and which I have identified as submissive, mythic and heroic mothers. My analysis will be based on certain traditional and mythic figures of Irish femininity; and how they have been adapted and assimilated into Irish culture in order to make them serve religious and nationalist purposes. I

will subsequently demonstrate the significance of these iconic figures as regards the three aforementioned mother figures in the novel. Furthermore, I will concentrate on Rosi Braidotti's concept of 'nomadism' in order to interpret the characteristics of the heroic mother figure.

A Star Called Henry narrates the story of Henry Smart, who was born in 1901 into a poor Dublin family. His father is one-legged and works both as a warehouse bodyguard and as a triggerman. His mother, on the other hand, suffers as a result of the loss of her unborn babies through miscarriages, and works in a rosary bead factory. Henry's father disappears and his mother subsequently becomes an alcoholic. Henry, together with his little brother Victor, begin to search for a life on the streets begging. Victor cannot cope with the cold weather and hunger and, as a result, he dies on the street. In 1916, Henry enlists in the Irish Citizen Army and actively takes part in the Easter Rising. He meets iconic names of the Easter Rising such as Michael Collins, Patrick Pearse and James Connolly. During the rebellion, he also meets his primary school teacher Miss O'Shea, who later becomes his wife and the mother of his daughter Saoirse. Henry manages to escape from the shootings of the General Post Office and later begins to work for Michael Collins, who uses him only for killing people and sorting out troublesome tasks, disregarding him as a real friend. Henry becomes aware of the fact that he is not part of Collins' circle. As Doyle clarified in his interview with Watchel (2000: 56), Henry's exclusion from Collins' environment stems from the former's insufficiency on various fronts: he lacks a suitable personal background (for the cause), education, wealth, and family ties. Besides, he realises that killing innocent people is not connected to his ideal of an independent Ireland and subsequently decides to flee the country leaving his wife and daughter behind.

The novel is narrated from Henry Smart's first person point of view. A variety of studies (i.e. Hopkins 1999: 55; Dawson 2001: 170; Lanthers 2002: 248; Shortt 2009: 137) interpret the protagonist's alternative view of history in different ways. For instance, in Hopkins' (1999: 54) review of the novel, it is underlined that Henry is sometimes "an unreliable narrator" and at other times "an implausible one". Dawson (2001) takes her interpretation further by stating that Doyle's narrative technique is both "[an] exploit and [a] parody [of] the heroic tradition" (2001: 170). This critic explains that Henry retells the story of the Easter Rising to accommodate his own narcissistic and ideological position. A third interpretation is provided by José Lanthers who claims that Doyle's protagonist "challenges the accepted view of Irish history by parodying the official version of it", and thus undermining "the master narratives of Irish history", by reversing the position of sacred figures of the rebellion such as Patrick Pearse and James Connolly. Similarly, Shortt underlines that Doyle refuses to accept the presupposed stories of the past, and chooses to "demonstrate the possibilities of invention and reinvention" given "the unreliability of narrative" (2009: 137-138). In an interview with Ingle, Doyle has recalled his school days in which the figures of the Independence were repeatedly enshrined: "Pearse was a god, a saint—[we] had to read those shitty sentimental stories and write these glowing reviews of them" (1999: 4). Doyle evidently subverts the unquestioned notions of history through his parodic portrayal of the Easter Rising. Therefore, Henry Smart's narration is not surprising. With the aim of blending history with fiction, Doyle admits his escape from "strict realism" and confesses that "[he] wanted to distort and wobble things. [He] wanted it to be real [while at the same time] to be seen through a distorting glass of some sort" (interview with Watchel 2000: 53).

Apart from Henry's unreliable account of the historical and social events in Ireland's past, *A Star Called Henry* is also a novel containing three intriguing portrayals of motherhood, as mentioned above. They are very different from one to another and all occupy a distinct place within the novel. We could say that the three different mother figures conform to what I will describe as submissive, mythic, and heroic stereotypes of motherhood. Besides, through his portrayal of these three different mother figures, Doyle mocks the historical and mythic representations of women/mothers and the way that they appear in Irish nationalist and religious accounts. However, before delving into my analysis of these figures, it is crucial to recall how the image of the fragile woman/mother was employed to benefit the nationalist and religious discourse in Ireland.

As discussed in section 3.3., despite internal differences, Irish nationalism objectified women through its political agenda. At times fulfilling the ideology of the Church, nationalists considered women as examples of delicate beings. They were either signified as the territory in trouble (Mother Ireland) or as legendary female figures of Celtic legends. Prior to the Irish Revival of the late 19th and early 20th century, Jacobite poets in the early 18th century had incorporated a nationalist approach in their work and composed poems about the image of a woman. In this poetry, the woman revealed to be Ireland, and informed the poet that the Irish people will have their rights restored when the true king returns (Welch 2000: 170). This female personification of Ireland was recovered during the period of the Irish Literary Revival, whereby traditional images of femininity were used to express ideological concerns. W.B. Yeats's play *Cathleen Ní Houlihan*, staged for the first time at the Abbey Theatre in 1902, relies precisely on this female personification of Ireland. The heroine, Cathleen Ní Houlihan, is a

figurative embodiment of the country and she encourages Irish men to fight and die for her.

As also outlined in section 3.3., a number of works later emerged (i.e. *The Playboy of the Western World* by John Millington Synge) in which subversive images of women came to the fore. Some other works from the beginning of the 20th century, however, transformed these Celtic representations of female Ireland to suit the parameters of Catholic-nationalist ideology. One illustration of this is Patrick Pearse's famous poem, "The Mother" (1916), which alludes to Ireland as a helpless mother in need of her sons to fight for their country (McMahon and O'Donoghue 1998: 183). This poem not only symbolizes the nationalist attempt to represent Ireland as a woman; it also transforms the beautiful woman of Jacobite poetry into a modern-day Virgin Mary.

A Star Called Henry (1999) opens up with the portrayal of Henry Smart's mother, a submissive female figure and the first of the three types that will be analysed. Firstly, contrary to the positive implications of her name, Melody struggles to survive throughout her life: "[s]he was a child of Dublin slums, no proper child at all. Her parents, grandparents, had never known good food. Bad food, bad drink, bad air. Bad bones, bad eyes, bad skin; thin, stooped, mangled" (2000: 5).⁴⁸ Besides, she has to work without stop: "[a]ll day, six days a week, sweating, going blind for God" (2). In an ironic reference to her name, Henry wonders: "[w]hat age was she when she learnt the truth, when she found out that her life would have no music?" (3). Her marriage at sixteen is another facet in her hard life. Echoing the patriarchal view of women imposed by Catholic ideology, she is depicted as the Virgin Mary figure: "she was impossibly innocent" (10) in that "[s]he'd gone up the little side aisle in a state of sexual innocence, kissed only by one

⁴⁸ I am using an edition of *A Star Called Henry* published in 2000.

man and no further" (10). After her marriage, Melody conceives many babies but some of the pregnancies are miscarried. In line with the idea of patriarchal inheritance, where sons are usually named after their fathers (or their male ancestors), Henry is named after his father Henry Smart. Dependent on her husband, Melody finds that her life is meaningless when he disappears and she becomes an alcoholic.

Like Mother Ireland, whose sons die when fighting for Ireland, Melody's children pass away, this time due to poverty and sickness. She mourns her children, and looks at the stars with a wish that their souls are up there blinking at her. Melody's gazing at the stars has a folkloric background, as we are informed in Doyle's interview with Watchel (2000: 52). As the author states, he was influenced by Kevin C. Kearnes' study *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History* (1994), from where he retrieved materials related to folklore such as "the stars in the sky being dead babies waiting for their mothers" (interview with Watchel 2000: 52). Henry describes his mother's despair as follows: "[a]n old woman. Big, lumpy, sad. Melody Smart" (Doyle 2000: 5). Furthermore, Henry's portrayal of his mother accentuates her submissive position. As Henry remarks, she cannot take a step by herself, not even stand up: "I try to make her stand up and walk back, to see her as she had been. I take three stone off her, I lift her mouth, I try to put fun into her eyes" (5). Similarly to the young son who wants to rescue Mother Ireland, Henry wishes to liberate his mother from her painful life. As Dawson (2001: 173) points out, Doyle's female character fulfils the expectations of "the traditional mother of a hero".

The second type of stereotyped mother figure presented in the novel, which I choose to call the mythic one, is embodied by Henry's grandmother, Granny Nash, who is presented as the opposite of the stereotypical patriarchal, submissive, mother image. She neither dedicates time to

housework, nor takes care of her children. On the contrary, she reads books whenever she gets the chance. In my opinion, Granny Nash can be likened to a symbolic female figure from Celtic mythology, the pagan goddess of sovereignty, Caileach Bhéarra (meaning Hag of Beara). I will proceed to explain why I believe this to be so. In his book on Irish culture, McCoy (1995: 211) describes Caileach Bhéarra as “an archetypal Goddess of sovereignty,” demanding kisses or a sexual encounter with a young man aspiring to the throne (Niall of the Nine Hostages, for instance) and offering the great kingdom of Ireland in return. In the original myth, she is an old woman who is able to transform herself into a beautiful young maiden if a man accepts her sexual invitation. Interestingly, this myth was adapted by Catholic Nationalists; their version differed from the original in that this pagan goddess was depicted as being reborn as an elderly Christian nun who mourned her lost youth (Welch 2000: 47).

Doyle’s portrayal of what I will call the Grandma Nash/Caileach Bhéarra figure has elements of both the pagan version of the myth and of the Catholic Nationalists. Firstly, it is necessary to make clear that she is more akin to the pagan goddess as far as religion is concerned, as she has absolutely no religious features. Henry comments upon his Grandmother’s unchristian name as follows: “Nash was her name but I don’t know what she called herself before she married her dead husband. She’d no Christian name that I ever heard” (2000: 2). This comment, apart from highlighting the lack of a religious nature of this mother figure, also alludes to the name of the mythical goddess with whom I am connecting her. Furthermore, the image presented of Granny Nash does not adhere to the stereotypical connotations that were once used to present the Old Hag for nationalist purposes. She does not mourn “her lost youth” (47); instead, she dedicates herself to becoming an intellectual: “[a]lways with a book under the shawl, the complete works of

Shakespeare or something by Tolstoy" (Doyle 2000: 2). It is perhaps this intellectuality which also serves as an indication of one's cultural status, that may make her appear as a powerful goddess.

If we now turn to look at which features the nationalists introduced in the mythical goddess and which are reproduced in the Grandma Nash/Caileach Bhéarra portrayal we see that Grandma Nash lacks the sexuality of the Pagan goddess, similar to that of the nationalist version. McCoy (1995: 188) argues that the nationalist adaptation of the myth distorts the Caileach Bhéarra's image to make her resemble a witch. Her source power, her youth, and her beauty have disappeared and she has been transformed into the standard bearer of the nationalist cause. Over time, then, her appearance has changed. She is described with a black and blue face, green teeth, tangled white hair, and a hunchback. As McCoy (188) concludes, the once potent Goddess is now the provider of death, rather than the granter of dreams. Similarly to the Old Hag, (also termed "Caileach", which means old woman or hag in Modern Irish), Grandma Nash is also stripped of her sexuality and is described using witch-like features in Henry's depiction:

She'd become a witch by the time I saw her. Always with her head in a book, looking for spells. She shoved her face forward with ancient certainty, knew every thought behind my eyes. She knew how far evil could drop. She stared at me with her cannibal's eyes and I had to dash down to the privy. Her eyes slammed the door after me. (Doyle 2000: 2)

Hence, Henry echoes the nationalist use of the Old Hag when he attributes negative traits to Granny Nash. For instance, he states that she smells like "rotten meat and herrings" (ibid). Besides, he feels frightened of her most of the time, as he considers her as someone who bears death (23). However, at The General Post Office, where he hides in fright, Henry sees Granny Nash during the Easter Rising attacks, and he instead describes her in almost mythic, powerful terms:

5. Unconventional mothers in *The Barrytown Trilogy* and *The Last Roundup Trilogy*

I looked out at Dublin rising. And there she came, through it all, out of the darkest of the flames, the loveless old hoor herself, Granny Nash. She was carrying a wall made of books; she had two of them open on top the pile, reading them already, one for each, as she strolled up Sackville Street. She looked singed and half-destroyed but she moved like a dreaming child on her way to school. And I cheered her on. I shouted with all I had but she never looked up from her books. (Doyle 2000: 117)

Depicted as an evidently remarkable figure, Granny Nash carries books, which might symbolise the power of knowledge. She manages to survive thanks to her intellectuality, and acts as if she were immortal, which again reflects her almost supernatural qualities. Furthermore, she has a child-like enthusiasm towards learning, and she is so much focused on her books that she is indifferent to what is going on around her. Through this portrayal of Granny Nash, Doyle seems to be commemorating Caileach Bhéarra, the mythic Celtic character, endowing her with a gloriously powerful intellectual capacity.

Doyle recalls how the historical figures of the rebellion were memorialized as mythical beings in the 50th Commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising (interview with Watchel 2000: 55). Henry, with his over self-confidence, evidently wishes to be remembered as one of them. In his study on *A Star Called Henry*, Juan F. Elices remarks, however, that “Henry can be categorised as a self-made individual whose practical vision of reality clashes with the heroic mysticism of the 1916 Easter Rising and of those figures that took part in it” (2005: 126). Furthermore, Elices notes that Doyle “was quite keen to make [the historical figures of the Rising] human beings” (55). Henry recurrently praises himself, and this narcissist attitude of his is laughable. Indeed, here Doyle is again evoking the icons of the Rising, who have been magnified and enshrined through the centuries. In Henry’s terms, he himself is the source of happiness for the women in his neighbourhood. Sounding highly vain, he defines himself as “the Glowing Baby” (2000: 22), a

miraculous human being and, he underlines that “[t]he women who’d seen [him] went through the rest of the day feeling special” (22). Besides, he considers himself “a genius” after only having spent “two days of schooling” (72). During this time, Henry meets the future love of his life: Miss O’Shea.

Without a doubt, Miss O’Shea constitutes the third stereotype of motherhood presented by Doyle in this novel. She is what I would call the heroic mother figure. Miss O’Shea participates actively in the Rising with Henry, and, as Imhof (2002: 264) states, she “[battles] valiantly for personal and political liberty” and is “[g]ifted with superhuman fortitude”. As Doyle admits in his interview with Drewett (2003: 345-346), the inspiration he received for Miss O’Shea’s heroic attributions comes from Cumann na mBan. Cumann na mBan is an Irish Republican civil women’s organization that dates back to 1914 and which was formed uniquely by voluntary women who played a crucial part in the Rising (McCarthy 2014: 1; Beatty 2016: 80-81). What is more, on the day that the Proclamation was read for the Republic in 1916, the members of the organization were in the General Post Office together with their male counterparts. Cumann na mBan can be seen as a vindication for women’s political equality. Furthermore, its members played an active part in the independence of the Irish Republic. Doyle defines them as “extraordinary women” and thus makes Miss O’Shea appear just as extraordinary as the ladies who inspired him to write about her (interview with Drewett 2003: 345). Lanters (2002: 248) takes this idea a step further and claims that Miss O’Shea might be an imitation of Margaret Skinnider, “a twenty-three-year-old school teacher, and a private in the Citizen Army”, who “was an active duty sniper on the roof of the College of Surgeons in 1916”. Lanters draws attention to the female participants of the rebellion, and underlines that they “are mythicized in the person of Miss O’Shea” (ibid).

Indeed, Doyle might have been inspired by various women figures for O'Shea's portrayal. However, most importantly, he creates a female counterpart of Henry. Miss O'Shea fights for the freedom of the Republic as much as Henry does (and at times, more than he does). Similarly, she does not conform to the patriarchal norms of femininity and engages in sex out of wedlock (Doyle 2000: 121). Besides, at the very moment of the attacks to the General Post Office, she clearly states that she wants freedom "to do what [she] [wants]" (122). Significantly, the freedom Miss O'Shea advocates is also expressed in the name she gives to her daughter: Saoirse, which means freedom in Irish. When considered from a patriarchal perspective, Miss O'Shea subverts the traditional image of the submissive mother and shows her determination to defend her country. Unlike the aforementioned images of femininity (i.e. Mother Ireland or Cathleen Ní Houlihan), who are often reflected as desperate, mourning, and waiting to be protected or fought for, Miss O'Shea manages to take care of her daughter in spite of Henry's absence. Besides, she does not adopt her husband's surname, and never reveals her real name (Noula), not even to Henry.⁴⁹ McClintock (1993: 62) points out that women were often charged as "the symbolic bearers of the nation". Nevertheless, they are hindered from any explicit connection to the "national agency" (62). Hence Doyle's portrayal of Miss O'Shea subverts the common feminine attributes of fragility, innocence and weakness promulgated by nationalism.

Another reason that makes Miss O'Shea an unconventional heroic mother figure is her ability to adapt to constant movement. Her emigrant identity can be interpreted in terms of Braidotti's theory of nomadism. Braidotti's concept stems from the term nomad, which refers to a person who does not permanently reside in one location, and constantly changes places

⁴⁹ It is only at the end of *The Dead Republic*, where Henry finds out her name by chance (Doyle 2010: 307).

for various reasons. According to Braidotti (1994b: 5), nomadic subjects develop a "kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour consciousness". Nomadic subjects can be read as the antithesis of the conventional fixed identities proposed by society, as they do not accept the values which are taken for granted and behave independently. Similarly, Miss O'Shea is a nomadic subject, who rejects various "socially coded modes of thought" in order to take part in her country's fight for independence. Unlike Henry's mother, Miss O'Shea, as we have seen, actively participates in the rebellion. Secondly, Braidotti (1994b: 22) highlights that a nomadic subject should not be taken only as a migrant in exile. According to this critic, nomadic self-awareness "is a sort of resisting assimilation or homologation into dominant ways of representing the self" (25). Indeed, Miss O'Shea's active part in the rebellion as a woman and her ability to take strategic actions are symbols of her unyielding character, as compared to Henry's mother with her passive and submissive attitude.

Miss O'Shea's nomadism is underlined in Doyle's following novel *Oh, Play That Thing* (2004). As the sequel to *A Star Called Henry*, *Oh, Play That Thing* continues with the story of Henry Smart. Henry flees to New York in the middle of the 1920s in order to save his life from the crimes he has committed in the Irish Republican Army. He engages in illegal jobs such as bootlegging, unlicensed dentistry, and porn movies. Henry then moves to Chicago where he meets the famous jazz singer Louis Armstrong and becomes his friend and manager. By chance, he meets Miss O'Shea and his daughter. While Henry follows his own adventure, he finds out that Miss O'Shea has moved to America together with their daughter to find him. The proof that Miss O'Shea is always on the move lies in Henry's words, when he briefly remarks: "[s]he was everywhere. But never where I went" (2004:

358). Following the rebellion, her purpose is to survive; hence her move to the United States, which also allows her to trace the love of her life, Henry.

Miss O'Shea adapts to this Braidottian definition of the nomadic subject, specifically as far as her survival strategy in America is concerned. Braidotti (1994b: 33) underlines that a nomadic subject needs to "[make] those necessarily situated connections that can help him/her to survive". Likewise, Miss O'Shea takes on some small jobs such as house-cleaning. However at the same time, she commits crimes for the sake of tracing Henry. As Henry admits (Doyle 2004: 358) "[he] could track her by the stories" (Doyle 2004: 358). In other words, Miss O'Shea manages to get away with her crimes, yet; at the same time she leaves a trace behind so that Henry can also find out about her. Furthermore, her offences against the law spread in the form of legendary stories. Henry (2004: 360) witnesses "the Wanted posters [of Miss o'Shea]. On the walls of the sheriffs' and marshals' offices". In this way, she leaves her mark of survival for Henry to see, "telling [him] to catch up and to hurry" (360). Interestingly, Braidotti (1994b: 25) draws a parallelism between nomadism and resistance. According to her, the nomad's "memory is activated against the stream; [the nomad] enact[s] a rebellion of subjugated knowledges" (ibid). Not surprisingly, Miss O'Shea struggles—to the extent that she even commits crimes—in order to achieve her ideals, which in return, are all to vindicate Ireland's political independence. Besides, even after her death in the third novel of the trilogy, *The Dead Republic* (2010), the reader is reminded that her ideal for a free country will be maintained: "[t]he struggle will continue" (Doyle 2010: 322).

In order to sum up the main ideas presented in this section we could conclude by asserting that in *A Star Called Henry* Doyle presents us with three mother figures. The fact that the novel is narrated from Henry Smart's own point of view ties in with Doyle's claim that "[i]n some areas [Henry is]

completely and utterly unreliable" (interview with Watchel 2000: 58-59). The writer finds this fact "a part of the fun of the writing and part of the novelty of it" (ibid). As Lanthers (2002: 248) states, Doyle "magnifies" the historical events and characters, and "also presents them through a late twentieth-century lens that highlights politically correct issues such as class, gender, and ethnicity" (248). The power of Henry's unreliable narration lies in the fact that it provides a different interpretation of official history. Through his lens, Henry accommodates himself within the leading names of the Rising. On the other hand, Doyle mocks Republican activism through Henry's parodic approach to Irish historical figures.

In line with the numerous Irish literary works which offer different interpretations of the Rising, Doyle revisits this important historical event with an ironic approach. He also offers three distinct mother portrayals, which I have identified as submissive, mythic and heroic. The submissive mother is embodied by the figure of Henry's mother, Melody Nash, who from the very beginning of the story, has undergone a tormented life due to her poor life conditions. Melody is described as pure and innocent, which are traditional attributes of the Virgin Mary. As the convention requires, she gets married very early and gives birth to many children. However, they do not manage to survive. Following the disappearance of Henry's father, she becomes an alcoholic. The mythic mother figure, on the other hand, is embodied by the figure of Granny Nash. Contrary to the patriarchal notions of motherhood, she does not look after her children (or grandchildren), but dedicates herself full time to reading and exercising her mind. In his essay exploring literary revisionism in *A Star Called Henry*, John Brannigan defines Granny Nash as "a timeless muse who [guides] Henry on his quest through the city" (2003: 121). She clearly symbolizes the power of knowledge in the novel. Furthermore, Henry likens Granny Nash to an old

witch. In that, he recalls the myth of the Old Hag of Beara, a powerful female figure adopted from Celtic mythology by the Irish nationalists for cultural and political propaganda. Lastly, the heroic mother is personified through the portrayal of Miss O'Shea, a woman who rejects all sorts of conventions through her independent and activist-like personality. Miss O'Shea dedicates herself to politics, in her ideals to free her country from oppression. Besides, she actively participates in the Rising and significantly gives birth to a girl called Saoirse (freedom, in Irish). Although she marries to Henry, she does not adopt his surname. This character, as shown above, can be interpreted from the perspective of Braidotti's concept of nomadism in various ways: she adapts to shifting conditions easily; she does not take for granted accepted social patterns for the sake of her country; and lastly she skilfully leaves her trace behind so that Henry can follow her. Without a doubt, Doyle redresses the official history of the Rising, and revisits the historical and mythic representations of women in Irish history. The portrayal of Melody Nash resonates with the conventional mother image, while Granny Nash and Miss O'Shea represent the souls of independent and empowered mothers.

**6. EMANCIPATION: EMPOWERED
MOTHERS IN *PAULA SPENCER*
AND DOYLE'S RECENT FICTION**

6. Emancipation: Empowered mothers in *Paula Spencer* and Doyle's recent fiction

6.1. *Paula Spencer*: A mother rising from her ashes

Paula Spencer (2006) is the sequel to *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, and it is set almost ten years later. Significantly, the book deals with Paula's life after Charlo's death; her recovery from her condition as a battered wife, and the emergence of her new life as an independent woman in Celtic Tiger Ireland. One of the most striking aspects of the novel lies in Doyle's favourable portrayal of the undervalued working-class condition of many Irish women. By entitling the book *Paula Spencer*, Doyle focuses on the female protagonist's determination to survive. Some positive changes in Paula's life can be observed in the novel. Unlike the woman who lies to herself in order to conceal the abusive treatment of her husband in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, in *Paula Spencer* she takes control of her life. My analysis of *Paula Spencer* focuses on three different aspects: the effect of Celtic Tiger Ireland on Paula as a working-class woman; Paula's inner conflicts regarding the experience of motherhood; and lastly, her promising recovery from domestic violence. My exploration of Paula's experience throughout the Celtic Tiger period has been conveyed in light of Ronit Lentin and Fintan O'Toole's approaches to this period. Furthermore, Paula's maternal concerns are examined through the psychoanalytical framework of Freud and Chodorow, since both of them develop a variety of ideas on the child's separation from the mother. When discussing Paula's recovery, I attempt to corroborate my findings with Cixous's writings about women's recuperation through the support of another woman.

Unlike the first person narrator of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, *Paula Spencer* is narrated from the third person singular point of

view. However, in particular instances, the narrator sounds as if it articulates Paula's subjective thoughts. Doyle clarifies his shift from first to third person explaining that his aim was to "distance [himself] from the first book"; but, at the same time he wanted to "write alongside it" (interview with White 2012: 246). In her review of *Paula Spencer*, Pauline Hall (2008: 198) draws attention to Doyle's use of "[t]he steady beat of short sentences" and sets of "dialogue exchanges" when Paula interacts with other people. According to Hall, Doyle's style succeeds in reflecting Paula's confusion and surprise towards the Celtic Tiger impact on her in an ironic and witty way. Similarly, Aída Díaz-Bild (2012: 24) notes that the book illuminates "how the comic response to tragic dilemmas is [...] the appropriate response to a situation which would otherwise destroy the human being" and in this way, it reflects hope after Paula's burdensome experience in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*.

At the very beginning of the book, we are informed that Paula is going to be forty-eight soon, and that she has not been drinking for four months and five days. However, she finds it difficult to cope with life, bearing in mind the added burden of caring for her children. On a financial level, she has to work in low paid jobs as most immigrants in the country (she cleans offices and apartments) in order to provide for her two children Leanne and Jack, who still live at home. Leanne is now a twenty-two year-old alcoholic, and has the habit of wetting her bed. Her youngest son Jack, on the other hand, is an untroublesome boy. As for her two other children, Nicola is now a grown up woman with a partner and a stable job; and her oldest son John Paul has recovered from drugs and has formed his own family. As a mother, Paula tries to stop her children from making the same mistakes she made. Furthermore, she struggles with her own craving for alcohol again. At a social level, Paula has to survive as a widowed woman.

Nevertheless, she never loses the hope of finding a partner, and indeed she starts a relationship with Joe Prescott, who lives near Paula's house.

As mentioned in chapter two, Doyle's short stories, about the shifting cultural landscape of Ireland, had been published in the early 2000s in *Metro Éireann*, an online newspaper addressing the multicultural community in the country. As Doyle describes in an interview, "[t]he whole idea was to embrace the new changes in Ireland creatively, rather than see them as statistics" (interview with Allen-Randolph 2010: 147). For the writer, Paula is "a great guide through the changes" (interview with Firetog 2012: 78). Indeed, various critics (Ferguson 2006: 24; Hall 2008: 197; Praga Terente 2008: 313; Jeffers 2011: 264-265) have highlighted Doyle's ability to describe the Celtic Tiger atmosphere of the city from Paula's perspective. Some of these critics have noted that there are intertextual echoes in the book from other canonical works. For instance, Praga Trente (2008: 312) states that Doyle has created "a sort of *Iliad* out of an irrelevant *local row*", underlying Paula's will to expand the confines of her life within the working-class environment (312). Similarly, Jennifer Jeffers (2011: 264) claims that Doyle's work resembles *Ulysses* in the sense that the writer "maps a year in life of twenty-first-century Paula Spencer", in the same way as Joyce projected a day in Leopold Bloom's life at the turn of the twentieth century. Another important aspect which has been investigated in relation to this novel is Paula's experience as a mother. Caramine White, for instance, touches upon the issue of motherhood in a chapter dedicated to *Paula Spencer* in her book *Reading More of Roddy Doyle* (2012). However, her analysis provides only a broad overview of Paula's relationships with each of her children. Apart from discussing the Celtic Tiger's effect on the life of a working-class woman, this chapter aims to offer an in-depth analysis of

Paula's inner conflicts as a mother from a psychoanalytical perspective, an aspect which has not been thoroughly addressed before.

The unexpected economic prosperity in late 20th century Ireland led to a demographic boom, since asylum seekers as well as economic migrants of all ethnic backgrounds were attracted by the Celtic Tiger, an economic and social phenomenon that lasted until the first years of the twenty-first century. The Celtic Tiger's social effect is also statistically demonstrated. As Jennifer Jeffers (2011: 259) points out, the Irish population increased by 322,645 in four years (between 2002-2006) and the rise of non-Irish work permits rose almost tenfold "from fewer than 6,000 in 1999 to about 50,000 in 2003". From the very beginning of the novel, the narrator reminds us of the multi-ethnic atmosphere of Dublin. It is stated that "[o]ne of the old shops is a café now, opened a few weeks ago. An Italian place, real Italians in it. Not chipper Italians" (Doyle 2006: 12). By using the term "real Italians", the narrator draws attention to the palpability of the new residents of the country. As Praga Terente (2008: 317) notes, Doyle depicts this multicultural background in Dublin "as a living organism" and he foregrounds the presence of "the new dispossessed". As the narrator notes, although supermarkets remain, now there are African people on the check-outs (Doyle 2006: 26). At some stages in the novel, Doyle foregrounds Paula's empathy with the newcomers, such as when she wishes the black cashier woman good luck (26). Through Paula's empathy, Doyle not only addresses the issue of the migrant community from an Irish woman's point of view, but also accommodates the newcomers with a welcoming approach.

Paula's empathy towards the newcomers is also reflected in her ability to identify with them through their hard working conditions. In her article dealing with ethnicity and diasporic identities in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger period, Ronit Lentin (2002: 243) acknowledges that Dublin has

become a very attractive and a well-known European capital for tourists. However, she also adds that rapid economic change has also brought a shift in "the consumer patterns" as regards crowds in restaurants and shops (229). On the other hand, there has been a considerable side effect to the Celtic Tiger which can be seen in the increase of homeless people and beggars in the streets of Dublin (229). In other words, the social gap between the rich and the poor has become more pronounced in the Celtic Tiger period. As a low paid working-class woman herself, Paula disagrees with the unfairness of her income, while identifying with migrants, who deserve in her opinion better working conditions:

That's another big change, maybe the biggest. The men doing the cleaning work. Nigerians and Romanians. She's not sure if they're legal. She doesn't have to know. She's not paying them. They come and go. They're grand. They're polite. She feels sorry for them. It's not work for a man; she'll never think different. The African lads come in dressed to kill, like businessmen and doctors. They change into their work clothes and back into their suits before they go home. Ashamed. God love them. Handsome lads. They deserve better. But everyone starts at the bottom, she supposes. But that's not true either. She knows it. There's nothing fair about the way things work. (Doyle 2006: 40)

Furthermore, the gender shift in the division of labour attracts Paula's attention, as the cleaning jobs are now done by the immigrant men. Unlike the majority of the working-class people around her, Paula's financial status has stayed almost the same, as up to now she has been living poorly as an unemployed woman. As Doyle reveals in the above quotation, migrant workers need to disguise themselves in order to be accommodated into a society where consumption and social class are the key words. Therefore, they hide their real jobs from their families. Paula is aware of this unfair treatment against the migrants, specifically due to the fact that racism is associated with immigration and the effects of multiculturalism. Furthermore, the narrator interestingly associates committing a murder with occupations

like being a businessman or a doctor, which are often socially perceived as prestigious jobs. This correlation (between the concepts of killing and jobs traditionally associated with power and prestige) is interesting as it implies that a particular social class may possess the right to destroy another one. As discussed in the following chapter, Doyle also employs a parallelism between power and murder in the short story "The Pram".

Although Paula can often put herself in the place of the migrant other, according to Ronit Lentin this is not always common for the average Irish person. Echoing Freud's concept of "the return of the repressed" and contrary to the traditional image of Irish people as hospitable, Lentin (2002: 243) states that the Irish are generally not very welcoming to newcomers since they are haunted by "the national repressed". According to Freud's views, in his work *The Essentials of Psycho-Analysis* (1986), "the return of the repressed" is inevitable as "the essence of the process of repression lies, not in putting an end to, in annihilating, the idea which represents an instinct, but in preventing it from becoming conscious" (1986: 142). Similarly, Lentin (2002: 243) adopts Freud's term and reformulates it as "the return of the national repressed" to refer to how the Irish deal with the presence of migrants from other countries. That is, the native is afraid that Ireland's repressed colonial past could be revived through the presence of the newcomer (243).

In Paula's case, "the national repressed" appears in her fear of losing her job to the newcomers. In any case, the narrator notes that Paula does not have an interest to know her neighbours, who are people who have come from different parts of the world:

She doesn't know the neighbours, either side. She's only seen them a few times. The crowd on the other side of her bedroom wall, they've only been there a few months. She's not sure how many. They're all young. Leanne thinks they're Russian. Jack says they're Polish. Three tall girls. Leanne says they're prostitutes or lap-dancers. Jack says one of them works for Google. (123)

The above paragraph is significant as it expresses three possible approaches of the natives towards the migrants. While Paula shows indifference towards the strangers next door, Leanne makes biased guesses about their occupations. On his part, Jack situates one newcomer in a worldwide company, Google, implying that this lady occupies a superior position to Paula. It is possible to interpret that even though there is vibrant economic movement taking place in the country, the gap between the migrant and the Irish prevails. Despite her indifference to the foreign girls who live next door, Paula dreads the thought of losing her low paid job to the newcomers. As the narrator puts it, "If she doesn't do it, other people will. She knows, she sees them. It's why they're here. Go back to your own fuckin' country. That's not her; that's not Paula. There's plenty of work. She won't be waiting long" (Doyle 2006: 248). This quotation illustrates how Paula makes an effort to fight against her prejudices. Her working-class background enables her to establish an affinity with the migrants, as she is able to identify with the marginalisation experienced by this sector. Besides, at the end of the quote the narrator states Paula's positive hopes of finding a job as the country is prospering. As Jeffers (2011: 266) puts it, "[Paula] is a subordinate" similar to the migrants from different ethnic backgrounds in Ireland and she has missed the chance of benefitting from the Celtic Tiger's prosperity (266). Furthermore, Paula's marginal position echoes Jimmy Rabbitte's famous lines in *The Commitments*, where he stated that "the northside Dubliners are the niggers of Dublin" (1993: 9). As a northern Dubliner Paula not only shares the same social status as the immigrants but she is also subordinate among her own social milieu. Therefore, the narrator poses a rhetorical question implying that some of the Irish working-class women do not work in low-paid jobs anymore because they have prospered, when he asks "[w]here are those women now?" (Doyle 2006: 56). As discussed in the following

paragraphs, the answer lies in Carmel's new social position, who "used to do cleaning and now she's buying flats in Bulgaria" (56).

Paula's struggle to survive in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* is continued in *Paula Spencer*, in which she has to face a new Ireland largely associated, in Praga Trente's terms (2008: 313), with "a male animal aggressiveness". Her own country is described, in economic terms, as brutal as her abusive ex-husband. Not surprisingly, self-questioning and self-pity surface when the narrator compares herself to other working-class women. As the narrator notes, the low paid jobs should not be for her but for immigrants: "She's a failure. She shouldn't be in this van. She should be outside, looking at it going by. On her way home from work. [...] Irishwomen don't do this work. Only Paula" (Doyle 2006: 56). In other words, Paula not only finds herself in the same social position as the immigrants but she is also "the other" with respect to other working-class women in Ireland. Furthermore, the narrator gives voice to Paula's own thoughts as she reflects on her particular circumstances: "That's not true. There's plenty do what she does. Going to work is never failure. Earning the money for her son's computer isn't failure" (56). In this sense, Doyle constantly reminds us that Paula does her best to overcome the obstacles to meet her children's needs during the Celtic Tiger boom.

In his book *Enough is Enough: How to Build a New Republic* (2010), Fintan O' Toole focuses on the political perplexities that arose during the post-Celtic Tiger period and offers solutions for a possible transformation of Irish society. O'Toole defines the Celtic Tiger as a phenomenon that managed to fill a gap in Irish society: "The Celtic Tiger wasn't just an economic ideology. It was also a substitute identity. It was a new way of being that arrived just at the point when Catholicism and nationalism were not working any more" (2010: 3). However, this new form of Irish identity

appears in the shape of mass consumerism and detachment from a traditional past and historical attachments (3). Doyle underlines Paula's curiosity towards the emancipation of the economic power of the people around her (interview with Firetog 2012: 78). He specifically notes that she is "fantastically amused by her sister's seeming wealth" (interview with Firetog 2012: 78). The new arrogant stance that O'Toole points out is epitomized by Paula's sister Carmel. The narrator points out that she has worked as a cleaning lady before (56) but that she is able to climb to a higher social status following the Celtic Tiger. Furthermore, this status has led Carmel to lose interest in her town and even in her own country: she feels reluctant to "being at home" or "going into town" and yet, she and her husband buy a flat in Bulgaria for the sake of "a good investment" (Doyle 2006: 245). Carmel justifies her reluctance towards her country by stating that "everyone else is doing it" (245), illustrating how widely spread the *nouveau-riche* phenomenon was during the Celtic Tiger period. While Carmel has prospered in her economic and social status, Paula still remains on the margins of society as a working-class mother. Her economically backward position in comparison to Carmel is reflected in her outdated outfit. For instance, she wears Jack's old jacket as "[w]omen like Paula don't wear real coats anymore. Working-class women. They wear anoraks, snorkel jackets, padded shiny sexless things" (75). The colourful outfits worn by working-class women can be seen as a sign of their improved finance, while the old jacket Paula wears can be read as a symbol of her social immobility. Paula's status has not improved, unlike that of her sister Carmel.

Apart from the burden of her undervalued position among the working-class milieu, Paula questions her motherhood and at times blames herself for not being a good mother. She particularly feels guilty for her old addiction to alcohol and her neglect of her children. Her past as a battered

wife and her inability to provide a role model for her children result in a role reversal between Paula and her daughters. On the one hand, Nicola takes up the role of a fastidious mother whilst Leanne turns into an alcoholic. On the other hand, John Paul and Jack seem to manage better in their coming to terms with the adult world. When analysed from a psychoanalytical approach, Nicola and Leanne suffer from a lack of identification with supportive adults, an aspect that shapes the healthy development of a person from the early years of his/her infancy.

Nicola's and Leanne's void in their identification as individuals may stem from some deficits during the stage of Oedipal development. As Freud puts it in his explanation of the Oedipus complex, the detachment from the mother is hard for both boys and girls since the "first love object" is always the mother (Freud 1986: 417-418). However, the fear of castration leads the boy to learn to repress maternal love whereas the girl diverts this love to her father. The attachment to the father is not as deep as a maternal bond. As Freud notes, "in the normal course of development [the girl] will find her way from this paternal object to her final choice of an object" (418). That is, the girl develops a more idealised paternal relationship with the father through time as she goes from loving her father to a loving partner.

In a pioneering study for its time, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), Nancy Chodorow supports the use of psychoanalytical theory to analyse issues related to motherhood. Bringing new insight into Freud's claims, Chodorow states that "[p]sychic structure develops through experiences of anxiety and frustration" (1978: 44). She states that the father plays a crucial part in the development of the child's ego with "[his] closeness to the child's mother" (71). For her, daughters possess a closer connection to the mother than sons because they belong to the same sex. Likewise, sons are expected to develop a masculine identity due to this lack

of a connection with their mother. Chodorow claims that the adult world gradually prepares daughters for mothering their own children and that they end up identifying themselves with their mothers (31). However, the identification with the mother may not always develop in a positive way. The lack of a supportive adult in the process of child bearing may lead the mother to an "ambivalent attachment and inability to separate" from the daughter (213).

Considering the above mentioned psychoanalytical frameworks of Freud and Chodorow, it is plausible to claim that Nicola and Leanne don't experience this usual process of detachment from the mother and idealisation of the father. This is due to the fact that they lack satisfactory maternal and paternal models to follow. Therefore, their particular identification with their mother occurs in two distinct ways: Nicola acts as the dutiful mother figure for the whole family and overprotects the family members, while Leanne replicates her mother's bad habits and her father's violent behaviours. In addition to having witnessed her father's violent treatment of her mother, Nicola experiences her mother's inappropriate gestures, as when she gives a bottle of whiskey to Nicola as a gift on her sixteenth birthday (Doyle 2006: 23-24). These incidents can be interpreted as the source of Nicola's misguided psychological development. As a consequence, the roles of mother and daughter are reversed in the book. As the narrator states, Paula is mothered by Nicola: "Paula is one of Nicola's children. It'll never be different" (253). Besides, she often "checks on [Paula]" to make sure that she does not return to drinking alcohol (35) or stands by her when Paula gets sick (132).

Apart from her maternal attributions, Nicola's economic status is better than Paula's and she often feeds the household by filling the fridge with food (3). In return, Paula feels annoyed and wishes to see Nicola

“vulnerable”, to have the chance to “be Nicola’s mother” again (256). In fact, with this unconventional reversal of roles Nicola is almost the embodiment of the ideal mother, as she has the caring nature, social success and calm life that Paula could never attain. The narrator notes that “Nicola is making something of herself. More than Paula ever did” (32). Furthermore, the narrator underlines the perfection of Nicola’s hands, which show her capacity to achieve an ideal life:

The fingers are long and her nails are always perfect, never a scratch or cracked nail. Nicola has never let work or age get into her hands. That’s the most amazing thing about Nicola, Paula thinks. Or what it stands for—they stand for, her hands. Nicola is in control. Nicola can manage. Nicola is much, much more than she’s supposed to be. Paula adores her. (132)

Apart from her successful attempt at leading a better life, the image of her hands also suggests care and protection. Paula is not only amazed by Nicola’s ability to control her life but she also envies her gift of mothering which Paula lacked in her past. The importance of Nicola’s hands also lies in the fact that she has never had to do manual work. This is precisely due to Paula’s prompt reaction to protect Nicola from Charlo in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*.

In many ways, Nicola’s mothering of her children opens up a new path for Paula. When Paula hears of Nicola’s pregnancy, she “seriously [gives] up the drink” for the first time in her life (35). She begins to take care of herself and to like herself (35). By doing this, Nicola supports her mother’s psychological recovery, echoing Cixous’s idea on the recuperation of a woman through the help of another woman. In *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Paula dares to hit Charlo with a pan thanks to Nicola’s presence and she consequently saves her daughter. Although Paula saved Nicola first, it was then Nicola who saved her mother. In her work about the power of female writing *The Laugh of Medusa* (1981), Cixous remarks: “It is

necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love her self and return in love the body that was 'born' to her" (1981: 252). This proves to be true as Nicola's maternity triggers Paula's love towards her own self. Furthermore, Paula recovers when she sees the projection of her failures in her daughter. In a way, Nicola is the mirror into which she sees her future and it is motherhood itself that helps them to love and appreciate their individual selves.

Similarly to Nicola, Leanne suffers from a lack of positive role models to emulate. She is an alcoholic like her mother once used to be. Apart from her problem with alcohol, she is also violent like her father Charlo. As the narrator describes, Leanne hits Paula on the latter's birthday when she tries to warn Leanne about excessive drinking: "[Leanne] screamed at her. Leanne did. She screamed at Paula. She hit her" (19). Furthermore, Paula realizes how she had once been like Leanne. The narrator highlights that very moment as if "it was Paula looking straight back at Paula" (21). Whilst Nicola symbolizes the life Paula wishes she had, Leanne embodies the life she does actually have. In other words, Leanne stands for the harsh realities that she has been exposed to throughout her life.

As her need for fulfilled parental care is not met, Leanne is psychologically dependant to her mother. Although she is twenty-two, she neither studies, nor works and still lives at home. As Chodorow (1978: 136) states, during the pre-Oedipal stage "a daughter acts as if she is and feels herself unconsciously one with her mother". Unable to take a step further into adulthood, Leanne is stuck at the very phase of feeling one with Paula. As the narrator admits, "Leanne scares Paula. The guilt. It's always there. Leanne is twenty-two. Leanne wets her bed. [...] Her fault. Paula's fault. The whole mess. Most of Leanne's" (5-6). Leanne's bed wetting could be interpreted as a symbol of her inability to grow up, and as an unconscious reaction that

allows her to repress her anger against her mother. Leanne's anger is also reflected in her accusations against Paula: "she made us go to school hungry, she made us wear clothes so that other kids threw two pences at us" (73). Here, the accusations against Paula's neglectful mothering, trigger her inner conflicts.. They reveal her sensitivity and her anguish at having failed to accomplish what was expected from her as a mother.

In this sense, Leanne could be seen as Paula's alter ego, her psychologically reverberant self. During her moments of weakness, Paula turns to Leanne in order to find a can or a bottle of alcohol that would quench her desire to drink. The narrator notes Paula's struggle to find a drop of beer by looking under Leanne's bed: "She's stretching, hoping her fingers will touch a bottle, a can" (178). Furthermore, in another scene that describes their fight for alcohol in Leanne's bedroom, this is presented as a struggle between two wild animals wrestling for a prey: "she pushes back, into Leanne. She wants to hurt her, to knock her over. Get her throat, get her eyes" (178). In this again, Leanne represents the dark self that Paula tries to defeat or, at least, to repress. Likewise, Paula admits that it is only herself that she has to fight against: "[s]he doesn't have to do anything. Leanne is Leanne. That's what Paula has to accept and love" (169). Interestingly, the image of the perfect hand associated to Nicole is also repeated in Leanne's case, but with a different symbolism: "Leanne's hands are desperate. Scratched raw, especially the wrists. Paula hates to see those scratches, self-inflicted—all her life" (150). As opposed to Nicola's perfect hands, Leanne's hands are not only a reflection of her troublesome childhood, but also of Paula's own obstacles and struggles.

When closely looked at, Paula's sons have a different relationship with her. Contrary to Nicola and Leanne, they manage to separate themselves from their mother. However, Paula does not seem to have easily accepted

their growth and autonomy. Notably, Jack is untouched by the dysfunctional family in which he has been brought up. Despite all his qualities (i.e. being neat, earning his pocket money, and studying hard), Jack is “like a fuckin’ saint” in the eyes of Paula (49). Jack’s perfection concerns Paula to the point that she fears he might be gay (46). Her worry stems from reading a newspaper article which claimed that a boy may become homosexual if his father is not beside him throughout childhood. She tries to console herself by affirming that Charlo was “some example”:

He was some example, Jack’s da. A man who beat his wife for seventeen years. In front of Jack and his brother and sisters. But Charlo was Jack’s father and he died when Jack was five. So Jack hasn’t had a dad. And no other man to show him how to wee standing up, or how to walk like a king, or how to look at a girl quietly. (50)

Here, despite his horrific treatment of Paula, Charlo functions as a father figure for her. As mentioned in chapter five, she is born into a family and later marries into one, in which abusive masculine behaviour is an accepted norm. By the same token, through the association Paula makes between a king and a father, Doyle reveals her internalization of women’s subordinate position to men. Furthermore, Paula laments Jack’s growth as she cannot hug him anymore since “he’s too old” now (8). She hesitates to being demonstrative to her son not only because she is concerned with the possibility of annoying him but also because she does not know how to treat her teenage son properly. As in the above mentioned paragraph, she assumes that it is the father, and not the mother, the one who should be involved in the son’s growing up process.

On his part, John Paul manages to recover from taking drugs and succeeds in creating a family of his own. In other words, he achieves what his father failed to create: a peaceful family. According to Freud (1986: 431), the mother feels an “unlimited satisfaction” if she can relate herself to her son.

He notes that "[a] mother can transfer to her son the ambition which she has been obliged to suppress in herself" (431). Similarly, Paula admires John Paul's individuality, something which she has struggled to gain for years: "He's elegant. It's not the clothes. It's him. The strength there that isn't muscle. The independence" (Doyle 2006: 229).

As discussed in the chapter dedicated to *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Paula pays for John Paul to have a tattoo for his fourteenth birthday. Her attempt to make John Paul love her is also recalled in *Paula Spencer*. She wishes to leave a mark on his body thinking he might forgive and love her forever (232). What is more, her wish is crystallized when the narrator notes his suffering: "Paula wants [John Paul] in her arms. Fuckin' God, it hurts" (119). In other words, she wants him to depend on her so that she can feel like a mother. She probably thinks that this is the only way she can free herself from the guilt of neglect from which she is suffering. Ironically, she does not like John Paul's wife (Star) because she has tattoos. From Paula's viewpoint, Star is not suited to be a mother: "[S]he doesn't look like a mother at all. [...] Maybe that's it. Paula looks at Star and she sees herself. She's not good enough" (112). Once again, Doyle is playing with society's biased view as to what constitute the parameters of being a good mother.

The problem of being a good parent is ironically questioned in another instance in the book, which is described by Schillinger (2007: 9) as a "freakish coincidence". When Jack shows Paula how Google functions by typing "Paula Spencer", they come across an American Paula Spencer, who is an expert on child-rearing and has authorised a number of guidelines and books on parenting (Doyle 2006: 125-126). This coincidence can be interpreted as one of the turning points in the book, since Paula comes to realise that she has actually brought up her children on her own against all

obstacles (167). Likewise, she embraces them regardless of their imperfections: “[h]er children are all around her, all their different ages and faces. She has four, divided into thousands. There are so many Leannes” (162). Her welcoming feeling towards “thousands” of children signifies that she is not a bad mother; however, she lacks the courage to defy her husband. Furthermore, the narrator connects Paula to “Smashed-Ankle Barbie” (82), emphasizing the fact that all her beauty and youth has vanished in the hands of Charlo. At times, she recalls his violence from her scars and from the cracking sound of her knees:

A tap, on her nerve. It's there. A claw. She tries not to be too nervous. Everything is hopping. Everything is sweating. Every hole and dent. Every thump and kick. All of Paula's past is her back. It's there, ready, breathing. One last kick from a man who died twelve years ago. (249)

Paula is here depicted as an old machine with unstable parts that can break down anytime. Furthermore, she carries all the physical and psychological scars from her past on her back. Her memories emerge at all times but she tries to control them by “not being too nervous” (249). In this again, Doyle reflects the glimpses of hope towards her full recovery.

Indeed, Paula's promising recovery is one of the main themes of the book. From the very beginning, the narrator signals that Paula has eventually come to terms with her past: “You can't leave things behind. They come with you. You can manage. That's the best you can expect. She manages” (12). For White (2012: 116), the reader witnesses Paula's self-renewal as “someone who embraces her past and her mistakes as a part of who she is”. White's observation is specifically noticeable in the scene when Paula brushes her teeth:

She brushes her teeth. The important ones are there. The ones at the front. The missing ones aren't seen, unless she smiles too wide. Then the gaps appear. She brushes them well. Brushing will bring the gone ones back. She can believe that sometimes. The new Paula. She can believe nearly anything. She's a bit hysterical. Not now.

But sometimes. So happy. Alive. She brushes for lost time. And teeth. (Doyle 2006: 10)

The teeth image is highly symbolic in the above paragraph. Brushing her teeth can be read as Paula's ability to control her life. Although she has lost some teeth in the past, these gaps are at the side of her mouth and cannot be seen easily. In a way, she manages to come to terms with the gaps and losses in her life. Besides, her front teeth are in their place, and this is symbolic of the fact that she has not given up the belief in herself. Her naïve approach as regards brushing her toothless gums can be read as her hopeless wish to bring back the past and undo her mistakes. Yet, her effort to brush what is left behind can also be interpreted as a symbol of Paula's self-determination. She cleans the slate of her painful past and feels gratified regardless of her lost youth.

Doyle draws on both the misery and hope in Paula's life, with the latter prevailing in the end. In a scene where Carmel and Paula are talking about travelling, Carmel highlights her fascination for Paula's endless determination:

—But you've been there and other places, says Paula. —I don't even have a passport yet. —Yet, says Carmel. —You see, that's it. You said Yet. You're going to get one. We know you are. You're fuckin' amazing by the way. Paula says nothing; it's happened too fast. She's not sure she heard it. —If it was me, says Carmel, —I wouldn't bother getting a passport. I'd think of reasons not to. (Doyle 2006: 246)

Their dialogue also reflects Paula's unwitting survival strategy in that, regardless of the suffering and struggles throughout her life, she still has hope. According to Kelly Marsh (2004: 156), Paula wins her "self-awareness" and this "allows possibility of escape from the unwanted role into which her life has forced her". Likewise, the reader is assured that: "She knows already. She's grand; she's fine. She's in charge again [...] She can trust herself. She knows she can" (Doyle 2006: 44). In a way, Paula

deconstructs the view she has inherited from society that “mothers can’t have problems” (132). This subversion enables her rebirth from the ashes of her traumatic past.

Similar to the ending of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, the ending of *Paula Spencer* is promising as regards Paula’s independence. As Hall (2008: 198) notes, “at the end of the novel, she is moving towards autonomy”. Furthermore, she meets Joe Prescott, a retired servant, whose wife has left him for another woman. Paula starts enjoying Joe’s company as they go for walks and a chat. Significantly, Joe and Charlo are opposing characters. More importantly, Paula is able to break from her behavioural pattern and feels attracted to a man who is the opposite of Charlo. Whilst Charlo is an abuser without any proper job, Joe is a kind, modest and mature gentleman. He listens to Paula; he laughs with her, and from his look “[Paula] could tell; he wanted to hold her, probably grab her” (Doyle 2006: 271). Although at first Paula finds it “weird” being with someone after so many years (271), at the end of the book she is more willing to date Joe.

In this sense, Doyle introduces the reader to a new Paula. She is not a battered wife any more, but a working-class woman, struggling to survive, not only in economic terms. While Paula is depicted from the perspective of a third person narrator, the title of the book suggests her forthcoming autonomy in contrast to the previous novel. The significance of the book stems not only from its depiction of Celtic Tiger Dublin through the experience of a working-class Irish woman but also from its portrayal of a mother’s inner conflicts. Furthermore, as Paula gradually recovers from her traumatic past, she has hope for a happier future. With the exception of White (2012), few scholars have highlighted the issue of motherhood in the book. In addition to discussing the effect of the Celtic Tiger on Paula’s life, my goal has been to examine her experiences as a mother. Although she has a welcoming attitude

towards the migrants, Paula faces difficulties when she attempts to adapt to the new multicultural reality of her country as she feels undervalued within her social class. In Lentin's (2002: 243) terms, "the national repressed" haunts Paula at times. While the majority of the working-class members, including her sister Carmel, prosper thanks to the economic boom, Paula lags far behind the economic power of her milieu. Hence, Paula is challenged both by the new multi-ethnic society in Ireland and by issues related to motherhood. Doyle also portrays the problems faced by children when not having proper parenting models. Quite naturally, having witnessed their father's abuse, Paula's children suffer from psychological deficits. Considering Nicola and Leanne from the previously mentioned psychoanalytical frameworks of Freud and Chodorow, the child's normal processes of separation from the mother and idealization of the father have not been properly accomplished. They do not have helpful parental models to take after. While Nicola becomes an overprotective mother figure, Leanne repeats her mother's past addiction to alcohol. A former drug addict, Paula's son John Paul finally stops being a replica of his father and gets his life back on track. The youngest son Jack surprisingly manages to protect himself from the familial dysfunction. As she becomes a grandmother, Paula begins to leave her bad habits behind and find peace with herself. Furthermore, she comes to terms with her past and begins to go out with Joe Prescott. With this uplifting ending, the book explores Paula Spencer's rebirth. From the ashes of a woman who has walked into the doors of domestic violence Paula resurfaces as an independent mother and fulfilled grandmother.

6.2. “The Pram”: The immigrant (m)other

Following *Paula Spencer*, Roddy Doyle's short story collection *The Deportees and Other Stories* (2007) is dedicated to the multicultural people of Ireland. “The Pram” is the only horror story in this collection and it still remains Doyle's only piece of work that has fearful elements. This writer turns the other side of the coin after his portrayal of an Irish working-class woman (Paula Spencer) and introduces a migrant caretaker. Set in the context of twenty-first century Dublin, the plot revolves around a Polish childminder (Alina) who loses her mind and kills her boss (Mrs. O'Reilly) as a result of the scornful treatment she receives from her and her fellow employers, the O'Reilly family.

The story opens with Alina's love and motivation for her job as a nanny to the O'Reilly's baby boy Cillian. Alina is also responsible for the baby's two sisters, Ocean and Saibhreas. At first, Ocean and Saibhreas have good manners but this behaviour does not last long. One morning Alina meets a man, a Lithuanian biochemist, during her routine walks with Cillian in his pram. They start to meet regularly at the same place and spend some time together until Alina has to pick Ocean and Saibhreas up from school. One day she has to collect the girls earlier and arrives late to school. On their way back home, they come across the biochemist. Alina passes by without greeting him. However, the girls notice Alina's awkward gesture and tell their mother, Mrs. O'Reilly, that Alina has a boyfriend. In return, Mrs. O'Reilly scolds Alina. Fed up with Mrs. O'Reilly's ill-treatment and Mr. O'Reilly's harassment, Alina tells a mythic ghost story to the girls to scare them and to take revenge for her encaged position. However, she feels strange since she is also affected by the story. Finding that her daughters are frightened to death by Alina's story, Mrs. O'Reilly gets annoyed and expels Alina. In the end, Alina loses her mind and kills Mrs. O'Reilly.

"The Pram" is narrated in the third person from the predominant point of view of the immigrant protagonist. In this way, the writer directs the readers' attention and sympathies to the immigrant character. The story contains various references to Celtic and Polish mythological female figures (in particular, the Old Hag of Beara and Boginka), which strengthen the thrilling, mythical elements in the plot. This section aims to examine the native Irish characters' negative attitude towards immigrants in Ireland in light of the racist discourse present in the story. I will also focus on the story's characters' mothering and discuss the limitations of being a female immigrant in Ireland. The parallels between the mythical female figures and the protagonist Alina will be another point to be analysed. As in the novel *Paula Spencer*, the theme of multiculturalism is highly present in "The Pram". This short story stages the obstacles that a female outsider may experience in Ireland and her subsequent transformation as a result of the marginalization she encounters there. It is also crucial to note that the discrimination Alina experiences as Polish is further complicated by issues of class. Alina's lower social status prompts, for instance, the verbal abuse of her boss. My analysis is based on a Freudian psychoanalytical framework and Daniel Berthold-Born's theories on the link between forgetfulness and madness, with a view to providing an alternative reading of Alina's subaltern position. Furthermore, the views of feminist literary scholars such as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and contemporary Irish scholars such as Gerardine Meaney, will be highlighted in order to discuss issues such as maternity and motherland in the short story.

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the beginning of the 1990s was marked by the increasing economic prosperity of Ireland. The country witnessed a rapid multicultural change following its unprecedented economic boom. With The Celtic Tiger period, Ireland became a homeland

for people from all around the world. As Margaret Spillane states in her review of *The Deportees*, "Ireland now has three Polish language newspapers, a Nigerian theatre company, Brazilian food shops, and Filipino restaurants" (2008: 146). The country's transformation was not limited solely to the social sphere. As Morales-Ladrón (2010: 165) puts it, this vast inward mobility could also be observed at the cultural level: "[T]he negotiation of a cultural site within which the diversity of immigrants and the Irish find their place has opened the ground for the emergence of what has been termed the "new Irish". As Doyle describes in the foreword of *The Deportees*, the Celtic Tiger "happened, I think, sometime in the mid-90s. I went to bed in one country and woke up in a different one" (Doyle 2007: xi). This "different country", with its new residents, springs to multicultural life in eight stories of the collection.⁵⁰ Doyle's stories have been criticised for being unreal in their highly optimistic portrayal of the multicultural phenomenon in Ireland. In her study "Strangers in a Strange Land?: The New Irish Multicultural Fiction", Amanda Tucker argues that Doyle's popularity stems from the fact that his stories "ease cultural anxieties surrounding recent inward migration" (2013: 55). However, "The Pram" challenges this fact as Doyle puts forward a rather different setting in comparison to the other peacefully resolved stories. This story undermines the intercultural relations between the Irish and the new Irish through his use of the disempowered migrant's point of

⁵⁰ The first story "Guess Who is Coming for the Dinner" is about an Irish father's prejudiced attitude against his daughter's male Nigerian friend. In the second story "The Deportees", we are introduced to Jimmy Rabbitte Jr., who was a teenager in *The Commitments*, and who has since formed a multicultural band. "New Boy" is a story of an African boy who is having adaptation problems at his new school in Dublin. The stories "57% Irish" and "Home to Harlem" are humorous tales of graduate researchers: in the former, an Irish doctorate student tries to conduct an "Irishness" test on immigrants, while in the latter a black student from Ireland analyses the influence of the Harlem Renaissance movement on Irish literature. "Black Hoodie" focuses on a Nigerian woman accused of shoplifting and an Irish man wearing a black coat. The last story in the collection, "I Understand", deals with an illegal immigrant who is fleeing the threats of drug dealers.

view. "The Pram" is particularly significant among the other eight stories in the collection as it adopts the female immigrant's voice and also, as it displays two different working-class mother portrayals.

From the very first sentences, Alina's love for mothering the little baby of The O'Reilly's is revealed: "Alina loved the baby. She loved everything about the baby" (Doyle 2007: 154). As the story continues, the reader is introduced to Alina's unbearable working conditions as the O'Reilly family criticises everything she does. Therefore, the narrator notes that she feels as if "she was being watched" (157), although she often takes Cillian for a walk on her own. Moreover, as Alina's relationship with the Lithuanian biochemist develops, the narrator underlines her recurrent uneasy feeling: "[t]hey met every morning, in the shelter. [...] She watched through the portholes as they kissed. She told him she was being watched" (Doyle 2007: 158).

Alina's sense of being watched by something mysterious is a common element in ghost stories to portray the character's sense of unknown forces at work. In her work *(Un)Like Subjects Women, Theory, Fiction* (1993), Gerardine Meaney touches upon Freud's approach to ghost stories. She argues against Freud's theories and criticises the "Oedipal model", claiming that "Freud denies feminine difference and translates woman into not-man" (1993: 18). Regarding his well known essay "The Uncanny" ("Das Unheimliche") (1919), Meaney (2010: 60) points out that Freud interprets the haunted places in ghost stories as "the uncanny replicas of the mother's body—our dark, frightening, desirable, first home".⁵¹ Meaney's critical reading of Freud's views as regards ghost stories is remarkable in its link between the maternal subject and the uncanny. As will be discussed further

⁵¹ "The Uncanny" is Freud's first literary critical essay that deals with the horror story called "The Sandman" (1817) by Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann (1776-1822). Concentrating on the employment of horrific elements in the story, Freud links Sandman's scratching of the children's eyes with an Oedipal castration complex.

on, Alina challenges O'Reilly's marginalising attitude through telling a mythical story of her motherland. Indeed, she revisits, as Meaney puts it, her "first home" through narrating the horror story.

Echoing Meaney's approach, Molly Ferguson focuses on Freud's concept of "The Uncanny" in her analysis of "The Pram" (2009). According to Ferguson, Alina takes revenge on the O'Reillys' scornful attitude by frightening their daughters through her poignant articulation of the horrifying mythical Polish figure of Boginka.⁵² Ferguson (2009: 54) underlines the subversive function of ghost stories claiming that they "give voice to people at the bottom of the social hierarchy, disrupting the continuity of the powerful". In this sense, Alina's evolution from an ineffectual maid to an empowered woman is structured through her articulation of a ghost story. The two daughters' disclosure of her love affair is what initially led Alina to becoming more annoyed:

—We want to go along the seafront, said Ocean.
—No, said Alina. —It is too windy today, I think.
—You were *late*, said Saibhreas.
—Very well, said Alina. —We go.
The biochemist waved his flask as she approached. Alina walked straight past him. She did not look at him. She did not look at the little girls as they strode past.
That night, quite late, the mother came home. The girls came out of their bedroom.
—Guess what, O'Reilly, they said, together. —Alina has a boyfriend. (Doyle 2007: 159)

The daughters' sneaky behaviour can be accepted as the primary wicked act of the narrative. Moreover, as discussed later, the daughters' calling of their mother by her surname instead of "mother" emphasises the domineering and perhaps unmotherly character of Mrs. O'Reilly. It would be useful to concentrate here on who is perhaps the most prominent wicked female

⁵² The word "bog" means God in Polish and the plural form of Boginka (Boginki) signifies "the little goddesses" (Bane 2012: 84).

character of the story: Mrs. O'Reilly. Mrs. O'Reilly is presented as a very dominant businesswoman who has no time to spend with her children. As the narrator points out, "[E]veryone called her by her surname. She insisted upon this practice. It terrifies her clients, she told Alina. It was intriguing; it was sexy" (158). Although Alina is attentive to the tasks she is given, Mrs. O'Reilly never misses the opportunity to reproach her. For instance, she constantly warns her not to "scrape the sides" of the baby's pram (155). In addition, Alina is never allowed to take the initiative: "She had walked for two hours, every morning. She had been ordered to do this. [S]he had been told which route to take" (ibid).

Even her language use is restricted by Mrs. O'Reilly: "she had been instructed never to use her own language" (157). She is not allowed to talk Polish with the baby because "[Mrs. O'Reilly doesn't] want Cillian confused" (157). Ferguson (2009: 56) indicates that "Cillian's hypothetical confusion might not only be linguistic, but perhaps he might also be confused about who his mother is if he hears Alina speak more often than her". Ferguson also points out that "as a white female immigrant, Alina looks enough like her employers to not immediately *appear* foreign, yet that characteristic also makes her a disturbing double figure for the actual mother in the house" (56). As Adrienne Rich (1995: 38) claims, "[p]owerless women have always used mothering as a channel—narrow but deep—for their own human will to power". Likewise Alina gets strength from mothering Cillian. Although Alina fills in for the absence of the mother figure at home, she cannot ingratiate herself with Mrs. O'Reilly. On top of this, she is exposed to the racist discourse of her boss, as she is often called a "Polish peasant" (Doyle 2007: 176), "Polish cailín" (169), or "[a] fucking nightmare" (176). As Jarmila Mildorf (2005: 109) notes, "insults confer a certain identity on the person insulted and thus ultimately contribute to the construction of social

group". Echoing the lines of Jimmy Jr. in *The Commitments*, Jennifer Jeffers's rhetorical inquiry summarizes Mrs. O'Reilly's dominant position over Alina: "what happens when the Irish are no longer the 'niggers of Europe' because of economic prosperity and the country's ability to invent itself for the twenty-first century? They become the oppressors" (2011: 268-269). Unfortunately, Alina's forced displacement and her work as a nanny automatically define her status in Ireland. Since Mrs. O'Reilly pays Alina's salary, she feels superior to her both on class and racial assumptions, and feels consequently entitled to tyrannize over her. Thus, Alina has to cope with the social status quo and handicaps attached to being a female immigrant. When telling the horrifying myth of Boginka, she takes the risk of losing her job and even her mind.

Racist or generally discriminative discourse is a common device employed in ghost stories, where evil fully enjoys power and control while the good figure is disregarded and forced to be an outcast by the evil figure. In her review of "The Pram", Margaret Spillane discusses the dichotomy between Mrs. O'Reilly and Alina as follows:

What makes O'Reilly a monster? In Doyle shorthand: she has a profession, a husband and children to neglect, and an immigrant nanny to abuse. Perhaps Doyle intended his juxtaposition of grotesqueries—O'Reilly, with her womanhood denatured by economic power, and the nanny Alina, the long-suffering erasure—to recall to readers' minds fairy tales of wicked witches and kind-hearted maidens. (Spillane 2008: 150)

Doyle creates a modern pessimistic fairy tale of 21st century Dublin, in which Mrs. O'Reilly is portrayed as a dark representative of the native Irish. When asked whether Mrs. O'Reilly belongs to an upper class, Doyle identifies her as "a Tiger phenomenon" and he underlines that "she has an inflated notion of herself" (interview with Tekin 2014: 115). In this sense hence, Mrs. O'Reilly reminds us a little of Carmel in *Paula Spencer* as she too represents

an example of the new well-off Irish during the Celtic Tiger period. She is presented as a dominant businesswoman who has no time to spend with her children, and is thus compelled to bring up her spoilt daughters with the help of her maid. She does not have any relation with the prototype woman shaped by the 1937 Irish Constitution; indeed, she is the opposite of the traditional iconographic image of Irish motherhood, "the angel in the house". Unlike this traditional mother figure, Mrs. O'Reilly is often away from home and her only concern is her own business. The following lines exemplify Mrs. O'Reilly's imperfect maternity:

—I pay you to keep [Cillian] awake, she'd told Alina, once. —In this country, Alina, the babies sleep at night. Because the mummies have to get up in the morning to work, to pay the bloody childminders. (Doyle 2007: 166-167)

Labelled as a "bloody childminder", Alina is gradually forced to be an outcast. Doyle reveals the social gap between the maid and her boss through Mrs. O'Reilly scornful gestures. For instance, following Mrs. O'Reilly question as to whether she "[is] fucking [that] guy?" (160), Alina looks up at O'Reilly and O'Reilly smiles down at her. Mrs. O'Reilly even degrades Alina by swearing at her: "[f]uck away, girl" (160). As a female immigrant, Alina suffers not only the verbal abuse inflicted by Mrs. O'Reilly but also Mr. O'Reilly's sexual harassment. Following the disclosure of Alina's affair with the biochemist, she embodies a threat for Mrs. O'Reilly. The latter maintains her degrading attitude by limiting Alina's private life, stating that she cannot have sex "while [she is] working. Not here, on the property. And not with Mister O'Reilly" (160). As for Mr. O'Reilly, Alina signifies for him a "fresh prey". At one of the dinner scenes in the story, the narrator states that Alina "felt something, under the table, brush against her leg. Mr O'Reilly's foot" (169). In another scene, Mr. O'Reilly "looked at Alina's breast, beneath her Skinni Fit T-shirt, and thought how much he'd like to see them when she

returned after a good walk in the wind and rain" (176). These examples prove Molly Ferguson's claim that Alina "experiences the trapped feeling of being fixed in the gaze of the host" (2009: 58). As a displaced, immigrant female character surrounded by cruel host figures, Alina's individuality is also entrapped and diminished.

Although Alina shares the family home, she is not considered an individual. Her "bedroom in the attic" (Doyle 2007: 156) can be taken as a reference to the classical works where "the outcast" or "the mad woman" is kept. In Charlotte Brontë's famous work *Jane Eyre* (1847), Mr. Rochester accuses his wife of being mad and confines her to live in the attic. Likewise, in the short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, we read about the life of a depressed woman who is doomed to spend her days upstairs as a result of her husband's decision. As in these classic examples, Alina lives in the attic. Her personal privacy is out of question as her bedroom door has no lock (160), and when she asserts her right to have "[a] private affair" in reference to her encounter with the biochemist, Mrs. O'Reilly strictly states that "Nothing can be [her] private affair [while she's] working [there]" (160).

Offering a pioneering in-depth analysis of various classical works from a feminist point of view, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar highlight the act of forgetting in the case of *Jane Eyre*. They state that "Brontë's orphaned Jane Eyre seems to have lost (or symbolically "forgotten") her family heritage" (2000: 59). In *Hegel's Theory of Madness* (1995), Daniel Berthold-Born underlines (1995: 90) that forgetting and madness go hand in hand: "[f]orgetfulness is the act of nostalgia seeking to heal the wounds suffered by spirit on its path of evolution by recovering its lost innocence". Furthermore, the manifestation of forgetfulness occurs as "the falling apart of the ordinary causal and temporal connections of rational thought" (90).

Similarly to Jane Eyre, Alina seems to lack family bonds. Furthermore, she makes efforts to—as Berthold Born would call it—“heal her wounds” through revisiting her culture’s folkloric horror story. Alina figuratively returns to her motherland through her narration of the Boginka story. She is even influenced by it to the extent of consuming reality and fantasy and becoming mad like Mrs. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. Alina also complies with Freud’s definition of the mad person as “neurotic”, a person who “turns away from reality because [s/]he finds it unbearable” (Freud 1958: 218). Alina’s neurosis is a consequence of being a newcomer who tries to elude her immigrant identity crisis caused by the unwelcoming native.

The peak point of Alina’s unfortunate victory, the murder of Mrs. O’Reilly, is also brought about by the nanny’s madness. Gradually, Doyle prepares us for her terrible revenge. At first, as the narrator states, she “was going to murder the little girls” (Doyle 2007: 160). However, Alina’s plan changes to a more grotesque one:

She would, however, frighten them. She would terrify them. She would plant nightmares that would lurk, prowl, rub their evil backs against the soft walls of their minds, all their lives, until they were two old ladies, lying side by side on their one big deathbed. She would—she knew the phrase—scare them shitless. (Doyle 2007: 160)

Deprived of the possibility of creating her own space in a foreign home, Alina regains power only through telling the horror story of her own culture as a revenge for the native Irish family’s scornful attitude. As shown in the quote above, it is also crucial to note that Doyle employs free indirect discourse to reveal how Alina feels. He enables us to know the emotions of the migrant worker, accomplishing sympathy towards the character of Alina through these revelations. In this way, the predominant point of view—which is the challenging situation of an immigrant—is provided throughout the story.

Alina's transformation from an ineffectual maid to an empowered woman is envisioned through her articulation of the ghost story about the Polish mythological figure 'Boginka'. In *Encyclopaedia of Demons in World Religions and Cultures*, Theresa Bane (2012: 84) provides a definition of Boginki as "a vampiric demon [...] found near riverbanks. Rather nymphlike in appearance [...] Boginki attack mothers with newborn children, stealing the babies to eat". According to Michael Ostling, who analyses Polish myths about witches, (2011: 203) the 'Boginka' is a figure who avenges herself "on the living by stealing any infant children not yet protected by baptism". This "kidnapper nymph", as Byddaym Nunal (1995: 263) defines her when discussing the elements of Polish folklore, is reawakened in Alina's retelling of the story. As Alina informs O'Reilly's daughters, this "old and wicked lady" from her country "lived in a dark forest", and every night she "pushed the pram to the village" and "chose a baby" to steal it (Doyle 2007: 161). Following vain chasing attempts, the villagers decided to cut down the trees of the dark forest in order to find her and rescue their daughters. Thus, this kidnapper nymph had to "[move] to another place" in order to find "new babies and new little girls" (165). The parallelism between the immigrant protagonist and the Polish mythological figure is apparent. Through Alina, Doyle engenders a modern Boginka who is far away from her native land and has the urge to be a mother but is only able to push the prams of others. As Boginka, Alina walks with the pram of Cillian every day, and nurses a baby who is not hers. She sees various "mothers and other young women like herself" who push modern prams and "she envies them" (Doyle 157). Her first opportunity to be a real mother is hindered by the O'Reilly family because they do not approve of her relationship with the biochemist. Impeded from being a mother, Alina expands the myth of Boginka to scare the life out of the O'Reilly daughters.

In order to do this, Alina emphasizes that Boginka “took only—the girls” (162), and that her main purpose was to steal them for “their skin” (165), what can be read as a symbol of her urge for rejuvenation. The negative attributions of Boginka, such as her old age and wickedness, echo the Celtic mythological figure of the Old Hag of Beara (Caileach Bhéarra), the goddess of prosperity in Celtic folklore, later re-imagined as the bringer of death in Irish-Catholic mythology (McCoy 1995: 211). Unlike the Old Hag of Beara, who can recover her splendour and youthful beauty through her sexual encounter with the rightful king of Ireland, the possibility of Alina's sexual fulfilment is thwarted from the very start.

This reference to the Polish myth takes on a mystical meaning as gothic elements gradually gain predominance in the narrative when the daughters claim that Cillian's pram moved by itself (168). As Alina tells her horrifying story to the girls, we learn that it is “dark outside”, that “a crow perched on the chimneypot cawed down the chimney; its sharp beak seemed very close” and that the “wind continued to shriek and groan” (164-165). Such an inscrutable, creepy atmosphere integrates into the drama of the story, to the extent that the pram appears “haunted” not only for the girls, but additionally for Alina herself: “The little girls screamed. And so did Alina. She had not touched the wheel. The pram had moved before her foot had reached it” (166). Alina eventually believes the folkloric tale that she is telling and the narrative records her gradual descent into madness in her blind credence that the pram is really haunted. Influenced by this myth of Boginka, Alina blurs the boundaries of reality and fiction, and according to the aforementioned definition by Freud (1958: 218), becomes a neurotic self, who “turns away from reality” because she finds her situation difficult to bear. Doyle skilfully amalgamates the myth of Boginki and Alina's progression into madness. Mrs. O'Reilly fires Alina because of her

“hardcore” storytelling (Doyle 2007: 170) which even causes her daughters to wet themselves. While Mrs O'Reilly is on the phone cancelling the following day's meeting, Alina kills her:

O'Reilly brought the phone down from her ear at the same time that Alina brought the poker down on O'Reilly's head. The poker was decorative, and heavy. It had never been used, until now. The first blow was sufficient. O'Reilly collapsed with not much noise, and her blood joined the urine on the rug. (Doyle 2007: 176)

The poker and the blow acquire various meanings. The adjective “heavy” and “not used before” suggest Alina's ponderous revenge. The reference to the fact that the poker has not been used before suggests that it has been waiting for Alina's act of vengeance. On the other hand, O'Reilly's fall does not make much of a sound; that is to say, overthrowing O'Reilly is not an action that involves much noise as her power is rather superficial.

Alina's unexpected poker blow is, ultimately, a reaction to the racist discourse she is subject to as an immigrant in Ireland. Specifically, Alina embodies the obstacles of a female outsider in Ireland as a result of O'Reilly's racist attitude. As Ferguson (2009: 58) notes, this character “regains control only as a monster, and Doyle's meta-textual ghost story is implied as a cautionary tale for readers who may underestimate the effects of alienation on the migrant worker”. The effects of this alienation become all the more obvious in the new multicultural face of Ireland when contrasted with the way such workers were treated in the past. In Roddy Doyle's memoir *Rory & Ita* (2002), where he records the words of his parents, we learn that they used to perceive their maids not as servants but rather as friends. As Doyle's mother Ita puts it, ““We were conscious of who they were, not *what* they were”” (Doyle 2003: 37). Unappreciative for who she is, “Alina helplessly takes sanctuary in her folklore” (Villar-Argáiz and Tekin 2014: 163). She transforms herself into a modern Boginki and escapes with the pram where the baby is sleeping. As the narrator states, “[t]hey found her

in the sludge. She was standing up to her thighs in the ooze and seaweed. She was trying to push the pram still deeper into the mud" (Doyle 2007: 178). In the end, the pram can be read as a symbol of Alina's vain efforts to bury the horrible memories she has been through in Ireland. The sludge or the bog—'soft' in Gaelic and it serves as a traditional meaning—suggests the immigrant are victimized as a result of the unwelcoming demeanour of the Irish native. Furthermore, it is a decomposed ground in contrast to solid land. As a result of its slippery and absorbent nature, the bog suggests instability. In Alina's case, it represents her failure as an immigrant to establish for herself a secure environment in Ireland.

In this sense, the last image of Alina is of a woman whose mind has gone completely blank. The use of indirect speech at the beginning gradually disappears in the story as the reader does not have access any more to Alina's mind. At this stage in the narrative we, as readers, have lost all sense of empathy with her. The narrative progressively becomes more mysterious, to the extent that, at the moment of O'Reilly's murder, we are not allowed to hear the Polish migrant's thoughts. This fact increases the suspense, as we do not know what to expect, and thus the murder takes us by surprise. Thus "The Pram" presents Doyle's portrayal of the other side of the coin. For him, Ireland is not always welcoming to outsiders. His idea coincides with that of Declan Kiberd, who comments that "racism of the most ugly kind undeniably exists in Irish society: and the presence of ever-growing numbers of refugees and migrants from overseas has brought it to the surface" (2001: 51). Alina is forced to leave her future aspirations aside, and she ends up taking refuge in her native folklore. Nevertheless, she cannot find a way out, loses her mind and turns into a killer. Undoubtedly, this unique ghost story from *The Deportees* collection provides an alternative look of a multicultural country with national values that are still largely at the forefront.

6.3. Motherhood in Doyle's children's fiction

6.3.1. Survival in the wilderness of the self: *Wilderness*

Wilderness (2007) is a children's narrative about the Griffin family living in Dublin. The Griffin family is introduced at the beginning: Frank and Sandra Griffin have two sons: ten-year-old Tom and twelve-year-old Johnny. Gráinne, who is Frank's teenage daughter from his first marriage with Rosemary, also lives with them. Rosemary lives in America and decides to visit her daughter Gráinne as they have not seen each other since the latter was a baby. As Gráinne steps into adolescence, her reactions to her step mother Sandra become outrageous. Gráinne's overreactions and her biological mother's upcoming visit compel Frank's wife Sandra to take a break. Therefore she decides to go on a winter safari in Lapland (Finland) with her two sons during Rosemary's visit to Dublin. In the meantime, Gráinne awaits her mother with high hopes, as she expects an apology for their lost years. In the meantime, her step brothers spend their holidays enjoying the snow and learning to feed the sled dogs. One day, during their holiday in the desolate snowy land, Sandra disappears. The boys secretly take the sled dogs to find her in the wilderness. With a superhuman effort, they rescue their mother just before she freezes to death. Contrary to her expectations, Gráinne's encounter with her biological mother does not go well and Rosemary returns to America. At the end of the book, Sandra and the boys return to Ireland, and the novel finishes with the family members empathizing and respecting each other.

The book is narrated in the third-person. According to Jerry Grisworld, *Wilderness* "is that rare young adult novel that can speak to every member of the family" (2007). Similarly, Deborah Stevenson (2007: 136) notes that "the book displays a keen understanding of kids' yearning for

attachment as well as autonomy and capability". Apart from its appeal both to adult and child readers, the most striking point of the book is its representation of each character's entanglement in his/her "wilderness" which is hard to step away from or change. Here, the metaphor "wilderness" refers to the repressed feelings that threaten to flourish at a particular moment. Therefore, my analysis concentrates on the various meanings that the book's title suggests: 1) the uninhabited land and wild adventure that Sandra and her sons experience; 2) Gráinne's crisis of adolescence and its resolution upon her biological mother's visit; and 3) Frank's inner conflicts about being a good father. Furthermore, this chapter aims to explore how Doyle challenges traditional ideas of motherhood. As in the other children's stories analysed later in this chapter, he focuses on a child struggling to come to terms with the absence of his/her biological mother. Moreover, I will discuss the significance of the dogs and how they strengthen human relations in *Wilderness* through Michelle Superle's approach to the existence of dogs in children's stories. Whilst analysing the symbol of the stepmother, I will refer to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's theoretical framework regarding surrogate mothers. Additionally, Melanie Klein's views on the child's split between the biological mother and the stepmother will enhance my analysis of the character of the daughter in the book. Finally, Tina Miller's perspective on the social perceptions of motherhood will illustrate my examination of the stepmother figure.

The literary meaning of wilderness, as a wild and uninhabited land, is reflected through the adventure of Sandra and her sons. To start with, when the boys see the sled dogs for the first time, they attribute human features to them. Tom refers to the intensity of their eyes stating "[i]t's like there's someone trapped in there" (2007: 2). This statement is a highly significant metaphor of how the characters feel in the book. For instance, Tom feels

inferior to John since Tom often ends up “in second place, in the backseat, with the smaller potato, the broken toy” (31). Likewise, Sandra's motivation for the winter safari stems from her desire to avoid an encounter with Rosemary: “She was glad she was here, just for a while. Just herself and the boys. Away from the complications” (50). While, Gráinne struggles to resolve the issues concerning her biological mother, Frank questions his fatherhood.

Before giving a closer look at this image of wilderness, it is also crucial to discuss Doyle's employment of the character of the dog in the book. In her analysis of nearly a hundred children's dog stories written in English in the second half of the 20th century, Michelle Superle finds striking common patterns (2012). In these children's stories, the dogs function as a bridge between childhood and adulthood; they are portrayed as “superior beings capable of effecting psychological transformation” (2012: 174). Indeed, in *Wilderness*, Tom's and Johnny's first step towards their growing up process is enabled through their adventurous experience with the dogs in the uninhabited land. Following their first sled trip with the dogs, John feels “different”; “bigger” and “like a man” (2007: 100). Furthermore, the dogs trigger a sense of solidarity between the brothers that they actually lacked before. Following the disappearance of their mother, Tom thinks that together with Johnny and the help of the dogs they can find her (145). In this sense, the dogs act as the vehicle through which the boys reconcile their relationship with one other.

In her analysis of children's fiction, Superle (2012: 175) also notes that the dogs in the stories “ultimately assist humans they touch to achieve a fuller human identity”. Significantly, accompanying the dogs enables Johnny to feel powerful in order to face the possible dangers in the wilderness as he repeats to himself that “they [are] going to find [his mother]” (2007: 145).

The narrator notes that Tom feels self-confident thanks to the presence of the dogs:

[Tom] wasn't lost; it didn't feel like that. Because of the dogs. He would never have walked through darkness like this. Or cycled. Not for money, or anything. It wasn't the dark; he wasn't afraid of the dark. It was what was *in* the dark. What was waiting. Holes, rats, crooked fingers, teeth. Not seeing; not being able to see. That was what frightened him. But he wasn't really frightened now. The dogs were with him and he was going to find his mother. (152)

In this sense, the stereotypical childhood fears (e.g. to darkness, beasts, or impaired body parts) begin to diminish as soon as the boys' interact with the dogs. Although they cannot define this new powerful feeling in concrete terms, the narrator reveals their transformation into more self-assured children:

It happened to Johnny too. [...] Being with the dogs had changed him. He was still a kid, but he'd become something else as well. He'd been alone. He'd learned from the dogs. He knew how to survive. He just knew it. (181)

The above excerpt reveals how the dogs trigger the boys' awareness of their own selves. Additionally, they provide them with courage to survive in the middle of wilderness.

The presence of the dogs could also signify the duality which exists between the rigid laws of nature and civilization. Superle (2012: 175) draws attention to the recurrent presence in children's stories of binary oppositions such as the city versus the forest or childhood versus adulthood. Significantly enough, Doyle situates Tom and Johnny in between this duality, implying that in contrast to most adults, they have not totally turned their backs on nature. The men in charge of the sled dogs treat Tom and Johnny as children and pretend that the disappearance of their mother is not an emergency (Doyle 2007: 153). However, the boys believe that they need to rescue their mother without giving a second thought as to the possible dangers in the

wilderness. Empathising with their feelings, the narrator claims: "Tom and Johnny *were* kids. But that was where lots of adults got it wrong. Kids didn't need to be treated *like* kids, or how most adults thought kids were—stupid" (153). Tom and Johnny can be interpreted as beings, who are closer to wild nature as they learn to survive in the uninhabited land with the help of the dogs. Here, the boys' wilderness is evidenced by the fact that the men in charge of the sled dogs do not tell Tom and Johnny that their mother is lost in the wild.

Wilderness is also significant in the sense that Doyle addresses the theme of children's survival during the mother's absence, a recurrent topic in his more recent children's books *Her Mother's Face* (2008) and *A Greyhound of a Girl* (2011), as it will be discussed later. Significantly, when the boys find their mother, they realise that they have been able to survive in the wilderness without her assistance. Furthermore, the stereotype of the determined mother figure is deconstructed as they find her very weak and close to death:

She was trying to smile, but they could tell that she was frightened. It was weird. It was terrible. Tom had expected her to hug him when they'd found her. He'd been cold and tired and very frightened. He was a kid; she was his mother. But she was lying on the snow, and she was broken and sick. (Doyle 2007: 181)

Here, Doyle advocates that, besides being a mother, Sandra is first of all a human being, rather than an all-powerful mother; her sons also come to realize this when they find her in a semi-conscious state, in a "frightened", "weird" condition. Therefore, Doyle challenges the idealization of the mother figure as well as the children's expectations.

In Sandra's case, the metaphor of the wilderness can be analysed in terms of as her deteriorated relationship with her step daughter. However, before commenting on Sandra's wilderness in detail, it is crucial to note that

Doyle subverts the conventional stereotypical image of the step mother through his characterisation of Sandra. Not only does she substitute Gráinne's absent biological mother figure, but she also helps Frank to fulfil his fatherly role. In their groundbreaking work *The Madwoman in the Attic* (2000), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar touch upon the stereotype of the cruel step mother in canonical texts such as Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817) (181). Similarly, these critics acknowledge that patriarchal texts (i.e. a fairy tale such as *Snow White*) have traditionally suggested a binary relationship between the angelic daughter and the evil stepmother (28): "for every glowing portrait of submissive women enshrined in domesticity, there exists an equally important negative image that embodies the sacrilegious fiendishness" (28). Significantly, Doyle refuses to portray the step mother as an evil figure and, furthermore, he does not condemn the biological mother for leaving her daughter.

From the very beginning of the book, Sandra acts nicely, in contrast to the patriarchal surrogate mother figure. As noted, she "made [Gráinne] laugh a lot, and Gráinne thought she was beautiful, and she liked the way her dad looked at her" (2007: 13). Furthermore, unlike Gráinne's absent biological mother, "Sandra was always there" when Gráinne needed her (16). Significantly, the narrator states that Gráinne's dinner is always ready and that its smell fills the kitchen (16). In this sense, Sandra's help surrounds and nourishes Gráinne in every possible way. Apart from being described as "funny and lovely" (14), Sandra also knows what Gráinne needs unlike Frank. While he often chooses clothes and accessories for his daughter which are stereotypically attributed to young girls such as "party dresses and skirts, and coloured tights and necklaces" (14), Sandra takes Gráinne shopping and buys her basic pieces that Frank never considers such as "jeans and tops, socks and knickers" (14). Furthermore, Sandra empathises with Gráinne

more than the latter does with her father. As opposed to the traditional demonized figure of the stepmother, Sandra acts in a more helpful and empathic way than the father. Although Johnny and Tom's birth poses a threat for Gráinne as she has to share Sandra and her father with her young siblings, "Frank and Sandra made sure Gráinne wasn't left alone for long" (16).

Despite Sandra's affectionate approach to Gráinne, the narrative emphasizes that the daughter holds more power in comparison to that held by her stepmother. As Gráinne steps into adolescence, her attitude changes. While she starts treating Sandra unfavourably, Sandra finds herself in a helpless position. Gráinne reminds Sandra of her subordinate mother position by constantly yelling "You're not my mother!" (17). Although this might be regarded as a common reaction among adolescents of divorced parents, the narrator compares Gráinne with "a terrorist" (18), subverting once again, the stereotypical patriarchal portrayal of a vulnerable Cinderella-like daughter, oppressed under the domineering influence of an evil stepmother.

Her crisis of adolescence and her resentment against her biological mother Rosemary can be interpreted in terms of Gráinne's symbolic wilderness. Apart from the turbulence of adolescence, Gráinne's wilderness means that she comes to terms with her biological and surrogate mothers. This differentiation between the two mothers has received special attention within the work on child psychology, mainly by critics such as Melanie Klein, a well-acknowledged 20th century psychoanalyst. For Klein (1986: 217), a child who is brought up with a surrogate mother and suffers from the absence of a biological mother needs to experience a "primal splitting process" between the "good" mother and the "bad" mother to reach balance. The child's recollection of the preoedipal mother as well as the mother's

projection of love serves to portray the good mother, whilst the bad mother signifies restraints, deprivation of love, and oedipal resentment:

[The] primal division only succeeds if there is adequate capacity for love. Excessive envy, a corollary of destructive impulses, interferes with the building up of a good object and the primal split between the good and bad breast cannot be sufficiently achieved. The result is that later the differentiation between good and bad is disturbed in various connections. [...] A very deep and sharp division between loved and hated objects indicates that destructive impulses, envy and persecutory anxiety are very strong and serve as a defense against these emotions. (Klein 1986: 217)

In other words, the child can only achieve the primal splitting process if s/he receives a sufficient amount of love. Excessive envy of the mother may hinder the child from achieving this process, making it difficult for her to differentiate between the “good” and the “bad” mother. This means that the separation between the “good” and the “bad” is not accomplished. If there is a profound division between the two, the damaging driving forces of envy and intolerance arise and create a barrier against feelings of love or hate. In Gráinne's case, her inability to split the two mothers and her resentment about Rosemary's absence emerges in the form of animosity:

[Gráinne's] arms were wrapped around her knees. Her knees were right up to her chin. She could hear them. Talking about her. She couldn't. Her music was all she could hear. But she *knew* what they were saying about her. Down in the kitchen. She could hear [the household]. They hated her. They hated her. And she hated them. (Doyle 2007: 21)

Despite all her resentment, Gráinne waits “most of her life” (44) for her biological mother to come back. In fact, as she does not remember the reason for her mother's departure, she questions herself “*What did I do? Why did you leave?*” (129). Furthermore, she preserves the utopic vision that living with her mother would enable her to do things that she is dreaming of such as drinking wine and enjoying life together with her mother in New York (103).

Significantly, her biological mother does not respond to her wishes or needs, whereas her stepmother does.

Despite her years without Rosemary, the gap created between them and the curiosity of her absence lead Gráinne to idealize her. Irish literary scholar Keith O'Sullivan, in his study of children's literature, has provided a thorough analysis of the relationship between the adult and the child in *Wilderness*. He (2011: 103) points out that the book portrays "a series of shifting perceptions" in terms of reflecting Gráinne's transition from childhood to adolescence since she has had a hard time "to tolerate, understand, and forgive the mother who abandoned her". Nevertheless, she "idealized" her biological mother at first, and Gráinne's crisis of adolescence is intensified as a result of this false idealization.

Doyle detaches himself from value judgements against Rosemary for abandoning Gráinne, while implying that Sandra has provided Gráinne with care throughout her childhood. Therefore, it is not surprising that Gráinne recalls more memories related to Sandra than to her biological mother. As discussed later in my analysis of *Her Mother's Face*, Adrienne Rich (1995: 12) states that the physical features of a mother (i.e. hands, voice) are later crucial for a child in the development of his/her social interaction. In other words, through the mother's bodily characteristics, the child develops his/her first interplay with the world around him/her. It can be concluded that the mother's features create the child's primary memories. This is especially noticeable when Gráinne cannot remember the voice of her biological mother: "[s]he'd never heard this woman's voice before. It wasn't in Gráinne's memory. Nothing clicked, or came back" (Doyle 2007: 67). Here, Gráinne's physical detachment from her biological mother clearly contrasts with her emotional idealization of her. That is, the physical recognition of her mother does not accompany her emotional attachment. As

we will see later in this chapter, Doyle connects bodily recognition and emotional attachment to the mother in other children's books such as *Her Mother's Face*. In *Wilderness*, while the narrator often uses the word "mother" to reflect Gráinne's thoughts about her biological mother, the shift to the word "woman" is significant at the beginning of this quotation. That is, as soon as Gráinne meets her biological mother, she feels alienated by her voice and she perceives her as a woman, not as her mother. Significantly, Gráinne does not see her biological mother as having a maternal role; she rather regards her as an individual, a woman with whom she cannot relate. By contrast, Sandra's voice is fresh in her mind as she has sung her songs in her childhood (14). Here, Doyle challenges the difference between mothering (the daily care) and motherhood (a biological bond). While Gráinne has a biological bond with Rosemary, she unconsciously associates Sandra's features with her primary recollections. Here again, Doyle shows that Sandra is the one who has supported Gráinne's personal development more than her biological mother.

Apart from Sandra's mothering, Doyle presents an unsure father figure through his portrayal of Frank. Frank's wilderness can be read as his hesitancy about whether he is a good father or not. As Gráinne turns into a furious teenage girl, Frank feels that he has lost control over his daughter. He strives not to restrict Gráinne's night life but finds it very hard not to "smell her breath" or maintain "his distance and [respect] her independence" (18). Therefore, in various instances, he finds himself questioning his role as a father. As the narrator states, "[Frank] felt guilty and, sometimes, angry" (17) and he blames himself for Gráinne's rebellious attitude. Furthermore, he thinks that she is "just a selfish wagon, like her mother, and the sooner she grew up and got out of the house the better" (17). Nevertheless, Doyle emphasises the fact that Frank's empathizes with Rosemary leaving and

Gráinne's adolescence. The narrator notes that Frank feels guilty as "[h]e [is] the selfish one. She was a teenager; it [is] a phase she was going through" (17).

One of the most significant aspects of this children's book is that Doyle introduces the reader to a mother who has left her family behind to be able to maintain her own identity. For O'Sullivan (2011: 103), Rosemary struggles "with the dichotomous nature of the human soul". That is, she turns her back on the duality of "emotional maturity" and "adult responsibilities" that motherhood requires, and her choice "is entirely understandable" (103). Rosemary's decision can be interpreted through the theoretical approach of the sociologist Tine Miller. In her work, *Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach* (2005), Miller explores how giving birth and becoming a mother leads to an ultimate shift within the lives of women. This sociologist focuses on how the maternal experience is viewed and acknowledged from the point of view of women. For Miller (2005: 15), women are faced with a new social identity when they become mothers: "[a] new social self as mother [that] has to be learned". Likewise, Rosemary feels threatened by an inevitable change following marriage and motherhood: "'You get married,' [...] 'You have children—a child. You turn from one person into another person'" (Doyle 2007: 133). Not content with her new identity, Rosemary desperately wishes to have her old self back. Emphasising the social expectations of ideal motherhood, Miller underlines the pressure placed on women: "[Women] do not necessarily feel like the type of mother they had envisaged being, and shifting identities involving a temporary loss of an old, recognisable self, can add to this period of confusion" (2005: 61). Similarly, Rosemary does not want to fit herself into this new reality. She tells Gráinne that she has loved her father, but that she felt that staying with Frank and Gráinne would have destroyed her old self (Doyle 2007: 133). Here, Doyle

not only questions the common view that all women are happy in the traditional mother role; he also depicts nonconventional mothers who leave the family when there are difficulties.

Doyle also examines how a daughter realizes that her mother has chosen to leave in favour of maintaining her independence. The narrator notes Gráinne's high expectations as regards her initial encounter with Rosemary by expressing that "[she expects] to feel suddenly full, lost time charging back into her" (66). However, she feels disenchanted following their encounter as "[s]he'd expected it to feel right. But, now, she [feels] nothing" (66). Similar to Tom and Johnny, who find their mother in the wilderness in a state of semi-consciousness and, as such, realize that she is vulnerable and mortal, Gráinne understands that her mother is humane, in that she chooses to leave her family of her own accord. In other words, she comes to the realisation that her mother had preferred to maintain her own independent self before succumbing to an undesired maternal identity. According to O'Sullivan (2011: 103) *Wilderness* "is a resolution of contraries", as "Gráinne successfully strikes a balance between her childlike obsession with feeling hurt at being abandoned and a more mature consideration of her mother as a 'real' person" (103). Empathising with her mother, Gráinne also feels transformed after her mother's explanation for leaving: "[s]he'd just turned into another person. That was what had just happened to her" (Doyle 2007: 133).

At the end of the book, Doyle offers a common ground for each character's wilderness, consisting of a respectful acceptance of people's own choices. For instance, Gráinne comes to an in-depth understanding that the adults around her are human beings and that they might act unexpectedly. As stated at one point, "the only adults who made real sense were dead" (104). Here, Doyle plays with the idea that human beings are bound to make

mistakes and that they are not always predictable, just like wilderness. Once again, Doyle links wild nature with human beings. Furthermore, in the very last scene, Tom declares that they should adopt a husky dog for a Christmas present (211). Their new dog echoes the symbolic presence of dog figures in children's stories, as bridging elements, in Superle's words, which link "the natural and human worlds, thus allowing child protagonists and their families to be reborn into a fuller humanity" (2012: 177). The adoption of this dog can be read as a symbol of the family's reawakening into a more insightful understanding of each other.

In conclusion, *Wilderness* displays characters who are enmeshed in their symbolic wilderness. As they try to find their path out of their entanglement, they also discover the importance of respecting one another. Thanks to the dogs in the wilderness, the boys mature and build a healthier relationship with each other and with their mother. The dogs not only symbolise nature and its uncontrollable features but they also serve as a connection between human beings and wilderness. Doyle's approach is also significant in relation to the mother figures. He distances himself from strict value judgements in his portrayal of the biological mother. Furthermore, he portrays a biological mother who leaves her family behind for the sake of leading her own independent life, challenging received perceptions of women as contented selves, in spite of familial problems. Additionally, he subverts the traditional patriarchal texts in which the evil stepmother torments the innocent daughter. In *Wilderness*, the stepmother figure provides the daughter with care during the absence of the biological mother to such an extent that she sometimes even takes on the father's responsibilities. Similarly, the father's wilderness concerns his doubts about whether he is a capable father. While the daughter struggles with her own wilderness, which is the transition to adolescence and her biological mother's absence, she

comes to terms with the past. Doyle provides a promising ending as each character's achievements are revealed. At the end of the book, the adopted dog can be read as a symbol of bonding and mutual understanding. In other words, Doyle assures us that the family members come to a point where, finally, they have learnt to empathise with one other.

6.3.2. In memory of the mothers: *A Greyhound of a Girl*

This chapter discusses the genealogy of mothers in *A Greyhound of a Girl*, a children's book that Doyle wrote in 2011. The term genealogy here refers to the historical connection that can be established between the female characters of four generations. As in *Her Mother's Face*, analysed below, this story presents a circular relationship between mothers and daughters. More importantly, it is through this circularity, which in itself leads to female bonding, that the youngest character feels connected to her older female relatives. The idea of circularity may suggest a repetitive process. However, it functions here to explore Kristeva's idea of cyclical repetition between mothers and daughters, and it is also linked to Alison Stone's idea of maternal subjectivity. As discussed in chapter three, the Freudian approach to motherhood perceives the mother as a rival to the daughter. Conversely, Doyle subverts this notion of rivalry and links the daughters' personal development with the mother-daughter dyad. In *A Greyhound of a Girl*, this dyad is interpreted as an essential link for the characters' psychological growth. Considering that the mother-daughter bond has often been perceived within the domain of female writing (Ostriker 1983: 4-5), Doyle's writing transgresses gender expectations in this regard.

Interestingly, Doyle's book echoes the common motif of the absent mother which often appears in literature written by Irish women. In her study

on the mother-daughter relationship in Irish women's writing, Fogarty (2002) focuses on a wide range of works by writers such as Mary Lavin (*Mary O'Grady* [1950]); Molly Keane (*Good Behaviour* [1981]); Julia O'Faoláin (*The Irish Signorina* [1984]); Deirdre Madden (*The Birds of the Innocent Wood* [1988]); Meave Kelly ("Orange Horses" [1990]); Edna O'Brien (*Down by the River* [1996]); and Mary Morrissy (*Mother of Pearl* [1995]). For Fogarty, contemporary Irish women texts reflect "an intense melancholia inspired by the fatal lack on which mother-daughter relationships are founded" (2002: 113). Therefore, Doyle's book infringes traditional expectations on the mother-daughter plot which Fogarty defines as "an unwritten story in Ireland because it is largely uncharted, hidden in the obscured domain of women's fiction" (2002: 85). In light of Kristeva's and Alison Stone's theoretical frameworks, I will discuss the outcomes of this circular process as regards the relationship between the female characters in the novel.

A Greyhound of a Girl is a children's book with several mother-daughter interactions across generations. The novel begins on an ordinary day in the life of Mary, a 12-year-old girl, who lives in Dublin with her parents and two brothers. She tries to come to terms with changing situations in her life, such as the fact that her best friend Ava is moving out and that her grandmother Emer is hospitalised and about to die. Emer's mother (Tansey) died when Emer was very young; therefore, Emer is motherless. One day when Mary returns from school, an old lady appears and blocks her way because she needs Mary's help. This old lady is Tansey, the ghost of her great-grandmother. Tansey comes to guide Emer so that her daughter can leave this world in peace after saying goodbye to her friends and family. However, Tansey needs a favour from Mary and Mary's mother (Scarlett). They accept to help Tansey and take her to the hospital. They get permission

to take Emer out for some hours and decide to take a road trip to a farm in Wexford, where Tansey and Emer used to live before Tansey died. As the journey progresses Mary, Tansey, Scarlett and Emer start to bond and Mary feels that she is growing into womanhood.

The book is divided into twenty five chapters, although some are not numbered and are only named after four female characters (i.e. Mary, Tansey, Emer and Scarlett). The book is narrated by a traditional third-person omniscient narrator. In some parts, the events are seen from a child's perspective, which enables the reader to empathize with Mary. Nevertheless, each chapter that is called by a name reveals a particular character's view point. For instance, the chapters named after Tansey adopt more outdated words when providing details of life on the farm. While the numbered chapters focus on the present (and, later on, specifically on the road trip of the four women), the named chapters offer additional information about each character's past memories. With this narratological style, Doyle is able to play with the idea of a bridge between the past and the future, in that the past influences the individual's shifting identity in the future.

Doyle takes his inspiration for the book from his own family. He states that he has grown up without grandparents and admits that he "was trying to imagine what it would be like to have a grandmother" (interview with Chilton, 22 September 2011). Although the novel focuses on the loss of the grandmother, the novel already introduces the theme of loss through that of her friend. The following paragraph suggests Mary's deep emotional loss as her best friend moves far away:⁵³

Someone had once told her that people who'd had their leg cut off still felt the leg, even a long time after they'd lost it. They felt an itch and went to scratch, and remembered that there was no leg there. That was how Mary felt. She felt Ava walking beside her. She

⁵³ I am using the copy of the book that was published in 2012.

knew she wasn't, but she looked anyway—and that made it worse.
(Doyle 2012: 4-5)

This paragraph foreshadows the idea of a lost one and the emptiness it can bring. At this point, Mary is suffering from the departure of her best friend but the arrival of her grandmother's ghost consoles her. As discussed in the previous chapter, Meaney (2010: 60) explains that Freud links the unknown and the uncanny which appear in ghost stories with the maternal body. However, in Doyle's children's book the spirit of the deceased grandmother does not cause fear or dread. Tansey conveys a familiar and a friendly feeling to Mary from the very beginning:

Mary should have been terrified. But she wasn't. Something about the woman, the way she spoke, her face, her smile—she seemed familiar. Mary didn't know her—but she *did*. (10-11)

Shortly after their encounter, Mary's mother Scarlett tells her that her great-grandmother is called Tansey. In her apparition, Tansey's outlook reflects the times in which she lived: "[Tansey] was old-fashioned. She was wearing a dress that looked like it came from an old film, one of those films her mother always cried at" (7). This reference to nostalgic films not only links Tansey with Mary and Scarlett but also evokes an Irish past. As the narrator admits, even Tansey's name, which is the shorter version of Anastasia, "seemed old fashioned" (29).

Without doubt, Tansey represents the past and the countryside. First of all, her physical appearance reflects the habitual rural female image: "She looked like a woman who milked cows and threw hay with a pitchfork. She was even wearing big boots with fat laces" (Doyle 2012: 7). The narrator indicates her daily work routine on the farm, as when she makes butter: "The churning was a hard ol' job, but then there was the result, the satisfaction. The butter" (40). Furthermore, as the butter paddles have her initials, she feels very proud: "[...] her sign—T for Tansey—was on every pound of

butter that she made. That was a great thing. She felt like a writer with her name on the cover of a book" (40). Although Tansey does not write a book to seal her existence in the world, 'the T mark' that she stamps on the butter can be read as her solid footprint. Moreover, she has managed to pass her characteristics on to her daughter. For instance, Mary realizes that Tansey uses similar words to her daughter Emer (31).

Secondly, Tansey belongs to a time when traditional values prevailed. For example, she is not only responsible for the butter production, but also for domestic chores such as cooking: "[t]here was the dinner to be made for when [her husband] and the other men came from the fields, and then there were the jobs that would have to be done this afternoon, right into the evening and night, right up to the side of the bed" (38). Moreover, Tansey points out the social significance that the name "Mary" had in the past. In their first encounter, Mary is enchanted by Tansey's prompt guess:

"How did you know my name?" Mary asked [Tansey].
"Sure, half of the girls in Ireland are called Mary," said the woman.
"No, they aren't," said Mary. "I'm the only one on our road."
"Well, they were all called Mary in my day," said the woman (10).

Therefore, given the social circumstances in Tansey's era, it is not surprising that Tansey assumes that her great-granddaughter's name is Mary despite the fact that that name is less common nowadays. In any case, as Doyle states, "Mary is a name now freed of religion so you can call a kid that without it being assumed that you are wearing barbed wire under your vest" (interview with Chilton 22 September 2011). In a similar vein, Mary's name can be read as a traditional motif. In other words, in the book, the name Mary acts not so much as a religious reference, but rather as a link to the past. The narrator notes that ghosts can only be seen when a child holds their hands (135). This is reflected for example in the fact that Tansey only becomes more solid and visible when Mary holds her hand. Here, Doyle portrays the perseverance of

a female genealogy which maintains itself on the condition that the next generation interacts with the past. Indeed, as we will see, Mary begins to feel like she is growing into a woman only after her encounter with her great-grandmother's ghost.

Just in the same way as Mary's name suggests the link between the Irish past and the present, Tansey bridges the gap between her generation and that of her daughter and granddaughter. For example, she admits that she does not know the meaning of new words [i.e. "apartment" (Doyle 2012: 31)] or the new connotations of terms [i.e. "cool" (86)]. Following the economic boom of the Celtic Tiger, some rural people have become alienated from urban life. Not surprisingly, supermarkets are unfamiliar establishments for Tansey as they did not exist in her day. At the same time, Doyle reflects on some of the restraints women suffered in Tansey's era. For example, Tansey admits that she has never stepped into a pub as women were not allowed in them at that time (175).⁵⁴

Despite their work in the fields, rural women are expected to fulfil a domestic role. In her sociological research specifically on the lives of rural women in Ireland, Patricia O'Hara (1998: 150) notes the impact of farm women on "social reproduction through their command over the education of farm children". Although O'Hara's study deals with a more recent past, it is also applicable to the reality of Tansey's times. In those days farm women had to undertake rural work, domestic duties and the education of their children. They strived to improve their children's' opportunities encouraging them to follow different career options to that of themselves. The issue of new opportunities, as well as the economic shift, are reflected in the book in the fact that although Emer grows up on a farm, the family moves to the city, transitioning an agrarian household into an industrial one. This may be

⁵⁴ According to Kathleen Heininge's account in her essay "Guinness Go Leor: Irish Pubs and the Diaspora", women were only allowed into Irish pubs at the beginning of the 1960s (2013: 71).

because Tansey dies from flu whilst very young, and Emer grows up motherless. Yet, growing up motherless does not break the chain of the mother-daughter circular bond in her case. Doyle links the daughters to their mothers and grandmothers and this can be interpreted through a Kristevan lens. In her essay "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini" (1980), Kristeva points out that there is a cyclical similarity among female family members. She (1980: 239) states that there is an "instinctual memory" among mothers and daughters, implying that every daughter becomes her mother in some ways: "[b]y giving birth, the woman enters into contact with her mother; she becomes, she is her own mother; they are the same continuity differentiating itself" (238-239). This circularity is applicable to Doyle's female characters in this children's book. To start with, Emer's speech resembles that of Tansey's. Furthermore, Mary wants to have a greyhound just like her mother Scarlett who once wanted to adopt one (Doyle 2012: 83). Not surprisingly, Mary feels as if she has talked to her future self when she communicates with Tansey, which once again emphasizes the notion of circularity between mothers and daughters: "[i]t was as if she was listening to someone else – the woman she was going to be in the future" (92).

Furthermore, what Kristeva describes as "the same continuity differentiating itself" (1980: 239) can also be illustrated by the road trip that Mary and her mother make when accompanying her grandmother to Tansey's farm in Wexford. This road trip becomes a symbol of the continuous mother-daughter link, a bond which surmounts temporal boundaries between the past and the future, and which flourishes in different forms. While Scarlett drives the car, Mary sits next to her, and Tansey and Emer are placed in the back. In this sense, the future (embodied by Scarlett and Mary) is in the front, while the past (symbolised by the ghost mother Tansey and her dying daughter Emer) is behind; yet, they harmoniously go hand in hand, as they sit in the

same car. When they arrive at the farm, the Slaney river catches Mary's attention. As the narrator explains, the Slaney river is one of the most important rivers of Ireland, and Mary has seen it in her geography book: "[i]t flowed past the farm where her granny and her great-granny came from—and, in a way, where Mary came from" (Doyle 2012: 178). The river can be interpreted as a supporting symbol of the mother-daughter bond in terms of both continuity and stability. Like time itself, the river continues to flow without stopping. In his study on the work of Dermot Bolger and Roddy Doyle, Damien Shortt (2009: 132), interprets the literary significance of rivers as "symbols of collective memory". Apart from its connotations related to memory, the river image represents the endless cycle of Irish history. In a similar way, the daughters in the book are born, they grow up, and become mothers themselves. On the other hand, according to Heraclitus, the river flows while it always remains the same, which can be interpreted as the unchangeability of one's maternal origins and the female bonding it provides. Interestingly, it is this power of female genealogy which is emphasized at the end of the book. Throughout the journey, Mary feels that the bonding between the four of them strengthens and that this in turn becomes a form of female empowerment for her. That is why, she assures herself, that "I'm a *woman*" (Doyle 2012: 162). The word "*woman*", which is written in italics, emphasises her feeling of being united with her three female descendants. Although she is not mature yet, she feels like an adult. In this sense, Mary's realization of her identity as a woman is made possible through her acknowledgement of her roots.

Kristeva's notion that daughters and mothers are linked through a circular bonding also appears in the work of Alison Stone. In her essay "Psychoanalysis and Maternal Subjectivity", Stone mentions a similar

circularity by stating that the mother is also the daughter of her own mother.

As she notes,

Mothering is indeed a variation on being a daughter, in so far as a mother replays with her child her own maternal past. Insofar as the mother re-enacts her own maternal past, she mothers as the daughter of her own mother. Each mother remains a daughter not in addition to but in being or becoming a mother, because she re-lives her relation to her own mother in and as her relation to her child. (Stone 2014: 337)

In other words, as she has been through a similar experience a mother can empathize with a daughter. When bringing up her daughter, the mother often recalls her own childhood, and her own mother's approach to her. Therefore, for Stone, mothers raise their daughters similarly to the way they were raised, that is, based on their own learned experiences through their mothers. This mother-daughter dyad parallels the strong connection existing between the past and the present. According to Stone (2014: 338), past and present are essentially connected, as they constitute "a living unity" together. That is, the present reproduces the past in a new form and, as a result, it "alters the past's internal significance" (338). Stone's term of "a living unity" can be seen in the book when Mary, Scarlett, Emer and Tansey visit Tansey's farm. Despite the fact that Mary has "never been on a real farm", she has the feeling that she has visited this place before (Doyle 2012: 183). Mary finds a previously unrecognised kinship with her roots, and this is shown in the familiar feeling she experiences when she steps onto her great-grandmother's farm. Although nobody is living on the farm anymore, it is that fellowship between the past (Tansey) and the present (Mary) which emphasises a sense of continuity.

At the end of the book, Doyle widens the genealogy of mothers with an intertextual reference to *Her Mother's Face*, the children's story analysed in the following section. Similarly to Siobhán's comforting way of tackling her mother's absence that has already been discussed, Tansey recommends

Scarlett to look into the mirror in order to find solace for the absence of Emer:

Tansey spoke, to all of them.
"We'll never be far away, you know," she said. "Even when you can't see us anymore." Scarlett had started to cry. Tansey leaned across and put her arm around her. "When you want to see your mother, look at your own face in the mirror," she said. "Or look at your Mary's face. Or Mary's daughter's face. Emer will be in there. You'll see. And so will I. And so will you. And so will Mary" (190-191).

Interestingly, Tansey's recommendation also includes looking at the face of the daughter. Here again, Doyle projects the idea of the circular similarity between mothers and daughters.

To conclude, in *A Greyhound of a Girl* Doyle explores the mother-daughter plot, which as I have contended can be interpreted through the concept of the genealogy of mothers. Following the works of Kristeva and Stone, I have argued that the story centres on the circular relationship among the female members of a family. The structure of the chapters—with some numbered and others named after the female characters—emphasises the time lapse between present and past even further. The chapters dedicated to Tansey explore the rural past of the country. This character also symbolises traditional values and maternal roots. Not surprisingly, Tansey feels alienated when she comes across strange words that function as neologisms for her, as they pertain to an urban context. On the other hand, the road trip that the female characters take to the village of Tansey can be interpreted as a reference to each character's current position in their own lives. While Scarlett drives the car (a symbol of control), Mary sits next to her with a feeling of unity with her female ascendants. On the contrary, Tansey and Emer sit on the back seat, which implies they can leave their lives behind and relax. Like their road trip, the River Slaney can be seen as a symbol of both continuity and permanence as, in general, a river is a long-lasting, albeit

geographical, feature that lasts through the ages regardless of the changes that may ensue around it. The invincible strength of the river can therefore be read as representing the matrilineal bonds that always survive. Similar to the flowing of time itself, the river flows nonstop; and at the same time, it echoes the dynamic nature of the mother-daughter relationship. Furthermore, the stream is steady as it depends on its bed, which can be read as the prevalence of the maternal roots. In this respect, the relationship between the four female characters can be interpreted from the perspective of Kristeva and Stone, who claim that there is an innate bond and a continuous link between mothers and daughters. By the same token, Doyle portrays a circular connection between his female characters as they end up resembling their own mothers, a theme exemplified by the symbolic mirror reference. Doyle also subverts the stereotypical frightening image of the ghost in the figure of Tansey, a comforting ghost who stands as the first step for Mary to discover both her maternal roots and her womanhood.

6.3.3. Searching for the mother in the mirror: *Her Mother's Face*

Her Mother's Face (2008) is a children's book with unnumbered pages and illustrations.⁵⁵ The characters are illustrated either with dark or vivid colours depending on the context. Doyle dedicated this book to his mother. Like Doyle, the protagonist, Siobhán, loses her mother at a very young age and is raised by her father. Throughout the story, she struggles to come to terms with her mother's absence and grow up to finally turn into a mother herself. Interestingly, the evocative presence of her mother is more powerful than that of her father, who emerges as a passive figure.

⁵⁵ I will use the initials "n/a" (no page number available) throughout my analysis when quoting references from this novel.

Bearing this in mind, the present chapter will focus on the analysis of the mother bond, for which I will be applying the theories proposed by Luce Irigaray and Adrienne Rich. As I will try to demonstrate, the Lacanian “mirror stage” develops in a different direction in Siobhán's case. In contrast to the Lacanian “mirror stage”, in which a child enters the Symbolic domain of the father, the mirror functions as a motif in this story for the protagonist to come to terms with the presence of her absent mother. Above all, *Her Mother's Face* is a story about women and more specifically about single mothers. With its exploration of the mother image it provides very different symbols to those found in traditional children's tales. As expected from a text addressed to children, the story is narrated in the third person singular and it uses plain language to grasp the attention of young readers. Furthermore, the narrator is very realistic in that the reader is reminded that although the characters may enjoy very pleasant moments, they do not live happily ever after. Doyle's focus on a single parent family formation is interesting. Acknowledging the absence of the mother is another crucial point throughout the novel.

Siobhán and her father live in Dublin. She loses her mother, Ellen, when she is only three years old. Although Siobhán is told that her mother, Ellen, is dead, the latter has disappeared leaving her daughter and husband behind. The father never talks about the mother and Siobhán can only remember a few things about her. For instance, she cannot recollect her mother's face. One day, while Siobhán is missing her mother in the park, she comes across a woman who gives her a mysterious piece of advice: Siobhán should look into a mirror whenever she wants to recall her mother's face. As Siobhán grows older, she begins to see her mother's face in her own reflection in the mirror. This reflection curiously resembles the face of the woman she met in the park and the image of her own mother. Time passes

and Siobhán has a daughter. Her husband is never mentioned in the novel, which could imply that she is a single mother. At the end of the story, Siobhán, her father and her daughter (who is also named Ellen) learn how to cope with the absence of Siobhán's mother and they are able to remember her with happiness rather than with tears. Indeed, Siobhán comes to terms with her mother's absence returning to her image in the mirror.

The story begins with the details of the house where Siobhán and her father live. It is "a great house, full of interesting rooms and corners, full of old magazines and old machines, and old, old toys and teddy bears" (Doyle 2008: n/a). The repetitive use of the word "old" in the very first sentences reflects that her father still lives in the past. Nevertheless, Siobhán enjoys exploring the house and she always discovers something new. Since Siobhán's mother disappearance when the girl was just three, she can only remember a few things about her. Strangely, in the house there are very few objects that belong to her mother, just a pair of "mad green shoes" and her scarf (Doyle 2008: n/a). The use of word "mad" can be read as a symbol of the mother's enigmatic personality (i.e. her unpredictable attempt to appear in the park to see Siobhán). Her father's portrayal may suggest Doyle's insistence on an absent father image: "[Siobhán's father] was a nice man, but he was very quiet and sad, and he kept himself to himself" (Doyle 2008: n/a). The illustrations of him in the book are in grey tones, and paler than the colours used for Siobhán, which may suggest a ghostly existence. He appears as a sorrowful man who rarely smiles. Siobhán's father is a passive and silent paternal figure who does not exchange his ideas with his daughter. Furthermore, the lack of connection between Siobhán and her father resembles the disagreement explained in the previous chapter between Jimmy Sr. and his son Darren in *The Van*. This also appears to illustrate the findings presented by Kiberd's *The Irish Writer and the World* (2005). In his work,

Kiberd dedicates a space to the disagreements between fathers and sons through his examination of the father image in well-known works of the Irish Renaissance. In the case of Siobhán, the father figure embodies the lack of satisfactory male models to follow. That is why Siobhán returns to the image of her mother in the mirror which I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

Curiously enough, Siobhán and her father have no extended family. She is an only child with “no uncles, aunts, or cousins, and no grandparents” (Doyle 2008: n/a). Furthermore, the conversations about Siobhán's mother never take place within the family unit as Siobhán's father never talks about his spouse. In fact, the narrator underlines that “nobody ever spoke to Siobhán about her mother” (Doyle 2008: n/a). The mother is a family figure that everyone avoids mentioning. Notably, the story of Siobhán is not that of a mere orphan story.

In her book *Of Woman Born* (1995), Rich not only examines the institutionalized position of motherhood; she also analyses the psychological bond between mothers and their children. Rich (1995: 12) emphasizes the significance of the mother's physical features by stating that “it is with a woman's hands, eyes, body, voice, that we associate our primal sensations, our earliest social experience”. Similarly, Siobhán recalls very few features related to her mother such as her hands and her voice: “Her hands combing Siobhán's hair, her hands peeling an apple, holding the steering wheel, pulling up Siobhán's sock, and her hands on her lap when Siobhán was brought into the dark room to say goodbye to her” (Doyle 2008: n/a). The hand is a recurring image in Doyle's fiction. As discussed in the chapter related to *Paula Spencer*, apart from its significance regarding manual work, the hand suggests the ability to obtain an ideal life. Here, the hand of the young girl's mother may suggest affection and protection. Likewise, it can be interpreted as Siobhán mother's trying to help Siobhán adapt to life without

her, whereas her voice provides comfort and soothes her. As regards her voice, Siobhán recalls her mother singing “Did you ever shove your granny of the bus?” This is a traditional folk song originating from Scottish culture and its lyrics are as follows:⁵⁶

O, ye cannae shove yer granny aff a bus
Ye cannae shove yer granny aff a bus
Ye cannae shove yer granny
Fur she's yer mammy's mammy
Ye cannae shove yer granny aff a bus

Here, the song advocates respect for the matrilineal side of one's family, which is considered sacred. By contrast, the link with the father's family is disregarded or considered insignificant. The introduction of this reference to the song in this story is not coincidental, because it consolidates one of the underlying themes of the book which involves respecting the matriarchal side of a family.

One day when Siobhán is crying for her absent mother, the woman in the park walks up to her and asks why she is sad. She seems familiar to Siobhán: “She had dark brown hair, like Siobhán's, and brown eyes. And she had a friendly smile and a lovely voice. Siobhán never spoke to strangers, but this woman didn't seem like a stranger” (Doyle 2008: n/a). The woman recommends the girl a special healing technique and she asks about her father. She even has a message for the father, which she whispers into Siobhán's ears. Besides the peculiar familiarity that Siobhán feels towards the woman, her advice regarding Siobhán's grief is significant: look into the mirror. In his book *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (1999), Michael Ferber discusses the significance of objects in literary texts. He (1999: 124) notes that “[t]he symbolism of mirrors depends not only on what things cause the

⁵⁶ The song lyrics are taken from *A Dictionary of Scottish Phrase and Fable* (2012) by Ian Crofton.

reflection—nature, God, a book, drama—but also on what one sees in them—oneself, the truth, the ideal, illusion”. Likewise, in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss the mirror image in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and conclude that the protagonist Jane here finds “her identity and position within the Reed family” through her gaze in the mirror (2000: 99). In Siobhán's case, the mirror image embodies “the ideal” just like in Ferber's terms (1999: 124), and additionally she finds her identity by looking into the mirror, just as Jane Eyre does.

On a similar note, Irigaray notes, in her chapter “The Gesture in Psychoanalysis” (1989), that gestures are highly significant in psychoanalytical practice. Irigaray also explores the relationship between mothers and daughters and stresses the trauma of a mother's absence in a daughter's life. As Irigaray states, “the girl tries to reproduce around her or inside herself a movement whose energy is circular, and which protects her from dereliction, [...] from depression, from loss in itself” (1989: 133). That is, the daughter engages in a recurrent practice to tackle with the absence of the mother and to protect herself from depression. Similarly, Siobhán creates a mechanism to deal with her mother's absence by using a mirror. By looking into a mirror, Siobhán gradually manages to visualize her mother's face:

At first, all she could see was her own face. But she stayed there, looking. And after a few minutes, she began to imagine another girl, very like herself, but not exactly the same. The hair a little different, the mouth a little smaller, the lips a little darker. And she could make her look a little older, and little more. And Siobhán knew. She was able to imagine her mother's face. (Doyle 2008: n/a)

When considered through a Lacanian lens, mirrors hold a great significance in a child's development. As discussed in chapter three, in what Lacan calls (1988: 29) the “mirror stage”, a child manages to see himself/herself as a separate being by recognizing his/her reflection in a mirror. At this point the child also starts to refer to himself/herself as “I” and to see his/her association

with the world as one of "self" and the "other". As another "self", the child moves away from the mother, endeavouring to copy the father. However, Doyle's story presents a different "mirror stage" process. As Siobhán looks in the mirror, she not only finds her own self, but also re-encounters her mother. As in *A Greyhound of a Girl*, explored in the previous section, Doyle implies that there is a circular relationship between Siobhán and her mother. It is this circularity that opens the way to the genealogy of the female characters in the story, echoing the strong bond between the female relatives.

In Irigaray's terms, mothers are unique figures in their daughter's lives, because "[girls] cannot find any replacement for her—unless it be nature as a whole, or appeal to divine, or doing—the-same-as-her" (1989: 134). Because of this, daughters sometimes come to terms with their mothers' absence by acting as their mothers. It is precisely this process of imitation that we see in Doyle's story. On her thirtieth birthday, Siobhán wears her mother's scarf as well as her "mad green shoes" (Doyle 2008: n/a). On this particular day, she looks into the mirror once again and sees the woman she met at the park years ago. In a way, she realizes that the woman she saw there was actually her mother. Now, she comes to the conclusion that her parents ended their relationship, which was the reason why she has been separated from her.

In addition to the couple's breaking up, another turning point in the novel is when Siobhán's father regains his voice. Siobhán grows up in the silence of her father who refuses to talk about her mother. On the day Siobhán turns thirty, she remembers the message that her mother whispered to her at the park for her father: "put a feather in your knickers" (Doyle 2008: n/a). When Siobhán passes on the message from the woman to her father, he is surprised; it is a secret phrase known only by him and Siobhán's mother. Her mother used to tell this to her father when she thought he was being too

serious. Furthermore, this has an even more powerful effect: it is only when Siobhán conveys her mother's message that her father begins to speak about her mother. That is, after hearing the message from his ex-partner, the father begins to tell the story of how they met and were married. In this sense, it is through Siobhán's evocation of her mother that her father recovers his agency and comes to terms with the grief of her absence.

The feather image in this respect is significant as the Celts associate it with wisdom. During their rituals, the Druids, who were judges, academics or priests with a high social status, wore feathered gowns.⁵⁷ As regards *Her Mother's Face*, the feather appears both at the beginning and at the end of the book. While Siobhán holds a feather on the front cover, her daughter gives away feathers on the very last page. This recurring feather image in the book can be read as Doyle's advocacy for matrilineal wisdom.

Without doubt, Siobhán's physical resemblance to her mother is natural. According to Irigaray (1989: 133), a daughter indispensably carries some characteristics of her mother and she maintains these features throughout her life: "in her skin, in the humidity of the mucous membranes, in the intimacy of her most intimate parts, in the mystery of her relation to gestation, birth, and to her sexual identity" (1989: 133). However, Siobhán's likeness is not only physical: Siobhán becomes a mother and names her daughter Ellen (her mother's name). The relationship between Siobhán, her mother Ellen, and her daughter (Ellen) can be read as a significant circle that ties all single mothers together. The narrator comes to suggest that Siobhán's mother is not dead, when the latter realizes that the woman at the park was her own mother. Additionally, the father of Siobhán's daughter is never revealed. Siobhán's mother could represent an independent woman who has chosen to leave her family behind. In contrast, Siobhán is a single mother

⁵⁷ For further information on the significance of the Celtic symbols on clothing, see *Pieced Symbols: Quilt Blocks from the Global Village* (2009) by Myrah Brown Green.

who is raising her daughter by herself. The reader is reminded of the unconventionality of the decision made by Siobhán's mother. For instance, apart from her "mad green shoes", the narrator reveals that Siobhán's mother behaves in a different way because she sits down on the grass even though "[m]ost adults never did this, because it was quite mucky and damp" (Doyle 2008: n/a). Echoing her mother and her grandmother, the youngest female character in the novel, Ellen, grows up and cycles around the city with feathers "looking for men who look too serious" (Doyle 2008: n/a). The three women exemplify in this respect a strong bonding whereas the men remain silent and at times absent.

To sum up, *Her Mother's Face* portrays a single parent family in relation to Siobhán's life. Doyle tells the tale of a little girl who is raised by her lone father. The absence of a mother figure in her life leads her to fill the gap of a female role model. Siobhán makes an effort to complete the puzzle of her mother as she remembers certain characteristics, but she is unable to recall her mother's face. When read through Irigarayan lenses, Siobhán develops a recurrent defence mechanism with which she learns to bear the absence of her mother. Looking into the mirror she gradually grows into an adult. In contrast with the Lacanian "mirror stage", in which one diverges from the maternal realm and approaches the paternal realm, Siobhán, by looking into the mirror, becomes like her mother in many ways. Apart from the physical similarities, Siobhán, her mother Ellen, and later her daughter Ellen are very much alike. More significantly, Siobhán appears to be a single mother, as her daughter's father is never revealed. At the end of the text, readers may be startled by the narrator's realistic remark: "Siobhán didn't live happily ever after, but lived a long, long life, and she was happy a lot of the time" (Doyle 2008: n/a). This realistic ending conveys two important morals for young readers: 1) the importance of finding ways to come to terms

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with the absence of a parent; and 2) the importance of accepting infinite possibilities of unconventional family formations, which are mostly happy in the end.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7. Conclusions

Writers born into an over-determined, over-defined environment, into a tension between political simplicities and cultural complexity, have felt impelled to redefine: to explore and criticise language, images, categories, stereotypes, myths. (Longley 1994: 194)

These lines by Edna Longley not only address writers in general, but also summarize Roddy Doyle's effort to reflect, reinterpret and criticize Irish society. As a writer who was born and raised within the working-class environment of Dublin, Doyle portrays the stories of his society with a keen eye. In Donnelly's terms (2000: 25), he "uses his fiction to record and memorialize aspects of the Ireland of his own youth". Even though Donnelly's view is accurate, there is more to it as Doyle's writing documents the zeitgeist of Ireland. The best adjective to define his work might be versatile. To start with, his writings are not limited to a single theme. The various topics that he employs in his work aim to represent the vicissitudes affecting Irish working-class families, the problem of domestic violence, the relevance of prominent events in Irish history, the country's multicultural condition following the Celtic Tiger, and, more recently, male mid-life crises. Doyle's frequent use of the colloquial language employed by the working-class milieu is one of the reasons why his writing is considered unique. Another point often overlooked in critical studies of Doyle's work—but worth exploring—is the broad space that he dedicates to mothers.

This Dissertation has aimed to address this research lacuna in Irish Studies by exploring the position and significance of mothers within Roddy Doyle's literary production. Mother characters in his work can be distinguished on the basis of three main characteristics: they appear as namely victimized, unconventional or empowered mothers in accordance with the writer's attempt to recapture the social changes in the country. In this research, I have suggested that mothers in Doyle's oeuvre become

increasingly more dominant and independent: in other words, submissive and dependent mothers in Doyle's initial fictional writings are gradually replaced by more empowered female characters in his most recent work. This can be said to reflect Doyle's exaltation of working-class women (and mothers) considering that, for decades in Ireland, they have been marginalized by various social, religious and political policies.

In this sense, my study explores the changing socio-cultural patterns in Ireland as regards their effect on Doyle's literary representation of motherhood. In other words, this Dissertation not only traces the various shifts in the Irish working-class setting; it also demonstrates how these shifts have affected Doyle's depiction of mother characters in his work. In addition to this, this study has also focused on how gender roles have evolved and changed through time. Cosgrove (1996: 231) comments on the difficulty in interpreting Doyle's texts, as this writer does not seem to possess a concrete ideological stance. This commentary summarizes one of the main limitations that I faced when doing my research, as Doyle neither claims nor supports a specific ideological standpoint and, as a result, it is difficult to define this writer's views on some matters (particularly with respect to women in Ireland). However, his writing often dedicates a considerable space to working-class women in the country, mirroring their experiences from various angles, and advocating a narrative space in which to accommodate women's and mothers' independence. As Smyth (1997: 66) underlines, Doyle's writing "[crystallises] with great insight and force many of the significant themes and debates of contemporary Irish culture". Even though Smith made this claim twenty years ago, this is still a valid observation nowadays, bearing in mind the up-to-date themes in Doyle's work.

This Dissertation started by discussing gender issues and concentrating on the perspective of psychoanalysis (as theorized by Freud

1986, 2001; Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986; Lacan 1988, 1998; Fuss 1989; Grosz 1990; Fink 1995; and Nobus 2000). In order to examine the behaviour of Doyle's female characters, I have drawn on the two main elements of Lacanian psychoanalysis—"the mirror stage" (the child's realization of himself/herself as an individual being); and the Name-of-the-father (the child's separation from his/her mother and the acceptance of the restrictions of social rules)—as well as Freudian psychoanalytical notions such as "the return of the repressed" and the loss of "the bonds with reality". However, as I approached the issue of womanhood, and motherhood in particular, I encountered some limitations within such psychoanalytical framework, as Freudian and Lacanian theories are filtered by a highly male, andocentric, perspective. Therefore, I complemented my analysis with the psychoanalytical perspectives of numerous feminist and gender critics (such as Chodorow 1978; Kristeva 1980, 1985; Cixous 1981; Irigaray 1989; Flax 1990; Braidotti 1994a, 1994b; 2003; and Stone 2014), who complemented the above mentioned views of motherhood with more transgressive perspectives, in their definition of maternity and motherhood as unstable and fluid categories. Furthermore, for a better understanding of Doyle's portrayal of mothers, it was necessary to focus on traditional notions of motherhood in the Irish context, as well as on its recurrent reshaping through political and religious propaganda and legislative regulations.

As examined in this study, modern Irish culture has been built upon two social forces: Catholicism and nationalism. The Catholic Church's ethos was often at odds with the social freedom of women as it enclosed them within the domestic sphere in their roles as wives and mothers. The ideal Irish woman was meant to resemble someone like the Virgin Mary, and as such, she was expected to act as a devoted mother and as a servant in the house. Building on the moral framework of the Catholic Church, the

nationalist movement further objectified women for its political cause. The nationalists reused and modified ancient Celtic images of femininity, such as *Cailleach Bhéarra* (the Hag of Beara) and/or Mother Ireland in order to suit their purposes and to disseminate their message. The nationalist vision of ideal womanhood was that of a fragile creature in distress; a dependent figure in need of rescue by powerful men who were devoted to the preservation of her purity. These roles were later supported by the 1937 Irish Constitution.

Following this examination of conventional representations of motherhood, it was necessary to offer an overview of how gender roles have changed in the Irish contemporary panorama. In the last decades of the twentieth century, Ireland underwent various social, political and economic changes, considering this country's entry in the European Union in 1973 and the Celtic Tiger phenomenon of the late 1990s. These shifts provided women with new social and legislative rights; with the lifting of the Marriage Bar, for instance, they were able to work after marriage; and divorce was eventually legalised in 1997. As a consequence, Irish women have become more independent financially speaking and single motherhood has increased. However, as reflected by critics such as O'Connor (1998), O'Hagan (2006), and Meaney (2010), women's sexual freedom is still highly limited, considering the ongoing controversial issue of abortion. Additionally, domestic violence and gender discrimination are still longstanding problems for many women in the contemporary Irish setting. Alternatively, it is also essential to bear in mind how conventional notions of masculinity and hypermasculinity have been subject to change in Ireland. Accordingly, I have relied on the views offered by critics such as Connell (1987; 1995), Ferguson (2001), Kimmel and Aranson (2003). Overall, one of the most interesting points of Doyle's writing is how he presents all the above social changes through his characters' experiences. In his most recent work, mothers appear

more at the centre of his narratives and are seen to be more proactive, whereas fathers are depicted as more passive characters. In this sense, Doyle's writing challenges conventional configurations of motherhood and fatherhood in Ireland by transposing gender roles.

The first two novels, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993) and *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1996), which provide the content of the fourth chapter of this Dissertation, portray submissive mothers in an Irish working-class setting. These can be classified as Doyle's only novels dealing with the victimized position of mothers. Although these two works are set in different time spans—the former in the 1960s and the latter in 1990s—domestic violence haunts the families in both cases. While some studies (Gordon 1996; Smyth 1997; Persson 2006; Morales-Ladrón 2007) have focused on the female protagonist's inferior position in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, there seems to have been a lack of critical interest to examine the issue of spousal abuse in *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*. On the contrary, the existing scholarly critique (i.e. Cosgrove 1996; McGlynn 1999; Donnelly 2000; White 2001; McCarthy 2003; Reynolds and Noakes 2004) has mainly dealt with the narrative voice in *Paddy Clarke*. Throughout my analysis of this novel, my intention was to examine the significant silence of the mother figure as a result of the psychological and psychical abuse she is subjected to, an aspect not sufficiently explored by critics. In order to reflect on the victimized position of the mother of the Clarke household, I have relied on feminist critics such as Adrienne Rich and Donna Haraway. Cathy Caruth's views, which constitute a milestone of Trauma theory, were also essential for interpreting the behaviour of victims of domestic violence, both in *Paddy Clarke* and in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*. This fourth chapter also analyses Doyle's personal stance regarding dysfunctionality within the Irish family. In the case of *Paddy Clarke*, Doyle reveals how

domestic violence has been a taboo subject that is neither articulated nor thoroughly considered within the 1960s Irish working-class family. Similarly, in the 1990s setting of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Doyle showcases spousal abuse as a prevalent issue that has been normalized in Ireland, through the perceived by society's conspicuous neglect.

While the fourth chapter discusses Doyle's critique of the victimization of mothers in *Paddy Clarke* and *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, the fifth chapter explores the presence of what I call 'unconventional' mothers in *The Commitments* (1987), *The Snapper* (1990), *The Van* (1991) and *The Last Roundup Trilogy*, constituted by *A Star Called Henry* (1999), *Oh, Play That Thing* (2004), and *Dead Republic* (2010). The first novel considered here, *The Commitments*, deals with a group of young people who form a soul band in a Dublin's working-class community but break up in the end. There are several studies dedicated to this novel: while some focus on the use of music in the novel (Anna 1991: 24; White 2001: 44); others centre around the topic of class differences (Persson 2006: 63). In addition, some studies mention the female band members' assertive look (Reynold and Noakes 2004: 52) and touch upon their sexual autonomy (Persson 2006: 63). My study complements the above mentioned academic research by specifically analysing the significance of these female band members. As I intend to show, these characters are worth exploring since they are unconventional women. Even though they are portrayed in accordance to the negative patriarchal stereotype of the 'femme fatale', these women challenge the dominant masculinity of the male members of the band in that they do not conform to male expectations. In particular, I adopted the theoretical perspectives provided by R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt (2005: 848), and Henry Ferguson (2001: 119) to show how the concepts of 'masculinity' and 'hypermasculinity' are closely knit around the female

characters' response to the male band members. Lastly, I also show how the unconventionality of these female characters in *The Commitments* is also apparent given their central location in the narrative, as opposed to their actual position on the fringes of society.

The second book dealt with in chapter five is *The Snapper*. This novel immerses us into the story of Sharon Rabbitte, a twenty-year old girl, whose unexpected pregnancy widely impacts on her family and her working-class environment. Various academic works (i.e. Smith 1997; White 2001; McCarthy 2003; Peach 2004b; McGlynn 2008) have analysed the issues of non-consensual sex and out-of-wedlock pregnancy in the novel. In my study, I complement this criticism by examining Sharon's pregnancy from various theoretical frameworks. To start with, I rely on Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theories—i.e. the Name-of-the-Father—in order to contextualize how Sharon mocks society's reaction regarding her pregnancy. On the other hand, Rosi Bradotti's views are useful when examining how the authority of Sharon's father is undermined in the novel. Likewise, Linda Connolly's social account of abortion in Ireland and Henry Ferguson's study of gender role changes in the country provide a multi-faceted reading of the novel. My initial claim is that Doyle views single motherhood from a positive angle in spite of the negative attitude and hypocrisy of society. Furthermore, Sharon's determination to give birth not only helps her father rediscover his own fatherhood, but also opens up a way for the alteration of gender roles within the Rabbitte family. By defying the accepted norms of gender relations, Doyle emphasizes that these social norms can change. More importantly, he indicates that social conventions regarding motherhood can gradually evolve and favour women.

The third book analysed in chapter five, *The Van*, narrates the story of Sharon's father Jimmy Sr. Rabbitte and his friend Bimbo, who set up a

chipper van to make some profit but end up frustrated in this enterprise. Several studies examine the novel in relation to Ireland's economic conditions at the beginning of the 1990s (i.e. Lynch 1997: 265; and, McCarthy 2003: 114; Persson 2005: 213). These studies, however, often disregard how issues such as economic prosperity and social mobility have an impact on gender relations in the Rabbitte family. Consequently, for my analysis of the novel, I have relied on Connell's (1995) and Ferguson's (2001) studies on the concept of 'masculinity', which underline how each time period in history generates different ideals of masculinity that are in accordance with economic and social progress. These theoretical frameworks led me to the idea that Doyle presents subversive mothers in *The Van*. He portrays mothers who are more determined than their husbands, not only at home but also in the public realm, in their work places, emphasizing men's debilitated status. While the mothers in this novel become more independent and expand their horizons to outer spheres, the fathers lose their authority and end up as ineffectual male figures.

The last section of chapter five focuses on *The Last Roundup Trilogy*, constituted by *A Star Called Henry* (1999), *Oh, Play That Thing* (2004), and *Dead Republic* (2010). I specifically focus on *A Star Called Henry*, as it presents female characters that I classify in terms of submissive, mythic, and heroic stereotypes of motherhood. This novel centers upon Henry Smart and his adventures during the Easter Rising. Henry's account offers a distorted, subjective perspective on this iconic event in Ireland's history. This fact has attracted the attention of several critics (i.e. Hopkins 1999: 55; Dawson 2001: 170; Lanter 2002: 248; Shortt 2009: 137) who point out the significance of Henry's personal interpretation of Irish history. With the exception of these studies, there is no research which specifically focuses on the female figures in *The Last Roundup Trilogy*, which, in my

view, are worth analysing. As for my findings, Doyle establishes a strong dichotomy between submissive and mythic stereotypes of motherhood, stereotypes which were discussed in section 3.3. of this Dissertation. Echoing the conventional image of Mother Ireland, whose sons die for her, Henry Smart's mother Melody loses her sons due to poor living conditions. She is depicted as a housewife who tries to look after her children in poverty. On the other hand, Henry's grandmother Granny Nash is the exact opposite of Melody in that she does not have any religious views and does not mourn her lost years of youth and beauty. In fact, she serves as a symbolic female figure from Celtic mythology, the pagan goddess of sovereignty, *Caileach Bhéarra* (the Hag of Beara), in its initial pagan version before she was distorted to accommodate to nationalist purposes. Granny Nash does not have any religious belief and does not dedicate herself to mothering. The last stereotype—the heroic mother—is fulfilled by the character of Henry's primary school teacher and later wife Miss O'Shea. With her determination to save her country, like the women who fought for Irish independence (i.e. the *Cumann na mBan* members), Miss O'Shea is seen as a dauntless mother figure. Here, I adopt Rosi Bradotti's concept of nomadism (1994b: 5), underlying that nomadic subjects fail to fit into socially prescribed systems of thought and actions. As a nomadic subject, Miss O'Shea exhibits an unyielding personality, which allows her to care for her daughter and at the same time fight for her country. All in all, while reminding us that the interpretation of history is subjective, and not fixed, Doyle also conveys the possibility of representing different mother stereotypes, stressing that motherhood should not be seen as a univocal role.

The unconventional mothers analyzed in chapter five gradually lead to empowered mother figures in the novels examined in chapter six. The first novel which is studied in Section 6.1. is *Paula Spencer*. Here, Doyle

reintroduces the protagonist of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, this time describing her as a strong mother. By calling the book *Paula Spencer*, Doyle emphasizes the fact that this protagonist has finally come to terms with her own past, which was rife with abuse, managing to stand up on her own. Several critics (i.e. Ferguson 2006: 24; Hall 2008: 197; Praga Terente 2008: 313; Jeffers 2011: 264-265) focus on the renewed social and economic phenomenon that surrounds Paula's life during the Celtic Tiger period. With the intention of interpreting her experience of the Celtic Tiger, my analysis adds another dimension to these studies by adopting Ronit Lentin's reflections on the Freudian concept of "the returned of the repressed", which Lentin calls "the national repressed" (2002: 243). As I claim, "the national repressed" emerges in the shape of Paula's fear of losing her job to the newcomers in Ireland. Apart from her status as an undervalued working-class woman, working in low paid jobs, Paula struggles to come to terms with the fact that she is deficient as a mother figure. At this point, I refer to the works of Chodorow (1978) and Cixous (1981), to discuss the lack of identification between Paula and her younger daughter Leanne. I also examine Paula's recovery from her traumatic past through her empathic identification with her elder daughter Nicola's mothering. It is possible to say that Doyle introduces us to a new Paula Spencer, who is not a victim of domestic violence anymore, but a working-class woman, accepting the challenges of life as they are, both in economic and social terms. With her new empowered self, she does not 'walk into doors' anymore; she rather opens new doors to a more hopeful future for herself.

Section 6.2. discusses the only horror short story written by Roddy Doyle—"The Pram"—which displays the Celtic Tiger phenomenon from the perspective of an immigrant caretaker. Apart from Spillane (2008) and Ferguson (2009), this short story has not been analysed by critics. The

originality of my analysis stems from the fact that I discuss issues such as motherhood and motherland while providing an in-depth analysis of the protagonist's (Alina's) marginalized position. My analysis employs a Freudian psychoanalytical framework (1958); I also rely on Daniel Berthhold-Born's theories (1995) on the connection between loss of memory and madness, in order to examine how Alina shows signs of amnesia and loses her mind as a result of the racism she experiences. However, what empowers Alina is her articulation of a mythic story from her homeland. The story also reveals parallelisms between the Polish mythical figure of Boginka and the Old Hag of Beara. At this point, the critique by feminist literary scholars such as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000), and by contemporary Irish scholars such as Gerardine Meaney (2010), have provided me with an alternative reading of the marginalized position of the immigrant mother in Ireland's multicultural setting.

The third section in chapter six examines motherhood in Doyle's child fiction books. Apart from some newspaper reviews and book commentaries, there are no critical studies dealing with these writings by Doyle, that include *Wilderness* (2007), *A Greyhound of a Girl* (2011) and *Her Mother's Face* (2008). It is crucial to note that my research constitutes the first academic study to offer an analysis of mother figures in these stories. The first book is *Wilderness*, which is about the Griffin family and the several crises that the members of this family need to overcome (e.g. the daughter's adolescence, or the visit from the step mother). The book's title can be read as an indication of the troublesome situations that each family member has to face. I focus on the "wilderness" of each character from the theoretical framework of literary scholar Michelle Superle (2012), who looks at children's fiction, as well as psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1986) and feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2000). One of the key

points in *Wilderness* is the replacement of the biological mother by the stepmother. The biological mother is depicted as an independent woman willing to leave her family behind for the sake of maintaining her own integrity; the stepmother, by contrast, is described as a rather affectionate mother, providing selfless love to those around her. I intended to show how Doyle detaches himself from strict judgements regarding biological and step mother figures. In particular, he challenges patriarchal texts (such as fairy tales) that accommodate wicked step mothers as opposed to submissive biological mothers. Additionally, the father figure in Doyle's story questions his fatherhood. At the end of the story each character manages to empathize with the other and strike a balance in their household.

The second and third books in section 6.3. —*A Greyhound of a Girl* (2011) and *Her Mother's Face* (2008) —are closely related to one another in terms of theme. First of all, these two books revolve around the mother-daughter relationship, implying that fathers are either absent or inefficient figures. Doyle employs various images to symbolise the mother-daughter bond, such as the river, the feather, and the mirror. While *A Greyhound of a Girl* depicts the close bonding among the women of four generations, *Her Mother's Face* portrays a girl who makes an effort to remember her absent mother's face. I analyse *A Greyhound of a Girl* in light of Julia Kristeva's (1980) and Alison Stone's (2014) depiction of mother-daughter relationship as a circular process. As opposed to Freud, who claims that mothers and daughters are rivals, Doyle's text addresses the mother-daughter dyad as a necessary component of the daughter's psychological development. Similarly, Doyle underlines the significance of the mother-daughter bond in *Her Mother's Face*. In light of the theoretical frameworks put forward by Luce Irigaray (1989) and Adrienne Rich (1995), I discuss the protagonist's need to remember her mother's physical features in order to overcome the

absence of the maternal figure in her life. Additionally, I consider how the Lacanian “mirror stage” is subverted in the story. Lacan views “the mirror stage” as a phase in which the child sees him/herself as an independent entity by looking into the mirror and detaching him/herself from his/her mother, as s/he steps into the paternal domain. However, Doyle’s young protagonist Siobhán gazes into the mirror and encounters her mother’s image as she grows into a woman. As in *A Greyhound of a Girl*, Doyle underlines the genealogy of the female characters in the story, emphasizing the powerful bond linking mothers and daughters. Considering Ostriker’s (1983: 4-5) claim that the theme of mothers and daughters tends to appear in female writing (or writing by women), these two books by Roddy Doyle transgress gendered expectations.

As this Dissertation explores, Doyle’s mother figures increasingly become more empowered and nonconventional throughout his literary production. The analysis of the mother figures in Doyle’s work can lead us to question the position of men (and fathers) especially in his most recent works of fiction. Doyle’s thematic focus has currently shifted to the mid-life crises of men. In fact, in his more recent work (e.g. *Bullfighting* [2011]; *Two Pints* [2012]; *The Guts* [2013]; *Two More Pints* [2014]), Doyle depicts male characters who are disempowered and/or emasculated due to ageing, divorce, disease, or the paralysis of daily life, to give but a few examples. Therefore, a focus on key issues such as the problem of masculinity and fatherhood in contemporary Ireland in his recent novels may serve as a starting point for future research. In fact, in a recent article (Tekin 2017), I follow this path and discuss the male characters’ dilemma—whether they measure up to the ideal construction of the Irish male—in *Bullfighting* and *Two Pints*.

Overall, the present research represents an original attempt to examine the concept of motherhood in Roddy Doyle’s work, by considering

the vast literary space that Doyle dedicates to women, particularly mothers, and his earnest attempt to represent them as heroines of the working class. In spite of his refusal to see himself as a spokesperson of any particular sector in Irish society (interview with Tekin 2014: 112) and the difficulty that some critics (i.e. Cosgrove 1996: 231) have identified when defining Doyle's ideological stance, it is unquestionable that his writings offer an ample, varied depiction of different kinds of women, challenging oversimplified visions of femininity and giving voice to the reality of the working class.

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APPENDIX

Appendix: An interview with Roddy Doyle⁵⁹

Clontarf, Dublin

23rd June 2013



BGT: Thank you very much for accepting my interview request. I have read that you were teaching English before you dedicated yourself to being a full-time writer. When and how did your writing adventure start? How has your literary background affected your writing?

RD: I started writing when I was a teenager ... when I started reading. I have always read a lot. Always, all my life I was a reader. I think I was in school for three years before I found out how to read. I was taught by my mother. Once I could read, I never stopped, particularly in my teenage years, when I realized that people had written these books and maybe they had written more books. I remember when I read *Catch 22* by Joseph Heller I would have been 16, and at that time he hadn't written any more books and I remember being a little bit heartbroken that there was only one book by him at the time. I remember searching for other books by other people but at the back of my mind I thought: 'well, I would like to do that; I would like to try it'. There was no creative writing school at the time, not until the late 1970s. I went to college, and

⁵⁹ This interview was retrieved with the permission of the editor of *Estudios Irlandeses*, Dr José Francisco Fernández, as it was published in 2014 (Volume 9, pp. 107-120).

became a teacher almost immediately, then I started teaching because then I had free time: I had no family so I had a lot of holidays in the summer.

BGT: I'm writing my PhD on the female characters of your work and am interested in their representation. I would like to address this particular aspect, if you do not mind. So far, your work has introduced many fictional female figures. We also hear about the real life characters in your non-fiction volume Rory & Ita, which is about your parents. I have found it highly interesting, in particular those parts narrated by your mother. I wonder to what extent your fiction is influenced by the women in your life? In other words are the female characters in your work inspired by actual women?

RD: No, not directly. So you're asking me do I know Paula Spencer, for example. No, I don't. If you're asking me, do I know Jimmy Rabitte, I have a book [The Guts] coming out soon from *The Commitments*, and now Jimmy is a middle- aged man – he is 48 years old and he has a wife he has been married to for twenty – twenty- seven years and do I know her? No. In the very beginning, if we go to, say *The Commitments*, my first novel, the young women in that book are inspired by the young women and the girls I used to teach. I can't say directly that this one is a fictional character and that one a real girl, now in their late forties. It was their energy, their wit, their humour, the way that they faced the world, which is in a way very un-Irish; they were supposed to be devout Catholics, quiet girls who did what they were told but actually they were not; they were much more lively and more energetic so when I wrote *The Commitments* they were in the back of my mind. I was still a teacher when I wrote *The Commitments*. Then, when I wrote *The Snapper*, it was purely fictional actually; not inspired by anything in my own family or anything else. Pregnancy is such a universal story. It's a very short book

but it took three years to write, to capture the main character's life, most obviously the biology, the pregnancy. I have been a father three times but the biology was always going to be foreign to me. I was the father after all and not the mother: no amount of empathy or emotions is going to get you closer to it. There was a certain amount of reading but mostly it was choosing the words that actually worked to get the woman's voice. It was a bit of guesswork there because how can you really tell? Almost inevitably when it comes to the something that I don't have direct experience of, whether it's violence in this case or being a member of a band for example, which I've never been, being involved in historical events when I wasn't even born; so when it comes to experience outside my own, I tend to write too much and then take a lot of it back and it's the exact same as with creating Sharon Rabitte or the first of the people to occupy a book. I wrote way too much, twice as much as is actually in the book and I just cut it away until that moment. That's how I get to know any characters really, but particularly the female characters. I have no real idea at first, very vague, I write too much, get to know them, take most of it away. The most extreme one was *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*. When I was describing her reaction to the violence, I have no direct experience of domestic violence or any other sort of violence and very little experience of physical pain but I used it to describe hers. I changed my physical pain experience, took away a lot of it, and ended up with *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* who was in the fiction.

BGT: Do you think that Paula Spencer (in The Woman Who Walked into Doors) or Sharon (in The Snapper) somehow subvert traditional notions of Irish femininity? Sharon, for instance, gets pregnant outside wedlock...

RD: Yes, but that was very common, very common in the 1980s in Ireland so it wasn't written about, I suppose. I started writing that book in late 1986. It wasn't published until 1990. What I did was, I think maybe for the first time, to present it as something that wasn't shameful and that wasn't to be hidden. That was all - the only drama in the story to an extent is the father. It's a common story so I wasn't doing anything revolutionary there. I was actually, in a way, giving a fictional shape to what I was seeing every day, there is nothing more. In a way all fictional characters should subvert, if they are going to be alive on the page. They have to be more than real including the naturalistic way - I don't buy into that. I am quite happy with literary movements such as naturalism and realism, but you know all writing is somehow heightened. All characters are somehow more than their human character because you home in on their lives in 200-300 pages or in the case of writing the novel, two or three years of your life and you pick and choose the moments that are revealed to the reader. It's all heightened I think, if you like; in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, I got in behind the door. I gave voice to this woman who ordinarily wouldn't have been there due to many conscious decisions of society ignoring her. The opportunity sometimes in fiction is to put on paper people who aren't often on paper. She was a case in point but it was nothing. In some ways obviously she is not typical but she is a fictional character and she has her own book; in fact she has two books. In the way she thinks, the way she manages or doesn't manage her life, the way she reacts to her husband and children, I would imagine they are very typical of anybody.

BGT: What comes first into your mind in the creation process of a literary product: A character's physical or/and mental features or the plot itself?

RD: Almost never the physical features. I'm not really interested. There is a lot of physical detail in *The Snapper* but only as Sharon's body changes during the pregnancy. I have no recollection if she was tall, if she had dark hair, what colour her eyes were. I don't think eye colour comes into it, at all. Physical features don't really matter -even in *The*

Commitments with three young women who the young men were obviously attracted to – I don't know if I have mentioned hair colour or eye colour or anything like that, the usual clichés, so I don't know what Paula Spencer looks like. It's only what she tells us.

BGT: I have asked that because in some novels I feel as if you're visualizing the characters and the dialogues stand as if they are from a movie. Also, many of your literary works have been adapted to the screen.

RD: Yes, they were novels first.

BGT: Yes, I know.

RD: That's the reader... That's the reader at work, not me. I firmly believe in leaving gaps for the reader. The reader is active, because I'm a reader myself and I'm actively involved. I'm not a passive recipient of the world; I respond. I'd often be in the process of having read a book when there is no literal description of a character but I have a very strong sense of what they're like. That's the words; they somehow work a chemical reaction in my brain, my mind or whatever so that's what my job is: to put the words as exactly as I want them on the page and then the reader responds in that way; to keep the dialogues lively, keep the scenes real, to put the human being together. I suppose I don't listen to much drama on the radio but I often notice that if I find myself enjoying it, I begin to see the characters. It's my own version so your idea what Paula Spencer looks like, that's your idea, not mine. [Smiles]

BGT: Speaking about female characters who have been through domestic violence I also like Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha. In a way, it is through Paddy's narration that we find out that his mother is exposed to domestic violence; we do not hear her voice often nor do we learn much about her. Is it a deliberate silence, I would like to ask?

RD: It's a ten year old boy's outlook. It's quite late into the book where he comes across this horrible notion that his parents' marriage is breaking up and there is a doubt as to whether there is physical violence there. I haven't read that book since I wrote it so it was long time ago. There might be the throwing of things, the stomping at the table, thumping on the table but I don't think that there is any overt proof that there is any physical violence. I probably would have thought not. I don't know; maybe my memory of the book towards the end is a bit sketchy but it had to be a ten year old boy's view. His parents are going through a breakup and that's plain but it doesn't become plain to him until quite late. They are sensitive enough and naive enough to hope that their arguments can't be heard by their children. Paddy, of course, is awake on the stairs, hoping that by staying awake it will stop all these little superstitious things that we carry with us throughout our lives. If I stop looking, the bus will come; you know that type of thing. I don't think that ever stops. I suppose it's particularly alive in a 10-year-old boy. I was a slave to the notion of Paddy as a 10-year-old boy. I couldn't ignore the insight that you would get from that he is a 10-year-old boy. It's a horrible experience to live. His mother is always is up there. [Showing high up with his hand] She is there; up there. You know everything is up there for a 10-year-old because they are small so then he misses a lot. He has no idea about a break-up and that was important to the book and I couldn't go "that happened to me twenty years ago and my parents just...". I hate that perspective in hindsight. "But I was only a 10-year-old boy then, now I know more". That book works because he was a 10-year-old boy not a 30-year-old man looking back at the time when he was there so that immediacy means that Paddy's view is very limited. Sometimes I would imagine that a marriage could explode or a

relationship could explode. It's only years later when the two people involved understand life; years, hindsight. We all become very wise so Paddy is actually trying to keep up.

BGT: What motivated you to write about domestic violence in The Woman Who Walked into Doors and Paula Spencer?

RD: I had written three novels between *The Snapper* and *The Van*. Particularly with *The Snapper*, there is not much of the family in *The Commitments*. *The Snapper* is all about family and *The Van* as well. I had written about the one family, The Rabitte family, an emotionally successful family. The baby born in *The Snapper* is lucky to be born in that house: very crowded and very loud. I think, emotionally lucky, that baby will be loved. I didn't want to write another book about the same family because I thought it would become a bit shrill. The question I would be asking myself is "I am saying that all families are like this? Because what about the unsuccessful?" As a result, I started to imagine not necessarily literally the next door neighbours but people on the same street whose emotional life isn't as successful. Besides, I was invited by the BBC to write a television series but it was an open invitation; I could write anything at all. I thought I was going to meet with the producers from the BBC. I was on the DART, the train, on the way to the city centre and I began to imagine a four part series and each part was told from the point of view of a different character. I didn't have names but I thought Paula and her husband, son, daughter, wife, father: one-two-three-four. I put that idea to them and they said "yes" so I wrote this series called *Family*, which was made by the BBC and broadcast in 1994. While I was writing the last episode which is Paula's episode, after she has thrown her husband out, I began to wonder about the rest of her life. What had happened before and what happens after, like a lot of people

who witnessed a marital breakup and have often wondered, from our point of view perhaps, “why it happened that that really lovely woman married that creep” or the other way around, “how that really nice, decent man married that monster”. You sometimes wonder ...; it's a common question. Joe Jackson has got a great song “Is She Really Going Out with Him?” I mean it's not necessarily about violence; it's about jealousy, as well, sometimes envy. I began to wonder about what she saw in this man seventeen years before the moment where she throws him out. At what point did he become violent? Did he know why or did he never know why? Did he carry that into the marriage? Was alcohol involved? How did she become much older than she should be in her years and then what happens afterwards? Then, I began to piece together this and it becomes *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*. It's almost an unusual one. *The Commitments* was a novel and a film; *The Snapper* was a novel and a film; *The Van* was a novel and a film. Paula, in *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* was a novel but before that it was a part of a television series. It was an unusual enough outline. I can't think of many examples where the novel has been inspired by the writing of something for television.

BGT: I think Paula Spencer is a perfect novel about a heroine rising from her ashes. Paula unconsciously employs a strategy of psychological recovery which is writing. Do you personally believe in this strategy? Do you think that writing can have a therapeutic function?

RD: I don't know to be honest. I don't think it should ever be presented as therapy. If it works that way then, great! However, I think that if the writing is to have any strength at all it should be presented as writing; that is to say if you get any lift to your self esteem or you get any clarity by writing, great. If you want to use your direct experience, great. I've

come across people who have written about their direct experience but they have written badly; but they seem to think that because it's their direct experience that somehow it's valid as a piece of writing, which it isn't. I'm nervous of writing as therapy but I could see why keeping a diary and trying to work out what happened could work. I think that the conceit, the trick of *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* is that I imagined when I started a woman at a table writing into a copybook. It may have started with a sense of therapy of writing but actually she is a very good writer and she begins to realize how you do it. Additionally, she edits the book and then she plays with the reader actually because things aren't revealed until quite late. When I started it, the first draft I imagined her being an enthusiastic, being a very intelligent woman but kind of unschooled. You know what I mean by unschooled: not particularly well-educated, like a lot of people of her generation, working class women and men of her generation. Her particular intelligence might not be recognized by the education system or by the teacher at the front of the room. She would have left school feeling slightly, officially stupid. Right? She wouldn't have read much in terms of fiction; her life didn't go smoothly. If she did, it might have been a few Maeve Binchy books, good books but conventionally told. I felt that she could have started with her childhood and worked into her teenage years, but I thought that actually that would be boring. That would be very boring regardless of her realism and how well she does it. As a result, I decided to break the story into three parts: her early life, her recent history and then her present and I'd tell them in three parallel lines, three parallel tracks. That's why it works, I think, because if I'd told it in a more conventional way I don't think it would have worked. It would have been well- intentioned, and might not be bad but it would have been very

boring. I gave her more editorial skill in a way, because you have to fall into the trap of thinking that she is the one who is writing the book. Paddy Clarke obviously as well. He is a better writer than most ten year olds, I think and that's how that particular book worked. Is it therapeutic? I don't know. The simple reason is that she's a fictional character so it doesn't seem therapeutic. Does she feel better? How can you tell? She doesn't exist outside the pages of the book.

BGT: I prefer to think that she has somehow recovered while writing because when you compare The Woman Who Walked into Doors with Paula Spencer you see that Paula Spencer has somehow overcome her problems in the second book.

RD: Oh, yes. One of the reasons why Paula Spencer is in reasonably good shape is that she has given up drinking. However, it is a huge preoccupation right through the book; she can tell you to the minute when she last had a drink.

BGT: Yes and she is counting the days that she does not take alcohol: a proper habit of alcoholics.

RD: Oh, yes, but she is also counting money which is a healthy thing, funnily. I always feel the woman, Paula Spencer, is my Celtic Tiger. It's not about the excesses of the money that's in the country; it's about somebody who used to have no money whatsoever. Now she is at a point in her life where she can put bits aside to buy things, say, a computer for her son, a record player or a CD player for herself, an occasional CD. She has a bit of money in her pocket where there used to be none. That is to say, her life is in better shape; but is it because she wrote her first book or is it just because she has given up drinking? I don't know.

BGT: I will come back to this theme of the Celtic Tiger a bit later but before that I would like to address the issue of representation. Your voice is truly

important nowadays in Ireland in its denunciation of life experiences which until recently have been silenced: domestic violence, ethnic marginalisation, etc. Would you consider yourself as a spokesperson of these silent realities? Do you consider your (male) gender and your (white) ethnicity as an obstacle or rather as an advantage when writing about female issues?

RD: There is a lot in that question! In fact I think several questions.

BGT: Sorry! [Laughs]

RD: It's okay. [Laughs] I don't consider myself to be a spokesman for anybody, and that's important: I'm a writer and I write fiction. In *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, I wasn't saying this is the life of a lot of women. This is the life of a fictional character and if I started by making it more general the whole thing called fiction wouldn't work. I mean I'm not a spokesperson for anyone. Does my gender make it an advantage to write? Being a man, is it an advantage to write from the point of view of a woman? Possibly not! It is not a disadvantage either. It gives me pause for thought; I have to think more. When I'm writing about middle-aged men, that's no problem to me whatsoever, but I still have to choose the words. They're very important. I have to choose the right words to capture the feeling of ageing, for example. That wouldn't be unique to men, but there are aspects of it that are unique to men as opposed to women. When I'm writing about it, I can dig into my own personal experience to relive it. Again, you have to choose the words. It's what writers do: choose the words and reject the other words. If I was writing about a 20-year-old man as a 55-year-old man, and I am a 55-year-old man, so I should be ready to stop. However, actually choosing the words can be difficult. When writing from the point of view of a 55-year-old woman, I have to think what we have in common and what we don't have in common. I am never going to be menopausal, for example. I'm

never going to grieve about no longer being able to have babies. Hair loss is more common; you know, men lose hair, women grow hair. [Smiles] Then, another issue would be: do I make it darkly comic or do I make it tragic? Men in my experience, maybe it's because I have been friendly with the same men since we were children, we tend to look at fifty-eight as a dark comedy. Do women? I don't know – at the moment – today – this morning, I don't know. I would have to think about it. I don't think my male gender is an advantage but it is a challenge, which is a good thing because then you have to think more. I think in the same way that I used to when I was a 20-year-old but it's a long time ago. However, I don't know what it's like to be a 20-year-old man today. I have to be very careful. Does that make sense? Just because I lived it back in 1977 doesn't mean it's still valid. A 20-year-old in 2013 would still be biologically a 20-year-old and actually and probably 95% of the experience is much the same. However, I'd have to think carefully before I put my final stamp and say "yes, this is finished". The last thing I think you have mentioned was my ethnicity which I have never thought about. I think if there is anything that makes me a writer more than anything else, it's not my nationality but my city where I grew up. I do like being Irish. I'm not sure why but I do like being Irish. I've never lived anywhere else but given that I travelled quite a lot, which I like, I like the place and I like the quality of life – by quality of life I mean, more than anything else the conversation; the words in the air. Dublin particularly; if I hadn't grown up in Dublin, and in my part of Dublin, I wouldn't write in the same way; the characters wouldn't speak in the same way and the narration wouldn't be the same. It's my city – it has had a bigger effect on my life, more than anything else.

*BGT: Talking about age, after reading your latest work, the short story collection *Bullfighting* and your most recent novel *Two Pints*, it seems to me that you have somehow changed concerns in your focus on gender. Now instead of focusing so much on women you tend to focus on men and the middle age crisis they experience. Is this true?*

RD: Oh, yes of course. I tend to be working at different things at the same time. When I wrote those stories for *Bullfighting* I didn't sit down and write a collection of short stories about middle-aged men. They were written now and again over a ten-year period. I think I wrote the first one literally a few days after New Year's Day in 2000. The one that's called "The Slave" is the first one that I actually wrote, when I found a dead rat in my kitchen; I used it as an inspiration. It's not about me but the rat. The last one I wrote was maybe in 2010 so it's about a ten-year period. While I was writing them sporadically, I also wrote *Paula Spencer*, and I wrote several books between: I wrote *Oh, Play That Thing* and I wrote *The Dead Republic*. I wrote several plays and couple of screenplays which don't look at middle-aged men so it's not as if I shifted and abandoned one thing and gave over my attention to middle-aged men. *Two Pints* is a little facebook thing that I do when the mood hits me, when something happens, and when I have the time. And it's just two middle-aged men. But it's not my life's work. The novel I have just finished is about a middle-aged man and while I was writing that I was also writing a script for a musical based on my first book, *The Commitments*. The same man. He is a 20-year-old man in one piece of work and a 48-year-old man, the same man, in the other piece of work. Every day I was writing about the same man except there is a gap of twenty-eight years in his life. Strange. The great thing about being a writer, or one of the great things about being a writer is that one's life

experience can be one of the things that you write about: my children growing older, for example, my feeling of redundancy perhaps for a while as a father because I'm not needed in the same way that I used to be. I'm not driving anywhere; I don't need to do things for them anymore and so I feel a bit redundant and it's not a nice feeling. It takes a while for it to feel like independence but you can use it in the same way as you can use your gradual physical decay as material for your writing. You can be quite bitter about it or you can laugh at it.

BGT: Some critics say that the Celtic Tiger brought a crisis of hyper-masculinity in Ireland. Do you agree?

RD: I don't know really. I don't know what it means! Hyper-masculinity? What does that mean? [Laughs] Like bullish behaviour?

BGT: Yes, I guess so.

RD: Possibly: in financial services, in banking services. "I have more millions than you!" (Banging his fist on his chest) Yes, maybe, but I have never witnessed it. Certainly I didn't in my circle. No, I don't remember any writers beating their chests saying "fuck you, I earn more than you!" I don't know. And I didn't witness it on the streets. Often on Friday nights in Dublin, there is a level of violence, for example. However, they were doing that in 1970s – 80s and the 90s and probably last night. If you're walking in any city late at night, you'd have to be careful probably. I'm not sure that the economy has anything to do with that; I'm not sure that I have witnessed it in literature. There are always men who seem to want to express themselves by imposing themselves on others, including other men. That would be in part a day-to-day experience in my school when I was a child. When I was a teenager there was nothing whatsoever to do with the state of the Irish economy so either I don't understand the question or I'll have to probably reject the

notion. Possibly in financial services you have cocaine-induced boasting. I don't know because I have never taken cocaine so I don't know what happens. I believe it is very common in banking services not just in Ireland but in the UK; probably everywhere where money is exchanged. They probably had a lot of boastfulness and big cars. However, actually, looking back at the Celtic Tiger, the women in big cars were just as noticeable. Different types of cars. Women were defining themselves by material goods as much as men were. That may well be as in traditional places the money might have been earned by men but women were expressing it in much the same way. Since the recession started, attacks on shops have increased, overwhelmingly by young men. It's not because they are hyper- masculine, hyper-desperate or lazy because actually in lot of places they earn no more than they would if they had a job because there is plenty of bad work available. They could earn as much on the minimum wage as they would if they plan a robbery. I don't know if we can see these things too much.

BGT: In your foreword to The Deportees, when you refer to the Ireland of the mid- 1990s, you state that "[you] went to bed in one country and woke up in a different one". What kind of an experience was the Celtic Tiger period for you? Have you ever felt like an outsider in your own country?

RD: Yes....

BGT: And did it take you long to adapt to the new situation in Ireland?

RD: There are two questions there, at least. Ireland has changed dramatically several times since I was a child and I suppose everyone's country has, including yours [Turkey] I would imagine. When I was a child, it was overwhelmingly happy; it was deeply conservative. I didn't know that's what it was; I wasn't aware of anything else. I never saw a black person, which is remarkable, living in a city of over a million

people. I don't think I ever saw a black person; there were none in my street. My mother, her father came from Wexford which is South. I'm pointing at it here [Pointing the direction with his hand] at South, South East which is now about one and half hour drive, it was four or five hours drive back then. One of her cousins, one aunt in particular, she lived on a farm with no electricity, no running water. This is mid-1960s. Not unusual for some rural parts of Europe, but very unusual for a Western country on the verge of joining the EU, back then. No electricity, no running water, no toilet facilities. I remember bringing, helping to bring the milk to the local creamery on the back of a donkey and cart. It's like a postcard but actually it's part of the economic reality. Ten years later, that was all gone. Now Ireland is more an urban country and the wealth came and Ireland changed then. It's no longer accurate to say it's a Catholic country; the debate now about abortion. In most cases it's quite a reasonable debate. Thirty years ago, you couldn't mention the word abortion. It would have got people upset. They would start screaming and shouting; some people still do, but the majority of people don't. Actually I find the subject quite boring. It's weird. The only time I have ever felt like an outsider in this country was in my late teens when I decided that God didn't exist and I had no interest in religion. I had to be a bit shrill about it for maybe ten years or so. It was unusual enough for somebody to term themselves an atheist and escaping from God and all the trappings of religion; that was actually quite hard. There were assumptions made when I was a teacher that I was never asked to teach religion, but I was often asked to bring the children up to the local church for some sort of mass. I didn't mind bringing them to the door but I wouldn't go in. First of all, I'd always feel a bit disrespectful of other people's religion. I would happily go into

any religious place now as long as it's not expected that I would get down on my knees. I'm quite happy to go with the rhythm of the symbolism of that particular rite if it's a funeral or whatever; I'm quite happy to go there out of respect for whoever's dead. At the time, being religious was almost an existence for everybody but that died out in the 80s. More and more people decided that religion was not their thing. And then it brought out whole issues like the papal abuse, the Magdalene Laundries, etc. The Catholic Church somehow became the enemy in the eyes of all the people. I think people were quite religious ... but now religion is irrelevant, you know. When I got married in the late 80s, my background was Catholic and my wife was Protestant and people kept pointing it out and nowadays they don't even care. It is not interesting; nobody gives a toss really. Nobody really cares. There was a period when I felt just like a bit of an outsider; maybe all young people felt a little like that; but that is part of growing up. It just happened to be circling around religion at that time. Other than that, no; I have always felt very at home here. I think it's one of the reasons why I write the way I do, because I do feel right at home. I do feel very comfortable in this part of the world, in this part of the city and I do feel very comfortable writing about what I consider ordinary experience slightly twisted. I never feel myself secluded in the way I work, in the attic of my house. I work by myself; I need to feel secluded, distant and I start to feel different from everybody else. I'm self employed; I am a plumber or a builder, you know, I work by myself. Not that I regard writing as work; I don't see a spiritual activity as a job.

BGT: I would also like to talk about the migrant characters in your short stories. For instance, I love the short story "The Pram" in The Deportees.

RD: Oh, thank you. The wooden bridge where it finishes up is down there [Pointing his finger].

BGT: Really?

RD: Yes, twenty minute - half an hour walk. If you go down, it's a lovely walk, along the sea. Yes, the pram is still there... [Laughs]

BGT: Do you personally think that the Irish are very conservative about newcomers?

RD: Not really, no.

BGT: Has this notion diminished through time?

RD: Very much so, because generally I think the newcomers readily soaked into Irish society. If you look behind the counter you might have noticed none of them are Irish, none of them are born Irish. If you're to get all of your information about Ireland and the media over the last five years, you'd have been told three years ago that people behind the counter are no longer here and they all returned to their own countries, but not where there was money, like back to Sweden or Norway. However, actually that's not the case at all. I'm still surprised; they are skilled workers, these particular workers had quite considerable tasks when this place opened then [Referring to the café where this interview took place]. And none of them are Irish. Ten or maybe twenty years ago it would have been noteworthy that people behind the counters are not Irish, but now nobody cares. Somebody comes to the door and they don't have an Irish accent; I'm not even curious of where they come from originally. I was at the time because it was so unusual: particularly the Africans, because visibly obviously they stand out. However, a Polish person comes in and you wouldn't know they were Polish unless they were talking or speaking Polish. However, when an African walks in the door, it is noteworthy because as I said I have never met a black person

in Ireland and suddenly in the heart of Dublin there was an African shop and African barbers. It was extraordinary; so I was asking myself “why would they be coming here?” There wasn’t hostility. I know that a lot of people who come here, when they are asked for seventeenth time “where do you come from?”, they feel as if they’re saying, “go back where you came from”. I think at first it was genuine curiosity because we were used to Irish people leaving Ireland, as we still are, not people coming to it. That’s to say, I have encountered very little hostility. There has never been, for example, a political party formed along the same way as that extreme party in the UK, the UK Independence Party, or other extreme nationalist parties in the European countries. We don’t have a fascist movement. No politicians have ever said they should all go back to where they came from and it would sort the unemployment problem out. Nobody. There are only a very few people who have ever said it so nobody has ever gained any advantage from ever saying it. There just isn’t that feeling in this country, “let’s get rid of the immigrants”; nobody thinks that. Even though nobody likes Roma people begging on the streets, I have never heard anybody saying I wish we sent them back them to Romania. It’s just one of these things.

BGT: I would like to go back to “The Pram”, the wicked female character I may call...

RD: O’Reilly.

BGT: O’Reilly, yes. She is from the upper class...

RD: No, she is not really.

BGT: No? But they were quite rich.

RD: She’d be a real Tiger; she’d be a Tiger phenomenon. Perhaps she is a bit interesting because she is a woman. Nobody has told her about hyper-masculinity and she is a hyper- masculine woman, in a way. Not

butch and not a lesbian but she has an inflated notion of herself. She'd be middle class, not upper class. However she is riding that crest of the Tiger and making more money than she should. She has got a big car and the rest of it and she treats that young woman [the Polish childminder of her children] very, very badly. However if that young woman was Irish, she'd treat her equally badly. It's nothing to do with it. That's the nature of that particular character, at that particular point.

BGT: There are not any upper class female characters in your work. Why?

RD: I don't know any. I don't know what upper class *is* exactly. I have been in a few homes because I am an internationally-known writer, so there have been occasions when I have been invited into these homes otherwise I'd have never gone. I don't know how I feel by upper class but by upper-middle class we mean people with a lot of money. I have an acquaintance of some people but I don't know the trappings. I didn't have access. My children went to state schools. We have our own car, seven years old. We have no interest in cars. I don't understand cars. For example, I don't know why a man or a woman would buy a particular car. Women buy a particular type of car; men buy a particular type of car. It's about status. I have been asked what would a 50-year- old man buy to try to prove that he is a 35-year- old man or what would a woman buy to try to prove what she is interested in. I don't know and I have no interest in it. I don't know the significance of furniture. I'm not being dismissive that there have been some brilliant books that do capture that world quite well but I don't know the trappings of that world. I don't have any interest in it and I don't know anybody intimately in that world.

BGT: I would like to ask a couple of questions about The Last Roundup Trilogy, especially about Miss O'Shea. I think she is ignored by many critics in terms of her vitality in Henry Smart's life...

RD: Yes..

BGT: How would you clarify her significance in the story apart from being Henry Smart's primary school teacher?

RD: She is the love of his life, isn't she, literally? Either her presence or her absence is the big thing from the time he meets her until the time he dies. So she is depicted in a romantic sense, as the love of his life.

BGT: You portray Miss O'Shea as a rather independent/dominant female figure but she keeps following Henry. I just couldn't understand why...

RD: Miss O'Shea is trying to find Henry. He is lost but he is trying to find her as well towards the end of *The Last Roundup*. They both tried to find each other. They could have succeeded, sadly, but then she is dead. It's not a case that she is running after him because he is running after her as well. He had to leave, remember in the end of *The Star Called Henry*; it's a tactful thing, he had to get out of Ireland; she was in jail so he left first. Therefore, she looks for him and he looks for her. I know people often find their love story quite frustrating but she is simply the love of his life and as is often the case with people: they push the ones they shouldn't push and often they push them away, instead of clutching onto them. They both learn, if you like, very late in their lives who it was they should have been sharing their lives with but that's not their nature. They are both slightly mad. I wasn't aware of what you said as I don't actually read the critics so, I'll take your word for it. [Laughs]

BGT: I also really like the Granny figure, who is a bookworm, reading books all the time.

RD: Yes, yes.... [Smiles]

BGT: I would also like to ask what's your favourite female fictional character in your work?

RD: My favourite?

BGT: Yes...

RD: Oh, Paula!

BGT: Why?

RD: Paula was the hardest to achieve. I spent two years writing *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*. Not a particularly long time to write a novel; it's not a long book. Very little of what I wrote in the first year is in the book ... and I write Monday to Friday, so there are a lot words, very little of it is in the finished book. It was very vague, so in a way, I was trying to get to know her. It was the first year after I'd given up teaching because I was writing full time. During the second year, I began to know her and it began to flow. However, the only way I could get to know her was to go into myself, really, and start thinking about her feelings, about her children. That was that. Then I would put my experience of physical pain, I would use that and then change it. I began to get to know her a bit. I gave the geography of my own childhood; so where she grew up, I grew up. She meets her husband in the dance hall and they are walking home together; that would have been the route I would have taken so I began to visualize it myself. I began to see the clothes that would have been worn by everybody including myself in 1974. The music was very important as well; how we do associate individual pieces of music with the times in our lives. We can visualize and we can smell things, even taste things, if we can associate with the piece of music. I'm not sure if it's still the case because there is such a glut of music these days whereas at the time there were limited opportunities to hear music. You would need to buy music for that

matter. People tended to know a song better because they had played it again and again, again and again. Whereas now, it's just a constant flow: you know a song is on the radio for only one day a year nowadays whereas in the summer of 1976 you would have heard only ten songs all the way through that summer. In a way, that's how I have got to know Paula's character. The truth is, I suppose I came back to ten years later. I'll be quite open to the notion of coming back to it again some time.

BGT: I believe you have various favourite writers... What is your favourite female character of other writers?

RD: Good question ... There are a few that spring to mind. There are the barmaids in the "Sirens" chapter of *Ulysses* by James Joyce. I think they are really, really great. They are brilliant. I can see why in the 1920s the book was banned; why conservative Ireland would have been terrified of these characters because they are very, very sexual. The notion that there were women like this in Ireland would have been a bit frightening for the people like that. They are brilliant; they are really, really great. At the moment ... I can't. It's one of those questions I really need to think about it because I really can't think of anybody. Does it have to be a male writer?

BGT: No, it can be anybody but a female fictional character that you like.

RD: I love *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton. The central character she has, she is fantastic; she is a brilliant, brilliant character. I really like that one.

BGT: Why?

RD: She's tragic; she's tragic...

BGT: I would like to ask a question regarding Joyce, now that you mentioned him. In an interview with Caramine White, she states that you do not like writers like James Joyce because "[they write] to show off [their] brain[s]"

(White 2001: 162), but when I am particularly thinking of Joyce's *Dubliners* and *The Portrait*, I also remember Paddy Clarke and *Bullfighting*, in a way. How do these works influence your writing in terms of their critique of the social and spiritual paralysis in Ireland? Do you think that they have influenced your writing?

RD: I don't know how. I don't know how books influence other books. I read *The Portrait of the Artist* when I was eighteen. Well, I know that because I was actually working in *The Irish Times* as a copy boy. Before email, a copy boy was given pieces of paper and told to deliver them to other parts of the city or to the other parts of the building. I used to buy a book to read with my wages and one of them was *The Portrait of the Artist*, which I carried around with me as I read it. I was eighteen; in 1992 I was writing *Paddy Clarke* and then I would have been thirty-four so a sixteen year gap, if my maths are right... I wasn't thinking of *The Portrait of the Artist* when I wrote the first chapters. I was pointed out by some critics for making similarities which are there to be seen, but I wasn't consciously doing it. I don't know if I'm unconsciously doing it. I admired Joyce's *Dubliners* hugely. It's magnificent and *Portrait of the Artist* is great. However if I do have criticisms, it's of the later two books. I personally think that *Ulysses* would be a better book if there was less of it. Unlike quite a lot of people, I find Stephen as a character tremendously irritating but if that's deliberate, grand. I did half-jokingly say that *Ulysses* could have done with a good edit. I was saying it half-joking; it was taken out of context and became a headline that "Doyle had criticised Joyce". However, if somebody said "would you be happier if *Ulysses* was edited?" I would have said no. It is the book it is. No more than if somebody said if I'd be happy to have the opportunity to rewrite a passage of the book that you didn't already undertake. No. It is what it

is so I think my feelings about Joyce are ultimately positive. I think the problem is the Joyce industry. Do I want to put academics out of work? No, I don't really. When you got books written about Joycean scholars, there is something weird about that. I think Beckett is going the same way and probably John McGahern will end up the same. When the academics, forgive me, take ownership of a writer, it makes it hard for ordinary people because they feel intimidated. That's the reality of it, I think. I'm not sure if I'm answering your question.

BGT: Yes, thank you, and do you think that there is a sense of literary comradeship when you think about your contemporaries in Ireland?

RD: Yes, I suppose so. It's as if you're playing with the football team and you're meeting the same eleven men everyday; not every day perhaps, but you're meeting them twice a week, once for training, once for a match. You're going to like five and you're going to tolerate five or so but at least one of them is going to drive you mad. I suppose eleven writers in a room ... a football team, they are much the same world. In a way, I'm drawn to the company of some not because they are great writers but because I enjoy the company. I avoid others not because they are not great writers; it's because I have nothing in common with them. It's so simple; it's the same as everything else. I do always feel a certain fellow feeling. When Kevin Barry won the Impac award a few weeks ago, I was delighted because personally I love his work and I like him. It's as simple as that. If Kevin Barry were a footballer and scored a goal, I would be delighted because it's about football and I like him so it's much less the same thing. If I am to speak on behalf of myself, I don't pay that much attention. I read the work and try to read as much as I can. There are a lot of the newer writers around that I haven't got round to yet but I know that I might read them, during my holidays now. I might be able to

read some of those that I have neglected. I always try to keep up to date and I always wish everybody well personally; if I hear they are shortlisted or longlisted or whatever that their books are selling well, I'm always quite happy with that.

BGT: Do you find any similarities in your work and in their work?

RD: Not particularly, but I don't look for them. I'm very much on my own. I have met writers who are often very aware what's going on in the world of publishing and know who has got a contract and who is going where, to what festival. However, I'm often a bit baffled by that and it doesn't really interest me.

BGT: I would like to ask something about the filmic adaptations of your work... Do you think your work loses something when it jumps to the screen or do you find it useful?

RD: Useful is never a word I would use. Inevitably a novel loses something when it becomes interpreted ... It's a different experience. For example, Colm Meaney plays the father in *The Snapper*. He is magnificent; he is just brilliant so you get that. You get different timing, it's a different energy to the process. It's an entirely different experience. If you are lucky, one will match nicely with the other - if you're lucky. I was involved in the writing of all three screenplays so I was doubly lucky and I think it worked out quite well. With *The Commitments*, the challenge of the novel was to try to put the music on the paper. The advantage of the film is that it can be heard and seen at the same time so that's the advantage there. However, you lose the point of reading with the music because I think the part of the success of *The Commitments* as a novel is way the music is presented on the page. It's fun: and the drum beats and the bass lines and the rest of it...; whereas in the film you get it so, you gain things and you lose things because they are entirely different

experiences. It is always a gamble. So far, luckily, I have been involved in four adaptations. I suppose, there have been some failures along the way that were never made. So far, I'd be quite happy to say "yes, let's go, do some work" so, I'm lucky in that regard. I'm not in the position to answer ... if that had been the question, as far as I have never had a book that I considered destroyed by a lousy film. I have never been in a position to see a short minor story become a film, a big film. Lots of stories I didn't care because I just don't think it would have worked. I have been lucky. I'm quite content with the both experiences.

BGT: Apart from novels, you have written screenplays, plays, children's books and short stories. In which literary genre do you feel more comfortable?

RD: Fiction.

BGT: Why?

RD: You're not dependent on the economic circumstances. You're not dependent on timing, availability of actors, and availability of music. You are not dependent on the enthusiasm of other people involved. While you are writing you're very much in control of your own work, and the challenge is to be in your own complete world. For example, if you're writing a script for other people, that would require dependence. I'm seeing that first hand at the moment because I'm involved in a musical that's going to open in London and later in Europe. I wrote the script and now I'm seeing a set inspired by the script being built. I'm seeing a cast being chosen and I'm seeing other people. I'm not involved in these things because I was purely involved in the words. There were other people building the house, so to speak, on the top of my foundation. Now with the novel, you build the foundation but you also build the house so it's much more challenging, much more engrossing. Obviously,

the gamble is you spend ten years of your life doing this, and nobody cares; that's the gamble. If I had pulled back on one it would be that. You are not dependent on the whims of a producer. I have been in meetings where there is this huge promise that they get back to you on Tuesday, but they don't specify what Tuesday and you're still waiting every Tuesday for the rest of your life. The phone call never comes. That's quite common. It's not when you are writing a novel. Their reaction to it is different then. I stopped working on a new book [*The Guts*] finally last October and that's coming out in August. I haven't worked on a new novel yet, but I'm beginning to feel a bit itchy. I never feel that I have really worked alone; but I'm incredibly busy. I never feel like I'm really working unless I'm also working on something else.

BGT: And what is it going to be about?

RD: The new one? The book that is coming out? [Referring to *The Guts*]

BGT: Yes.

RD: Jimmy Rabbitte as a middle-aged man. A year in his life: he has health issues, he has cancer but he survives that. It's about reacquainting himself with things like friendship and other aspects of his life.

*BGT: I would like to ask one last question: I have been reading theoretical material for my PhD thesis recently. In *Emerging Voices: Women in Contemporary Irish Society*, Pat O'Connor (1998) claims that the economic boom in Ireland had affected the lives of women more than men. Now after fifteen years, in the Post-Celtic Tiger period, how would you characterise the situation of women in Ireland?*

RD: It's all over the world. I think women by and large are more self confident than they used to be; more assertive; even though they are not particularly well-represented in politics. I suspect in part because they don't want to be. They are not interested in politics as a life. And it's

often because they have children, so they can't do it. That might be one element of it. When political adversarial democracy is concerned, you get two sides shouting at each other across the room. In the British and also in American model, which we have, there are the democrats, the republicans, conservative, labour. I don't know if you have the same in your own country but that shouting across the room at each other; women just don't want to be involved and some men don't want to be involved. It comes across as being quite childish and silly. I think that the women don't want to be involved. I think women are more in their bodies and in themselves; they are a very assertive sex and that wouldn't have been the case when I was a young man. The women's use of the language – as evident on facebook and as evident on my ear, middle-aged men hearing the vulgar language of a young woman, jars a bit – they can be very, very rude, really rude: that's to my ears. However, at the same time I can see it as a positive thing because they are standing up to men in terms of language. I think they are also brutal to each other. There is one word in particular which no man of my generation would ever use no matter how angry they were, they would never ever use it to describe a woman. One word. But I have heard it and I have heard women use it quite casually. It's shocking. It will always be a shock!

BGT: Do you think Paula would be like this, if you were writing about her today?

RD: Paula would never use that word. She would use the word but she'd use it very, very sparingly and she would never use it to describe another woman. Her daughter might, her granddaughter might eventually but Paula never would. These are how things change.

BGT: Okay, I think I have asked lots of questions!

RD: I think you probably have a lot there.

BGT: Thank you very much for such a wonderful interview, which has been truly inspiring and will be very helpful for my research.

RD: You are very welcome.

SUMMARY OF THE THESIS IN SPANISH

Summary of the thesis in Spanish

Cuando se habla de literatura irlandesa, los nombres que primero vienen a la mente son los de escritores considerados canónicos, tales como Jonathan Swift, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett u Oscar Wilde. Sin embargo, la literatura irlandesa no se limita a escritores canónicos del pasado, sino que también incluye muchas otras voces contemporáneas (i.e. Seamus Heaney, Sebastian Barry, William Trevor, Eavan Boland, John Banville, Emma Donoghue, Kevin Barry, Colum McCann o Lisa McInerney). Es más, si acudimos a trabajos que se centran en la sociedad multicultural irlandesa y el paisaje cultural cambiante del país, podemos ver que la lista de autores contemporáneos se vuelve aún más extensa (con escritores de la talla de Dermot Bolger, Cauvery Madhavan y Hugo Hamilton, entre otros).

En concreto, escritores como Patrick McCabe, Edna O'Brien, Anne Enright y Colm Tóibín han destacado en el panorama de la literatura irlandesa contemporánea desde principios de los años 90 hasta principios del siglo XXI. Entre los temas dominantes que unen a estos autores destacan cuestiones como la pertenencia, los abrumadores recuerdos del pasado y las paradojas de ser irlandés en un mundo global en constante cambio. Además, algunas de sus obras abordan de forma consistente las disfunciones que ocurren en una esfera doméstica descrita como traumática y violenta. Tal es el caso, a modo de ejemplo, de *The Butcher Boy* de McCabe (1992), *House of Splendid Isolation* (1994) de O'Brien, y *The Wig My Father Wore* (1995), de Enright; novelas que retratan de forma mordaz las tensiones y sufrimientos de los protagonistas en el espacio privado de sus familias. Escritores como éstos han enriquecido la escena irlandesa contemporánea incorporando a sus obras nuevos elementos idiosincráticos de la cultura del país, que a menudo se definía únicamente por el nacionalismo, la religión y la historia. Sin embargo, hasta el momento, la tradición literaria irlandesa no había prestado

atención al ámbito de los suburbios y la clase obrera, salvo notables excepciones como es el caso del dramaturgo Séan O'Casey.

Entre las figuras literarias contemporáneas mencionadas anteriormente, Roddy Doyle destaca por su interés en retratar, lo más fielmente posible, la clase obrera trabajadora de Dublín, un territorio ampliamente desconocido en el ámbito cultural del país. Como escritor enfrentado a un legado tradicionalmente definido en términos reductivos (Longley 1994: 194), Doyle se ha sentido obligado a reformular y proporcionar una crítica social y cultural de su sociedad. Además del interés de Doyle por retratar la experiencia de la clase obrera, su “tratamiento innovador de la voz narradora” es muy original (Harte 2013: 30). En particular, su obra destaca por el uso de la lengua cotidiana utilizada por la clase obrera. No es sorprendente que sus novelas hayan provocado un gran impacto en el panorama literario irlandés contemporáneo. Además, dicho autor no ha limitado su escritura a un género determinado; muy al contrario, ha publicado no solo novelas, sino relatos cortos, memorias, guiones de televisión, obras de teatro y cuentos infantiles. Por tanto, no sería erróneo referirse a Roddy Doyle como un escritor polifacético. Sus temas son tan variados como los múltiples géneros literarios con los que ha experimentado, y reflejan, a su vez, la naturaleza cambiante de una sociedad irlandesa en constante evolución. Todos los aspectos anteriormente mencionados hacen de Roddy Doyle una de las figuras más idiosincráticas en el panorama literario actual de Irlanda.

Por otra parte, la obra de Doyle no sólo ha tenido un impacto nacional, sino que su reputación se ha visto consolidada en el extranjero. Así, muchas de sus novelas se han adaptado al cine y han llegado a un público internacional. Del mismo modo, sus libros se han traducido a numerosos idiomas como el alemán, el holandés, el francés, el español, el italiano y el

turco. Autor de muchos best-sellers, Doyle ha sido galardonado con numerosos premios, tales como el BAFTA al mejor guion adaptado (1991), el prestigioso premio Booker Prize (1993), el Premio Royal Television Society (1995), el Premio de Irish Pen (2009) y el Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Award (2013).

Como escritor que nació y se crió dentro del ambiente de la clase trabajadora de Dublín, Doyle retrata las historias de su sociedad con un ojo crítico, tratando de reflejar, reinterpretar y criticar a la sociedad irlandesa. Según Donnelly (2000: 25), Doyle “usa su ficción para registrar y conmemorar aspectos de la Irlanda de su juventud”. La opinión de Donnelly es acertada, pero podemos ir más allá, al afirmar que su obra documenta el *zeitgeist* de Irlanda. El mejor sustantivo para definir su trabajo podría ser “versatilidad”. Tal y como se ha indicado con anterioridad, sus escritos no se limitan a un solo tema. Su ficción aborda, desde las vicisitudes que afectan a las familias de la clase trabajadora irlandesa y el problema de la violencia doméstica, hasta los acontecimientos prominentes de la historia de Irlanda, y la condición multicultural del país tras el Tigre Celta. Otro punto a menudo ignorado en los estudios críticos de la obra de Doyle—pero que vale la pena explorar—es el amplio espacio que dedica a las madres en sus escritos.

Este trabajo pretende abordar este aspecto, frecuentemente ignorado por la crítica, al embarcarse en un estudio profundo sobre el papel que ejercen las madres dentro de la producción literaria de Roddy Doyle. Los personajes que encarnan la figura de la madre en la obra de Doyle pueden dividirse en tres grupos según las siguientes características principales: aparecen como madres victimizadas, como madres no convencionales y como madres empoderadas, de acuerdo con el intento del escritor por reflejar los cambios sociales que tienen lugar en el país. En esta Tesis Doctoral he sugerido que las madres en la obra de Doyle se vuelven cada vez más

dominantes e independientes: en otras palabras, las madres sumisas y dependientes que protagonizan la ficción inicial de Doyle son gradualmente reemplazadas por personajes femeninos empoderados en su obra más reciente. Podría decirse que se refleja así la exaltación de Doyle de las mujeres de la clase obrera (y madres) que han sido marginadas por diversas restricciones sociales, religiosas y políticas durante décadas en Irlanda.

En este sentido, mi estudio explora los patrones socioculturales cambiantes en Irlanda a través del efecto que ejercen sobre la representación literaria de la maternidad en la obra de Doyle. Además, este estudio se centra también en cómo los roles de género han evolucionado y cambiado a lo largo del tiempo. Cosgrove (1996: 231) apunta la dificultad de interpretar los textos de Doyle, ya que este escritor no parece poseer una postura ideológica concreta. Este comentario resume el principal inconveniente de mi investigación, ya que Doyle raramente reconoce tener un punto de vista ideológico específico. Sin embargo, su escritura a menudo se alza en representación de las mujeres de la clase trabajadora de Irlanda, reflejando sus experiencias desde varios ángulos y abogando por un espacio narrativo en el que acomodar la independencia de las mujeres en general y de las madres en particular. Como subrayó Smyth (1997: 66), la escritura de Doyle “cristaliza con gran perspicacia y fuerza muchos de los temas y debates significativos de la cultura irlandesa contemporánea”. A pesar de que Smith hizo esta afirmación hace veinte años, sigue siendo una observación válida hoy en día, teniendo en cuenta los temas actuales que subyacen en su obra literaria.

La presente Tesis Doctoral comienza ofreciendo un estudio detallado sobre cuestiones de género, centrándose en las perspectivas aportadas por críticos psicoanalíticos de la talla de Freud (1986, 2001), Benvenuto y Kennedy (1986), Lacan (1988), Fuss (1989), Grosz (1990), Fink

(1995), y Nobus (2000), entre otros. Para analizar los personajes femeninos de Doyle me he inspirado en los dos elementos principales del psicoanálisis lacaniano: “la fase del espejo” (la toma de conciencia del niño/a de sí mismo/a como ser individual); y “el Nombre del Padre” (la separación del niño/a de su madre y la aceptación de las restricciones impuestas por las reglas sociales); así como en nociones psicoanalíticas freudianas como “el retorno de la represión” y “la pérdida de los vínculos con la realidad”. Sin embargo, al abordar el tema de la feminidad en general y de la maternidad en particular, encontré algunas limitaciones dentro de ese marco psicoanalítico, ya que las teorías freudianas y lacanianas parten de una perspectiva abiertamente masculina y androcéntrica. Por tanto, he complementado mi análisis con las perspectivas psicoanalíticas de numerosas críticas feministas y de género (i.e. Chodorow 1978; Kristeva 1980, 1985; Cixous 1981; Irigaray 1989; Flax 1990; Braidotti 1994a, 1994b, 2003; Stone 2014); autoras como estas complementan este estudio de la maternidad con perspectivas más transgresoras, en su definición de dicha experiencia en términos de fluidez e inestabilidad. Además, para una mejor comprensión de la representación de la maternidad en la obra de Doyle, era necesario centrarse en las concepciones tradicionales de la maternidad en el contexto irlandés, consolidadas durante siglos por la religión, el nacionalismo y el estado.

Como se ha examinado en este estudio, la cultura irlandesa moderna se ha construido sobre dos movimientos sociales diferentes, pero frecuentemente asociados: el catolicismo y el nacionalismo. La postura de la Iglesia Católica estaba a menudo en desacuerdo con la libertad social de las mujeres, ya que las enmarcaba dentro del hogar en sus papeles de esposas y madres. La mujer irlandesa ideal tenía como misión parecerse a la Virgen María, y como tal, se esperaba de ella que actuase como una madre devota y como sierva en el ámbito doméstico. Sobre la base del marco moral de la

Iglesia Católica, el movimiento nacionalista simplificó aún más a las mujeres para su causa política. Los nacionalistas reutilizaron y modificaron antiguas imágenes celtas de la feminidad, tales como *Caileach Bhéarra* (la Hag de Beara) y/o la Madre Irlanda, para adaptarlas a sus propósitos y difundir su mensaje. La visión nacionalista de este ideal femenino era la de una criatura frágil en peligro, una figura dependiente en la necesidad de ser rescatada por hombres poderosos que se dedicaran a la preservación de su pureza. Estos papeles fueron consolidados más adelante por la Constitución irlandesa de 1937.

Tras este repaso de las representaciones convencionales de la maternidad, el presente estudio ofrece una visión general de cómo han cambiado los roles de género en el panorama contemporáneo irlandés. En las últimas décadas del siglo XX, Irlanda ha experimentado diversos cambios sociales, políticos y económicos, entre los que se incluyen la entrada del país en la Unión Europea en 1973 y el fenómeno del Tigre Celta de finales de los años noventa. Estos cambios proporcionaron a las mujeres del país nuevos derechos sociales y legislativos. Con el levantamiento de la “prohibición de matrimonio”, por ejemplo, se les permitió trabajar después de casarse. El divorcio fue finalmente legalizado en 1997. Como consecuencia de todo ello, las mujeres irlandesas se han vuelto más independientes económicamente hablando y han aumentado el número de madres solteras. Sin embargo, tal y como reflejan críticos en la línea de O'Connor (1998), O'Hagan (2006) y Meaney (2010), la libertad sexual de las mujeres sigue siendo muy limitada, siendo el tema del aborto aún un asunto controvertido en la sociedad irlandesa. Además, la violencia doméstica y la discriminación de género constituyen todavía problemas de peso para muchas mujeres irlandesas en la actualidad. Al abordar la obra de Doyle hay que tener en consideración no solamente todos estos condicionamientos externos con respecto a los roles

femeninos; también resulta esencial tener en cuenta cómo las nociones convencionales de masculinidad e hipermasculinidad han sido objeto de cambio en Irlanda. Por consiguiente, me he apoyado al respecto en las opiniones ofrecidas por críticos como Connell (1987, 1995), Ferguson (2001), Kimmel y Aranson (2003). En general, uno de los puntos más interesantes de la escritura de Doyle es cómo refleja todos los cambios sociales anteriormente mencionados a través de las experiencias de sus personajes. En su trabajo más reciente, las madres aparecen más en el centro de sus narraciones y se considera que toman un mayor número de iniciativas, mientras que a los padres se les representa como personajes pasivos. En este sentido, la escritura de Doyle desafía las configuraciones convencionales de maternidad y paternidad mediante la transposición de los roles de género.

Sus primeras dos novelas, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* (1993) y *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1996), son analizadas en exhaustividad en el cuarto capítulo de este estudio. Estas novelas retratan a madres sumisas en un ambiente de clase trabajadora irlandesa. Aunque estas dos obras transcurren en diferentes intervalos de tiempo—la primera en los años sesenta y la segunda en los noventa—la violencia doméstica surge como un tema predominante en ambos casos. Mientras algunos estudios (i.e. Gordon 1996, Smyth 1997, Persson 2006, Morales Ladrón 2007) se han centrado en la posición inferior de la protagonista en *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, no existe hasta el momento ningún estudio sobre el problema del abuso conyugal en *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*. Por el contrario, la crítica literaria existente (i.e. Cosgrove 1996, McGlynn 1999, Donnelly 2000, White 2001, McCarthy 2003, Reynolds y Noakes 2004) sobre *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* ha analizado principalmente la voz narrativa de la novela. A lo largo del análisis de esta novela, mi intención ha sido examinar el silencio significativo de la figura materna como consecuencia del abuso físico y psicológico al que

está sometida, un aspecto que antes no había sido percibido o analizado en detenimiento. Para reflexionar sobre la posición victimizada de la madre en la familia Clarke, me he apoyado en críticas feministas como Adrienne Rich y Donna Haraway. La perspectiva de Cathy Caruth, todo un hito en la teoría del Trauma, también ha sido esencial para interpretar el comportamiento de las víctimas de violencia doméstica, tanto en *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* como en *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*. Este cuarto capítulo en su conjunto también analiza la postura personal de Doyle con respecto a la disfuncionalidad dentro de la familia irlandesa. En el caso de *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, Doyle muestra cómo la violencia doméstica ha sido un tema tabú en la Irlanda de los años sesenta. De manera similar, en la década de los 90 retratada en *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Doyle muestra que el abuso conyugal es un problema frecuente que se normaliza a través de la negligencia conspicua de la sociedad.

Mientras que el cuarto capítulo se centra en la victimización de las madres en *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* y *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, el quinto capítulo explora la presencia de lo que califico como madres 'no convencionales' en *The Commitments* (1987), *The Snapper* (1990), *The Van* (1991) y *The Last Roundup Trilogy* [*A Star Called Henry* (1999), *Oh, Play That Thing* (2004) y *Dead Republic* (2010)]. La primera novela considerada en el capítulo cinco, *The Commitments*, trata sobre un grupo de jóvenes que forman un grupo de música *soul* en una comunidad obrera de Dublín, pero que se desintegra al final. Hay varios estudios dedicados a esta novela: mientras algunos analizan el uso de la música en la novela (i.e. Anna 1991: 24; White 2001: 44), otros se centran en el tema de las diferencias de clase (Persson 2006: 63). Algunos trabajos mencionan el aspecto asertivo de los miembros femeninos de la banda (Reynold y Noakes 2004: 52) y la autonomía sexual de algunos personajes femeninos (Persson 2006: 63). Mi

estudio complementa dicha investigación mediante el análisis específico y pormenorizado de la relevancia de estos miembros femeninos de la banda. Como pretendo demostrar, estos personajes son dignos de explorar, ya que son mujeres poco convencionales. A pesar de que son retratados según el estereotipo patriarcal femenino de la *femme fatale*, estas mujeres desafían la masculinidad dominante de los hombres a su alrededor, ya que no se ajustan a las expectativas masculinas. En particular, he adoptado las perspectivas teóricas proporcionadas por R.W. Connell y James W. Messerschmidt (2005: 848), y Henry Ferguson (2001: 119) para mostrar cómo los conceptos de ‘masculinidad’ e ‘hipermasculinidad’ están estrechamente unidos a la percepción que las mujeres en la novela tienen de los hombres a su alrededor. Por último, también demuestro cómo dicho comportamiento no convencional de estos personajes femeninos se ve enfatizado por el lugar central que ocupan en la narración, en contraposición con su estatus marginal dentro de la sociedad.

La segunda novela tratada en el capítulo cinco es *The Snapper*. Dicho libro nos sumerge en la historia de Sharon Rabbitte, una chica de veinte años cuyo embarazo inesperado afecta profundamente a su familia y a su ambiente de clase obrera. Varios trabajos académicos (i.e. Smith 1997, White 2001, McCarthy 2003, Peach 2004b y McGlynn 2008) han analizado las cuestiones del embarazo, producto de una relación sexual aparentemente no consentida de la protagonista, y en su condición de madre soltera. En mi estudio, complemento esta crítica examinando el embarazo de Sharon desde distintos marcos teóricos. Para empezar, me baso en el marco psicoanalítico de Jacques Lacan—fundamentalmente en su concepto del ‘Nombre del Padre’—para contextualizar cómo Sharon se burla de la reacción de la sociedad con respecto a su embarazo. Por otra parte, los puntos de vista de Rosi Bradotti son útiles cuando se examina cómo la autoridad del padre de

Sharlon es minada en la novela. Del mismo modo, el relato social de Linda Connolly sobre el aborto en Irlanda y el estudio de Henry Ferguson sobre los cambios de roles de género en el país proporcionan una lectura multifacética de la novela. Tal y como pretendo demostrar, Doyle ofrece una visión positiva sobre la condición de Sharon como madre soltera, a pesar de la actitud negativa, e hipócrita, de la sociedad. Además, la determinación de Sharon de dar a luz a su hija no sólo ayuda a su padre a redescubrir su propia paternidad, sino que también abre un camino para la alteración de los roles de género dentro de la familia Rabbitte. Al desafiar las normas aceptadas con respecto a las relaciones de género, Doyle enfatiza que estas normas sociales pueden cambiar. Y lo que es más importante, indica que las convenciones sociales sobre la maternidad pueden evolucionar gradualmente a favor de la mujer.

El tercer libro analizado en el capítulo cinco, *The Van*, narra la historia del padre de Sharon, Jimmy Sr. Rabbitte, y su amigo Bimbo; ambos amigos montan una empresa para obtener ganancias pero terminan frustrados. Varios estudios examinan la novela en relación con las condiciones económicas de Irlanda a principios de los años 90 (i.e Lynch 1997: 265 y McCarthy 2003: 114; Persson 2005: 213). Estos estudios, sin embargo, no tienen en cuenta cómo cuestiones como la prosperidad económica y la movilidad social influyen en las relaciones de género de la familia Rabbitte. En consecuencia, para mi análisis de la novela, he tomado en consideración el concepto de masculinidad de Connell (1995) como una noción propensa al cambio, así como el enfoque de Ferguson (2001: 119), que subraya cómo cada período de tiempo en la historia crea diferentes ideales de masculinidad de acuerdo con el progreso económico y social. Bajo la perspectiva de estos marcos teóricos, argumento que Doyle presenta en *The Van* a madres subversivas, más decididas que sus maridos, no sólo en casa, sino también

fuera del hogar, en sus lugares de trabajo, haciendo hincapié en el estatus debilitado de los hombres. Mientras las madres en esta novela se vuelven más independientes y expanden sus horizontes a las esferas exteriores, los padres pierden su autoridad y terminan como figuras masculinas ineficaces.

El último análisis del capítulo cinco se centra en *The Last Roundup Trilogy* [*A Star Called Henry* (1999), *Oh, Play That Thing* (2004), *Dead Republic* (2010)]. Mi estudio analiza específicamente la novela *A Star Called Henry*, ya que ésta presenta personajes femeninos que clasifico en términos de estereotipos sumisos, míticos y heroicos. El libro nos cuenta la vida de Henry Smart, a través de sus aventuras durante el Levantamiento de Pascua de 1916. El relato de Henry ofrece una perspectiva subjetiva distorsionada sobre este acontecimiento crucial en la historia de Irlanda, tal y como han señalado varios críticos (Henry, 1999: 55; Dawson 2001: 170; Laners 2002: 248; Shortt 2009: 137). Con la excepción de dichos estudios, no hay ninguna otra investigación que se centre específicamente en las figuras femeninas en *The Last Roundup Trilogy*, las cuales, en mi opinión, son dignas de analizar. En cuanto a mis hallazgos, Doyle establece una fuerte dicotomía entre los estereotipos sumisos y míticos de la maternidad (estereotipos analizados en la sección 3.3. de esta Tesis Doctoral). Doyle se hace eco de la imagen convencional de ‘Mother Ireland’, al retratar a Melody, la madre de Henry Smart, quien pierde a sus hijos debido a las malas condiciones de vida. Melody aparece representada como una ama de casa que trata de proteger a sus hijos del hambre y la pobreza. Por otro lado, la abuela de Henry Granny Nash encarna un papel totalmente opuesto al de Melody, en el sentido de que no tiene ninguna connotación religiosa y no lamenta sus años perdidos de juventud y belleza. De hecho, Granny Nash podría ser considerada como una figura simbólica de la mitología céltica, la diosa pagana de la soberanía, *Caileach Bhéarra* (la Hag de Beara). Curiosamente, cumple con la imagen de

la versión pagana de la vieja bruja, en su fase anterior antes de ser distorsionada con fines nacionalistas. Granny Nash no tiene ninguna creencia religiosa y no se dedica a la maternidad. El último estereotipo—la madre heroica—aparece reflejado en el personaje de la maestra de la escuela primaria de Henry: su futura esposa Miss O'Shea. Con su determinación de salvar a su país, como las mujeres que lucharon por la independencia de Irlanda (es decir, los miembros de Cumann na mBan), Miss O'Shea aparece descrita como una madre luchadora y patriótica. Para estudiar este personaje, adopto el concepto de 'nomadismo' de Rosi Bradotti (1994b: 5), que subraya la idea de que los sujetos nómadas no encajan en sistemas de pensamiento y acciones socialmente prescritos. Miss O'Shea exhibe una personalidad inflexible que le permite cuidar a su hija y al mismo tiempo luchar por su país. Con todo, recordando que la interpretación de la historia es subjetiva y no fija, Doyle también defiende la posibilidad de representar diferentes estereotipos de maternidad, subrayando la idea de que dicha experiencia no debe ser entendida como un papel unívoco.

El análisis en el capítulo cinco de todas estas figuras femeninas no convencionales nos lleva al posterior análisis, en el capítulo seis, sobre la presencia de personajes claramente autónomos e independientes. La primera novela que se estudia en la Sección 6.1. es *Paula Spencer*, una obra que reintroduce a la protagonista de *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, esta vez describiéndola como una madre fuerte. Al titular al libro *Paula Spencer*, Doyle enfatiza el hecho de que esta protagonista finalmente ha superado el dolor de su propio pasado, cargado de experiencias traumáticas de abuso y violencia doméstica. Varios críticos (Ferguson 2006: 24; Hall 2008: 197; Praga Terente 2008: 313; Jeffers 2011: 264-265) se centran en la perspectiva de Paula sobre el fenómeno social y económico que rodea su nueva vida durante el período del Tigre Celta. Mi análisis aporta otra dimensión a estos

estudios, para lo cual he adoptado las reflexiones de Ronit Lentin sobre el concepto freudiano de “el regreso de la represión”, que ella llama “represión nacional” (2002: 243). Tal y como afirmo, la “represión nacional” surge en forma de temor, cuando Paula se percató que puede perder su trabajo ante la llegada de numerosos inmigrantes a Irlanda. Aparte de su condición como mujer trabajadora, en empleos mal remunerados, Paula se enfrenta a sí misma en su rol como madre, percatándose de las muchas deficiencias que ha tenido en su relación con sus hijos. En este punto, me refiero a las obras de Chodorow (1978) y Cixous (1981) para analizar la falta de identificación existente entre Paula y su hija menor Leanne. También examino la recuperación psicológica de Paula, la cual se manifiesta como resultado de haber visto a su hija mayor Nicola actuar como madre. Es posible afirmar que Doyle nos presenta a una nueva Paula Spencer, como una mujer que ya no es víctima de la violencia doméstica; sino una mujer obrera independiente que acepta los desafíos de la vida tal y como surgen, tanto en términos económicos como sociales. Con su nuevo yo empoderado, Paula es capaz de abrir nuevas puertas a un futuro más esperanzador para ella.

En la sección 6.2. se analiza el único cuento de terror de Roddy Doyle, “The Pram”, que muestra el fenómeno del Tigre Celta desde la perspectiva de una inmigrante polaca que trabaja como niñera para una familia irlandesa de clase alta. Exceptuando a Spillane (2008) y Ferguson (2009), este relato es a menudo ignorado por los críticos. La originalidad de mi análisis deriva del hecho de que aborda temas como la maternidad y la madre Irlanda, a la vez que proporciona un análisis en profundidad de la posición marginalizada de la protagonista (Alina). Mi análisis emplea un marco psicoanalítico freudiano (1958). Asimismo, me baso en las teorías de Daniel Berthold-Born (1995) sobre la conexión entre la pérdida de memoria y la locura para examinar cómo Alina muestra signos de olvido y pierde la

razón como consecuencia del racismo que sufre. Sin embargo, lo que convierte a Alina en una mujer empoderada es su articulación de una historia mítica de su patria polaca. Así, la historia también muestra paralelismos entre la figura mítica polaca de Boginka y la figura celta de Hag de Beara. En este punto, la posición crítica de estudiosas literarias feministas como Sandra M. Gilbert y Susan Gubar (2000) y de eruditas irlandesas contemporáneas como Gerardine Meaney (2010) me han proporcionado una lectura alternativa de la posición marginada de la madre inmigrante en la Irlanda multicultural.

La tercera sección del capítulo seis examina la maternidad en los libros de ficción infantil de Doyle. Aparte de algunas reseñas de periódicos y comentarios de libros, no hay estudios críticos sobre *Wilderness* (2007), *A Greyhound of a Girl* (2011) y *Her Mother's Face* (2008). Considero relevante, por tanto, señalar que mi investigación ofrece el primer estudio académico de los personajes femeninos en estas historias. *Wilderness* trata sobre la familia Griffin y las varias crisis que sus miembros necesitan superar para alcanzar una mayor madurez personal. El título del libro se puede interpretar como una muestra de las situaciones problemáticas a las que tiene que hacer frente cada miembro de la familia. Mi estudio parte del marco teórico de Michelle Superle (2012), que estudia la ficción infantil, así como el de la psicoanalista Melanie Klein (1986) o el de las críticas feministas Sandra Gilbert y Susan Gubar (2000). Uno de los puntos clave en *Wilderness* es el reemplazo de la madre biológica por la madrastra. La madre biológica aparece representada como una mujer independiente, dispuesta a abandonar a su familia para mantener su propia integridad. La madrastra, por el contrario, se describe como una madre bastante afectuosa, proporcionando amor desinteresado a los que la rodean. Doyle, por tanto, desafía estereotipos sobre la maternidad, prevalentes en textos patriarcales (como los cuentos de hadas), en los que aparecen con bastante asiduidad madrastras perversas y madres

biológicas sumisas. Además, la figura paterna en la historia de Doyle cuestiona su paternidad. Al final de la historia cada personaje logra empatizar con el otro y alcanzar un punto de equilibrio en el ámbito familiar.

Los otros dos libros estudiados en la sección 6.3.—*A Greyhound of a Girl* (2011) y *Her Mother's Face* (2008)—están estrechamente relacionados entre sí en lo se refiere a la relación madre-hija y a la representación del padre como figura ausente o ineficaz.. Doyle emplea varios símbolos para reflejar el estrecho vínculo madre-hija: el río, la pluma y el espejo. *A Greyhound of a Girl* representa de forma perspicaz el estrecho lazo entre las mujeres de cuatro generaciones; *Her Mother's Face* nos adentra en los esfuerzos de una niña para recordar la cara de su madre ausente. *A Greyhound of a Girl* es analizada desde el enfoque de Julia Kristeva (1980) y Alison Stone (2014) acerca de la relación madre-hija como un proceso circular. A diferencia de Freud, que afirma que la madre y las hijas son rivales, el texto de Doyle representa la relación madre-hija como un componente necesario del desarrollo psicológico de la hija. Del mismo modo, Doyle subraya el carácter indispensable de dicho vínculo en *Her Mother's Face*. A la luz de los marcos teóricos planteados por Luce Irigaray (1989) y Adrienne Rich (1995), analizo la necesidad de la protagonista de recordar los rasgos físicos de su madre para superar así la ausencia de dicha figura materna en su vida. Además, considero cómo “la fase de espejo” lacaniana es subvertida en la historia. Lacan interpreta “la fase de espejo” como una etapa en la que el niño se ve a sí mismo como una entidad independiente, separándose de su madre a medida que entra en el dominio paternal. Sin embargo, la joven protagonista de Doyle, Siobhán, se mira al espejo y encuentra la imagen de su madre a medida que crece y se convierte en mujer. Como en *A Greyhound of a Girl*, Doyle subraya la genealogía de los personajes femeninos en la historia, haciendo hincapié en el poderoso vínculo

que une a madres e hijas. Teniendo en cuenta la afirmación de Ostriker (1983: 4-5) de que el tema de las madres e hijas tiende a aparecer en la escritura femenina (o en la escritura de las mujeres), estos dos libros de Roddy Doyle transgreden las expectativas de género.

Tal y como este estudio demuestra, las figuras maternas en la obra literaria de Doyle se vuelven cada más poderosas e independientes conforme avanzamos cronológicamente en su producción literaria. Dicho análisis nos permite a su vez cuestionar la posición de los hombres en general y de los padres en particular, especialmente en las obras de ficción más recientes de Doyle. En *Bullfighting* (2011), *Two Pints* (2012), *The Guts* (2013), y *Two More Pints* (2014), a modo de ejemplo, Doyle refleja la realidad de personajes masculinos que están privados de poder, castrados por el envejecimiento, la enfermedad, la falta de amor o la parálisis de la vida cotidiana. La manera en que los varones son retratados en estas novelas pone de relieve el problema de la masculinidad y la paternidad en la Irlanda contemporánea, lo que puede servir como punto de partida para una investigación futura. De hecho, en uno de mis artículos recientes (Tekin 2017) abordé el dilema experimentado por los personajes masculinos en *Bullfighting* y *Two Pints*.

La presente investigación representa, por tanto, un intento original de examinar el concepto de maternidad en la obra de Roddy Doyle, considerando el vasto espacio literario que el autor dedica a las mujeres, en particular a las madres, y su ferviente intento de representarlas como heroínas de la clase trabajadora. A pesar de su negativa a verse a sí mismo como portavoz de un sector particular de la sociedad irlandesa (entrevista con Tekin 2014: 112) y la dificultad que algunos críticos (Cosgrove 1996: 231) han encontrado para definir su postura ideológica, es incuestionable que la obra de Doyle ofrece una representación, amplia y variada, de diferentes

tipos de mujeres, desafiando visiones simplistas de la feminidad y dando voz a la realidad de la clase obrera.