"FINE OLD COUNTRY, RECENTLY PARTIONED, IN NEED OF MINOR POLITICAL REPAIR. PRICED FOR QUICK SALE": AN EXAMINATION OF THE YEAR 1969 AS A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN IRISH HISTORY THROUGH WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY IRISH FICTION

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The fiction of Ireland after 1969 represents an eclectic mix of themes and ideas that Irish writers from both the Republic and Northern Ireland are struggling to understand. Though the year 1969 is a historical date out of many historical dates, it gives literary critics a view into postmodern Irish fiction. The characters in these works struggle with what it means to be Irish, either an Irish Protestant or an Irish Catholic. Paradoxical promises of 1969, war and peace, unification and fraction, offer readers a context within which to understand contemporary Irish fiction. Whether Northern Irish or the Republic, important works show dissatisfaction with violence and contemporary politics, as well as a novel sense of history.

A common thread among the writers surveyed is a fractured sense of identity. They transcend geographical boundaries, using instead temporal ones. Both
Northern Irish and Republic writers are united in many ways. They share common ideas such as identity, British/American influence on culture, and a second-class political status. These ideas are prevalent throughout their work. What connects them are the Troubles, yet at the same time it also separates them. At the core of their works are how the violence has changed how the Republic and Northern Ireland are perceived not only by the rest of world, but also by themselves. Even for those who do not explicitly mention it, the argument can be made that their works show the anxiety and dread that is prevalent in Irish life, both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland.

What separates postmodern Irish literature from other postmodern literature is 1969. It is the pivotal moment in Irish literature. As scholars we can view the shift in how Irish literature revolves around 1969 when violence became part of the national identity. We can also see how with the violence also came a desire for peace. The works surveyed reflect the disembodied culture of the country, a paradox of peace and violence. The novels have a sense of hope that life in Ireland can change, once national identity and violence separates itself. There is acknowledgment that both the Republic and Northern Ireland is in a state of hiatus, neither moving forward nor remaining in the past.
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Although violence in Northern Ireland has existed for most of the 20th century, in 1969 a major paradigm shift occurred, in that a peaceful civil rights issue became a violent religious and political conflict known as the Troubles. Though a tentative peace resolution was passed in 1997 with the Good Friday Agreement, tension still exists. Sporadic violence still occurs and there are occasional threats of withdrawal from the agreement. As a result, contemporary Irish citizens have had to confront the issue of violence and adapt to the onslaught of terror and apprehension, and this specific confrontation is registered in the literature. Although violence is endemic to 20th century Irish culture the representation of violence, or the impact of that violence shifts as the century wears on, especially post 1969.

The best way to view contemporary Irish literature is through a post-modern paradigm: not through a conventional post-structuralist paradigm, but after and beyond modernism. The post-modern movement can perhaps best be seen in contemporary Irish writers' focus on identity. Irish identity in the 21st century is important to contemporary Irish literature. In the early 20th century writers such as James Joyce struggled with what it meant to be Irish at the same time contemporaries such as J.M. Synge and W.B. Yeats attempted to create an identity based on the mythic Irish warrior of a past that predated the British occupation of Ireland. The Celtic Renaissance of the late 19th and early 20th centuries occurred around the time that modern Ireland was experiencing its first uprising by farmers. For many modern Anglo-Irish writers, a connection had to be made in order for them to understand why the Irish desired to be free of British rule. It was easy to look back to a barbaric
warrior past to justify political uprising as well as to decide whether or not an Irish identity was a positive identity to have (Kiberd 196). Violence for many modern writers was justified, even romanticized.

There is a definite shift in the justification or lack thereof, of violence in Irish literature, and that shift is registered in the difference between modern and post-1969 conceptions of Irish identity. Modernist writers wanted to articulate a historical Irish identity forged through revolution represented by violence. In contrast, postmodern writers want to escape an Irish identity predicated on violence, so that the writers can show the reader how violence is universal and not particularly Irish. Through this universality, postmodern Irish writers desire to move past a history typified by violent conflict.

After 1969, writers attempt to decipher on their own what it means to be Irish. They refuse to write about the past, imagined or otherwise, in order to understand the Troubles. If they do go back in history, they do so satirically, to suggest that violence is part of human nature, and is not indicative of Ireland, the North or the Republic. For example, in Eureka Street, a bomb explodes in a busy section of Belfast. Unlike the Easter Rebellion of 1916 took place where the instigators declared their intent with written documents and fanfare, the bombers in the novel do no such thing. They simply detonate the bomb without regard for human life or to explain their cause. The author offers the reader this explanation:

the men who planted the bomb knew it wasn't their fault. It was the fault of their enemies, the oppressors who would not do what they wanted them to do. They had reasonably asked to have their own way.
They had not succeeded. They had then threatened to do violent things if they did not get their way. When this had not succeeded, they were forced to proceed with reluctance to do these violent things. (Wilson 228)

Although it seems as if this explanation gestures towards a possible revolutionary rhetoric, all that the reader notices is how empty and general the statement really is. The literature written by post 1969 Irish writers shows how violence is part of Irish life as it is a part of modern society everywhere. The anonymity of the violence, the fact that the reader does not know which group set off the bomb, as well as the lack of personal responsibility felt by the bombers, could be represented anywhere in modern day society. Despite the ubiquity of this violence, post 1969 literature desires to overcome this endemic violence in order to create new post national identities.

The year 1969, as previously mentioned, is a pivotal moment in both the history and the literature of Ireland in that the literature attempts to embrace the present day construction of the country while creating a new national identity that is separate from the national identities of the past. Unlike many Modernists' works, post 1969 novels problematize Irish nationalism and national identity. For example, Eoin McNamee in Resurrection Man describes Belfast as being on the verge of a post-national identity. While the novel is set in Ireland, there is no real Irish identity articulated throughout the setting: "By day the city seemed ancient and ambiguous. Its power was dissipated by exposure to daylight. It looked derelict and colonial. There was a sense of curfew, produce rotting in the market place. At night, it described itself by its lights, defining streets like a code of destination" (6). In
comparison, Joyce also shows a city in the beginnings of a post nationalist identity. The Wandering Rocks chapter of *Ulysses* shows the citizens of Dublin going about their daily lives. "Stephen Dedalus watched through the webbed window the lapidary's fingers prove a timedulled chain. Dust webbed the window and the showtrays. Dust darkened the toiling fingers with their vulture nails. Dust slept on dull coils of bronze and silver, lozenges of cinnabar, on rubies, leprous and winedark stones." (198). For all intents and purposes, Joyce's city and McNamee's city could be one and the same. Instead of creating a national identity based on an oppressive colonial past, post 1969 writers strive to move beyond to create a post national identity that has elements of the past, but concentrates on the future.

Many Irish novelists have examined how violence has contributed to the construction of Irish society and the expansion of community beyond family and society, and unlike Joyce who also represents a hybrid Irish identity, these authors have consciously worked to create a (post) national identity that is dissociated from the violent past celebrated by the Celtic Renaissance. Six authors in particular, Emma Donoghue, Roddy Doyle, Patrick McCabe, Bernard MacLaverty, Eoin McNamee, and Robert McLiam Wilson, show how Irish writing after 1969 differentiates itself from previous Irish literature. Although not all of the works mention the Troubles and the historical background post 1969, their complex relation to the depiction and relation of violence in Irish identity show the readers that 1969 was a defining moment in Irish literature.
I. **The Modernist Heroes- Where Are They Now?**

*I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere in the clouds above;
Those that I fight I do not hate,
Those that I guard I do not love*

W.B. Yeats, "An Irish Airman Foresees His Fate"

One way to differentiate between modernist and postmodernist Irish literature is through an analysis of their different representation of a hero. The Irish hero of the modernist era is male, individualistic, noble, sacrificing himself for a greater good, and looking back on a supposedly glorious past before the British invaded and conquered Ireland. The model for this hero was Cuchulain, a half man, half god Irish warrior noted for his deeds in battle as described in the *Táin Bó Cúalnge*. The Anglo-Irish of the Celtic Renaissance resurrected this hero as a way to merge their contemporary articulations of Irish identity with the Celtic Past. Even Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's Irish anti-hero, contains elements of this hero archetype. At the end of *Ulysses* the Ithaca chapter sums up Stephen's life, and predicts how he will proceed: "Once by inadvertence twice by design he challenges his destiny. It comes when he is abandoned and challenges him reluctant and, as an apparition of hope and youth, holds him unresisting. It leads him to a strange habitation, to a secret infidel apartment and there, implacable, immolates him, consenting" (567). The battles that Stephen fights are ironic and satiric, but Joyce represents Stephen's plight as a battle nonetheless and one that takes place against both Celtic myth (represented by Haines and Mulligan) and Greek drama (Bloom). Though somewhat deflated and definitely not half god, Stephen is still a questing figure concerned with his identity. As with
Cuchulain and to a lesser extent Telemachus, there is never rest for Stephen or any other modernist hero. There is always another battle that he will have to fight in order to claim status and identity.

The modernist hero attempted to create a new construction of Ireland that was uniquely Irish. However, this construction rarely included a present, but it did create a past. The so-called hero of modernist Ireland was forged in rebellion, for example the Easter Rebellion of 1916, and this rebelliousness was seen as a continuation of a heroic battle for the independent Irish spirit. As a result, the modernist hero, and the modern Irish identity that was to be created via this mythic fighting past, was seen as "a terrible beauty" born out of violence. Protagonists, even so-called deflated ones of Joyce, are heroes in both a heroic and as a protagonist sense.

After 1969 however, there are no "heroes" in the literature in the guise of a protagonist. These protagonists do battle, yet their battle is not toward a "terrible beauty". The characters in the novels are fighting not for the country in a mythical epic battle, but for themselves or for their immediate family. Those who partake in the violence are either disgusted with what the violence has done to the country, such as Cal in Bernard MacLaverty's Cal, or they themselves are overtly represented as monsters with no conscience, such as Victory Kelly in Eoin McNamee's Resurrection Man. The new archetype of the Irish hero is often working class or lower class; an aspect not mentioned in Modernist text and the sense of community that they belong to is more fluid. For some writers, Protestants and Catholics interact with one another and the family structure extends beyond the typical nuclear family. Women,
though still in the background for the most part, can also be protagonists, for example Pen in Emma Donoghue's *Hood.* All of this demonstrates how far the mythic male hero of modernist imaginings has been superceded and a new non-mythic protagonist has emerged in the novels written post 1969.

Post 1969 novels show how the hero/protagonist has progressed from epic hero to the mundane person (even more so than Joyce's everyman Bloom), as well as how the violence in Ireland is now more realistic than mythic. For many people, the Troubles are not the glorious war that Yeats and others viewed the conflict between the warring factions to be. This shift is perhaps a reflection of political realities that have changed throughout the century. For example the IRA takes a realistic view of their struggle with the British. In the *Green Book,* an IRA training manual written in the 1970s, volunteers are told that they "are expected to wage a military war of liberation against a numerically superior force [...] When volunteers are trained in the use of arms, they must fully understand that guns are dangerous, and their main purpose is to take human life, in other words to kill people and volunteers are trained to kill people" (qtd. in Coogan 209). Paramilitary organizations aside, they often do not speak for the families of the people that they have killed. There is a shift in tone and in perception in those who do not participate in the violence. For those who have lost loved ones to the Troubles, the focus is noticeably centered on the senseless deaths rather than any supposed victory over British oppressors.

Due to the current political situation in Ireland, death is an important theme in the literature. Death is an inevitable result in the novels that deal with the Troubles.
Unlike representations of modernist martyrs (such as Joyce's elegiac representations of Parnell), these deaths are often senseless, with no real purpose. For example, the protagonist in *Resurrection Man* believes himself to be above the law and society. When Victor Kelly is shot down by mysterious men, the gangster persona that he believes himself to have when he terrorized and killed Catholics is taken from him, leaving him with a violent death similar to the ones he has given many others.

Victor sees himself not as an Irish patriot, but as a gangster based on American movies. His identity is not linked to an Irish identity but to a general culture and glorification of violence that is prevalent in Western society. In this way, he becomes a simulacrum, not an authentic representation of an essential identity.

In the contemporary Irish novel there are many factors that distinguish the postmodern hero from the modernist one. One is the complete lack of interest of the authors concerning Irish affairs. For example, there is no glorification of the Irish language that was prominent in modernist society. During a dinner conservation in Robert McLiam Wilson's *Eureka Street* a character named Chuckie Lurgan finds out that his name has nationalistic connections:
To his amazement he heard her say his name 'Chuckie Lurgan' she said 'Chuckie Lurgan'. Then, satisfied, replete, she walked away.
'Did that girl just say my name?' he asked Jake. They all laughed.
'No, she said...' Jake said something that sounded like Chuckie Ar La. 'What?'
'It's Irish for 'our day will come'. It's a nationalist rallying cry'.
'Chuckie Ar La?'
'Yeah Tiocfaidh ar La. It's the slogan of the Just Us Party.'
'We never told you, Chuckie, but that's the funny thing about your name, what with you being a Protestant and all.'
'Your name sounds like a supremacist republican slogan.'
'Yeah, it's like a Jewish guy being called Deutschland über Alles' 'It's a laugh.' (Wilson 150-151)

The scene is important in that it shows that language, instead of being a unifying factor, becomes a contradictory historical anachronism. Because the Republicanist and the Unionist factions both speak the same language (English), Gaelic is seen as part of the historical background of the country.

This ironic reference to Troubles that are no longer meaningful is part of a general devaluation of the conflict in post 1969 literature. For example, neither Doyle's The Barrytown Trilogy nor Donoghue's Hood mentions the Troubles. Even more significantly, the novels that are set in Northern Ireland do not celebrate the violence. What all the novels do show are fractured identities with characters trying to find cohesion and coherence in a so-called troubled and divided society. This is because since 1969 the idea of a pure ideology behind the conflict has not existed. Authors of post 1969 novels often represent the lack of coherence. For example, the protagonist in MacLaverty's Cal clearly does not believe in the political dogma spouted by Republicans Crilly and Skeffington:
'The problem with this kind of thing is that people get hurt'
Skeffington leaned forward. 'But compared with conventional war the numbers are small. I know that sounds callous but it's true. In Cyprus the dead hardly ran to three figures. That's cheap for freedom.'
'I have no stomach for it.' said Cal. His voice was tired.
'Do you think any of us have?' Skeffington stared at him. 'Anybody who enjoyed this kind of thing would have to be sick. But it has to be done—by somebody. Because we have committed ourselves Cahal, it is our responsibility. We have to make the sacrifices. You just can't turn away and say you have no stomach for it'. (MacLaverty 23)

Unlike the Modernist revolutionaries who had a clear purpose to what they did,
Skeffington and Crilly only commit violence based on abstract notions of what freedom should be, and who should be responsible for establishing that freedom. The two spout rhetoric without knowing the purpose behind it.

Although the Modernist hero would partake in violence in order to further a cause, the post 1969 hero does not. Cal partakes in the violence sparingly in order to create an identity that separates him from others in his neighborhood. The novel rejects the modernist idea of a hero by having Cal only experience happiness and fulfillment in peace. His identity as a hero is formed away from the violence. Cal assumes a rebel identity as a means to break free of his life that falls into two extremes: boredom and unemployment or abject terror. He is constantly seeking to find a middle ground in his life that is not possible. Protestants firebomb his apartment and on the other side Crilly and Skeffington murder people in cold blood. This is why he seeks a new identity and a new life at Marcella Morton's farm, though it seems he is doing so in order to gain absolution (Brienzo 74-5). Though he
ultimately fails, Cal attempts to find a new identity outside of Irish identity politics that are predicated on violence.

While critics rarely read Cal's action in terms of identity politics, they tend to see Cal as attempting to alleviate his sense of guilt by working for the family whose patriarch he has helped murder, it can also be argued that he desires a life that for now does not exist: peace and stability. Throughout his life, the Protestant community does not accept him. He has no employment prospects other than at a slaughterhouse. With Marcella, he has a surrogate home with a wife and child, and he attempts to have a life outside of the violence. "He got a sense of a new life, a new start now that he had officially moved into the cottage. He would discipline himself. He felt a surge of his own power to direct his life into whatever path he wanted" (MacLaverty 106). Though he realizes that this peaceful existence will not last forever, for a brief moment he does have happiness. It is also important to note that he is not punished at the end of the novel for murdering Robert Morton. He is at the wrong place at the wrong time, and is implicated in a crime that he did not commit. And he does find absolution by informing on Crilly and Skeffington, though it comes too late.

While the post 1969 heroes do not have strong political views that have been defined by the Troubles, they do have a strong sense of purpose in their lives. Jake Jackson of Wilson's Eureka Street lives in Belfast during a highly sensitive atmosphere politically. He is surrounded on both sides by conflicting ideologies concerning what Ireland should become. One particular ideology is represented by Aoirghe Jenkins, a staunch Republican who desires a united Ireland. During a
blind date she angrily tells Jake her views about Northern Ireland. Jake's response to her diatribe is, "She gave us the full whack the entire job. The international perspective, the moral imperative and the historical basis for why it was OK for the people she liked to kill the people she didn't like. I'd had many such evenings, many such listernerships, being Irish, I could hardly have failed to-but it had never been so hard to take, it had never been so ugly" (Wilson 98). On the other side, there are Loyalists who believe that Northern Ireland should continue being a part of the United Kingdom. At a local bar with Loyalists he listens to how they feel about Catholics:

They talked the talk of Protestant fear and conspiracy. Catholics were moving in everywhere, including across the table from them if they but knew. The Fair Employment Commission was putting them in the workplace. They were then getting enough money to buy property in the good Protestant areas where the houses had no shit on the walls. The RUC weren't allowed to shoot them any more and if any good Protestant took a couple of the dirty bastards out, he was appallingly sent to prison as though he'd committed a crime. Bar the tits and the university education, these guys reminded me of Aoirghe. (Wilson 163)

Because Jake is a Catholic, it is assumed by others that he shares Aoirghe's views concerning the situation of Ireland. The opposite is true. Jake is appalled by the fanaticism of Republicans and Loyalists concerning Northern Ireland. Like many of the people in Belfast, Jake desires stability. His friends all desire this same sense of stability, though they pursue it in various ways. For example, Chuckie recreates himself from an unemployed nobody to a wealthy somebody. Through these novels we see how the hero has been transformed in the postmodernist era from a mythic
hero to an everyday person, struggling to carve out a niche for himself or herself in his/her communities. The violence and hardships of society are a part of their lives that they have to deal with, which is more important than an abstract battle for freedom and independence.

This post 1969 hero archetype is present in several novels. Roddy Doyle's *The Barrytown Trilogy* contains several different types of heroes who develop throughout the novels. In *The Commitments* Jimmy Jr. attempts to create a working class soul band in Dublin. He also attempts to bring people together through music, bringing the large world (America and England) to Barrytown (Smyth 70). The Dublin soul band does not last long, but it does allow Jimmy Jr. to show that he is capable of becoming a hero that can restructure Irish identity, although it is a romanticized version of the identity produced via a Dublin folk/country band. As he tells the new group at the end of the novel called The Brassers "You've got to remember tha' half of the country is fuckin' farmers. This is the type o' stuff they all listen to. Only they listen to it at the wrong speed" (Doyle 139). Post 1969 novels attempt to come up to speed by representing various and shifting Irish identities. Instead of Cuchulain, we get instead a band manager who tries to change Irish identity through music.

We see a different sort of hero with Jimmy Sr in *The Van*. Though both he and Jimmy Jr. are unemployed, the difference between youth and adulthood is vast. *The Commitments* shows a youthful hopefulness; when the Commitments break up another band comes together at the end of the novel. Jimmy Sr is unemployed
because his employers want someone younger. He does not seem to have much hope, and gradually his unemployment becomes part of his life: "You got used to it. In fact, it wasn't too bad. You just had to fill your day, and that wasn't that hard really"

(Doyle The Van 408). Jimmy Sr has a possible future with a chip truck. After disastrous results, he loses his job and his friendship with his best friend and employer, Bimbo. As with Stephen, Jimmy Sr has come to a crossroads of sorts, and although he does not lose his battle, he does not really win it either. Post 1969 novels often fixate on "Troubles" as opposed to the Troubles, and The Van with its focus on hopeless economics is a good example of this.

Some critics view The Van as being a bleak novel. Jimmy Sr feels emasculated by his failure to provide for his family. There is a definite shift in emotion and feeling from The Snapper to The Van. There is excitement in The Snapper or The Commitments that is not present in The Van but we do not have to agree with one scholar who believes that this book is ultimately Doyle's bleakest. There is no room for hope and no reason to expect that things will change for Jimmy Sr. Unlike Paddy Clarke the hero of Doyle's other drearily ending novel, Jimmy is not young and he lacks youth's adaptability [...] Jimmy does have the support of his wife, but as we have seen, this support is not enough to give his life a sense of purpose. (White 96-7)

Though his life is a series of misfortunes, we can see Jimmy Sr as persevering through all of his misfortunes and becoming stronger through it all. He works at the chip van rather than staying on the dole. He helps Bimbo through the initial depression of his unemployment and convinces him not to take a job at McDonalds.
"A man like Bimbo would never recover from having to stand at a counter, wearing a uniform that didn't fit him and serving drunk cunts and snot-nosed kids burgers and chips. They weren't even proper chips" (Doyle The Van 436). He stands up for himself after Bimbo demotes him to an employee instead of a partner. These are not signs of someone who is "defenseless" (White 97). Instead the reader should see that what happens to Jimmy Sr is part of his purpose in life, which implies a defining feature of the post 1969 hero, to take an existing identity and adapt according to change.

In many ways the novels of post 1969 with their non-heroic heroes seek a balance between extremes, between the Ireland of the past and the Ireland of the present. The literature shows people attempting to create a sense of normalcy in a chaotic social structure in order to gain control of their lives. That could be true of most postmodern novels, but in Irish postmodern novels that need is essential. The novels work to create hybrid identities, but the identities presented blur the distinction between Catholic and Protestant, giving the characters non-partisan identities. The country itself has a chaotic social structure, both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. The historical animosity between Catholic and Protestant gives them more in common with each other than what they believe to have with the European community. They are struggling to create a new sense of Irishness that can account for and move past former Troubles.
II. "Fine Old Country, Recently Partitioned": Issues of Irishness and Community after 1969

"...And in the end, after generations and generations of the thousands and hundreds of thousands, the city itself begins to absorb narrative like a sponge, like paper absorbs ink. The past and the present is written there. The citizenry cannot fail to write there. Their testimony is involuntary and complete". Robert McLiam Wilson

Eureka Street

In looking at the contemporary fiction of both Northern Ireland and the Republic, a number of generalizations appear. The obvious one is that the novels written about Northern Ireland mention the violence associated with the Troubles, while those written about the Republic present the country as peaceful, almost idyllic, and more progressive than Northern Ireland. Yet geography does not completely divide the texts: all of the novels surveyed take place within urban areas. In many ways the political partitioning of Ireland has not partitioned the literature. Both the North and the Republic focus on urban areas and contemporary concerns to help create a post-national imagined community.

For many writers, Dublin is an important figure in Irish literature. It is impossible to mention Dublin without mentioning Joyce. He was the first to bring the importance of the city in literature into the 20th century, writing about what the city is rather than what it should represent (Kenner 17). That Hood and The Barrytown Trilogy contain Catholic Dubliners as protagonists speaks volumes as to how far postmodern Irish fiction has come. The protagonists in the novels do not feel stymied by their religion or their Irish identity. By focusing on Belfast as well as Dublin, they work to create a new postmodern Irish community.
The images often associated with Ireland are lush green hills where people with red hair live in thatched huts eating potatoes and imbibing alcoholic beverages in pubs. This bucolic image is particularly a result of the success of the Romanticized Celtic Renaissance, and like Joyce, contemporary writers work to move past the stereotype. One primary way that writers have done this is by following Joyce and focusing on urban reality. Setting novels in urban areas is important because it creates for non-Irish people a sense of what it means to be Irish within a set community. Often the images non-Irish people associate with Ireland go against what post 1969 Irish authors are attempting to do in their work. As Benedict Anderson notes in *Imagined Communities* the literature of an area is essential in creating not only how others perceive the community, but also how people within the community perceive themselves (46).

Issues of Irish identity are often linked to representations of the country in post 1969 fiction. As Wilson dryly points out: "Like that of most citizens of Belfast, my identity is the subject of some local dispute. Some say I'm British, some say I'm Irish, some even say that there's no way I'm five foot eleven and that I'm five foot ten at best. In many ways I'm not permitted to contribute to this debate. If the controversy is ever satisfactorily concluded, I will be whatever the majority of people tell me I am" (Wilson "Sticks and Stones" 1). For many writers, who they are and particularly who they are perceived to be in a particular region is very important in their writing. As a result, all of the novels that deal with the city also deal with what it means to be Irish in a post-national society.
Belfast and Dublin are often used as setting in the Irish novels surveyed because they are the centers of the communities of Northern Ireland and the Republic. Different authors view the cities differently. McNamee shows Belfast in a state of decay and fraught with violence, while Wilson shows the same city as progressing; though violence still exists there it is nowhere as prevalent as it is in McNamee’s novel. At times, novelistic representations of the city are based on how the characters themselves view it. Doyle and Donoghue both write about Dublin, but the difference between the two lies in the class of each protagonist who lives in the city. Doyle deals with the working class while Donoghue’s characters are middle-class, which creates a different portrayal of Dublin in each work.

In *Hood* we see how an outsider views Dublin through her own subjectivity. Donoghue’s protagonist is aptly named Penelope, which implies that she is waiting for something or someone, possibly for acceptance from both the heterosexual and the lesbian community in Dublin. There are obvious references to both the Homeric Penelope and Joyce's Molly Bloom, but unlike Molly, Pen is able to move outside of the bedroom and into the Irish community. While she is waiting, she also observes how others live their own lives, for example how her lover Cara and Cara's father live. Dublin provides Pen anonymity in that she teaches at a Catholic school while her lover is active in lesbian/feminist politics. After Cara’s death, Pen ponders how society, particularly Irish Catholic society makes her invisible. She is not allowed to publicly mourn Cara, as evident by a conversation with Jo, another lesbian who is out.
‘Oh and by the way, are you, were you out to her family?’
I leaned my temple against the cool mirror and examined the little red tracks across my eyeballs. ‘Not in so many words. I mean, some of us have homes and jobs we could lose, you know, we can’t all just up and...’
‘Don’t get your knickers in a twist’ said Jo. ‘I was just wondering should we go easy on the T-shirts.’
‘Which T-shirts?’
‘Well, Mairéad’s latest full time garment says, “Fit for a Clit”, I thought I should warn you.’
‘Oh god no, make her wear a plain black one.’ (48)

Though Jo and other lesbians feel free to express themselves and their sexuality in Dublin, Pen does not. Her sense of community is not as strong as others and as a result Pen hides herself within the Wall household. Though both are lesbians, only Jo is allowed to express her identity, while Pen is forced to keep her identity suppressed. What this also shows is how the city as a sense of community varies according to how one perceives the notion of a city, for example Jo’s lesbian community, versus Pen’s nonexistent one. These different cities and different identities imply that there is no one stable identity—no one sense of Irishness that characters such as Pen and Jo can inhabit. Unlike Joyce, Donoghue shows her readers a group of outsiders who have no stable core or identity to react against.

Post 1969 Irish novels in general represent the Irish nation, and in a related sense, the Irish city, as a form of resistance to ideas of what Irish identity should be. In the novel, the lesbians of Dublin have a choice: they can conform to the dominant heterosexual culture as Pen does, or they can create an alternative one that goes against the principles of the dominant cultures as the lesbians of Amazon Attic (a community of lesbians who live and work together) do with their own subculture. As
Donoghue, who is a lesbian, points out in an interview “most people live in the closet in some form or another. I know a lot of people who are very out and proud when they’re in Dublin, but back home down the country not a word to the family, and it might be the same about jobs, so there’s a lot of living in two worlds” (Benzyl 76). This shows how complex identity is in a post-national Ireland.

As in *The Van*, Hood moves past polarized debates in Irish politics by focusing on other "Troubles". Though Ireland is known for its religious troubles, there exists an underlying notion of sexual and subversive "Troubles". In the novel, both Pen and Cara are questioning the notion of femininity. It is quite possible on some level that Pen’s employers know that she is a lesbian. Pen and Cara were both students at the school where Pen teaches and where their relationship started. Although Pen never mentions Cara to her colleagues by name, her relationship does come into question. As she tells a colleague “I never lied about it’… You’ve often heard me mention my housemate, and I didn’t invent any men’s names or anything. The L-word just never seems to come up at staff meetings" (Donoghue 182). But as long as Pen keeps up the appearance of heterosexuality/normalcy, her real identity will be tolerated. This is how Pen lives her life. As a result, her sense of community is very limited. Pen never denies her lesbianism, but she never acknowledges it either.

In both *Hood* and *The Barrytown Trilogy*, the city itself is seen as a space that contains different types of ideas and people. At the same time, they can be invisible, nameless but an important part of the space that makes up a city/community. For
example in Hood, Pen observes a nameless girl who catches her eye. The reader sees how Pen connects herself through her identity as a citizen:

Through the crowd I saw a girl running down the street. Only the back of her; all I could make out was a rusty head of hair, catching the light whenever she emerged from a building’s shadow. Probably running for a bus, or twenty-five minutes late to meet a friend at Bewley’s. She had almost disappeared into the wide mouth of the crowd; I saw something moving but wasn’t sure if it was her. I would never know who or what she was running from or to. (Donoghue 288)

By observing people outside of her perceived community, Pen realizes that she is part of the Dublin community. This is typical of the new post national identity that contemporary Irish writers are exploring. Even though she is not part of the larger Dublin community, she still influences it by her own awareness of both the heterosexual and the lesbian community.

Doyle also shows how Dublin allows people to be lost in the crowd although not in a positive way, as evident in The Van. After Jimmy Sr and Bimbo gain financial stability, they celebrate by visiting Dublin as sort of a bachelors' night out. However, because they are outsiders and unfamiliar with what is expected of them and how they should behave, they experience a sense of frustration and impotence (Harte and Parker 24). The men in post 1969 novels often have to struggle with their loss of identity. Once the heads of their community, Jimmy Sr and Bimbo find themselves struggling with notions of identity and a sense of purpose. This demonstrates what Hood implies—that there is no truly stable dominant identity that outsiders can react against. Contemporary Irish life is represented as a complex notion of identities and beliefs that are always shifting.
There are several instances in the novel of how youth and youth culture influences the city though its consumerism. Whereas Hood was most concerned with lesbian identity, The Van is most concerned with class, particularly with how a new era of youth oriented consumerism has affected class consciousness and identity. Now that they have money, Jimmy Sr and Bimbo should have access to the consumerism that the youth of Dublin already seem to have. The new Dublin of youth and dance clubs of Anne Marie and Dawn's community that sell wine is nothing like the Dublin of old. The chip van (Bimbo and Jimmy Sr's livelihood) is being replaced by a McDonalds. While trying to pick up two women, Bimbo drunkenly reveals what the two men do for a living. In the eyes of his date, Jimmy Sr does not have what it takes to be successful. Bimbo escapes the same fate because he actually owns the van, thus separating him from Jimmy Sr. The city and its citizens desire success. If the two were younger, working in a chipper van would have been an acceptable job, because there is the underlying notion that the job is temporary. This is not the case for Bimbo and Jimmy Sr who see the job as providing for their family, and continuing their role in their families as breadwinners:

Jimmy Sr looked again. Your woman, Anne Marie was still looking at him.
Then she spoke.
-Your complexions are very good, she said. -Considering.
-Considering what Anne Marie?, said Dawn.
-Where they work.
Bimbo! The fuckin’ eejit!
-Where do they work?, said Dawn.
-In a van, said Anne Marie.
He’d fuckin’ kill him. Grinning away there!
...-They have a chipper van, said Anne Marie.
-That’s righ’, said Bimbo.
-Brendan’s Burgers, said Anne Marie.
Bimbo and Anne Marie were holding hands.
-We’re buildin’ up a fleet o’ them, Jimmy Sr told Dawn. –Wha’d ye do yourself, Dawn?
-Do you bring it to football games and that sort of thing?
She sat up, but she didn’t seem to be trying to get away from him.
Maybe it would be alright. He was still going to kill Bimbo though, the stupid cunt. (Doyle 594-5)

The old and the young come together with disastrous results. It is after this incident and the fight between Bimbo and Jimmy Sr that ensues that Jimmy Sr is demoted from partner to employee and receives wages. The city and its influence corrupt the friendship between Bimbo and Jimmy Sr. It also changes the power structure between the two. Before the scene at the bar:

Jimmy Sr had always been the one who’d make the decisions, who’d mapped out their weekend 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. Jimmy Sr had rented the pair of caravans in Courtown a couple of years back and the two families had gone down in a convoy and stayed there for the fortnight. (580)

After that night, it is Bimbo who takes care of the work situation and the paradigm shifts.

-You’ll ask me can yeh wipe your arse next, said Bimbo once.
-No, I won’t said Jimmy Sr –Me arse is me own.
It was at that moment – the way Bimbo had said it; the pretend annoyance in his voice that Jimmy Sr realized that Bimbo was enjoying it, being the boss; like he was giving out to a thick lad, a thick kid he liked: he wasn’t embarrassed anymore. (607)

Although both Hood and The Van represents Ireland in a state of prosperity, not all Irish writers view the country in that way. Some writers such as McNamee see
Ireland and the Irish identity caught up in violence. Resurrection Man shows Belfast caught up in a wave of violence brought on by one man and his gang. McNamee's community, unlike Doyle and Wilson's, does not support its citizens. There is a disjunctive sense of identity for the citizens of McNamee's Belfast. The identity and perceived Irishness is based on a person's name and address: "It was common to be stopped on the street and asked for your name and address. Inhabitants of the city were adept at deciphering the clues to religion and status contained in an address [...] Your address was a thing to be guarded as if the words themselves possessed secret talismanic properties. Your name was replete with power and hidden malevolence" (McNamee 85).

Based on an actual gang from the 1970s known as the Shankill Butchers, the novel portrays the protagonist as killing people not for political reasons, but for sport. Though Victor Kelly kills primarily Catholics, it is never solely due to political reasons. In fact, Victor's own religious identity is questioned due to his last name. He is drawn to committing violence against anyone who crosses him, and due to the political environment of the time, his violence is aimed towards Catholics. All of this combined with a romanticized gangster criminal persona and events in Belfast at the time shape Victor into the person that he is. Then, McNamee juxtaposes reality and fiction to create a different Belfast, as well as a different type of killer.

McNamee constantly shows the city and its citizens in a state of fear. They cannot trust one another for fear that the wrong word or idea will result in sectarian violence. Nobody is safe from violence. After an IRA attack of a Protestant gas
station the Resurrection Men take revenge. They go to a Catholic bar called the Shamrock that evening and proceed to attack:

There was a moment of uncertainty. The people in the bar feeling something was expected of them, that they should shape a response out of the sudden onset of consternation [...] One of the men waved his gun vaguely in the direction of the drinkers. 'Prods on one end of the bar, Taigs on the other.' Half of the people rose immediately and began to move towards the bar. They seemed grateful for the guidance offered. They went calmly to their respective ends of the bar and stood there awaiting further instructions. The rest of the people in the bar were more alert, their faces working soundlessly as they attempted to come to a decision as to which end of the bar to go to.

In the end, to the killers the patron's religious identity made no difference.

The two men began to fire at random. The drinkers ran towards the exits, disappeared into the toilets, lay down on the floor, stood and covered their ears. Even in a confined space the firing did not sound like shots, did not fit into the perceived notions of gunfire—the roar, the muzzle flash, the profound and vital noise that hangs in the air [...] A whole glamorous ethic was missing from this scene with masked men pointing guns that made a flat, non-lethal sound.

(McNamee 139-140)

One difference between the real Belfast and McNamee's fictional one is the police. There is evidence that the police were complicit in events associated with events in Shankill (Coogan 285). In McNamee's novel the police do participate in the violence in an off-handed manner, in talking about guns with other enthusiasts. The other policeman in the novel, Ivor Coppinger, sees the murders Victor commits as a mystery to be solved, as a kind of cat and mouse game associated with detective novels. Coppinger and Ryan, the journalist who becomes connected to Victor, see
Victor as an enemy, but at the same time they admire him. They realize this after examining Victor's first victim:

'The head was attached to the body by tissue at the back' Coppinger said. 'It near fell off when he was moved.' There was a certain awe in his tone. There was someone out there operating in a new context. They were being lifted into unknown areas, deep pathologies. Was the cortex severed? They both felt a silence beginning to be spaced from this one. They would have to rethink procedures. The root of the tongue had been severed. New languages would have to be invented. (16)

Though this is a horrific murder, Coppinger and Ryan treat it as a fascinating game that they will play against the killer. There is no person lying on the ground, but instead there is a body. The killers and the murders they commit shape the city's identity, along with Coppinger and Ryan.

One scholar, Richard Haslan, believes that McNamee takes the realistic portrayal of the Shankill Butchers too far. However, there is no indication that McNamee glamorizes the murders in any way or that he uses this representation of violence to resurrect a modernist preoccupation with the Troubles. Victor Kelly meets the same fate as his real life counterpart did in 1982. McNamee continually portrays Kelly as a sociopathic monster with no conscience. There are many instances of this; the most startling one is where he shaves his father after his father has had a stroke.

He gripped the angle of his father's jaw with his left hand and tilted it backwards, his red eyes glistening and a smile on his face like an idolatrous barber. He continued to force his head back until the neck was painfully stretched and it seemed to Dorcas that the look was cold and unreckonable. With the left hand that supported his father's jaw Victor began to probe beneath the lather, touching the neck sinews, the
windpipe, the carotid artery, as though there was something instructive in the anatomy itself, an atavistic revelation beneath the surface of the skin. (McNamee 226)

The Belfast in Resurrection Man is one where its citizens live in a state of apathy and fear. The violence is condensed to a war over control of a city that could be any contemporary city, instead of a battle between Catholics and Protestants over centuries old oppression. The city exists for McNamee as a vehicle for his characters to create a sense of their history, which is marked by the bullet holes and bombings: "Ryan had noticed people pointing out bullet marks and bomb sites. They added to the attraction of the city. Bloodspots on the pavement were marked by wreaths. Part of a dark and thrilling beauty" (McNamee 34). As such, McNamee's Belfast is one where masculinity reigns and creates a strong hierarchy that controls the mindset of all. But at the same time, it is not a celebration of a terrible beauty. McNamee's city, for all of its realism, is an anonymous representation of contemporary life, like the Dublin in Hood.

The reality of McNamee is contrasted with a differently focused reality in Eureka Street, which uses humor and irony as a way to understand the violence in Northern Ireland. There is a shift in tone and voice as to how Northern Irish writers perceive Belfast to be. While McNamee uses macabre elements in his work, Wilson uses a lot of carnivalesque elements in his. There is heteroglossia, in which more than one voice gives the narrative, as well as emphasis on the body with the descriptions of Chuckie Lurgan. The voice of Wilson's work, like that of McNamee's Doyle's and Donoghue's inevitably explores the intersection of the contemporary Irish
city and post national Irish identity. As Wilson notes, "Irishness is unique amongst the self-conscious nationalisms. A self-conscious Frenchman bores everyone. A self-conscious American is a nightmare. And a self-conscious Englishman makes you want to lie down in a darkened room. But a self-conscious Irishman is a friend to the world and the world listens attentively [...] There's a global appetite for Irishness that is almost without parallel" (Wilson "Sticks and Stones" 2). As a result, the characters in Eureka Street deal with issues of Irish identity.

In post-national Belfast, there is still the notion of who has the power. In the novel, Luke Findlater, a financial adviser to Irish Protestant Chuckie Lurgan, represents a caricature of the British colonizer. Upon meeting Luke, Chuckie through the narrator expresses his fears as to Luke's nationality. "Englishmen always made him feel below-stairs. Most of the Englishmen he had met had been working class Northerners with berets and automatic weapons but, like many people he still clung to a notion of Englishness based on Kenneth More in old war movies" (Wilson Eureka Street 152-3). As with perceptions of Irishness, there are also skewered perceptions of Britishness in the novel. Between them, Findlater and Chuckie create a financial empire based on conceived notions of what it means to be Irish, particularly Northern Irish. Here Wilson addresses and ironicizes this appetite for Irishness in the novel in the financial empire the two create:

They had broken into the Irishness business. They were engaged to import half-wool Aran sweaters, made by slave-workers in Romania. By sticking a Made in Ireland label on them and shipping them to New York and Boston, they would make a fortune. They had already bought out a small mineral water supplier in Kansas; they had
contracted to ship the water to East Coast restaurants and wine bars. The shipments stopped off in Philadelphia where they were decorated with the legend IRISH WATER and a picture of an Irish brook. (Wilson Eureka Street 156)

The perception of Irishness that they are foisting on others is in actuality vastly different from their own Irish community. This perception of Irishness relates to how postmodern Irish fiction creates a unique literary paradigm. Many writers such as Wilson strive to create a place that substitutes and glorifies aspects of Ireland, creating what John Wilson Foster calls a topophilia. He further states that "writers have appropriated the real Ireland and turned its places over into imaginative and fictional landscapes of often great and magical beauty". (31). This is in a sense what Northern Irish writers attempt to do with their works. Many aspects that Modernist writers used in their writings are emulated (such as the sweaters and the water) and are then de-romanticized and fetishized. Modernist writers were interested in what Ireland was in order to create a mythology of Irishness. Post 1969 Irish writers have attempted to go beyond that mythology in order to re-write what Ireland is. As Wilson points out

To understand all things Irish, you must understand something fundamental. Everyone knows that Ireland is the land of myth. And myth is a beautiful and resonant word. It sounds so profound, so spiritual. There is something visceral in it. Our mythmaking is vital to the self-imposing standardized norms of nationality that are current here at home [...] In some ways, the Irish tendency for romancing can be seen a harmless, almost charming. It is, after all, what produces our leprechauns, our fairy rings, all our beguiling fakery. But it also produces people who will murder for lies they only half-believe and certainly never understand—for the Irish have always armed their ideas. We don't have any white lies here anymore. We only have the deadly barbaric type. (Wilson "Sticks and Stones" 2)
Wilson sets up a seemingly 19th century paradigm in order to render it ridiculous and to draw attention in the ways in which the mythic construction of Irish identity has allowed the country to be romanticized and exoticized. In the novel, Luke Findlater gives Chuckie the means to finance his lifestyle, but there is also another side to the "colonizer". What was once a colonized nation is now a place for non-committal sexual encounters. After visiting Northern Ireland Luke becomes sexually attracted to Irish women.

It [Northern Ireland] was a place that suited him. It was a life for which he had been made. He was besotted with Irish girls because they were so easily besotted with him. Elegantly, handsomely, he had dated twenty-four working class Irish girls in his first four months on the island. He loved them for their vigour, their vulgarity- he loved the whole sublime atmosphere of post-colonial eroticism. (Wilson Eureka Street 351)

Wilson looks at this phenomenon in a humorous light. The power structure between the colonizer and the colonized is absent in the novel, and the sex is viewed as an act committed by consensual adults regardless of nationality or loyalty. However, the concept of English versus Irish identity comes into play. Luke views himself as physically superior to the Irishmen around him, even though his colonial beliefs are undone and rendered ironic by a narrative voice that downplays the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized. "He was stupidly handsome, arrestably beautiful amongst the troglodytic Hibernian halfmen. In the hour he walked around the town, he saw only one man who could be considered even close to six feet tall and none at all who could be conceived as handsome" (Wilson Eureka Street 350). This
belief is similar to how the Irish were perceived by the Victorian English as a subhuman sect incapable of higher thought.

Despite his humorous recourse to 19th century rhetoric, Wilson sees Belfast as a city of progress. Though the violence continues in various forms, the people in the novel are able to create romantic and sexual relationships with one another, two of which are homosexual in nature, which go outside of cultural norms and the post colonial exotic. In addition, Jake develops a surrogate father relationship with a young boy and also a romantic relationship with Aoirghe. The political fighting is at a standstill when a new non-sectarian political party is formed. Though vague in ideology, the OTG party is able to bring the many parties together because of that very fact:

You want to know what OTG means?
Almost everything.
That was the point. All the other letters written on our walls were dark minority stuff. The world's grand lazy majority will never be arsed writing anything anywhere and, anyway, they wouldn't know what to write. They would change their permissive, clement, heterogeneous minds halfway through.
That's why OTG was written for them. It could mean anything they wanted. It did mean anything they wanted. Order The Gammon.
Octogenarians Tote Guns. Openly Titular Gesture. One True God.
(Wilson Eureka Street 395)

Unlike McNamee, who still represents the violence as hatred between Catholic and Protestants, Wilson views what is happening in Belfast as an unofficial war that nobody is really fighting. "It was a war between an army that said it didn't want to fight and a group of revolutionaries who claimed that they didn't want to fight either. It had nothing to do with imperialism, self-determination, or revolutionary
socialism. And these armies didn't often kill each other. Usually they just killed whoever of the citizenry happened to be handy" (Wilson *Eureka Street* 381). The people in Wilson's Belfast attempt to continue on with their lives despite the violence. He is able to transcend the politics and create a post-national city. Though the violence and hostility continues throughout the novel, they do not exist on a personal level for the characters. When a bomb explodes on Fountain Street, it affects the people who are injured or killed, as well as their families and rescue workers; however the city itself and the citizens remain untouched. "Fountain Street is an incidental detail. The site itself is a distraction, the event, in some ways, an irrelevance, the toll a technicality. Such bombings, such murders do not really involve the people involved. The death and the maimings less by-product. The victims are mostly random, entirely obscure. No one is interested in them" (Wilson *Eureka Street* 232). For Wilson, the purpose of the novel is to show Belfast and its citizens are able to adapt to the situations given to them by a violent society. The two entities become one by the end of the novel: "I think of my city's conglomerate of bodies. A Belfastful of spines, kidneys, hearts, livers and lungs. Sometimes, this frail cityful of organs makes me seethe and boil with tenderness. They seem so unmurderable and because I think of them, they belong to me" (Wilson *Eureka Street* 396).

With these novels, we see how writers have re-created notions of what a city is. For some, the city is welcoming and accepting, while others see the city as a war zone where people are forced to take an ideologist side in order to survive. We also
see how politics play a role in how the citizens function in a city. Though Dublin is viewed as non-political we see how subjectivity is forced upon its citizens based on class and sexual orientation. Finally we also see how the sense of community is very fluid. Identity is predicated on something other than nationality. Characters move in and out of identities, Catholics and Protestants interact with one another, lesbians can create a family structure, and men can redeem themselves after they lose their position of breadwinner. What is known of the city has changed over time so that it is no longer a prison of ideas for its people.

III. The Ghost of Kathleen ni Houlihan: The Changing Face of Women in the Irish Novel After 1969

"Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals"—Oscar Wilde The Picture of Dorian Gray

Though violence and conflict are traditionally viewed as a masculine enterprise, women do play an important role in the aftermath of violence. The Troubles brought out many women activists in the name of peace and civil rights as well as the name of violence. The Troubles have allowed for a restructuring of gender ideas that were indicative of modernist ideas of what women should be. Postmodern society has allowed for various revisions as to how we should view the construction of gender in a post national society.

Traditionally, Irish writers were male and their protagonists were male as well. Those who did write about women often based their characters on Irish
mythology, for example Yeats' Kathleen ni Houlihan. Oftentimes Ireland was portrayed as a woman, tying the idea of nationhood with an abstract feminine ideal. This is fairly typical in many colonized and formerly colonized countries (Cahalan 15). There are many reasons as to why women are oppressed in Irish society. For many years, women were oppressed in Irish society, and it is only in recent years that laws that oppressed women were lessened. As a result, out of 1969 a new type of heroine emerged in Irish literature.

The post 1969 novel shows how women (and those who view themselves as women) have struggled with being female in a very patriarchal society. The real "Troubles" for post 1969 Irish literature concerned with gender are issues of sexuality and equal rights. We see how writers have transcended the idea of woman as only a representation of Ireland idea; instead of the "Poor Old Woman" (Cahalan 14) women in Ireland in the post 1969 novel include a transvestite, an unwed mother, and a lesbian.

Both Breakfast on Pluto and The Snapper deal with illegitimacy, an issue that is very prevalent in Ireland. Illegitimacy is still a problem in Ireland because of the strong influence of the Catholic Church on Irish morality. Social stigma is more severe than in other places and in Europe and also access to abortion is more restricted. In contemporary Irish society, the unwed mother is accepted in urban areas, although not as much in rural areas. As one mother states, "I know quite a few single mothers in Dublin. After they get over the shock and horror of illegitimacy, the Irish like their babies, and that is probably our saving grace. I know some of the
country girls can't go home again, but of the women I know in Dublin, those children are the apple of the grandparents' eye." (Qtd. in Mahoney 182) At the same time, however, young women who are pregnant have little support from society. There have been several cases of young women who murdered their newborn babies because they felt they had no recourse. As a result, the Irish government restructured how sex education was taught in schools (Inglis 2). The notion that women are sexual creatures/victims still persists in the literature. Though Irish women have made changes as to their perception in Irish society, there is still many ways that they are still subjected to social stigmas.

Patrick McCabe's *Breakfast on Pluto* is one example of a novel depicting characters outside of the societal pale concerning gender identity. The protagonist in the novel is Patrick Braden, also known as Pussy, a transvestite prostitute who lives in both Northern Ireland and England during the Troubles. As the Troubles go on around him, Pussy creates a world where he is the star in a disturbed melodrama, a characteristic of McCabe's novels. McCabe uses this plot device as a way for his characters to escape the horrors of the everyday world over which they have no control.

Pussy's life revolves around acquiring material possessions and finding someone who will supply him these things as well as with any form of affection. He flees his birthplace of Tyreelin after denouncing his father, the local parish priest. The instances of his conception and birth--his mother was sexually assaulted by Father Bernard and then abandoned on a doorstep--shaped his adult life. According
to his therapist, his relationships with other people is an attempt to recreate the family structure that he never had as a child.

In the novel, we see the influence of the Catholic Church concerning sex in Ireland. Pussy's biological mother is forced to abandon him, and moreover was never informed about sex. In a flashback in which he describes the assault of his mother, he presents his own ideas as to what women know about sex prior to marriage:

> You see, in those days girls didn't really have any experience of boys and their electric little tootling flutes! To be perfectly honest, I don't think they even knew they had them [...] To them, what was between a boy's legs was a little snail-type fellow your brothers had. Not an insatiable, unreasonable trunk of a thing that reminded you of some illogical version of the song that you heard regularly on the radio, except now going: 'It was a one-eyed, one-horned flying purple weenie-poker/ One-eyed one-horned flying purple weenie poker!' (McCabe 28)

This ignorance about sex continued in Ireland until the end of the 20th century. Until the 1960s, the Catholic Church maintained a strict control as to what children knew about sex. Until marriage, men and women were supposed to have limited contact with one another in order to keep them innocent. Moreover, according to the Church, it was women who were viewed as leading men into the temptation of sex (Inglio 26-27). McCabe argues that characters such as Pussy are created out of this atmosphere. In 1955, when Pussy was born, girls were not supposed to become pregnant out of wedlock, which is why he was abandoned. And although the town knows that Father Bernard is Pussy's father, no action is taken against him. The idea of priest as a moral center of a society changes post 1969 as power of the church is weakened.
This cycle of women as sexual victims continues in Tyreelin. Though unwed mothers are not shipped off to London as Eli Bergin was, there is still little support for them within the community. Pussy attempts to talk with Martina Sheridan to convince her not to have sex with her boyfriend, who is already married. He describes the possible life that Martina would have if she has a child out of wedlock:

The estate in Tyreelin is full of them. Barely over fourteen, some of them already pushing buggies and looking years older than they are. And their children. Who can say it's fair the way some of them are treated? You can tell by their Complexions- the pasty, porridgy skin colour that they all seem to have, left outside staring with those sad empty eyes. Eyes that say: 'Who will love me? Why will no one love me?' And not with the sort of emotion that Martina Sheridan had been duped into accepting as genuine. (McCabe 107)

The novel represents realities that it wants to problematize. Even today, illegitimate children have different legal standing than do legitimate children. For example, illegitimate children cannot inherit property or an estate when a father dies (although an illegitimate child can under Irish law inherit a mother's property) (Mahoney 186-187).

As previously mentioned, what Pussy desires is for someone to provide him with money and items that would cement his idea of femininity. When no one is available in his life, Pussy turns to prostitution in order to sustain his lifestyle. McCabe implies that if Pussy had a normal childhood then there would be no confusion as to his sexuality. He describes a fantasy sequence in which he has a mother and a father: "Is this Patrick- Pat Puss of the girly doodle dandies son-of-priest and naughty nipple-licker of a Mum called Louise Ward-fame? No-this is
simple, ordinary Patrick-son of the man called Daddy, who with great big shovel
hands this cabin proudly raised" (McCabe 109).

McCabe's representation of Pussy may be problematic, but is a distinct
movement away from the abstract feminine ideal of previous writers such as Yeats as
well as the enigma of Joyce's Molly Bloom. McCabe attempts in his novel to portray
the life of a transsexual without knowing the actual details as to what it means to be a
transsexual. That does not mean that a heterosexual author cannot accurately write
about what it means to be gay or a transsexual. In fact, many scholars have argued
that notions of heterosexuality and homosexuality are subjective in nature. So the
question then arises as to whether or not McCabe succeeds in accurately portraying
the transsexual experience. He does raise interesting notions of what femininity is.

Being a woman according to Pussy has a lot to do with clothing and accessories.

During one shopping trip he buys the following:

Max Factor, Johnson's Baby Oil, Blinker's eye-shadow, Oil of Olay, Silvikrin Alpine Herb shampoo, Eau de toilette, body moisturizers, body washes, cleansing milks, St Laurent Eye and Lip make-up, Noxzema Skin Cream and Cover Girl Professional Mascara [...] Knitted tops in white, purple, lavender, blazing orange, satin-type velveteen pants, turtleneck leotards, flouncing skirts, ribbed stretch-nylon tights (McCabe 35-36).

Not only is the novel set during the Troubles, but it also takes place during the 1970s
when glam rock and androgyny were part of youth culture. In a time when
masculinity meant death at the hands of either the IRA or the UVF, it could be
preferable to be a transsexual and avoid direct involvement with the violence of
Northern Ireland.
Roddy Doyle's *The Snapper* is another novel that looks at how women are portrayed in Irish society. In the novel, Sharon Rabbitte becomes an unwed mother. Sharon has the support of her family, so she is never forced to consider not having the baby, or giving it up for adoption. Throughout the novel, we see Sharon and the family adapting to the new addition to the family as well as the Barrytown community itself adapting. We also see Sharon struggling with what it means to be a woman who has to defend the choices that she made in her life, and how those choices will affect her daughter. Sharon represents a new form of Irish womanhood, one that will not sacrifice herself for the good of the country.

One difference between *The Snapper* and *Breakfast on Pluto* is that Sharon is never ashamed about her pregnancy. Unlike Eli, Sharon has choices concerning her pregnancy. This shows progress in Irish society, but there are limits. Though Sharon refuses to have an abortion, even if she wanted to, she would have to go to England to have one. In the 1980s it was nearly impossible for women to even obtain information concerning abortion services offered in England. In fact, the Irish Supreme Court forced two organizations in Dublin to stop informing women as to their choices (Mahoney 48). Under the Abortion Information Act of 1995, abortion information can be published in magazines, journals and other forms of material, but it cannot be broadcast through billboards, public notices, or unsolicited books or newspapers (Abortion Information the Law). Although Sharon's decision to keep the baby shows strength of character, we should not view her decision in a religious context, or as one scholar puts it, "Sharon's hasty statement 'Abortion is murder'
seems more like a case of religion being used to validate what she wants to do rather than an indication of a true Catholic belief" (White 81). The author does not seem to understand that 1) a person can be Catholic and also be for a woman's right to choose, and 2) the pro-choice movement does not necessarily mean pro-abortion. Sharon's statement should be seen instead in the context of the post 1969 representations of gender and the re-conception of gender roles.

Sharon also cares little as to what the community thinks about her pregnancy. Her concern is how her parents will receive the news of her pregnancy. After they do find out, she has this conversation with her mother:

-I was afraid you'd throw me out.
-I never thought of that, mind you. -It's not right though, said Veronica.
She looked straight at Sharon.
-I supposed it's not, said Sharon. (Doyle 149)

What Sharon does care about is how her parents and the community will react to the realization of who the father is. Sharon takes responsibility for her pregnancy. How it happened may shock American readers: by our legal statutes, what happened to Sharon was a rape. She was very intoxicated when George Burgess, an older married man, had intercourse with her. However, Doyle in an interview explains it thusly:

When I was writing the book, I didn't want to encroach too much. I wanted it to be up to the reader. Legally, in Ireland, it is not a rape, although I believe that in some states in the States it is a rape. I wouldn't personally consider it a rape. I do believe that he behaved very wrongly in taking advantage of a drunk woman. But, again, does that make it illegal? Where do you step from immorality to illegality [...] I wanted the circumstances to be open to interpretation. (Doyle quoted in White 74)
When the community discovers who the father of Sharon's baby is, the blame is placed on Sharon, which is why she denies it and creates a new father, a nameless Spanish sailor. The town and Sharon's family know this is not true, but play along with the charade. At the end of the novel, Sharon names the baby Georgina. Some critics believe that she named the baby after Burgess as a joke (White 79). This could be true, but it could be also a form of defiance. By naming the baby Georgina, Sharon is taking control of her life. With this act, she stops denying that Burgess is the father, and the community is forced to acknowledge Gina's paternity. "They'd all call her Gina, but Sharon would call her George. And they'd have to call her George as well. She'd make them" (Doyle 340).

Throughout the novel, Jimmy Sr attempts to be the surrogate father to the baby. He reads books about pregnancy and constantly inquires as to Sharon's health. He crosses the line after getting into a fight in a bar defending her honor because he discovers who the father is. Jimmy Sr automatically reacts to the news by attempting to defend her honor, although Sharon is an adult. Even though Sharon denies that Burgess is the father no one believes her. The town and her family blame her, and as a result Sharon becomes angry with Jimmy Sr because of his actions. She believes that he gets into the fight not for her, but to ease the shame against the family. Jimmy reveals his true feelings after the fight:

Jimmy Sr stayed there, sitting in the kitchen. He was busy admitting something: he was ashamed of Sharon. That was the problem. He was sorry for her troubles; he loved her, he was positive he did, but he was ashamed of her. Burgess! Even if there WAS a Spanish sailor – Burgess-!
There was something else as well; she was making an eejit of him. She wasn't doing it on purpose—there was no way she'd have got herself up the pole just to get at him. That wasn't what he meant. But, fuck it, his life was being ruined because of her. It was fuckin' terrible. He was the laughing stock of Barrytown. It wasn't her fault but it was her fault as well. It wasn't his. He'd done nothing. (Doyle 278-9)

Sharon's pregnancy upsets the family structure. As the patriarch, Jimmy Sr has no control over his oldest daughter. As a result, he begins to ignore her as a way to regain that control, instead of treating her as an adult capable of making her own decisions.

Sharon retaliates by staging a counterstrike of her own. She threatens to move out of the house. This is a ploy on her part; she has no intention of leaving if she does not have to do so. But it forces Jimmy Sr to confront her pregnancy. If she leaves, the town would know that Sharon is pregnant by Burgess, but that the family is against her. This would prove that not only does Jimmy Sr not have control over his daughter, but also that he is abandoning her. Interestingly enough, both Sharon and Jimmy Sr believe that they won the fight:

Sharon got undressed. She wondered if it would work; what he was thinking; was he feeling guilty or what. The face on him when she was talking to him; butter wouldn't melt in his fuckin' mouth, the bastard...

Jimmy Sr sat back and stretched. Victory: he'd won. Without having to admit anything himself, he'd got her to admit that she was the one in the wrong. She was to blame for all this, and he'd been great. She'd said it herself. (Doyle 287)

Though the scene between the two is staged, a later scene is very heartfelt and sincere. Jimmy Sr acknowledges that though the baby might be Burgess' he will
accept it and love it anyway. As proof of this, it is Jimmy Sr who is with Sharon in the hospital when she has the baby.

In Hood, we see how the idea of how notions of Irish womanhood is extended further. As previously argued, Pen has a lesbian existence while her lover Cara has a lesbian identity. Their relationship is not a monogamous one; Cara leaves Pen several times, but she always returns. A conversation between Pen and Jo, an Amazon Attic lesbian, is proof of this:

Jo was watching. 'Hey, I've remembered what the point is.'
'Yeah?' I offered her a small smile. If I was going to turn into a bitch overnight, there truly was no point to anything.
'Well' she began carefully 'even if Cara might have had the odd fling over the years, didn't she always come back to you? I remember her saying that you'd tried breaking up quite a few times, for a couple of years once-'
'Four'
'Right' Jo had lost her rhythm; she flailed the words. 'But she kept coming back, didn't she? The woman couldn't have got away from you, even if she'd wanted to. Which she didn't' she added hastily. 'She made a good shot of it', I commented. 'Got as far as Denmark. And what about Ben, she nearly had a baby by him.'
'But she didn't. She couldn't actually leave you for good.'
'That might say more about her capacities than my attractions.'
'Ah, bullshit. Stop waving the big words around, Teacher.'
I glanced over, startled by her rudeness. And then my own anger came back. 'You know, Cara once told me that my kind of love was like a feeding tube forced up a hunger-striker's nostrils.'
Jo's throat wavered as she swallowed. 'She was just being melodramatic.'
'She meant it.'
'Maybe that particular minute she meant it. But the girl invited you into her family home, for god's sake.' Jo ploughed on. 'She chose you over and over again since she was a teenager. Doesn't that prove anything?'
'What? What exactly does that prove?' (Donoghue 68-69)
When Cara's sister Kate has trouble with this fact Pen responds, "'Why do hets always call it cheating? A relationship that's negotiated in a civilized and honest way to allow for the occasional sexual partner is hardly the same as one of your grubby little bits on the side'" (Donoghue 200-1). For Pen, the two of them do have a committed relationship. After all of Cara's affairs she returns to Pen.

Because Pen and Cara are lesbians, they are considered by society as never-married women. At Cara's funeral, though she died in her late 20s, she is viewed almost as a girl and not as a woman, though she had been in a committed relationship for years. "Most of the flowers were white. Traditional, I suppose for a young woman who is still presumed to be somehow innocent and virginal no matter how she spent her cluster of decades" (Donoghue 133). As never-married women, they go against contemporary notions of familism that are very prominent in Irish society. Familism as a doctrine entails that men and women fall into a breadwinner/housewife binary. It also reinforces notions of heterosexuality, marriage and reproduction (Cohen and Curtin 71). For many heterosexual women, being single carries a stigma not unlike being a lesbian. In Irish society, there still exists the underlying notion that women must continue the lineage of the nation. Pen is not the typical Irish woman, though she continues the tradition of Ireland. She teaches at a Catholic school and attends Mass regularly and takes Communion, but because she is single she is not seen as a viable part of Irish society.

The two of them live in the same house with Cara's father. Not only does Pen work as a teacher, but she also maintains the upkeep of the house. In this way she has
the traditional role of wife and homemaker. But unlike heterosexual wives, Pen has no social and legal recourse. She cannot even take time off to fully mourn Cara. Yet at the same time, she is glad that her mourning is allowed to be private. "Somehow, what galled me most was that if it had been a husband, Sister Dominic would have given me two weeks off. On the other hand, it occurred to me now [...] losing a husband would have been horribly public. I couldn't have it both ways, I supposed, couldn't have me in the closet and bitch about it" (Donoghue 248). In that aspect her life is similar to the other lesbians at Amazon Attic, the difference between them is that the Amazon Attic lesbians have each other.

Pen attempts to structure her life outside of a lesbian identity. Even though she is a lesbian, she wants nothing to do with the politics of being a lesbian. Before Cara's death, she forsakes the lesbians of the Amazon Attic as well as Cara's causes for women's rights. But at the same time, the lesbians of the Amazon Attic may not seem to be very political. They protest in a few marches from time to time and do not associate with gay men. This seems to be due to the fact that unlike the American feminist or the lesbian movement, Irish feminists and lesbians work together on the same issues, such as rape, contraception, single parenting, divorce, poverty, and prostitution (O'Carroll and Collins 92). Though lesbians and feminists have since differed on some of the issues, lesbian identity/existence is still an important issue. One lesbian sums it up thusly: "'Lesbian identity' exists as a category only because 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality' exist as categories, only because sexuality is considered a key to personal identity. And in general, we are 'women' because there
are 'men', 'Irish' because there are 'English'" (O'Carroll and Collins 103). This is how Pen lives her life. The novel shows Pen moving past previous identity politics of what an Irish woman should be. She is just a person who has always loved one woman in her life.

After Cara's death, Pen attempts to carry on with her life. She is now free to consider living her own life. "I didn't have to be anybody's rock anymore" (Donoghue 229). She has been part of a family for years--her, Cara and Mr. Wall--and suddenly the family has changed. Pen and Cara's relationship is unspoken in the house; for the sake of appearance they keep separate rooms. In many ways Mr. Wall's identity is also suppressed by society. Though he and his wife have been separated for years, under Irish law they cannot divorce (the divorce referendum was passed in the Republic of Ireland in 1997). Because we have no idea of Cara and Mr. Wall's relationship we only see the family structure through Pen and Mr. Wall. The two seem to have an equal relationship: both work at jobs outside of the home, and both cook meals and clean the house. After Cara's death Mr. Wall asks Pen to stay at the house even though for all intents and purposes he would have no reason to let her stay.

Pen grudgingly accepts the offer, even though she does not understand why Mr. Wall would invite her to remain. Pen offers to pay rent but Mr. Wall does a remarkable thing. He gives Pen a pamphlet from an organization known as Wages for Housework Campaign, an organization that believes that housewives are part of an unpaid labor force. This organization is still going strong in countries such as
Ireland. Mr. Wall believes that Pen is one of those women. "It strikes me [...] that you do all these jobs that family members often do for each other; you cook almost all of the meals, do more than your fair share of the cleaning, you drive me around in your car and [...] well, generally contribute to the quality of domestic life. So really you are earning your rent already!" (Donoghue 278).

We see how the idea of Irish women has changed over the years. The Troubles are viewed as a masculine enterprise, while women are invisible. In actuality women are responsible for many changes in Irish society. They have worked extensively for peace in Northern Ireland, they have fought for their sons brutalized in prisons, and they have fought for their rights and have tried to break free of patriarchal institutions. However, they are still viewed in very limited terms, even in the literature. They are mothers, housewives, transvestites, but they are never women. They do not have identities outside of those notions.

IV. Leaving Joyce Behind: The Irish Novel as a Viable Literary Form

"Oh yeah, the Great Irish Novel, Jesus man, a computer could write that. A bit of motherlove, a touch of suppressed lust, a soupçon of masochistic Catholic guilt, a bit of token Britbashing, whole shitloads of limpid eyes and flared nostrils and sweaty Celtic thighs, all wrapped up in a sauce of snotgreen Joycean wank." –Joseph O'Connor Cowboys and Indians

Irish literature has always been rich and diverse, but at the same time, poetry and drama have been in the forefront until recently. Many changes in Irish culture and society have made the novel an important literary form, and an argument can be made that the Troubles were the catalyst for that change. Scholars have claimed that
the Irish novel gained its prominence in the mid 1980s and continued with the election of Mary Robinson as President of the Republic. Gerry Smyth argues that the Irish novels published between 1986 and 1995 are Robinsonian in nature, meaning that "the new Irish novelists combine a willingness to confront the formal and conceptual legacies of a received literary (and wider social) tradition alongside a self-awareness of the role played by cultural narratives in mediating modern (or perhaps it would be better now to say postmodern) Ireland's changing circumstances" (6).

All of the novels surveyed with the exception of Cal fall into the time frame that Smyth uses in his book. Therefore, a revision of Smyth's thesis is needed in order as to the role of the Irish novel. We definitely need to consider what role the Troubles play in the definition of the novel as a historical phenomenon. It is also necessary to look at how events during and after the Troubles contributed to the Irish novel, and what effect both Irish and non-Irish writers have had on the new Irish novel.

Though there have been many Irish novelists after Joyce, they are not often studied by the literary canon. Those who do study the semi-forgotten writers who wrote between 1922 and 1955 believe that the writers wrote in a distinct realist/fabulist binary. The realists such as Liam O'Flaherty, Patrick Kavanagh, Sean O'Faolain, Elizabeth Bowen and Kate O'Brien can be classified into three subgroups: 1) working and middle class writers who desired to expose problems in Irish society 2) women writers of the middle class who wrote about being women and middle class, 3) writers who combined both realism and fantasy. In contrast, fabulist writers
such as Flann O'Brien, Samuel Beckett, and Máirtín Ó Cadhain focused on satire as their mode of expression. They were flexible with time and space and often used mythological and medieval romance themes (Cahalan 182, 220). Irish fiction today still maintains this binary: there are realist novels (Hood, Barrytown Trilogy, Cal) a combination of realism and fantasy (Resurrection Man) and fantasy (Eureka Street, Breakfast on Pluto).

After 1955, a change occurred in fiction. Irish society underwent many changes that influenced the literature. Censorship eased, an economic boom and subsequent recession took place, and state patronage of the arts flourished. The fiction showed this change. Historical novels, love stories, bildungsroman and the Big House novel took prominence (Cahalan 262). But then the Troubles came and the novel changed once again.

Some scholars believe there is almost a unique Irish literary genre: the Troubles novel. Two components of the Troubles novel stand out: 1) the continuation of realism and 2) well meaning characters within a deliberating and damaging political context (Bell 131). Bell's definition of the Troubles novel could also define Doyle and Donoghue's works though they do not specifically write about the Troubles. At the same time, many writers have attempted to break free from this definition, but the themes still remain: writing about violence, death and strife. There are obvious comparisons to other countries with the same predicament as Northern Ireland, such as South Africa and India; however, the difference lies in the perception of the country and the writer. While many Northern Irish writers staunchly maintain
that they are Irish, and write specifically about Irish themes, Wilson like Rushdie has written about both the colonized and the colonizer culture in caustic ways. In many ways Wilson is trying to create a hybrid identity with his novels, possibly foreshadowing where Irish novels are going.

Many post 1969 novelists are striving to move beyond notions of what Irish literature is; yet at the same time they cannot escape what it means to be Irish. As Doyle has stated in an interview: "I do love being Irish. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. To an extent we have a lifestyle that, although there's a lot of human misery here there's a quality to life that we can't get anywhere else" (McArdle 116). Doyle has this mindset in his writings. The Van is an excellent example of this dichotomy. Ireland's soccer team is participating in the World Cup, and Barrytown is full of nationalistic pride.

Jimmy Sr looked carefully to make sure that he'd seen it right. The net was shaking, and O'Leary was covered in Irishmen. He wanted to see it again though. Maybe they were all beating the shite out of O'Leary for missing. No, though; he'd scored. Ireland were through to the quarter-finals and Jimmy Sr started crying.

He wasn't the only one. Bertie was as well. They hugged. Bertie was putting on a few pounds. Jimmy Sr felt even better.

What a team, wha'. What a fuckin'—

He couldn't finish: a sob had caught up on him. (Doyle 511)

In contrast, eight pages later Doyle describes through Jimmy Sr a group of young boys called the Living Dead. These passages are a very disturbing glimpse into the
underside of Dublin society. These boys have no hope or prospects in their lives whatsoever:

There was a gang of them that hung around the Hikers carpark, young fellas, from fourteen to maybe nineteen. Even in the rain, they stayed there. They just put their hoodies up. Some of them always had their hoodies up. They were all small and skinny looking but there was something frightening about them. The way they behaved, you could tell that they didn’t give a fuck about anything. When someone parked his car and went into the pub they went over to the car and started messing with it even before the chap had gone inside; they didn’t care if he saw them [...] Sometimes they’d have a flagon or a can of lager out and they’d pass it around, drinking in from of people coming in and out of Crazy Prices, people that lived beside their parents. It was sad. When they walked around, like a heard migrating or something, they all tried to walk the same way, the hard men, like their kaks were too tight on them. But that was only natural, he’d supposed. The worst thing though was, they didn’t laugh [...] These kids were different though; they didn’t do anything for a laugh. Not that Jimmy Sr could see anyway. They were like fuckin’ zombies. When Jimmy Sr saw them, especially when it was raining, he always thought the same thing: they’d be dead before they were twenty (Doyle 519-20)

Other writers have also written about this need to create Irish literature that is also not Irish. McCabe’s Breakfast on Pluto is set in Ireland but is not a typical Irish novel.

McCabe does a remarkable job at juxtaposing "new" Irish fiction that encompasses a global, telecommunicational, post-modern Ireland with the "traditional" which incorporates the family, the small town, the authorized national narrative, and the social and religious character of the state. These two systems often clash with one another, as evident in the novel (Harte and Parker 168). Pussy is a very unreliable narrator, presenting the action and events through his skewed viewpoint. He is always the main character in his personal story. Pussy has an interest in things
outside of Ireland, adapting personas of famous British women (Audrey Hepburn and Dusty Springfield). At the same time he cannot escape being Irish and the trappings that come with it. He returns to the small town of his birth after living in London in order to help a friend, even though he suffers harassment from people in Tyreelin. His search for a family in various ways coincides with the violence in Northern Ireland as McCabe implies in the prelude of the novel.

But will it all be so easy for him, this fragile, flamboyant self-styled emissary, or shall he prove nothing more than another false prophet, ending his days in a backstreet apartment, sucking his thumb and dreaming of Mama, a silly old hopeless Norman Bates of history? Or will he triumph, making it against all the odds through the gauntlet of misfits, dodgy politicians, errant priests, psychos and sad old lovers that is his world, laying his head beneath a flower-bordered print that bears the words at last: "You're home."?

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The war over, now perhaps we too can take—however tentatively—those first few steps which may end unease and see us there; home, belonging and at peace. (XI)

McCabe stretches this metaphor further, by extending the violence to London, Pussy's haven. Several people associated with Pussy die as a result of the Troubles while Pussy searches for his family. The IRA bombs a nightclub, for which Scotland Yard considered Pussy a suspect. We see how the small town values of the past coincide with the new ideas of what Ireland should be and how Ireland at least according to McCabe has a way to go.
It is now time to consider Irish literature's importance to post-modernist literature. Just because a work of literature is written during the so-called post-modernist period does not make a work of literature postmodernist. Many scholars and critics find fault with the whole definition of postmodernism in that the term is too open as a definition. Postmodernism for some "inevitably calls to mind a band of vainglorious contemporary artists following the circus elephants of Modernism with snow shovels" (Newman qtd. in McHale 3). Postmodernist fiction, though difficult to define, has much to do with Irish literature. Postmodernism reflects reality, of creating a world that is similar and different from the real world. McHale simplifies his definition of postmodern literature so that all postmodern literature is about love and death. "Postmodernist fiction may be antirealistic, but antirealism is not its sole object of representation. Indeed, two of the favored themes to which it returns obsessively are about as deeply colored with traditional literary values as anyone could wish. What could be more traditional than love and death?" (222). According to McHale's paradigm, post 1969 Irish literature is postmodern in nature, in that all six novels surveyed are about love and death. Wilson even collaborates this with the first sentence of Eureka Street when he writes "All stories are love stories" (3). But the same can be said with regards to Romantic poetry, Shakespearean plays, and Greek tragedies. It is necessary, therefore, to expand this paradigm to see what separates Irish fiction from other types of contemporary literature, and one way of doing this is through voice and tone.
Unlike most American postmodern texts, there is a strong sense of voice in contemporary Irish fiction. This needs to be explained: American fiction in general takes pride in the notion of having an unbiased omniscient narrator, doing whatever is necessary to tell a story without a personal stake in the text. This is not the case with Irish fiction. There is a strong personal voice that resonates throughout each of the novels surveyed. Other writers such as Rushdie do this as well but there is something different about Irish fiction that sets it apart from others. The tone of the novels adds to the texts by putting a humane aspect to the works. For example, Cal follows the protagonist as he goes on a journey for redemption though violence and death are all around him. Though the reader hopes that Cal will have his redemption and find peace, the narration of the novel constantly informs the reader that this is not the case. Cal's confusion about his life and what he should do mirrors what he feels about Ireland. The uncertainty of the future of Ireland foreshadows Cal's future. "To suffer for everything which didn't exist, that was like Ireland. People were dying every day, men and women were being crippled and turned into vegetables in the name of Ireland. An Ireland which never was and never would be" (MacLaverty 83). What makes this novel special is that it leaves the reader to judge Cal. We see what Cal goes through in his life and then we are forced to decide whether or not Cal receives his redemption in the end. The end of the novel portrays Cal as a Christ figure of sorts. His last night of freedom is spent with Marcella. His Christmas present to her was a book of Grünwald portraits with pictures of a crucified Christ. The next day he is arrested and his arrest parallels Christ's arrest, "the next morning Christmas Eve,
almost as if he expected it, the police arrived to arrest him and he stood in a dead man's Y-fronts listening to the charge, grateful that at last someone was going to beat him within an inch of his life" (MacLaverty 154).

The voice in Irish fiction can be somber, sarcastic, melodramatic, or neutral, but it is always present. It is part of the lineage of Irish literature, going back to the bardic tradition of the poet telling a story. What post 1969 novelists have done is extend the notion to include a narrator that is part of the story. The narrator of *Eureka Street* is one such narrator. There are actually two narrators, Jake Jackson and an omniscient narrator that switches intermittently to inform the reader about life in Belfast. While Jake is also a protagonist in the novel and has a limited viewpoint, the nameless omniscient narrator can do what Jake cannot: give background history of the characters and to give his unbiased look at Belfast. The omniscient narrator goes in and out of the narrative, sometimes telling the story of Chuckie and sometimes observing the citizens of Belfast. In this way, the narrator is able to bring Belfast into the story in ways that Jake cannot. For example, it is the omniscient narrator who describes the bombing of Fountain Street in gruesome detail. The narrator presents the victims' lives as a form of stories, but those stories have little importance in the grand scheme of things:

What had happened? A simple event. The traffic of history and politics had bottlenecked. An individual or individuals had decided that reaction was necessary. Some stories had been shortened. Some stories had been ended. A confident editorial decision had been taken.
It had been easy.

The pages that follow are light with their loss. The text is less dense, the city is smaller. (Wilson 231).

Gerry Smyth believes that what makes Irish fiction postmodern is the "collapse of the gap between the local and the universal" (100). But only Irish writers could write all of the books surveyed including Doyle. The characters' dialect in Doyle for example is distinctly Irish. In doing so, they go against Modernist ideas of universality. The themes of the books surveyed may be universal, for example themes of family, love and death, but what makes Irish fiction unique is the way in which the themes are presented to the reader. Each author brings a different perspective of Ireland to his or her works. Combined, they present a holistic view of Ireland, one of humor and heartache, horror and peace. It is reality and fiction combined, which is the definition of postmodernism. Although the six novels surveyed are post nationalistic in nature, they are still Irish. As such, they offer an Irish identity not seen before, one that moves past postmodernism into altogether new territories.
Works Cited


