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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or part, by me or another person, for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification. All sources that have been consulted have been identified and acknowledged in the appropriate way.

Signed: Eileen O' Connor

Date: 19.06.23

Acknowledgements.

Firstly, I begin this thesis by expressing my gratitude to Dr. Eoin Flannery my esteemed supervisor and advisor, for all his guidance, support, and instruction he provided me throughout my doctoral studies. His guidance and professional support have been instrumental in the completion of my thesis. I am deeply grateful to Professor Eugene O'Brien, Head of the Department of English, and Dr. John McDonagh for providing me with the funding and opportunity to undertake my studies ,and the marvellous experience of tutoring over the duration of my research. I would also like to say a very special thank you to the late Eugene McCabe and his wife Margo for their warm and courteous welcome to my husband and I when we visited their home in Clones in October 2018. McCabe who, although no longer with us, continues to inspire by his marvellous storytelling. I was privileged to meet him, and I remain very grateful for his interest and input into my thesis. Finally, this journey and success would not have been possible without the unfailing support and continuous encouragement from my husband John and my two daughters Joleen and Jacqueline, I would like to thank them from the bottom of my heart for their constant support, guidance, and encouragement while I completed my thesis.

ABSTRACT

This research analyses Eugene McCabe's contributions to modern Irish writing by examining his engagement with three milestone events in Irish history. The study focuses on McCabe's works in chronological order, beginning with *Tales from The Poorhouse* (1999), set during the Great Famine of 1845. These short stories provide a platform to explore the trauma and socio-economic repercussions experienced by the Irish population during this devastating period. The research then delves into *Death and Nightingales* (1992), McCabe's only novel, which takes place against the backdrop of the Irish Land Wars of the 1880s. Through this work, McCabe explores historical land issues, offering insights into their impact on Ireland's history and their relevance to contemporary society. Finally, the study concludes with analyses of shorter fictions, 'Cancer,' 'Heritage,' and 'Victims.' These narratives are set amidst the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. This exploration allows for an examination of the trauma endured by individuals and communities affected by the conflict, and as well as McCabe's portrayal of loss, heritage, and victimhood.

In analyzing McCabe's literary techniques, themes, and character development, this research sheds light on his treatment of historical events and their lasting influences. The study also situates McCabe's works within their socio-political contexts, examining how they reflect or challenge prevalent narratives of Irish history. By filling the gap in scholarly research on McCabe's oeuvre, this study contributes a comprehensive analysis of these three works, offering fresh insights into his literary engagement with Irish history. Through this investigation, a deeper understanding of trauma, historical legacies, and Irish identity emerges, further enriching the appreciation of McCabe's contributions to modern Irish literature.

INTRODUCTION

History, Literature and Colonialism

Aims and Key terms.

Before continuing with my discussion, it is necessary to define and outline the key terms and motifs of Gothic literature. Beginning by exploring themes and motifs relative to this thesis. I address the gothic by looking at strange family settings, rape, incest, guilty family secrets, along with the dream, or nightmare motif in McCabe's work. I look at how male dominance and authority affect the choices of the female and the world they inhabit. The blood motif is an effective symbol and along with heritage, lineage, and identity reflect the primeval visceral aspects of human nature in this thesis. My study focuses on gothic trauma, one of the key terms of this study, which looks at how the characters in McCabe's oeuvre experience and deal with their trauma. I discuss feminist perspectives and critiques, like the female gothic, the new woman, female sexuality, domestic and sexual abuse, and patriarchal colonialism.

The key terms discussed in this thesis include trauma, feminism, and the Irish Gothic as genre, which as a literary form emerged in the 18th century and continued its influence on into the 19th century. As a style, the gothic is characterized by its dark, mysterious psychological patterns and includes a sense of alienation and estrangement which contributes to the atmosphere of the strange and the uncanny. Gothic literature and rural gothic are often identified by their location in dark, rural, and desolated dreary places. The genre includes Irish folklore and Irish mythology and includes gothic figures, like the banshee, fairies, and other mystical entities. The gothic is preoccupied by the past and its hidden secrets and especially hidden family secrets, and their dark pasts. In McCabe's *Tales from the Poorhouse* (1999), secrets and dark pasts abound throughout the text. The mother describes her childhood past and her abuse at the hands of her father Holy John. Concealed family secrets appear in *Death and Nightingales* (1999) and the secrets and

skeletons from the closet are by way of Winter's duplicitous attainment of Clonoula . The open secret regarding Beth's true parentage troubles Billy and contributes to the strained environment of Clonoula. The question of ,deception and betrayal drive the narrative, and in the portrayal of Beth as a young woman in distress, identifies as a stock motif of the gothic .Beth lives alone with Winters and in her gothic trauma , is susceptible to threats of rape, and the hint of incest ,creating opportunities for dramatic tension in the text. Gothic violence pervades these stories, and 1880s Ireland was awash with politically motivated violent events ,like the Phoenix Park murders and the tragedy of the early 1816 Wildgoose lodge murders. The violent political Land Wars along with secret societies identified this era as specifically violent and solidifies in the later Troubles violence.

Outlining the use of gothic in Irish literature

Gothic locations are usually remote eerie landscapes, old, ruined castles with the setting symbolizing the past and remoteness.During the earlier 1840's Great Famine is a particularly Gothic event, when McCabe's Tales from the Poorhouse describes the Gothic horrors of Irish mass starvation. McCabe's *Tales* ,describe the ensuing despair at the failure of the land to provide food that for previous centuries fed the ever-growing Irish population. *Tales From the Poorhouse* (1999) also highlights the bleak desecrated land of the Great Famine, the tumbled cottages and the bleak poorhouses, sites of misery, disease, and despair. The loss of the home, the loss of a sense of place, and the spectral haunting of the Famine dead instigate and bring about a culture of immigration up to the present day. Looking at the representation of trauma from personal trauma to transgenerational trauma. The term transgenerational trauma involves the transmission of emotional pain, stress, and unresolved grief from one generation to another. A feature of the legacy of transgenerational trauma is for years the lack of a discussion on the Famine and across Irish society an almost reticence to engage with the trauma of this event. There are a few stark reminders of the Famine poorhouses just some of the artefacts kept from the soup kitchens. The

famine as an event, like the later Troubles is seen as among some of the more traumatic events in Irish history. I discuss the post-colonial-gothic looking at Irish history focusing on the Anglo-Irish, and their influence as Irish gothic writers. Themes of identity and history feature prominently in Irish history and this thesis focuses on a sense of displacement, trauma, oppression, and cultural conflicts in Irish history. Looking at Ireland's colonial history and the Troubles form the backdrop to McCabe's trilogy *Heaven Lies About Us*, which describes dark gothic scenes. I look at how Irish history becomes connected to the notion of the living gothic, an apt term considering the violence of Ireland's turbulent history. The gothic landscape becomes a key motif in my discussion, often reflecting a sense of dark gothic foreboding. Gothic literature also deals with situations that are essentially violent and aberrant, with a focus on extreme psychological states. This contributes to the gothic gloomy settings of Famine Ireland, the contested landscapes of the Land Wars and the later violent Troubles. I also outline the use of the gothic in Irish literature and, as an aesthetic form across McCabe's oeuvre. My research also includes a comparative study of well know gothic literary works such as, *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker and *Carmilla* (1872) by Stephen Le Fanu, and *Drama in Muslin* by George Moore, *December Bride,* by Sam Hanna Bell and the gothic *Wuthering Heights* (2003) by Emily Bronte. These texts incorporate similar gothic themes and like *Death and Nightingales* (1999) and *Dracula* (1897) provide a fascinating lens through which I explore McCabe's gothic writing. For example, both *Dracula* (1897) and *Death and Nightingales* (1992) include several dream scenes that contribute to both tales, eerie and supernatural atmosphere. The opening scene of *Death and Nightingales* (1992)includes Beth's gothic trauma of awakening from a dream ,in which she sees herself poisoning Billy Winters. Equally the dream motif in *Dracula* is an important one when both Mina and Jonathan recall bad dreams. In both cases remembering dreams and being aware of the visit from vampires signals their trouble sleeping and signal a prelude to danger in both texts. In *Death and Nightingales* further gothic similarities to the text *Dracula* are deciphered

when , Dummy McGonnell lets Beth know Liam Ward and Blinky Blessing plan to murder her. He has seen the grave they prepared for her. Beth stunned and distressed witnesses the grave and notes ,beside the grave and 'lying at the base of the tree was a masonry hammer with a long steel-pointed edge on one side, and the rope, exactly as described' (McCabe 1992:186-187)The similarities being, the spiked metal stake can be compared to the stake used to impale Lucy in *Dracula*. Billy Winters as landlord also bears the characteristics of the vampire and he also resembles the renowned vampire, Polidori's Lord Ruthven.

The principal claim of this thesis examines gothic trauma in the work of Eugene McCabe. I appraise McCabe's writing through a theoretical framework examining the impact of trauma on Eugene McCabe's characters, from the 1840s Great Famine to the violence of the Northern Ireland Troubles, through to the contemporary Irish social order. I have appraised McCabe's writing concentrating on Irish history's violent and traumatic historical events, on trauma and its transgenerational resonances in his only novel *Death and Nightingales* (1992) *Christ in the Fields* (1993), and *Tales from A Poorhouse,* (1999). I have addressed these narratives through an innovative examination of themes and theories indicative of the relationship between trauma, memory, and violence in a postcolonial context. McCabe's treatment of female sexuality, along with an appraisal of the key role of the female Gothic heroine is examined in this thesis. By developing the concept of what the 'Irish' Gothic is, I have focused on McCabe's writing, which as a previously neglected writer, adapts some of the conventions of the Gothic genre.

McCabe has penned an impressive but exiguous oeuvre. His literary output includes his only novel, *Death, and Nightingales* (1992), *Christ in the Fields* (1993), *Tales from the Poorhouse,* (1999), *King of the Castle* (1978), *Pull Down a Horseman and Gale Day* (1979). McCabe also wrote a children's book, *Cyril; The Quest of an Orphaned Squirrel* (1998) and a novella, The *Love of Sisters* published 2009.

Research questions.

The research questions that lead to this investigation looks at, what are the manifestations of gothic trauma in the literary works of Eugene McCabe, and how these narratives reflect broader societal and cultural anxieties? Eugene McCabe's writing incorporates elements of the gothic genre, and what are the key characteristics of this incorporation in his writing? What is the nature of the gothic trauma evident in McCabe's literature, and how does it manifest itself in the context of Irish history and culture? How does the concept of trauma in McCabe's work intersect with the broader themes of feminine identity, the female gothic, and the new woman? What are the literary and stylistic techniques that McCabe employs to convey the gothic trauma in his writing, and how do these techniques function within the context of Irish literature and history?

Application of the framework and the contribution to scholarship.

This thesis explores Eugene McCabe's literature within the framework of gothic trauma. McCabe provides an important fictional response to the unspoken emotional truths and traumatic resonances rooted in Irish history. This resonates particularly in colonialism, the Great Famine and the 'Troubles.' I read McCabe's writing primarily through a historical and a gothic lens. Notwithstanding, my supervisor Eoin Flannery and my external examiner Christina Howes, publication of articles on the gothic motif and eco-philosophy, mine is the first in-depth study of Eugene McCabe's work and the first extended study using a gothic framework. Furthermore, my thesis makes a valuable contribution to the field of literary scholarship by delving into the examination and exploration of how Irish and more generally relevant fiction, unveils the psychic realities and psychological trauma experienced by individuals, families, and communities in the context of a broader socio-political milieu. My thesis emerges through its distinctive contribution to knowledge, as it not only extends and advances the research on gothic trauma in McCabe's

works, but also enriches our understanding of the broader Irish gothic tradition. Moreover, this thesis constitutes a noteworthy addition to the scholarly discourse surrounding McCabe's oeuvre.

Results/Findings:

The significance of my findings are instrumental in advancing our understanding of the gothic trauma in McCabe's literature. My research has significant implications for the broader academic community, as my thesis can be viewed as a reference document for future scholarship. My in-depth analysis of McCabe's work contributes to a broader understanding of Irish literature, to the gothic genre, and the historical context of Northern Ireland. My approach or methodological method is the originality of my data source, as I interviewed Eugene McCabe for this thesis. This demonstrates my commitment to only using primary research and to collating only original data. By interviewing McCabe, I gained access to information that is not readily available through published sources. McCabe's personal accounts of his life experiences during the Troubles and their cultural influences have greatly aided my interpretation of his literature. This is highly relevant in my understanding of McCabe's broader literary landscape. It enhances the accuracy of my analysis and contributes to the research field by providing new and unique insights into his writing. I have also included certain elements in my writing that are guided by his input and sheds light on the themes, symbolism, and artistic choices I have made, regarding Eugene McCabe's writing. My research reveals a deeper understanding of the intricacies within McCabe's works, shedding light on the complexities of Irish literature and its broader implications for scholarship in this field. These findings contribute to a more nuanced appreciation of the interplay between individual narratives and the socio-political backdrop in Irish literature, offering fresh perspectives for future research and academic exploration. In an overview of the findings in my thesis, I explore how Eugene McCabe incorporates elements of a gothic trauma in his writing, particularly in the context of Northern Ireland and the Troubles. In my analysis of McCabe's dark gothic writing and as a

study of the Great Famine, I have identified *Tales from the Poorhouse* (1999) by McCabe as a notable dark piece of gothic literature. The Great Famine has been studied by numerous writers but this study recounts not just the historical complexities and social nuances of the Famine, but the intimate details of Irish families and their gothic Famine experiences. The bleak and dismal environment of hunger, dread, and fear all define Ireland's Famine era and McCabe's utilises the colloquial and descriptive language of the local Irish peasantry. This then is offset by his use of modernist techniques in his writing, for example the sense of alienation, the disillusion effect, and the delving into the psychological effects of the Famine victims. These literary strategies further accentuate the dismal air of hopelessness and despair of Famine Ireland and symbolize the inner turmoil or psychological state of the characters in McCabe's writing.

Overview of the organization and Content of the Chapters.

This thesis includes three main chapters, Chapter 1, *Tales from the Poorhouse,* Chapter 2*, Death and Nightingales*, and Chapter 3, the 'Troubles Trilogy': 'Cancer', 'Heritage', and 'Victims'. The thesis is subdivided into smaller sections or sub-chapters, and I address gothic trauma and the socio-political concerns in the texts. Chapter 1 addresses the Famine, Chapter 2, looks at female sexuality and the Big House motif, and Chapter 3, examines Gothic trauma in the 'Troubles' Trilogy. Beginning with Chapter 1, I look at the Anglo-Irish and the Post-colonial Gothic'. Considering Irish history and the Anglo-Irish as a group, they became established in Ireland through the colonization and plantation of Ireland. This section looks at how this group set down roots in Ireland and antagonized the native Irish, by depriving Catholics of their land, leading to resentments that stretch back to the 1641 rebellion to the latter-day Troubles. Describing how the gothic becomes an important aspect of McCabe's fiction and from the outset, the gothic has been construed as a manifestation of Anglo-Irish guilt and alienation. Their fears are certainly a response to their perceived marginalization within Irish society, and acutely aware of their

complex position as a minority with dual identities, as both Irish and British. Hence the Anglo-Irish adapt gothic literature as a platform, through which their gothic trauma and historical experiences find resonance. Anglo-Irish writers and their lineage have influenced latter day gothic writers like Eugene McCabe. This becoming manifested in the focus of their writing, and mainly based on issues like colonialism, land ownership and inheritance. As a group, historical links and connections can be made between the Anglo-Irish and Gothic fiction, W.J. McCormack 'traces a line of descent from largely forgotten novelists of the 1790s through Charles Maturin, Lady Morgan, Sheridan Le Fanu, William Carleton, Oscar Wilde, and Bram Stoker to W.H. B. Yeats. J.M. Synge and Elizabeth Bowen (Keogh 2014:34). Among these we can cite; Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871) Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

Predictably, Irish history becomes directly tied to the Anglo-Irish and the Irish Gothic. This next short chapter looks at Irish history as the living gothic with a particular focus on Brexit. Having spoken to Eugene McCabe about the negotiations around Britain's exit from the European union, he raised concerns about the stability and future of the peace process. While writing this thesis, negotiations on how Britain would leave the European Union became a new fear for Ireland and its inhabitants. Having previously discussed the Anglo-Irish gothic and its connection to colonialism and land rights Brexit's is important here. Referring to the historical context and the potential implications for Ireland, the developments around Brexit meant the hard-won Peace Process and the Good Friday agreement were in a precarious position. There is a real tangible significance to the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement in resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland. Because Eugene McCabe's work is specifically tied to the trauma of the Northern Ireland Troubles and because he talked at length about the conflict, my approach becomes based on our Irish history.

In this next sub- section, I define trauma and transgenerational trauma as key aspects of this study. Trauma and its connection to the war-torn areas of the world align with Ireland and its unsettled legacies of colonialism. These sub-chapter address trauma in McCabe ‘s works and examines trauma in *Tales from the Poorhouse*, to the effects of Northern Ireland s violence in ‘Cancer’ ‘Heritage’ and ‘Victims’ encompassed in *Heaven Lies About Us* (2005).I also explore transgenerational trauma along with the notion of the living gothic becomes directly related to the Great Famine and the Northern Ireland Troubles. This chapter utilizes works from trauma theorists like Cathy Caruth, and Dominick La Capra who focus on trauma from the past and its perception as a haunted presence. The focus of this segment is on transgenerational trauma also known as intergenerational trauma. It is recognized as a concept that parents or grandparents subconsciously communicate experiences of trauma to subsequent generations. A feature of Northern Ireland society is the drive by both Protestants and Catholics to celebrate their individual cultures with parades and marches. These events commemorated by adherents of both Catholic and Protestant faiths, evoke the violence and the haunting gothic trauma of the Troubles. They primarily evoke memories of the Troubles, and essentially summon up dark memories and traumas of past violent events.

Turning our attention to the central chapters, the focus of this segment is Chapter One; Hunger and Resistance in *Tales from the Poorhouse (*1999). Set in rural Ireland at the height of the Great Famine, these four short stories describe the harrowing portrait of the Irish famine, capturing the diverse experience of each protagonist. The opening story ‘The Orphan’ sets the tone of the book and describes the determination and resilience of Roisín who loses nearly all her family during the Famine. Her gothic trauma is delineated by the loss of her beloved sister Grace, and her newborn baby, a death most likely caused by their mother, Mary Brady. Roisín also must confine her ailing younger brother, Micilín, within their tumbled cottage and wait until his passing. The

gothic trauma of her Famine experiences is testament to her strength and resistance and drives her to leave Ireland and emigrate to America. 'The Master,' too is haunted by his Famine experiences and is hardened by his daily supervision of the inmates at the poorhouse. His gothic trauma reaches a point of crisis when he denies his young sister and her baby shelter at the poorhouse. His story ends with his complete breakdown motivated by regret at how he behaved to his only living family. 'The Landlord' is a story of the declining power of the Anglo-Irish and Lord Clonroy as the landlord, bemoans the loss of his Big House, his wealth and property. His financial losses become minor when juxtaposed with his son Matthew's involvement in the sexual abuse of a minor. Matthew is forced to leave home or else the family will face public humiliation if he stays. Finally, 'The Mother' the last story from McCabe's *Tales from the Poorhouse* gives the account of Mary Brady's trauma and her guilt motivated by her ill-treatment of her daughter Grace. McCabe's depiction of the mother figure in this story diverges markedly from the conventional or traditional representation of the Irish motherly figure. Her trauma comes to the fore when she clashes with her husband, a poor tailor who fails to support his family during the hard hunger. She is instrumental in the death of her daughter Grace and her newborn, deaths that could be avoided if she sought aid. Roisín is disgusted at her mother's pride and her ill treatment of Grace and is another reason to seek a new life abroad.

Mary Brady is also a victim of sexual abuse in this story, and it describes how as a child, her father Holy John, a pillar of the local church sexually abuses her. McCabe includes Holy John and his actions highlighting the merging of his rigid Catholicism with a gothic perversity. The trauma of Famine continues to influence Irish writing, and, in this section, we further explore the significance of McCabe's short stories. I look at the attitudes to the Famine from the British government at the time and its effects in Ireland. Caruth's examination of trauma and the theory behind it also help define trauma experienced by the Irish population at this time. Examining the

links between the short story form and key terms such as the Gothic and modernist writing, McCabe's short stories and the short story form are an important influence in all Irish literature. A similar link is made in Chapter 2, where the discussion is on Female Sexuality and the Big House Gothic in *Death and Nightingales* (1992) The themes examined in this section looks at the political background to *Death and Nightingales*, like the reference to Charles Stuart Parnell, the Land Acts and the Land league and its impact on the protagonists in the text. The narrative is set in rural Fermanagh in the year 1883 and it is written around the time of the Enniskillen Omagh bombing in 1987 it scrutinizes the colonial relationship between Ireland and England. The narrative is focalized through the two principal characters Billy Winters and his stepdaughter Beth Winters and McCabe incorporates dominant themes of treachery, love, and betrayal with the introduction of a clear historical perspective. Colonialism, the importance of blood lines and a continuance of lineage are all important strands in this novel. I examine the gothic vampire tradition and especially the female vampire by examining Le Fanu's *Carmilla* in nineteenth-century Ireland and I look at the dream motif and how it applies to Beth in *Death and Nightingales*. I also focus on legacy and the blood motif as a symbol along with *Dracula* compares to the now defunct Anglo-Irish. The vampires are all representative of the Irish gothic tradition and *Carmilla* as illustrative of the female gothic. Le Fanu 's gothic modes depict feminine dispossession and the erasure of maternal histories through marriage, as well as, in the case of *Carmilla*, filial loyalty to a father. Continuing with the theme of Irish gothic literature, McCabe scrutinizes the portrayal of the feminine in his writing. I include Simone Beauvoir's claims on the representation of women and how they are viewed. This section also highlights, how the control of the female body and its procreative abilities become allied with the recurrent anxieties related to the female body. Blood as a thematic element is also a central part of this discussion and Roisín's femininity and the flow of blood invokes female reproduction and the vampire in *Dracula.* Maria Parson's paper on the Victorian obsession with blood, the female

menstrual cycle and madness becomes an influential part of this story. McCabe also looks at female sexuality and the pervasive silence around the female body. Lucy from *Dracula* is coalesced with the female Roisín from 'The Orphan' and looks at the challenging of Victorian mores relevant to both stories.

From a historical perspective, the uncertain future of the Anglo-Irish upper class and their declining power in Ireland becomes the central theme of big house fiction. I examine the big house in *Death and Nightingales* as symbolic of the Anglo-Irish presence in Ireland and are seen as rural centers of political power and wealth in Ireland. Most of these big houses occupied property confiscated from native Catholic families in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. I examine the trope of the absentee landlord and how it is used to critique the numerous estates falling into disrepair. This due to bad management on the part of landlords. Continuing with similar themes like the Land wars and the strife of early nineteenth century Ireland. *Drama in Muslin* (1886) *and Death and Nightingales (1992)* displays the tumultuous atmosphere of this era. Class is also a dominant motif in *Drama in Muslin* and is overtly represented 'throughout the novel images of stark divisions are presented to the reader; the Bartons and their friends are constantly figured apart from the crowd, disconnected from the peasants in the countryside and the workers in Dublin.' (Hand 2011:103). *Death and Nightingales* includes marriage and the marriage plot as one of the presiding themes in both novels. Like Eugene McCabe's stance on female autonomy, Moore's writing expresses sympathy for women who are constrained by restrictive prohibitive mores, and in this regard, he was partaking of an established literary tradition. Shifting our focus to the next comparative text we can draw further comparisons with McCabe's *Death and Nightingales (1992)* this time with a text that also addresses the victimization of women and the Irish heroine*, s*pecifically *December Bride (1951)* by Sam Hanna Bell. In examining the ways of the country folk of Ulster and the sectarian bias that divided the

two communities, *December Bride* is an excellent and useful text to compare with Eugene McCabe's works. I examine how both texts combine similar themes looking at land, inheritance and the foretelling of the political bitterness that characterizes latter-day Northern Ireland. Consequently, the menage trois at the Echlin household has resonances of Billy Winters, Catherine Winters, and Beth. Turning to themes of land and inheritance, the sub-chapter entitled a contested landscape focuses on the beauty of the nature and the landscape and how the two Ulster traditions, Catholic and Protestant view the land and the many antagonisms connected to it. Nature is viewed as both beautiful but also dark, gothic, threatening and dangerous, and in *Death and Nightingales* McCabe represents nature with dual aspects, both pleasant and bucolic but also a gothic site of menace. Moving on from one novel to the next, I look at *Wuthering Heights* and examine the striking similarities that can be drawn between McCabe's *Death and Nightingales (1992)* and *Wuthering Heights (1847)* by Emily Bronte, in terms of sexuality and femininity. Both texts are riven with conflicting emotions, and both partake of gothic themes in the competing motifs of love, violence, and tragic death. Both novels share similar scenes of uneasy relationships between the dark brooding gothic hero and the heroine, Beth and Winters in *Death and Nightingales* and Heathcliff and Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) Interestingly the name Catherine has a particular resonance in both *Wuthering Heights* and *Death and Nightingales.* Equally, both texts can be read in terms of the female gothic as, the female protagonists display the visceral passions and the intense and primal passions of the vampire.

As we transition to the next and final Chapter 3, I examine the Gothic trauma in the 'Troubles' Trilogy: 'Cancer', 'Heritage' and 'Victims', and these three short stories provide a perspective on the gothic trauma experienced in Northern Ireland Beginning with 'Cancer' which is penned from a decidedly Catholic perspective, McCabe counters this by including 'Heritage' which is written from the Protestant perspective. These stories delve into the deep-rooted conflicts and

traumas that have plagued Northern Ireland for decades and McCabe sheds light on the enduring impact of the conflict, and the complex interplay of warring near neighbors, of religion, politics, and history in the region. 'Cancer' describes the lives of two bachelor brothers Dinny and Joady who live alone on a dilapidated farm in rural South Fermanagh. Joady has been diagnosed with cancer of the blood and his cancer becomes an allegory for the Troubles that ravage Joady's body and that of the body politic of Northern Ireland. Myth is a constant in this story and is placed alongside violence, heritage, genealogy, the Big House, inheritance, blood, and bloodlines. There are copious references to blood and the links to Stoker's *Dracula*, and his pride in his family genealogy becomes a notable component of the story. Death and the violence of the Troubles feature prominently with the inclusion of a car bomb and its deadly consequences. The pub scene in the story also illustrates the tensions between Protestant and Catholic farmers living and farming near one another. McCabe inserts some humor in this scene, but it also shows the visceral hatreds between both groups. The return of the repressed becomes envisioned in the memory of Dinny's father, who also died of cancer, a sense of dèja vú connects their father's vampiric illness to Joady's condition. The next story 'Heritage' describes the gothic trauma of a young farmer Eric who is also a UDA volunteer officer and his shock when he discovers a message from the IRA. The message is clear leave the UDR or be murdered like his fellow UDR volunteer men. This story includes the complexity of life in Northern Ireland at this time. Eric and his mother have a good relationship with the Catholic Maggie who helps on the farm and in the house despite the question of her Catholicism and her relationship with Eric's father, her presence is still accepted in the home. The plot unfolds with the antagonisms and violence between Catholics and Protestants and Eric a UDR officer is placed in an impossible situation. He must support his Protestant girlfriend in her grief at the death of members of her family. He also must cope with his uncle George's adverse sectarianism and his blind hatred of Catholics. The narrative proceeds with Eric in the hazardous position of trying to remain loyal to his Protestant heritage but also

presenting a polite veneer to his Catholic neighbors. The situation becomes untenable and seeing no way out, he chooses death by suicide.

Proceeding to the final story, 'Victims' a novella, is crafted as a latter-day big house narrative. It describes a hostage situation, a scenario that was all too familiar in Ireland in the early to late 1970's. The story is introduced by the origins and demise of the Big House tradition and describes the hostage taking of the Anglo-Irish Armstrong family and their guests at their big house, Inver house. As emblematic of the colonial gothic the Armstrongs epitomize the decay of the last of the gentry class in 1970s Ireland. The story deals with a kidnap situation and the fraught interactions between the hostages and their captors throughout the siege. The IRA gang includes Isabella Lynam a 23 year old Arts graduate and an IRA volunteer. As the story progresses, class becomes a central theme as Isabella recognizes one of the kidnap victims Millicent Armstrong, a girl with whom she had attended college. Unlike her fellow gunmen and because of her background, Isabella, and the Armstrong's share far more in common than the subversive gang.

The interplay between the male terrorists and Isabella represents some of the notions attached to feminism at this time in Ireland. Northern Ireland was an extremely traditional patriarchal society, and, in many ways, the hierarchy of the IRA reflected the structure of the Catholic church. This story also represents Isabella's fear of becoming one of the disappeared, of being secretly abducted and murdered. The traumas of the families of the disappeared demonstrates how the Troubles transformed Irish landscapes into dark gothic spaces. Another feature of this story is how the men in the IRA gang display definite misogynistic attitudes towards women, and from the start Isabella's encounter with Jack Gallagher renders their association toxic.

Isabella is also troubled by the matriarch Harriet Armstrong and her plea to release her pregnant daughter Millicent. Isabella is clearly agitated now she knows one of the family, however she

remains true to the IRA plan to continue with the kidnapping. Her emotions are at a heightened state as she is also dealing with her recent choice of having an abortion. This story also represents Isabella's fear of becoming one of the disappeared, of being secretly abducted and murdered. McCabe emphasizes the contrast between 'the violent masculinity of the male characters and Isabella's femininity and her reverence for nature, thereby illustrating not only the detrimental effects of disregarding the equal worth of all beings on the environment but also the ecological self. Violence done to the environment and to the Other is violence done to one's self' (Howes 2023:177)

Before the gang travel to Inver house, they rendezvous at the McAleer house known by the IRA as a safe house. It is interesting to note that in addition to the political resonances of this story, there are strong feminist implications and McCabe not only addresses political issues, but also conveys important themes relating to gender equality. The McAleer's home and the mother are represented in exaggerated terms melding a staunch republicanism with Catholicism. In Mrs. McAleer we see the traits of the monstrous mother and looking at gender through the prism of feminist analysis the portrayal of Mr. McAleer is physically, psychologically, and culturally the embodiment of the maternal grotesque. The hostage situation reaches a climax when Alex Crawford, a friend of Armstrong's, is murdered. The lack of restraint from the kidnappers intimidates the kidnapped victims but nothing prepares Isabella for the compromise reached. She and the McAleer twins are offered up in exchange for three far more valuable IRA terrorists. The kidnapping and the story end with Harriet Armstrong tired and struggling from the emotional trauma of the previous hours. Harriet concludes with a testament to the beauty of the natural world around her, from an ecological perspective and in relation to the 'Troubles' violence, Harriet's reflection suggests a strong sense of hope remains, despite the violence she has witnessed.

Further research and the limitations of this study.

In evaluating how my PhD thesis on 'Gothic Trauma in the Work of Eugene McCabe' has made a significant contribution to scholarship. First, I believe my research has added to the existing body of knowledge in the field of gothic literature and trauma studies. Secondly my thesis has filled gaps in the literature and has expanded the understanding of these topics. In my analysis of gothic trauma, my thesis employed the gothic as an innovative and underexplored theoretical framework. In my approach or methodology, I used a gothic framework in my research methodologies, data collection, and analysis techniques. Because I used data from my interview with McCabe ,I regard my thesis as a unique and valuable contribution to future scholarship, and the impact of my research has set a precedent for further study on McCabe's works.

Limitations of the Study.

Regarding the limitation of my study means I could not adequately cover or address all of McCabe's works. I focused on *Tales from the Poorhouse* , *Death and Nightingales,* and the *'Troubles Trilogy'; '*Cancer', 'Heritage', and 'Victims'. Looking at the scope and generalizability of my study I am limited to these specific set of works by Eugene McCabe, and a particular aspect of gothic trauma. I am acknowledging that my findings do not apply to his entire body of work but specifically to the works detailed above .Certainly there are themes, like class ,the eco-gothic, space and architecture and transgenerational trauma that warrants further research. Also, and because a great deal of my research was carried out during the Covid pandemic, I was unable to access certain writing and works that would have aided my research on Eugene McCabe's writing.

Areas for future research.

Areas for future research include the issue of class ,the eco-gothic, space and architecture and transgenerational trauma . I especially feel the academic community would benefit from an in-

depth study of McCabe's work encapsulating these themes. Speaking with Eugene McCabe from the outset, McCabe spoke about Northern Ireland's past, and he identified the importance of the Rebellion of 1641 and the massacre of Protestant settlers as a decisive informant of the latter-day Troubles. This period of Irish history contributed to Protestant insecurities and their fear of extinction in Northern Ireland. In McCabe's view, Protestant communities have passed on their fears and traumas from one generation to the next, and the Gothic horror of this history becomes a reality in the communal reprisals and counter-reprisals. McCabe traces the legacies and traumas of the unresolved conflict back through history and up to the modern-day conflict between Catholics and Protestants. McCabe's writing furnishes both Catholic and Protestant perspectives in his stories. Religious beliefs and modes of representation are central to the mythologies of competing Northern Irish narratives, as Graham Dawson states:

> myth is understood to mean damaging misconceptions and falsehoods about the past embedded in popular consciousness which fuel the atavistic political identities of Ulster Unionism and Irish nationalism and stir up political violence. The haunting memories and myths of such experiences demonstrate the power of violence and atrocities to haunt survivors into the present. While 'history is used to refer to the more objective and truthful knowledge about the past produced by apparently disinterested professional historians whose task is to challenge and deconstruct those myths. (Dawson 2007: 35).

For McCabe too there could be nothing innocent about the functioning of such mythologies, and Patterson concurs, arguing that 'throughout the country, family mythology, historical mythology should be tagged with health warnings. Myth can induce a form of madness and zealotry that leads to death' (Patterson 2011:161). McCabe is a writer whose work is vitally important to modern Irish writing and has never been studied in this depth before. There is a distinct lack of scholarly works on McCabe's oeuvre, and I intend to close this gap by advancing and building on McCabe's literary engagement with three milestone events in Irish history. We address three pivotal periods in Irish history in chronological order, beginning first with *Tales from The*

Poorhouse (1999) set during the Great Famine of 1845, which deals with the trauma of hunger, death, and injustice during one of Ireland's greatest humanitarian disasters. Next, we move to *Death and Nightingales*(1992), which is set during the turbulent Irish Land Wars of the 1880s and deals with historical land issues that shape Ireland's history today. Finally, I conclude with the trauma of the Troubles trio, 'Cancer,' 'Heritage' and 'Victims' collected most recently in McCabe's *Heaven Lies About Us* (2005), a story sequence that is set in the dark Gothic days of the Troubles.

Ireland's colonial history, then, is a cornerstone context and thematic of McCabe's novelistic and short fictions. And our argument accords with Flannery's contention that 'despite the apparent constitutional parity granted to Ireland as part of its union with Britain, many contemporary Irish cultural critics and historians readily affirm its historical condition as that of a colonised society' (Flannery 2021: 22). The protracted and varied history of colonialism is firmly embedded in versions of Irish national identity and is intrinsically linked to a Gothic Irish history. Again, as Flannery maintains in his reading of Irish gothic literature, the country's colonial history and McCabe's writing, the Gothic is well-suited to the historical and traumatic events of both Northern Ireland and the Famine. McCabe's Gothic texts navigate the nexus of land and violence, and he addresses the resultant social anxieties in terms of trauma. Political tensions proliferate in McCabe's stories, with fixations on borders, for example, Northern Ireland's physical border and the origin of the schisms attached to it before and after partition.

In a society like Northern Ireland, the emotional and psychological effects of colonialism are evident in the residues of trauma and rage that coexist alongside other environmental states and feelings. Picking up on this aspect of Irish colonial history, via the work of Alvin Jackson, Flannery posits that: 'Jackson opens up a crucial field of debate within postcolonial studies. He suggests the extent to which a reductive reliance upon empirical facts too often conceals the

affective peculiarities of inter-communal and interpersonal relations within colonial societies' (Flannery 2021: 22).McCabe's writing places a particular focus on the local and the parochial, as well as aforementioned 'intercommunal and interpersonal relations' of his Monaghan farming community.

McCabe's skill as a writer has never been questioned, but what has caused comment in literary circles is the lack of a comprehensive study of his work. This dissertation will correct this anomaly, and by examining his work from varied perspectives, I intend to reinvigorate a renewed interest in McCabe and his Gothic writing. In his ability to outline the complexities of the Northern Ireland conflict, he narrates the origins of the underlying conflicts in Northern Ireland, touching upon the inherited nature of the so-called 'Troubles.' For instance, his short stories give credence to both sides Catholic and Protestant, evincing a thought-provoking empathy that can only come from having witnessed the suffering and distress visited on both communities. Much of McCabe's naturalistic writing circulates around the themes of land, inheritance, and loss. And his body of work coheres with John Wilson Foster's assertion that: 'all of these divisive social forces that draw or drive people off the land provide the plots and dramatic tension in a good deal of rural fiction after Carlton' (Foster 1974: 26). McCabe situates his Gothic writing within the ambience of the local, and his stories inhabit the rural natural world in their depictions of the primitive and the ritualistic. The themes of betrayal and of treachery are constants of McCabe's writing and, in *Death and Nightingales*, in particular, he merges the fraught socio-political background of the shocking 1882 Phoenix Park murders with the later Troubles of the 1970s.

Eileen Battersby, the late *Irish Times*' critic, has described his Ireland as 'a bleak hell of angry sex and tribal hatreds; there are few moments of tenderness, and little humour' (Battersby 2005:

13). McCabe is well placed on the border to see the results of a fractious history that becomes the historical backdrop to the story, *Death, and Nightingales* (1992).

As McCabe's only novel, *Death and Nightingales* anticipates the future political and sectarian violence of the Troubles that divided Ulster from the 1960s through to the late 1990s. As a personal love story, it mirrors the bitter, acrimonious strife of twentieth-century Northern Ireland before the existing peace process. It provided McCabe with the stimulus and motivation to write much of his fiction. Sadly, many of his stories can be traced to real-life events, adding to the poignancy of his narratives. Living and farming on the Northern Ireland border, McCabe captures the atmosphere of hatred and violence of the Northern Ireland Troubles. In an ethnographic approach to assessing the health needs in post-Troubles Northern Ireland, the devastating effects of the violence point to recent ethnographic studies of individuals enmeshed in trauma and traumatic situations. Ethnographic studies carried out by researchers at Ulster University note the different approaches to targeting the health and social needs of Northern Ireland and the focus on its orientation:

> Researchers from Ulster University's Psychology Department, Bunting, Ennis, Ferry, Murphy, and O'Neill, have produced a body of research that has informed and influenced government policy to tackle mental illness arising from NI's violent sectarian civil conflict, known colloquially as the Troubles. The conflict dominated life in NI in the latter half of the 20th century and resulted in over 3,500 deaths, 34,000 shootings, and 14,000 bombings. Although paramilitary activity continues, the worst of the violence ended with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. (Bunting et al 2012:1)

The events from the Northern Ireland Troubles constitute a traumatic pathology and it has been noted the events from the Northern Ireland Troubles constitute such a traumatic pathology and influences how victims deal with and internalise those traumatic experiences. There is good cause

to believe then that a Gothic terror and fear permeate victims' attempts to vocalise their suffering. This is especially true in relation to calamitous events, such as the Famine and the Northern Ireland Troubles. In this dissertation, I explore the psychological trauma that characterised much of the suffering experienced by the characters in these narratives. Chronicling events from a historical perspective but with as what Smyth describes as the 'profound infiltration of history by geography' (Smith 1997:140). McCabe forewarns of the deeply divided sectarian society of Northern Ireland, and the Troubles while living and experiencing its effects. Speaking with McCabe in an informal meeting in 2018, he reflected on the fallout from the trauma of the Troubles, when he stated, 'the deep hatreds are still here and have not gone away' and he identifies colonization and the 1641 rebellion as central to the Troubles narrative. The recollection of incidents was largely based on the memory of the Catholic rebellion of 1641, and this Gothic memory and the 'gruesome imageries' and 'typologies in which it was expressed set the limits for the Gothic identity in a typological theatre' (Killeen 2005: 23).

The Anglo-Irish and Postcolonial Gothic:

The colonization of Ireland locates the origins of the Anglo-Irish as a group who became established in Ireland through the process of plantation, when the British Tudor monarchy moved settlers from England and Scotland onto land in Ireland. Escheatment was a system set in place by Queen Elizabeth I whereby the plantations involved the mass confiscation of land from Irish landowners and the subsequent importation of numerous settlers and labourers from England and Wales, and later from Scotland. As Darby details '[t]he Ulster clans, under Hugh O'Neill, succeeded in overcoming their instinctive rivalries to create an effective alliance against Elizabeth's armies. After a long and damaging campaign, Ulster was eventually brought under English control and the Irish leaders left for Europe' (Darby 1995:16). By the end of Elizabeth's reign, and her death, in 1603, English rule had been well-established all over Ireland aided by

military conquest, and by the 'early eighteenth century the bulk of Irish land had passed from Gaelic or Old English (as the Catholic descendants of earlier conquerors are known) to New English or Scottish landowners' (O'Gráda 2004:1). In Ireland, the Gothic is more visibly political, and is epitomised in the anxieties of the Anglo-Irish who were part of the Ascendancy in Ireland up until the 1801 Act of Union. When the Act uniting Great Britain and Ireland was passed, it essentially destroyed the power of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland.

As a Gothic writer ,McCabe draws upon the colonial roots of Irish history, of the conflict and the resulting traumatic violence[1]. In this context, and as we alluded to above, McCabe's works engage with the histories of the Anglo–Irish community in Ireland and their memory of their traumatic pasts. As Julian Moynahan outlines in his study of the Anglo-Irish:

> Anglo-Irish literature is that body of writings in English produced by the English settlers and their descendants, who began coming into Ireland around 1167, commencing with the invasion of the Earl of Pembroke, Richard FitzGilbert de Clare, called Strongbow,
> and the arrival a few years later of the English and Angevin King, French-speaking Henry II (Moynahan 1995: 3)

This particular group arrived in Ireland and by conquest and colonization settled on misappropriated lands.[2] Jarlath Killeen details that the descendants of the Cambro-Normans had invaded Ireland in the 12th century and found favour with Henry II and proceeded to take

[1] Killeen argues plausibly that "figures as substantial as Maturin, Le Fanu, Wilde, Stoker, Yeats, Synge, and Bowen…have a connection to the same political and geographical space…recourse to the same broadly defined conventions of Gothic…[and] some thematic associations….' (21) He also establishes that the 'Irishness' of Irish Gothic relates to its practitioners having 'had some important Irish connection,' having 'dealt with Irish issues," and having been 'partially influenced by (or at least vaguely aware of) an Irish line of precursors(Haslam 20073-26)

[2] These settlers by conquest ,the greatest number of whom turn Protestant in the late Tudor period ,are a powerful and privileged group, though always a minority in the Irish population until they fade out of the picture after the Peace Treaty between Britain and Sinn Fein in 1922 frees most of Ireland from direct English rule.(Moynahan 1995:3)

political control of the country. The newly arrived English settlers were motivated by both religious incentives and personal advancement, and across a subsequent century strove to deprive all Catholics in Ireland of power, whether they were native or of Norman descent. McCabe focuses on these roots and the subsequent resentments that originate back to the 1641 rebellion and the original colonization of Ireland. He points to this period in Irish history as the catalyst for the later trauma of the Northern Ireland Troubles. Irish history in particular has always suffered from the horrors of the past and its incursion into the present, and as Luke Gibbons argues Irish history might be better viewed through the tropes and themes of literary Gothic than those of literary realism (Killeen 2005: 13). In his review of the Anglo-Irish, Foster observes that:

> From the inside of the demesne wall, a sense of threat was inevitable" during this period. He also suggests a connection between the precariousness of the Anglo-Irish position and the emergence of the paranoid gothic, pointing out that "as the nineteenth century wore on," the Anglo-Irish, experiencing themselves as marginalized in Irish society, produced increasingly paranoid persecution scenarios. (Foster 2006: 247-48)

The land becomes the cause of the simmering tensions, it is the causal agency of Gothicised vindictiveness, and, crucially for our argument, it is a central theme of McCabe's writing. The early settlers, who later became the Anglo-Irish, had themselves been landless and displaced, and often were soldiers promised land in lieu of their war service ,and on receiving land from the crown assimilated themselves into Irish society as full Irish citizens. As Backus clarifies: '[t]he Anglo-Irish settler colonialist family therefore took on specialized meanings in terms of wealth and material security, along with a specialized relationship to national identity and social feelings of belonging' (Backus 1999: 23). Unable to achieve social and political advancement in England, the Anglo-Irish settler sought to establish themselves as an aristocratic member of English society.

McCabe's writing identifies this era of Irish history as predictably ripe for Gothic expression because much of the literary trappings were already in place. Terry Eagleton states:

> As the nineteenth century drew on, the Anglo-Irish had more and more reason to believe that this was their condition; and that most exemplary of all Gothic states of being — paranoia - was one unnerving consequence of it. For Gothic is the nightmare of the besieged and reviled - of women, most notably, but in this case of a minority marooned within a largely hostile people to whom they are socially, religiously, and ethnically alien. (Eagleton 1995: 188)

For the Anglo-Irish, then, as a grouping, the contrast between the Protestant and Catholic religions, their faith and the differentiation between their theological doctrines emerges, resulting in a torturous history. Thus, the once expatriate Anglo-Irish colonizer, striving to ingratiate himself into English society, assumes the persona of an exalted dignitary placing the local native Irish as both ethnically and culturally the Other. Paradoxically for the Anglo-Irish, residing in Ireland became the only way to improve their status in English society. By the end of the 19th century, Ireland retained two diametrically opposed groups, the Protestant Anglo-Irish who wholly supported the union of England and Ireland and who saw themselves as quintessentially English, and the second group, the nationalist Catholics. The difficult question of Home Rule had been a contentious issue since the abolishment of the Act of Union in the 1800s and the dissolution of the Parliament of Ireland resulted in the British government in London having full dominance over Irish affairs. This action by the English parliament meant that Ireland was no longer a separate independent country from Britain, but instead was one of Britain's colonies. Ireland was rendered as a 'liminal space [that] contained two pronounced polarities those who advocated the total submission of Ireland to English sovereignty on the one hand, and those that sought independence for Ireland through any violent means necessary'. (Newman 2019: 30).

This contention is developed by Killeen in study of Irish Gothic literature when he suggests:

> such tropes and themes are in fact the methodologies by which the Anglicans thought out their condition in Ireland in the 18th century; Indeed, Gothic is the form on which articulation of

> Anglican identity began to depend towards the end of the 18th century ,a form which assimilated multifarious fragments of 'normative' Anglicanism since 1641. (Killeen 2005: 13)

The Gothic has been construed as a manifestation of Anglo-Irish guilt and alienation, 'a fixation on the ways which the past persists in the present, as well as being caught up in a peculiarly Protestant imagination of life and death' (Smyth 1997: 52). The instability and trauma of Irish history is mirrored in the Anglo-Irish Gothic psychological experience of 'disruption rather than stability [and] is a function of [how] Irish Anglican psychology expressed itself in rhetorical strategies which eventually came together to form the Irish Gothic of the late eighteenth century' (Killeen 2005: 13). Reading the Gothic from another fruitful perspective, Jason Marc Harris claims: 'the Gothic and other literary traditions of fantasy and the fantastic have extended and stylized motifs and metaphysics that were long- standing in folklore to begin with' (cited in Markey 2014: 94). Indeed, drawing attention to their shared association with superstition, transgression of rationality, fascination with the supernatural, and repetitive recourse to familiar tropes and formulaic narrative conventions, critics have repeatedly argued that folklore is a significant source for Gothic tropes and themes.

Irish Gothic Writers and their Literature:

Ireland has a long history of producing Gothic writers and texts. Writers such as Sheridan Le Fanu, Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde are notable exemplars who have influenced Gothic contemporary writers like McCabe. The Irish Gothic writers listed above share the connection of an Anglo-Irish lineage and the Irish Gothic has most often been read as a Protestant tradition. From a historical perspective, according to Roy Foster:

> Anglo-Irish, was a nineteenth-century usage referring to those Anglican Protestants of English extraction who, from the early eighteenth century onwards, while still of dual nationality in the broadest sense, established a greater balance between their two identities and, as the eighteenth century progressed, began to shift some of their allegiance away from England towards

> Ireland: not the Ireland of the Catholic natives, but one made synonymous with themselves. (Foster 2006: 7)

In tracing the historical links between the Anglo-Irish and Gothic fiction, W. J. McCormack 'Traces a line of descent from largely forgotten novelists of the 1790s through Charles Maturin Lady Morgan, Sheridan Le Fanu, William Carleton, Oscar Wilde, and Bram Stoker to W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, and Elizabeth Bowen' (Keogh 2014: 34). Predictably, then, the Irish Gothic becomes chiefly based on colonialism and the contentiousness of land ownership and inheritance. As Flannery states, '[I]n this respect Gothic literature becomes the outlet for the Gothic trauma of the Anglo-Irish and the anxieties surrounding their place in Irish society. Such anxieties, then, have most frequently, and effectively, been mediated through the tropes of Anglo-Irish Gothic fiction and drama' (2013: 7).

The Gothic provides researchers and writers with the prospect of discovering some of the more intimate or shaded aspects of the human psyche, as it explores the inner recesses of the human mind. For the purposes of our literary engagement with McCabe's gothic fiction, Abram's description of the Gothic novel is apt. The Gothic novel, or in an alternative term, Gothic romance, is a type of prose fiction which flourished through the early nineteenth century:

> The locale was often a gloomy castle furnished with dungeons, subterranean passages, and sliding panels. The typical story focused on the sufferings imposed on an innocent heroine by a cruel and lustful villain, and made bountiful use of ghosts, mysterious disappearances, and other sensational and supernatural occurrences (which in a number of novels turned out to have natural explanations). The principal aim of such novels was to evoke chilling terror by exploiting mystery and a variety of horrors. (Abrams 1999: 111)

McCabe's narratives bear the textual characteristics of the Gothic and, as we shall explore, the psychological aspects of trauma and terror are the primary foci of the ensuing analyses. The Irish Gothic as a genre has remained a permanent fixture in Irish writing right up to the twentieth

century, and Flannery notes the degree to which Irish Gothic is 'fixated with the political, economic, and cultural exertions of Ireland's colonial relationship with England provides the motive force, as well as the temperamental anxiety, of an Irish Gothic literature that was principally authored by Protestant Anglo-Irish writers' (2013: 93) In gesturing to the origins of the Irish Gothic, as we note below, it is essential to acknowledge the writers and texts of the Victorian era, among which we can cite: Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871), Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

McCabe infuses his Gothic fictions with elements of the superstitious and the folkloric, which serve as historical and sociological indices of late eighteenth-century Ireland. McCabe interweaves the narratives about the Irish Famine with narratives reminiscent of James Joyce's comparison of Dublin's starving poor with its well-fed citizens. He delineates the binary opposites of a mother and her orphaned daughter, the master of the poorhouse and that orphaned daughter, chronicling events that are deeply affective and often profoundly tragic. As we shall outline, this is most glaringly witnessed in his novel, *Death and Nightingales* (1992), described by Colm Toibin as a 'miracle of a novel', and it is the lynchpin of McCabe's writing. Across this powerful narrative McCabe provides a judicious and astute interpretation of the historical setting of the Irish Land War of the 1880s, with his allusive inclusion of Charles.

Stewart Parnell and dramatization of the tensions of religious bigotry and land tenure in Ulster. The hint of an incestuous relationship between Billy and his stepdaughter Beth, is juxtaposed with Beth's attempt at a romantic elopement with the Irish Republican terrorist Liam Ward. In a further description of what humans are capable of doing in desperate situations, his polemic, *Tales from the Poorhouse (*1999) describes the abject desolation and human suffering of the Famine in mid-nineteenth century Ireland, and in its retelling, represents the various perspectives

and viewpoints from the wretched individuals as well as those in control of the large powerful institutions.

Irish History as the Living Gothic

This examination of McCabe's work is undertaken at a moment in Irish history, a living history where crucial decisions on Northern Ireland are again resulting in severely strained relations between the Irish and British governments. Brexit is evoking, or offering a retrospective view of, periods in Irish history when unprecedented violence in Northern Ireland saw events like Bloody Sunday, January 30th, 1972, captured on camera and televised across the world. McCabe wrote his trio of short fictions in the early 1970s and in broaching his prose fiction and his drama in a modern-day context we are returned to a time when relations between the Irish and British governments were at an all-time low. Irish and British bureaucrats continue to debate the Brexit impasse and the many issues arising out of Britain's exit from the European Union. For Ireland, both North and South, the fear of a hard border may provoke or instigate a return to terrorist activity on the Border, and one of the issues dominating debates in the Dail is the Peace Process and the Good Friday Agreement.

McCabe's writing engaged with and raised many concerns arising out of the armed struggle of the violence in Belfast and Derry. While 'the main paramilitary groups are on ceasefire and their political affiliates have pledged themselves to the Mitchell Principles of nonviolence and democracy, 895 'punishment' shootings and 1,512 beatings have been recorded by the police between 1995 and 2003'. (Monaghan 2004: 454) These shootings have happened despite being a violation of the peace process and the terms of the Good Friday agreement. Such is the tentative nature of the Peace Process and the amnesty process in Northern Ireland, that consecutive Secretaries of State have been reluctant to move against the paramilitary organisations involved

in these attacks and shootings. The apprehension of policing the border between the North and the Republic has unleashed anxieties that have laid dormant for a decade and are now threatening to re-surface and become a real and tangible fear. Monaghan reiterates:

Despite public pronouncements by political parties linked to paramilitary groups condemning the use of :

> punishments and such parties' commitments to the principles of nonviolence and democracy, paramilitary actions continue. The reluctance of the British government to enforce the sanctions that are open to them, for example, the returning of political prisoners released under the Good Friday Agreement and the exclusion of parties from the peace talks, has sent a clear signal that such paramilitary activity will go unpunished.(Monaghan 2004: 457)

The threat to the Good Friday Agreement is palpable, as is a fear of a return to violence. Due to Britain's proposed exit from the European Union, there is a heightened awareness of the looming prospect of a border that summons a Gothic return of the repressed. This is where the violence of traumatic events, thought of as long gone, lurk beneath the surface ready to reappear and return. Retrospectively, it is unrealistic to expect that all antagonisms, hatreds, and resentments would suddenly disappear overnight after the Good Friday agreement. McCabe addresses the origins of the underlying conflicts of the Northern Ireland struggle and lays bare the results on its victims. He writes giving credence to both sides, Catholic and Protestant, evincing a thought-provoking empathy that can only come from having witnessed up close, the suffering and traumas suffered by both communities. According to Norris, '[n]ational identity begins with local attachment and extends outward, encompassing neighbourhood, province, and ultimately nation' (Norris 2004:108). And for Northern Ireland as a community, it entails a doubling of national identity, that of the local Catholics and their attachment to the province of Ulster and to Ireland as a nation. This then becomes juxtaposed with the Unionist community who rate highly their attachment to England and cherish their sense of Britishness, an identity they view with the utmost importance. The historical Gothic anxieties that began with the Anglo-Irish are part of a historical grouping

that aligns two separate cultures and all that entails becomes one of the dilemmas that place's identity, culture, and a sense of place alongside the resentment over the Brexit arrangements.

To conclude McCabe takes a balanced unbiased approach to both sides of the Northern Ireland conflict, recognising the considerable trauma on both sides. The complex and deeply rooted conflicts in Northern Ireland, especially between the Catholic and Protestant communities, place a focus on the notion of the home place and the strong attachment to one's local community. In summary, the ongoing struggles in Northern Ireland are deeply rooted in the ancient cultural, and political issues. A complete understanding of these elements and the trauma they summon , is indispensable for those seeking to contribute to conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and eventual reconciliation in the region. In addressing trauma and its effects the next section suggests that Gothic trauma is used to describe the experiences of individuals and communities specifically in the context of Northern Ireland's troubled history.

Trauma

In attempting to define trauma, I will first establish what trauma is in the context of this dissertation. Etymologically speaking, 'trauma refers to psychological injury, lasting damage done to individuals or communities by tragic events or severe distress' (Davis and Meretoja 2020: 1). In fact, over the course of researching this series of analyses of McCabe's work, trauma has been given yet another meaning in the post-traumatic stress that has emerged in connection to the Covid pandemic and the resultant lockdown trauma. However, Davis and

Meretoja confine their analysis to traumas rooted in the past, a focus of our arguments also. They suggest that 'our traumatized reality is explained by reference to such as the Holocaust and other genocides in Armenia, Cambodia, Bosnia or Rwanda, or the Vietnam War, or 9/11, or the still-unsettled legacy of colonialism, or to innumerable other occasions and sites of suffering' (Davis and Meretoja 2020: 1). Like the war-torn areas of the world catalogued above, Ireland still bears

the trauma of unsettled legacies of colonialism. My focus in this thesis is on the trauma and the sites of suffering from the Northern Ireland Troubles and the Great Famine. I anatomise the specifics of trauma by looking at the causes and origins of Gothic trauma and its effects on those impacted by it. In representing the trauma of surviving Ireland's turbulent past, McCabe describes his Northern Ireland community as decimated and fragmented by the trauma of a complex mixture of culture, class, strained politics and of history. The idea of felt history becomes important here and especially for writers like McCabe who is writing not just about fictional characters, but real individuals who are not actors but real participants in the grand narrative of an Irish traumatic history. Garratt's rigorous application of the notion of' trauma 'to the Irish novel shows how some writers not only tell stories of trauma but actually enact that trauma in their telling, thus acknowledging the exertions necessary in personalizing and humanizing history' (Hand 2012: 111). Trauma presents itself in many different guises and McCabe's characters struggle to deal with the traumatic events in their lives. Cathy Caruth makes the powerful argument that trauma returns to not just haunt its victims but in narratives of trauma and 'is not only the reality of the event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known' (Caruth 1996: 6). Caruth's statement bears witness to how trauma renders the body and mind incapable of accepting the absolute desolation of the Great Famine, and similarly the blow to the senses from the violence of the Troubles. From the horrors endured by the twin sisters Grace and Roisin, their mother and their entire family in 'The Orphan' from *Tales from A Poorhouse* (1999) to the insidious effects of the Troubles in 'Cancer', 'Heritage' and 'Victims' in *Heaven Lies About Us* (2005),

McCabe offers a fateful view of the destiny of his characters during the Great Famine and the Troubles in the loss of life in both historical events along with the presence of guilt for survivors of both catastrophes. For example, in 'The Orphan,' we note Roisin's guilt at not being present the night her sister died, or the 'Master's' guilt and remorse at his presence and witness to the

death of his sister Annie and her baby. 'Heritage' too describes Eric's guilt along with a future of deception of lying about his uncle George's murder of two Catholics, a haunting possession Eric cannot face. Caruth and Dominick La Capra share a similar stance in dealing with the past. As the latter suggests: '[t]he past is misperceived in terms of sheer absence or utter annihilation. Something of the past always remains, if only as a haunting presence or revenant' (La Capra 1999: 700). To that end it is important not to view trauma theory in literature, not just as a literary genre, but as a device by which trauma victims who, on writing down their experiences often achieve a type of catharsis, a release from damaging memories.

From the early 1960s to the 1998 peace accord, Northern Ireland could be defined as a living breathing Gothic space. The Northern Ireland border becomes a site of violent events, the realm of the Other, a place of chaos and threat. McCabe provides literary versions of the reality of trying to live an everyday life along the border. Haunted by the ghosts of a colonial past, and ongoing colonial present, the focus of trauma is on the victims and survivors from history but also on the events and characters that led to such traumas. He describes living in a Northern Ireland devastated by the psychological effects of the Troubles. And the Gothic as a genre is often used to reflect the consequences of trauma on the psychology of the subject, as Maria Beville states, 'the concept of 'living Gothic' suggests a notion of the Gothic as a living thing, and importantly, as a living culture' (Beville 2014: 54). The notion of a living Gothic becomes specifically relevant to The Great Famine and the Northern Ireland Troubles. Both events have left a trace memory of a past trauma that haunts a peaceful future. In *Unclaimed-Experience*, Caruth refers to the root or Greek origin of meaning of the word trauma, or wound and identifies its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's works: '[t]he terms trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind' (Caruth1996: 3). This specifically applies to how psychological damage marks the victim of

trauma. A feature of the Famine and the Northern Ireland Troubles is how trauma affects the personality, seen in changes to the character of the people affected by both catastrophic events.

For example, In *Tales from the Poorhouse*, in order to survive Roisin has to develop a hardened shell-like defence. At one point, describing Doctor O'Grady's visit to the ailing Micilín, she remarks:

> Then he looked into the byre and showed me where Micilín was to lie on a bed of rushes near enough to where the bábóg was buried. I was to lock the door tight and seal it with blue clay and give him this stir about and water on a shovel through the small windy, then close the windy tight and keep well away from the infection – A dog would die of loneliness from the like of that, I said. (McCabe 1999: 32)

Later Roisín transforms her horrific experiences and her trauma into a hope for a better future in America when she states, 'But I'll, fight, I'll do anythin' to stay alive and, with luck, I'll get my hands on five golden guineas and get away to America, because no place in the world but be worse than this, except hell itself' (McCabe 1999: 34). In this poignant story, the trauma of the Famine removes many vestiges of normality and humanity, especially in relation to death and the witnessing of the death of close family members. The Troubles scenario envisages a similar dynamic when Eric is witness to his uncle George's murder of two Catholics in a vehement sectarian revenge attack. In the story 'Cancer' the disease becomes a metaphor for the hatred of sectarianism and includes two brothers who fail to move past the hatred that surrounds and envelopes them. 'Victims' also represents Lynam's trauma and her shock at seeing the murder of some of the hostages at Inver House, a Big House, as a representation of colonial rule and a target for an IRA gang.

I have chosen the medium of trauma or 'trauma gothic' to interrogate the narrative texts and dramas by McCabe to engage with the distressing transgenerational impacts of Irish history,

addressing how violence and sectarianism impacts on the protagonists in these texts. Trauma was originally kept in the domain of medical psychology, and it is only in the last few years that it has been adapted in literary discourse. Key publications in trauma studies such as
Caruth's essay collection, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and her widely celebrated *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), sparked the various approaches to trauma and were rapidly followed by a new number of studies on trauma in literary studies. A key feature of writing about trauma is the struggle to accurately represent or record the core issues involved in trauma to find the language to represent the unrepresentable. The concept of the vampire becomes appropriate here, as Caruth noticeably draws attention to how victims who have experienced trauma, unavoidably infect, or contaminate others with their trauma. Trauma has the capacity to repeat and reengage with the subject over and over again and like the condition of the vampire incurs a state of being mired in an everlasting cycle of suffering, and of a powerless sense of doom. La Capra takes a different approach to Caruth's analysis of working out and working through trauma. La Capra looks at how trauma is represented in history in theory and narratives, he believes that placing too much of an emphasis on the symptoms of trauma can have a negative effect. By becoming too perplexed by the crisis caused by the trauma itself, one can deliberately or non-deliberately further reinforce the effects or condition of the trauma itself.

Trauma and trauma studies provide crucial frameworks for identifying the effects of political violence during both the Great Irish Famine and the Northern Irish Troubles. For Dawson:

> [t]rauma has become established as a pervasive trope in discourse and practice concerned with the affective legacies of the Northern Ireland Troubles, providing a popular as well as a critical framework for understanding the effects of political violence during the conflict and memories of that violence during the peace process. (Dawson 2016: 1).

Trauma involves a confrontation that abruptly interrupts the continuousness of life. It involves an occasion that cannot be recovered in the symbolical chain or link that makes up a person's life.

To help victims of the Troubles deal with this lack of an adequate expression of their trauma, victims are invited to engage with the groups like the Wave Trauma Centre based in several centres around the North. It adopts a curative or ameliorative approach to helping and encouraging the victims of violence. Finding a way to talk about their experiences, victims of violence confront feelings of melancholia and mourning by speaking about their individual experiences of trauma. Some experiences are less intrusive or disturbing and in diagnosing and acknowledging trauma, some individuals may display traits that are tied to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).While others will present with brief subclinical symptoms which are barely detectable and fall outside the remit of diagnostic criteria. To that end, as a model, trauma studies has proved hugely successful, especially in the focus on Ireland's painful history, offering means to move forward with an acceptance of the wrongs of Irish history, and an attempt to help victims seek redress.

Transgenerational Trauma

Northern Ireland endured thirty years of war-related trauma centred on contested geographical spaces. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) is an organisation that looks at victims of war-related trauma like the Vietnam War, the Holocaust and sexual abuse victims. The diagnostic experience of war trauma experienced by these victims can also be ascribed to Northern Ireland's violent past. Addressing the clinical effects of trauma in the Northern Irish context, Dawson makes the point that 'this clinical work is itself informed by the diagnostic categorisation of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), one of various mental conditions and disabilities recognised (since 1980) by the American Psychiatric Association (APA); and also, by a neuroscientific approach to memory disorders' (Dawson 2016: 2).As well as using the scientific data recorded above, a literary approach has also been utilised in addressing the Troubles and its relationship to the living memory and a living trauma. Prominent among these approaches is that undertaken by

Stefanie Lehner, whose work invokes Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Feldman, and Dori Laub, 'together with Jennifer Edkins on the political implications of trauma theory' (Dawson 2016: 85) The political consequences of trauma theory are relevant to writing on the Troubles, and the Great Famine, and this thesis focuses on the personal experiences of trauma.

In spite of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, post-traumatic stress syndrome guarantees memories and traces of past wrongs and tensions from the Troubles, incur or increase repeated trauma in Northern Ireland. Stressors like violence on the streets, perpetrated by both sides, by Unionists and, ongoing attacks on the RUC by the Real IRA further disrupt the peace. The political aspects of social memory are linked to trauma and the partaking in ritual parades, marches gestures, memorials and funerals all mark the site of a Gothic trauma. Oonagh Frawley describes how 'postcolonial memory' has operated in Ireland as a cultural memory. She employs Maurice Halbwachs's 1952 study *On Collective Memory* and Paul Connerton's study of *How Societies Remember* (1981), addressing how memory affects societies. Frawley believes:

that all memory is social, arguing that social memory is often enacted as performance, through ritual, gesture, and commemoration; like Halbwachs he [Connerton] also draws attention to political aspects of social memory with his assertion that "control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power. (Frawley 2010: 20)

Northern Ireland's power to banish all traces of violence is diminished by the re -enactment of trauma and past violent events in habitual everyday life. The visual imagery of the graffiti on the walls and buildings of the province act as reminders of violent events. The graffiti or art depict images of people and reminders of sites and locations of trauma and violence. Events are recalled by the 12th of July Orange celebrations of the Battle of the Boyne, also in the attendance of large groups at IRA Republican funerals. They become visual reminders of Troubles traumas, and the images or graffiti communicate visual messages of a call to action to, a call to violence. The

consequences of the recent April 2021 rioting on the streets in Northern Ireland, when young children engaged in rioting and violence on the streets, are the direct results of a collective psychological trauma. What these young people carry with them is a cultural memory of the Troubles already passed on to them through their parents or grandparents as transmissible historical trauma. Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, is a valuable literary source here again. And like Halbwachs' and Connerton's stance, Nora argues that 'memory is locatable outside of the mind, in the spaces or realms of our cultures left by the traces of memory: in libraries, repositories and buildings, symbols, symbolic events, and so on' (Frawley 2011: 20).

Like the example of transgenerational trauma, secondary memory becomes an important component in the study of a Gothic trauma and its bearing on the cognitive ability of victims to re-enact or feel what the generations before them have experienced. Luke Gibbons states

'Ireland is a first-world country, but with a third-world memory. Though largely white, Anglophone and westernized, Ireland historically was in the paradoxical position of being a colony within Europe' (Gibbons 1998: 27) Because Ireland is a predominantly white Anglophone and westernized country, many believe it cannot be viewed in the same light as other colonized countries. For Eugene O' Brien:

[i]If by postcolonial one means writing from a place that was colonized by another government, then yes it must be. Ireland is an unusual case in that it is a first world country (some might question aspects of this) and white in racial composition' (O'Brien qtd. in Duncan 2002: 322).

From the Famine era in the 1840s to up till the late 1990s, McCabe's writing tracks and mediates the traumas and stressor events experienced by a variety of communities in Ireland as a consequence of British colonialism. Indeed, it is hardly surprising, then, that the renewed violence and the continuing tensions between Catholics and Protestants in relation to arrangements concerning Brexit engender anxieties connected to identity, hegemony, and colonialism. The

memories of Gothic violence, of traumatic events of bloodshed and the distress that it reproduces, are embedded in the memories of its victims. In the chronicling of such painful memories, McCabe's writing describes the often-vitriolic sectarianism that existed within the border counties between the Protestant and Catholic farming community of Northern Ireland.

The Border region became a particular focus for a continuous cycle of violence, trauma, and death. McCabe uses the literary strategies of flashbacks and Gothic nightmares to describe the trauma of his characters and his texts. He places a particular focus on the trauma and violence of the earlier years of the Troubles. His writing juxtaposes his own lived experience of the sense of cordial friendly relationships with neighbours that exists sometimes alongside the hateful vitriol of sectarianism. The trauma of his troubled characters and the narrative strategies he utilises become means of 'encircling the trauma.' As Jenny Edkin suggests, taking up the notion from Slavoj Žižek: 'We cannot try to address the trauma directly without risking its gentrification' (Žižek 2002: 272). Trauma can often defy categorization, and literary works that seek to regulate trauma risk limiting their narrative focus, especially by allocating a fixed meaning to the coherent interpretation of an otherwise incoherent event. For Edkins, '[a]ll we can do is 'to encircle again and again the site' of the trauma, 'to mark it in its very impossibility' (ibid., citing Žižek 2002:272). In conclusion, exploring gothic trauma outside of the historical perspective reminds us that trauma is a deeply complex and personal experience. It often resists or defies a neat categorization and any attempt to set it within a fixed set of parameters. A fixed meaning risks oversimplifying the intricacy of these events. As Edkins reiterates above, all we can do is encircle it, and mark trauma for what it truly is – a profoundly elusive and profoundly human part of our existence.

CHAPTER ONE

Hunger and Resistance in *Tales from the Poorhouse* (1999): 'The Orphan', 'The Master,' 'The Landlord' and 'The Mother'.

This chapter examines Eugene McCabe's gothic *Tales from the Poorhouse* (1999). The author vividly portrays the harsh realities of life in an Irish poorhouse during the Great Famine. In these stories he weaves narratives that illuminates the struggles, resilience, and complex relationships of the inhabitants within the impoverished institution. Eugene McCabe describes the themes of hunger and resistance across four interconnected stories, namely 'The Orphan,' 'The Master,' 'The Landlord,' and 'The Mother,' delving into the characters' struggles for survival and their unyielding determination to overcome the dire circumstances of poverty and deprivation. Terry Eagleton, writing in his *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* states that 'if the Famine stirred some (Irish writers) to angry rhetoric, it would seem to have traumatized others into muteness' (Eagleton1995: 13). Eagleton goes on to reflect that the shame and trauma of this event may have been the core reason for the lack of narration of the Famine. The 150th anniversary of the Great Famine in the 1990s spawned a great deal of writing on this particularly traumatic part of Irish history, and the Irish Folklore Commission displayed a sizeable collection of material from the 1940s and 1950s on the event. And reflecting on this period of commemoration, David Lloyd argues that: '[f]or many, the commemoration was seen as a means precisely to overcome certain 'melancholic' fixations and seemingly obsessive repetitions in Irish culture, from alcoholism and domestic abuse to political violence itself' (Lloyd 2000: 221). The trauma of experiencing hunger and the focus on melancholic themes and the repetitions in Irish culture describe how hunger and desperation changed how people viewed society. This chapter explores McCabe's *Tales from the Poorhouse*, which describes the abject desolation and human suffering of the Famine in mid-nineteenth century Ireland, and in its retelling, represents the various standpoints from the wretched individuals, as well as those in control of the large powerful institutions. McCabe

skilfully depicts the trauma and suffering endured by the Famine victims across these plangent tales. The collection appeared in time for the anniversary of the Famine, commemorated in the 1990's and the later 2000's, when an abundant amount of fiction on the Great Famine appeared. Works like Joseph O'Connor's *Star of The Sea* (2002) also address the Famine with a multi-perspectival range of voices, and both books share a similar arrangement, with each story detailing the trauma of the Famine and the effects on each of the protagonists. *Tales From the Poorhouse* records the various individual experiences of the Great Famine and more than one perspective is represented to the reader. McCabe handles these stories without an excess of sentimentality and but with great skill, and not just in terms of the Gothic trauma of the Great Famine, but also the range of personal traumas and the resultant horrors visited on each of his individual characters.

Utilising the work of leading trauma theorists like Caruth, along with Shoshana Feldman, Geoffrey Hartman, and Dominick La Capra we can read the trauma of this history, where the foci of the debate oft-times lead us away from addressing history and into what Caruth claims 'political and ethical paralysis' (Caruth 1996: 10). Unconstrained by political and ethical strictures, McCabe's gothic Famine stories gives a realistic interpretation of the trauma and horrific experiences of the Irish Great Famine. In Cathy Caruth's *Trauma, Explorations in History (1995)* her edited introduction states 'that the history of a trauma, in its inherent belatedness can only take place through the listening of another'(Caruth 1995:11). Caruth goes on to state, that in a catastrophic age that is beyond trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures itself not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather within the traumas of contemporary history as our ability to listen through the departures we have taken from ourselves,(Caruth 1995:11)

The Famine is such a cataclysmic event in Irish history, the trauma it evinces sees a correlation or link with other cultures across the world, like that of the Jewish communities and their traumatic experience during the Second World War. Equally each of the protagonists from McCabe's *Tales from the Poorhouse* endures their own personal trauma. Famine victims and their trauma were rarely spoken of until the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Great Famine in 1995, when a range of books and journals appeared related conference events took place.

In a response to the anniversary of the Great Famine McCabe penned his short stories encompassed in *Tales from the Poorhouse* (1999). These stories describe the horrors of the Great Famine. This suite of stories intertwines trauma and each personal perspective, creates a multi-perspectivity that vividly portrays the traumas experienced by Irish communities during the Famine. Beginning with the example of the trauma experienced by the Brady family from the death of Grace and her baby to Róisín's gothic experience of entombing her younger sickly brother, Micilín, in their tumbled cottage until he dies. The 'Mother's' trauma is intertwined with her guilt at the treatment of Grace and, mentally damaged by the traumatic experience, she becomes confined in a shed in the poorhouse for madwomen. Her isolation instigates her subsequent descent into madness. 'The Master' depicts Reginald's trauma and regret at his pride and the needless death of his sister, Annmarie, and her baby. 'The Landlord' too shares his disappointment about his son's sexuality and his lack of interest in a continuation of the family's Anglo-Irish heritage. This ensures the landlord and his class no longer hold a stable position in Ireland. As read McCabe's interrelated narratives, it seems apt to think that '[w]ith trauma forming a bridge between disparate historical experiences, so the argument goes, listening to the trauma of another can contribute to cross-cultural solidarity and to the creation of new forms of community' (Craps and Buelens 2008: 1). The traumas experienced by Irish communities during the Famine are represented here in McCabe's *Tales from The Poorhouse* and the individual narratives are focalised through a different character. They are expressed through the

narratological technique of multi-perspectivity, where every story is related through each individual voicing of their own personal viewpoint or perspective, in a plurality or polyphony of voices in the text.

McCabe fashions these stories as a quartet, separate but inter-woven, which chronicle each story from the perspective of the first-person narrator. 'The Orphan', is recounted by Roisín Brady, 'The Master,' is told by Reginald Murphy, 'The Landlord' by Lord Conroy and 'The Mother' told by the twin's mother, Mary Brady. Róisín's account is first, and her mother's elegiac tale is the last story. The two male narratives are presented by way of a confessional form, with the Master's narrative relayed seeking absolution for his neglectful treatment of his sister and her baby. The Landlord's account is via an epistolary form with access gained to his personal inner thoughts through his journal entries. All four descriptions represent the sadness and melancholy of Famine life in 1840s Ireland. McCabe textually encoded the dismal air of desperation and hopelessness and the isolated despair and suffering in each of his tales. The trauma of this catastrophic event evokes silence, an understated but powerful literary response, instead of rage and, for many years, elicited a dramatic pause in Irish historical and literary circles.

Writing in 1989, Cormac O'Gráda commented that 'the history of the Irish Famine is also British political history. Despite the obvious truth to this observation, there remains an absence, even from the most recent writing on the subject' (O'Gráda 1989: 50). Similarly, Christine Kinealy writes in *A Death-Dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland* that as 'documentary evidence relating to the Famine years is abundant and this has led to some historians to identify a historiographical silence from the 1930s to the 1970s' (Kinealy 1997: 1). It was only in more recent years that researchers started to access these sources and, as a consequence, 'more has been written to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine than was written in the whole period' (Kinealy 1997: 1). During the Famine era, Ireland was beset by violence, by the

vehement process of colonial misappropriation, countless evictions, and the loss of the vital potato crop to blight. McCabe describes the gothic trauma of the catastrophe of the Great Irish Famine in terms of the real, human anguish of the lives of Irish ordinary people. McCabe melds the tradition of the oral short story with a focus on the gothic aspects of the Great Famine. Written in the dialect of the Irish peasantry of this era, McCabe's accounts are realistic, and his language accurately demarcates the trauma of their experiences. These narratives are bolstered by the sense of intimacy in the direct involvement of the characters, and each describes their individual accounts the stories emit a sense of intimacy but also of pain. McCabe describes the gothic elements that dominate the private interior lives of his Famine characters.

In his acclaimed study of the early 19th-century Irish novel, Thomas Flanagan argues that 'what separates Irish novelists from their English counterparts was a felt urgency about the fragility of culture that involved an insecurity about what constituted Irish society, about what was authentically indigenous, and what was imposed from England' (cited in Garratt 2011:16). These stories are authentically Irish and, while they engage in subject matters that interrogate the Irish and English relationship, their focus is wholly on the Irish context. Also, from a formal perspective, they depart from the broader expanse of the novel form, as the short story is a suitable conduit for McCabe to engage with the Northern Irish Troubles and the Famine. And in a particularly poignant representation of destitution and suffering, *Tales from the Poorhouse* successfully manages to describe the abject desolation and trauma of the human experience. McCabe delves beneath the surface to represent the human suffering of the Great Famine in 1840s Ireland. Flannery argues that: '[a]s a form, the attenuated formal structure of the short story permits "snapshot" exposures to the lives, motives, and emotions of the characters involved. Denied the narrative scale of the novel form, the short story writer portrays fragments of human

experience in compressed moments of representation' (Flannery 2010:5). McCabe centres on the fragments of the human experience of Famine and its effects on the protagonists in these stories. Concurrent with the short story form McCabe gives a glimpse into the lives of each of the characters and gives a realistic view of their personal struggles. For example, Roisín from 'The Orphan' is confronted with a visceral experience of trauma first-hand when her father, an inadequate tailor, deserts the family and she is charged with sourcing food for her family to survive. She is grief-stricken at the loss of her beloved sister, Grace, and her dead niece, a death possibly at the hands of their deranged mother, Mary Brady. Roisín also has to entomb her typhus-stricken brother Micilín in their tumbled cabin and witness his death and cremation among the flames of the cottage. Her traumatic experiences give her a renewed strength of purpose to do whatever it takes to leave Ireland and get her passage to America.

'The Master' too is haunted by his Famine experiences hardened by his daily supervision of the death of the inmates at the poorhouse, his trauma and his eventual breakdown come when he denies his sister and her young child a place in the poorhouse. The use of the gothic testifies to the psychological trauma suffered by individuals during the Famine leading ultimately to their despair and destruction. The Landlord's story is a representation of the declining power of the Anglo-Irish class in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century. His trauma is intensified by the imminent loss of his Big House, his wealth and his property coinciding with the loss of his son Matthew, who has no other choice but to leave home. Matthew has sexually abused a young stable boy and is now blackmailed. He is forced to leave Ireland, or he and his family will face public humiliation if he stays. Finally, in 'The Mother' Mary Brady's trauma is relayed via a combination of pathos and regret, one that pleads for forgiveness for her actions.

Mary Brady's chagrin and guilt is motivated by her ill-treatment of her daughter Grace, and McCabe reflects an easily recognisable feature of Irish life in his stories as The Mother's prayerful

Catholic religiosity is juxtaposed with her irrational Gothic perversity. McCabe's snapshot view of Famine life gives glimpses of the Gothic hardships that were a daily part of life for the protagonists in these stories.

As a genre 'the modern Irish short story emerged in the final decades of the nineteenth century, before that a tale could embrace the brief sketch, anecdote or fable, a novella or even a novel' (Ingman 2018: 277). After Ireland had achieved its independence, Irish writing and the short story began growing and expanding as a genre and 'has long occupied something of a special place in Irish literature. It has often been called "the national form" or "the preeminent Irish prose form," and the strength of its tradition has been championed far beyond the country's borders' (Ingman 2009: 1 in D'Hoker and Boumans 2020: 287). Ronan McDonald points out that there are links between 'the short story tradition in Ireland and "modernist" narrative techniques – part of the explanation for the prevalence of both in Irish fiction […] [is] the oft observed connection of the form to marginal and colonized conditions' (McDonald 2005: 249).

Ireland's colonial history and the notion that the marginalised or silenced could find their voice through the short story form can also explain the relevance and popularity of the short story form in Irish writing. Indeed, the Gothic also appears more often than not as a response to imperial modernity as a mode of 'registering loss and of suggesting that new forms of subjectivity are necessary to deal with the new forms of knowledge and power that are conquering past systems and beliefs' (Kilfeather 2006: 83). But the genre is also apt at narrating experiences of marginalization and suffering, as Ingman later suggests:

> The liminal quality of Irish experience may also partly account for the flourishing of the short story in Ireland. As far back as Poe in 1842 the short story has been characterized, not only by the unity of its effects but also by its element of suggestion, requiring from the reader an attentiveness to what is going on beneath the surface equal to that of the writer, in what Poe termed 'a kindred art'. (Ingman 2009:261).

In the current context, McCabe's use of the genre in his representation of Famine befits the trauma of the Famine itself. As Kevin Whelan argues: 'Ireland remained culturally comatose in the immediate post-Famine period' (Whelan 2002:59). And the short fictional genre is attuned to representing such silence. From a historical perspective, the trauma of such an event was delineated by various factors relating to why it occurred in the first place, and the trauma of what some endured remained buried in the subconsciousness. And this tallies with Ó Gráda's point on catastrophe as a historical experience:

> Psychiatric research suggests that adult survivors of catastrophes such as earthquakes often show considerable memory impairment. Memories of more protracted catastrophes such as war or famine may be weighted towards their earlier phases. Moreover, some traumatised victims may be reluctant to talk, while more may be silenced by the reluctance of non-victims to listen. (Ó'Gráda 2001:130-1).

Hence, psychological trauma permeates McCabe's *Tales from The Poorhouse*. The representation of the land during the Famine becomes a site of trauma as the once green pastoral fields become marked by black tuberous pulp: 'The proximate cause of the Great Famine (1846-52) was the fungus phythophterainfestans (or potato blight), which reached Ireland in the fall of 1845. The fungus destroyed about one-third of that year's crops, and nearly all of the 1846 harvest' (O'Gráda 2004: 1). This resulted in the death of one million of the rural population; it led to mass evictions from small farm holdings with cottages tumbled turning families on to the road. Emigration became the only alternative, with many travelling to England and America. Land is a central theme in all of McCabe's writing and he places the land at the centre of Ireland's political trauma and turbulent resentments. McCabe's *Death and Nightingales* parallels *Tales from The Poorhouse* in that both describe the violence and sectarian animosity between the Ascendancy class and the impoverished cottiers. For example, this tension is played on an everyday level in the scene in *Death and Nightingales* when 'barefoot children playing on the street were careful not to let Billy Winters see their protruding tongues, the single -and double -

thumb nose salutes, the carefully subdued tongue farts' (McCabe 1999: 134). Despite an outward appearance of a pleasant amiable relationship between Billy Winters and the local peasantry, the anxieties connected to landlords and the renting of the land is still a lived reality. A mere forty years earlier, it still carries the same animosity, the same emotional charge all directed towards the landlord class.

Transgenerational trauma carries across generations and further solidifies the hatreds from the past. Despair and trauma are in evidence across the landscape, and the loss of life was at its zenith during 1846 and 1847, the years of the Hard Hunger, and it is in this era that McCabe situates his *Tales from The Poorhouse*. The calamity went on to cost lives for a further four years, giving expression to the anger of dispossession, to the fear of exposure to the harsh elements, to death by starvation and the loss of the land. Seamus Deane makes the point that in contrast to the story of the struggle for the language, the struggle for the land, and indeed the struggle with the land, is contrastingly marked by an inexhaustible series reference to its economic status-property, rent productivity, upkeep, improvement, impoverishment, ownership, tenant right, buying and selling, state purchase, redistribution etc. (Deane 1997:72)

During the Great Famine, the landscape and the fields desecrated by blight offer up a black rotten pulp and is openly hostile to its human and animal population. Thus, giving rise to gothic modes and conventions depicting the landscape as poisoned, polluted and unwelcoming. The bleak landscape, disturbing and unsettling mirrors the Gothic Famine human experience in *Tales from the Poorhouse*. McCabe's descriptions show how each character deals with the trauma of the Famine. During the Famine, the British government did its utmost to avoid giving charity to the starving Irish, instead aid and food would be offered, but in exchange for work on clearing and building public roads.

After the Famine, Ireland was a radically different place, and this event made its mark on the very landscape: in the Famine graveyards, the Famine roads that go nowhere, in the Famine museums that house the few scant artefacts from the soup kitchens, but especially in how Irish people began to view their place in the world. From the outset, Irish and English views of their environment and the pastoral world differ, and especially on how nature is perceived and utilised. On the eve of the Famine:

> several separate cultural experiences of nature co-existed. The peasant weighed nature for utility while observing the omens and rituals which might interpret and propitiate her whims. The gentry confronted nature, as everything else, with an assumption of authority.
>
> The urban middle class now looked to nature for solace and occasions of rapture. (Viney 1986: 62)

However, one outstanding feature of the potato blight is the view of nature as no longer trusted, nurturing and sustaining but instead as a treacherous malevolent power. In nature's desolation of the valuable potato crop it showed itself to be a traitorous force: '[i]n the biological treachery of the Famine, nature was disgraced: it would not be surprising if, somewhere in the rural consciousness, a decision was made neither to grant nor expect any further quarter. (Viney 1986: 62) Appealing to God for help echoes the providential that was a feature of Catholic discussions of the blight. Irish people saw the failure of the land to produce a healthy crop of potatoes as a curse. The anonymous poem. 'The Farmer of Inniscreen: A Tale of the Irish Famine in Verse' describes '[s]ome seed was sown and never grew, there came a curse from heaven and wise men said the land had sinned. And had not been forgiven' (Jarrold and Sons 1863: 4) Unsurprising then, the starving multitudes made their way post-haste to the ships leaving on every tide, the 'desolation of the post-Famine landscape was succeeded by the break-up of the estates, the cashing-in of trees to the travelling sawmills, the ceremonial consumption of peacocks. The aesthetics of the Big House departed with its occupants' (Viney 1986: 62). Thus, a turning point in Irish history is reached during the Great Irish Famine, and as such becomes unrepresentable,

it is marked as 'it is a point of caesura in the historical imagination. As such, it is a national trauma that has come to be bound by silence' (Beville and McQaid 2012: 15). Set against the backdrop of the 1840s Irish Famine, McCabe's narratives succinctly display the pervasive atmosphere of terror of Famine Ireland.

For many, this tragedy was exacerbated by the British government's maintenance of a strict adherence to laissez-faire economic orthodoxies. Sir Charles Edward Trevelyan, the most senior civil servant at the Treasury in London at the time, and the Whig government was guided by a strict adherence to laissez-faire policies. Trevelyan was slow in sending aid to Ireland and his feelings were clarified in a letter to Sir Randal Routh on the 1st of December 1845, at the beginning of the Famine: '[b]esides the greatest improvement of all which would take place in Ireland, would be to teach the people to depend on themselves to develop the resources of the country instead of having recourse to the assistance of the government on every occasion' (cited in Coogan 2014: 107). Trevelyan administered help grudgingly but with the stipulation that it was a loan not a gift.[3] The direction taken was that it was best to let nature take its course and, as the British government were of the opinion, that 'the land had become overpopulated with the poorest, most destitute class of illiterate, rebellious Irish and if nature, or God, had ordained a solution, then intervention into the divine would not be beneficial' (Woodham-Smith 1962: 105). The lack of foresight on the part of the English government meant they thought it best not to, as it were, intrude on God's plan for the Irish and their wild unruly ways. The Famine was perceived

[3] The country was divided into nine districts and an inspecting officer was appointed to supervise the committees in each area. Membership of the committees were closely monitored and only those deemed suitable would attain membership. The types of people considered acceptable were magistrates, principal clergymen, chairman of the poor law unions with police and coastguard officials, but they rarely do.
Correspondence explanatory of the measures adopted for the relief of distress arising from the failure of the potato crop. HC,(1846).

by English government officials to be all part of a grand plan to bring the savage Irish in line with their more benign English neighbours.

Unsurprisingly the trauma of the Famine left an indelible mark on the Irish psyche and Melissa Fegan, in *Literature and the Irish Famine 1845-1919,* states that 'the idea of Famine as a chastisement did not leave the Catholic psyche untouched' (Fegan 2002: 221). A sense of guilt and a belief in the Famine as a punishment from God permeated the Irish population. The potato crop harvest of the previous year, 1844, was particularly good and the oversupply of potatoes were disposed of and given to cows and other farm animals. When the worst of the Famine arrived, many Irish Catholics believed the Famine was a punishment from God for that wilful waste of food the previous year, and for the sins of impurity. An interesting aspect of the study of the effects of trauma from the Famine is how the brain chooses to remember certain details of a painful memory. Caruth notes '[t]rauma, that is, does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned' (Caruth 1995: 151). The trauma of experiences endured by a great many of the Irish population became lost and there are sizeable gaps and notable silences when it comes to literature on the Famine, and, as Cathal Póirtéir has noted, '[w]hile there is a vast amount of written evidence, little or none of it comes from the perspective of the ordinary people' (Póirtéir 1995:3). McCabe's *Tales from the Poorhouse* seeks to correct this anomaly, as the re-imagines accounts from ordinary people and their families describing their struggles and experiences during the Great Famine. He employs gothic motifs to describe the psychological states of the uncanny the terror, violence, cruelty, and incest.

In *Tales from the Poorhouse*, the trauma of the Famine and its gothic register are represented in the nuances of the short story form. With the inability of language to give an accurate description

of the shock and trauma that struck the country almost overnight, McCabe's *Tales* represent the shame and self-abnegation of the Irish population in his Famine writing. In the *Tales* McCabe successfully conveys the sense of foreboding and of dread with language that describes the cruel unpalatable features of life for the Famine victims. McCabe's short stories contain some of the strategies that usually appear in modernist writing, for example, the sense of alienation, his delving into the psychological construction of his characters, the use of interior monologue, and the accounts articulated through stream-of-consciousness techniques. And in this he partakes of the gothic form, as described by Wurtz in the following terms:

> Although the Gothic, with its atavistic tendencies, is often viewed as antithetical to a mode of writing that insists on its radical newness, the Gothic's origin in moments of crisis and its emphasis on the fragmentary and the liminal make it essential to understanding the ways in which Irish modernism navigates its colonial and cosmopolitan contexts. (Wurtz 2010: 119-128)

McCabe merges Irish modernism with the tenets of gothic writing, resulting in a sense of liminality, a pervasive theme in Irish Gothic. Placing modernism and the gothic together may seem an unorthodox pairing but by the very nature of the gothic and its otherworldly strangeness, this linking creates a suitable paradigm. Modernism emerged in Europe and

America as a response to the horrors of World War One, and the trauma of the earlier Irish

Great Famine is ascertained as every bit as drastic an event. For the Irish population, the Great Famine is delineated in memory and material practices as a catastrophic event, a total dehumanisation of the self. This dehumanisation is also a key component of Irish modernism, along with themes of instability and fragmentation. Like the plague of the nocturnal vampire, the estranging gothic effects of starvation arrive overnight and the blight proceeds to wipe out modernism is contemporaneous with the loss of social cohesion associated with the cultural and political changes wrought by the Famine. Changes in social practices and a completely different mode of living, like the loss of the Irish language and no longer rambling to each other's cottages, sitting beside the fire reciting poems, songs, and stories. There are changes in drinking practices,

in landholding and cooperation, and changes in waking the dead and keening over the body. A practice that once took the form of a social event in celebrations that went on over several days, now saw bodies lie unburied in ditches for days. Modes of Modernism derive from the estranging effect of changes on a profound traditionalist society and emigration becomes embedded in Irish culture as a necessity rather than a cultural choice. Beginning with the Famine mass emigration becomes embedded in Irish culture.

According to Fredric Jameson, modernity thus conceived may be described as a 'catastrophe', since it 'dashes traditional structures and lifeways to pieces, sweeps away the sacred, undermines immemorial habits and inherited languages, and leaves the world as a set of raw materials to be reconstructed rationally' (Jameson 1994: 84) Jameson's description of the effects of modernity are consistent with the catastrophic effects of Famine on the Irish population. McCabe's *Tales from a Poorhouse* describes the sudden decimation of Irish life's traditional structures and its effects. In 'The Orphan', Rose speaks of her parent's relationship before the arrival of the Famine, as she claims: 'by all accounts they were happy enough in the early years with a bit of land and the tailorin'; It was she calved and milked the cow, cut and footed the turf, put in and dug out spuds, but when the blight came and rotted them in the ground the cow had to be sold, then the fowl were eaten' (McCabe 1999:13). When the Brady family lose all food sources, the mother becomes furious at her husband's drinking and selfishness. The strain of no longer having food and a decline in the family's prospects adds to her frustration. Her anger at her husband's lack of drive and ambition is fuelled by the despair of hunger and her fear for her family and the breakdown of their familial relationships. The hierarchal structure of the Brady family home is ruptured by the father, Tom Brady, and his drinking. This is compounded by his inadequacy as a tailor and provider for his family. In this critique of Irish masculinity, Tom Brady's flaws are

many and, while the mother castigates her husband for his inadequacies, later his physical absence from the family home means Roisin will have to take his place in sourcing food for the family. The hierarchical structure of the story is reversed with the strength of the female figures of the mother and daughter privileged over the male father and their sickly brother, Micilín. For the Irish population, an aspect of the Famine was the cultural trauma of sweeping away those aspects of life as deemed as sacred and perpetual. Like the certainty of nature as a provider of a cheap plentiful food supply. The removal or wiping out of these certainties placed an enormous strain on people and strains or cracks already present became even more visible as the Famine crisis worsened.

In examining how the trauma of the Great Famine was represented in Irish literature or as the case not represented, ‘a more realistic treatment of the Famine was impossible in the genre because, as Kinealy observes, Irish farmers and merchants benefitted from the famine years, troubling 'a simplistic morality tale about the "goodies" (the Irish people en masse) and the "baddies" (the whole of the British people)’ (Roos 2013: 327). Chris Morash also notes, in his *Writing the Irish Famine* (1995), that language fails to adequately signify the trauma of the Great Famine and he cites the notion or concept of deferred reaction to trauma. The Freudian concept of Nachträglichkeit becomes valuable here, as what Morash is referring to is the trauma of the Famine as an event that bypasses conscious awareness at the time and that it manifests itself later. In a related vein, Caruth notes that trauma ‘seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available’ (Caruth 2016: 4). Again, in the Irish Famine context, Morash notes that, ‘it may be precisely this unimaginable, indeterminate element - the absence of a stable, empirical reality - which makes us constantly aware of the Famine dead whose defining characteristic is their absence’ (Roos 2013: 327). The

absence of over a million dead and another million who emigrated during the Great Famine become all the more relevant because they are absent (Lloyd 2005: 153). In its retelling, the trauma of the Famine represents the various perspectives and viewpoints from the wretched individuals as well as those in control of the large powerful institutions: '[f]or the Irish, the Famine was an event so traumatic as to be placed on a continuum with the devastation caused by Cromwell in the seventeenth century' (Wurtz 2005: 107). The relationships between Ireland and Britain became particularly strained during the Famine and:

> the connection to England was also placed front and centre: "pervading all was a sense that this was the final betrayal by England: After a momentary respite, the disease returned destroying all the 1848 harvest. 'It led to the wide-scale eviction of farmers, killed nearly one million of the rural population, and formed the impetus for massive emigration to other parts of the British Empire and the United States. (Corporaal 2009: 142)

The next section *Tales from The Poorhouse* describes the trauma experienced by the protagonists during the Famine in first ,'The Orphan', 'The Master', 'The Landlord', 'The Mother'.

'The Orphan'

Tales From the Poorhouse describes the reality of Famine Ireland, and the opening narrative, 'The Orphan,' is set against such a dismal background. McCabe provides a realist view of Famine life through Roisín, the first-person narrator, who opens her story describing the arrival of the potato blight: 'when the hard hunger reached us the Mother went half cracked blamin' Dada for near everythin', the landlord, the agent, the pig dyin', the leaky thatch, even the blight itself; Once when the run-off from the dung heap overflowed to the well she accused it made our Micilín sick' (McCabe 1999:11). Roisín and her twin sister, Grace, reflect 'the truth is far different I'd say, it was her cuffin' and scoldin' and then smotherin' the wee cratur with kisses, did some of the harm' (McCabe 1999: 11). The mother, in particular turns her anger outwards, blaming her husband for their misfortunes, and especially his inability to provide for his family.

Both girls also recognise that their father is too weak to stand up to their mother's ire, and there is an important difference between the ways in which the twins and their parents deal with the pain of their situation and the hardship they experience. The father is weak and ineffectual against his wife's anger, and the twin girls take a more sympathetic view of their father, with both girls running and hiding from the horrendous rows between their parents.

The significance of 'The Orphan' and its peculiarly charged atmosphere and language originates from the trauma of the Great Famine itself. Roisín, in her castigation of her mother, states: 'she cared mostly for Micilín, God help him. He was forever coughin.' She kept him in a bag skirt to fool the fairies' (McCabe 1999: 11). In her fear and desperation, the mother turns to superstitions centred on the presence of fairies to explain away her irrational fears. McCabe is writing about a period in Ireland when, as a society, Irish belief systems are heavily immersed in paganism. This includes the belief in fairies, of cures from holy wells and of curses from piseogs and, like the druids of ancient times, a belief in nature and the Earth as a viable living source one that supports life. From the outset, 'The Orphan' describes the mother's anxieties about her family but especially her concerns regarding her twin daughters' budding sexuality. For Irish people, the idea or notion of the Famine as an affliction or curse can be associated with the high degree of superstition among the rural Irish. Superstitions surrounding evil become linked to the land, to female sexuality, to fecundity or the fruitfulness of the soil or its lack of productivity and, especially with female reproduction.

In the mother's ritualistic guarding of her daughter's sexual purity, there is a clear psychological link to their sexuality and to the spiritual cleansing of the soul, the washing of the body is also the cleansing of the soul. In a euphemistic turn of phrase, the frequently used idiom of cleanliness is next to Godliness is appropriate here as the mother proclaims – 'Water costs nothin', she'd say,

and by God you girls keep your bodies clean and your souls pure as long as you're in my care' (McCabe 1999:16). Her demands for a punitive washing and cleansing of their bodies are affixed to the cleansing of their souls. The mother's attitude is described in terms of being 'all out show and pride' (McCabe 1999: 11), a description of her own family pride and a denial of her young daughters' and her family's desperate plight. This is further evidenced in her angry diatribe: 'what would the priest and the neighbours think of her two daughters were near hoors out dancin' and gallivantin' like mad heifers in heat and half the parish half-dead from hunger?' (McCabe 1999: 11). The priest's criticism of the two girls is driven more by their lack of deference to his position as their priest, along with their enthusiastic femininity youth and vitality; as is well established, '[i]n Ireland it was the knowledge and control that priests and nuns had over sex which helped maintain their power and control over women' (Radosh 2008: 308). The mother's constant monitoring of her daughters' sexuality and their attempts to source a life beyond the Famine catastrophe has clear associations with the psychological guilt arranged around the sexual female body. Hence Roisín's protest that, 'it was nothing to her we were young and wanted a bit of life away from misery' (McCabe 1999: 11). The twins' buoyant youth and their vibrant sexuality are juxtaposed with the barren landscape of the Famine. In Irish Famine society 'representations of young sexualized Irish women were difficult to reconcile with nationalist ideologies which proselytized morality and purity of the female race' (Culleton and McGarrity 2008: 187).

Both young women reject the symbols of containment and control, and, instead, seek to transcend the Gothic trauma of the Famine by engaging in the only outlet available to them: their emerging sexuality. In this way, the Famine period saw 'the cultivation of a growing awareness of a sense of sin which was channelled by the Catholic Church into a post-Famine devolution revolution' (Fegan 2002: 221). The mother is typical of some 'Irish mothers who reinforced the church's teachings about sin and sexuality teaching children to avoid temptation to be ashamed of their

bodies' (Radosh 2008: 308). The body becomes a central feature of these stories and its relation to the abject all define the trajectory of the lives in the four stories. Julia Kristeva's essay on the 'Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection' is relevant here, given that the abject is figured as that which is brought low, miserable craven, degraded, despicable, self-abasing, a person of the meanest condition (Fowler and Fowler: 1917;3). This resonates with the effects of the Irish Famine in real tangible terms, and the abjection becomes manifested in terms of the bodily waste of human beings, surrounded by the hunger, filth and smells, the religious hypocrisy, murder, the incestuous and the Famine corpses. In this context, Kristeva states:

> the corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us (Kristeva 1982: 4)

The starving Famine victims are represented as walking corpses and, as an event, the Great Famine is perceived as a chastisement that left an indelible mark on the Irish population. Such was the level of trauma that, for years, it lay just beneath the surface of Irish life. As an event it was characterised by silence, and Irish writers remained reticent to write about the Famine, lacking an adequate response to accurately portray or comprehend this cataclysmic episode in Irish history. During the Great Hunger, the land and its people take on ghostly forms and, 'in particular, the nineteenth-century poet James Clarence Mangan wrote of the effects of the Great Famine in terms of the living dead' (Wurtz 2005: 102). This is further evoked by Wurtz who describes Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* leaving Burton's restaurant and seeing the desperation of the destitute and the starving all round him: '[a]ll trotting down with porringers and Tommy cans to be filled, devour contents in the street' (Wurtz 2005: 109). Bloom continues to designate the Famine victims as famished ghosts, and as he considers starvation, his memory evokes the Gothic figure of the vampire: 'Hot fresh blood they prescribe for decline. Blood always needed. Insidious. Lick it up, smoking hot, thick sugary' (Wurtz 2005: 109). The description of the hot

thick sugary blood portrays the Famine victim as needing blood to survive. Indeed, Joyce's earlier short story, 'The Dead' (1907) has the Famine embedded at its centre.

In evaluating the differentials between the human body and that of the vampire, it becomes the imperative for the vampire they must imbibe blood, to ensure their survival. Blood then becomes the essential requirement and sustenance for a necessary life force during the Great Famine, and Ireland becomes the natural place wherein to situate the vampire. As Robert Smart suggests: '[b]ecause Ireland had been associated with cannibalism and blood drinking for centuries before this point (in works by Fynes Moryson and Edmund Spenser, for example), the geographic slide from Ireland to Transylvania would have made a certain kind of sense to

English readers' (Smart 2007: 14). Early visitors to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland also recorded the draining of blood from cattle and mixing it with oats; this practice represented dual visions of the human as a vampire, sourcing an edible blood supply. The gothic aspect of Irish life is further represented in an awareness of the ghostly spectres of the later Famine, from starvation and malnutrition, clinging to the last vestiges of life. McCabe writes on the living dead and the conversion of the living into ghostly spectres that populate each of the short stories in *Tales from the Poorhouse*. The process of dehumanisation and vampirism is particularly manifest in 'The Orphan,' when Doctor O'Grady instructs Roisín she must isolate Micilín away from all other human beings in the corner of the byre:

> when he dies it would be best to leave him in there and burn the byre. I carried him out and laid him on rushes in the corner of the byre like I was told. He pleaded with me to get back into the cabin. I was sick with grief and pity but what could I do? (McCabe 1999: 32)

The sequestering of Micilín away from all human contact reflects a fear of contagion and a fear of the vampire, hence the treatment of the Famine diseased body after death. The gothic scene of entombing her brother reflects and intensifies Roisin's trauma and her recollection of her brother's isolation and eventual death is what is referred to as 'a system of representation, in which subaltern groups, using their own local memories form a representation or an image of

people and events in their collective past' (Quinn and Delay 2017: 117). During the Famine, burial rites and traditional ceremonies fell far short of Irish funerary standards and most burials fell below societal notice. Unsurprisingly language no longer becomes adequate to describe trauma at such a level. And Fegan invokes Morash to flesh out this point:

> Morash describes a haunting of language during the Famine, suggesting that in the living skeletons and spectres who materialise again and again in the pages of Famine writing we see a discourse of the Famine taking shape, with its own particular vocabulary. The living skeleton is an image that proliferated wildly during the Famine; the monologue in Ireland had shifted to horror, and the texts remained largely homogenous in content, language, and tone. (Fegan 2002: 93)

The language and the rhetoric of the Famine describes the effects on the sufferers, especially the weaker parties who, while clinging on to life, can be described as the vampire or the living dead who prowl the countryside in rags devoid of any trace of humanity. Gothic language is also utilised in John Mitchel's diatribe against the English exportation of food from Ireland on every tide. Mitchel invokes Gothic rhetoric with the use of the metaphor of the vampire in *The Nation* newspaper, when he writes: 'Take your fangs from the Irish throat, your claws off the Irish dish; plunder and murder Irishmen no more' (Mitchel 1847: 3). The reference to 'your claws off the Irish dish' links English misappropriations of Irish foodstuff exported from Ireland to England and abroad for profit. As well as the obvious Gothic connotations, the statement also reflects the anger at the many powerful British colonist excursions into Ireland and its rule in Ireland over the centuries. Looking at the psychological trauma experienced by the Great Famine victims, they endured hunger, and poverty but also evictions were partly to blame. Without shelter and fuel to keep warm and the lack of food many turned to the already full workhouses for shelter.

When offered a place in the workhouse, Roisín first rejects Mister Johnston's offer, stating?

‘Hereabouts Mister Johnston, people call this the death ticket. I’d rather die where I was born’ (McCabe 1999: 32). Róisín demonstrates her desire to remain in her homeplace, a common feature of Famine victims:

> Many observers of the Famine in the South and West of Ireland noted the recalcitrance of cottiers to leave their small plots of barren land, preferring to die on the spot where they had lived - however tenuously - rather than moving somewhere there was at least the possibility of survival. (Smart 2007: 17)

Roisín is prepared to stay and die among the ruins of her cottage, but she changes her mind when Mister Johnston warns her, ‘[t]here’s tumblin’ talk’, to which Roisín asks, ‘Is there ?’ and Johnston states ‘I heard them in the barracks, a squad from Mayo, and I’ve seen the list, Drumlana’s on it, next Thursday’ (McCabe 1999: 32-33). The threat of the workhouse means disease, death, and despair. The public work schemes were introduced to employ people, but these schemes were totally unfit for purpose, especially as most Famine victims were too weakened to even contemplate any physical work. Trevelyan’s attachment to laissez-faire politics also becomes relevant here. The provision of Relief Works was totally inadequate but for Trevelyan they satisfied the conditions of the Irish working for monetary aid. His scrupulousness disavowed the concept of altruistic aid and his lack of charity towards the Irish poor meant many died needlessly:

> there were multitudes behind, including the most helpless portion of the community, for whom no work could be found. The Relief Works did not always furnish a subsistence for even those who were employed by them melancholy proof of which was afforded by daily instances of starvation in connexion with the relief works. (Fegan 2002: 14)

The relief work included needlessly digging up roads that needed no alteration whatsoever. The people employed too weak to work, failed to earn enough money to keep them alive.

The once fruitful land and its yearly bounty is replaced by blight, Irish people see this as a betrayal by the land, a lack of control over their own lives and a punishment from God. A feature of the Great Famine is the associations with Irish Catholic guilt and that the Famine is a punishment for sins of impurity. 'The Orphan' includes the mother's appalling callous treatment of Grace and in her punishment of Grace reflects Irish society's contemporary attitude to female sexuality. An example, in *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* argues that 'the good daughter was gentle, loving, self-sacrificing and innocent' (Gorham 1982: 37). The pregnant Grace is duly punished for her departure from such qualities and the anxieties arranged round the containment of female sexuality is especially visible during the Great Famine. The mother's anger is seen in her attempts to control and contain her daughters' budding sexuality, but the twins' fecundity and their procreative abilities counteract the notion of the barren landscape. The twins' exuberant youthful attitude suggests a more promising resistance to the pervasive doom and gloom of the Famine, and the hope for new life. Their mother, however, sees her daughters' youth and budding sexuality as an affront to the moral mores of the time that demands punishment for sins of the flesh. As O'Kane Mara outlines,

'The Famine (and its repercussions) affects women differently to men. In other words, the legacy of the Famine complicates and exacerbates postcolonial Othering of women in modern Ireland' (O'Kane Mara 2010: 198).

Margaret Kelleher notes in her important study of the *Feminization of Famine* that 'this association of women's experience with a crisis in representation can have various results […] it also may produce a much more constricting role with women as bearers of meaning not makers of meaning' (Kelleher 1997: 6). From the 1800s the denigration of the female was accepted broadly by most people and was especially promulgated by the Catholic Church. As Scott suggests: 'The Church imposed patriarchal control of women's lives and offered narrow images

of her as virgin, temptress, or whore' (Scott 1984: 9). Róisín describes the visit of the priest, Fr. Brendan Galligan, to their home after the horrific trauma of young Grace's death. At this visit the arrogance and the double standards expressed by Fr. Brendan Galligan is undeniably patriarchal. He compounds this with his distorted view as to the culpability of the two young women in their father leaving the family: '[y]ou've put a lot of decent young men astray in the head and the whole country half-starved. It's wicked beyond words. I'm certain sure it was the burden of shame drove your poor father out of his own house' (McCabe 1999: 28). This attitude to women is endemic to the thinking of the Catholic Church, especially in their ultimate control of women in the Famine years, and later across the twentieth century in Ireland:

> Nuala O'Faolain's texts repeats images of land, fertility, food production (and consumption), women's bodies and reproduction, suggesting a link between the failure of the land to produce food and the need to control unruly female bodies. Women's bodies and their fertility become ciphers for the health of Ireland, rather than spaces for individual consciousness. (O'Kane- Mara 2010: 197)

For the mother and the priest, the disciplining of the twins' bodies and the containment of the two young women within the confines of their cottage becomes a justified act. The mother panders to Fr. Brendan's concern with controlling the unruly twins and their sexual exploits. The twins' blatant refusal to adhere to the patriarchal constraints of Irish society, their sexual fertility, and their flagrant disregard of the moral codes of the Church further provokes Fr.
Brendan's displeasure.

The patriarchal norms entrenched in Irish society are depicted in the blatant misogynism of Fr. Brendan, who blames Grace's death on both sisters. Lowe-Evans reiterates that 'the Church had inculcated a scrupulousness of conscience into Irish thinking that devalued secular life and individuality' (Lowe-Evans1989:21) Fr. Brendan denigrates and criticizes the twins' attempt at living as vibrant young women, sourcing a life beyond the cataclysmic Famine. Lowe-Evans goes

on to highlight, 'this scrupulousness manifested itself in the forms of docility, passivity, apathy, and submissiveness to the Church, the most glaring example of which was the national response to the Great Famine' (Lowe-Evans1989: 21). The Irish national response to the

Famine was an acceptance that the Famine was a punishment from God, and here Róisín and Grace's ebullient cheerful outlook are frowned upon, and both denigrated for their promiscuous actions. The mother goes further in her condemnation of the girls, blaming both for bringing shame on their family. She equates their grasping for a life away from the constant despair of the Famine as a blight on the whole community. The pregnant Grace is particularly exposed and no match for her mother's rancorous tongue, as McCabe represents the mother's skewed opinions formed by a misguided belief in a flawed religiosity and folklorist providentialism. Roisín is worldly-wise and experienced beyond her age and, unlike her half-twin Grace, her agentic actions emphasize she is far more aware of the workings of the world outside the realm of their cottage.

Conscious of their desperate situation, Roisín ruminates: 'I began to wonder what I could do to get money in my fist to feed us all', describing how 'Lord Clonroy had a twenty-acre turnip field over the estate wall that marched Drumlana, our wee garden of a farm' (McCabe 1999: 19). Roisín decides to scale the wall and noting:

> the turnips were long since dug by squads of men to feed sheep and bullocks. Twice the mother let me out to cross the wall and glean at night. Each time I came back with a bag of crow-pecked, half-frosted roots. The Mother fried them with a little pig fat. They were so delicious they made our heads light. Each time in the black dark I could hear the German wolfdogs over a mule away up at the big house. They were kept in a special yard alongside the prize cattle and sheep penned in every night for fear the gangs of Ribbonmen would slash their tendons. (McCabe 1999:19)

Famine Ireland is beset by violence represented by McCabe's inclusion of groups like the Ribbonmen, who sought revenge against landlords and landowners who profited from the

suffering of the tenant peasantry. As a force, their subversive origins reached back to the early eighteenth century and resurfaced with added vigour in the second half of the nineteenth century. Driven by the vulnerable peasants exposed to extreme poverty and evictions, their political insurrection is often accompanied by extreme acts of violence. William Carleton's *Wildgoose Lodge* (1816) is testimony to such violent outrages, a fiction based on fact and, like a great deal of his writing, can be described as a true account of the atrocity. The story details the Gothic murder of an entire family by a group of Ribbonmen in late October 1816. Despite being a revenge murder, the victims and the perpetrators are all Catholics. The story gives an account of the shocked reactions of the narrator with its concise style, and its expressive Gothic elements are typical of the techniques used in the later, modern short story.

The Ribbonmen were involved in attacks on landlords and landowners and engaged in secret clandestine meetings, roaming the countryside at night. Róisín engages in a similar rebellious clandestine activity and determined to survive and, in her struggle to save her family, she takes similar seditious actions. She comes up with a plan to race against Lord Conroy's carriage thereby gaining sympathy from the young men and women inside the carriage. Roisín muses and, 'then after a mile they'd have to look at me and if they had any breedin', they'd throw me out a coin or maybe something from a hamper or maybe a rug I could pawn' (McCabe 1999: 21). As Flannery has suggested, Roisín's expression of hope in her desperation has resonances of Ernest Bloch's philosophical treatise, *The Principle of Hope*,

'the actcontent of hope is, as a consciously illuminated, knowingly elucidated content, the positive utopi an function; the historical content of hope, first represented in ideas, encyclopaedically explored in real j udgements, is human culture referred to its concrete utopian horizon'.(Bloch 1995 :450)

Like Bloch's thesis on a wish for a better life, Roisín is animated by the thought of a new life in America, as her utopian dream propels her to remain positive despite the horrendous Famine

conditions around her. The notion of a longed-for utopia is embodied in the spirit of Róisín's desperate attempts to earn money for food for her family. Roisín has taken on the onerous task of providing for her mother and siblings, and she tries to come up with ways to get money for food supplies. In her plight, she appropriates the motif of the young woman who overcomes that which is powerful. Running side by side with the horses in parity, their animality with her humanity becomes fused, propelled by her determination and the energy of hunger, she, as a Famine victim becomes 'abject.' As a representative of the abject, Roisín is one of 'these, "Poor bare forked animals", revealing the deep connection between the rightless, politically unrepresented status of bare life and the process of a primitive accumulation that denies the dispossessed of even the right to subsistence' (Lloyd 2008: 49).

Despite living through the most debased conditions of Famine Ireland, she never loses hope. In Ireland, the notion or perception of women as both threatening and subordinate to men has deep historical and cultural roots. Because Roisín is a young woman who challenged traditional gender roles or power structures she is perceived as threatening. *The Madwoman in The Attic* becomes relevant here where Gilbert and Gubar examine the different classifications of women assigned to women in a patriarchal society. One of the concepts Gilbert and Gubar describes is , how early nineteenth century women who deviated from the norms were seen as disruptive to the established order. Uncompliant women like Roisín are constructed as the 'other' 'and as it is debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels, they must be monsters'(Gilbert & Gubar 1979:379)

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Waiting for the carriage she carries out her plan to continue running, trying to keep up with the gallop of the horses and even when she falls, she states:

> I'll keep runnin', I thought till someone throws out somethin'. Just when it was hardest with the big house and the lake in view, I heard a coin sing on the stone of the avenue. Then

> another. Then another. Then another. Then another. Five sixpences. Enough to buy two weeks Indian meal. (McCabe 1999: 22)

The harmonious sound of a coin singing on the stone is music to Roisín's ears, as she knows her endeavours have not been in vain and have gained her the empathy from those inside the carriage and also the money to buy Indian meal. Her successful ruse to get money for corn gives the lie to the concept of the female as a helpless powerless Famine victim incapable of gaining agency. Margaret Kelleher cited in (Fegan 2002) states that '[f]amine novelists chose the female as the "archetypal victim" despite historical evidence indicating the higher survival rate of women during the Famine' (Fegan 2002: 211). Having endured the trauma of hunger and humiliation, Roisín feels she is demeaned and considered the Other by those in the carriage, she feels shame 'under the eyes of high bred young men and women' (McCabe 1999: 23). Her humiliation and shame at her situation is countered by her pride in not having to beg, and she muses, '[m]aybe it was the relief of knowin' we could hold off from the poorhouse a while and I hadn't held out my hand to whine like a beggar' (McCabe 1999: 23).

Roisin suffers from what is known as 'double colonization,' she is oppressed by the weight of colonialism and also by the weight of a patriarchal society. Patriarchy and the controlling hand of the masculine colonists determine her survival. Roisín recognises her own lowly status as she is the colonised, and the high bred young men and women riding in the carriage are the colonisers. Because they have the money that she needs to buy food, they possess the power over her. This society demonstrates how socio-economic dominance along with political dominance typify how males and masculinity have the power and influence over women and femininity. Beginning with the impact the males have on her life with first, her father, the failed tailor, Tom Brady, next Lord Conroy, the coachman Clancy, Ivan Dowler, and Mathew, Lord Conroy's son and, finally, Reginald Murphy, an overseer at the workhouse. Despite her shame and the weakness of hunger,

Roisín is desperate to gain money for food for her family. The normal gender roles are reversed as societal standards would have dictated that Roisín, as a young female, should not be ascribed the task of foraging for food to feed her family. As Quinn and Delay reveal: 'Margaret Kelleher and Stuart McLean, among others, have argued that images of desperate women came to personify the worst depredations of famine such records disrupt the woman-as-victim trope that has dominated Famine representations and historiography' (Quinn and Delay 2017 120-1). Roisín takes command of the situation 'and suggests instead that during the crisis of the 1840s, some Irish women used their associations with food to not only feed their families, maintain communal ties, and uphold tradition, but also to lay claim to power and influence. (Quinn and Delay 2017: 120-1).

A Gothic Feminism

McCabe's Gothic writing focuses on the Irish female body and here it dramatizes Famine Ireland's fanatic control of female procreative abilities and the recurrent anxieties related to the female body. McCabe restores Roisín back to her feminine material female state when 'at that moment I felt blood on my thighs and knew what had happened' (McCabe 1999: 23). The link between Famine, starvation and reproduction become evident in Róisín's femininity. In this case, as the Other, Roisín feels a connected abjectness, she has transcended such dictates and disavowed the normal gender roles. Róisín's femininity and the flow of blood invokes female reproduction and the vampire in *Dracula,* and in the same way 'from her first encounter with Dracula to her final beheading and staking, Lucy is an exemplary case study in the pathologizing of menstruation and the control and containment of female sexuality' (Parsons 2005: 69). Thus Róisín, like Stoker's Lucy Westenra, foreshadows and becomes representative of the late Victorian attitude regarding the socio-cultural and psychosexual anxieties pertaining to women

and madness. Thinking of her trauma, but also her success at gaining the coins, and despite burning with shame, she was planning in her head:

> would I, could I, do the same again if I had to, two weeks from now? I was thinkin' these thoughts when I saw Ivan Dowler the gate lodge keeper the worst breed of henchman, come into the copse carryin' his whitethorn stick. He had frog eyes and the low hung lips of a bully. (McCabe 1999: 23)

The containing and disciplining of the female body are exemplified in Roisín's encounter with the bully, Ivan Dowler. Roisín is prepared for her confrontation with Dowler, and during the Great Famine myths and folk beliefs relating to sexuality lead to the socio-cultural and psychosexual anxieties regarding the feminine. From 'the 1840s on, menstrual bleeding became the sign of swelling and explosion whose corresponding behavioural manifestations were aligned with sexual excitement and animals in heat. Thus, the menstruating woman was rendered as "out of control" and in need of containment' (Parsons 2005: 67).

In her readiness for her confrontation with Dowler, who is expecting a penitent Roisín, she transforms into a vampiric state. Her anxieties, hunger, and desperation metamorphose into an almost demotic rage and anger. Roisín states, 'I'm not sure what came over me maybe hundreds of years of being wronged, but somewhere from my lungs I screamed at him so loud it near frightened me as much as him' (McCabe 1999: 23). Roisín transmogrifies into a vampire and in her anger and desperation her loud vociferous protestation renders her as a dangerous threatening force. She summons up a vengeful femininity and in her loud expressions frightens Dowler: 'Then I let out another and another till the screamin' became more like the howlin' of a trapped creature through clenched teeth, I could see that he had stopped and could hear him growl. Quit, quit that, Quit!' (McCabe 1999:23). Roisín describes, '[t]hen of a sudden I was gone.' She is pushed beyond endurance and Dowler leaves, startled by Roisín's attack. Roisín has obviously fainted and fallen into a heavy sleep, spent from her race against the horses and the trauma of her

encounter with Dowler. Roisín can be compared to Lucy's lethargic state in *Dracula*, as both are young adolescents and on the cusp of sexual awakening:

> The treatment of Lucy's illness (through blood transfusions) obviates the Victorian obsession with treating female mental illness (sexuality) by regulating the menstrual cycle. The symptoms from which she suffers are blatantly sexual and blood related. Blood loss is a significant indicator of menstruation, and her lethargy and heavy sleep is, as Bruno Bettelheim notes, symptomatic of puberty. (Parsons 2005: 71)

Interestingly in Roisín's aggressive stance against Dowler, her sexual awakening, and her womanly state both collude, and she gains the means of saving her family from starvation. The notion that the representation of the woman as diseased and contaminated invokes the characterisation of Lucy in Stoker's *Dracula*. The text describes her penchant for walking through the streets of Whitby at night, clad only in her white nightdress. Drawn by the rhythm and the light of the moon her roaming is interrupted when she encounters Count Dracula. Jonathan Harker, observing from a short distance, notes:

> The coming of the cloud was too quick for me to see much for shadow shut down on light almost immediately; but it seemed to me as though something dark stood behind the seat where the white figure shone and bent over it. What it was whether man or beast, I could not tell; I did not wait to catch another glance but flew down the steep steps to the pier and along by the fish-market to the bridge, which was the only way to reach the East Cliff. (Stoker 2013: 146)

Lucy's languorous pose is overtly sexual in nature and suggests an obvious intimate sexual encounter with Count Dracula. The sexual nature of the representation of Lucy coalesces with Roisín's burgeoning sexuality and both young women challenge the sexual mores of their time. They can be described as not only out of control, but both women present as a danger to their society; in the case of Roisín, it is to the Irish Catholic mores and Lucy to Victorian womanhood. Hence the view of women as dangerous and out of control raises the notion of the female as the Other. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir postulates.

> Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being. She determines and differentiates herself in relation to man, and he does not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other. (Beauvoir 1949 [2010]: 5-7)

Such a notion might be considered in relation to Kristeva's insistence that 'the image of woman's body because of its maternal functions acknowledges its debt to nature and consequently is more likely to signify the abject' (Creed cited in Gelder 2000: 66-7). Just as de Beauvoir does not use the term abjection, she creates another term to represent it, that is, 'absolute alterity.' The term absolute alterity refers to De Beauvoir's idea or concept of the Other and refers to how women are often marginalized and oppressed by society. This concept can be linked to both Roisín, and Lucy from *Dracula.* Both women are treated as the Other emphasizing their difference, and in the end, this leads to their subjugation.

Roisín is representative of the abject and, in McCabe's creation of her as a character, he charts her development and coming of age. She echoes the lives of protagonists in the classical bildungsroman 'which more closely examines a character's early, formative life experiences than any other type of fiction' (Cahalan 1999: 105). In McCabe's representation of Roisín's bildung, he addresses not just the interior events in her life but also addresses the action in the plot. The genre of the bildungsroman grows out of a traditional heroic narrative, its plot is derived from searching and the motif of initiation from the idea of what Bakhtin calls 'testing.' The bildungsroman's main theme is, according to Bakhtin, essentially the image of man in the process of becoming and, so the novel is one of human emergence. In Roisín's characterization we can chart her emerging development from the beginning of *Tales from The Poorhouse*, when as a young girl, with her beloved sister Grace, Roisín states that 'at night we'd lie close and talk and giggle about the boys and the kind of them, who was good for a coort and who was shy, and who we'd let and how far we'd let them' (McCabe 1999: 16). McCabe represents Roisín's and Grace's

transitions from giggling immature young women to young adults. The tragic trajectory of Grace's coming of age unfortunately culminates in her death, and the death of her new-born baby girl. Roisín's and Grace's nurturing sisterhood acts as an antidote to the priest, Fr. Brendan, who harbours a deeply negative opinion of the two young women's youth and vitality. Both young women's vibrant sexualities offend the narrowminded cleric and emphasize his lack of control over the two girls.

McCabe's narrative addresses the pervasive silence around female sexuality together with the anxieties connected to the female body, which is often equated with sin. As Connolly suggests: 'Even in pre-Famine Ireland there was an extreme intolerance toward sexual misdemeanours and successful policing of sex necessitated close supervision and control of desire' (Connolly 1982: 213). In our reading of McCabe, the effervescent spirit of youth, embodied in the twins, acts as a remedy to the misery of starvation and sickness of Famine Ireland. McCabe uses twinning as a trope, and the spirit of hope is embodied in his treatment of the twins, Roisín and Grace. Throughout *Tales from the Poorhouse*, Roisín and Grace blossom as two young females, emerging as a unifying unit in their very touching friendship. McCabe is particularly cognizant of the harshness of life for Irish women, especially during and after the cataclysmic Great Famine years. Here in his Famine monologues, McCabe describes Roisín's devastation at the death of her beloved sister, Grace, and her baby. She questions the existence of a God that would oversee such a horrific scenario. As she says 'if Jesus knew the carry on in our house, why would he not shift himself to help her? And for a bad minute I thought I'd shout out, it's a clip on the ear Jesus wants to waken him up! but I held my tongue, thank God' (McCabe 2005: 234). In the juxtaposition of life and death, amid the desolation of the famine, McCabe focuses on the positivity of the twins' vibrant sexuality in the throes of hopeless despair.

McCabe reflects on the inhumane cruelty meted out to young girls, like Grace, under the guise of maintaining a pious outward show of Catholic virtue, that all the while was cloaking a profound callousness. The notion of death infecting life becomes a truism and when the mother discovers Grace is pregnant, Roisín describes 'there was a screehin' match to end all screehin' matches' (McCabe 1999: 19). For the mother, Grace's pregnant body becomes a source or a site of monstrous sexual energy and a target site for the mother's rage and frenzy. The mother is furious at Grace and, consumed with a righteous religious fanaticism, views her daughter as the gothic Other. Grace's reproductive body and her female sexuality become equated with degeneration, disease and eventually death:

> she took Grace up to the cockloft by the ear, put a cow's chain round her neck and closed it tight with a blacksmith's pincers. Then she nailed the end of the chain to the roof-beam with nails as big as the ones they nailed on Christ and kept her up there with a bowl and a bucket. (McCabe 1999: 19)

The descriptions here have both religious connotations with the mention of 'with nails as big as the ones they nailed on Christ' (McCabe 1999: 19) The gothic tableau evokes Christ's crucifixion and the religious imagery reflect Biblical modes of dying or paying for one's sins. Grace is bound and manacled, and her innocence offered up by the mother as part of a human sacrifice to appease a vengeful God. The callous animalistic way the mother treats Grace reflects a socially sanctioned attitude to female sexuality. Grace's personal qualities are an antidote to her mother's bitter and explosive rage. When Roisín begins to speak ill of her mother, Grace gently reminds Roisín: '[s]he loves us, Roisín. I pointed at the chain and asked, Is that love? She's sick with worry over the head of everythin'; to which Roisín retorts, '[s]he's madded with pride, or just plain mad' (McCabe 1999: 25). Roisin is furious at her mother's cruelty and hypocrisy, as well as at the mother's damaging sense of pride regarding her own family blood ties. The mother's inhuman treatment of Grace is driven by her own pride and by how she would be perceived in her Famine community. In this way, linking anxieties on female fertility and reproduction can be juxtaposed

with the barren unfruitful land. In a sense, Grace is an example of what can, and did, happen in such circumstances if a young woman deviated from the expected societal norms. As McGarry notes: 'In 1854, Pius IX promulgated the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception – that Mary was born without original sin – embedding still further in the popular Irish Catholic mind a profound association between sex and sin' (McGarry 2009: 1-3).

In his representation of 'The Orphan,' McCabe highlights the double standards endemic to Irish society: while the mother castigates her daughters for acting like 'mad heifers in heat' (McCabe1999: 11), she sanctions her own secret sexual liaisons, stating: '[b]etimes I was near tempted to tell them the way they were planted. A knife-grinder from Kildysart it was. Not a day passes but I think of him' (McCabe1999: 114). The liaison had resulted in her becoming pregnant with the two girls and in the representation of motherhood and the maternal, the 'unnatural mothers' in McCabe's Gothic fiction are established in terms of Kristeva's grotesque, abject and uncanny. In general terms, Kristeva is 'attempting to explore the different ways in which abjection works within human societies, as a means of separating out the human from the non-human and the fully constituted subject from the partially formed subject' (Creed 1989: 51). In examining the various representations of the mother, Barbara Creed establishes a close relationship between the figure of the mother and the abject. Kristeva's notion of the abject becomes pivotal here and for her 'the maternal figure is constructed as the monstrous -feminine' (Creed 1989: 68). The Mother is representative of a monstrous-feminine maternal figure and especially in her reaction to Grace. The inhumane way the mother treats Grace is evidenced by the issue of animalistic tropes. Grace is Othered by the mother whose predominant concern is to conceal her daughter's pregnancy from the local community: '[t]he Mother was either mouthin' prayers or usin' a tongue would cut you in two. I knew Rosh half believed what she preached that Holy God had sent down the blight and the hard hunger to punish us for all our sins of impurity.

(McCabe 1999: 25) Grace's situation is deemed to confirm such simple beliefs, confirming McGarry's point that '[t]he Vatican's celibate foot soldiers preached chastity as the greatest virtue and Irish women were expected to emulate the Virgin Mary' (McGarry 2009: 1-3).

Roisín describes how '[i]t was near daylight when I got back to Drumlana to hear a terrible story. Grace was stretched dead as any dead thing you'd see in a ditch or bog' (McCabe 1999: 26). On discovering Grace and her baby are dead, Roisín is inconsolable but furious at her mother's part in the death of her grandchild. McCabe excels in his representation of the horrors of the Famine. He does not disguise the horrific circumstances of the Famine and its effect on the characters in the *Tales.* The leitmotif of the missing twin can be read as an analogy for Róisín's devastation at the death of her twin sister. For Roisín the loss of her close friend, her sister, is traumatic, and Vivienne Lewin discusses the intensity of emotions felt by twins in her book, *The Twin in the Transference*. Lewin notes: 'twins who feel they are two parts of the one person would experience any expression of violence towards the other twin as a violent act against the self'(Lewin 2018: 234) Roisín is furious at how her twin has been treated and she is particularly angry at her mother's actions leading to Grace's death. Roisín's soul-searching can be read as a quest for a unified completeness, a cohesiveness of self. The description accurately describes the closeness of Roisin and her sister Grace and, as twins being part of the split double, it becomes even more difficult for Roisín to accept her death.

As the first-person narrator, it is Roisín who is both emotionally involved and consciously aware of the seriousness of their situation. Both Roisín and her mother end up in the poorhouse – though in different areas. When visiting her mother she describes 'there's a shed here for mad women in the grounds of the poorhouse; she was still clean but surrounded by filth and smell, her only company the gibberin' and laughin' mad women night and day' (McCabe 1999: 3031) Few

survived the unsanitary disease-ridden conditions of the workhouse, and Reggie Murphy, the Master, comes to Roisin to persuade her to go to the workhouse. She reflects 'if I proved useful, I might get some paid work. He put his hands on my neck and felt my glands, made me open my mouth and looked down my throat. I felt like a filly at a horse fair' (McCabe 1999: 34). The overtly sexual nature of his examination leaves Roisín in no doubt as to the nature of his interest in her: 'I could see him lookin' down through my poor patched smock and I knew well what was in his head' (McCabe 1999: 34). Roisín's status is relegated to the position of the Other, and in her hunger, desperation and dejection moves into the realm of the subhuman. The master Reginald sets the slave, in this case Roisín, to work, meaning she is in a secondary or derivative position to Reginald as the Master of the poorhouse. Roisín's trauma and reality is she is seen as an object that the Master enjoys, and he also gets her to work for him. She is very much aware that she could die if he had not given her food or if he had decided to turn her out of the poor house. For Roisín the death of her entire family and the fear of death has led to the meaning of her world being called into question. Reginald, as the Master of the poorhouse, is in a powerful position and, for him, Roisín's subservience reaffirms that position. Later, when he thwarts his sister's attempts to find a place in the poorhouse, the whole power differential inverts and Murphy is brought low. Because of his treatment of Annemarie and his guilty conscience he proffers, 'I am not poor, but I'd refused a sibling help and shelter, lest my position of Master is called into question when in truth I'm as crooked or partial as any man' (McCabe 1999: 67). Reginald's fear of losing his powerful position as master of the poorhouse has essentially meant he ignores his sister's plight and lets her and her infant die. From his earlier stance of being in a powerful position and having a certainty of self, he is now full of remorse and has to endure the trauma of a regretful painful existence.

One of the most salient aspects of Famine representations is that 'these terms are part of the common lexicon of postcolonialism, descriptions of the disintegration of the human into imperial caricature' (Valone 2009: 62). Roisín Brady is an exemplar of the many desperate Famine victims who aspired to travel to America. Reginald Murphy states 'of course the dream they all dream is America, America, America. Paradise! Happiness! Freedom! Abundance, meantime the nightmare is here, and now and being awake to other bodies lodged in this house, half alive and otherwise' (McCabe 1999: 43). Róisín is hungry and desperate, and is driven by her desire to escape, not just from colonial oppression but from a stifling parochial and patriarchal Irish society. Her melancholy and rage propel her on, and since her family is gone and the home will be tumbled, levelled back into the landscape, she is alone and has nowhere else to go but the workhouse. Róisín has endured incredible trauma and loss, suggesting that the absolutisms that people take for granted in their everyday life such as a sense of true optimism and objective reality have no meaning for those who experience trauma. Róisín and her family are representatives of those 'who cannot trust the reliability of everyday events and the security and predictability of everyday life' (Ringell and Brandell 2012: 73).

Despite the Irish Famine victim's absolute aversion to entering the poorhouse or workhouse, once the family home or cottage was tumbled, it was the only available option. The workhouse as a structure is a formidable building with its external walls measuring between nine and eleven feet tall, built to create a psychological fear and difference between those residing inside and the lives on the outside. Coupled with this, the standard layout of a workhouse at this time included large dormitory or reformatory style blocks, housing the workhouse officers' and master's quarters, along with the meeting rooms or boardrooms of the guardians. The structure or design was such that the paupers residing within this place are completely hemmed in, cowed and unable to challenge the actual physical and institutional display of formidable power. The road to the

workhouse named in Irish, as cosan na marbh or pathway of the dead, is so named as more than a quarter of those admitted died inside the workhouse. Another feature of the poorhouse was the trauma of separation of family members as, once admitted, children were separated from their parents, and this added to the immense distress of both parents and children. Due to the breakdown of normal societal rules within the poor house, there was also the perceived lack of morality, and many parents, especially women, refused to let their children enter the poorhouse in fear of their exposure to immorality and the reported baseness of some characters residing there:

> For hundreds of thousands of the Irish poor during the middle of the nineteenth century, the suffering of the Great Famine would be synonymous with first-hand experience of the much-despised union workhouses. Approximately 250,000 people suffered death in these institutions between 1846 and 1851, and 200,000 of these are believed to have been directly related to famine-induced conditions. (Geber 2016: 102)

Unsurprisingly for Roisín she promises she will find her way out and move away from Ireland's bleak famished landscapes:' [b]ut I'll fight, I'll do anthin' to stay alive and, with luck, I'll get my hands on five golden guineas and get away to America, because no place in the world could be worse than this except hell itself and no girl ever had to be shamed like me. (McCabe 1999: 34)

A feature of the Famine tableau was the gothic scene of the many coffins 'piled outside of cottiers' houses or on wagons being led to overflowing cemeteries, the number of coffins that.

Dracula prepares for his colonization of England and the West resonates with cultural memory' (Smart 2007: 17-18). In chapter four of *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker comes across fifty coffins full of Dracula's precious soil, causing Jonathan to panic and 'what Harker saw and felt likely parallels both in detail and in effect, the impact of seeing piles of coffins and newly dug earth in Skibbereen in 1848' (Smart 2007: 17-18). Another example are the harrowing accounts of Famine

related deaths in newspapers. Often an unprecedented number of deaths were recorded in newspapers at the time. An article appeared in *The Times* newspaper, dated 17th September. 1847, reads that, 'in the case of ten of the vessels that arrived at Montreal in July, four from Cork and six from Liverpool, out of 4,427 passengers, 804 had died on the passage and 847 were sick on their arrival' (Corporaal and Cusack 2011: 344). Hence McCabe's characterization of Roisín as a strong determined young woman, symbolically prefigures only the young and those with a firm resolve to succeed will survive the struggle to establish new lives and the limited chances of success the Irish emigrant characters will have to confront on American soil. The so-called 'coffin' ship is a recurrent image and setting in these 'semiotic systems, which give shape to the memories of Famine and diaspora. […] the storms that emigrant characters have to endure during their passage prefigure the trials the characters will face in the urbanised New World' (Corporaal and Cusack 2011: 345). Eventually Róisín succeeds, and in her decision to take the red ticket she shows her rationale for her choice. She wants to live and move beyond Famine Ireland. In her struggle to survive she embodies the true spirit of a redemptive hope to exist beyond the despair of the Famine. Her determination to survive surpasses the trauma of the Great Famine and the loss of her many family members.

'The Master'

McCabe intertwines Roisín's life story with that of Reginald Murphy, 'The Master,' who as the first-person narrator recounts his life story and that of his younger sister, Annamarie, in a model of conversational storytelling. The story is told from the Master's perspective, blending his own personal story with the other interlocutors in the tales. The Master's account is delivered in a decidedly apologetic tone, and it begins with Reginald Murphy's recollection of his and his young sister, Annamarie's forced separation:

> I can still see your eyes at Granard as Aunt Bridie carried you from coach to ass and cart without the smallest warning we were to be parted. That transfer was so brutal seeming, so unexpected, that I've no memory of what our aunt looked like. All I remember being alone and you calling out my pet's name again and again-Lola, Lola, Lola. (McCabe 2005: 240)

Reginald's trauma stems from the loss of his parents and the forced separation from his much younger sister. Ehlers and Clark propose that 'an influential cognitive theory on the development of PTSD may develop in some people due to a subsequent event which gives the original trauma a more threatening meaning' (Bistoen et al 2014: 671). For Reginald seeing Annamarie again brings him back to a stressful period in his life, and the forced separation from his sister re-enforces the trauma of the subsequent event. Despite his authority, Murphy's dissipated lifestyle and his lack of contact with his sister, Annamarie haunts him, and these are coupled with the everyday engagement with the death and despair of the workhouse.

From the beginning of his life, trauma pervades Reginald's very being, and his childhood experiences hamper his cognitive abilities, especially when he struggles to remember what his aunt looks like. This is just one of the classic signs of trauma and hysteria and is also the psychiatric neurosis that has altered his personality, a change he admits to as 'that's thirty years ago now and during all that time I don't think I cried once' (McCabe 2005: 240). Reginald Murphy's melancholy is represented in his pleading and suffering tone, and Lord Clonroy bears testimony to Reginald's psychological decline, when he notes:

> Murphy still locked in his room. The Brady girl says he eats almost nothing. Tried talking through the door. Sounds unbalanced. Muttered about entering the poorhouse as a pauper. I pretended not to hear that. Told him I'd have behaved as he did, with firmness and courtesy. How else could he have guessed that she was his sister, being a child herself when he last saw her? They say she screeched, ballyragged, cursed and left in a great huff with her child next

> morning. Terrible the way she was found with her child the next morning. Deeply grieved since then. (McCabe 1999: 72)

Lord Clonroy continues in this vein: 'close to a fortnight now, 'mourning out of all proportion. As master for two years now how many has, he buried? Thought he'd be impervious to the empire of death' (McCabe 1999:72). The Master is in the throes of grief, devastated by his ill-timed decision to refuse admission to his sister and her baby into the workhouse. Reginald Murphy's guilt and anxiety are melancholic and, as such as:

> The distinguishing features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity and the lowering of self-regarding features to a degree that finds utterances in self-reproaches and self-reviling and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment. (Freud 1914-16: 244)

The gothic focuses on protagonist's inner psychological neurosis and in Reginald's case, his previous life experiences make him predisposed to trauma. Guilt and despair haunt Murphy and he seeks to hold on to his diminishing authority. Delivered through the first-person narrator here, the form underlines the suffering of the Great Famine victims around him. The struggle to describe the traumas in their personal lives are amplified by the death and deprivation of the wretched Famine victims ensconced in the workhouse. As a young child, Reginald is distressed and powerless when, due to his parents' death, both children are separated and placed with different relatives. Reginald suffers trauma in his inability to stop the removal of his sister, Annamarie and, due to the trauma of the event, he has consigned this painful traumatic memory to his unconscious memory. Now, in later life, the reappearance of his young sister, Annamarie, and her young child waiting to be admitted to the poorhouse resurrects old painful memories he tries his best to deny.

Here, and throughout, McCabe gives a voice to those dying from hunger and disease. In all of McCabe's narratives, he is heavily invested in offering an intimacy of voice to his characters

rather than the omniscient narrator, the all-knowing voice of the stories. Among his list of characters and personalities, he instils a feeling of intimacy between his writing and his protagonists. McCabe discloses even the most guarded secrets of his characters, giving an intimate account of their trauma. He reverts to real historical facts as regards the callousness of Famine life and the juxtaposition of Rosen's use of food for sex to get better rations, thus linking the human condition and the bodily appetites in these short stories. As we have learned from Róisín, Murphy leaves her in no doubt as to the nature of his interest in her, as she accepts his offer of a place in the workhouse. Róisín says of the Master, 'they all say hereabouts he's a bad lad. If he takes a notion of some girl or woman, he'll buy her passage if she opens her legs for him' (McCabe 1999: 33-4). Roisín recognises she can use her beauty and her obvious sexual appeal in an exchange with Reginald Murphy, her sexual favours for his bread and fresh water. Reginald states 'clean well-water the left-over of fresh bread, the cuttings of cheese and meat scraps she gets from my table. That's what she wants, that's what brings her to this bed.
Not me. Hunger' (McCabe 1999: 40). The exchange or arrangement, while unethical, lets Reginald Murphy know that Roisín is prepared, and determined, to survive. Even in the extremes of hunger disease and poverty, the human body becomes a voyeuristic site for him, as he ruminates, 'For three miles I watched her walking, her gait graceful as that of a trained dancer. Compared with most country girls she trod the road like a racehorse' (McCabe 1999: 39). Murphy notes Roisín's delicate graceful deportment and his lascivious gaze has an obvious sexual content.

Murphy's interest in Roisín transforms the Famine victims into objects to be viewed. In fact, as Margaret Kelleher points out, in Asenath Nicholson's account of the Famine affords to the 'comfortable classes a certain voyeuristic pleasure, the pleasure of looking in on a private world unaware of the spectator's own existence, a curiosity, even voyeurism, shared by future audiences' (Kelleher 1996: 127). Furthermore, Reginald Murphy's appraisal and response to

Roisín invokes Mulvey's theory of the gaze. Drawing on Mulvey's work on cinematic theories of the gaze and of spectacle, Kelleher continues:

> mainstream cinema invites the spectator to identify with a male gaze which objectifies the female; woman is thus the object of the gaze, 'to-be-looked-at-Ness.' Mulvey's identification of woman as image, man as bearer of the 'look' is exemplified throughout representations of famine in which individual victims are characterised most frequently as female by predominantly male observers. (Kelleher 1996: 119)

Reginald's interest in Roisín is expressed in his statement on 'how it made it hard not to stare, to imagine that body under those pitiable rags' (McCabe 1999: 39). Here Róisín, as the Famine victim, is transformed into a sexual object, into an object of desire for men's pleasure. In the act of turning the woman into an object of desire, the woman is not an active participant in the production of meaning, but rather is viewed as a passive recipient of meaning that is imparted by the patriarchal order. Murphy's voyeuristic examination of Róisín's body becomes an example of scopophilia, and looking at the Famine victim takes on a fetishized form. His gaze or perusal of Róisín's body becomes a permitted act of dominance over her body, a removal of her autonomy. Reginald Murphy, the Master of the Workhouse, turns his desire into an act of supremacy, looking at Róisín without her consent he seeks to tame, control, or own her.

One night, in an act of defiance, Róisín questions Murphy about his own family. Murphy states: 'I was unready for these sudden questions. Even less did I care for the blunt way they were asked. My kin, creed, or name is no affair of yours, girl, I said. She was silent for a while, then shrugged faintly' (McCabe 1999: 41). Murphy is disconcerted by Róisín's line of questioning, especially when she mentions - 'the priest Galligan says you have a sister, married out of
Granard. I then heard myself say, she was an infant when we parted' (McCabe 1999: 41). The Master is somewhat surprised when she states, '[t]hat was a cruel thing they did Sir' (McCabe 1999: 41). Despite his anger and shock, Reginald remains stoic and does not allow his pride to

dictate how he reacts to Roisin. He recalls his family's happier earlier life in India, where their father was a batman to General Lord Clonroy. Relaying the sights and horrors of the Indian Agra famine of 1837–1838 to the Irish Great Famine of the 1840s, Reginald muses 'and who would have thought such horror could ever visit this ancient Island of ours, so thronged with saints, so especially beloved of God himself and his Blessed Mother. Or so we were led to believe' (McCabe 1999: 36). In his rhetorical question, Murphy uses irony to convey and question the unfailing faith of the Irish nation at this time. The result of this blind faith meant countless died nursing a sense of guilt that the Famine was a chastisement from God. As the workhouse Master, Murphy is charged with dealing with the trauma of the Famine and engaged to admit paupers into the workhouse. Every day he deals with the desperate paupers, the impoverished victims of hunger, their appearance redolent of the ghosts, and the walking dead crying out for aid. Reginald struggles to accurately portray or interpret the desperate scenes he engages with daily. Commenting on representations of the Irish Famine, Steven Marcus notes scenes resonant of Reginald Murphy's experiences:

> The constant refrain of those who observed the Famine is "It cannot be described." The scenes which presented themselves were such as no tongue or pen can convey the slightest idea of "It is impossible to go through every detail" Believe me. My dear Sir, the reality in most cases far exceeded the description. Indeed, none can conceive what it was but those who were in it. (Marcus 1963: 10)

For Reginald Murphy, his memories, and the graphic images he witnesses are numbing, and he is unable to comprehend the horror. As Morash suggests: '[t]hese images of cannibalism and desecration of the dead constitute another of the memories which make up the archive of Famine literature' (Morash 1996:116). Unsurprisingly Marcus culminates by pointing out 'however mad, wild, or grotesque art may seem, it can never touch or approach the madness of reality' (Morash 1996: 116).

Lord Clarendon calls a meeting of all Masters. Reginald describes 'that some time in February of this year the Viceroy Clarendon requested a delegation of a dozen other masters, three from each province to discuss the increased death rate in almost all of the hundred and fifty poorhouses?' (McCabe1999: 61) At the meeting, the question is raised regarding the disposal of the dead bodies and the implementation of cremation as a method of disposal comes up for discussion. Reginald thinks the disposal of the dead in this way is a safe sanitary idea, noting 'when families die of typhus, which was widespread during the Famine, their hovel is burned to the ground with the entire family inside and the clergy sprinkles ashes. That's cremation surely? Why pretend it's not' (McCabe 1999: 62). However, the Viceroy Clarendon, fearful of the Catholic Church's displeasure, will not countenance cremation at the workhouses, 'the church of Rome, he said will not discuss cremation. I will not antagonise them. We have more than enough on our hands, gentlemen' (McCabe 1999: 62). Here, Lord Clarendon focuses on theological differences between Irish Catholics and Protestants, and touches upon the deeply rooted dilemmas regarding the observation of Irish burial rituals and practices. McCabe's many references to the different burial practises between Catholics and Protestants evokes the perversions of Catholic lore in the choice of burning bodies as opposed to the standard Catholic traditional method of burial in consecrated ground. The fear of the attending Masters is centred on the resuscitation or return of the Famine dead, the reappearance of the spectral and haunting Irish body. The quality of spectrality is the fear of death and ghosts is embodied in repressed antagonistic feelings towards the Famine dead. The fear of spectrality of the skeletal figures of the Famine victims can be compared to the walking dead, to ghosts who as a hostile force will return to claim retribution for the many wrongs committed against them. In this way the border between the living and the dead becomes marked by fear. Maud Ellman explains in European folklore that 'vampires embody ambivalent feelings of remorse and aggression towards the dead leading to the notion that the dead return to claim a debt of life from those who have

survived them' (Goss 2003: 9). The dead paupers, like the revenant or vampire, are so illtreated in life, a fear persists they will rise up and take revenge. Unless their bodies are burnt and consigned to ashes they will seek to return in an act of revenge for a life of misery and their literal death by starvation.

Declarations of strong emotion pepper the text, and most pointedly, this is seen in the appearance of one of the figurative revenants mentioned above: Murphy's sister and her child. But, as we see, Reginald remains unmoved by his sister's pleading. He denies any familial connection with her and her infant son when she arrives at the poorhouse, and despite pleading with him for help, he rebuffs her pleas. Reginald remains circumspect and guarded, and when processing his sister's admittance, he notes 'the orderly was watching me for a sign. Unnerved I looked away to the clerk's ledger and said what I say to every pauper. Name?' (McCabe 1999: 66) Reginald will not allow any breach in his cold exterior not even to his sister: 'Even when she says - Lola it's me, Annie, he remains set with a look of steadfast resignation. Townland? Your sister, Annie, Annemarie, remember look at me, Lola!' (McCabe 1999: 66). Reginald performs a dual identity as a Master in the workhouse but also as a brother to Annemarie. He chooses not to acknowledge his sister. Guided by his pride and fearful of any threat to his position as Master in the poorhouse, and wanting to maintain a calm exterior he posits: 'I was aware I'd lost control, could sense a curious silence, staff and paupers watching to see what would happen next' (McCabe 1999: 66). Reginald is aware of being watched, struggles to maintain control and Annemarie realises that he has no intention of helping her, and, as Reginald states: 'I glanced from the ledger to your face and saw the disbelief in your eyes as you twisted away with a kind of wail' (McCabe 1999: 66). Annemarie is incredulous at Reginald's reaction to her, she moves away as Reginald states 'wrenching the child after you and heading for the main gates, half running, half -stumbling, stopping once to gulp out curses'

(McCabe 1999: 66). Reginald tries to remain composed in front of the workhouse staff but as he states: 'I am not poor, but I'd refused a sibling help and shelter lest my position as Master be called into question when in truth, I'm as crooked and partial as any man. Somewhere in that clenched heart I knew as you stumbled away that I'd made a mistake of a lifetime. (McCabe 1999: 67)

Reginald Murphy's grief is compounded by the callous way he has treated his sister and, as Reginald and his sister were cruelly separated since as young children, Reginald redoubles their trauma by essentially denying her very existence. Closing his ears to her pleading, she directs an array of curses at him.

Marguerite Corporaal notes that because the short story appears in a compressed form or arrangement, it provides a literary representation of some of the more traumatic aspects of the Famine by omitting distressing scenes or passages that fail to provide an accurate portrayal. Trauma and its inexpressible component is such that it begs the question, is the lack of adequate interpretation in the configuration or arrangement of the short story form, or is it because of the inexpressible nature of the trauma itself? McCabe manages to elide such concerns and successfully portrays the trauma of his Famine victims. Because he suddenly comes across his sister again, the original trauma Reginald endures returns and becomes manifest once more. As Bistoen et al. maintain:

> Some trauma causalities experience a long latency period during which they preserve good functioning and present little or no PTSD symptoms. However, following this period they may encounter an event (e.g., accident, death of a loved one, terror attack) that is actually or symbolically reminiscent of their traumatic event, and therefore bring it to the forefront again. (Bistoen et al. 2014: 675)

Reginald Murphy suffers guilt for his denial of his sister and her young son, and McCabe, using his gift for psychological observation, focuses on the dissolution of his mental state. Reginald is

psychologically damaged by his past and above all other interlocuters in this story segues into a highly emotional state and tries to justify his own actions and the reason behind them. Recognizing, as he does, that he has made the mistake of a lifetime, he escapes into a mental and psychical breakdown. His guilt materialises via the elegiac form of a confessional tone, communicating his sense of sorrow and regret at how he has treated his sister. Caruth's concept of trauma becomes particularly applicable here as the perception of its inexpressible content, the lack of cohesion, and the psychological ennui all become especially relevant to Reginald's psychological breakdown.

Tortured by regret and residing within the poorhouse walls, his intentions to make amends for his behaviour towards his sister are essentially self-destructive:

> two days ago, I asked the porter to bring me the rags of a dead pauper. I have them here in a cupboard. They smell. I asked for them because my first instinct was to lay aside the clothes of authority and whatever I possess, put on the discards of the poor and walk to Granard and enter the poorhouse there, as a pauper. (McCabe 1999: 70)

In a form of self-punishment, Murphy seeks to make amends, but his trauma impedes his progress. Unable to move forward, his acknowledgements and his guilt compel him to make amends for his actions. For Murphy, his psychosis prevents him from completing his cathartic healing, and, instead, he returns to an indecisive pattern stating: 'Every night I decide on this. Every morning I decide otherwise' (McCabe 1999: 70). Troubled by the dead ghosts of his sister and his parents, Reginald brings the spectre of their deaths into the room with him every night. And we can read about such psychological disturbance via Freud, who states:

> Since almost all of us still think as savages do on this topic, it is no matter for surprise that the primitive fear of the dead is still so strong within us and always ready to come to the surface on any provocation. Most likely our fear still implies the old belief that the dead man becomes the

> enemy of his survivor and seeks to carry him off to share his new life with him. (Freud 1919: 241-2)

Deciding he must suffer for his transgressions culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment, as he says: 'Too easy, in any case. I have been Master here for three years and here I must admit myself under Hanratty as master. That would be fitting. That would be punishment. That word again 'admit' like a knife' (McCabe 1999: 70). McCabe makes a play on the word 'admit' using it when Reginald admits paupers but also for Reginald to admit he is wrong. Searching for a way out of his dilemma, Reginald pleads with the ghosts of the dead, entreating them for forgiveness but torturing his own soul in the process: 'Thus, Oh Mama,

Dada, why did you leave us? Oh, my poor sister, my poor sister forgive me, and may almighty God forgive me. Jesus, mercy. Mary, help' (McCabe 1999: 70). Reginald ends pleading for forgiveness from his family's dead ghosts, his sad invocation a plea for clemency. It ends with a cry for help that will forever trouble his mind.

'The Landlord'

Lord Conroy's 'The Landlord' is the next in the collection of McCabe's stories, and it is written in the form of a personal private journal and bears resemblance to the epistolary writing of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). 'The Landlord' and Dracula bear kinship given that both can be read as ascendancy landlords. Both characters bear affinity with each other. In Stoker's text, we note Dracula's affirmation of his once renowned military career and that of his illustrious ancestors, he states 'the warlike days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of honourable peace; and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told' (Stoker 2013: 478). While Lord Clonroy's narrative also expounds on his own glorious military career, one that is also ended, despite stating 'at one time I was the youngest General in the English Army serving in India with Field Marshal Gough' (McCabe 1999: 71). Also, like Dracula's move from Transylvania to

England, Lord Clonroy is forced to move to England, despite being torn between trying to hold onto his property in Ireland and his beloved soil: 'Here I was born though, grew up and, despite famine, horror, and hatred, it's where I'd choose to die and be buried. Unlikely now' (McCabe 1999: 75). Lord Clonroy, like Dracula, recognises his hold on land is waning and his choices are limited. The political antagonisms connected to the starving peasantry and the failure of the potato crop mean tenants are unable to pay the landlords' rent, leading to political violence and resentment against the Anglo-Irish landowning class. Dracula, as representative of an Ascendancy class, is particularly cynical when it comes to the poor peasantry and, like the English ascendancy in Ireland, believes they are incapable of self- government: 'Bah! what good are peasants without a leader. Where ends the war without a brain and heart to conduct it?' (Stoker 2013: 47). The landlord, Clonroy, adopts a similar stance on the unmanageable Irish peasantry. Bemused, he addresses the local Irish peasantry, 'surely you can grow enough to feed yourselves and your families. How do they answer? They fall on their knees and whine. We have no brains, your honour, to grow vegetables like gentlefolk. Only the praties, your honour (McCabe 1999: 95). The obvious condescending attitude to the peasantry is another aspect of the Ascendancy class that links both Dracula and Lord Clonroy. Both bear the overbearing characteristics of the Ascendancy, and both share the same disdainful attitude to their plight. Lord Clonroy's attitude to the local Irish is that they are more like disobedient children than adults. He says they are: 'devil-me-care happy-go-lucky children. Next week's a hundred years off. When they get money, every farthing's gulped in shebeens and pissed out in sheughs. Raving lunatics then, reciting and bellowing out dismal ballads about lost battles, dispossession, and glorious Celtic past! (McCabe 1999: 81)

Clonroy's story is communicated through the confessional and the psychological nature of the epistolary form, with the use of personal and open letters, journal entries, newsletter clippings

and poetry. This is evident, for instance, in the communication by Lord Leslie in an open letter 'to all the considerable landowners in the baronies of South Ulster', to the record of the massive mortality of the Famine dead in the *Times* newspaper of 12 April 1848, and the inclusion of the sale of Lord Clonroy's estate in the *Farmers Gazette*. The detail in the landlord's personal accounts manages to create a very realistic and compelling picture of life in Famine Ireland and the interconnectedness of the characters give a fluidity to McCabe's writing. One of the persistent themes in Famine writing is the sectarian nature of the tensions between the Ascendancy and the destitute peasants. The constraints on the poorer peasants are present long before the Famine and are exacerbated by the calamity. It also culminated in the emergence of various secret societies like the Whiteboys and the Ribbonmen. And, as such, Lord Conroy spends his time poring over the newspapers and informing himself of the political events in both Ireland and England, keeping up to date on all relevant information.

As mentioned above, Lord Leslie describes the abject conditions of the local peasantry in an open letter to all the considerable landowners in the Baronies of South Ulster, 'this morning we were wakened by a voice crying out 'Mercy, mercy. Mercy,' followed by keening on the front lawn. The workhouse at Kilnaleck, closed for lack of funds leaving a straggle of paupers with nowhere to go' (McCabe 1999: 73). The starving Famine victims arrive at Lord Clonroy's estate and cry out for help, and he states 'they arrived here before dawn, starving cold and wretched beyond description. When we looked down the men were kneeling, the women and children standing and lying, amongst them, a young girl holding a dead infant towards our window' (McCabe 1999: 73). The Famine victims kneel before Lord Clonroy's house, pleading for mercy, and in their silent accusation evince a prophetic warning of future reprisals for this day. The suffering paupers on the lawn are harbingers of future disturbances of Gothic social warnings of the later agrarian unrest of the 1880s. The unsettled peasants represent a threat to the landlord, who as a symbol of

the Anglo-Irish faces a very uncertain future and without tenants to lease the land they will certainly be out of pocket. Writing in an open letter to the landlords of South Ulster, Lord Leslie states: 'I know all the objections, but common humanity and selfish interest suggest that common sense must be laid aside until this crisis is over. If we allow the poorest of the poor to die on our doorstep, we will never be forgiven' McCabe 1999: 73).

Lord Clonroy, like many of his peers, adopts a highly moralistic tone towards the local Irish peasantry. They view Ireland as backward, and the peasantry as idolatrous in their attachment to Catholic religious symbols like grottos, statues, and crosses. They are far too attached to folklorist notions of ghosts, vampires, and superstitions, which causes Lord Clonroy to conclude: 'Christ in heaven what's to be done with such people? (McCabe 1999: 96). The focus here is not just on the suffering poor but on English attempts to instigate a modification of the Irish character, a complete cultural transformation. Irish resistance to such changes and a combination of factors instigated the downfall of Anglo-Irish landlords like Clonroy. The requirements of the Poor Law of 1838, which was modelled on the English Act of 1834, divided the country initially into one hundred and thirty separate poor law unions, each with a workhouse at its centre. The principle behind the Act was that Irish property must serve to fund the Irish poor and the poverty attached to it. Thus, meaning that landlords with estates in Ireland were expected to bear a great deal of the responsibility for the poor tenants in their area. The negligence of some landlords was seen as a prime instigator of the Famine catastrophe, and the landlord class suffered the loss of funds normally accrued from rental income and losses due to poor management of estates. The landlord who previously relied on Reginald Murphy to manage the poorhouse, continues to speculate on the Master's rapidly deteriorating state. Evoking the spectrality of the landscape and its people, Lord Clonroy interjects, 'Murphy opened his door today. A hollow-eyed ghost. Still not eating much. Drinking a lot, I'd guess. Slow speech and the stricken look' (McCabe 1999: 76). Murphy's

appearance is reminiscent of the Famine victims and of the vampire, ghostly, spectral, and literally drained of his essential life blood. Reginald, harbouring guilt concerning his sister's demise, tries to appease his own conscience by attempting to share in the suffering and grief of the Famine victims. His stricken body has taken on the appearance of the starving Famine vampire and becomes a site of Gothic dissolution.

Lord Clonroy views Catholicism as a highly dangerous and suspect organisation, and this is reflected in his disparaging account of 'the emergent Church of Rome now building like beavers all over the island. Free labour and farthings of the poor. Every chapel on a higher site than the Protestant church' (McCabe 1999: 72). The Catholic Church is seen as a real threat to Protestant constancy in Ireland. The religious difference between the Protestant and Catholic faith is adjudged as preventing real social and economic advancement in the country. The landlord recollects a conversation he once had with Lord Leslie concerning the colonising mission of Ireland from the early 12th century, declaring: 'Nothing here when we arrived, I said, but bush, bog and plain. And the native Irish! he said. We drained bogs and marshes, made roads. What's suspect about building mills and manor houses, towns, and villages? We civilised it. I refused to be guilty about that' (McCabe 1999: 79). The reference to guilt has a clear psychological thrust, as the Anglo-Irish landlords were perceived as vampires sucking the life blood of the peasantry by charging high rents and placing the Irish peasants in a situation of penury. The peasant tenants' eventual demise arrives through a lack of resources, no fiscal autonomy means a payment in the only way possible, with their blood. The Anglo-Irish, despite claiming Ireland benefited from their presence in the country, are conscious their position in Ireland is tenuous. Their relationship with the Irish is tainted by their misappropriation of the land. The landlord, like his English contemporaries, views their colonising mission in Ireland as one of improvement, but to the native Irish, no matter how long they reside in Ireland, they are always perceived as the Gothic

Other. McCabe links the blood of the peasantry to the figures of the ghost and the vampire in his representation of the Famine. In this way, the Irish Famine victim become the personification of the walking dead, as part of a Gothic spectral army. There are clear religious tensions between the Anglo-Irish and Catholics, especially in the rites and teaching of their respective doctrines. McCabe references Irish Catholic rites in the text, and these play an essential role in highlighting the religious tensions connected to the disposal of the dead at the height of the Famine. Clonroy declares:

> Two and a half thousand dying every week now, from Malin to Dingle. Workhouse figures only. God alone knows how many more unrecorded, unburied throughout the islands, mountains, and bogs. Last year he was all for burning our dead in the grounds, out of sight of the paupers. Corpses fouling the water. Could be right. Galligan, for the Roman Church said wrong. A desecration. Some claptrap about the resurrection of the body. Too inane to argue over. (McCabe 1999: 80)

Lord Clonroy reflects on the burial practices that violate the sanctioned ecclesiastical forms of the Catholic Church of Rome. And these generate anxieties, especially from the local clergyman, Fr. Galligan. Catholicism teaches that at the end of days, all people will be resurrected and raised up with the deceased body born to new life. Catholic fears around the body turned to ashes coalesces with the Gothic vampire's fear of burning.

Lord Clonroy's English wife is horrified at the thought of the Irish peasantry camping on their neat lawns and their desperate pleading for food from her, and her husband, the landlord. McCabe addresses the representation of the poverty of the Irish peasantry, posing the question as to the culpability of Rome in the 'manufacturing and baptising hundreds and thousands of impoverished wretches. The whole family caboodle in the image and likeness of God!' (McCabe 1999: 81) Before the Great Famine the Irish population had risen to around eight million, and a feature of Irish life during the Great Famine is the Irish population's unfailing adherence towards a rigid

Catholicism. The arrival of the Great Famine initiated a sense of fear and of guilt and meant that the bulk of the population was dependent upon their priests. They obediently conformed to the teaching of Catholic doctrines, as we noted in relation to the moral policing of the young Brady twins. Indeed, elsewhere, Clonroy focuses on the pettiness of the religious competition between the Church of Ireland and the Irish Catholic clergy. The constant battle for souls includes wrangling between Father Galligan and the Reverend Stringer, but as the landlord remarks: 'if a pauper myself sitting with no hope, on a bench in an Ulster poorhouse, mid-nineteenth century, waiting for death, that would, I suppose, lift my spirits a little. Our day will come! Will it?' (McCabe 1999: 82-83). The landlord is sceptical of paupers believing in and hoping for a brighter day and especially for the near dead poor Irish peasantry.

Disappointment pervades everything the landlord touches, and he is particularly disappointed with his son, Mathew. Writing about Mathew, he states: 'Mathew arrived this evening with young Dixon and the two Gilmartin girls. Both redheads. Gigglers both. The younger full breasted as a spring heifer. Leaning forward at table to show them off. A freckled beauty'
(McCabe 1999: 98). The dinner scene with Lord Clonroy, Dot, young Dixon and the two Gilmartin girls includes a discussion of the Famine, and the landlord interjects 'there was talk about some child running alongside the carriage on last visit. I wasn't there' (McCabe 1999: 98) The reference to the girl is obviously Roisín from 'The Orphan', and there is a sense of natural continuity of the plot as we become reacquainted with Roisín and her plight yet again. Disturbed by the mention of the starving orphan, Lord Clonroy describes 'Mathew's tone cool and accusing. Dot didn't know. Or pretended' (McCabe 1999: 98). The guilt of the Ascendancy is compounded by their lack of action as regards the Famine poor, and the claims by Clonroy that he or Dot didn't know of the incident are questionable. The inference being during the Great Famine, the Anglo-Irish landlords often neglected their responsibility in the care of their rent-paying tenants. Often

the reaction to the poor and destitute is to blame the poor themselves for their predicament. The Anglo-Irish continued with the various entertainments, like debutante balls, dinners, and drinks parties while around them the misery of the Famine continued.

The story continues with Lord Clonroy's statement that he is 'very glad to be shut of young Dixon's staring hero worship. Hanging on to Mathew's every word. Do those girls or Dot have the faintest notion?' (McCabe 1999: 99) The reference to 'the faintest notion' is a reference to Mathew's sexuality, and the landlord's scepticism that Dot and the two Gilmartin girls are even aware that he is gay. Lord Clonroy continues to describe his talk with Mathew:

> he got me alone in the kitchen garden. Told me he'd been accepted for a Jesuit seminary in Spain. Somewhere near Zaragossa. Convert to the Church of Rome. Kept my face like a boot. Asked me not to tell his mother. Yet, No great surprise. Always inclined to playacting and dressing up. Prep school is a hotbed for that inclination. Most graduate to females. Clearly, he didn't. Conversion to Rome I did not expect. Jesuits will love him till they catch him out. Unless they're at the same caper themselves and turn a blind eye like I had to in the army. (McCabe 1999: 99)

Here McCabe's focus on Mathew and the Gilmartin girls' sexuality, reflects their optimistic attitude amid the desolation and despair of Famine Ireland. Like the effervescent Brady girls from 'The Orphan,' McCabe's Famine writing includes his characters' disregard for the wretchedness of their situation. Instead, they grasp at utopian measures of hope, seeing past the desperation of their situation, sourcing joy even in the darkest of Gothic moments.

Mathew is obviously gay, and his father accepts this, but when a blackmail letter arrives at Eden Hall addressed to the Skinner's father and son, Lord Clonroy is devastated by the contents of the letter. Strangely the discovery of Mathew's sexual abuse of a young stableboy coincides with Lord Clonroy's loss of Eden Hall and the loss of an heir for Eden Hall. The loss of the land now no longer deemed a point of crisis is offset by the departure of Mathew, ironically, he loses his

son to a Catholic religious group. For Lord Clonroy, the confirmation of Mathew's sexual deviancy becomes allied with his interest in joining a male-only religious organisation. Coinciding with his son's new religious affiliation and supported by Mathew's pontificating on military bullies, becomes a point Clonroy finds hard to stomach.

Clonroy disagrees with Mathew's view of the Irish Famine and he especially dislikes Mathew's view of strong military men as bullies: 'Military people are mostly bullies dressed up to kill. Like, Bonaparte? Yes like, Bonaparte. And he'd close the ports, would he ? Yes, he would' (McCabe 1999: 100). Lord Clonroy reflects on his son's attitude describing it as preachy and contradictory: 'The Roman Church will suit him well. I stood. Went to bed without another word' (McCabe 1999: 100). Troubled by his son's departure, Clonroy reflects: 'Mathew in my head night and day. His defection makes selling easier. No heir now but Judy's stupid boy. Prefer to sell on. Three months left' (McCabe 1999: 100). The landlord makes his final entry in his diary of 30th April 1848, describing 'Mathew left this morning. We embraced in the hall. It was cold the embrace. Will I see him again in this world? Doubtful.' (McCabe 1999: 100). The landlord, in a melancholic mood, decides to get some air and walk around the local countryside till dusk. He walks 'alongside the enclosing walls screening off what I'd no stomach to look at, hovels like rotten teeth in a green mouth, a silent countryside without cattle, sheep, or fowl. Turf-smoke a reminder of whole families starving at the hearth' (McCabe 1999: 103). On his walk through the local countryside, the landlord hears what he calls a murmur of people down where the Gola River forks. Looking through a screen of thorn hedge, he knew he was witnessing an American wake. The poignant scene has all the elements of a Gothic ghostly event:

> Under a moon tattered with clouds, the people looked spectral. Famished ghosts more than humans. Saw a young man moving through them shaking hands with neighbours, embracing relations lifting and kissing children. Then saw him whisper something to a young girl who left the gathering and stood below me under the garden bank. Out of sight, but I could hear her as

> the mother held on to her son calling him her *'bábóg'* kissing his hands and eyes and begging him not to go. The professional keeners then began the lament for 'The Dead Traveller,' an archaic rigmarole praising his noble deeds, his prowess of body, and his beauty of soul. (McCabe 1999: 104)

Viewing the farewell gathering of an American wake, the forced emigration, and the separation of families due to the Famine, the landlord becomes privy to the struggles of his peasant tenants. The ceremonial gathering then separates, and the father and son struggle to express their emotions in language 'until the father spoke, stating, Face me now, son in a step, for as likely as not, it's the last step we'll take in this world together' (McCabe 1999: 104). The father and son display their emotions not through language but through the stilted emotion of an Irish dance. As the landlord watches, he is unable to continue looking at the emotionally charged scene, turning away he reflects that until this moment he had never really understood the depth of suffering of his tenants. The landlord, privy to the heartache of the final dance of farewell, learns more from this ritual gathering of family and friends saying farewell to a son than all his years as their landlord.

'The Mother.'

The final story in *Tales from the Poorhouse* is entitled, 'The Mother,' and is relayed by Mary Brady. Mary as mother to Roisín, Grace and Micilín, tells her story from the 'idiot ward' of the poorhouse, to where she was committed after the death of her daughter, Grace. In this story, McCabe describes the mother as the symbol of the Irish Catholic family home but tempers this portrait with characteristic Gothic colouring. Written in the form of a trauma narrative, the mother describes her life during the Famine and weaves the language of folklore, Catholicism and of druidic pagan lore in a melding of registers. As Brigit Neumann asserts '[n]arratology has proven to be of great value in the exploration of the representation of memory in literature, for plot and focalization display how processes of recollection and forgetting to interact and which

perspective on the past is privileged' (Neumann 2008: 333). McCabe uses the mother in this story to present her perspective on her past and to recall the horrors of her Famine experience. Her memories of Famine Ireland are described in nuanced layers of meaning. From another perspective, focusing on historical context, Margaret Kelleher determines that Ireland's colonial condition accounts for the inclusion of so many Irish women across Famine literature. The various accounts from female characters in Famine literature reflect Ireland's colonial condition juxtaposed with English imperial oppression. McCabe's version of the mother figure is unique and forms a stark contrast to the major roles that most mothers occupy across Irish Famine literature. This version of the mother is the antithesis of the standard Irish mother and is unlike Kelleher's heroic self-sacrificing mothers in her Irish literature. Flannery describes McCabe's version of 'The Mother' as 'the mother that can protect becomes the mother that must be protected against' (Flannery 2010: 66).

'The Mother' opens with Mary Brady, uttering a string of prayers in a repetitive invocation, pleading for forgiveness, and reciting a litany of Catholic prayers imploring and beseeching Our Lady to 'cover me with sleep and sleep and sleep till my eyes open at the feet of Christ' (McCabe 1999: 106). The mother sits in the poorhouse, among barrels of vile human waste, her mind and thoughts fragmented, deranged, and unhinged by her fragile mental state. For many people, especially women entering its confines, the poorhouse was seen as the final course of action when all else failed and their house is tumbled. Many mothers preferred to resort to their own means of begging from neighbours or relatives to feed their children, rather than entering the poorhouse. It was also noted that once a family took the option of the 'red ticket,' in a way it was perceived as giving in to death and defeat. For the mother, her husband,

Tom Brady had failed miserably in the care of his family, and she rages and castigates him 'And it's the like of you Tom Brady, has made a hell out of this house with your booze and your blether'

(McCabe 1999: 14). The mother despairs of her husband, who is a drunkard and a less than adequate countryman's tailor. Many times, she berated her husband, screaming at him: 'You have a wife and three childer to feed now, Tom Brady. Have you no shame to be gulping' and pissin' the most of it into a ditch! It's horsewhipped you should be you and drunkards like you!' (McCabe 1999: 13). The mother's anger and rage at her husband is well placed and irrefutable as she states: '[w]we'll all starve to death, Tom Brady, because I married a fool. That was the night he left and never came back, no message, nothin' (McCabe 1999: 15). Families like the Brady family depended on the potato for their survival, and McCabe captures the miasma of fatalism that hung over the general population who were set to starve once the blight had set in.

The mother is teetering between sanity and insanity, recalling her life with the trauma of her past, uttering prayers and entreaties that link Catholic guilt with her folkloric beliefs in a shifting collage of her own family history. The extremes of her own emotional response are yoked to the shades of darkness and despair surrounding her in the poorhouse. The opening paragraph is full of the mother's psychological despair, describing in graphic detail the Gothic trauma and horrendous conditions of most Irish workhouses during the Famine. Many versions of the mother figure proliferate across Irish literature, as in the Catholic Virgin Mary, the "*mater dolorosa*" or sorrowing woman, the old woman of the road, or Ireland's Gaelic representation of Cathleen Ni Houlihan , and other versions of Mother Ireland, but also as the monstrous mother. The versions of motherhood in this story describe a mother who is mentally fragile, who in her fragmented state is represented as the mother *in extremis*, and McCabe establishes thematic and situational parallelisms between the figure of the mother and the concept of Ireland as a mother. Related through the blighted land motif, first, the blight on the Irish potato crop becomes emblematised in the blight or curse on the mother. All becomes viewed as a curse from God. The mother's attachment to folk beliefs like curses, piseógs and hiding her children from fairies, render this

society a rural pagan one. For the local Irish peasantry during this era of Irish history, the blights or curses from the little people are essentially tied to beliefs in curses from God, as the mother asks:

> Was it Your will that bitter blow in March broke my heart beyond all mendin,' took my Grace, warped my Roisín's heart, made me foolish husband lave, and left me nothin' of home and happiness but this poor cracked thing I am, in this foul purgatory? Is that the price You'd have me pay, Lord, for a few stumbles? Or have I more to pay? (McCabe 1999: 107)

McCabe includes the informal idiomatic language of the Irish peasantry, and the mother blames God as a divine power for the hardships she now experiences. Guided by her Catholic priest and her pride at what the neighbours might say, the mother's biggest concern was the reputation of her daughters and their purity. In rural Ireland before the Famine, church attendance was rare, and people adopted an attitude of non-conformity as regards Church teaching. Nevertheless, 'the Irish had the lowest incidence of pre-marital pregnancy among all European countries before the Famine, but strict adherence to the moral teachings of the Church after the Famine strengthened the prohibition against sinful sexuality' (Nolan 1997: 6). Women were particularly influenced by the Catholic Church and their priest. As such, the private and social lives of the Irish family unit maintained a strong Catholic ethos and looked towards the Church and the local priest for guidance in all matters. There was a concentrated drive towards prayer, the avoidance of sin and temptation, and prohibitions about sexual pleasure, and sexual repression became a factor in Irish life: 'Mothers instilled values of faith on the moral principles of the Catholic Church, denial of sexual desires, extraordinary loyalty to the needs of the family of origin, very strong ties among siblings, and strong feelings of guilt' (Radosh 2005: 309). Sexual repression guided the mother's beliefs and especially regarding Grace's pregnancy, a fear of the Church's stringent control, but more especially a fear of what her neighbours would say.

The mother's pride takes precedence over her daughter's health, and instead of undertaking her role as a nurturing supportive mother, Mary Brady metamorphoses into a version of the petticoated vampire. Usually, in Irish literature, we are given the view of the desperate starving helpless mother holding and comforting an emaciated starving child pleading for help. But in McCabe's version of the mother figure, Mary Brady is far removed from the natural nurturing mother who conveys an image of home as peace. Instead, here, the mother occupies a Gothic space and, like the vampire, hovers over and witnesses Grace's death and the great flood of bleeding seeping from her body. Mary Brady, as a vampire, even bears some of the characteristics of Dracula, as both are very proud of the blood that flows in their veins. Dracula, speaking to Jonathan Harker, states 'we Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship' (Stoker 2013: 46). The mother too has great pride in her own kin, and Roisin describes how the mother probably: 'had murdered her own flesh and blood and I was her daughter, the daughter of a murderer, and her so proud of her kin, the grand Daly blood she had in her veins compared to the poor thin blood in Dada's veins' (McCabe 1999: 27). Young women like Grace suffered horrendously due to the mindset of Irish society at this time: 'Even in prefamine Ireland there was an extreme intolerance toward sexual misdemeanours and successful policing of sex necessitated close supervision and control of desire' (Connolly 1982: 213). Grace is a sad indictment of those same ideals: 'The Vatican's celibate foot soldiers preached chastity as the greatest virtue and Irish women were expected to emulate the Virgin Mary' (McGarry 2009: 1-3). This story accurately describes Irish Famine society and the Catholic mindset of mothers like Mary Brady. In her response to her daughter's pregnancy, she becomes a monstrous mother. The mother praises her two girls for their beauty but also castigates both girls for their lack of due diligence regarding their virginity and femininity:

> full of Grace and Roisín, I was one-time, twin beauties, and the Devil knows why. I warned them day in and day out, so I did. God knows I did. Any night they'd creep in late from wake or dance I'd shout at them. Is it a pair of hoors I have for daughters? Go out wash yerselves, ye dirty clarts, ye have me shamed before the whole country. Have ye no neither a titter of wit nor track of decency. (McCabe 1999: 107)

Akin to the local priest, Mary Brady views her daughter's emerging sexuality as a blight on their community. Castigated for their youth, beauty, and vitality, Catholic preoccupations with sin and guilt colour all the mother's interactions with her daughters. The mother rails at both girls to keep their bodies clean and their souls pure. In this context, Barbara Creed points out 'when a woman is represented as monstrous, it is almost always in relation to her mothering of reproductive functions' (Creed 1993: 3). For Mary Brady, her pregnant daughter, Grace, becomes the monstrous Other and she says of Grace, 'and did she cry the cratur, when the blood come, God help her, and when her monthly didn't I lost the head. I went and got her by the ear and chained her above like a pedlar's monkey, well hid from the eyes of Maggie Scarlett and her like' (McCabe 1999: 108). The mother's attitude towards her daughter is harsh and animalistic, and in her chaining and stabling of her daughter has medieval overtones reflective of the crucifixion of Christ. The poignancy of Grace's death and the death of her baby girl both invoke themes of sacrifice and despair as both are sacrificed on the altar of pride.

The mother's priority is to keep her daughter's pregnancy a secret and to keep her own family pride intact. But when both fail, the mother subsequently loses all mental equilibrium and is confined in the abject space of the idiot ward of the poorhouse. Her psychological breakdown means that, in her head, she returns to an earlier time in her life. Reflecting on her life as a young woman, living alone with her father, Holy John of Drumlana, Mary recalls:

> now my Dada, John Daly was a proper man with a proper grip on God and the Devil on account of Canon McKenna with his fancy Leinster Irish couldn't twig the Kerry boy's confessions, them squads of travellin' chancers diginin turnips for Lord Skinner. Put him on a chair in a dark sacristy and made him face away from the Kerry men and translate their sins. Bound him over to secrecy. Holy John the neighbours called him from that day out. (McCabe 1999: 108)

McCabe uses irony to describe Mary's whimsical account of her father, John Daly. Mary describes the bully as a 'proper man with a proper grip on God and the Devil,' but he is a tyrant, and the supposedly holy man is not only strict, but he also threatens his girls with violence 'for a fit of the giggles only, at the Rosary. And more than a growl it was. He meant it. We quit our giggles quick, so we did. No man for empty threats' (McCabe 1999: 109). Violence and threats are behind every action from Holy John and is reflective of the regimes and personal interests that shape this story. Mary Brady's mother is loved by her children and perceived in a totally different light to the bully, Holy John. Writing about reflections on women in Eavan Boland's poetry, O'Leary states, '[l]acking in agency and depth, images of women during the Famine have, according to Boland, existed within a "constraining national tradition," in which "Ireland has often been allegorised as female"' (O'Leary 2017: 6). O'Leary continues, noting that poetry like Boland's 'often cast women as sites of national suffering, as starving mothers or sacrificial angels, or as not having produced themselves through voices of their own and instead perpetuating broader narratives of colonial patriarchy' (O'Leary 2017: 6). Mary Brady's own mother could easily serve as an allegory for Mother Ireland and of colonial patriarchy. McCabe's description of this disempowered woman is startling:

> red-eyed in turf-smoke and clabber, stooped all her days over pots till she tumbled into her grave at fifty like most poor weemen in the world. Where are you now Mama, with your bad cough? Can you hear me? And Granny Maguire? And Granny's Granny and her Granny and her Granny and all the Grannies of a hundred thousand winters away back to the blind start of the world? (McCabe 1999: 109)

McCabe's depiction of Mary Josephine Brady and her mother, and the generations of mothers before her, offers a description of the reality of the lives of Irish women across the generations. The women silenced by edicts of the Catholic Church and by misogyny are cast as characters in the broader narratives of colonial patriarchy. The women in McCabe's stories are marked by the history of the Famine and each of his story's functions as a trauma narrative.

McCabe places women and their trauma front and centre in his writing. In dealing with representations of the feminine in Famine literature, traditionally women or the 'the figure of the woman is the means through which the 'sorrow of the country' is given form, its pain and horror communicated' (Kelleher 1997: 152). McCabe's writing gives a unique representation of women during the Famine, and these stories are far removed from the sentimental romantic triumph of the female spirit over Famine. The stories record pain and horror channelled through the female body, and, true to the reality of the Famine experience, McCabe includes real women who are not self-sacrificing but fall prey to the normal everyday pressures of Irish life during the Famine. Not only do women have to cope with death, but with the starvation of their children, they are also prey to patriarchal enslavement. A condition that ends only when as the mother describes 'they tumble into their grave at fifty like most poor women in the world' (McCabe 1999: 109). The women then across the centuries become a collective site of suffering and pain becoming repositories for Irish history and cultural memory.

The subtext of McCabe's prose is directed towards the many inequalities between men and women in Irish Famine society and especially how women are perceived as the Other. Tropes of Gothic feminist imagery, particularly of the maternal, link women with sin. And the misogynistic and prejudicial views of women abound during Famine Ireland and are a salient feature of these stories. The mother recalls her sister's experience of marriage and the trauma of her story, 'poor

Cissie ended up married to the great brute Noel Callaghan. She must be up in heaven now with her three wee girls as sure as Noel's down in hell, and it was our Dada, Holy John, who sent him there' (McCabe 1999: 116). Mary Brady recollects her father's role in Noel Callaghan's death and the insular nature of Irish Famine society, and how miscreants like Noel Callaghan are dealt with within the community. Telling the story, Mary Brady recounts:

> cause after a fair at Lisbellaw didn't the same Noel bring home the wida woman from Grencha, Aggie Halpin, a breed of half hoor, the two of them astray in the head from drink. Cissie was too afeared to face them but in dread of what her wee girls might hear or see she got out the windy and came down to our house with her story. (McCabe 1999:116)

Holy John instructed her to go back to the house before she was missed and he went to inform Canon McKenna and then Sergeant Reilly, and the 'two of them lit in on Noel stretched above on the hearth with Halpin astride him wrigglin' hard trying to plaze him for sixpence' (McCabe 1999: 116). McCabe again adapts the idioms of the Irish peasantry in colloquial language and misspelt words to represent the Irish peasant dialect of the time and to insert an element of humour and realism to some of these scenes. The Canon attacks Aggie Halpin shouting at her:

> Is your arse in the air now, Jezebel? shouts the Canon givin' her buttocks a woeful lash with his whip. She screamed and fell off Callaghan and started to crawl for a corner. He follied, whippin' her and shoutin' - 'If it's hell you're after woman, it's hell you'll get from me. Bad cess to your filthy trade. I'll name you from the altar, so I will, you blight, you poison, you family polluter, you foul thing in a clean parish! (McCabe 1999: 116)

McCabe describes: 'when she had welts on her as thick as your finger, he turned to Callaghan and roared. Let that be a lesson to you Noel Callaghan!' (McCabe1999: 116) This scene reflects the obvious misogyny and double standards the Canon shows towards women like Aggie, who were given the pseudonym 'the fallen woman'. For the patriarchal Catholic Church and Irish society, the value of men far supersedes that of the female. Aggie is cast as a temptress, bearing full culpability for the sexual interaction with Noel Callaghan. For the Canon, the fallen women,

Aggie, despite her single /widowed status, bears responsibility for this episode, and is physically beaten for her transgression. For the married Noel Callaghan, however, as a man, the only reprimand he receives is by way of an irresolute warning. Mary Brady is exact when she reflects: 'aye, that's the way of it in this world. It's the men that matter; two butter balls and a squirty, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They get off most times with a shout when the woman gets bate like an ass' (McCabe 1999: 116).

It is the female who is constructed as the dangerous Other and, due to the absolute power of the Catholic Church and the patriarchal nature of Irish peasant society, women like Cissie suffered extreme physical violence and oppression. Much later De Beauvoir determines the female is always perceived as the Other: 'to posit the Woman is to posit the absolute Other, without reciprocity, refusing, against experience, that she could be a subject, a peer' (De Beauvoir 2011: 315). De Beauvoir describes patriarchy as an instrument of oppression. The very concept of woman, de Beauvoir argues, 'is a male concept: a woman is always 'other' because the male is the 'seer': he is the subject and she the object – the *meaning* of what it is to be a woman is given by men' (Joseph 2008: 10-11). Later, at home after this episode, in an extreme act of revenge, Noel attacks Cissie and their young daughters, 'and he took the plough reins from the top of the dresser and every time he lashed Cissie about the kitchen; he'd roar time about where's the Church now? Where's the Law now?' (McCabe 1999: 117) Callaghan is a malicious bully, and he is conscious now that Cissie has no support from a priest or guard and is powerless against his abuse. Because he is a man in an Irish patriarchal society, his violent actions are more likely to go unpunished. As Mary Brady recalls, Cissie:

> when she come down to our house next day scorched from the plough reins, Mama and we girls cried as she told her story, how Wee Tess was deaf in one ear from a cuff, and how there was always one of her girls bruised or worse, and that was only the half of it cause there was other carry on couldn't be spoke of, and the truth is they were all livin' terror of Noel and most days

> God sent she said she'd rather be dead and out of it entirely with the angels and saints in heaven. (McCabe 1999: 117)

The reference to 'there was other carry on couldn't be spoke of', (McCabe 1999:117) is obviously the sexual abuse perpetrated by Noel Callaghan on his young daughters. And 'when

> Cissie was gone, Dada stood listenin' at the half-door as the boys got fierce angry about Callaghan's villainy. We girls joined in and were all noisy at this when he spoke up. Quit the talk now, he said. Callaghan's dead' (McCabe 1999: 117). Holy John's Gothic approach to Catholicism is striking as he merges excessive violence with his Catholic beliefs. His inversion or manipulation of religious theology to suit his own needs is even more striking, and Cissie's brothers and sisters are shocked by their father's admission, 'no one offered to spake. We all knew he meant what he said' (McCabe 1999: 117).

McCabe focuses on the domestic abuse Cissy is subjected to by her husband, Noel Callaghan, and accurately reflects the trauma of a priest-ridden society dominated by rules that in no way favoured Irish women. Secrecy was paramount in concealing unexplained deaths like Noel Callaghan's and, in Famine Ireland, intervening in spousal abuse is deemed dangerous. For the courts at this time, 'the seeming disconnect between the rhetoric about wife beating and the cases themselves stem from the perception of wife-beating as an act of unprovoked cruelty something the Irish courts were extremely reluctant to see in any situations' (Conley 1999: 72). Courts and judges were reluctant to treat cases like domestic violence with seriousness and 'as with homicides, in some cases, it was assumed that an abusive husband was insane. But sane men who assaulted their wives received light punishment, none of the men indicted for assaulting their wives received more than twelve months' (Conley 1999: 69). Because of the insular nature of Irish society, problems, like a wife-beating bully like Noel Callaghan, are often dealt with secretly within the community. This is often achieved by the male members of the abused wife's family. Regarding the reaction to Noel Callaghan's death, it is greeted in the local community with: '[i]t's

a small wonder to God he lasted so long, the same Noel, but a half miracle for Cissie and her girls now he's gone' (McCabe 1999: 118)

Mary Brady wonders what part her father had in Noel Callaghan's death, recalling that 'near the latter end of his life, I asked him straight out how Callaghan met his death. He looked at me a brave while before he spoke. He was the bad thief, daughter. Christ turned away from the bad thief. So did I' (McCabe 1999: 118). For Holy John, Noel Callaghan's actions and his unrepentant attitude earned him death without any chance of redemption. Mary Brady considers her father, Holy John, 'a hard judge of men and weemen, but harder again of himself' (McCabe 1999: 118). Distracted by guilt and trauma and his own actions in life, Holy John blurts out, 'may God forgive me, he said one day, my head's full of nothin' but bad notions. And the tears came into his eyes, a thing you'd hardly ever see' (McCabe 1999: 118). Mary puzzled by this, asks him 'how a Christian man as good livin' could be so troubled, and he said, the devil at night, daughter. He poisons the head' (McCabe 1999: 118). Mary contemplates this piece of information and spoke, 'There's no sin in dreams, I said. Sure, the Pope himself has nature like us' (McCabe 1999: 118) Mary continues to speculate 'he must dream like us, surely to God. True enough he said, only be times you'd be hard put to know when you're awake and when you're asleep' (McCabe 1999: 118). Holy John is sexually abusing his daughter, Mary, and he cleverly uses the cloak of dreaming and devout piety to mask his abuse of his daughter. His statement stimulates Mary Brady's unconscious memory, and she remembers 'that was when I minded a dream wouldn't leave me be. No matter how I prayed or who I prayed to' (McCabe 1999: 118). Mary recollects her sexual abuse by her outwardly devout father:

> when I was asleep down, he'd come from the cockloft into the settle bed and I'd take his piesel in my hands and when I put it inside me it took the breath from me and when we were done he'd crawl out to the street and howl up at the stars like a dog, beggin' God Almighty to forgive

> him. Then I'd awake in a wet fright to hear him snorin' above and thank God it was a dream only. Even so, I wouldn't be myself all next day. (McCabe 1999: 118)

McCabe traces the hidden history of sexual abuse within Irish Famine society to describe the mother's recollection of her own sexual abuse while living alone with Holy John. Mary is traumatized by this sexual abuse and suppresses her recollections, consigning such dark Gothic memories to a dream. An outwardly devout and religious man, such as Holy John, can mask his deviant behaviours in false piety. Mary denies and exonerates her father of his sexual abuse by choosing to quantify her memory as a dream. Choosing to believe her own chaos and disorientation is a bad dream, she states: 'Thank God it was a dream only […] Maybe it was the like of that had him annoyed. The Devil's a crafty villain and maybe in the black dark, he planted the same in Dada's head. Who can say it can never be talked about' (McCabe 1999: 119). Horner suggests that 'parental incest is an act so different in motivation and consequence that it may deserve a separate name and category' (Horner and Zlosnik 2009: 116). For Mary, such is her absolute compliance with, and belief in, her father's devout religiousness that she is unable to process or countenance that he would sexually abuse her. Holy John wields all the power in his relationships with his entire family and a level of compliance is necessary. To question a religious man like Holy John is tantamount to an open act of rebellion and resistance. It is also deemed a dangerous action against a society heavily invested in the ethos of the Irish Catholic family. It is thus not surprising to find the manifestation of incest within the family structure causes the ultimate devastation; it becomes particularly disturbing and truly warrants the classification of a Gothic trauma. In the case of Holy John and the abuse of his daughter, the death of his wife leads to Mary taking over her mother's duties in the house and this later extends to also performing marital duties. In this respect Mary is the victim of her father's sexual abuse and is in denial about what has happened to her, given that she seems to accept that her father's abuse was merely a

dream and he, very much aware of his crime causes him ‘to crawl out to the street and howl up at the stars like a dog, beggin’ God Almighty to forgive him’ (McCabe 1999: 118).

With McCabe’s inclusion of

Mary’s disbelief regarding Holy John’s sexual abuse of her, he echoes the level of disbelief and shock that greeted the various sexual abuse scandals in Ireland in the 1970s: ‘As late as

1885, incest was spoken of euphemistically in medical journals as things done in secret, and in Ireland, debates would remain couched in this euphemistic language until the emergence of second-wave feminism in the 1970s’ (Buckley 2011: 5). The secrecy surrounding incest in the home, especially in relation to the father-daughter relationship, requires ‘sociological approaches that are informed by the equation of father-daughter incest in the Gothic, contribute to these readings of these relationships as reflective of the abuses inherent in the emerging nuclear family and domestic spaces’ (Di Placidi 2018: 35). Thus, the perceived threat to the heroine is located in the home. Placidi goes on to note that ‘father-daughter incest is often the destruction of the patriarchal family followed by the formation of alternative structures of family, female agency, and desire’ (Di Placidi 2018: 41). The Brady family is dispersed due to early marriage and emigration and have long since left the family home, leaving Mary Brady alone in the house with her father, a fact remarked upon by the wider community: ‘[i]t was Sadie put about what was overheard in Caffrey’s shebeen. Imagine slavin’ out all day with Holy John and then the Rosary and litanies at night and after that, gettin’ up on big Mary Joe! Any man fit for thon’ d need to be part saint, part hoe boy, and part billy goat! (McCabe 1999: 111)

The cruel remarks reflect how Mary Brady is perceived in her wider community, and Mary recognises that ‘there was no pad tramped to our door by young fellas lookin’ to join with me at

Drumlana' (McCabe 1999: 111). Corresponding to research on incest, Mary Brady's situation is indicative of 'families in which incest occurs have pronounced gender roles where the father has absolute authority and a profound sense of entitlement, expecting to have his demands obeyed and his needs served by his wife and (female) children' (Gordon et al 1988 in Fischer 2003: 96).

The theme of betrayal, the breach of trust and Holy John's abuse of his power over his daughter situates his sexual abuse in the realm of absolute exploitation. A particularly insidious aspect of the abuse is Holy John's use of Mary's lack of clarity and her doubting that the abuse took place at all, when he states: 'true enough only be-times you'd be hard put to know when you're awake and when you're asleep' (McCabe 1999: 119). In Holy John's forthright authoritarianism, he cleverly absolves himself of any wrongdoing by convincing Mary that her abuse is nothing but a dream. He uses his power as the head of the family and as a stalwart of the Catholic Church to place doubt in her mind that the event ever occurred. Mary is particularly vulnerable and in a culture in which chastity is seen as one attribute crucial to gaining a husband, any rumour of an attack on her chastity and her sexual reputation is generally utterly destructive. The gothic trauma of paternal incest thus leads to absolute secrecy or in Mary's case an absolute denial the incest ever occurred:

> Because the father (figure) stands in for, and in ways coextensive with the patriarchal figurehead, the critique of the father as abusive is equally an attack on patriarchal power, specifically for the way it empowers men, who arguably all stand in as father figures over those dependent on them, women in particular. (Shaffer 1999: 76)

The treatment of Mary's psychological confusion and the continuum of secrecy attached to familial sexual abuse leads Mary to doubt her own memory. For Mary, the level of secrecy and embarrassment around the abuse stops her from broaching the subject, as she reflects: 'who can say it? it could never be talked about' (McCabe 1999: 119). The lack of dialogue on sexual abuse

within the family adds to the trauma of its victims and the level of secrecy connected to abuse means it is never accurately dealt with.

Ultimately, Mary Brady has lost all hope; desolate within the walls of the poorhouse, she speaks of her distress at Roisín bitter reproach and states ‘if my Roisín came back for five minutes and listened to my story and believed it I’d die happy’ (McCabe 1999: 121). She goes on to describe the trauma of Grace’s funeral, and ‘when the first shovel dundered on the boards that near stopped my heart with grief. I looked up and saw her face all glares and stares forminst me. Hatred or near enough writ all over it’ (McCabe 1999: 121). The mother is desperately seeking to vindicate herself in the aftermath of Roisín’s accusations that she murdered Grace’s newborn baby and, watching her daughter Roisín walk away, the mother’s trauma and grief are exacerbated. During the Famine the poorhouse was seen as one of the most feared and hated establishments. For a great deal of Irish people , they bore the characteristics of British rule in Ireland. Confined within its walls, for the mother, the abject poorhouse ultimately proves to be her dungeon, an inescapable hell.

Even her escape into the privacy of her own thoughts brings her despair, as she remembers how angry Roisín was with her: ‘Oh my love, my love, my Roisín Dubh, wherever you’re gone remember me kindly’ (McCabe 1999: 119). She struggles to find any solace as she recites a prayerful plea: ‘have pity on your poor mother and may the Mother of God have pity on you the fruit of my womb, my dead daughter Grace, and the dead-born fruit of her womb’ (McCabe 1999: 119). As a result of her trauma, the mother tries to reclaim agency and make sense of what has gone on in her life. Her story ends with her sad keening and lamenting over the death of her daughter, Grace, and the loss of Roisín. In the old Irish sean nos style, delivering a sad monologue of continuous prayers descending into a crazed melding of prayers and curses. Her trauma is

expressed through a desolate pathos or in the Irish, *cumha* meaning an overpowering sense of loss or grief. McCabe ends the mother's story by delving into her psyche as she transcends the Gothic trauma of her bleak surroundings in the workhouse. In her head she is removed to happier times in her life when she was a child, and nature becomes for her the healer, and she remembers when 'I was a wee thing in a bag skirt playin' happy and laughin' with the others, and that bog bank was heaven 'with the shower of larks high over our heads that never quit singin' and singin' and singin' (McCabe 1999: 124). The mother's story concludes the narrative of these stories. Grappling with her guilt and the aftermath of her gothic trauma , she chooses to retreat into her own psyche to escape her guilt and the harsh realities of her surroundings. Transported back to her childhood and happier times in her life, McCabe includes the evocative imagery of her reminiscence and the healing power of nature to counteract her profound trauma.

The next chapter examines Eugene McCabe's only *novel Death and Nightingales* in a chapter titled, 'Female Sexuality and Big House Gothic in *Death and Nightingales* (1992)

CHAPTER 2

Female Sexuality and Big House Gothic in *Death and Nightingales* (1992)

The Gothic in *Death and Nightingales*

Set at the height of the Land War, the novel traces the roots of partition and the later Troubles epoch to this particular era in Irish history. The Land Acts from the Act of 1870 to the Wyndham Act of 1903 all attempt to resolve, but equally reflect, the political tensions between landlords and tenants. This was a period in which one could argue that gothic acts of violence became the order of the day. The events surrounding the Land War define the political traumas and intrude on all the lives of the characters and the various interactions between each of the characters in McCabe's novel. *Death and Nightingales* includes many references to Charles Stewart Parnell and, in late nineteenth century Ireland, Parnell had rapidly risen in popularity, and he was elected as MP for Meath in 1875. He became the chairman of the Home Rule party and, as president of the Irish National Land League, he formulated the strategy of agrarian 'boycotting', earning him the title of uncrowned king of Ireland. Parnell travelled the country addressing large crowds everywhere he went, encouraging both Catholics and Protestants to unite against landlordism and 'he launched the opening of the campaign in Ulster at Beleek in November 1880 and in February 1883, according to the fictional secret service report included in the novel, he is a guest of the Winters family at Clonoula' (Smyth 2015: 4). The Land War characterised much of 1879 and 1882 and it forms the backdrop to *Death and Nightingales*. The political aspects of the novel are reflected in its formal patterning, including parliamentary papers and reports, censures of secret societies, along with land being seized from tenants and cottiers. In this context, Meredith suggests that '*Death and Nightingales* is a metaphor for everything that happened since 1610 until now and it is a metaphor about conquest and those who are subjected to it' (Meredith, 2018). What classifies this 1880s era in Irish politics as

predominantly violent is the trauma of the Land Wars, the disturbing grotesque details of the Phoenix Park murders and the equally demonic gothic Wildgoose Lodge murders.

The action of *Death and Nightingales* is sited in rural Fermanagh in the year 1883, and the novel begins on May 3rd, with events taking place over the course of one day. This particular structure and form of the novel is called the circadian novel, and McCabe achieves this impressive feat of writing in *Death and Nightingales*, much in the same way as his favourite author, James Joyce, accomplished with *Ulysses*. *Death and Nightingales* examines the gothicised traits of Irish culture within the scope of the Anglo-Irish tradition. It features the themes of betrayal and treachery endemic to the Northern Ireland situation. Written around the time of the Enniskillen bombing in 1987, one of the North's watershed moments, it scrutinizes the colonial relationship between Ireland and England. The narrative is focalised through the two principal characters, Beth Winters and Billy Winters, and the plot is driven by a retrospective view back to 1880s history, when this novel of treachery and betrayal is juxtaposed with the wider socio-political circumstances of violence in latter-day Northern Ireland. Belying the century differences, the betrayals of religious and political loyalties, and of personal love mirrors the bitter acrimonious strife of modern-day Northern Ireland before the current peace process. McCabe incorporates the dominant gothic themes of treachery, love, and betrayal with the introduction of a clear historical perspective. In Patten's view, McCabe 'unearths from the Parnellite era the rooted complexities of region and ownership in Ireland, and illuminates the local impulses obscured by official versions of the past' (Patten 2006: 260).

Besides its pervasive gothicism, McCabe's *Death and Nightingales* adopts the gothic Romanticism of the late eighteenth century, with its titular reference to Keats's poem, 'Ode to a Nightingale.' This intertextual allusion situates Keats as the idealized image of the classic

gothic Romantic hero, a young poet who was destined to die young. With Beth's preference for Keats' poetry in the novel, she invokes the young poet's tragic death as a forewarning of her own threatened violent demise. These events are connected to the latter day bombing in Enniskillen on Sunday 8 November 1987. It can be posited that McCabe wrote the novel as a moral response to the bombing and the violence that caused universal revulsion, condemnation, and resultant trauma. The atrocity triggered unprecedented public outrage and that traumatic event became the catalyst for the Irish and English governments' renewed commitment to achieving peace in Northern Ireland. McCabe deftly shifts the narrative between two parallel time spans, and there is a correlation between one, the era it is set in the schismatic era of the 1800s, and, secondly, the era Smyth describes as 'the late 1980s and early 1990s, a particularly bleak period of the "Troubles", preceding the Provisional IRA ceasefire of 1994' (Smyth 2015: 2). What also identifies the 1880s era of land and political agitation is the acute level of violence and the uniformity of gothic episodes that permeated this particular time in Irish history, when the Land War, and Home Rule politics were at their zenith. The primacy of land seizure and Anglo-Irish anxieties connected to how the land was gained by their predecessors and their subsequent guilt all frame the narrative. Colonialism, the importance of blood lines and a continuance of lineage are all important strands in this novel. All of these thematic concerns stand as a stark presentiment of the ensuing violence of latter-day Northern Ireland. In a related way, the politics and morality of female sexuality and the politics of reproduction are thematics central to the plot of this novel.

The key characteristics of the Gothic could be described as a 'fascination for the past, particularly–but not exclusively the medieval era, liking for the strangely eccentric, the supernatural, the magical and the sublime, sometimes subtly intermingled with the realistic.'

(Stevens 2000: 50). The novel is written from the perspective of a third-person omniscient narrator with streams of consciousness techniques and epistolary literary devices such as letters and diary accounts that all lend a typically gothic representation in *Death and Nightingales*. A stream of consciousness is often associated with gothic literature and as a literary technique allows the reader to delve deep into the private inner thoughts and emotions of characters. Hence in *Death and Nightingales* we gain access to Beth's inner thoughts and her unfiltered thoughts and trauma revealing her inner turmoil and psychological distress. We become aware of her fears and emotions. These various formal features ably represent the tumultuous background to this fractious period of Irish history. *Death and Nightingales* begins with Beth's dream where she sees herself perusing a medical almanac, *The Chemist and Druggist 1880*, conjuring up a range of concoctions of poison. Within this opening dream sequence, we are witness to her actions that are prompted by her conscious wish or Freudian desire to kill her stepfather, Billy Winters. In summoning visions of the supernatural, the list signifies a society immersed in gothic superstition, alternative medicine and even witchcraft. Beth drowsily emerges, disturbed and agitated from the nightmare, startled by the sound of an animal in pain. Slavoj Žižek, explains that Freud's two contributions to dream study are that a dream is meaningful, and that a dream is beyond its significance (Žižek 1994: 299). The dream-like state means censorship is relaxed and those wishes or fantasies that lurk in our unconscious are given free rein.

The content of Beth's dream is quite meaningful in that it is a desire or a fulfilment of a wish to kill her stepfather, a wish that is firmly repressed when she is awake. Motivated by the bellowing of a cow, Beth promptly dresses and tends to the distressed animal, all the while she is contemplating her plan to escape for a new life with Liam Ward. Beth saves the animal and this 'particular scene operates on two levels, one, it establishes the novel's deployment of a complex system of animal symbolism appropriate to the author's penchant for agrarian settings'

(Pelaschiar1998: 84). Secondly, this scene 'foreshadows the aborted murder scene towards the end of the novel in which Beth herself is intended to be a dumb helpless animal subject to the penetrative violence of Liam Ward and Blinky Blessing' (Smyth 2015: 9). In the opening scenes, McCabe includes the natural world and further enhances the Gothic imagery of an Irish pre-Celtic world steeped in Irish heritage and culture, describing ringforts, from the medieval period circa 500-800AD, along with the allusion to treacherous wombs and dangerous wells, that connect all in an arrangement of primeval duplicity. The Ulster countryside is the backdrop to this story, and it is presented as a dark brooding gothic topography, mutually welcoming and threatening with the juxtaposition of sudden beams of light in the darkness flickering candles and lightning flashes. Gothic violence characterised this volatile period of land agitation in Irish history, and it formed the fulcrum of colonial power in Ireland.

With these thematic concerns in mind, the Gothic as a genre is a fitting mode through which to interrogate McCabe's writing, given that 'the genre of Gothic,' according to Bowen, 'is a particularly strange and perverse family of texts which themselves are full of strange families, irrigated with scenes of rape and incest, and surrounded by marginal, uncertain and illegitimate members' (Bowen 2014: 1). Stock gothic motifs such as these permeate the text of *Death and Nightingales* and, for Beth as the gothic heroine, the uncertainty around her birth, the threat of rape and incest from her stepfather Billy Winters, adds to her trauma. And this catalogue of features are recurrent in such gothic texts that, 'embrace literary miscegenation'. As Kilfeather further notes: '[t]he Gothic novel presents itself as an alternative form of history writing, one which questions official sources, excavates guilty secrets and pulls skeletons from the closet.' (Kilfeather 2006: 83 -86). In McCabe's narrative we witness the unearthing of the historical secrets of Billy Winters' lineage, and the misappropriation of land and wealth, together with his

inappropriate attraction to his stepdaughter Beth. The secrets and skeletons from the closet are by way of Winters' ancestry and his family's duplicitous attainment of Clonoula.

From a stylistic perspective, *Death and Nightingales* is also marked by a tendency towards a rural naturalism, a mode of writing that is summarized as follows by Abrams:

Naturalism is sometimes claimed to give an even more accurate depiction of life than realism. But naturalism is not only, like realism, a special selection of subject matter and a special way of rendering those materials; it is a mode of fiction that was developed by a school of writers in accordance with a particular philosophical thesis. (Abrams 1999: 261)

Abrams pays particular attention to Émile Zola, the French novelist, in his survey of this particular style of writing, arguing that '[b]eginning in the 1870's in what he called le roman experimental (that is, the novel organized in the mode of a scientific experiment on the behaviour of the characters it depicts' (Abrams 1999: 262). In the current context, McCabe adapts this form in *Death and Nightingales*, and his characters, such as Billy Winters, the dark tyrannical patriarch, and Liam Ward are coarse earthy characters. Both protagonists betray strong animalistic characteristics and are predominantly driven by greed, exhibiting a rapacious appetite for monetary gain, sexual desire and power over those they seek to control. Winters and the IRB terrorist, Liam Ward, in particular fit this mode, and as Abrams determines naturalism:

> held that a human being exists entirely in the order of nature and does not have a soul nor any mode of participating in a religious or spiritual world beyond the natural world; and therefore, that such a being is merely a higher-order animal whose character and behaviour are entirely determined by two kinds of forces, heredity, and environment. (Abrams 1999: 262)

The Gothic novel is especially concerned with anxieties relating to heredity and environment. And Beth Winters features as the protagonist who finds herself entrapped in a situation essentially not of her making. The family unit shapes or defines the individual by a set of events arranged

around domestic relationships and inheritances. Billy Winters fears the unknown origins of Beth's biological father, and he also fears that her mother's hereditary traits will be passed on to Beth, thereby ensuring an unstable and uncertain family lineage. Beth's patricidal dream about her stepfather is couched in gothic terms in a plan to rupture the family lineage. The dream or nightmare is a standard gothic ploy and dreams appear several times in *Death and Nightingales*. In Beth's dream/nightmare state she discloses her deep unconscious wish to poison her stepfather Billy Winters. The dream motif appears also in *Wuthering Heights* in a particularly striking gothic scene when Lockwood dreams about the waiflike figure of Cathy knocking on the window crying to be let in. In this latter dream, Lockwood breaks the window and the tiny hand grabs on to his, perhaps the most disturbing moment in this nightmare scene is when Lockwood tries to force separation. He says, 'I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood came down and soaked the bedclothes' (Bronte 1992: 17). Lockwood, in his absolute terror, awakens from the dream or nightmare. It is not uncoincidental that the murderous Liam Ward in McCabe's narrative bears an uncanny resemblance to Cathy's lover, Heathcliff. The same gothic theme of dreaming is depicted in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* when Jonathan, while in a hypnagogic state, dreams of three beautiful female vampires aka, Dracula's brides. This textual feature is again in evidence in Joseph

Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, when Carmilla introduces herself to Laura in a childhood dream. Conversely by having 'Carmilla seduce only her own maternal Karnstein descendants, Le Fanu makes vampirism, incest, and homosexuality resonate metaphorically as well as onomastically in his text: each involve a lusting for one's own kind' (Leal 2007: 38-9). The significance of Beth's dream is in a gothicized fantasy or illusion, and her actions are prompted by her unconscious wish or Freudian desire to kill her step-father Billy Winters. Beth's dream or oneiric prophecy signifies her innermost repressed desires to essentially remove Winters' power over her.

To conclude and in the context of this dream scene ,we witness the unveiling of Beth's innermost thoughts and emotions, concealed beneath the surface of her subconscious. Dark concealed longings and forbidden gratifications are frequently expressed in dreams. In the gothic the figure of the vampire is often seen as a metaphor for dark hidden desires and forbidden pleasures and this next section discusses the figure of the vampire its relation to the dream motif, and the famous Irish vampires *Dracula* by Bram Stoker and *Carmilla* by Le Fanu.

The Gothic Vampire Tradition in Nineteenth-century Ireland

The vampire figure in Gothic literature became popular in texts such as John Polidori's *The Vampire* (1819), and as we have alluded to, Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) and, of course, in *Dracula* (1897). And in David Punter's view:

> the connections between the vampire and the dream are very strong, both are night phenomena which fade in the light of day, both are considered in mythological systems to be physically weakening, both promise-and perhaps deliver-an unthinkable pleasure which cannot sustain the touch of reality; also the vampire, like the dream can provide a representation of sexual aberration in extremis, indulgence to the point of death. (Punter 1980: 119)

Dreams provide a way into the subconscious mind and as Freud states, describing the process of dream interpretation: 'the interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind' (Freud 1900a: 608). Freud's basic claim is that dreams are symbolic fulfilments of unconscious wishes. And this is a matter we have pinpointed with respect to Beth's dreamtime feelings towards her stepfather and his power over her life and her inheritance. Caruth explains, 'the story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life' (Caruth1996: 7). Hence, in Beth's case because in reality she does not escape the wounding incident, namely her stepfather's illicit sexual physical

attraction to her, Beth's life is continuously impacted and haunted by the trauma of her lineage. And this results in her desire or longing to flee Clonoula and heal her scars from the past. With respect to the gothic aspects of Beth's dream, we might heed Fred Botting's argument, when he states that, '[g]gothic fiction is bound up with the function of the paternal metaphor' (Botting 2002: 282). And in a related way, if we return to Punter, we note how the vampiric, the paternal and power are actually coherent, when he notes that 'the question of power is central; to the vampire's victim, the vampire seems all powerful, compelling, hypnotic' (Punter 1980: 119). For the purposes of our argument, Billy Winters is a vampiric figure, a voracious landlord who has aristocratic pretensions and illicit sexual impulses, not unlike Stoker's Count.

Winters also resembles Polidori's Lord Ruthven, the 'most important of his particular attributes is that he is, like the vampires of central European legend, an aristocrat, and it would be foolish to overlook the obvious connexion between this feature and his sexual potential' (Punter 1980: 119). As a member of the Anglo-Irish class and as Beth's step-father, Winters maintains a certain control over Beth, his victim. Again, like Winters and Count Dracula, 'what Ruthven exercises over his victims is a kind of droit de seigneur, a notion or practice from medieval times from that kind of absolute sexual privilege which is concomitant of absolute power, and which is at the same time a predictable object of middle-class fantasies' (Punter 1980: 119). Winters' sexually transgressive desire for his step-daughter, Beth, is a taboo that renders Winters as a deviant gothic Other. And while *Death and Nightingales* is set at the tail end of the nineteenth century, the narrative is replete with what McEvoy describes, via Chris Baldick, as 'various stalwarts of the eighteenth-century plot (persecuted heroines, labyrinths, young heroes) persist, as do certain structural relations, most notably, as Chris Baldick points out, the relation of the past to the present and the relation between history and geography' (Baldick1992: 19 in McEvoy 2007: 7).

Like the mytho-historical figure of Lord Ruthven, Winters is emblematic of a long mythologized Anglo–Irish class in 19th century Ireland. Their condition is like that of the vampire; they are dead but not quite dead, as is their power.

The passing on of legacy is important here, as what is needed is fresh blood, because as Punter reiterates: 'blood is the business of aristocracy, the blood of warfare and the blood of family' (Punter 1980: 119). Dracula, like the now defunct Anglo-Irish, laments the passing of their power, as extolled by Dracula in the following terms: 'the warlike days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace, and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told' (Stoker 1897: 40). Dracula's fixation with his status and the importance of his family ties and traditional ethnic allegiances elide the consequences of colonialism. Reading *Dracula* through the prism of Ireland's colonial history, Bram Stoker's vampire tale has become representative of the Irish Gothic tradition. In his reading of *Dracula*, Valente notes Stoker's inclusion of Irish nomenclature: 'in a coincidence too pointed to discount, her similarly Irish birth name filiates her with native Celts of the name O'Muireadhaigh, which was anglicized to Murray sometime during the colonial occupation, and with Protestant

Scotch-Irish planters, the Murrays who were part of that anglicizing occupation' (Valente 2002: 66) . Not only is Billy Winters immensely proud of his family genealogy, one that is steeped in colonial usurpation, elsewhere in McCabe's work these concerns are forcefully articulated. For example in the shortest of his 'Troubles' short fictions, 'Cancer', the protagonist, Dinny Mahon proudly eulogises: 'our crowd the McMahons; Kings about Monaghan for near a thousand years, butchered, and driv 'north to these bitter hills, that's what it said, and the scholar that wrote it up maintained you'll get better bred men in the cabins of Fermanagh than you'll find in many's a big house' (McCabe 2005: 77). This statement resonates with Dracula's declaration on his own proud heritage of military invasions and conquests: '[w]e Szekelys have a right to be proud, for

in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship' (Stoker 1897: 39). Dracula expounds at length on the exalted nature of his ancestry and 'the Count self-identifies as Székely, a subgroup of the Hungarians who, geographically separated from the Magyars, protected the frontier to the East. Like the descendants of the early Anglo-Irish, many of whom were resettled military veterans, Dracula's position is obsolete' (Keogh 2014: 189). Count Dracula represents, then, the repressed and the oppressed, with the lack of certainty surrounding religious beliefs drawing parallels with the link between vampires and irreligiousness in *Dracula*.

As well as divining lines of similarity between McCabe's narrative and Stoker's, we can also trace further correspondences with Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. In this vampire tale, Le Fanu employs the conventions of the female gothic in overlapping ways. In particular, Le Fanu's gothic modes depict feminine dispossession and the erasure of maternal histories through marriage, as well as, in the case of Carmilla, filial loyalty to a father. And the narrative, furthermore, ends with a reclamation of matrilineal histories and female sexuality as a form of feminist resistance. In *Death and Nightingales*, Beth's matrilineal history and her lineage has long been a source of anxiety and disturbs her sleep. She oscillates between waking and sleeping, emerging disturbed and agitated from the troubling nightmare. As we noted above, she is motivated by the bellowing of a cow in pain, so Beth promptly dresses and tends to the distressed animal. All the while she is contemplating her plans to escape for a new life with Liam Ward. As we have established, Beth is prompted by her wish or desire to kill her stepfather, and Beth summons visions of death and poison and the supernatural, all of which signifies a society immersed in Gothic superstition, alternative medicine and even witchcraft. But, as Flannery makes clear, Beth's attitude to her stepfather is also fuelled by the Gothic concerns related to disinheritance and past trauma. In Flannery's estimation, 'we later appreciate Elizabeth's murderous appetite is nourished by a

confluence of her own traumatic childhood, her illegitimacy, and her perceived disinheritance by her step-father' (Flannery 2013: 99). Winters has an unwholesome sexual attraction to Beth, and it is emblematic of the transgressive gothicism that 'tended to buttress a dominant bourgeoisie ideology through fulfilment of fantasies of rape, murder, incest, parricide, social disorder' (Jackson 1981: 174-75). Winters sexual interest in his step-daughter transgresses familial boundaries, and he is demonstrably not content to accept the social restraints placed on him. Essentially he abandons all sense of fatherly decorum and morality, giving himself over to incestuous carnal longings. This, as Botting clarifies, is symptomatic of the absence of a stable paternal order which 'provides room for the projection of both ideal and terrifying figures of authority and power. In Gothic fiction fatherly authority is assumed by rapacious aristocrats ambitious monks and impassioned bandits more often than benevolent role models' (Botting 2002: 284).

Billy Winters is far removed from the ideal benevolent role model and, instead, he is the disturbing contradiction of fatherly privilege, especially in his carnal desire for Beth. Beth circulates throughout society and, indeed her life, without knowing the true identity of her father. She is identified or codified as Winters' true daughter or, in 19th century parlance, as the exclusive property of Billy Winters, hence she becomes contingent on the strategic financial interests exchanges of men with respect to her inheritance and her future marriage prospects. Because, as Lévi- Strauss describes it, marriage is a structure that is essentially a form of exchange:

> affinal or consanguineal tie allows for its occurrence without a legal violation of the incest taboo–though While the exchange has an incestuous father–daughter configuration, that there is no it clearly encroaches on the taboo as defined by theologians, sociologists, and psychiatrists in that it is a position of familial authority or power. (Di Placidi 2018: 51)

Levi Strauss claims our western society is based on the control and exchange of women and whereas Strauss summarizes this trade in terms of a gift or exchange, he sees this exchange of women not as gifts, but more as commodities, as bartered goods and merchandise. Focusing on gender Levi-Strauss postulates that:

> without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into the anarchy(?) of the natural world, the randomness(?) of the animal kingdom, the passage into the social order, into the symbolic order, into order as such is assured by the fact groups of men circulate women among themselves according to the rule known as the incest taboo. (Strauss 1949 :36)

The Female Gothic and The Big House in *Death and Nightingales*

The Anglo-Irish presence in Ireland populates a great deal of Irish fiction and the Protestant Ascendancy as a group are a long-standing part of Irish history. As rural centres of political power and wealth in Ireland, most big houses occupied property confiscated from native Catholic families in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

> [t]he estate or the Big House was defined by being strategically placed within the centre of the Irish countryside but, throughout the country, there were innumerable instances of the estate as the arbiter of power and privilege, and a demonstration of "civilization" and "superior moral order" in operation (Duffy 2005: 385).

But in its decaying form, the Big House represents the power of the presiding culture. The trope of the absentee landlord is used to critique the numerous estates falling into ruin due to bad management on the part of the landlords. The rise of the Big House novel began with Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackren*t (1800), and its defining themes ever since have centred on: class, wealth, political allegiance, ethnicity, religion, and language. The conventions of the Big House novel are exemplified in the decaying houses and demesnes that persist in various states of neglect and that are used as a metaphor for the Ascendancy's declining power in Ireland. The trope of

the absentee landlord is used to critique the numerous estates falling into ruin due to bad management on the part of the landlords. As Vera Kreilkamp asserts: '[f]or the conquered Irish, the Big House evoked memories of dispossession, exploitation, and injustice—and, simultaneously, of a remote and glamorous power, of inaccessible social position and wealth' (Kreilkamp1998: 20).

> Prior to the publication of *Death and Nightingales*, McCabe's *Victims* directly follows the Big House novel tradition of 'Somerville and Ross ... [and] puts together two narrative modes, the Big House novel, and the 'Troubles' thriller, and skilfully intersect[s], two important themes of

Northern Irish life, the crisis and decay of the Anglo-Irish world and the increasing role of Republican terrorism' (Pelaschiar1998: 83). The Irish Big House literary tradition is a well-established mode in McCabe's fiction and dramas, appearing in *Death and Nightingales*, *Tales from a Poorhouse* and *Heaven Lies About Us*. The modern Big House novel can be read in relation to the 1980s and 1990s, a particularly troubled phase in Northern Ireland's history. It is important, then to address the recurring motifs found in the old decaying or ruined Big House novel as they have been appropriated by McCabe, namely, the absentee landlord, or negligent landlord, the usurpation of the estate from the landlord by a devious outsider, and the lack of an heir to the Big House, together with the urgent Big House questions of inheritance. These, of course, are linked to our previous invocation of the Irish Gothic tradition. The sense of place evokes anxiety rather than a sense of ease for the Big House occupants, and a sense of remoteness and separation from the local Irish community adds to that detachment. This is well expressed by Genet, who suggests that the 'high walls of the estate were to separate for seven centuries the Gaelic population from the English invaders' (Genet 1991:15). Such divisions also position the Big House fictions within the broader lineage of the gothic literary tradition and tropes of the gothic affix McCabe's work to the earlier Big House literary tradition, and that will be subject to analysis here. Such indicative tropes include outcasts, doubles, confessional division, and gender

and sexuality.

According to Kreilkamp, '[t]he term "Big House" refers to a country mansion not always very big, but typically owned by a Protestant Anglo-Irish family presiding over a substantial agricultural acreage leased out to Catholic tenants who worked the land' (Kreilkamp 1998: 60). The Big Houses that dotted the Irish landscape were viewed quite differently to the large majestic stately manor houses in England, as the latter were built on a much grander scale. As a major literary tradition, the Irish Big House is represented in a great deal of Irish fiction. Such fictions, Kreilkamp continues, were set 'on isolated country estates, they dramatize the tensions between several social groups: the landed proprietors of a Protestant ascendancy gentry; a growing usually Catholic, middle class; and the mass of indigenous, rural Catholic tenantry' (Kreilkamp 1998: 6). The Big House stands as a representative of a social base as well as for the Irish nation itself: '[a]t a macrosocial level the demise of estates such as Winters are entwined in the broader legislative re-negotiation of the Irish Land Question in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Thus, there was a pending extinction, or at least a diminution of tenure among such classes' (Flannery 2013: 97). As Otto Rauchbauer explains the Big House was once an Anglo-Irish country house, or 'big house', as it is known in Ireland, is a highly ambivalent colonial and cultural artefact: or more than four centuries it has been an emotionally charged icon of Anglo-Irish relations.

> At the end of the twentieth century, it is still there to be viewed as a museum, as a shell gutted by fire, abandoned as a ruin, or converted to other uses; only a few dozen houses function in one way or the other as socio-economic units, with the old family still in command, though marginalized politically and economically. (Rauchbauer 1999: 222)

Revolts, secret societies, landlords, and the contestation of land rights and land ownership became the fulcrum of violent resistance, 'surrounding the 1879-82 Land War and subsequent Plan of Campaign, a period characterised by ruthless evictions of tenants and organised violence directed against landlords' (Foster 2006: 69).

And this is precisely the period during which McCabe locates the action of *Death and Nightingales*. Irish Big Houses stood on land seized from local Catholic families in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and, for the native population, the Big House was seen as representative of a distant colonial power, its pre-eminence indicative of disunity and division. Returning to Kreilkamp, who draws on the work of W. J. McCormack, 'the term "Big House" does not enter into cultural discourse with any frequency until the late nineteenth century, when Anglo-Irish dominance was ending.' (Kreilkamp1998: 7). The conventions of the Big House novel are exemplified in the decaying houses and demesnes that persist in various states of neglect and that are used as a metaphor for the Ascendancy's declining power in Ireland. McCabe includes the landlord Evelyn Philip Shirley of the Shirley estate, one of the largest in the county. McCabe accurately focuses on 19th Ireland including, Shirley who, like many landlords in Ireland, had immense power during the 1880s. Throughout the country there were countless examples of the manor as the mediator of power and privilege. During the 18th and 19th centuries, Ireland and its economy were governed by England and emerged as an agrarian addendum to the British nucleus. English landlords, like Shirley, were noted for their paternalistic attitude towards their tenants, and viewed their role not only as landlords but also custodian of their tenants' morality. Joep Leerssen has noted that the stereotypical British-Irish opposition was often 'genderized in that the Irish character is seen as fundamentally feminine, as opposed to the masculine qualities of England' (McGauran 2017: 27).

McCabe draws parallels between the upheaval of agrarian agitation and the rise to prominence of Parnell:

> As we have noted, the series of Land Acts affected during this period not only enacted a process of change but suggested a will to act on behalf of dispossessed or precariously tenanted individuals and communities. Parnell is the figure that is most closely tied to the successive

> stages of the Irish Land War during the latter decades of the century and his absent presence haunts McCabe's narrative. (Flannery 2013: 98)

From a historical perspective, the uncertain future of the Anglo-Irish upper class and their declining power in Ireland becomes the central theme of Big House fiction. According to Foster: 'the chief reason for reading these novels, provided they are entertaining and competently written, (the word professional comes to mind for many of them), is because they are at least in part, problem novels, the chief problem being the decline of the Irish country house during the years of the disturbances, outrages and structural alterations on the land' (Foster 2008: 198). The decline had its political coordinates in the many bills passed, in the series of Coercion Bills and Land Acts. The political backdrop to the novels is the sense of division and decay, and the Big Houses at the time singled out a division between people. The recurring motifs of the Big House are the decaying or ruined house and the absentee landlord who represent or suggest the decline of the Ascendancy class in Ireland. They are compounded by the grossly negligent landlord who is absent from the estate causes mismanagement and a sense of alienation due to the political and societal irrelevance of the Big House.

The motif of the social entrapment of females like Beth in *Death and Nightingales* is juxtaposed with her love of a sense of place but also evokes anxiety and a sense of alienation from the local peasant population. Billy Winters is conscious of his lack of connection and devoid of any real connection to the local community, his metaphoric isolation becomes real in relation to the local native Irish residing around Clonoula. Big House novels to which McCabe's *Death and Nightingales* is indebted 'explored the domestic life of the Big House but often they were overtly political novels' (Kreilkamp 2006: 60). Invariably the content of the novels often stands as a metaphor for what it is happening in the wider political milieu. The approach to writing about the Big House can either be elegiac or critical. Big House fiction was predominantly realistic, but during the nineteenth century, the gothic as a genre encroached upon it. The result was it conveys

a sense of fear and insecurity. The gothic novel then began to embrace literary miscegenation and materialized in novels of different genres and represented itself in Irish fiction as a moderated extra element in Irish fiction. It represents the deranged or demonised landlord, the eerie decaying house, a fear of growing class obsessions with racial pollution and cultural decline in short, a fear of the dark races of Otherness. The gothic novel also includes the threats against helpless young women and the trope of the isolated gothic villains who are more than likely driven by greed and planning to advance in a move away from their own class. Tropes of the Big House gothic include the outcasts, doubles, veils and for the gendered gothic the metaphoric sense of entrapment especially where women are concerned. *Death and Nightingales* include each of these components and the compelling plot juxtaposes the anxieties of the declining power of the Anglo-Irish Billy Winters with the backdrop of the story heavily immersed in the domestic life of the novel.

***A Drama in Muslin* (1886)**

By way of instructive comparison, we might briefly consider, *A Drama in Muslin* (1886) by George Moore, which is also set in the early 1880s, and in which Moore adapts the characteristics of French naturalism. As Foster notes: '[a]lthough occasionally drawing on Gothic conventions in *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), George Moore (1852-1933) reduces a vitiated Ascendancy to its basest materiality through the techniques of French Naturalism he had recently mastered in France' (Foster 2006: 69). Naturalism can be said to represent an even more accurate description of life than realism, and in *A Drama in Muslin*, for example, Alice chooses to escape into books and reading to disappear from the world around her. Naturalistic fiction also locates texts more obviously in the present sphere rather than the past. Although occasionally drawing on Gothic conventions, *A Drama in Muslin*, written in a third person narrative style, focuses on the consciousness of Alice and we are given Alice's thoughts, words, and comments on the action in

the book. From this view, McCabe's *Death and Nightingales* is also set in the late 1880s and bears many similarities to Moore's novel, highlighting the trauma of this turbulent era and its troubled political atmosphere. The central figures of Moore's novel are its female heroines; and for James Cahalan, '*A Drama in Muslin* is part satire and naturalistic expose, part bildungsroman recounting how Alice Barton achieves her freedom' (Cahalan1988: 107). We encounter the Barton family in *A Drama in Muslin*, a middle-class family who are intent on securing viable marriage partners. And this is not incompatible with the way in which Beth Winters's future life is imagined at times in McCabe's novel; in Beth's case it is explicitly shrouded in the prospects of the gothic return of the repressed native population.

Like *Death and Nightingales,* one of the presiding themes in *A Drama in Muslin* is marriage. Alice is frustrated and disgusted that despite education her life and those of her sisters and of her female companions are so limited, the only option available to them is to marry. And as Moore outlines, the marriage mart has been specifically invented:

> For this, and only this, the whole system of their education had been devised. They had been dressed out in a little French, a little music, a little watercolour painting – for this, and only this: to snigger, to cajole, to chatter to any man who would condescend to listen to them, and to gladly marry any man who would undertake to keep them. (Moore 1886: 98-99)

Moore's writing expresses sympathy for women who are constrained by such restrictive prohibitive social mores, and in this regard, he was partaking of an established literary tradition. As Jed Esty argues: '[o]f course the troubling of the marriage plot was already a fixture of the female bildungsroman in the nineteenth century' (Esty 2012: 23). The women in these narratives are bound and constrained, and in A *Drama in Muslin*, Moore sympathizes with the muslin martyrs who are viewed or valued only in their suitability for the marriage mart. The outlook for women in this era is extremely limited, and they are essentially trapped in their homes. Moore is also quite disparaging of the Catholic class and is decidedly anti-Church and anti-religion, and

when Cecilia decides her future is to become a nun, Moore sees this as another way in which her world is closed.

Alice, the omniscient narrator of *A Drama in Muslin*, conveys the insincerity of public religious practices in the novel and this also tallies with the centrality of religious affiliation to the divisive action of *Death and Nightingales*. The educated Beth reassures Billy Winters that she has no interest in the Catholic religion and its central governing body when she states: 'Rome is as much to me sir, as your bowler hat is to you' (McCabe 1992: 174). Beth engages with the Catholic cohort at Clonoula but for her the badge of Catholicism has less to do with the rites and beliefs of Catholicism than as a mark of continuity with her deceased mother, Catherine.

Beth's attitude to religious rites can be also compared to Alice's, who describes herself as more agnostic than believer and cleverly she outwardly presents herself as a believer while inwardly she had no such religious convictions:

> Alice watched the ceremony of Mass, and the falseness of it jarred upon her terribly. The mumbled Latin, the by-play with the wine and water, the mumming of the uplifted hands, were so appallingly trivial, and worse still, all realisation of the idea seemed impossible to the mind of the congregation. (Moore 1886: 70)

Alice views the mass rites as farcical and the show of devotion as a mere hollow spectacle. She is particularly scathing of the upper-class Catholic contingent and by the wide chasm between the classes. She is perturbed at the unquestioning devotion of the poor Irish peasantry. Of the upper class she remonstrates 'they had come to be in the absolute presence of God, the Distributor of Eternal Rewards and punishments – and yet they had taken advantage of this stupendous mystery to meet for the purpose of arranging the details of a ball' (Moore 1886: 71). Alice is equally shocked at the lack of finesse from the local peasantry noting, 'the peasants, on the other hand, prayed coarsely, ignorantly, with the same brutality as they lived' (Moore 1886: 71). This sets her firmly apart from the lives and pieties of the neighbouring, and labouring, community.

Class is also a dominant motif in *Drama in Muslin* and is overtly represented 'throughout the novel images of stark divisions are presented to the reader; the Bartons and their friends are constantly figured set apart from the crowd, disconnected from the peasants in the countryside and the workers in Dublin' (Hand 2011: 103). The Anglo-Irish Billy Winters, like a great deal of his own landlord class, is well aware of his precarious position with the heightened tension of a resurgent Irish nationalism: '[t]he Anglo-Irish were held in contempt by the Irish-speaking masses as people of no blood, without lineage, with nothing to recommend them other than the success of their Hanoverian cause over that of the Jacobites' (Deane 1985: 32). When placed in the context the political tensions of the late 1880s, the Anglo-Irish as a group were in mortal danger of attack from the local Irish populous. And Moore captures just such an atmosphere when he describes events with the precise situating of political and national events in chronological order.

Moore's novel begins when: '[t]he Barton sisters and their set leave school in the summer of 1881. Coming home to Galway, they find the tenantry so aroused, following the government's Irish Coercion Act of the previous March, that armed police are required to keep guard around the clock at many estates including the Barton property at Brookfield' (Moynahan 2017: 155). Like McCabe's *Death and Nightingales*, Moore's narrative, in Hand's view, 'presents an image of Ireland teetering on the brink of a profound and radical transformation' (Hand 2011: 102). Attending the various soirées, functions and balls and dressed in their finery, the Bartons are inspected and paraded in front of eligible males, hence 'the marriage mart.' On the way to Dublin Castle for that evening's ball, Moore conveys the sense of a city in decline. The poor and vagrants line the streets and are juxtaposed with the finery and wealth of a declining ascendancy. Travelling to the ball in their carriage, the Bartons are shocked by the level of degradation and poverty they

witness from the security of their carriage. Moore depicts this Dublin Castle scene with an emphasis on the sense of Dublin as a city in decline, with the depiction of vagrants lining the street in juxtaposition with the finely dressed landed gentry riding in their carriages.

The gulf between the peasantry's poverty and the gentry's wealth further emphasises an unequal Irish society: 'Just look at the country-people, how sour and wicked they look – don't they Alice?' (Moore 1886: 68) Alice's mother is fearful of attack from the threatening Irish peasants lining the streets: 'Well I don't know that they do, mama,' said Alice, who had already begun to see something wrong in each big house being surrounded by a hundred small ones, all working to keep it in sloth and luxury' (Moore 1886: 68). Moore levels his criticism at his own class and the social injustice endemic to Irish society. The occupants of the carriage are made extremely uncomfortable at the sight and their proximity to such poverty when placed beside their own obvious wealth, finery, and decadence. Under such a visible juxtaposition of two very different representations, and conscious of Ascendancy guilt, 'Mrs Barton wishes they would not stare so' (Moore 1886: 171) Such suggestive scenes of social division chime with McCabe's inclusion of the political discord in *Death and Nightingales*. Thus, *A Drama in Muslin* reflects the Gothic undertones that lie behind the façade, and we see Ireland as a country in political turmoil, we see the artificial society of the Anglo-Irish, and the poverty of the tenants in comparison to their landlords. George Moore recognises inequalities of the landlord system among which he was numbered: 'I have done this, and I shall continue to do this, for it is as impossible for me as for the rest of my class to do otherwise; but that doesn't prevent me from recognising the fact that it is a worn-out system, no longer possible in the nineteenth century, and one whose end is nigh' (Moore 1886: 7).

Ultimately, McCabe's *Death and Nightingales*, like *A Drama in Muslin*, includes the political traumas and atmosphere of the day, with a discussion on the Land War, the Coercion Bill, the

Kilmainham Treaty, and the shock of the violence of the Phoenix Park Murders. *A Drama in Muslin* can also be described as a critique of the landlord class and 'Moore recognises that the landlord system deserves to die but he cannot bear the thought that the peasantry will in turn, take over' (Deane 1994: 171). Adrian Frazier reflects that in Moore's writing of this book, 'there was something in it to offend everyone' (Frazier 2006: 116). The poor Irish peasant, or as they are known in the Irish as the 'coismhuintir', remain a gothic ghostly presence and become as traumatic ghostly figures who in their eerie act of silent accusation unnerve those they view: '[t]hey cannot be adequately contained within the novel form as it is; they remain just outside this aesthetic reach. However, their brooding presence is a recognition by Moore that their silent threat may as well become a vocal reality' (Hand 2011:104) Returning to Ireland from Europe, Moore notes the chasm between the rich and the poor and the ominous change in the mood of the country. As a landlord and a member of the ascendancy class, he becomes immediately aware or conscious of the threat of an imminent peasant class revolt and the increasing animosity towards the landed gentry. Likewise, Billy Winters, travelling with the farm labourer, Mickey Dolphin, makes the same observation on his short journey from his Big House at Clonoula through the village he experiences obvious hostility from the children of the village. The threat of violence is palpable and McCabe's *Death and Nightingales* and Moore's *Drama in Muslin* include many scenes and references to the tense political events in Ireland at the time. Characters in both novels discuss Parnell, the Land Acts, rent problems and the shock and horror surrounding the Phoenix Park murders. These violent events further increased the resulting antagonisms between the Irish peasantry and the landed gentry of the time.

***December Bride* (1951)**

If we move to the Northern Irish context, we can draw further comparison with McCabe's *Death and Nightingales*, this time with a text that also addresses the victimisation of women and the

Irish heroine, specifically, *December Bride*, by Sam Hanna Bell. As young men both Bell and McCabe moved to Northern Ireland from Glasgow, absorbing the habits and customs of Northern Irish culture following these migrations. Bell moved to Belfast in 1921, and McCabe in the early 1940s. Bell asserted that he modelled *December Bride* on 'the pattern of rural life that had existed for three hundred years [...] that remote and idyllic past' (McMahon, 1999: 8). In examining the ways of the country folk of Ulster and the sectarian bias that divided the two communities, *December Bride* is an excellent and useful text to compare with McCabe's works. *December Bride* is peppered with an Ulster-Scots lexicon, indicating the writer's own cultural background and that of the people with whom he had grown up. Like McCabe, Bell does not shy away from showing the caustic and bitter sectarian bias within his community.

Set in the early 1900s in Strangford Lough in Co. Down, the plot centres on a female character in the guise of the secretive and calculating, Sarah, detailing her sexual dalliances with the two Echlin brothers. Like McCabe's *Death and Nightingales*, both texts combine similar themes, attending to land inheritance and the foretelling of the political bitterness that was to characterise the latter-day Northern Ireland Troubles. As we have noted, Billy Winters' wife, Catherine, and her daughter, Beth, are embroiled in the sexually transgressive attraction he has for his stepdaughter, Beth. This sexual attraction could be compared to the ménage à trois at the Echlin household. Sarah ensures her presence at Rathard is indispensable, and cleverly contrives to form a sexual relationship with both brothers to further bolster her position within the Echlin household. The events in both novels coalesce in a mirroring of the dark gothic forces at play in the hostile relationship between the 'two tribes,' Catholic and Protestant and sketch the anxieties connected with the Northern Ireland rural community at the turn of the century. The land and property represent security for Sarah, and she loves that she has a stake in this landscape. And this is much like Beth's attachment to Corvey island when Liam Ward queries:

> This is all Billy Winters? No, she'd said, my mother promised me this when I was four. Billy put cattle on it once and then complained it wasn't worth the trouble. My mother said Cuchulain summered here, drinking mead, and setting snares for deer, and out from the island there were nets and ropes to the kitchen window and a bell on every rope, to ring out a run of salmon. (McCabe 1992: 87)

McCabe paints an idyllic rural picture of the local Fermanagh landscape, which holds sway over all the protagonists. Land and its ownership present both the origin and kernel of the latter-day gothic trauma of the Troubles, thus bringing together a confluence of the two cultures dogged by Gothic sectarianism, one that refuses to let both groups live in peace side by side. As Flannery argues: '[t]he contested nature of the Irish geographical and cultural landscapes meant that these topographies were haunted by the disinherited revenant of colonial misappropriation' (Flannery 2010: 49)

December Bride describes Sarah Gomartin and her mother's visit to the Echlin's home after Mrs Echlin's death, and their decision to stay on and work as housekeepers. Arriving at the farm, they drink tea but, as Martha Gomartin makes a face at the non-too-clean cups, the old man laughed apologetically and states pointedly that 'ye can see Martha. There's hands wanted here' (Bell 1990: 19). The reference to the lack of adequate housekeeping compares to McCabe's 'Cancer' when women from townlands had offered to cook and wash. Both brothers had refused: " Odd wee men" the women had said. "And of course, they'd have no sheets, and the blankets must be black." "And why not," another said, "no women body ever stood in aither' room these forty years" (McCabe 2005: 75). McCabe is pointing to the role women took in Irish rural communities, which is sometimes overlooked, and their work is taken for granted. According to MacPherson:

> By moving into the home, women made the domestic sphere their own and used it as a base appearance of relative solidity from which they gained power through their control of the

> household economy. An efficient farm depended on women's labor inside the home and men's role in the fields. (MacPherson 2001:131)

Death and Nightingales describes the work Beth carries out in the home and on the busy farm, taking care of the farm animals going to the aid of 'a beast in great pain', completing domestic chores, preparing food, helping to churn butter in the dairy with Mercy, who appreciatively declares 'Oh God, thanks Miss, I'm wringin' wet soaked through' (McCabe 1992: 56).

Again, in *December Bride* we witness a generational clash when Sarah argues with her mother about Sarah's decision not to continue going to church. Speaking about the minister, Sarah's mother states 'It isn't Mr. Sorleyson, daughter. It's what he stands for. He's the servant of O'God-the church that ye were reared in and your folks afore ye. Ye can't prosper Sarah, if ye forget your duty to God' (Bell 1990: 50). Sarah, then, rounds on her mother: 'Aye! Our folks prospered, didn't they, with their running tar church on Sunday! My father died on the roads, and ever since I can mind my life has been nothing but slaving for another folk' (Bell 1951: 51). Both Beth and Sarah are strong female characters, and the characterization of both women coalesces in that they are trapped by their circumstances, with a lack of employment, have no independent means, and are driven by a desire to attain stability in their lives. They face the same dilemma many of their female nineteenth-century counterparts faced, finding a suitable man to marry, this being the only way to achieve a home and an identity. The same themes of religion, identity, and class pattern both texts. The female protagonists share similar concerns, with political tensions arranged around femininity, and the female body, together with the pressures of colonial and anti-colonial politics, which prefigure the sectarianism and the tensions of latter-day Northern Ireland.

Set against the background of Gladstone's Land Act of 1881 and previous to that the dissensions embroiled in the Land Wars of 1870, there is an equivalent sense in Sarah's relationship to the

land in *December Bride*: 'When Sarah went out in those grey unwakened mornings, scratching herself and yawning, there was nothing she loved better than to isolate those fields, trees, loanens and roofs that had passed into the hands of her and her men' (Bell 1990: 238).

A Contested Landscape

We get a deeper sense of this attachment to land and place at the beginning of *Death and Nightingale*s when Beth walks to where 'at the top of this field there was a ringfort encircled by pines growing on a high bank' (McCabe 1992: 3). McCabe's view of the ringfort as an ancient Irish monument emphasizes the unchanging beauty of Irish heritage sites still embedded in the Irish landscape and forwards a different perspective to Bell's description of graves of 'ould Kings' and also the 'crumbling monastery' (Bell 1990: 31). Here the two perspectives on Irish historical monuments and history are interesting and clearly demarcated. Bell points to graves of 'ould kings' to an old dying crumbling Irish ancestry and is juxtaposed with McCabe's description of a ringfort firmly sited on the Irish landscape, a still thriving heritage. In a crucial, tragic moment, set firmly within the natural world, Bell details the traumatic death of Andrew Echlin. Bell describes the boat journey home from the island when a violent storm results in Andrew's drowning, relinquishing his own life so both his sons and Sarah will stay afloat on the boat. In Ireland, the sea and the landscape have always maintained a particular traumatic resonance and many of the country's antagonisms have been arranged around the land. From the opening passage of *Death and Nightingales,* the land and nature occupy a central space in the novel and are of particular significance in Beth's life, and the gothic genre is an apt mode to represent those fears and anxieties. *Death and Nightingales* opens with Beth waking from a dreamlike state and becoming aware of the eerie 'lack of birdcall, a sense of encroaching light and then far away the awful dawn bawling of a beast in great pain' (McCabe 1992: 1). Beth's sensory perceptions enable a form of *telesthesia* in a sensation or perception so attuned to the natural world she becomes

aware of the eerie stillness and to the animal in pain. She is jolted awake and spurred into action, her subliminal warning functioning as a reminder of her fear of an uncertain future. Gladwin states 'fear or phobia can function as a central concern in ecological readings of literary texts, but also in other representations of nature that have been Gothicised' (Gladwin 2012: 327). McCabe's gothic writing possesses an ecological vision, and nature and the natural world occupy a central space in *Death and Nightingales.*

In *Death and Nightingales*, McCabe represents nature with dual aspects, both pleasant and bucolic but also as a gothic site of menace. In Beth's first encounter with Liam Ward, she helps to pull a cow from a bog and walking along a country road, the adjectives McCabe uses suggest nature and the landscape are sinister, describing the landscape with 'hungry scutch grass spined the lane, tentacles of briar reaching from the verges' (McCabe 1992: 69). Nature and the natural world are coded as animalistic when Billy Winters and Tommy Martin, watching from the quarry office, observe Liam Ward furtively speaking into Blinky Blessing's ear and the interaction is described as 'a black fox-snout talking into a blonde mule's ear' (McCabe 1992: 64). In Liam Ward's animality and secretiveness and with his potential to deceive, trick and kill he is aptly described by Tommy Martin as a brazen trickster. Later on, Beth walks through the wood to her arranged tryst with Liam Ward, nature again appears alive as a sentient being capable of reaching out and impeding Beth's progress: 'twice branches caught at her dress, the second time unstitching the front seam. When her foot caught in the bare forked roots of ash, they grazed her ankle. It became darker as she went lower, fern fronds growing evilly from the mossy branches of elongated oak' (McCabe 1992: 82). McCabe personifies the natural world bringing it alive with the landscape represented as a menacing, threatening force. The significance of the landscape and the space Beth inhabits form a gothic representation. Nature is depicted as eerie and frightening, and Beth walking through the woods on her way to meet with Liam Ward hears

strange sounds: ‘At first, she thought it was the cry of the vixen calling her cubs. No? Behind, ahead, above? It seemed to be approaching, a creature in distress …bird or beast’ (McCabe 1992: 83). Beth is terrified and she hears the cry again almost human-like and fear and horror overwhelm her: ‘The squealing seemed alongside her; Then she saw it...a white owl grounded, a baby rabbit gripped in its talons, the hooked beak tearing ravenously into the wriggling upturned stomach’ (McCabe 1992: 83). The helplessness of the baby rabbit trapped in the powerful claws of the owl foreshadows or prefigures Beth’s helplessness against Liam Ward’s murderous plans. Beth is represented as the hunted, and Liam Ward as the hunter and again, the powerful animal imagery mirrors a cruel humanity and especially in what Liam Ward has planned for her.

In Ireland nature, the land, and, especially, bog land with its buried cargos are all potential Gothic sites of preservation but also of concealment. Equally the buried space of the bog often gives up those secrets. Working in the bog, Mickey Dolphin announces they have come across ‘a go of auld bog-butter…or Maybe someone was murdered long ago; not gold and that’s for sure’ (McCabe 1992: 116). An air of excitement accompanies the find but also reflects the theme of hidden buried secrets and the bog butter reflects the hidden lives of earlier Irish farmers who centuries earlier worked the land. Despite the butter being found on Winters’ land,
Mickey Dolphin and the group take charge of its disposal reflecting the unwanted tenancy of Billy Winters and his tremulous connection to this land:

With both hands, he was taking out fistfuls of blackish debris clinging to the back, top and sides of the buried bulk. He then put both arms around his find, removed it and walked towards the steps. All followed. The wrapping leather was removed revealing butter which looked white as lard, mottled with tiny black and green choppings of herb (McCabe 1992: 116).

The archaeological aspect of the find reflects the fact that the bog butter may have been buried as early as the sixth or seventh centuries, long before the sixteenth century, when the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland took place, and long before Billy Winters' ancestors took ownership of Clonoula. The find legitimises Irish land ownership and further emphasises the tenuous hold Billy Winters and the Anglo-Irish class have on this land. In this context, Flannery argues that the:

> disinterred fragmentary shards of ancient Irish history are at once affirmations of historical continuity, but simultaneously interrogate the usurpatory genealogies of colonial conquest. As much as Billy Winters' and his class are underwritten by antique documents and legal testament, contradictory archaeologies of memory remain embedded within the landscape (Flannery 2013: 100).

Despite referring to his own Anglo-Irish class and their correction and development of the land in Ireland, Billy Winters cannot negate the resentment against his class and the ever present threat of sly sedition from the locals. As an Anglo -Irish landlord and the owner of Clonoula, he is viewed with antipathy and his tenure with the land is viewed as invalid and the product of colonial misappropriation.

One of the climatic scenes in the novel is when Beth's connection to the land becomes all-encompassing and she is shown her own grave. Dummy McGonagle tells Beth by gestures, miming and sketching the images of her grave and the unmistakable image of the two men who plan to murder her:

> The Dummy…drew a rectangular box on a separate sheet. On the box he put a cross.
>
> Underneath the box he drew another rectangle, pointed at it. When she said the word 'grave' he nodded…As he began to sketch on a fresh piece of paper, she knew what she would see before it was drawn, Ward's profile, a foxy effect, stressing the nose. (McCabe 1992: 181)

The foxy effect, again, points to the vulpine or animalistic traits that characterise Liam Ward's appearance. They also portray the cunning and duplicitous aspects of his personality. When the

Dummy impresses on Beth the danger of her situation, it is from this point on Beth's realisation of what is planned for her transforms her. That change is also accompanied by a change in the space and the natural world around her. McCabe uses the bird imagery of pigeon wings in the scene when Beth is secretly returning Winters gold, 'as she reached for her pocket handkerchief [and] she became aware of a sudden change of light, of a consciousness of something. Outside in the half-light, there was a sudden thrum of pigeon wings' (McCabe 1992: 184). The sudden change of light reflects a change in mood and the space around Beth, and the thrum of pigeon wings reflect a portentous sign of brooding evil. As it transpires, Beth is alerted to Winter's presence behind her, and Winters subsequently attacks and cruelly beats Beth, banishing her from Clonoula.

Death and Nightingales is permeated with references to the land and the image of the Irish natural world as cruel and threatening, juxtaposed with the view of nature as a pastoral idyll. And such portraits can be brought into dialogue, once more, with *December Bride*. In the boat scene in *December Bride*, the sense that nature is a placid romanticised space is invalidated. In chapter four of *December Bride*, Sarah is sailing in a punt with the three male members of the Echlin family and suddenly the waters of the lough become choppy, rough, and dangerous. They try to turn the boat around, but all four fall from the boat, with Andrew deciding to relinquish his life to save the others. Bell describing the treacherous waters declares.

> impeded by hundreds of islands, the waves never mounted to the fury of those of the sea, the menace lying in the currents that raced through the passages between island and island the punt was now crawling across such a passage approaching the deep channel where a swift band of racing water, broken and windblown raised itself like the ruff of an angry dog. (Bell 1990: 34)

Bell uses violent adjectives to anthropomorphise the raging waters and assign animalistic characteristics to the tumultuous water. Andrew, the patriarch, is conscious of the dangers of nature and, approaching the deep channel, recognises the loch as a monstrous site in its ability to

threaten his life and that of his family. The loch demands a reckoning, and Andrew knowingly takes his hand off the boat. Andrew acknowledges that he and his family are no match for what Hilliard describes as the 'hostile and deadly aspects of the otherwise nurturing image of "Mother Nature"' (Hilliard 2009: 688). Nature is represented here as menacing and threatening and the extreme strength or violence of the water is not just a natural phenomenon, it also symbolises the dark gothic aspects of nature and human life. The loch is depicted as a dark force and the threat from this stretch of water is the hidden menace of its dangerous currents that raced between the islands all possessing ferocious power and speed. The boat or punt tries to navigate the choppy waters of the lough, but nature is exhibited as a cruel unrelenting maleficent force. 'Landscapes,' Botting continues (naming only mountains and forests specifically), 'stress isolation and wilderness, evoking vulnerability, exposure, and insecurity. […] Nature appears hostile, untamed, and threatening; again, darkness, obscurity and barely contained malevolent energy reinforce atmospheres of disorientation and fear' (Botting 2014: 4). The currents of water course through the islands producing dangerous violent fluxes of water. Andrew is lost in the water and, afterwards at his funeral, his death is attributed to a punishment from God for their Godless living arrangements, a view that circulates among the local community.

After the trauma of this incident, the central space religion occupies in the lives of Northern Ireland's population, especially the women, takes on a specific prominence, most powerfully represented in Sarah's reaction to the local Presbyterian minister and his words of consolation at Andrew's death. Sarah and her mother are Presbyterians and were often driven or accompanied to Church by the Echlin brothers. Sarah rebels against her mother's religious indoctrination, and is angry at Reverend Sorleyson's version of the boat accident, as it diminishes Andrew's heroism:

> To her [Sarah Gomartin's] simple mind, the idea of a vast overcleaning spirit, ever-present, which with infinite patience followed the coming-in and going-out-of a human being for eighty years, and then, at a pre-ordained time plucked him from the world, bore the signs of an ultimate responsibility. But now she suspected, and her anger rose at the thought, that Sorleyson had bent a fortuitous and tragic occurrence to buttress his own beliefs and teachings, and in some way robbed the lustre of Andrew's self-sacrifice. (Bell 1990: 44)

Religious tensions are threaded throughout the text of *December Bride* and Sarah is angry at how Sorleyson assigns Andrews's death as part of God's plan, negating any notion that Andrew may have taken control of the situation and planned his own destiny. Similarly, in *Death and Nightingales*, McCabe emphasises the significance of religion and its place in the many arguments between Beth's mother, Catherine, and Billy Winters. Beth, as a strong female character, bears many of the traits of the female gothic heroine. Her nonconformity to the mores of her day coalesces with that of Roisin 'The Orphan' in *Tales From the Poorhouse*, and the independent Sarah from *December Bride*. These female characters are strong and independent, and are positioned in binary opposition to the representations of the compliant female of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The three also share the loss of or missing a father figure in their lives and considering the patriarchal nature of early nineteenth-century life in Ireland, this factor has a significant influence on the lives of these young women.

Gothic Motifs in *Death and Nightingales* and *Wuthering Heights*

There are striking similarities that can be drawn between McCabe's *Death and Nightingales* and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* in terms of sexuality and femininity. Akin to McCabe's narrative, *Wuthering Heights* is riven with conflicting emotions, and both partake of gothic themes in the competing motifs of love, hate, violence, and tragic death. Both novels problematise linear narrative form in the use of analepses or flashbacks and the narrative plotting also includes

the deployment of prolepsis. As we have made clear, the action of *Death and Nightingales* is significantly informed and conditioned by the uneasy relationship between the past and the present, with events and memories from the former intruding upon the latter. Additionally, it is interesting to note that the name Catherine has a particular resonance in both *Wuthering Heights* and *Death and Nightingales.* Crucially, for our purposes, both texts can read in terms of the female gothic, as they detail the visceral passions and hatreds of their respective female protagonists.

Brontë's use of a dual narrative as a literary device means the story is told by Lockwood as the outsider, with Nelly Dean as the insider. Published when the Irish Famine was at its zenith there is no escaping the effects that cataclysmic event had on Ireland and on England. It is conceivable that Emily Brontë and her sister, Charlotte, were inspired and greatly influenced by their father, Patrick Brontë. Indeed, in *Wuthering Heights* we read that Catherine Earnshaw remembers her father arriving home to Wuthering Heights with Heathcliff. As Eagleton explains, Heathcliff:

> is picked up starving off the streets of Liverpool by old Earnshaw. Earnshaw unwraps his great coat to reveal to his family a 'dirty, ragged, black-haired child' who speaks a kind of 'gibberish,' and who will later be variously labelled beast, savage, demon, and lunatic. It's clear that this little Caliban has a nature on which nurture will never stick; and that's merely an English way of saying that he's quite probably Irish. (Eagleton 1992: 108)

One of the most disturbing aspects of the Great Famine was the transformation of human beings into almost animalistic sub–humans. The description of Heathcliff echoes the many starving fleeing from Ireland. In *Wuthering Heights* 'Heathcliff is likened to a vampire, a ghoul, and a cannibal – the last, a gothic metaphor that associates him with the "dark races" of the world. All three terms are monstrous metaphors for Heathcliff's "savage," rage, passion and behaviour' (Bratlinger 2000:161). Eagleton links Heathcliff to the Irish Great Famine and the political unrest that became a feature of Irish and British life in the 1840s. When Heathcliff is a young child, he is described as dark and, as Brontë's biographer comments: 'Their image, and especially those of

the children, were unforgettably depicted in the *Illustrated London News* - starving scarecrows with a few rags on them and an animal growth of black hair almost obscuring their features' (Eagleton 1992: 108). As John Kelly notes in his description of the victims of starvation with a growth of black hair as mentioned above:

> In the later stages of starvation, the eyelids inflame, the angular lines around the mouth deepen into cavities; the swollen thyroid gland becomes tumor-sized; fields of white fungus cover the tongue, blistering mouth sores develop, the skin acquires the texture of parchment; teeth decay and fall out, gums ooze pus, and a long silky growth of hair covers the face … Hunger edema—a grotesque swelling—is also common. (Kelly 2012: 225)

In a similar pattern of trauma and tragedy, the story of *Death and Nightingales* gives a retrospective glance back at Beth's formative years growing up at Clonoula. Her freedom around the beautiful pastoral Clonoula is similar to Catherine's freedom as a young girl at Wuthering Heights. Beth cherishes the aesthetically beautiful fish-shaped Corvey Island, and declares 'it's the nicest place in the whole world' (McCabe 1992: 5). As a young child, Cathy Earnshaw enjoys her natural surroundings of a hardy and free wild untamed childhood with young Heathcliff, revelling on the moors around the Heights. The landscape at Wuthering Heights is bleak and harsh, far from pastoral and is juxtaposed with the pastoral rural setting of Clonoula with its rolling farmland and its abundance of flora and fauna. In both novels the harshness of the natural world is mirrored in the characterisation of the rough uncouth male protagonists, Heathcliff, and Liam Ward. Both share a decided resilience. As characters, they can be related to the cold harsh landscape at Wuthering Heights and both men are connected to nature as primal in their natures. Liam Ward, as a Republican volunteer, is often on the run from the police, so he exists on the periphery of society. Ward lives without normal blood ties and family ties and he has proven himself to be a treacherous character. He claims to be a member of the IRB but he even resorts to stealing funds from that organisation. Ward is deemed dangerous and, like the love between Catherine and Heathcliff, both couples are pushed outside what constitutes normal familial relationships and

normal societal structures. The realm they inhabit draws them together and Beth, as the illegitimate daughter of Billy Winters, finds a soul mate in the firebrand Liam Ward.

For a time, their Otherness and differences seal their bond. Beth's attraction to Ward is purely physical, but her attraction to him is also cemented by his image as the internal émigré, a situation she has been familiar with all her life. Her status and future in the household at
Clonoula is juxtaposed with the question of her true parentage. She feels an outsider within the Winter's family structure and, taken outside of the family she sees the gypsy Ward as having a similar ontological situation. By moving away from the civilised world of Clonoula, she rejects conformity and instead chooses rebellion in the guise of Liam Ward. Her first sighting and encounter with Ward is replete with references to darkness, describing his looks, his temperament, all of which implicitly prefigure his murderous intentions towards Beth. She noticed 'he was very good–looking, fine-skinned, dark, a kind of beardless Christ with slightly irregular teeth' (McCabe 1992: 67). Similarly, when Lockwood first meets Heathcliff, he immediately marks him as the Other, noting his dark brooding looks that set him apart from the other inhabitants at Wuthering Heights: '[h]e is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman—that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure and rather morose' (Bronte 2007: 5). Both stories recount the lives of two Catherines, but it also includes gothic undertones, dark forces that impede on the lives of both young women and those who follow on after them. Heathcliff's origins and the darkness of his appearance as a gypsy or ploughboy, mirrors the darkness of Liam Ward's swarthy appearance and both men share facial features that are both handsome yet animal-like. Both men are inscrutable and shady, with unanswered questions as to the authenticity of their true lineage.

From the opening chapter of *Wuthering Heights,* the notion of Heathcliff as the Other is flagged by his dark appearance. He is uncouth in his appearance and his gruff persona mirrors the gothic hatred that permeates the Heights. An inhospitable atmosphere greets Lockwood on his arrival at Wuthering Heights, and Lockwood is met with, and shocked by, a perturbing and inhospitable reception especially from the women. Lockwood, as the narrator, reflects his own biases when he speaks about women: 'I bowed and waited, thinking she would bid me to take a seat. She looked at me, leaning back in her chair, and remained motionless and mute' (Brontë 2007: 9). Lockwood is disturbed by the young woman's lack of attention and 'she never opened her mouth, I stared– she stared also; at any rate she kept her eyes on me in a cool, regardless manner, exceedingly embarrassingly and disagreeable' (Brontë 2007: 9). Lockwood is taken aback by the young woman's audacity to look straight at him without bowing her head. It is not just the lack of hospitality that throws Lockwood, he is mostly shaken by her actions and not just astounded at the woman's lack of civility, it is because she is a woman and has fixed him with her piercing gaze. He finds this most perturbing and because she has not responded to him, he finds her gaze even more troubling. He is shocked at the reception he receives and the atmosphere that permeates every aspect of Wuthering Heights, from the savage demonic dogs to the uncompromising humans and their cynical embittered hatred for one another. The pretty but sullen dour young woman Lockwood mistakenly believes to be Mrs Heathcliff, even openly threatens the old, disgruntled farmhand Joseph with her skill at witchcraft, when she warns him:

> Stop, look here she continued, taking a long-dark book from a shelf. "I'll show you how far I've progressed in the black art-I shall soon be competent to make a clear house of it; The red cow didn't die by chance, and your rheumatism can hardly be reckoned among providential visitations!" (Bronte 2007: 13)

Joseph mutters the word 'evil' under his breath and it is clear he believes the young Catherine is in touch with evil spirits and has evil intentions. Both novels *Death and Nightingales* and *Wuthering Heights* share a gothic proclivity for the art of witchcraft, as *Death and Nightingales*

opens with a description of a gothic scene not far removed from that of a witch's coven, with Beth dreaming of a poisonous witch's brew, a Gothic medieval mixture of medicines and poisonous concoctions. The symbolism of the bestial sounds of an animal in pain in *Death and Nightingales* interrupts Beth's dream and mirrors the menacing snarling dogs in the opening scenes of *Wuthering Heights.* The scene describes Lockwood's terror as he feels under threat from the brood of dogs who Lockwood has inadvertently aroused, 'the whole hive: half-adozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes and ages, issued from hidden dens to the common centre' (Bronte 2007: 6). The dogs growl furiously at Lockwood and he, in turn, directs his displeasure at Heathcliff, for leaving him alone with what he describes as 'the herd of possessed swine [who] could have had no worse spirits in them than those animals of yours, sir. You might as well leave a stranger with a brood of tigers!' (Bronte 2007: 7) The dogs' threatening advances on Lockwood mirror Heathcliff's unwelcoming manner on receiving his guest. The ferocity of the animals is very much affiliated with his persona, and Heathcliff is like a pack leader among the vicious beasts. A malevolent hatred pervades the Heights and manifests itself in the viciousness of the dogs and the people. Representations of violence, death, cruelty, and the inclusion of mysterious supernatural forces haunt the characters in both books.

The Heights, like Clonoula in *Death and Nightingales*, includes a host of gothic elements that relate to the various cycles of violence, cruelty, and defiance at both abodes. Both novels describe the untimely deaths of the female protagonists named Catherine and these deaths add to the mysterious forces at play in respective narratives. In *Wuthering Heights* 'for Catherine, the defiance that might seem like hate was made possible by love (her oneness with Heathcliff) and the energy that seemed like violence was facilitated by the peace of the (wholeness)of an undivided self' (Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 266). The patriarchal society inhabited by Catherine means she is severely constrained in her marriage choices, and the choice posed for Catherine is

between Heathcliff and Edgar Linton. That choice becomes the root cause of the tragedy that unfolds throughout the novel. Because her brother has married, Catherine must leave *Wuthering Heights* and move to Thrushcross Grange. She is: 'seized by Thrushcross Manor and held fast in the jaws of reason, education, decorum, she cannot do otherwise than as she does, must marry Edgar because there is no one else for her to marry, and a lady must marry'
(Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 277). Similarly, Beth recognises she must also marry in order to have a life outside of Clonoula. While Beth's contemporary context dictates that women were chosen for marriage partners because of their appearance, their dowry, and their wealth, she has the added obstacle of uncertainty with regard to her birth father. Because her birth is unknown there is a good chance she will not inherit Clonoula and this in turn makes Beth respond to Liam Ward's presence. Because of the illicit nature of their affair, Beth retains a high level of secrecy around her trysts with Liam Ward and the planned elopement. With someone like Ward, and his dubious political background, the only course of action for Beth and Ward would have been to elope and leave Clonoula. Thus, young women like Beth were often at the mercy of men and often open to unscrupulous behaviour.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine, and Nelly, while deep in conversation are unaware that, Heathcliff hears part of Catherine's conversation, where she declares her love for Edgar Linton even going too far, in her self-justifying proclamation that 'I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says; I love all his looks, and all his actions and him entirely and altogether: There now!' (Bronte 2007: 67) Heathcliff is distraught at Cathy's admission of love for his hated rival, Edgar Linton, and promptly disappears from the Heights for two years. The notion of rebellion and insurrection take centre stage in both novels, *Death and Nightingales* and *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff rebels against his ill-treatment by Edgar and his place as the relegated dark foreign Other. Both Cathy of *Wuthering Heights* and

Beth's mother, Catherine Winters in *Death and Nightingales* challenge their assigned gender roles in the hierarchy of gender. Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* grows up with a rebellious nature as Nelly says of her, 'her spirits were always at high water mark, her tongue always going singing, and plaguing everybody who would do the same' (Bronte 2017: 36). Catherine Winters, Beth's mother, who is of Irish regal descent with a highspirited forceful personality, challenges Billy Winters' condescending attitude. It this image of Catherine's female revolutionary rage that most disturbs Billy Winters, and, set as it is in the late nineteenth century, her rage speaks to the political upheaval that dominated this era. The political insurgency of this era is combined with the intertwined disruption of gender norms.

Violence in *Death and Nightingales* is constantly directed towards women, and rebellion features strongly in what Winters sees as Mercy Boyle's betrayal of him by telling tales outside of Clonoula. A deeply shaken Mercy, a housekeeper, states: 'I done nothi'n Sorr, said noth'in 'bout you to anyone', but Winters angrily interjects, 'and now you lie to my face …Time was you'd be whipped for that girl, and will be when I get back…if you're not gone, you and your gulpin brother' (McCabe 1992: 132). Winters' approach to Mercy reeks of paternalistic colonialism and acts as a cipher for the British and Irish political relations at this time. Working-class women like Mercy were in danger when they chose to defy traditional expectations as to their behaviour which essentially has the sole purpose to keep them in positions of relative powerlessness. Winters' verbal attack on Mercy is implicitly connected to the violence of Irish rebellion in *Death and Nightingales*. Billy Winters' use of violence constitutes an attack on the entire female cohort which allows him not only to verbally attack Mercy, but, that same night, he also violently attacks Beth, as she attempts to return his gold. Billy Winters is unmanned by Beth's betrayal and his convivial sojourn at the Percy French concert with Mickey Dolphin is

clouded by his feelings of anger and humiliation. His trauma and agitation as an Anglo-Irish landlord are fomented by a persistent sense that his authority is being undermined.

Winters' treatment of Catherine's daughter, Beth, and his infantilizing of women is equalled to his patronising attitude to Irish nationalism. The tensions associated with the latter are in plain sight when, travelling in a gig to the Percy French concert ,Winters and Mickey Dolphin discuss Charles Stewart Parnell and the pressing political uproar in Ireland at the time: 'Great men,' Billy said, 'can be great trouble-makers', to which Dolphin answers 'Aye! and some little men too, it's the old wrong was never put right', but Winters retaliates with 'Right or wrong, where were *ye* before *we* came?, to be met with Dolphin's 'Where we are now, Billy Sorr, in our own country' (McCabe 1992: 135). The incendiary nature of politics is a highly divisive issue at this time, and McCabe highlights the contentious issue of the Land Wars and the emotive reactions it evokes in ordinary Irish people at this time. This ensured tensions are fraught and, Catherine Nash points out that the 'issue of land ownership is central to the colonial situation, but it is also important symbolically in the postcolonial context when identification with landscape and place is one of the prime sources of cultural identity' (cited in Meaney 2010:
30). The identity of Irish people is intrinsically tied to the land and appears also in *Wuthering Heights* in the form of Heathcliff's rebellion, which mirrors Irish insurrections
against England. Traditionally, for Billy Winters, and his Anglo-Irish class, he viewed the Irish workers on his farm and even the visiting educated Canon as lesser, feminine subjects to his English masculine persona. Ironically, his ego and his reputation is further damaged by his lack of control especially over the female cohort at Clonoula. But McCabe showcases resistance to class-based prejudices, and to ideas that perpetuated simple gender hierarchies.

Despite occupying a subordinate position at Clonoula and outwardly and meekly accepting Winter's furious reprimand, Mercy Boyle inwardly fumes and rebels against Billy Winters. It is

against the background of rebellion and consternation that the Anglo-Irish, like Winters, without a successor, fear they will lose their foothold on their land, farms, and estates. This fear is reinforced by figures like Parnell who fight to bring an end to an unjust system of land holding and leasing. Unsurprisingly, then, for the Anglo-Irish, the political and social traumas they endured from previous generations still live on in social memory and become manifested in the Land Wars of the 1880s and the Anglo-Irish that occupied the Big Houses at this time.

The Female Gothic and the New Woman - *Dracula* and *Carmilla*

In this section, I address the female gothic in terms of the representation of the gothic New Woman. Analyses of femininity and the female Gothic as a form populate texts from literary critics like E.J. Clery, Ann William and Ellen Moers, and, as we argue, aspects of the female gothic are a stalwart of McCabe's writing. Indeed, the gothic as a genre has a particularly close affiliation with female readers of gothic fiction as well as female gothic writers. In her *Literary Women* (1976), Ellen Moers includes the term 'female gothic' to highlight how in the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries female writers began to apply veiled terms to explain female anxieties about their sexuality and their confinement within the domestic sphere. Experiences of domestic entrapment within draughty castles or the standard suburban home, with dominating iniquitous villains, as patriarchal male figures, and besieged heroines all point to women's isolation and imprisonment within a domestic setting. And this point is distilled by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar when they argue:

> If male sexuality is integrally associated with the assertive presence of literary power female sexuality is associated with the absence of such power, with the idea expressed by the nineteenth-century thinker Otto Weininger – that woman has no share in ontological reality. As we shall see, a further implication of the paternity/creativity metaphor is the notion implicit both in Weininger and in Southey's letter that women exist only to be acted on by men, both as literary and sensual subjects. (Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 8)

Gilbert and Gubar's statement reflects the powerlessness of women in the early nineteenth century and the lack of acceptance of women in a creative sphere. Their participation is guided by the notion that they only become relevant as visual, sensual, or pleasurable objects, traits embodied by the gothic heroine in her emerging sexual assertiveness. The female gothic and the New Woman coalesce in that both versions of the female combine obvious ardent sexual traits that serve as allegories for the vampire and the terrors of the gothic family romance. In this context, Gary Kelly classifies the female gothic as a:

> species of Gothic fiction from the decades just before and after 1800, written by women, featuring female protagonists in certain situations, with appropriate settings, descriptions, and plots, using distinctive kinds of narrations, and with distinctively feminine and feminist interests and tendencies, specific to that time, but of continuing interest to women and feminists now. (cited in Davison 2002: 91)

McCabe's *Death and Nightingales*, together with its antecedents, Stoker's *Dracula* and Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, exploit these notions within the context of nineteenth-century feminine identity, thereby focusing on the various conflicts' endemic to the nineteenth-century gothic fiction. As is clear, there is more than a trace of the gothic in *Death and Nightingales*, as Beth takes on the mantle of the female gothic heroine, dreaming about her escape from Clonoula, chiming with Lyn Pykett's point that:

> in the Victorian period female Gothic became an increasingly complex and contradictory genre which not only represented women's fears of domestic imprisonment but also enacted and simultaneously, or by turns, managed and recontained their fantasies of escape from the physical and psychological confinements of the domestic and conventionally defined femininity. (Pykett 2001:198)

Beth's femininity and her attempts to escape her domestic confinement echo one of staple features of the New Woman figure, as seen in her hybrid traits as that of the sufferer when she endures Ward's treachery and dishonesty, but also as the aggressor when she orchestrates his death by

drowning. Looking at the features of the female gothic, Diana Wallace lists, 'the haunting idea, female Gothic metaphors and feminist theory examines the traces of female Gothic metaphors - of women imprisoned, buried alive, and as 'ghosts' - which 'haunt' feminist theory and the relationship which exists between theory and female Gothic fiction' (Wallace and Smith 2009: 6). These gothic texts address the anxieties relating to patriarchy and control of the female body from the late 18th century right up to the late 20th century. In Ireland, the containment of the female body and the secrecy connected to that containment has most frequently been driven by religious principles and has been a notable feature of the Irish literary canon. Indeed, Hoeveler maintains that the 'female Gothic lies at the heart of women in patriarchal society: the ideology I have come to recognize as gothic feminism - a persecuted heroine trapped in a house diffused with manic oedipal anxieties and assaulted by the forces of socioeconomic power (often disguised as religion) run amok' (Hoeveler 1998: 103).

McCabe's *Death and Nightingales* is marked with similar set of gothic tropes, with Beth, the female gothic heroine, residing in a Big House with her stepfather Billy Winters, whose illicit sexual attraction to her is regularly invoked. McCabe engages strategies like experimentation with interior monologue, and such techniques allow the reader access to Beth's inner thoughts. the basic linear narrative record Beth's journey through a trajectory of events over the course of one day, as it happens on her twenty-fourth birthday. From a general stylistic perspective, McCabe blends imagery from the natural world and employs gothic and modernist techniques to create the narrative disruptions, the breaks and silences in the conversation pieces that express the alienation and the clash between different versions of history held by the Anglo-Irish, Billy Winters and his Irish Catholic stepdaughter, Beth. Through her recollections and her childhood memories, Beth also serves as a mediator between the present and the past, between her mother and Billy Winters, and she is an insistent reminder of past traumas. For

Beth, the lands at Clonoula are inextricably linked to her sense of belonging and sense of identity. Having tended to the cow in distress, Beth looks across the expanse of water as 'the mist had cleared across the lough. She could see the island now, the brightening countryside on the far shore' (McCabe 1992: 6). She could make out 'Tirkennedy where her mother came from. I must fix it now in memory she thought because not for years, probably never again would she see what one day she imagined could be paradise' (McCabe 1992: 6). This is a striking visual and the sublimely beautiful scene of the mist that had cleared across the lough and the brightening countryside is juxtaposed with Beth's heartbreak because she plans to leave it forever. Beth recognises the duality of her sense of belonging and not belonging to this landscape at Clonoula, and as she says 'the heartbreak of this place? Love it and hate it like no place else on earth, tomorrow I leave it forever' (McCabe 1992: 2). Beth loves Clonoula but, at the same time, she simultaneously feels alienated from the people who live there. Billy
Winters, Mercy, and the visiting Canon all reinforce her sense of not belonging in this space. Beth essentially rewrites her own story and by choosing her own individual path she envisions walking away from her sense of entrapment at Clonoula.

Unsurprisingly in gothic female texts, the accent or focus is on the related power tensions between the colonizer and colonized, and are, often, played out in the domestic arena. For example, in *Death and Nightingales*, Beth struggles as the gothic heroine in her dealings with presiding patriarchal authority figures and institutions. In a domestic setting at Clonoula, in a conversation with Billy Winters and the local priest, Canon Leo McManus, 'Beth smiled back at the smiling men…two fathers …neither mine, she thought, as Billy rambled on, mock ordinary with an avuncular Irishness, a manner he used with country priests, farm hands and quarry workers, never with horse-Protestants or at the R.D.S'. (McCabe 1992: 27) Winters is guilty of class-based prejudices and he maintains a ready-made taxonomy in his attitude to the

Catholic locals. He adopts a fawning ingratiating manner with the local Catholic curate, but it is clear he obviously harbours a powerful sense of loathing for all Catholics, especially those of the lower order. In his interaction with the Catholic farm hands and the household staff like Mercy Boyle and her 'gulpin' brother as he calls him, he accords a level of cordiality and decorum only with those he considers his equal. His attitude to the local Catholics reaffirms his own ingrained prejudices, especially when it comes to religious affiliation. Winters treats the local Catholic cohort like disobedient children, and his lack of respect is evident in his obsequious address to the farm workers. For Winters, Catholicism equals deception and deceit, and Beth makes it clear where her loyalties lie: 'Once in the early years during an upset she had left saying "I prefer to eat with my own people": and he had muttered, "Aye …and lie with them" (McCabe 1992: 125). McCabe's inclusion of this jibe reinforces Winters' Anglo-Irish background and his bitterness towards Beth and her mother. He displays his anger not just at the capriciousness of femininity, but his retort has a clear political slant.

As we have noted, the female gothic characteristically includes the figure of the embattled heroine entrapped in an unhomely home, and this is often supplemented by an effort to flee as part of a romantic compact. The home is often a large, isolated building, akin to that in evidence in *Death and Nightingales*, which mobilizes the familiar Big House setting as part of its array of gothic motifs, among which we also see the prominence of the absent or dead mother. Beth's identity is problematic, and her experience of home is a lack of stability and constancy, while she harbours a strong connection to the natural world. For Beth, the notion of nature as a source of comfort is perennial and unlike the people in her life is a constant presence her life. Crang expands on this perception by referring to landscape as a cultural palimpsest (revealing and incorporating traces of previous cultures) or a text. He explains that 'Landscapes may be read as texts illustrating the beliefs of the people. The shaping of the landscape is seen as expressing social ideologies that are

then perpetrated and supported through the landscape' (Crang 1998: 27). The land and the home become texts on which a human story is written. Indeed, as Tim Wenzel further explains:

> Morley and Robins (1993: 7) add an additional dimension by claiming that 'home evokes a feeling of nostalgia and memory of the past, of roots and origins.' To summarize the most significant associations of 'home' relate to social relationships and networks, to the idea of a place as a refuge, and to the sense of continuity gained from its existence. (Wenzel 2008: 146)

Motivated by her sexual entanglement with Liam Ward, Beth seeks to rupture the sense of continuity by moving beyond the domestic confines of Clonoula, moving past the social relationships and networks in which she is embedded. Entrapped within the domestic environs of a bourgeois domesticity at Clonoula and because she has committed the ultimate transgression by sleeping with Liam Ward, Winters deems her sexual transgressions as unforgiveable. In nineteenth-century Ireland, women who transgressed the sexual norms are deemed promiscuous and, for Billy Winters, are fraught with meaning and menace. The most problematic aspect of this situation is not just his inability to contain Beth within the bounds of Clonoula, Winters also fears a return of the repressed. He fears the return of his wife's, Catherine's, treachery, anxious that it lives on in her daughter Beth, who, in turn, reinforces this notion by her attachment to an unsuitable male in the guise of the vampiric Liam Ward. As Punter rightly notes, 'the vampire in English culture, in Polidori, in Bram Stoker and elsewhere, is a fundamentally anti-bourgeois figure. He is elegant, well dressed, a master of seduction' (cited in Seed 1985: 62) Like Liam Ward he is 'a cynic, a person exempt from prevailing socio-moral codes. In short, he is a combination of Gothic villain, Regency rake, and monster' (cited in Seed 1985: 62) Ward displays all of these traits and in spite of his obvious bad character, his engagement in criminality and his involvement in an illegal organisation, Beth still finds Liam Ward attractive. She removes all obstacles, psychological or otherwise, and plans an elopement with Liam Ward underwritten by stealing Billy Winters' gold.

The regulation and control of the female sexual body becomes important here and appears also in McCabe's suite of short stories, *Tales from the Poorhouse*. As detailed in the previous chapter, 'The Orphan' describes the emerging sexuality of twins, Roisín and Grace, as well as Roisín's desperate plan to escape from Famine Ireland. She hopes to achieve her goal by trading her sexual favours with Reggie Murphy, the Master of the poorhouse, for her ticket to America. The story 'The Mother' recounts her recollection of her sexual dalliance with a knife grinder and her reference to the true provenance of her twin girls Rose and Grace: 'betimes I was near tempted to tell them the way they were planted; a knife grinder from Kildysart it was.' (McCabe 2005: 301) The story, also illustrates and reflects the double standards of a strict Catholic religiosity juxtaposed with the insidious sexual abuse perpetrated by her father, Holy John, an example of a stalwart of the Catholic Church. McCabe continues with the same theme emerging in *Heaven Lies About Us* (2005). Set in early 1970s rural Ireland it describes the sexual abuse perpetrated on Marian by her brother Iggy and, again, McCabe limns the congruence of an almost fanatic Catholicism with sexual abuse, a strand or theme that permeates much of his writing. In fact, at the outset of McCabe's writing career, in *King of the Castle*, he dramatized a domestic tragedy, focusing on the feminine, sexuality and land. Set on a Leitrim farm in Clonhaggard in the late 1950's the tragedy centres on Scober McAdam, the farm owner, and his young wife Tressa .The focus of the drama emphasises the female body, Tressa's femininity, and her husband's longing for an heir for his Big House and farm. The point of crisis comes when Scober cajoles a younger man in the local pub to sleep with and impregnate

Tressa. The whole story is heavily immersed in animal imagery and relates female reproduction with bovine terminology. Scober's masculine pride is dented, the results of a flawed humanity along with Tressa's femininity which is cruelly diminished and objectified under the auspices of her local Irish community.

Marie Mulvey Roberts suggests that '[w]omen have been identified primarily through the body which, throughout history, has been associated with monstrosity' (Mulvey Roberts 2016: 106). And, in *Death and Nightingales*, Billy Winters feels threatened by Beth's sexual independence and McCabe sketches Winters's anxieties over his stepdaughter's overtly sexual female body. As the dominant male figure, Billy Winters has control over every aspect of Beth's life and, like her mother before her, she is constrained by Winters as the predominantly male patriarchal figure in her life. From another perspective, Juliet Mitchell retrieves Freudian theory from feminist abandonment to explain that the Oedipus complex 'is not about the nuclear family, but about the institution of culture within the kinship structure and the exchange relationship of exogamy. It is specific to nothing but patriarchy' (cited in Di Placidi 2018: 10). The shifting perceptions of the family, along with kinship bonds in the late eighteenth century informed a mode of understanding that becomes tied in with the social implications of patriarchy. When the Canon visits Clonoula, Billy Winters includes Beth in their convivial chat, remarking on

Beth's reluctance to find the right man for herself. Reflecting on Beth's individual spirit Billy Winters states:

> It's a man like Leo you want, Beth, a keen sportsman, a good gardener, a farmer, and a sound Christian gentleman to boot, also he keeps bees … She's very choosy this one, I've brought them out here by the cartload, all sorts, overbred under bred young bucks and not so young, fellas in the bank strong farmers, millers, merchants, apprentices to law, accountancy, and architecture. She'd have nothing to do with any of them. (McCabe 1992: 29)

As the gothic heroine, Beth recognises the inescapable bonds of patriarchy, as Winters attempts to maintain control over who she will marry. *Death and Nightingales*, set in the early 1880s, can be described as a Victorian novel. It formulates the links at the time between female nature and femininity that social studies were ascribing to middle-class white European women. The novel also presents itself as a medium that highlights features of women's lives and experiences otherwise unrepresented. As Armstrong explains:

> Victorian fiction revised an earlier narrative that insisted a woman's quest for financial security and social respectability began and ended with her ability to attract an agreeable man and extract a promise of marriage from him. According to this narrative, in which a woman's desires determined her place in the intricate ranking system of the social world her femaleness and femininity were one and the same. (Armstrong 2001: 112-113)

In Winters' choice of the clergyman as a suitable marriage partner for Beth, he is removing the threat of a sexual entanglement with a more potent virile male figure. The relationship between Beth and Winters is difficult as a certain ambiguity revolves around their relationship and complex nature of their stepdaughter/stepfather relationship. As Winters earlier reiterates 'she goes by her own pad, you wouldn't know what's in any woman's head bar the obvious!' (McCabe 1992: 29). The reference to woman's unbridled or unchecked sexuality points to Winter's damaged male ego, and it also gestures to the suppression of the female and the fear of the rise of the New Woman in the late nineteenth century, which: 'not only posed a threat to the social order but also to the natural order, and was represented as simultaneously nonfemale, unfeminine, and ultrafeminine. Incorporated into varying depictions of the New Woman was a consistent perception of her as oversexed and unduly interested in sexual matters' (Parsons 2006: 66). Beth is subject to the disconcerting sexual attentions of her stepfather Billy Winters, and later, to the gothic murderous intentions of her lover, Liam Ward. Beth realises some degree of agency by confronting her traumas and by challenging Billy Winters' sexual advances towards her. Billy Winters constantly links his dead wife's duplicity to her daughter, Beth. His reference to Catherine's betrayal is driven not just by sexual jealousy, but in his sardonic reference to Winters' masculinity. Billy Winters shows his anger and frustration at his wife's deceit by using physical violence first to dominate and control Catherine and later Beth. He sums up his predicament: 'somewhere in the misery of his cups he had confided to a drunken comrade, or aloud to himself, never cross the lough for a woman. Mine was served when I got her, three months gone' (McCabe1992: 22).

Winters' male pride is seriously dented by Catherine's deceit and because she was Catholic, this only serves to support the many prejudices he harbours against Catholics and Catholicism. Her deceit is injurious to Winters, and deeply aggravates him:

> and so the rumours spread about Fermanagh and neighbouring counties that one of the shrewdest young men in Ulster, the first man to build a macadamised road from his limestone quarries, a man who could hold his own with bishops and horse dealers, who could teach tricks to tricksters, had himself been gulled and shamed by a woman, and worse again a Papist woman. (McCabe 1992: 22)

Female sexuality, and domestic and sexual abuse feature prominently in McCabe's private domestic worlds and reveal the extent to which a patriarchal colonialism has long been troubled by gothic anxieties. And we can read such anxieties through Gilbert and Gubar's work when they argue that such anxieties pertaining to 'the female monster is a striking illustration of Simone de Beauvoir's thesis that woman has been made to represent all of man's ambivalent feelings about his own inability to control his own physical existence, his own birth and death' (Gilbert and Gubar 1976:266). Because of Winter's earlier experience with his wife, Catherine, he harbours serious misgivings about women, and, for him, Beth has the potential to be the Other. As Beauvoir states 'she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other' (Beauvoir 2011: 26). From a male viewpoint Billy Winters' discomfort is connected to his wife's treachery and he is fearful Beth also carries those traits.

A particular feature of the female gothic is its ability to dislocate male patriarchal kinship structures through female sexuality, one that exists outside of marriage. The anxieties arranged around Billy Winters and his inappropriate attraction to Beth become linked to national anxieties

regarding tensions between the Anglo-Irish and the local Catholic farmhands and villagers around Clonoula. This narrative that focuses on the struggles of a gothic heroine often portray her as not only suffering but also exerting agency, displaying inner strength and courage. Most obviously, Beth's keen acumen and courage come to the fore when she discovers her lover's, Liam Ward's, deception, and his plans to kill and bury her. And this notion of 'burial' in McCabe's novel can be linked to feminist theorization, as Diana Wallace argues:

> In the twentieth century, metaphors of burial, imprisonment and spectrality proliferate in feminist theory, used by, among others Virginia Woolf. Hannah Gavron, Adrienne Rich, Luce Irigaray, Sarah Hofman, Diana Fuss and Judith Butler, in ways which suggest that they have a particular potency as theoretical 'tools'. There is, however, a shift as they are no longer used to theorise women's 'subject 'position specifically within marriage but to analyse the repression of women's 'subjectivity' in a wider sense. (Wallace 2004: 34)

These metaphors have a strong currency in *Death and Nightingales*, most poignantly when we see Beth standing over her own future grave: '[s]he moved to the edge of the grave and stood looking down into it, remembering her mother's burial. This is a much nicer place to lie, she thought. I'd almost have picked it for myself, peace and quiet under the sun and moon, rain wind and stars, what more could any girl want'? (McCabe 1992: 187). Beth's discovery of her grave and the gothic end Liam Ward and Blinky Blessing had planned for her, shocks and disturbs her. It also shows how gothic texts portray the suffering and persecution of the female gothic heroine, and with her experience of being a victim of what Hoeveler describes as 'an amorphous and transhistorical patriarchy' (Hoeveler 2004: 31). In her answer to Ward's treachery, Beth turns from a much-maligned victim to the aggressor, morphing into a gothic female force when she takes revenge on Liam Ward by planning and executing his death by drowning. Beth's use of water and the lake to bring about Liam Ward's death is significant as vampires are terrified of water.

Blood is often used in gothic literature to represent the more horrific or gruesome aspects of the gothic, and in his analysis of *Dracula*, Stephen Arata relates this specifically to the Irish context, stating that it:

> is difficult for me to imagine a closer-reading of *Dracula*, the thrust of which is to demonstrate the complexity of Stoker's engagement with the question of 'blood'. As other critics have noted, blood operates in *Dracula* as a metonymy for racial identity; it thus is at the centre of many of the novel's richest obsessions, including its obsessions with the racial status of the Irish and with the fate of the British imperium. (Arata 2003: 537)

Like Lucy in *Dracula,* Beth's sexuality is deemed a disease, and as she is obviously dissatisfied and troubled by her limited domestic role at Clonoula, and, again, like Lucy, as a 'woman' she has no choice but to suppress any desire to explore her sexuality and is compelled to fulfil her duty as a middle-class Victorian woman (Parsons 2006: 70). Terror and horror are descriptions assigned to the notion of the vampire: 'One of the biggest differences between the vampire body, and the human body is that the vampire – almost exclusively – by definition must in fact consume blood to live' (Farnell 2014: 23). Channelling the importance of blood in the gothic through a gendered lens, Mulvey Roberts argues that Stoker's *Dracula* is:

> Far more than a novel about pathologies. […] its gendering of male blood as good and female blood as bad signals that it is menstrual blood and its pathologies that provoke a sense of horror. […] Stoker's attention to the relationship between women and blood is a surrogate for menstrual taboo, which is also eroticized haemofetishism (Cited in Parsons 2006: 69)

The notion that menstrual blood is associated with illness or infirmity points towards a fear of the natural female body, but it is also viewed as the primary source of life. Blood as a lifegiving force makes it an absolute necessity to imbibe as life-giving, and in the representation of the abject, Kelly Hurley reflects that blood, 'elicits queasiness and horror because it reminds one of traumatic infantile efforts to constitute oneself as an ego' (Hurley2007: 138) Blood and the spilling of blood become dominant figurations in McCabe's writing and they serve as symbols

that reflect Protestant traumas and anxieties about Catholicism, further solidifying the chasm between Protestant and Catholics in Northern Ireland in relation to religious beliefs.

Stoker's Dracula, like Billy Winters in *Death and Nightingales*, is very much taken with his land, property, and inheritance, and like Dracula, Winters is conscious of his position within a familial and cultural lineage, as well as being proud of his bloodline. Blood symbolizes both social and biological forms of inheritance, an association corrupted in vampire lore. The vampire is an important motif in the Gothic, and in *Dracula* represents not just an ethnic meaning or symbol but it also reflects the strong hereditary connection between vampires and blood. The notion or idea of drinking blood is established in Gothic texts as symbolic, as Mulvey-Roberts explains: 'In a historical context, the vampire however has a long history, both as a literary device and as a signifier in culture. Much of the power of the trope is derived from the intimate relationship between vampires and blood' (Mulvey-Roberts 2009: 252). As the archetypal gothic figure, Dracula typifies the bond between horror and the uncanny and 'while the archetypal blood-sucker, the literary vampire, provides us with the most comprehensive symbol of disease, vampirism itself is symptomatic of a number of clinical and psychosomatic conditions ranging from erythropoietic protoporphyria to auto-haemofetishism' (Mulvey Roberts 1978: 78). The amalgamation of themes and motifs in *Dracula* including, death, blood, and familial ties, symbolize the trauma of cultural allegiances to kinship and lineage. Because Dracula is the personification of Otherness, he too is defined as the epitome of difference, an alterity that declines a single definitive meaning or classification. As a novel, *Dracula* is a blend of myth and folklore and as Killeen notes:' *Dracula* has provoked a plethora of different critical readings from literary critics, who have seen him as everything from a Jew to an Irish landlord, to an Irish rebel, to an incarnation of sexual perversity, to a primordial savage: [and] he is all these things and more' (Killeen 2009: 87).

Terry Eagleton postulates that *Dracula* 'was another allegory for the collapse of the gentry' (Eagleton 1995: 215). Similarly for Richard Haslam, Dracula constituted another case of 'allegoresis masquerading as allegory' (Haslam cited in Spooner and McEvoy 2007: 88). Dracula can be read, then, as an image of the Anglo–Irish landlord. In McCabe's *Death and Nightingales*, as an Anglo-Irish landlord, Billy Winters is respected by the local Irish peasantry and his farmhands because of his wealth and the employment he gives, but behind his back he is the quintessential Other, a much-maligned force. Stoker's Dracula, like Winters, becomes a metaphor for the Anglo-Irish landlord and evaluating the comparison it becomes clear that the lifeblood of the Irish peasant is being squeezed out by a blood-sucking imported monster who needs his sanctified earth to keep him alive. In this vein, Seamus Deane speculates that '[d]racula's dwindling soil and his vampiric appetites consorts well enough with the image of the Irish landlord current in the nineteenth century' (Deane 1997: 90). As a material monster, Dracula is very much engrossed in the financial business related to his land and wealth:

> When he is slashed with a knife, it is banknotes and gold coins rather than blood which cascade from his breast. But Dracula, like the Ascendancy, is running out of land: by the end of the novel he is being hotly pursued around Europe, furnished only with the crates of Transylvanian soil he needs to bed down in for the night (Eagleton 1995: 215)

Like Dracula, who needs the sacred earth to keep him alive and his precious soil to survive, Billy Winters holds firmly onto his land, and the soil is steadfastly affixed to his identity. Akin to his earlier vampiric counterpart in Stoker's narrative, Winters' financial security rests on the soil of his estate at Clonoula. When Dracula first appears his primary concern is with the land deeds and titles to his house, and this resonates with Winters' display to Beth. Showing her his trove of wealth: 'as he opened it with his left hand his right plunged into a glitter of gold coins. He took out a fistful, pulling off the beaver hat, and thrust them both up towards her in the light of the lamp' (McCabe 1992: 34). Gleefully telling Beth 'That's what helped put a shine on this place a

hundred years ago…French gold, the beaver loot of three million square miles' (McCabe 1992: 34). Dracula also hoards gold of all kinds and when Jonathan Harker comes across an empty room, he records: 'the only thing I found was a great heap of gold in one corner, gold of all kinds, Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek and Turkish money, covered with a film of dust, as though it had lain long in the ground' (Stoker 1897: 47). Dracula's gold, which has lain in the ground for centuries, represents colonialism, and the seizure of wealth and of gold reflects the British colonising. Honour had little to do with the colonising mission and for opportunists like Winters' great grandfather it was more about chance. The colonising mission is mirrored in the wealth seized by Winters' great grandfather in an opportunistic endeavour where he watched and seized in what was later to become the family motto.

Degeneration is represented in McCabe's texts via his focus on blood, the inheritance of land and property, violent behaviour, and the decline of the so-called 'Big House.' At the time in which *Death and Nightingales* is set, the Anglo-Irish were mired in a welter of anxiety about the decline of their place in Irish society and their dwindling power as the noblemen in Ireland. Beth strongly resembles such Gothic characters as Lucy Westenra, who represents the traditional heroine who obeys desire and therefore fails to exercise the very principle of selection on which the future of Western civilisation depends in this novel. (Armstrong 2001:114) Lucy's inability to select the right man is consistent with Beth's misguided choice of Liam Ward as a suitable marriage partner. Billy Winters is unaware at the time of her entanglement with Ward, and he thinks that Beth is being too selective in her choice of men. Beth like Lucy, has a host of gentlemen callers but, unbeknownst to Billy Winters, Beth chooses Liam Ward, while Lucy settles on an English gentleman despite proclaiming 'why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? (Stoker 1897: 67) Lucy exhibits a latent wanton promiscuity that includes a tendency to wander around at night barely clad in her night-dress. She allows bats to

gain admittance through her bedroom window and she sucks the blood and life force from innocent babies. Lucy's transformation becomes even more marked when Dracula appears on the scene. Armstrong isolates the scene from the novel that demonstrates if any text shows 'how the Gothic changes the relationship between femaleness and femininity at the end of the nineteenth century, it could certainly the bedroom scene where Dracula forces Mina to perform a peculiar kind of oral sex' (Armstrong 2001: 115). As Stoker writes:

> With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. (Stoker 1992: 288)

This tableau is about inversion and the notion of the nursing mother is turned on its head. Dracula's attack on Mina, forcing her to feed from his body, drink from his breast can be described as an inversion of mothering or breastfeeding. Again, Dracula articulates Victorian anxieties on the nature of femininity and the nature of motherhood itself. The New Woman was considered monstrous because of the voraciousness of her desires. She was deemed especially unnatural in her choice of independence and freedom, over marriage and motherhood: 'Hence her haunting of Hampstead Heath inverts motherhood into callousness when she seizes children for prey' (Seed 1985: 62). For Victorian England, the representation of the New Woman is extremely problematic and hence ideas of her overtly blatant sexuality are juxtaposed with her refusal of marriage and motherhood. Victorians connected ideas related to the New Woman as not only monstrous, but they had the ability to influence the future female generations. In an uncertain era, women's fight for independence is immediately connected with the ills of the 1890s industrial world, in the spread of social disorder, the rise of socialism and nihilism.

In *Death and Nightingales*, and unsurprisingly for Winters, Beth's independent spirit and her transgressions against the sexual and class codes of Victorian England thereby shatter his conceptualization of her character and her identity. As the liberated gothic heroine, Beth brings about the disintegration of the patriarchal culture that is the cornerstone of her life at Clonoula. Billy Winters' angst and disappointment with Beth's choice of partner aligns with the anxieties on sexual codes and marriage in Stoker's *Dracula*:

> Or again, Dracula's assault on Mina is presented as a literal defilement of the marriage bed. Her husband (Jonathan Harker) lies in a drugged stupor as Dracula forces Mina to drink his blood. This quasi-sexual tableau is followed by some heavily underlined symbolism. The blood from her mouth stains her husband's white nightrobe and a piece of the host brands her forehead her white with a mark of Cain, which can only be purged by Dracula's death. (Seed 1985: 62).

In a related vein, *The Cornhill Magazine's* 'Character' note on the New Woman in 1894 presented her as a 'fast woman pursuing an unwilling male prey, and there are shades here of the New Woman as vampire' (Ledger 1997: 13). As we have noted at length, Beth displays the characteristics of the female gothic heroine with her murderous actions at the close of the novel. As an example of the gothic female heroine who suffers under male misogynistic maltreatment, she is the personification 'of a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine establishing a crucial Gothic trope' (Wright 2009: 61). In *Dracula,* in the communication between Lucy and Mina they express their views on men and on marriage. They both agree with marriage as an institution because it allows them independence and an engagement with a new sexuality of which they are keenly aware. Mina appears perplexed by her three suitors, but it is clear she enjoys their adulation and attention. Paradoxically she compares such needs with the modernization of femininity in the New Woman. The discussion of the New Woman figure 'offered a revision of the model of the passive domestic woman, during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Self-consciously feminist and revisionist, the account of

middle-class feminine behaviour in *Dracula* is a classic example of an ambivalent perception of womanhood' (Ellis 2000: 195).

Like the beneficent Mina from *Dracula*, Beth is also portrayed as gentle and beloved, and she too is to be rewarded with the feminine gift of motherhood at the end of *Death and Nightingales*. We can read both female characters in terms of anxieties about Victorian female sexuality, which, in Beth's case are reinforced by a maelstrom of politics, blood sexual desire and land. Both women could be described as New Women and, as such, their reckless sexuality must be suitably corralled. In *Dracula*, the weapon used to stake Lucy Westenra bears a striking resemblance to the weapon intended to murder Beth who comes across 'a masonry hammer with a long steel–pointed edge on one side, and a rope, exactly as described' (McCabe 1992, 186-7). And in viewing the instrument of her death, Beth bears witness to 'an attack on the form of social legitimacy with which (against her will as it happens) she is associated' (Smyth 2015: 13). In Stoker's representation of the feminine there is a distinct disparity in the representation of Mina who, like Beth, is perceived as docile submissive and ladylike, and is the opposite of Dracula's three adoring handmaidens, his three beguiling vampires. The three sensuous vixens stumble upon Jonathan Harker earlier in the novel, 'who so perfectly embody the abject in the male gothic tradition. While these women are beautiful and enticing it is also implied that they are threatening, sexually voracious and have cannibalistic tendencies' (Mitchell 2018: 58). Harker is faced by his own feelings of abjection when he comes face to face with these attractive women and he has to admit to himself that he has 'felt some longing and at the same time some deadly fear'. (Mitchell 2018:58)

In *Death and Nightingales,* the classic gothic tropes of disinheritance and dispossession converge around the female protagonists, Beth Winters and her mother, Catherine Winters, nee Maguire. Sexuality becomes the currency through which Beth and Catherine circulate throughout this story, and it causes Billy Winters considerable angst. The sexual body becomes a site of fear and control, and as we have referenced, the New Woman figure was seen as a representation of the female sex who committed the ultimate act against nature by choosing to reject her mothering or womanly instincts. The anarchy that accompanied the emerging New Woman figure was such that it fed into bourgeoisie English and Irish life: As Eileen Battersby suggests, in a different context: '[t]his representation persists within the Gothic in various forms, from the gorgon to the vampire. For Aristotle, the female was a monster, an aberration from the normative male and, in the words of Luce Irigaray's book title, *The Sex Which Is Not One* (1977)' (Battersby 1998: 49). In the Victorian context, Gilbert and Gubar maintained that it is debilitating to be *any* woman in a society where women are warned if they do not behave like angels, they must be monsters' (Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 53). And in terms of our immediate discussion, Beth starts out as the ideal Victorian woman but by the end of *Death and Nightingales* she transmogrifies into a monster, a version of the vampire.

At one point, relatively early in the narrative, Mercy Boyle describes Beth's appearance, which is very much in line with the Victorian female of the time: 'a kind mistress to work for, a bit standoffish, or something, but a picture to look at; her strong arms working the shaft, her blouse tightening and loosening to the movement, the Parnell locket swinging rhythmically. Spiteful catty ones said the Winters girl was platter faced, and she was a bit maybe, but her skin was beautiful–and her eyes' (McCabe 1992: 56-7). Beth's outward appearance and character embodies all the characteristics of a pleasant Victorian femininity, but once Beth engages in an uncontrolled premarital sexual liaison with Liam Ward, her sexual desire forms the kernel of a

problematic gendered experience. Like the bite of the vampire, she metamorphoses into a strong female Gothic figure, a monstrous figure and becomes capable of the murder of her lover, Liam Ward. Beth's actions tally with Whisker's description of the female vampire:

> Disruptive and troublesome, female vampires are an embodied oxymoron, a thrilling contradiction, fundamentally problematising received notions of women's passivity, nurturing, and social conformity. Female vampires destabilise such comfortable, culturally inflected investments and complacencies and reveal them as aspects of constructed gender identity resulting from social and cultural hierarchies. (Whisker 2016: 150–66)

Beth rebels against the standard social hierarchies and against her sense of entrapment at Clonoula. She makes a bid to escape the confines of her stable nineteenth-century life under Billy Winters' watchful, leering eyes. Sally Ledger argues that 'Women's sexuality has – when recognized at all – often been regarded in Western cultures as a symptom of madness or to use Freud's clinical terminology, hysteria' (Ledger 2002: 85)

McCabe represents the constrictive nature of Beth's experience in late nineteenth-century Ireland, which is coloured by religious and social mores of that time. Again, Ledger's invocation of hysteria can be read in terms of the figure of the New Woman, which, as we have established, 'signalled new, or newly perceived, forms of femininity which were brought to public attention in the last two decades of the nineteenth century' (Richardson and Willis 2001: 1). As a sexually transgressive female figure in Victorian society, Beth is deemed as suffering from some malady, a sickness. The terminology applied to the disease is hysteria and emerges in medical discourse in the latter half of the nineteenth-century: 'Around the 1850s, American physician Silas Weir Mitchell, who had a special interest in hysteria, started promoting the rest cure as a treatment for this condition' (Cohut 2020: 1). The disease was identified as a real physical ailment and became predominantly associated with the female sexual reproductive organs. Women who displayed symptoms of hysteria were treated for the disease and the normality of regular sexual thoughts or

feelings were seen as a possible threat for the female body. The thinking at the time meant the normal functioning of female sexuality was labelled a disease. So that as 'a synonym for femininity in nineteenth-century medical textbooks hysteria encodes female rebellion in contemporary feminist theory' (Heilmann 2002: 123).

In McCabe's representation of Beth, the threat of the overtly sexual female body, as well as the danger of female intimacy and male anxieties about the voracious female body are embodied in Beth's rebellious nature. Elaine Showalter makes the same link between women and madness. In her essay 'The Female Malady,' Showalter contends that:

> Victorian psychiatry defined its task with respect to women as the preservation of brain stability in the face of almost overwhelming physical odds. First of all, this entailed the management and regulation, insofar as possible, of women's periodic physical cycles and sexuality … Nineteenth century medical treatments designed to control the reproductive system strongly suggest male psychiatrists' fears of female sexuality. Indeed, uncontrollable sexuality seemed the major, almost defining symptom of insanity in women. (Showalter 1987: 74)

The reference to Beth's perceived insanity and hysteria are tied to her sexuality. The Victorian view of women was such that it viewed young women, like Beth, who disregarded Victorian social and sexual codes as psychologically deviant. Beth's victory over her would-be killer, Liam Ward, ratifies her victory over staid Victorian social expectations. Billy Winters comes to her aid and the island seeking her forgiveness. Patriarchy then becomes represented as a male force and is seen as both the cause and the solution to Beth's trauma. The drama of *Death and Nightingales* supports such a perspective, as Beth is a victim of Liam Ward's duplicitous plans to entice Beth to steal Billy Winters' gold. Later Ward plans to reward Beth by murdering her, and secretly burying her, thus proving that 'according to this powerful and socially coded formula, victims earn their special status and rights through no act of their own but through their sufferings and persecutions at the hands of a patriarchal oppressor and tyrant' (Hoeveler 2004: 31).

This statement carries weight in supporting my argument in relation to *Death and Nightingales*. As the female gothic subject, Beth seeks justice and she has experienced terrible events, especially at the behest of her lover Liam Ward. But Beth proves to be a formidable opponent for Ward's scheming and in her escape we see a melding of dark Gothic melodrama.

Beth presents as docile charming and innocent, but once she discovers Ward's deception she becomes more 'Angel of Death' than 'Angel in the House.' She proves to be far more duplicitous than she first seemed to be. She is now more controlled, more rational, and now she knows she is in possession of a future. By her actions, Beth achieves agency and displays monstrous female energy remaining indomitably earthbound, while at the same time embodying traits of the supernatural. In part, Beth's new wholeness results from a complete shift in the expected family dynamics. At the end of the saga it is now decided she will live with Billy Winters. Beth attains for herself a masculine authority or, a kind of transcendence. In this way Beth achieves a degree of self-autonomy. From another vantage point, Ardis, invoking Nina Auerbach, argues that 'it is virtually impossible to distinguish "official" from subversive visions of Victorian womanhood. The demon, the old maid, the fallen woman, the New Woman, and the angel in the house, "these are the many faces of a single image, an image of the dialectic between womanhood and power that was "so central and general a concern" in the Victorian period' (Ardis 1990: 26). In *Death and Nightingales*, Beth essentially embodies or portrays to the world each one of these faces. Women like Beth sought more than just individual freedom, they also wanted the removal of labels from women. They sought to challenge the notion of women behaving in a particular manner, in what society terms "the correct female" behaviour. Equally, the New Woman project recognised the danger of situating men and women in binary opposing positions. And such notions manifest more broadly in the creation of tenuous dichotomies: men versus women, the good respectable woman pitted against the fallen woman, the working-class woman against the

middle-class, along with the fear of the racial Other embodied in European classes and different races. Indeed, this set of concerns relates directly to the religious and ethnic politics and conflicts on show in McCabe's narrative, especially in relation to the religious division that separates Beth and Billy Winters.

CHAPTER THREE

Gothic trauma in the 'Troubles' Trilogy: 'Cancer,' 'Heritage' and 'Victims.'

In McCabe's interpretation of the lives of the farming communities in these stories he is accurately reproducing the Gothic realities of life in Northern Ireland and the Troubles stalemate before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. The three stories 'Cancer', 'Heritage' and 'Victims' that, as McCabe states were 'separated at birth' and eventually published as a unified trio in *Christ in the Fields* in 1993.The story 'Cancer' is written from a decidedly Catholic perspective, and McCabe balances this by including his story 'Heritage', which sees the trauma of the Troubles from the Protestant position. The trajectory of both stories results in a confrontation between Protestant and Catholic, and the ancient conflict of religion and politics divides them, defining the source of their antagonisms in the realm of a late colonial crisis. A compelling feature of McCabe's psychological probing of his characters is his treatment of how sectarian or political tensions in his oeuvre are linked to the inhibited personal development and, in particular, the sexual paralysis of his characters. This feature of McCabe's writing extends to the trauma of his characters and adds to the overall impact in his texts. McCabe's stories are a valuable historical literary source, as many authors have written on how the trauma of the Troubles have impacted on both Protestant and Catholics. But as a farmer living along the Border, McCabe experienced those traumas at a personal level and on an almost daily basis. McCabe focuses on the traumatic events unfolding during the Troubles of the 70s, 80s and early 90s. A particular feature of these stories is not just that they constitute social studies of Northern Ireland during the Troubles, they also focus on the psychological trauma endured by the agents of violence and the victims of violence.

Henry Patterson makes the case that instances and personalities from each of the stories have their origins in the genuine historical violence of the Troubles of the early 1970s, especially around the area McCabe is from, the Monaghan /Fermanagh border area. The aim of these stories is comparable to those of many Irish writers, namely to focus on the skewed relations of a deeply divided Northern Ireland community at the height of the Troubles. And Flannery reads these stories as ones which 'expose the limits of monolithic ideological thought as it manifests in irredeemable sectarian hatred' (cited in Doyle and Leavy 2020). McCabe details the traumas of Northern Ireland, giving both views of Catholic and Protestants amid the Troubles impasse. These three stories all are interconnected by character, or by theme, and reflect the actualities of life on the Border during the early days of the Troubles. In the Irish context, trauma and the gothic are wedded to the collective memory of Irish history and are also are very much alive in McCabe's writing on the Troubles and the Great Famine. McCabe's trilogy of stories portrays the effect of the Troubles on Irish people living close to the borders. The stories, then, explore the network of relations in one small community and let this stand as a microcosm for life in the wider society' (Ingman 2009: 215).

Representations of gothic trauma in 'Cancer'

'Cancer' is set at the height of the Troubles and the short story commences with the description of the local schoolteacher, Boyle, collecting Dinny McMahon from the home he shares with his brother, Joady. The two bachelor brothers live together on a dilapidated farm in rural South Fermanagh. Boyle arrives at the house to take Dinny to visit his terminally ill brother, who is in the hospital in Enniskillen. 'Cancer' is recounted through a series of analepses or flash backs describing the car journey taken by the two men to the hospital in Enniskillen. In terms of the postcolonial gothic the home becomes pervaded by an unsettling, often ghostly, atmosphere that permeates all facets of everyday life. This becomes especially resonant in the political issues that

invade the home from outside. Joady's cancer becomes an allegory for the 'Troubles' that ravage the body politic of Northern Ireland. Dinny comes out of the house with a bottle of lemonade in his hand and Boyle notices 'an old Anglia, and five bicycles outside the cottage' (McCabe 2005: 73). He questions Dinny, '"Busy?", Dinny answers, "From the back of Carn Rock and beyond it's like a wake inside". For a living corpse, Boyle thought' (McCabe 2005: 75). The notion of the living corpse invokes images of death and in gothic literature is associated or tied in with the supernatural and the return of the repressed. Joady is diagnosed with a particularly virulent form of cancer. For both brothers, death is accompanied with a fear of the unknown and their trauma is compounded by the sense of powerlessness over the deadly disease that has also already caused the death of their father.

For Dinny, Joady's living present body represents the uncanny and the strange. Fear of death and the notion of Joady as a living corpse evokes Kristeva's essay on abjection, and her description of the corpse:

> The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. (Kristeva1982: 4)

The gothic convention of the uncanny is located in the sense of strangeness, a dislocation of the self. Dinny's and Joady's traumas are further magnified by the manifestation of Joady's cancer and his impending death. And this physical and psychological suffering can be linked to a broader social trauma, as Garratt explains: '[t]rauma theorists note that this identification suggests a link between personal and social or communal trauma and how the memory of suffering can trouble both the individual and the community.' (Garratt 2011: 16-17). The return of the repressed is envisioned in the memory Dinny's father, who also died from a rare breed of cancer; a sense of déjà vu connects their father's, vampiric illness to Joady's condition. The father's cancer and

trauma are like the uncanny repetition of the vampire, who is destined to repeat itself over and over again throughout the generations. The story parallels two different types of death and disease, both seemingly inoperable: the slow natural death of Joady
McMahon from cancer, and the murder of the British Army soldiers in a terrorist bomb attack. Both, then, are symptomatic of the insatiable and resolute agencies of death, one physical, the other political.

The journey to the hospital is marked by news on the radio of a large bomb that had killed two BBC news crew and three workers near Trillick, a townland between Enniskillen and Omagh. The news relates the gory details of dismemberment and death, with the horrific vista of 'the bodies of the men were scattered over an area of 400 hundred yards' (McCabe 2005: 77). The carnage of the bomb at Trillick is emphasized with gothic descriptions of blood and gore, and because of Joady's certain demise, both brothers have a morbid fascination with death. Further on a British army helicopter hovering over the two men in the car incites Dinny's invective, 'the whores he screeched, they're trackin' us, I hope to Jasus' yis' are blown to shite, he grinned and waved the bottle again' (McCabe 2005: 76). Dinny watched the helicopter as it 'rose clapping its way towards Armagh, across the sour divide of fields and crooked ditches' (McCabe 2005: 76). McCabe focuses on Dinny's anger at the encroachment of the British soldiers, and their lack of respect. McCabe infuses Dinny's language with the bitter tones of 'sour and crooked,' juxtaposing the unreceptive geography of the local countryside with the unwanted intrusion of the British presence in Northern Ireland.

Continuing on their journey, they pass a local graveyard, which prompts Dinny to tip his hat and re-counts an esteemed regal Irish heritage. He pays homage to the dead ancestors, McCaffreys, Boyles, Grues, Gunns, McMahons, Courteneys and Mulligans. Of course, Dinny romanticises

about his noble heritage, and he recalls his dead ancestors and many of the dead buried in the local graveyard. In an act of mourning, an act of a gothic cultural lamentation, Dinny invokes the dead Irish ancestors by revering the local deceased, and the register of honour becomes infused with myth, honour, and memory. Dinny states:

> I cut a bit out of the Anglo-Celt once, Dinny said, about our crowd the McMahons. Kings about Monaghan for near a thousand years, butchered and driv' north to these bitter hills, that's what it said and the scholar who wrote it up maintained you'll get better bred men in the cabins of Fermanagh, than you'll get in many's a Big House. (McCabe 2005: 77)

And this is a consistent feature of McCabe's authorial process, as myth provided him with the stimulus and motivation to produce a great deal of his literature and dramas. However, for McCabe, and in relation to the violence in Northern Ireland, there could be nothing harmless or innocent about the effect of mythologies: 'throughout the country, family mythology, historical mythology should be tagged with a health warning. Myth can induce a form of madness and zealotry that leads to death' (McCabe 1998: 3-4). Dinny's reflection on his ancestors reveals the focus on heritage, genealogy, the Big House, inheritance, blood, and bloodlines. And these gothic associations become corrupted in vampire lore with the links made between blood and social and biological inheritance. The haematological motif invokes Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and his pride in his family genealogy becomes a notable component and motivates Dracula to speak about his ancestral lineage. Inglebien notes that 'in his speaking of things and people, and especially of battles, he spoke as if he had been present at them all' (Inglebien 2003: 1098). In a similar fashion Dinny venerates 'our crowd the McMahons. Kings about Monaghan for near a thousand years' (McCabe 2005: 77). Driving along the road, Dinny and Boyle come across an unusual sight, 'on the Loughside field there seemed to be fifty or sixty swans very white against the black water' (McCabe 2005: 77). As Dinny ominously foreshadows to Boyle, 'I've seen it before on this lake in the twenties, bad sign. Boyle asks,

> Of what? Trouble' (McCabe 2005: 77). A great deal of Irish writing includes the beauty of the

> Irish landscape and McCabe, as a farmer, has that extra connection to the rural landscape. The Northern Ireland landscape is represented as troubled by its individuals and their pain. For McCabe, the connection between the land, people and the animals and birds on it, are what Pelaschiar describes as 'primeval, strong deep ineluctable, but McCabe's fields have lost all their Elysian qualities, they are blind, bitter, violent and brutal and even when they are beautiful, they hold the promise of death' (Pelaschiar1996: 158).

The conversations in this story, despite being colloquial and nondescript, still bear gothic nuances. Dinny describes his father's death from a rare form of cancer and states:

> Cancer that's what we're all afraid of. One touch of it and you're a dead man, my auld fella died from a rare breed of it. If he went out in the light, the skin would rot from his face and hands, so he put in the latter end of his life in a dark room or walkin' about the roads at night. (McCabe 2005: 79)

By affixing a gothic vampiric mien to his ailing, now deceased, father, Dinny figures his father as representative of the living dead, as a vampire. Dinny's brother, Joady, who has inherited the cancerous blood disease is also analogous to the figure of the vampire. The blood motif and the handing on of legacies becomes essential here. Like the vampire, his sons ,Dinny and Joady too, could be described as also failing to see the light. They too are doomed to live out their days with the bare basic essentials of life and are also blind to other aspects of the Troubles. Dinny locates the source of Joady's cancer as in his blood by telling Boyle: 'A doctor told me it could be in the blood for fifty years and all of a shot it boils up and you're a gonner' (McCabe 2005:79). The notion of the vampire becomes firmly established as Dinny describes his father's malady and his trauma as the father conducts ghostly night-time wandering about the roads.

Vampires are always portrayed to be creatures of the night, pale and ghastly, and, symbolically like Dinny's father and his illness, are sensitive to the bright daylight. Dinny's father uncannily bears the same characteristics of the undead and, like the vampire, cannot venture into the light

and is suspended between life and death, neither truly alive and yet not dead. Dinny's father occupied a liminal space and is described as both being both alive and dead. His gothic condition renders him like a vampire and has strong connections with the relevance of the diseased body placed in juxtaposition with the allegorical disease of sectarianism that blights this Northern Ireland community. Here, McCabe's story 'Cancer' deploys Joady McMahon's terminal illness and his deteriorating relationship with his cohabitant brother, as an allegory for the seething inter-communal hatreds of rural Tyrone. As McDonald points out 'sometimes allegory acts as a buffer and is typical in short stories for the part to stand in for a whole in this way. In short stories of the Troubles local or particular conditions often ramify into political synecdoche' (McDonald 2005: 254).

Dinny and his friend continue their journey travelling on to visit Dinny's brother Joady, and, given that the latter has been diagnosed with a particularly virulent form of cancer, the entire gothic story is related back to the figurative use of cancer for the Troubles. In *Illness as a Metaphor* (1978) Susan Sontag contends:

> disease metaphors are used to judge society not as out of balance but as repressive. Illnesses have always been used as metaphors to enliven charges that a society was corrupt or unjust. Traditional disease metaphors are principally a way of being vehement; they are, compared with the modern metaphors, relatively contentless (Sontag 1978 :72).

Hence the notion or concept of cancer becomes part of allegorical quality of the story in its reading of Northern Ireland as a diseased body politic. Northern Ireland is under attack not just from outside its environs, but internally within its body, within its borders. Like a deadly cancer it succumbs to its virulent disease, with hatred spreading throughout the community through violence and sectarianism and eventually death. As Sontag continues: '[u]nlike the Elizabethan metaphor which complain of some general aberration or public calamity that is, in consequence, dislocating to individuals—the modern metaphors suggest a profound disequilibrium between

individual and society, with society conceived as the individual's adversary' (Sontag 1978: 73). The natural imbalance is disrupted and, as Sontag states, in nature 'illness comes from imbalance. Treatment is aimed at restoring the right balance—in political terms, the right hierarchy' (Sontag 1978: 73). Dinny contends that the presence of the British in Northern Ireland disturbs the communal harmony and peace of the local countryside. In McCabe's portrayal of Dinny he focuses attention on the ecological costs of the attack and the destruction of the homeplace initiated by colonization and its underlying patriarchal forces. As Howes argues: 'Dinny symbolizes a deep sense of displacement and the ensuing destruction of the place-world that remains part of his ecological self and his identity, engendering centuries of violence in the region' (Howes 2023, 176). Accordingly, he has a very pessimistic view of life and sees little or no hope for a peaceful resolution to the Troubles, he pours scorn on Boyle's hopeful attempts to find a way forward for a longed-for peace. When Boyle suggests 'unless there's changes,' Dinny retorts, 'Changes! What changes. Look in your neighbour's face, damn little change you'll see there' (McCabe 2005: 77). Dinny recalls an encounter working with a local neighbour:

> I wrought four days with Gilbert Wilson before Christmas baggin' turf beyon't Doon, and when the job was done we dropped into Corranny pub and talked land, and benty turf and the forestry and the way people are leavin' for factories, the pension scheme for hill farmers and a dosed of things no side in any of it, not one word of politics or religion and then all of a sudden he leans over to me and says, Fact is Dinny, the time I like you best, I could cut your throat. (McCabe 2005: 77)

Dinny had been shocked at the sudden mood change as he tells Boyle, 'A quare slap in the mouth but I didn't rise to it, I just said, I'd as lief not hear the like Gilbert' (McCabe 2005: 7778). The outward show of good neighbourliness quickly disperses, and despite a collective saving of crops and the annual turf-cutting rituals, a gothic trauma still segregates the Catholic and Protestant farming communities in the North. Addressing these accounts of sectarian animosities in this

study, McCabe explores the effects of such hostilities as the harmonious rural countryside is blighted by the caustic relationships between Protestant and Catholics.

In gothic writing, blood ties, genetics, and consanguineal links are important themes, and they underlie McCabe's notion of contested symbolic relations between land ownership and the body. 'Cancer' as it turns out is an apt figuration for this story, as Joady's cancer provides dual metaphors, with a tainted hereditary that enforces the malignant hatred of sectarianism and in the traits of a disease that rots and erodes Joady's body. As Foucault asserts in *The History of Sexuality*:

> blood has traditionally operated as a reality with a symbolic function, a substance which is simultaneously both a literal and figurative source of power. Blood is culturally as well as textually an item of multidiscursive significance, a fluid which may signify at times notions of family, race, religion, and gender. (cited in Mulvey–Roberts 2009: 252)

Blood is often used in gothic literature to represent the more horrific or gruesome aspects of the genre. Joseph Valente focuses on Bram Stoker's engagement with the debate about blood and how his Irish heritage may have prompted his interest in vampires and blood suckers. The name Dracula puns on the *Gaelic* phrase *droch fhola* meaning 'bad blood.' Since pre-Christian times, Irish culture had a particular affinity with the gothic and the dead. The historian and folklorist, 'Patrick Weston Joyce made the connection between Abartach, an undead, bloodconsuming, Irish chieftain of the early Christian era and vampirism in a book published in Dublin in 1880' (Murray 2004: 191**)** Writing and researching on Abartach. Bob Curran explores the connections with Irish folklore. In his article, 'Was Dracula an Irishman,' Curran believes Stoker may have constructed the tenets of *Dracula* around this myth. Even Freudian analysts like the psychoanalyst, Ernest Jones, one of Freud's closest associates, also noted the Irish concept of a vampire as *Dearg-dual,* which he translated as red bloodsucker' (Murray 2004: 191). Ultimately, as Stephen Arata concludes:

> it is difficult for me to imagine a closer reading of Dracula, the thrust of which is to demonstrate the complexity of Stoker's engagement with the question of "blood." As other critics have noted, blood operates in Dracula as a metonymy for racial identity; it thus is at the center of many of the novel's richest obsessions, including its obsessions with the racial status of the Irish and with the fate of the British imperium (Arata 2003: 537)

And McCabe's deployment of blood can be linked to the ways in which sectarianism and racial identity come to the fore when Boyle and Dinny continue their journey until they decide to stop for a drink. They mistakenly go into a Loyalist pub frequented by members of the UDR and the atmosphere within the establishment is one of outright animosity and hostility. Dinny and James quickly acknowledge that they had entered what in Northern Ireland was

euphemistically called 'the wrong shop.' Boyle asks for 'two halves, please. The barmaid says, What kind? Irish. What kind of Irish?' (McCabe 2005: 80) The question is asked in relation to the alcoholic beverage but functions in this case to highlight the distinction made between Catholic and Protestant. McCabe conveys the strained atmosphere in the pub, which is blended with snatches of black humour, evidenced by the notice displayed behind the bar:

Lisnakea and District development Association;

Extermination of Vermin

1/-for each magpie killed

2/ for each grey crow killed

10/-for each grey squirrel killed

£1for each fox killed

-Underneath someone had printed with a biro: For every Fenian fucker; one old penny' (McCabe 2005: 80). The overtly sectarian message directed towards Catholics demonstrates the level of intolerance and bigotry towards Catholics. The undeniable sectarian message is designed to

discourage any Catholics intent on socializing in this bar, and McCabe includes the bigoted George who is intent on dispensing his own sectarian message, shouting from the snug ‘Well by Christ, they’ll come no Pope to the townland of Invercloon, I’ll not be blown up or burnt out. I’ll fight to the last ditch’ (McCabe 2005: 80). George’s reference to being blown up or burnt out refers to a Protestant fear of an ethnic cleansing type campaign by the IRA, which was allegedly carried out during the early 1970’s. The hostile dialogue meant an uncomfortable silence as the barmaid ‘went to the hatch, pushed it and said something into the snug; the loudness stopped’ (McCabe 2005: 81). Dinny and Boyle decide to leave, but before they walk out, Dinny spills his drink down the bar sink and with a quick riposte states: ‘I’d as lief drink with pigs’ (McCabe 2005: 60). This episode dramatizes the trauma of the Protestant and Catholic tensions that encroach into everyday life in Northern Ireland. Dinny excoriates outsiders and he blames the unwanted intrusion of earlier English colonists and their appropriation of land when they settled in Ulster in the early 1600s: ‘They got it with guns, kept it with guns, and guns’ll put them from it’ (McCabe 2005: 81). For Dinny the concept of time is immaterial, the historical seizure of land from the native Irish is extant as a living breathing happening in the present. In fact, Dinny’s historical attitude invokes Beverange’s concept of time and victims of historical injustice ‘that would challenge the conception of the past as a 'dead' matter that is absent or distant and leave some intellectual space to take seriously the idea of a 'persisting' or 'haunting' past’ (Beverange 2012: 5).

As a vital symbol, blood becomes a multi-faceted reference point, and in the hospital, Boyle lightens the mood of the sombre tone of the visit by adding a touch of humour. The nurse jokingly suggests that Joady has got Ian Paisley’s blood: ‘I hear you got blood Joady,’ and Joady answers ‘three pints,’ and Boyle conspiringly winks at the nurse telling Joady, ‘Black blood, she told me you got Paisley’s blood.’ Joady then states, ‘Paisley’s blood, she said that!?, that’s a tarror’

(McCabe 2005: 84). The light-hearted banter is countered by the reference to Paisley's black blood, as in Irish cultural terms, someone as obstinate or unyielding as the Reverend Ian Paisley, earned him the appellation of 'black Protestant.' McCabe portrays the atmosphere of Northern Ireland, and his reflections on its politicians, like the late Reverend Paisley, offers an accurate description of Paisley's forceful and vociferous personality. Public figures like Ian Paisley were highly visible in the North's political arena as well as the cultural life of Northern Ireland. His trademark becoming his well-known vociferous blunt outspokenness. Reverend Ian Paisley, in his outspoken sermons, often referred to the violence and trauma of the 1641 rebellion. Historically, Protestant and Anglicans identified Irish Catholics as monsters, who feast on bodies and blood, and are eternally designated or specified as the Gothic Other. During the Catholic mass, the ritual of the body and blood of Christ being partaken or eaten all invoke Gothic cannibalistic images of the Other.

Blood is established in gothic texts as symbolic, and here blood and bleeding become a symbol for the disintegration of Joady's body, now fragile and weak, as '[b]odies, unabashedly represented as objects in the Gothic novel, are properties, commodities. Flesh is territory (Columbus 1986: 318).

Earlier in the narrative, the Gothic is invoked in the tearing asunder of flesh in the booby trap bomb at Trillick and the accompanying Gothic imagery and trauma of

'the bodies of the men were scattered over an area of 400 hundred yards' (McCabe 2005: 77). The stark imagery of scattered bodies, blood and death become merged with Joady's own fast ailing body as 'Boyle imagined Joady on the low stool by the hearth in the hot crowed kitchen, his face like turf ash. Everyone knew he was dying' (McCabe 2005: 75). Dinny's trauma is replete with an overarching sense of despair and a feeling of injustice against the trauma of colonisation and his own acrimonious relationship with his dying brother. Dinny and his brother Joady and

their communal ties to their home, their ideas of kinship, and their attachment to their homeplace invokes a sense of belonging to a dwelling, to their own locality. Joady's body is indicative of the political body of Ulster, and the cancer that rages through his body is analogous to the gothic cancer of violence and hatred of the Troubles.

Dinny and Joady do not fit into the accepted norms of their local community, and they have become identified as the Other. For Boyle's aunt Annie, Dinny and Joady's lack of hygiene and non-religious affiliation disgust her. She despairs of Dinny and his brother Joady's 'heathen' way of life 'as for religion, no Mass no altar, nothing ever. They'll burn they really will, and someone should tell them' (McCabe 2005: 82). Dinny McMahon, in his usual tirade castigates the whole Protestant tribe, 'but he and his brother living in squalor on the dole, are despised by respectable middle-class Catholics, like Boyle's aunt' (Patterson 2011: 161). McCabe's inclusion of Boyle is the only representative of a symbol of hope in 'Cancer,' and he offers a chance for reconciliation. In his conciliatory tone Boyle states, 'blood's not the way,' but Dinny combatively retorts, 'There's no other way' (McCabe 2005: 81). Boyle points to changes within their community, and '[t]o the power of such a primordial ethnic narrative, Boyle's warning "Blood's not the way" is portrayed as a well-meaning decency is doomed to be pulverized by the impulsions of ancestral hatreds' (Patterson 2011:159). Boyle recalls his aunt's annoyance at Joady's unappreciative attitude to her kindness, when 'one Christmas long ago, she had knit a pair of wool socks for Joady and asked him about them; "Bad wool, Miss, he said "out through the heel in a week, I dropped them in the fire"' (McCabe 2005: 81). As she continues, 'Ungrateful, lazy, spiteful little men, small wonder Protestants despise them and us, and the smell in that house…you'd think with nothing else to do but draw the dole and sit by the fire the least they could do is wash themselves' (McCabe 2005: 82). Boyle's aunt is upset at Joady's ungrateful reaction, but Boyle, however, takes a more humane approach to the brothers, recognizing that their poor standard of

living and inadequate quality of life is much more to do with class and lack of education represented by ‘no light, no water, no money, nothing all their days but the dole, fire poking, neighbour baiting, and the odd skite on porter, retched off that night in the ditch’ (McCabe 2005: 162). Eliding the Troubles conundrum, McCabe’s centres on the two brothers and the aspects of their dreary and mundane lives. He writes about ordinary people who inhabit his own local area, the conflicts they faced and exhibits his adept understanding of the struggles they faced during the Troubles. The two brothers, Dinny and Joady, have little interaction with their neighbours and the locals. They have very few family and friends, and not attending Mass and religious services further alienates them from their local community. In the end, the prospect of Joady’s death seems to invite more neighbours and friends to gather at the house. The brothers’ relationship is damaged by the fear of death and the uncanny becomes discernible in the experience of othered versions of some of our most basic fears.

Dinny’s numbness and lack of emotions is guided by his trauma in his reaction to Joady’s oncoming death. In the medical terminology numbing is a biological process whereby emotions are detached from thoughts, behaviours, and memories. Dinny feels detached from what’s going on around him and his emotional trauma tied in with these events renders him cold and uncaring. In an American study focused on understanding the impact of trauma, such as a traumatic stress reaction, Malta et al found that because numbing symptoms hide what is going on inside emotionally, ‘there can be a tendency for family members, counsellors, and other behavioural health staff to assess levels of traumatic stress symptoms and the impact of trauma as less severe than they actually are’ (Malta et al 2009: 40). When Joady asked Boyle ‘Where’s the other fella gone? ‘I’m not sure,’ Boyle said, ‘he went down the river’ somewhere.’ Joady sucked on the cigarette. McCaffrey’s. He’s gone to McCaffrey’s, very neighbourly these times, he’ll be there until twelve or after’ (McCabe 2005: 86). From a psychoanalytical perspective, Dinny’s

behaviour becomes clear, as does his lack of empathy. In his trauma he is driven to seek solace in others company, by the human need to prepare himself for living alone after Joady's death. Boyle excuses Dinny's nightly excursions away from his home and he pacifies Joady, by telling him: 'All the visitors you have Joady and he's worried' (McCabe 2005: 86). Joady rounds on Boyle stating 'Damn the worry, whingin' and whinin' to every slob that passes the road about me snorin' the night long, didn't I hear him with my own ears' (McCabe 2005: 86). Joady describes his brother's actions as cold and uncaring: 'He spat, his eyes twisting It's him that snores not me: it's me that's dyin, me not him …Christ's sake …couldn't he take a back sate until I'm buried' (McCabe 2005: 86). 'Cancer' is a domestic drama, in one respect as we see the two brothers at odds with each other. Their lives are conditioned by the political traumas around them, their own personal traumas of ill health, a diminished standard of living and their own strained relationship. The brothers' acrimonious relationship stands as a synecdoche for the bitter relationship between Northern Ireland's divided communities. As we note from Joady's conclusion: 'what would you call it when your own brother goes contrary, and the ground hungry for you …eh? Rotten. That's what I'd call it rotten' (McCabe 2005: 86). The sibling relationship and the inherited disease are figurative fragments that represent the broader political and military conflicts. And the story ends with a divisive bitterness and the motif of cancer is again utilized to describe the malignancy that rots this community both from within and outside the body politic of Northern Ireland.

Representations of Gothic trauma in 'Heritage'

McCabe's story, 'Heritage' deals with the interiority of his characters and explores the trauma of living along the Border during the Troubles. McCabe includes dramatic and stylized portrayals of moments of violence, and 'Heritage' includes the outright hostility between the Catholic and Protestant farming communities living in the border counties. Hence, while McCabe's works

focus on issues such as land and mythology, sectarianism was rife and forms the basis for most of his literary works. Set at the height of the Troubles, the story is focalised through the young part-time Ulster Defence Regiment volunteer, Eric O'Neill. As a part-time UDR officer, Eric is both shocked and traumatised when he receives an ominous message from the IRA. The message relays a stark warning to leave the UDR or be killed like one of his fellow UDR men. When he enters the kitchen 'he noticed the envelope, black edged printed with red marker pen he read: 'Eric O' Neill UDR, Drumhowl, Born 1952. Died? Get Out…Or Be Got Like Crozier' (McCabe 2005: 89). Eric tries to imagine which one of his Catholic neighbours has put pen to paper. He ponders who within his immediate community has sent this letter and, in his paranoid state, wonders what the Catholic, Maggie, knows about it. McCabe includes Maggie to demonstrate how doubly encumbered she is, first as a Catholic and, secondly, because 'Maggie had two children by different men and lived in the office section of a disused creamery' (McCabe 2005: 87). Maggie, who works for Eric's mother, is under suspicion because she is Catholic, she completes menial work in the house and on the farm, and there is no evading the patriarchal controlled environment she inhabits. She is described as a 'proper Papist hedge whore' by Eric's bigoted uncle, George, who said often to Eric's mother, 'You should get shut of her, Sarah' (McCabe 2005: 87). Eric's father is also father to Maggie's son, which further complicates things. Maggie's confessional background is added to the fact that not only is she Catholic, but she is firmly working class. Having had a relationship with a Protestant is deeply problematic for her, as Caroline Magennis explains: if one is a Catholic, 'having relationships with Protestants or vice versa is taboo, this immediately marks them out as distinct from Catholic Nationalists, as mixed religion relationships were and to a lesser extent still are taboo in a working-class Northern Irish community' (Magennis 2010:

55).

Cultural and religious differences divided Northern Ireland across the twentieth century, and there were also significant economic differences between Catholic and Protestants in Northern Ireland:

> The establishment of Northern Ireland in 1921 was achieved through a careful cultural delineation which ensured a unionist majority. The exclusion of Catholics from significantly and relatively well-paid areas of employment was determined by their marked over representation in the unskilled and female sections of the labour market and by higher levels of unemployment. (Graham 2002: 96)

In examining the disparity between Catholics and Protestants in the workplace, most Catholics cited discrimination as one of the many reasons for the conflict in Northern Ireland. Class becomes essential here in describing Maggie, who is part of Northern Ireland's working class during this particular time in the 1970s. As a popular character in her community, she exemplifies the sort of figure with which the short story often deals. In McCabe's inclusion of Maggie, he is blending the domestic and the employment realms, reflecting on the importance of social class and the inequalities between Catholics and Protestants that further intensified and fuelled the hostilities. Though Maggie is represented in terms of an exploitive political context, she does not show any awareness or cognisance that her problems are due to her social status as an uneducated Catholic in Northern Ireland. The merging of both the private domestic space and that of the world of work, eventually create the conditions where the political and power structures of the Troubles permeate familial and sexual relations in this story. Despite Maggie's role on the fringes of this drama, her opinion and her voice is often heard, especially when she warns Eric that she overheard his name is on the IRA's death list. McCabe also endows her with a presence, in that despite Eric's mother being aware that her husband is father to Maggie's son, she still employs Maggie to help out around the house and on the farm.

Like the threats to the Protestant Eric, Protestants living on the border were particularly open to sectarian attacks, and Donnan and Simpson writing in their study of 'Silence and Violence among

Northern Border Protestants,' discuss the Protestant experience of living in the border area throughout the 1970s and 1980s . As a group, border Protestants felt particularly exposed because they were living in a rural community where most of their neighbours were Catholics, who more likely to support the Republican movement. Protestants, like their Catholic counterparts, were aware of their precarious position and as their farms ran alongside one another, the concept of good neighbourliness, common courtesy and friendship did not overcome the mistrust and fear of the conflict. Neighbours turning on one another and being murdered solely because of their religion was not unusual. Eric, as an UDR officer, would have been particularly at risk of attack and as he tended his farming chores, he pondered who among his Catholic neighbours were prepared to kill him. McCabe attempts to capture an understanding of Eric's inner trauma and his dilemma., and does so vividly, as he walked out under the stone archway and watching the flight path of a hawk:

> He followed its flight towards Shannock and Carn Rock, a dim hidden country, crooked scrub ditches of whin and thorns stunted in sour putty land. Bare spare ribbed field, rusted tin roofs, housing a stony-faced people living from rangy cattle and welfare handouts. From their gaunt lands they looked down on the green border country below watching, waiting. (McCabe 2005: 88)

Despite a reasonably cordial friendship between the Protestant Eric, and his Catholic neighbours, he is aware of the historical tensions as regards the quality of the land owned by each community. A division of resources that has deep historical origins.

During the Elizabethan plantations of the 16th- and 17th-centuries, English planter-settlers ensured the endurance of their superior tenurial status in Ireland, and as the English Tudor Crown gifted some of the best prime land to their Protestant supporters, it caused enduring animosity among an underprivileged Irish Catholic population. Catholics had 'their land confiscated forced to move from fertile to poorer lands, creeping impoverishment, harvest failure, all of which

contributed to a build-up of sectarian tension in the region' (Killeen 2005: 29), Thus, in the countryside while tensions build as regards land distribution, similar patterns were evident in urban areas also:

> in Derry all the nationalists' problems were crammed in to one small unhappy part of the city on the edge of the province. Two thirds were Catholic, but the local government was completely controlled by Protestants, unemployment affected both communities but especially the Catholics and the housing conditions of the minority were the worst in the province. (Pelaschiar 1996: 153)

The psychological impacts of the Troubles lead to a damaging social structure, with families often torn apart by sectarianism. Eric's mother's deep hatred and distrust of Catholics has led to her rejection of her son Sam's, Catholic wife and she refused to go to their wedding and states: 'I told Sam before he married her, I wouldn't meet that girl or let her cross the door. I won't pretend about Papists, he hates me because I tell the truth, he's afraid of that' (McCabe 205: 95). Eric's father refuses to be drawn into sectarianism and he further alienates his wife by attending the wedding of his son and his Catholic daughter in-law, Maisie. Eric recognises the enigma that is Northern Ireland, and that the trauma and hatred of the Troubles seeps into every aspect of family life in the North; he 'understood what his father was saying, he knew what his mother was feeling' (McCabe 2005: 94) On receiving the death threat from the IRA he felt hatred for these hidden killers but he baulks at the idea of adopting his mother's and Uncle George's undiluted sectarianism.

The bitterness of the struggle left Eric struggling with feelings of shock and fear for his personal safety within his own community. He feels trapped as he cannot leave the UDR because of the pressure he is under from both his mother and Uncle George, who rages that '[a]ny man tries to slide out is no man' (McCabe 2005: 104). Eric is a young man who is caught up in the trauma of sectarianism, the crossfire of his parents' unhappy marriage and pressurised into action by his

uncle George's belligerent Protestantism. Eric struggles to remain faithful to his Protestant culture and remain loyal to the customs and laws of his own community. The sectarian nature of the conflict and the unusual arrangement of the two warring sides of Catholic and Protestant living in close proximity to one another added an extra dimension to an already stressful situation. And, just like Eric, 'local Protestants periodically became targets for attacks as symbols of a state that Protestants originally dominated and were left feeling vulnerable and defenceless in the face of what they saw as a systematic IRA campaign to squeeze them out' (Donnan and Simpson 2007: 8). The gothic nature of the Northern Ireland Troubles meant violence, fear, and constant anxiety of being under attack were a reality for both Protestant and Catholics living in the border areas.

It was particularly intimidating for McCabe living adjacent to the border. He describes living under the constant supervision of a military watchtower with sophisticated listening devices, capable of hearing all personal conversations between members of the McCabe family household. The helicopter patrols too, as mentioned in 'Cancer,' were another daily feature of life living in and around border during the Troubles, and the constant military surveillance creates feelings of being under siege and under military attack. For Protestants too living along the border area throughout the 1970s and 1980s, their trauma is exacerbated by residing within a farming community in which most of the population were Catholics and supported the Republican movement. The embittered tension is fuelled by the uncertainty of who might, or might not be, involved in the violence, like Eric's predictable paranoia when he questions who had sent him the message to get out or be got. Gothic warnings and threats such as in this situation persisted for the thirty years of the Troubles, and George, in his clamorous sectarianism, locates and situates the local sectarian attacks as specifically violent and Catholic in nature. Graham Dawson, in one of the few pieces of academic work which addresses the experience of border Protestants, argues 'that the violence of the 1970's was made sense of through a cultural memory of ethnic violence reaching back through the period of partition to the plantations of the seventeenth century'

(Patterson 2011: 163). Eric is in the dilemma of attempting to stay loyal to his familial relationships and his Protestant heritage and trying to maintain an equilibrium. Trying to remain calm, he began thinking of 'twenty-five U.D.R. men shot since he had joined, buried in parish graveyards, skulls and bodies smashed, married or single, in and out of uniform. He felt again a hatred for these hidden killers' (McCabe 2005: 91). And for Michael Storey, the carnage of these stories reflects 'the devastating physical, social, and psychological effects on innocent people; and the moral decisions and actions that acts of sectarian violence force upon civilians' (Storey 2004: 155). Eric's fear, humiliation and rage leads to a desire for revenge, and Rachel's brother, Joe, jerked his head towards the gaunt uplands: 'It's a jungle from here to the rock; they don't need phones, radios, or helicopters; sneeze at the back of ditch, they know who it was and why he was there. They know every move; we don't stand a chance' (McCabe 2005: 103). There is an abiding feeling of claustrophobia across this heavily monitored and heavily contested landscape. As McCabe makes clear, living on the border was a very traumatic experience and certainly the geographical proximity of Protestants to their Catholics neighbours, at times deepened the apprehensions and hostilities between the two communities.

In McCabe's characterization of Eric, it becomes clear that the young farmer feels under a particular strain. His family's valuable land demonstrates the class divide between the Catholic and Protestant farmers in Northern Ireland. The two communities are divided by the inequitable variations in the quality of the farmland held by poorer Catholics juxtaposed with a wealthy Protestant land-owning class. For most of this century Ulster unionists had control of the larger areas of prime farmland in Northern Ireland, and this enormous difference serves to alienate and provoke Catholic resentment and bitterness.[4] The land settlement of the 1660s is key to

[4] Synonymous with transgression, transformation, and disruption, and replete with an excess of sentiment and subjectivity, Irish Gothic has been widely read as an expression of the fears and anxieties of a privileged but embattled social caste, the once dominant Anglo-Irish elite, bearers of a literary imagination characterized as 'ineluctably haunted, cloven into duality by the cleavage in Irish society

much of the subsequent centuries of Irish history. In a society where land brought wealth prestige and power the distribution of land was the central fact in political life (Gillen 2016: 2). Such are the reliable markers of socio-economic status in Northern Ireland and adds to the anger and frustration of the local Catholic population. Even a quick appraisal of Northern Ireland society shows how deeply divided it is not just in regard to religion, but also in the differences in their financial situation, as Coulter outlines 'given the nature of the inequalities within contemporary Northern Irish society one would not have to be a raving reductionist to anticipate that social class might constitute the most important source of political identity in the province' (Coulter 1999: 77). Class divisions within the six counties becomes readily apparent when we consider the distribution of income within the province, and 'Information garnered by the British Treasury reveals that the different social strata within Northern Ireland experience vastly divergent life chances' (Milburn, 1994 in Coulter 1999: 80).

In this story, McCabe further scrutinizes the integral part class has in the representation of economic and political power in both Catholic and Protestant communities. A far higher proportion of Catholics than Protestants from the lower tiers of society faced difficulties in attaining access to education and better working conditions, and these factors contributed to their alienation and disaffection. One of the most contentious issues in Northern Ireland was the economic and educational difference between Catholics and Protestants and the notion of

between expropriated and expropriators', whose future became more and more uncertain as a lower middleclass Catholic ascendancy of strong farmers and shopkeepers emerged' (Moynahan cited in Harte 2020: 8).

'It is commonly held that the revolution in Irish landholding which began with the plantations of the early seventeenth century and culminated in the Cromwellian and Restoration land settlements reduced.

the Catholic share of land to 59 per cent in 1641 to 22 percent in 1688 and thus paved the way for the Protestant ascendancy in the eighteenth century :More recently these figures have been revised; Kevin McKenny in a statistical interpretation of the land settlements which draws on figures from The Books of Survey and Distribution for Land holding in 1641 and c.1670 when the Restoration land settlement was largely complete suggests the Protestant share of land increased from 30 per cent in 1641 to 67 per cent in c1670 and that the percentage of land held by Catholics fell from 66 per cent to 29 per cent in the same period' (Ohlmeyer 2012: 301).

antagonisms being solely based on religion is contested. The divergence in class, in education and in employment has affectively fomented the conflict and further bifurcated the Catholic and Protestant communities. And not only that but:

> electoral boundaries in parts of the province were gerrymandered, some local authorities discriminated in the allocation of houses and jobs, the police and particularly the Special Constabulary acted sometimes in a partisan manner. Discrimination also existed in the field of private employment. The pioneer investigators in this field produced some fairly startling examples. (Barritt and Carter 1962: 100)

There are of course variations between people as regards personal wealth, and by the area they live in, but by in large they live separate total self-contained lives, 'not only do Catholics and Protestants go to different churches, but they also send their children to different schools, read different newspapers, play different sorts of games, read different history books, have different popular ballads' (Darby1976:157-160). The existence of discrimination, especially in the period from 1921 to 1968, cannot seriously be questioned.

Land and land ownership are at the root of Northern Ireland's problems and McCabe's narratives display the festering resentments that blighted the North. Eric is pulled towards his uncle's

corrosive sectarianism as he looks up towards the small Catholic hill-farms above the more affluent holdings of his own Protestant neighbours. In portraying the strained inter-communal relations between Catholics and Protestants, his uncle George's blind hatred of Catholics pervaded every aspect of his life. Eric recalls 'It was from George as a child that he first heard about Catholics in the forge at Oakfield; I'll shoe no Catholic ass, my boot in his hole' (McCabe 2005: 104). The men in the forge laugh and say, 'you're an awful man, George' (McCabe 2005: 104) Even as young boy, visiting his uncle at the forge, Eric recognised his uncle George's, and his friends', overt sectarianism and it becomes clear they agree with George's apparent intolerance. In the Irish postcolonial gothic, the home as the private realm functions as a metaphor for the wider public political arena and even as a young child Eric bears witness to both his mother's and uncle's extreme sectarian attitude to Catholics and Catholicism. Eric's uncle George is a blacksmith and is unwavering in his rigid prejudice and his long-nourished hatred of Catholics. Eric has grown up fearful of his uncle's.

sectarian rantings and his hatred of Catholics but his mother considers her brother a Protestant like herself as a 'good straight man, his mother said, the best blacksmith in Ulster, afraid of nothing or no one' (McCabe 2005: 105) Eric is in the hazardous terrain of trying to overcome the complications connected to his familial loyalties, trying to remain loyal to his Protestant heritage while also trying to present a polite veneer to his Catholic neighbours. In the same way in the earlier story 'Cancer', when Joady, in particular, talked about the explosion in Trillick to his Protestant neighbours 'they kept silent, Joady noticed and said, "A bad doin, Albert, surely there could be no luck after thon', but to his Catholic neighbours he said, 'Done it their selves to throw blame on us and spat in the fire' (McCabe 2005: 75).

A particular feature of the Troubles was the close proximity of the Catholic and Protestant farming community to one another, and this meant the enemy also happened to be the close neighbour.

With the two traditions trying to live beside one another it established a culture of distressing trauma, especially a transgenerational trauma. In trying to retain filial loyalty to his mother, uncle and girlfriend, Eric is caught in a very precarious position. In trying to find his way through a web of familial loyalties to which he has been intensely faithful, he is pressured to perform impossible psychic tasks of rescue and reparation by endorsing his family's own Protestant heritage. He tries to uphold and defend their resentments, while he also recognises and validates the bind his Catholic farming neighbours are in, and in this way, Eric's situation reflects Backus's point that 'the contemporary social order continues to direct considerable collective energy into the arrangement of a traumatic past' (Backus 1999: 244). The Troubles were not just rooted in faith-based divisions, though both groups used religious iconographies, symbols, rites, and ceremonies to express themselves. But in defining their religiosity over and against each other, both Catholic and Protestant are constituted as the gothic Other. Religious beliefs and modes of representation are central to the mythology of the Northern Ireland narrative, as Dawson details, 'myth is understood to mean damaging misconceptions and falsehoods about the past embedded in popular consciousness which fuel the atavistic political identities of Ulster Unionism and Irish nationalism and stir up political violence' (Dawson 2007: 35). Likewise, McGarry and O'Leary contend that:

> thinking that the conflict between the two communities is on religious difference alone is wrong: Conflict is indeed waged between two communities whose members are religiously differentiated but they are also divided by broader culture differences, national allegiances, histories of antagonistic encounters and marked differences in economic and political power. (McGarry and O'Leary 1995: 172)

These differences are manifested in McCabe's work in the everyday mundane aspects of family life in Northern Ireland. The trauma of the Troubles impedes on family life both within the family itself and beyond and, as La Capra asserts, 'one of the under-investigated issues it addresses is the role of the so-called transgenerational transmission of trauma to descendants and intimates of

both survivors and perpetrators' (La Capra 2016: 375). An example of a transgenerational transmission of trauma is Eric's absorption of his mother's and his uncle's damaging sectarianism. Eric's father, Sam, intensifies the deep chasm between himself and his family, by rejecting his wife's staunch sex hating Protestantism and his brother in law's hate fuelled sectarianism. Eric does not yield to his father's and brother's advice to leave the UDR but instead stays on and becomes drawn more towards his uncle's sectarianism and an ensuing transgenerational trauma. Eric's father urges his son to leave the UDR, castigating his wife for her dogged allegiance to a group who he believes sees their son only as 'cannon fodder.' In this context he asks his wife why or what they are fighting for:

> What's he fighting for woman? God and country, the Queen? I'll tell you what he's fighting for the big boys who splash more on weekends whoring, than he'll make in a lifetime, and good luck to their whoring, that's what I'll say if they have 'goms' who'll die to keep them at it (McCabe 2005:91).

Eric's father does not support or openly express support for a Protestant religious or political affiliation. And he is critical of what he notes is the influence of the local Protestant upper class and their influence on the Protestant working-class. He criticizes their use of their religious and political identities to maintain the Protestant passions and uphold the status quo. Eric's father abhors the violence around him and commenting on the sectarianism, he states: 'If one neighbour in ten thousand wants to kill me or mine, I'll not hate them all, for that one. And I don't hate someone I've never met' (McCabe 2005: 94). Later, as they attend the local Inver church, Colonel Norbert, his immediate family, and the house party from Inver Hall fill the front pews in the church. Eric's father comments on their church attendance. 'They go for curiosity, to hear ould Plumm rave on. They believe in nothin' but lands, stocks and shares, and keepin' things the way, they are' (McCabe 2005: 99). For Eric's father, his son will become little more than a disposable pawn in the perpetuation of the politico-economic status quo.

Protestant Loyalists and Catholic Republicans could also demonstrate the ethic of good neighbourliness exemplified by the collective or communal assisting of one another in the saving of crops or other tasks like cutting turf in the bog. In Irish rural life the Gaelic word 'meitheal,' describes a long-standing Irish tradition among the farming community.

Neighbours would come together to help one another in turn, saving hay or drawing turf from the bog. Meitheal is still in evidence in both Southern and Northern Ireland and is a well-respected reciprocal method of rural husbandry. Sam, who despite his Protestant roots, visited his local Catholic neighbours and did odd jobs on their farms. However, Sam damaged his standing in his own Protestant community, by his disrespecting his wife, and he violated basic communal codes by fathering a child with a Catholic woman. Communal codes are also violated by Dinny McMahon from 'Cancer' who makes an appearance at the Colonel's hunt, stopping the hunting party from traversing across his land. When the Colonel asks Dinny '[w]ho is you?' Dinny answers him by stating:

> Here a thousand years, and the same again, McMahon Daniel and this mill-pad is mine. It's my land you stand on, and I say 'No' to you and all like you, and to any of my own race down there in that sheugh with you, none while I breathe is goin' to go down this pad, no means no, and that's that. (McCabe 2005: 116)

The Colonel, as the coloniser, recognises the stand-off situation with Dinny could become far more dangerous and, since Dinny is essentially waiting for one of the hunting parties to retaliate, the Colonel decides it is best to retreat and go around a different way. Dinny is angry and culturally traumatized in a culture beset by grave uncertainty and, as a staunch Irish Republican, he will not accept the British presence in Northern Ireland in any shape or form. The Colonel represents imperialism, and he provokes Dinny's anger and rage. Dinny is fully aware of institutionalised injustice including sectarianism and racism and class inequality where Northern Ireland Catholics are involved, and he makes a stand against Protestant majoritarianism. Protecting his three acres of land against the incursion of the hunting party represents his attack

on the British establishment and against the colonisers' incursion onto his land. He is the Catholic Other and despite the Colonel's self-assured stance and claim on his hunting rights to the land, Dinny will not yield against any legal or illegal incursion onto his land.

Eric and Rachel leave the hunt and walk back home through the fields from the hunting party. In their conversation Rachel highlights her recent daydreaming episode which demonstrates the destructive nature of sectarian mythology. She speaks about working on the labour ward in a recent shift as a trainee nurse in a Catholic maternity ward, and McCabe introduces the politics of reproduction and racial hatred when Rachel describes the Catholic mothers: 'I heard them talk so coarse and stupid, holy magazines and rosaries and this fuzzy –headed priest going around blessing the labours and their babies, and that horrid way they sucked up to him' (McCabe 2005: 120). Rachel's observations here are ostensibly typical in such circumstances, but her feelings take on gothic proportions and they quickly morph into a damaging sectarian register, alluding to religion and fecundity. She confesses to Eric that while 'I was on night duty a month ago, infant wards, all Catholics, in the middle of the night I thought…I thought if I set fire to it, they'd all be burned, about thirty less of them' (McCabe 2005: 120). Rachel's response to the Catholic new-borns takes on a gothic intensity and ferocity, and it points to an increasingly fragmented train of thought, suggesting Rachel is on the verge of a breakdown.

Her thoughts both frighten and disturb her, and Rachel's traumatic experience can be likened to Freud's description of the imagined, or fantasised, wish fulfilments that are either denied by reality or are prohibited by the social standards of morality and an accepted propriety. Freud states:

> I am in the habit of describing the element in the dream thoughts which I have in mind as a phantasy. I shall perhaps avoid misunderstanding if I mention the daydream as something

> analogous to it in waking life. The part played in our mental life by these structures has not yet been fully elucidated by psychiatrists. (Freud 2010: 496)

Freud goes on to clarify that daydreams bear similar properties to the products of night-time dreaming and carry the same significance in the psyche. He continues: 'Like dreams they are wish fulfilments; like dreams they are based to a greater extent on wish fulfilments on impressions of infantile experience; like dreams they benefit from a certain degree of relaxation of censorship' (Freud 2010: 497). Rachel indulges her mind in the phantasy of ridding the world of Catholic babies, thereby proving when censorship is relaxed her mind wanders, and afterwards she is shocked at what she is imagining. She acknowledges her own human frailty in her predisposition to a gothic animality and recognises, even in her imagination, the consequences of the violence have seeped into and damaged the fabric of her life. In Freudian terms: 'the study of the psychoneuroses leads to the surprising discovery that these phantasies or daydreams are the immediate forerunners of hysterical symptoms or at least a whole number of them. Hysterical symptoms are not attached to actual memories but to the phantasies erected on the basis of memories' (Freud 2010: 496).

With this in mind, Rachel operates briefly into a state where she actively imagines burning the Catholic babies in the maternity ward and she is shocked by her own thoughts and imagination. Freud also argues that dreams have a bearing on lived experience and real events in our life, and 'they are psychical phenomena of complete validity—fulfilments of wishes; they can be inserted into the chain of intelligible waking mental acts; they are constructed by a highly complicated activity of the mind' (Strachey 2010: 147). The term active imagination derives from Carl Jung and refers to 'a means of mobilizing the psyche through an image or a chain of images and their related associations' (Schaverien 2005: 128). This thought process renders Rachel in a highly

emotional state of antipathy and anger, and Watkins (1976) states the active imagination may emerge spontaneously as visualized imagery, as a 'waking dream' and in

Rachel's case 'the deliberate lowering of consciousness permits images from the unconscious to rise to the surface and, as these emerge, it may be as if the visualized event is actually taking place. Therefore, this form of active imagination is lived experience' (Schaverien 2005: 131).

Eric's understands Rachel's visualisations as a product of the Troubles and its traumatic effect on their relationship. It is dominated, firstly, by his religious affiliation to his strict Protestant upbringing. Troubled by traumatic feelings of guilt and shame, and his mother's stance on sexual relations outside of marriage, Eric's angst about his relationship with Rachel heightens.

The problem with their relationship is his embarrassment and his awkwardness around Rachel. This attitude highlights his reticence in touching or kissing her without discomfort and tension, believing what his mother told him often and when Rachel asks him "Then, I'll ask you again: you've never touched me why? he answers "it's for begetting. I believe that." "And love" Eric answers her "In wedlock" (Mc Cabe 2005: 122). Eric is guided by his strict upbringing, by his mother's staunch moral stance on sexuality, and his automatic identification with his uncle George's feelings towards Catholics, and in this respect, Freud's work also offers useful insights on the Eric's experience of intergenerational affect:

> It is possible that, just as Freud used the study of neurosis to illuminate the structure of the normal psyche, so the close examination of the intergenerational passage of acute psychological states may throw light on more general, or "normal" processes through which affective messages are communicated from one psyche to another, and from one generation to the next. (Radstone and Schwarz 2010: 408)

'Heritage' is based on an actual occurrence with the reprisal killings known as the Pitchfork Murders, and Eric finds himself having to console Rachel after the murder of her brother, as well as bearing witness to a double 'revenge murder' by his uncle George, shortly after. Eric witnesses

the horrific gothic image of the Pitchfork Murders, seeing his uncle George murder Willie Reilly and Martin Cassidy:

> As he neared with a sudden sick shock, he saw Willie Reilly humped across a bag of dairy nuts, sprawled as though copulating in an obscene posture of death, mouth and eyes open, tongue out. In the yard he saw George from the back, driving a graip into what looked like a dung heap, again and again and again and again. (McCabe 2005: 130)

George, in a desperate act of revenge, has murdered a local Catholic man and his young helper and, as it turns out, the young man is Maggie's son fathered by George's brother-in-law, Sam. George sanctions his murderous hatred against his Catholic neighbour by his earlier remarks:

> Catholics and civil rights, isn't he, seen him two years ago in Derry with that wee whore Devlin. See the way he smiled. He's laughing at us every bomb that goes off, every man that is maimed or murdered, laughing because they think we're affeered. No balls, that is what they say to themselves. (McCabe 2005: 126)

Such was the shock and horror that these killings evoked that it was thought of as a loyalist response to earlier killings by the IRA. The killings stopped for a while and Patterson states it was widely held in the local area that 'it was the fear of retaliation that temporarily put an end to the IRA attacks in South Fermanagh for more than two years. But the IRA campaign resumed and intensified in the late 1970s' (Patterson 2011: 163).

'Heritage' is driven headlong towards a dramatic ending, mediated through the traumatic circumstances of Eric's life. In George's entrenched sectarianism he merges the political with the domestic, accusing his nephew of treachery and disloyalty. George's sectarianism becomes aligned with the trauma of his desperate humanity, as he describes his joyless life to Eric: 'My life, have you thought on that, no woman, no brother, no close friend ever, wrought on my lone all my days, for what? I have nothin' but this house and forge, a few acres, and a stretch of bog

but *that* is somethin,' land that is something' (McCabe 2005: 132). The unappeasable longing and the passion for the land crosses all religious divides in the attachment to the soil and the related themes of land inheritance. In McCabe's rural world the ties of blood and land have absolute precedence over any other loyalty or moral consideration. Such is the destructive nature of George's hatred for his Catholic neighbours that all are diagnosed as murderous or, at best, complicit with the agents of sectarian murder on the Republican side of the conflict. Eric is traumatised by his uncle's murderous actions and the hopelessness he sees around him as he sees no escape from his situation, finally yielding to suicide as his only way out.

In employing the concept of trauma, studies on the mental health of people residing in Northern Ireland during the Troubles have been undertaken by various medical and psychological researchers. And it has been noted that 'failing to acknowledge the effects of these emotional reactions could it be that the poor health in Northern Ireland represents the somatization of the years of exposure to the intense emotional effects of the Troubles' (Kapur and Campbell 2004: 94). McCabe's characters find their expression through the dark interior of their minds. Drunk on whiskey and blood lust, George tries to placate his nephew, but Eric finally decides he can no longer sanction or endorse his uncle's blind hatred and actions. He tells George his entire life has been governed by fear: 'Yes all my life afraid of you George, George, afraid to pick between my mother and father, afraid of God, afraid of Catholics, afraid of dark and dreams, afraid to hate or love ….I'm tired of being afraid …but if you're brave George then I'm a coward like my father and I'll stay one' (McCabe 2005: 133). In his characterisation of Eric, McCabe details the bind the young volunteer finds himself in, trapped between familial loyalties, allegiance to his uncle and devotion to a political ideal that will mean a future trying to evade capture and execution by the IRA. The prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry manifest in the 'discrimination and visceral hatred arising from affixing labels of Taigs to Catholics and Prods to Protestants' (McCabe 2018).

An example in McCabe's 'Heritage' is in the interaction between the belligerent sectarian George and his nephew Eric. The staunch Unionist, George, rages at his nephew's lack of loyalty to his Protestant roots, laying the blame for his reluctance to murder Catholics at the feet of his father, who bears the particularly suspect Irish name of
O'Neill. The sectarian, George, turns on Eric, castigating him for his moral reckoning, blind to Eric's situational bind: 'Your father's son. O' Neill treacherous bloody Irish at the back of it, begrudgers, traitors, turn your back when I need you most' (McCabe 2005:133). McCabe captures George's unwavering sectarian polarization directed towards his nephew Eric and that of his father's politico-religious identity. McCabe includes the theme of betrayal and treachery as a constant in the moral poles of the Troubles.

Eric is devastated by his uncle's casual murder of Willie Reilly, Eric's own half- brother, and of his neighbour, Martin Cassidy. Eric returns home and tries to sleep but his sleep is haunted by the murders his uncle George has committed. Eric tries to block out what has happened, and the events are momentarily consigned to his psyche but returning, to the second element of trauma, 'the other is a kind of memory of the event, in the form of a perpetual troping of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche' (Hartman 1995: 1). He becomes overwhelmed by his depressive anxiety and is driven to suicide by what he has encountered. He endures a torrid night of disturbed sleep: 'Two hours till daylight. He closed his eyes and turned from the window' (McCabe 2005: 137) and has a nightmare that includes his friends, family and neighbours, strange visions that depict scenes of violence death and blood, 'machine-gunned, bodies falling screaming, coughing, spluttering blood' (McCabe 2005: 137). For Eric, the societal values of his community, the violence, the lack of *familial* cohesion means his past and future are beyond his control, and he is in a particularly worrisome position. If Eric should choose to stay in the UDR he will face death by the IRA, and trying to leave home he could still be apprehended and brutally

executed. Eric, in absolute desperation, purposely drives towards a British Army checkpoint in a conceivable suicidal effort to escape. As a part-time UDR officer himself he would be fully aware that this particular action would mean certain death. He is also hoping to circumvent repeating the trauma of his uncle's hatred and bitterness and his sad lamentable life. In fact, Eric committed suicide to avoid this legacy, ultimately his heritage eventually manifests in the sacrifice of his life.

Representations of gothic trauma in 'Victims'

'Victims' is a novella, crafted as a latter-day Big House narrative. The pre-history of the Irish Big House can be traced back to the middle of 12th century when Strongbow invaded Ireland and set up a permanent English base, as '[t]he high walls of the estate were to separate for seven centuries the Gaelic population from the English invaders' (Genet1991:15). Later, the Big House became a central part of the Irish landscape, standing on land seized from local Catholic families in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And the novels written about the Big Houses and their occupants represent a major tradition in Irish fiction, according to Vera Kreilkamp, who notes the architectural history of the literary genre: 'Ireland's architectural flowering during the eighteenth century suggests the eagerness of a newly secure Anglo-Irish Protestant oligarchy to display its wealth and power – and indeed its permanence – through a classically inflected building programme' (Kreilkamp 2006: 60). The genre evolved as an important literary response to colonial life in the 1800s, with the first Irish Big House novel, *Castle Rackrent*, authored by Maria Edgeworth. We still see legatees of the genre across the

twentieth century in the contemporary novels of Aidan Higgins, Molly Keane, William Trevor, and Jennifer Johnston, as well McCabe's 'Victims' and *Death and Nightingales*. According to Kreilkamp, '[t]he term "Big House" refers to a country mansion not always very big, but typically owned by a Protestant Anglo-Irish family presiding over a substantial agricultural acreage leased out to Catholic tenants who worked the land' (Kreilkamp2006: 60).

The Big House as genre has long been identified with the historical and social travails of the Anglo-Irish class in Ireland:

> What was traditionally called the Big House in Ireland was, first of all, big physically, in relation to the modest cottages and scattered farmhouses surrounding it; more significantly, from the eighteenth century on, it was the centre of wealth power and influence. These Big Houses were normally inhabited by Ascendancy families, Anglo- Irish in blood and Anglican in faith. (Genet 1992: 209)

Big House novels represent a major tradition in Irish fiction, 'set on isolated country estates, they dramatize the tensions between several social groups: the landed proprietors of a Protestant ascendancy gentry; a growing, usually Catholic, middle class; and the mass of indigenous, rural Catholic tenantry' (Kreilkamp 1998: 6). Irish Big Houses stood on land seized from local Catholic families in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and for the native population, the Big House was a seen as representative of a distant colonial power, its pre-eminence indicative of disunity and division. The conventions of the Big House novel are exemplified in the decaying houses and demesnes that persist in various states of neglect and that are used as a metaphor for the Ascendancy's declining power in Ireland. As Kreilkamp notes: 'Over the course of two centuries these novels reveal recurring themes and conventions, most notably the setting of a beleaguered and decaying country house collapsing under the forces of Anglo-Irish improvidence and the rising nation' (Kreilkamp 1998: 6). Even in its decaying form, the Big House represents the power of the presiding culture. The trope of the absentee landlord is used to critique the numerous estates

falling into ruin due to bad management on the part of the landlords. The Big House mirrors, in many ways, the disintegrating of the Anglo-Irish as an aristocratic class.

As a source of colonial power and a gothic literary trope, the Irish Big House tradition is a well-established mode in McCabe's fiction and dramas. It appears in *Death and Nightingales* and in McCabe's troubles story 'Victims,' which describes the IRA's hostage taking of the Anglo-Irish Armstrong family. The Armstrongs are typical of the few remaining Big House dwellers dotted across Ireland during the early 1960s and 1970s. McCabe includes the motif of family descendants of inheritance and continuation in 'the family portraits round the walls looked calmly down on the upturned faces around the hunting table, each face expressing varying degrees of incomprehension and disbelief' (McCabe 2005: 174) It can be compared to Elizabeth Bowen's descriptions of the interior of Danielstown in *The Last September*, where ancestors 'portraits looked down from the walls on descendants marooned in the present ,subtly define the relationship of the family to the past and to their colonial inheritance' (Genet 1991: 148).

The presiding themes running through these two Big House narratives in 'Victims' and *Death and Nightingales* are colonialism, land seizure, IRA violence and terrorism, division and loyalty along with the destructive sectarianism. Both stories are set in Big Houses albeit in different centuries. Owned by descendants of the Anglo-Irish and of Irish colonial history, Big Houses set apart on isolated country estates, dramatize the tensions between several social groups, the landed proprietors of a Protestant ascendancy gentry; a growing, usually Catholic, middle class; and the mass of indigenous, rural Catholic tenantry. As we have seen earlier, McCabe's *Death and Nightingales* highlighted the isolation of the Anglo-Irish as a community in Ireland and further emphasised the hyphenated existence of the Anglo-Irish during this period. These events all manifest the gothic trauma of murder and violence that were characteristic of this specific time in Irish history. McCabe deftly shifts the narrative between two parallel time and there is a

correlation between one, the era it is set in the schismatic era of the 1800s, and two, the era Smyth describes as 'the late 1980s and early 1990s, a particularly bleak period of the "Troubles", preceding the Provisional IRA ceasefire of 1994' (Smyth 2015: 2).

As representatives of the colonial gothic, the Armstrongs epitomise the decay of the last semblances of the gentry in 1970s Ireland. The gothic trauma of this kidnapping demonstrates the fierce brutality of both sides. This Big House confirms its colonial rule, is an affront to the IRA gang and a specific reference to transgenerational trauma and prejudice. During the Troubles, IRA kidnappings and terrorist activities happened regularly, and this kidnapping demonstrates the corrosive hatred that existed in Ireland in the early 70's and 80s. Big Houses were seen as an emblem not just of bygone days, but they stood as testimony to Ireland's colonial past. Inver House confirms its colonial rule, and is an affront to the IRA gang and in a specific reference to trauma and a colonialist prejudice, Alex Armstrong consolidates this with his statement 'we never employed Papists, family tradition, they all cheat, lie and thieve, dirty, careless, superstitious, stupid; when you hear this from the nursery onwards, right or wrong it tends to stick' (McCabe 2005: 170) And such rhetoric confirms Kreilkamp's point that '[f]or the conquered Irish, the Big House evoked memories of dispossession, exploitation, and injustice—and, simultaneously, of a remote and glamorous power, of inaccessible social position and wealth' (Kreilkamp 1998: 20).

'Victims' brings together characters from the previous two narratives and demonstrates McCabe's dramatic skills in the build-up of tension as five IRA members hold an Anglo-Irish family to ransom (Ingman 2009: 216). The violence in this novella is represented as the appalling result of misguided idealism, and 'Victims' begins with the Inver show, an agricultural event and the arranged meeting between the two IRA activists, Leonard and Isabella Lynam, a 23-year-old Arts

graduate. The meeting between the two militants is tense and fraught, as Leonard 'took out a scrap of paper, read the coded message without expression, put a match to it and dropped the blackened ash' (McCabe 2005: 142). The scene is very much in keeping with that of a spy thriller, as Isabella Lynam learns about the planned kidnapping of the Armstrong family. She admits to Leonard that she is terrified and describes 'a car called at four, an Army Council note, I was to go where I was taken, didn't say where… under your command, …Burke's hand … and the driver said nothing between here and Dublin. That's all I know' (McCabe 2005: 142). The sexual politics evident in this story render Isabella as vulnerable and exposed not just to arrest by the Gardai or the British Army, but she is also under the control of her superiors in the IRA. Leonard's thoughts on Isabella note that she had risen high in the ranks of that organisation and Leonard is taken aback at her angry retort when he offers sympathy on her recent trauma at the loss of her baby. She reacts with anger stating, 'Abortion is the word. Her mind, he thought again, a clenched fist against pity, maidenhood, motherhood, or anything denoting feminine softness' (McCabe 2005: 145). This opening scene describes Isabella's vocalisation of her fear and trepidation that she will somehow be removed or made to disappear.

At an earlier date, Isabella had become pregnant by an IRA leader named Burke, and she had decided to terminate the pregnancy, when 'she had told Burke how she had ended the pregnancy, the gravel voiced arbiter of life and death was so stunned he could hardly speak.

Why do that, he had asked?' (McCabe 2005: 152) Isabella is startled and unprepared for Burke's reaction to the abortion, and she thinks to herself 'was he so puerile, that he saw her as a mere seed bed for his image? Why now without warning had he drafted her to possible martyrdom under Leonard?' McCabe 2005: 152) 1970s Northern Ireland was an extremely traditional patriarchal society and, in many ways, the hierarchy of the IRA reflected the absolute control of the Catholic Church. Women's bodies and reproductive rights feature prominently in 'Victims'

and, despite Lynam's reproductive autonomy, she is still fearful and unsure of how Burke will respond to her decision, and this further compound her trauma, and can be read in terms of the Irish 'national' cause to which she is enlisted here:

> Women's bodies have also been constituted as a site for ethno-nationalist concern and control. Noting the disciplining of women's bodies through nationalist scripts Martin (2000: 69) has observed that; it is through mimetic performance that Irish women come to embody femininity and by extension, the Irish nation. Protestant women's femininity has also been judged in relation to their adherence to community norms surrounding women's place in communities and the family. (Ashe and McCluskey 2015)

A feature of Irish nationalist politics is the imbrication between structures of patriarchy, sexuality, and reproduction. The nation, then, in turn, adapts these fundamental social systems and, dealing specifically with the case of Northern Ireland, religion becomes ingrained in the formation of gender norms for the patriarchal heterosexual family. Lisa Smyth makes the point that:

> morally conservative national voices particularly politicians and political lobbyists who might otherwise divide along Catholic/Protestant lines or (Irish) nationalist (British) Unionist lines as they define their imagined communities (Anderson, 1991) in opposition to each other and in relation to Britain and Ireland formed a united non-sectarian front when it came to opposing sexual rights and reproductive services. (Kitchen and Lysaght 2004: 91 cited in Smyth 2006:664)

It is noteworthy to behold Catholic and Protestant men who displayed such a repugnance of one another's political, religious, and cultural beliefs being in a state of agreement or harmony, especially on a topic relating to opposing sexual rights and reproductive services for women. As in the case of Isabella, 'women are often judged more harshly as they are seen to behave in a deviant manner and to show a lack of concern for their 'natural' responsibilities, particularly towards children and families' (Dowler 1998 in Stapleton and Wilson (2014)). Isabella's fear and trauma is tangible, and she is terrified she will end up like a lot of people who fell foul of the IRA in the early 70s and the early 80s. She is cognisant of 'and fully informed about how the

performative discourse of the body operates for punishment killings, how it is part of a theatrical substantiation and ritualization of paramilitary power on the street' (Feldman 1998: 304).

In this context, Stephanie Lehner describes the insidious nature of silencing victims, and the fear and intimidation that was a major part of the years of the 'Troubles.' The gothic heroine, Isabella, recounts events as they unfold, and McCabe includes some darker aspects of the 'Troubles' that prove particularly disturbing when we reflect on the 'disappeared' of that violent period. From the beginning, McCabe introduces Isabella's fear of being secreted away and murdered, highlighting the gothic criminal world of the 'Troubles' at this time in Ireland. For anyone singled out to undergo a tribal punishment, IRA style, and made to disappear or become conspicuously absent, more than likely often resulted in death. In a discussion of such fears, Lehner looks at 'Troubles' theatre and the disappeared, with the focus on the photographic collections of David Farrell's *Innocent Landscapes* (2001), John Duncan's *Trees from Germany* (2003) and David Park's *The Truth Commissioner* (2008) (Lehner 2017: 2). The disappeared and the issue of their absent but present state haunted the Northern Ireland Peace Process, and Lehner explores how three artists are responding to the idealized landscape that is contemporary Northern Ireland. Here in 'Victims,' Isabella Lynam tries to think of other reasons why she had been included in this IRA mission and she finally concludes that it is more likely, 'pressures from others on the army council who disliked her bluntness' (McCabe 2005: 152). During the 1970s and 1980s, coincidentally around the time McCabe was writing his Troubles literature, several people were abducted, killed and secretly buried by the IRA in unmarked graves, 'although numbers are still uncertain, to date there are seventeen known cases of individuals who are suspected of having been secretly abducted and murdered, mainly by the IRA, and who were then buried in unmarked sites in the Irish Republic' (Lehner 2017: 5).

Isabella, as an IRA combatant, would be very much aware of the possibility that she could at any time, have been secretly abducted and murdered. When she tells Leonard, 'I was very frightened …still am,' Leonard queries 'of what?' (McCabe 2005: 142). And Isabella's answer is telling and ominous: 'A final journey' (McCabe 2005: 143). In articulating her fears of being taken on a final journey, she is essentially fearful of becoming one of the disappeared, and she worries she will suffer a similar fate to that of the many victims of the IRA's retributive history since the early 70's. From the 1970s up to the Peace Process, Northern Ireland is framed by its dark gothic portrayal and 'horror piled on horror in July 1972. The restlessness of the mid-1960s had first degenerated into the violent clashes of August 1969 and now descended further into killings at a rate of three a day' (McKitterick and McVea 2002:86). Right through the early seventies violence between Republicans who killed Protestants, and Loyalists who claimed Catholic lives was a daily feature of life in Northern Ireland: '[t]his was the era the car-bomb was introduced and caused terrible injuries and enormous damage. Violence from Loyalists increased significantly from the Spring of 1972 when working-class Protestants turned in their thousands to paramilitaries as insecurity and uncertainty soared' (McKittrick and McVea 2000: 83). Again, Lehner addresses not just a way of 'offering a new lens to explore the play of absences and presences that constitute the peace process. The three works allow us to perceive how idealized landscapes act as façades that conceal, contain, and defer alternative realities' (Lehner 2017 :1) It also shows the trauma of the families of the disappeared, and demonstrates how the Northern Ireland 'Troubles' transformed Irish landscapes into dark gothic fearful spaces. Following the IRA's ceasefire of 31 August 1994, the families of the disappeared began to publicly call for Sinn Féin – and Gerry Adams President of Sinn Féin from 1983–2018 in, to takeaction with regards to the disappeared. During the

Troubles, sixteen people were confirmed as disappeared and The Independent Commission for The Location of Victims Remains abbreviated (ICLVR) ,was set up by an intergovernmental arrangement between the Irish and British Governments, signed on the 27th April 1999, and by the legislation enacted in the two jurisdictions. The law became known as The Criminal Justice (Location of Victims' Remains) Act, 1999. In the retrieval of buried bodies:

> The Provisional IRA has admitted responsibility for 13 victims, mostly in a statement issued in 1999. One victim was admitted to by the INLA. No attribution has been given to the others. To date, the remains of twelve of the Disappeared have been recovered, ten of whom have been recovered through the ICLVR's efforts. (ICLVR 1999)

Since ancient and pre-Christian times for Irish people, death and the burial of the dead is a very important aspect of Irish heritage and culture. The murder and denial of a proper burial has a cultural resonance that impacts not just on the family but on the wider community. In 'Victims' the notion of the disappeared can also be applied to Isabella's fear of a reprisal, bodily harm, punishment, and death. Considering the signifying practises of punishment beatings, Feldman writes that 'violence is a writing on the body, violence is deployed not only as a vehicle for memory, but for the fashioning of sites, terrains and textures-wounds of remembrance'.
(Murphy 2008: 25). This can be applied to the Northern Ireland situation, and the fear and trauma surrounding punishment beatings or murder, and 'the varied means of punishment beatings constitute a form of writing on the body, a corpus inscribed with a specific message' (Murphy: 2008: 25). For example, Isabella's mental suffering and the ideation or notion of the body as a site of violence, can be linked to her psychological pain and trauma as regards her abortion. The notion of a punitive justice and the trauma of what a loved one has endured by an IRA-style execution becomes even more distressing by the loss of the remains and the internment of that body in an unknown locale. David Farrell's *Innocent Landscapes* (2001) are photographs that show the excavation work carried out on the land at the seven sites in the Republic of Ireland from where the bodies are exhumed. These spaces become delineated as the secret burial place

of those victims called The Disappeared: 'The 1972 figure of almost 500 killings stands as a vivid illustration of the lethal depths to which the troubles descended. There were almost 2,000 explosions and over 10,000 shooting incidents, an average of around 30 shootings per day' (McKittrick 2001: 86). It is against this background that Isabella's fears are not unwarranted. As to be part of the Republican movement meant constant fear of arrest by the Gardai, the threat of violence from an opposing Protestant faction and in Isabella's case her fear of becoming subject to the IRA's punitive internal policing system.

The bodies are buried beneath beautiful scenic spots in the Republic, and Lehner notes all except one British soldier a Captain Robert Nairac, the Special Forces operative who disappeared near the border in 1977, were brought to the South from Northern Ireland, murdered, and then secretly buried. There are gothic aspects to the search for the bodies and here, despite the landscape's obvious beauty, it is represented as desolate, alienating, and full of menace. Mark Phelan notes:

> The invasion of this pastoral world by modern machinery has a further connotative charge, in that the violence of its excavations mnemonically re-enacts the violence perpetrated on innocent victims by their executioners, as the diggers' defiling on the eponymous "innocent landscapes" embodies the IRA's desecration of the "Disappeared" bodies and the denial of their burial rites. (Phelan in Lehner 2017: 5-6)

It is ironic that the IRA, in assuming a longed-for utopia, a unified Irish country, a yearned for idyll, render the Irish rural landscape as darkly gothic, its physical elements rendered a site of the macabre. In the tracing and locating of the victims' remains, the trauma of the victims' families becomes an uncomfortable reminder for the IRA and their henchmen who engage in a communal politics. The sequestering and isolating of victims in unmarked graves take on monstrous proportions.

Burying the bodies in aesthetically beautiful scenic areas, the IRA gunmen or those involved in these deaths would much rather erase the past as they seek to ease their guilty consciences, by

interring the remains. It is against such a background of unremitting violence that Leonard and Isabella Lynam meet, both mindful of the dangerous mission they are about to embark on as they mingle with the other fair attendees. They buy ice-cream cones at an ice-cream stand and 'Lynam looked at the whipped ice. A squirt of raspberry liquid on top had run down the cone onto her fingers. She had not tasted it but now looked at it with revulsion' (McCabe 2005: 146). The imagery of the red raspberry liquid running on to her fingers is suggestive of blood, and once she takes part in the kidnapping and, maybe the death of the hostages, she will have their blood on her hands. She asks the question 'how many?' and Leonard answers, 'six or eight most nights to dinner' and Isabella answers him by saying 'I don't want this' (Mc Cabe 2005: 146). Isabella Lynam refuses the ice-cream cone, and McCabe plays with language by using this line to also convey or represent her unwillingness to partake in the murder of the hostages. She is terrified, recognising the dangerous game in which she is involved.

Isabella is cast as the vulnerable female in the role of the gothic heroine, much like Beth from *Death and Nightingales*, and together with Roisín and Grace in *Tales from a Poorhouse*. As gothic heroines, these women are propelled into gothic nightmarish worlds of guilt, secrecy and violence. Like the gothic heroines in *Dracula* and *Carmilla*, Irish heroines share in the same sequence of desire connected with Irish questions on history and violence. Beth, from *Death and Nightingales,* narrowly escapes her own well-planned death and burial. Grace and her baby from *Tales from The Poorhouse* die in tragic circumstances. Isabella from 'Victims' notes her fate has already been sealed and her freedom will be sacrificed for the greater good of the IRA. These are the situations that McCabe intricately weaves into his own writing. When Isabella asks Leonard about the job, 'Big house, Leonard said. We hold some gentlefolk till they bring us Quinn, McIntyre, and Fanin from Long Kesh' (McCabe 2005: 143). She asks what will happen if their demands are not met what will happen? She is shocked when Leonard tells her they will be

executed, and then, 'We fight,' he states. In turn, she pauses to ensure that her voice would not betray what she felt: 'I didn't volunteer for active service, why me?' (McCabe 2005: 144). Lynam is becoming aware that there is a strategic plan behind the kidnapping and she is both fearful of and is uncertain as to the motive behind her inclusion in this particular mission, but she is mindful: 'She had chosen freely the waking nightmare of action, the comradeship of men whose vivid words, aims and violence seemed more attractive, honest, and hopeful than the hollow crafty manoeuvrings of politicians like her father, grinding out their mean greedy lives towards anonymous deaths' (McCabe 2005: 153). Isabella is terrified, recognising the reality of the dangerous game she is involved in, and she knows she is in a very precarious position. She questions Leonard ,'I didn't volunteer for active service, why me? He, they…someone wants rid of me…you…have you thought of that? (McCabe 2005:144.)

Lynam's fear is palpable, and she confides in Leonard, she was sure 'she was on her way to her final journey.' Writing in *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*, Laura Sjoberg, and Caron E. Gentry state that:

> in these gendered discourses, deviant women are set up in opposition to idealized gender stereotypes. They are represented as separate and distinct to clearly demarcate gender norms. Women are expected to portray nurturing caring and sensitive characteristics and adapt to a natural domesticity. These qualities associated with women and femininity have been traditionally characterised as inferior to those associated with men and masculinity. (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 7)

McCabe's portrayal of Lynam resonates with the experiences of many young women joining the IRA in the early days of the Troubles and there are clear gender demarcations between Lynam and her male peers. Women like Lynam are expected to portray dual characteristics, one of docile female obeyance, while also partaking in violent activities. Lynam is seen as a useful decoy and

more likely to remain under the police radar and not draw attention to the group's activities. However, when her femininity is juxtaposed with a male identified violence a point of crisis ensues. She is expected to follow orders but is vilified if she partakes in violence, her value as a woman and as terrorist merge, and she becomes expendable. In her 'Myths in The Representation of Women Terrorists' (2000) Rhiannon Talbot reflects that:

> The construction of a "terrorist" is a strongly masculine one, whereas the perception of femininity excludes use of indiscriminate violence. Not surprisingly, when a woman terrorist is represented, her culpability as an empowered female employing traditionally masculine means to achieve her goals very rarely emerges. She is seldom the highly reasoned, non-emotive, political animal that is the picture of her male counterpart; in short, she rarely escapes her sex. (Talbot 2004: 168)

There are definite misogynistic overtones to how Lynam is perceived by the terrorist gang. The whole dynamic here is about patriarchal power and, despite being an IRA combatant, Lynam is still distrusted by the gang. Women in Lynam's situation are criticised for falling outside of gender norms in paramilitary organisations: '[f]or example, when women in Northern Ireland abandon their primary role as 'mothers' by becoming involved in paramilitary operations, they forfeit a sense of innocence or purity' (Dowler 1998: 164). They essentially become judged and berated for daring to step out of the gender norms enshrined in that patriarchal community.

McCabe's Northern Ireland trilogy reflects the attitudes to gender in Ireland at the time, and the less-than-liberal attitudes to women are guided by the notion that women's rights came a very poor second to the achievement of Civil Rights for Catholics. In Northern Ireland, the norm was that women involved as paramilitaries were seen as nothing more than as useful aides to the 'struggle.' As Magennis clarifies: 'Sectarianism, and the construction of political and social life around community loyalties, has been a powerful force in maintaining women's subservience' (Magennis 2010: 10). When the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland were at their zenith, women across

the world were campaigning for their rights, for access to contraception, abortion, women's health, and education. In 1970 three revolutionary books appeared within a few months of one another. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and *Patriarch Attitudes* by Eva Figes were all bestsellers (Belsey and Moore 1989: 2). While these authors voiced key challenges to a dominant patriarchal system in the West, it was clear that Northern Ireland, like the Republic, was marked by rigid conformist views from both the Protestant and Catholic churches:

> Ethno-gendered ideologies constituted women who had a termination as a 'spoiled' woman in the eyes of the community and in the eyes of God. Men who support their partners to procure an abortion, men who advocate for an abortion and men who perform abortions in other regions have never been constituted as spoiled identities; it is an identity that is only reserved for Northern Irish and Irish women. (Ashe 2019)

In Isabella Lynam's efforts to prove she is an independent woman means her choice to join the IRA and, later, to have an abortion leave her feeling distressed. McCabe's portrayal of Lynam, her background and her lack of any religious affiliation sets her apart from many of the young women joining the IRA in the early days of the Troubles. Talbot notes 'that women who join the IRA, like the men, are from predominantly working- class backgrounds, they are younger than the usual recruiting age around the world, and they often continue to participate after they have had children' (Talbot 2004: 168). The 'Troubles' and its subsequent traumas had an adverse effect on the rights of women and the discussion on gender related issues took a more secondary role to the issue of Civil Rights in Northern Ireland. Isabella Lynam, modelled as she was on Maria Maguire (Gatland), both share a similar middle-class background. As an IRA member, Maguire had worked on various missions for the IRA in the early seventies. Maguire openly discussed her reasons for leaving the IRA in newspapers and in a recorded interview broadcast by the BBC. Isabella Lynam's middle-class background and her motives for joining the organisation are what sets her apart from her contemporaries in the IRA. Talbot (2004) has also specified that 'the

increase in female volunteers in the IRA did not necessarily correspond to a feminist agenda within the movement, but rather a realisation of the strategic importance of using women [like Lynam] as they were unknown to police.

> and as such less likely to be stopped by army or police' (Talbot 2004: 135-6). Isabella Lynam's reasons for joining the IRA and her 'hang-ups are ultimately sexual - she seeks to punish her father by joining the IRA and then craves the attention and love of the father substitute' (Rolston 1989: 10). As Lynam earlier admitted to herself, her involvement originates from a need to strike back at her father, his political will, and his way of life. She becomes like a great deal of female terrorists that 'behind the bravado and professionalism lurks psychosexual disorder, bound up, according to the novels, with their relationship to their fathers' (Rolston 1989: 8).

Female terrorists like Isabella Lynam are viewed both as a source of fascination and horror. For the PIRA, Lynam's educated background and the ambiguous reasons for her involvement in the violence render her the dangerous Other. Lynam, like her prototype the IRA activist Maguire, fall into such a category and like 'Maria Maguire, the middle-class Provisional defector, both have their doubts about where the struggle is going' (Patterson 2011: 166). When Maria Maguire first joined the IRA, the leaders of the Republican movement at the time thought she was as a good acquisition. David McKittrick, writing in the *Belfast Telegraph*, included the caption 'Maria Gatland: From terrorist to Tory' and wrote:

> when a particularly horrific IRA bomb which caused many civilian casualties went off in Belfast, and she wondered about the crippled and the injured and the lives that had been changed for ever. She decided to leave the IRA and head for England. Word reached her from the authorities that she would not be interrogated, and indeed that she would receive Special Branch cover. She told her story in a Sunday newspaper, recorded television interviews, and wrote her book. (McKittrick, 2008)

Female terrorists like Maria Maguire, like Isabella Lynam, are viewed both as a source of fascination and horror. Unlike Maria Maguire, Isabella does not escape what is planned for her. She is casually traded for more dangerous and valuable IRA members, and Lynam, unlike Maria Maguire fails to escape her own premonition of a doomed fate. Margaret Ward points out 'how women in the Republican movement were excluded from influential positions, highlighting that they were generally content to perform unquestioningly whatever services were demanded of them' (Ward 1995: 248). In this portrayal of a hostage situation in 'Victims,' Isabella is not only subject to the power of immediate imprisonment, or death, she is also subject to an aggressive hostile patriarchy. Again, Magennis makes a valuable point on this matter: '[t]o questions a male figure head was to question an ideology of struggle or resistance, and to stick one's head above the parapet was ill-advised at the height of the Troubles' (Magennis 2010: 11).

The men in the IRA Republican gang display definite misogynistic attitudes towards women and from the start Isabella's encounter with Jack Gallagher renders their association as toxic. When Isabella and Leonard go to the farmhouse to meet with the rest of the paramilitary gang, Isabella has an encounter with Gallagher, who she has caught spying on her while she washes at a stream behind the farmhouse. This incident outlines interactions between these two characters, and from the outset are marked by a highly charged atmosphere and there is a palpable tension in the farmhouse. McCabe states, 'to Gallagher all females were for screwing in ditches or cars. He boasted his prowess as lover and killer, how the girls whimpered, how his targets spun, stumbled, and fell' (McCabe 2005: 162). Again, Howes insightfully comments that.

> 'Gallagher thus appears the epitome of self-destructive heightened masculinity. McCabe emphasizes the contrast between the violent masculinity of the male characters and Lynam's femininity and her reverence for nature, thereby illustrating not only the detrimental effects of disregarding the equal worth of all beings on the environment but also the ecological self.

> Violence done to the environment and to the Other is violence done to one's 'self'' (Howes 2023:177).

At the river, Isabella's thought process is distorted and incomplete, and her emotions are triggered by her unconscious when she sees something floating downstream in the rushes. Isabella's active imagination is spontaneously activated by the visual imagery of the object floating in the stream and by her casual daydreaming an 'active imagination may emerge spontaneously as visualized imagery, as a waking dream' (Watkins 1976:in Schaverien 2005:1 31). In Isabella's case this is different from her having a simple daydream, which is a form of musing or considering her past, and it also unlike a dream one might experience in nocturnal sleeping. From her unconscious wishes, come guilt, desire, and regret and, consequently:

> the deliberate lowering of consciousness permits images from the unconscious to rise to the surface and, as these emerge, it may be as if the visualized event is taking place. Therefore, this form of active imagination is lived experience. The image generates psychological movement whilst the ego is held in a suspended state. (Schaverien 2005: 131)

Isabella's feelings become apparent when she thinks she sees a Moses' basket in the river but, 'then she saw clearly a fawn shopping bag in patchwork design. It drifted past spinning into the shallows and on into a deep pool round the bend, plastic, illusive, childless. She had sacrificed the blood of her blood for what? A dream? Nothing' (McCabe 2005:153) As Vicki Mahaffey points out, the best stream-of-consciousness writing not only depicts subjective experience in the moment but also makes us aware of the viewpoint character's limitations by showing us how their experience relates to larger social realities (Mahaffey 2013: 46).

Isabella's thought process is increasingly fragmented, suggesting the paramilitary narrator is on the verge of a breakdown. We can understand Isabella's hallucinations, in terms of the larger social reality of breaks from reality, even though the image of the shopping bag/Moses basket seems real to Isabella. She struggles with her past decisions, and, from a Freudian perspective,

the image of the Moses basket generates what Schaverien calls a psychological movement one where suppressed trauma comes to the fore. In relation to trauma, Caruth's notion of 'belatedness' suggests that trauma is both a response to and a failure to respond to the overflowing stimuli (Caruth 1996: 91). Lynam's emotions are channelled through what she imagines she sees in the water and the images replicate what is in her unconscious. As Caruth explains, trauma generates from 'an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena' (Caruth 1996: 91). It becomes clear that Isabella Lynam is someone who has suffered deep psychological trauma, due to her involvement in the violence of the IRA and her recent abortion. Isabella has decided to invoke an almost Freudian death wish or death drive in her involvement in the kidnapping. Despite propelling headlong towards a very uncertain and precarious end, it is noted 'nevertheless, in the collision of feminine and masculine interests - motherhood and militant nationalism - the latter wins' (Storey 2004: 206).Gallagher's gung-ho macho attitude grates on Isabella Lynam and the McAleer brothers, and it was a widely noted aspect of Northern Irish society during the Troubles. As Magennis points out:

> Masculine collectives provided identity when employment and opportunity were scarce in Northern Ireland with membership confirmed by participation in in often ritualistic violence. From the Grand Wizards of the Klu Klux Klan to the IRA's army council these groups afford men the pretence of a status they do not have in everyday life. (Magennis 2010: 114)

Lynam recognises that Jack Gallagher is dangerous and could be described as a psychopath, Gallagher's attitude to women is both sexist and violent, and Laura Pelaschiar notes:

> the sexuality of men such as these [terrorists] tend to harbour at times very explicit misogynistic attitudes towards women, combined with a violent and sadistic approach to sex which sees them equating the act of killing with that of sexual intercourse both of which understood and expressed in terms of overpowering the victims. (cited in Magennis, 2010: 77-78)

As the leader of the IRA cell, Leonard realises his failure to keep the violent Gallagher well away from Lynam: 'Burke's cryptic code had advised him to watch her. The river thing was unfortunate. Either of the McAleers would have been more discreet and Gallagher would have been more careful had he known who she was' (McCabe 2005: 162) .

The McAleers' home and personas are represented in exaggerated terms, melding a fervent Catholicism and staunch Republicanism. When Isabella enters the kitchen, she notes:

> all other available shelf and wall space was taken up with clocks grandmother, grandfather, a dozen wall clocks, wag-o the-walls, cuckoo clocks, shelves of ticking alarm and marble, clocks from railway stations and reading rooms, and one very impressive piece cast in from a big house yard or stable. The room itself seemed a clicking mechanism. (McCabe 2005: 155)

She is introduced to the rest of the republican gang, the twin McAleer brothers, who Gallagher glibly refers to as Tick and Tock and their staunch Republican mother. McCabe's reference to the numerous clocks in the room can essentially be described as a clicking mechanism and is related to the assembling of bombs and invokes the McAleer family trade in bomb making and terrorism. Isabella meets the rest of the gang, and the twin brothers Pascal and Pacelli, who introduce her to 'The Mammy': 'Everything about Mrs. McAleer is repulsive to Bella. She is 'enormous .... all chin and breast are quite literally short-sighted. And she is bed-ridden with some unexplained ailment which we are to assume is as incurable as her quasi-religious nationalism' (Rolston 1989: 7). Mrs McAleer dispenses advice, holy medals and holy water to Isabella while blissfully disregarding the oxymoronic juxtaposition of the two opposites; the notion of a blood sacrifice and the deliberate spilling of blood is placed in collusion with a devout piousness and religiosity. In the representation of motherhood and the maternal, the

> unnatural mothers in McCabe's gothic fiction are established in terms of Kristeva's grotesque, abject and uncanny. In general terms, Kristeva is 'attempting to explore the different ways in

which abjection works within human societies, as a means of separating out the human from the non-human and the fully constituted subject from the partially formed subject' (Creed 1989: 51).

Kristeva's notion of the abject becomes pivotal here and for her 'the maternal figure is constructed as the monstrous-feminine', a creature that prevents the child 'from taking up its proper place in relation to the symbolic' (Creed 1989: 68). Mrs. McAleer is an example of the monstrous feminine. This coalesces with her role of sacrificing her young sons to Republican ideals, precluding them from taking up their proper place in relation to the symbolic. The meaning being as a mother, Mrs McAleer is far too attached to her twin sons and her absolute reliance on them disavows their need to break free from her control and restrictive Republican ideals. The needs of the mother far supersede those of her sons and pose the greatest threat to the established order. In gothic writing, in the theorisation of the abject and the grotesque, the family and the mother especially are often linked to trauma. Mrs. McAleer embodies many of the traits of the monstrous mother and looking at gender through the prism of a feminist analysis the portrayal of Mrs. McAleer is physically, psychologically, and culturally the embodiment of the maternal grotesque. The monstrous feminine highlights the significance of gender in relation to the construction of monstrosity and there are a variety of such representations of the monstrous mother. Mrs. McAleer is represented with the traits of the maternal and this is juxtaposed with her monstrous composition. Creed maintains when the feminine is often formulated as monstrous, it is usually understood through the link with her female reproductive function or through her maternal traits. Consequently, McCabe challenges this portrayal or notion ,of motherhood through his representation of Mrs McAleer's self-sacrifice, her lack of selfishness and naturalness. Such attributes are juxtaposed with the element of wit and witticism and in his representation of Mrs. McAleer, McCabe describes her as: 'Mrs. McAleer was enormous, an Irish Queen Victoria, with de Valera's nose and Churchill's mouth all chin and breast, her stomach making a tent of the patchwork quilt, plaited hair bunned up, and lens so powerful that her eyes peered out in huge

and permanent astonishment' (McCabe 2005: 157). In his characterisation, and caricature, of Mrs McAleer, McCabe melds both religious ideology and violence, highlighting the contradictory links between religious beliefs and gothic violence. Isabella describes her life to Mrs. McAleer stating: 'I'm twenty-three. Arts graduate, only child of Willie Lynam, publican, Dail Deputy, and drunkard, separated from my mother, who devotes herself to poodles and Jesuits, and soon I will be in jail exiled or dead' (McCabe 2005: 160). Lynam is guided by her fatalistic view of her life, and she is propelled headlong towards an uncertain future. When she realises, she has been used by the IRA as a pawn in their dangerous game it is too late, devastated she sees with clarity how much of her life will be lost to ideals for which she has no real attachment.

'The Mammy'/Mrs McAleer is a powerful and dominating force in this story and is patterned as a self-sacrificing mother and wife who has 'given all for the cause' and she proves to be a formidable force. The representation of woman-as-Ireland in Irish culture is a well-worn trope in literature. The writing of the Irish Revolutionary period bears this out, with the poetry of Padraic Pearse being notable for the veneration of the Irish mother, and Pearse is depicted in 'Victims' on a calendar print, his head in a halo of flames. Underneath someone had printed, in biro, his poem 'The Mother' (McCabe 2005: 157). Mrs McAleer is proud of her sons and relates their horological skills as clock menders to that of building and priming bombs. She states 'they can take down any clock in the world and put it up again, and bombs…! Not a one in the country to touch them' (McCabe 2005: 158). At the end of Lynam's audience with the mother, 'Mrs McAleer was holding her with a crab-like grip between rigid thumb and forefinger. Close up the two great floating eyes in that flaccid face had the impact of a Hogarth cartoon, as she gives Isabella Lynam and the terrorist group what McCabe terms her 'sepulchral blessing' (McCabe 2005: 160). McCabe continues to depict the mother in a darkly comical manner, as she passes on her 'motherly pockets' of wisdom to Lynam telling her ,'All a body needs is faith in God, his

Blessed Mother, faith in your people and faith in your country' (McCabe 2005: 160). In this context, Rolston submits that 'it is that blind faith which she has passed on to her sons, the republican Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Lynam, without such a mother, constantly doubts. But with which Pascal and Pacelli obediently and uncritically obey their domineering mother' (Rolston 1989: 7). From the start, McCabe frames Lynam in terms of the mother/whore dichotomy, describing her in terms of both the sultry temptress, juxtaposed with his description of her as 'a smallish Madonna composed with cool all-seeing eyes' (McCabe 2005: 165). And, as Kennedy-Andrews confirms across 'Troubles' literature 'when women characters appear, they frequently stand for "the sacred realm of private feeling and personal relationships," which is positioned as the opposite of the "macho-man" paramilitary arena' (Kennedy-Andrews 2003: 17).

As the only female member of the gang, Isabella expresses her unhappiness at sacrificing her freedom for ideals; she has no real belief in the revolutionary cause. In his inclusion of Isabella Lynam, McCabe reflects on the how different types of personalities from various backgrounds become drawn into Irish Republicanism. Isabella Lynam proves one does not need to grow up in a home with an overt exposure to the tenets of IRA Republicanism, to imbibe or absorb transgenerational trauma and to act on or adapt to its ideologies. In McCabe's illustration of Lynam he supports this hypothesis, as Lynam's reason for joining the IRA differs from the usual female terrorist, and her relationship with Irish republicanism is incompatible with that of her peers and her fellow terrorists in the IRA. She contemplates as to 'why she had joined? She tried to recall now her student impatience, bordering on hatred, for the congenital Irish condition, a drunken meaningless talk, breeding more drunken meaningless talk, an ability to think clearly and act coldly' (McCabe 2005: 152). Lynam, like a great deal of people in the early 70s and 80s, was drawn to Republican nationalism by an idealism that was predominantly activated by a response to the violence by the British state. The 'Troubles' began in the late 60s and the violence

that erupted instigated the arrival of the British army onto the streets of Northern Ireland**.** Their presence, along with internment without trial and a shoot to kill policy, filled the ranks of the IRA with young people not just from a Republican background but many joined due to the obvious breach in civil rights. Women would normally be confined to working in the home but suddenly found themselves involved in a new violent and politicised world. The violence drew the focus of worldwide media and because of the concentration on the 'political, economic, and social marginalization of working-class. Catholics, the introduction of British soldiers to the streets of the North, and atrocities such as Bloody Sunday, many women became involved in the resistance movement that developed in response to these repressions' (O'Keefe 2017: 169).

Now the kidnapping becomes real, and her nervousness is due to her unmistakable fear as to what part she is expected to play in the attack on the Armstrong family: '[r]ound a table or from a platform it was easy to talk and propagate the merits of violence as she had done for two years, different now that it had prowled to her side, the bloody midwife of regeneration, a ruthless animal with dripping mouth and glassy merciless eyes' (McCabe 2005: 151).

And yet despite her "troubled consciousness and humanity" (215) and growing empathy for the victims, she does not rebel but rather ironically sacrifices herself to a futile cause. Thus, having unwittingly bought into the sacrificial myth of Ni Houlihan, she has not been true to her 'self' nor committed herself to any moral act, or what Naess, following Kant, would term 'beautiful' action — one that is performed out of noble inclination. But, as Naess would undoubtedly agree, 'the cause' is like a self-inflicted disease, that in the absence of revolt can have only one outcome — self-destructiveness(Howes 2023:179)

McCabe uses language associated with maternity, like 'bloody midwife,' arrogating terminology connected to Isabella's pregnancy, linking the abortion to the violence of the 'Troubles.' The

metaphors McCabe uses here connect the maternal, the mother and the animalistic. Rolston has commented that in earlier Troubles fiction, '[m]en came to represent violence and women peace, with all the force of a Greek myth' (Rolston 1989: 4). But McCabe offers a female protagonist that moves away from that standard representation of a woman. Her actions for Buckley, the father of the baby, are couched in the monstrous, and this is a clear rejection of him as a father, and herself as a mother. For Magennis 'Ireland, maternity has become the horror. Mother Ireland is, at best, a poor vessel, and, at worst, infanticidal' (Magennis 2010:18).

While the gang wait for the fulfilment of the terms of their kidnap demands, the American Professor, Stuart Caldwell, and the Colonel listen to Pascal and Pacelli play the tin-whistle. Caldwell describes the music as 'Haunting' and 'Very special', but the Colonel describes it as 'Noise' and 'Repetitive'. The Colonel refers to the tragedy and trauma of Irish history relating the contemporary political turmoil of the 'Troubles' with the 1840s Great Famine, just as McCabe does in his works: '[a]ll so unfair, the Colonel said. We were never absentees, my grandfather cut rents to half and nil during the famine, mortgaged the estate to feed tenants. Catholic and Protestants, ,one of my cousins signed the Treaty for the Irish side. Harriet's father was related through marriage Lloyd George…lunacy' (McCabe 2005: 189).The Colonel's paternalism could be described as part of the Ascendancy ethic. He is self -righteous in offering up reasons as to why this kidnapping is discriminatory. Believing that he and his forbears were good landlords during the Great Famine, he is expecting an almost feudal loyalty to his family. But as Eagleton explains: '[t]aken as a whole, the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy represented a backward, unmannerly sector of the British governing class; and their ability to win the loyalty of their tenants was seriously disabled by the ethnic, religious and cultural abyss which yawned between them' (Eagleton 1995: 59).These recurring motifs found in the old decaying or ruined Big House novel

appear across McCabe's oeuvre: the absentee landlord, or negligent landlord, the usurpation of the estate from the landlord by a devious outsider, and the

lack of an heir, to the violence hanging in the air. But as the ordeal moves to its resolution, we witness the further side-lining of the feminine in the public military context:

> Caldwell was about to say something when the volume of Gallagher's transistor was turned to a news-reader's voice in mid-sentence. … at the Armstrong Estate in County Fermanagh the army are standing by. The kidnappers are demanding the release of three leading Provisionals from the Maze camp at Belfast. They want them brought to Inver Hall by helicopter. If this demand is not met, they say they will kill the first hostage at noon tomorrow and thereafter one every six hours. Colonel Armstrong served under General Montgomery in the African campaign and was awarded the D.S.O. Also, hostage is Alexander Boyd-Crawford, member of the old Stormont Parliament for over twenty years. An American professor and a Protestant clergyman are among the six being held. (McCabe 2005: 190)

After the radio report: 'Harriet was the first to speak. To Millicent she said, "We don't exist dear" (McCabe 2005: 190). What is being expressed here is far more than just a lack of recognition of the two women and their value as human beings caught up in the kidnapping situation.

By highlighting the purposeful omitting of the women's names from the news report, McCabe is making a strong statement on Irish patriarchal attitudes to the role of women in Irish life at this time in early 1970s Ireland. The hostage stand- off reaches its climax when the British Army send in soldiers to attempt to enter Inver House from the roof: 'Leonard looked towards the McAleers and pointed at Alex Boyd–Crawford. The brothers moved as one carrying the inert body to the main hall' (McCabe 2005:199). Harriet tries to stop what is about to happen to Alex, but 'Gallagher's pistol whipped across her face so quickly that those in the room saw only the effect of the impact' (McCabe 2005: 199). Gallagher's savage attack on Harriet reinforces the lack of restraint and ruthlessness of the terrorists. Consequently, when Alex is callously murdered by the IRA gang, it proved the IRA group were resolute in their commitment to carry out murder of

hostages until they achieved the freedom of their fellow IRA members. The British Army waiting outside Inver house, and using a megaphone, requested a word with Colonel Armstrong. After Leonard spoke to the Colonel it became clear to Isabella 'from the way they spoke, turned about and listened intently, she had no doubt that some form of compromise had been agreed' (McCabe 2005: 211). But nothing prepared Isabella for the shock, when she hears Leonard give the results of their talks: 'The offer was nothing or…three for three…he paused. The men being released you know about …their value… I had to choose…I've chosen' (McCabe 2005: 211). Again McCabe includes the familiar themes of treachery and betrayal, as Isabella Lynam realises the McAleer twins and herself are offered up in exchange for the three far more valuable prisoners from Long Kesh: 'Lynam listened unbelieving as the spare words branded her accessory to murder, condemned her to the brutality and living death of a prison compound' (McCabe 2005: 211) McCabe ends the story not with the anger and despair of the betrayed Isabella, but instead he focuses on the matriarch Harriet, and her sense of hope and renewal after the trauma of her kidnapping experience. Speaking to the reporters:

> Harriet looked out over the massive shapes of war and the uniforms below, to the long lake, the great forest beyond and up into the August sun, the blinding sky. "Look about you." Her face fell apart as she said, "The world is still beautiful". She nodded trying to smile and said again. Beautiful. (McCabe 2005: 219)

Tired and struggling with the emotional trauma of the previous hours, Harriet concludes with a testament to the beauty of the natural world around her. From an ecological perspective and in relation to the 'Troubles' violence, Harriet's reflection suggests a strong sense of hope remains, despite the violence she has witnessed. She essentially views nature and its wonders both in terms of an appreciation for the natural world but also in a renewed gratitude for her life and that of her family. For McCabe, nature remains a central thematic leitmotif and it provides a bridge to the characters in these stories. McCabe's writing is intimately connected to his environment, particularly the lake which inspires the water imagery that remains a recurring theme in his work

(The Irish Times 1998: n.d.). This natural feature also forms an inseparable part of his characters' place-world, as both the IRA terrorists and the Colonel's family in 'Victims' are frequently reminded of its presence through the mansion's bay window.(Howes 2023:180)

This view may serve as a poignant reminder of the reality of the place world beyond the confines of their politically charged and self-destructive environment. McCabe's writing bears testimony to the importance of nature and communities coexisting in harmony with it . The peaceful natural world becomes shattered by the 'Troubles' violence, symbolised in the opening passages of 'Cancer' by the violent imagery of nature and the natural world reflected 'in the enclosure a fresh crop of dandelions crocheted in the green sward pushed with a violence that forced him to look away' (McCabe 2005: 78). McCabe also includes the lake, assigning it violent turbulent adjectives like: 'a cold wind blowing from the lake chopped at the water ,churning up angry flecks' (McCabe 2005:78) The gothic ecological images have also reverberated throughout *Death and Nightingales* and are included in Beth's first meeting with Liam Ward when she helps him to pull a cow from a bog. The surrounding landscape is represented as threatening evil or sinister with descriptive images as 'hungry scutch grass spined the lane, tentacles of briar reaching from the verges' (McCabe 1992: 69). Interestingly, violence and the self-destructive behaviours displayed by the characters becomes reflected back in the environment itself. Nature has been represented with dual characteristics, one as aggressive and self-destructive and secondly acted upon or destroyed by human behaviour. Harriet's interaction with the beauty of nature, possibly as a result of her near-death experience, causes her to reflect on the beauty of the natural world all round her. Nature is signified and aggregated with gothic language and this distinction is further emphasised in the portrayal of the lake like 'a bloodied gash in the quiet landscape' (McCabe 2005: 168). McCabe's inclusion of such language illustrates the impact of terrorism, warfare and blood on the very landscape. In 'Victims' nature and humans alike are all victims of gothic trauma and violence. Consequently , nature and the natural world are depicted with two

conflicting views. From one perspective ,it is portrayed as aggressive and self-destructive, and on the other, it is acted upon or destroyed by human behaviour. This duality underscores the complex relationship between nature and humanity in these works.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has noted that Ireland's past has led to transgenerational traumas and that cycles of violence lead to gothi trauma for the victims and for those injured by their experiences. Rather than providing a broad overview of the Famine, the Troubles, and the violence associated with the Land Wars, this study has focused on the psychological trauma and suffering experienced by those who were affected by these periods in Irish history. As noted earlier, the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine saw the publication of numerous publications, journals, and conference events relevant to the topic, and *Tales from The Poorhouse*, published in 1999, features in this grouping. The cast of characters that figure in this study of *Tales from ThePoorhouse,* includes 'The Orphan,' as recounted by Roisín Brady, 'The Master,' as told by Reginald Murphy, 'The Landlord' by Lord Conroy and 'The Mother' told by the twin's mother, Mary Brady.

Róisín's account is first, and her mother's elegiac tale is the last story. *Tales from the Poorhouse* details the agony endured by the Brady family, from Grace and her baby's death through to Róisín's Gothic experience of imprisoning her younger, sickly brother, Micilín, in their collapsed home until he dies. Focusing on the Irish female body, McCabe's gothic literature dramatizes the fanatical control of women's reproductive potential in Famine Ireland as well as recurring concerns about the female body. Róisín is exemplative of the female gothic and her characterisation has challenged the strict social paradigm of femininity and its demands on the female figure. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is McCabe's identification and awareness of the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. The connection between famine, starvation, shame, and reproduction is made clear through Róisín's femininity, and as she transcended such mandates and disavowed the conventional gender norms, she embodies Kristevan abjectness as the Other.

This thesis has also identified gothic trauma in how Irish people were characterized by a sense of shame and a conviction that God was punishing them through the Famine. Our argument charted Grace's and Roisín's development. Despite the hunger and death of the Famine catastrophe, the two young women represent a hope for the future transfusing vitality into their Famine community. Their moving friendship and their youth invoke hope amid the despair of the Famine conditions. This study has also found that despite religious indoctrination and the influence of the clergy over the public, Roisín remains stoic and especially abhors her mother's fawning attitude to the local cleric, Brendan Galligan. The effervescent spirit of the Brady sisters is viewed as immoral and wanton, and Roisín remains resolute in the face of her mother's and the priest's accusatory tones. Supported by the outraged priest, Mary Brady castigates the twins for their licentious actions and lays the blame for the Famine blight and the downfall of the local community on the two young women. McCabe's focus on the twins' bodies signified a youthful vibrancy is juxtaposed with the disintegrating bodies of the Irish countryside. During the Famine, all normal familial connections and what was once considered the norms of Irish society are transformed. The drive to survive the Famine changed Irish society and its people. The psychological and emotional impacts reflect the attendant results of a gothic trauma. But also, we argue that female sexuality represented an emphatic force, one that acts as an affront to the Famine dead and dying. In Famine society the male figure is privileged over the female and the savagery of violence mirrors Ireland's turbulent, violent history. Extreme poverty and bloodshed serve as the impetus for an engagement with the gothic literary genre.

We have also attended to the genre of the Irish Gothic, which remains a staple of Irish literature well into the 21st century and has featured literary greats like Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla,* Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* along with other well-known literary works like George Moore's *Drama in* Muslin, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and the later *December Bride* by Sam Hanna Bell.

These gothic texts have focused on various themes and the sexualised element becomes juxtaposed with horror; *Carmilla,* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* include the vampire, an especially Gothic tool or device, and coupled with the dream, motif further highlight the Gothic elements to these stories. *Death and Nightingales* is set in Clonoula in Fermanagh in 1883, one year after the murders of Lord Cavendish and his under-secretary in the Phoenix Park. The volatile nature of Irish society at this time exposes the barely concealed aggression and violence between Protestant and Catholic landowning farmers and tenant labourers. Clonoula is an example of the Big House, and it stands as a metaphor for the Ascendancy's waning influence in Ireland. Set against the background of the anger and antagonism from the Irish peasantry against landlords and their ilk are the fulcrum of this story. The analysis here focused on how these divisions place McCabe's work within the previous Big House literary history, as well as how Gothic literary tropes place the Big House fictions within the larger Gothic literary legacy.

Death and Nightingales is set against the background of the Land War, which dominated most of 1879 and 1882 and the formal structure of the book reflects the political elements of the story, which also include parliamentary papers and reports, criticism of secret societies, and the seizure of land from tenants and cottiers. This novel describes the trauma of the Land Wars, the horrifyingly hideous details of the Phoenix Park killings, and the similarly gothic Wildgoose Lodge murders, all of which combine to define this era in Irish politics and become juxtaposed with the personal traumas in the book. McCabe's novel is a moral response to the Enniskillen bombing in 1987. It shifts the narrative between two parallel time spans, with the 1880s era of land and political agitation and the late 1980s and early 1990s era of the 'Troubles.' In our investigation of *Death and Nightingales*, colonialism, blood lines, and female sexuality are all set important strands in the plot, as well as the politics and morality of female sexuality and reproduction. From a broader stylistic standpoint, McCabe combines naturalistic

imagery with gothic and modernist techniques to produce the narrative breaks, silences, and conversational fragments that express the alienation and conflict between the two versions of history held by the Anglo-Irish Billy Winters and his Irish Catholic stepdaughter, Beth. Like his short stories set against the Troubles milieu of 1970s Northern Ireland, McCabe addresses issues of religion, politics ,class, and the nation. Beth acts as a bridge between the present and the past, as well as a persistent reminder of past traumas, through her memories of her upbringing and her traumatic recollections.

The Irish Big House literary tradition is a well-established mode in McCabe's fiction and dramas, appearing in *Death and Nightingales, Tales from a Poorhouse* and in the 'Troubles' short fictions. This study has identified the recurring motifs of the Big House in the decaying house and the absentee landlord, which represent the decline of the Ascendancy class in Ireland. McCabe draws parallels between the upheaval of agrarian agitation and the rise to prominence of Parnell, the figure most closely tied to the Irish Land War .The decline of the Irish country house during the disturbances, outrages and structural alterations on the land was caused by the series of Coercion Bills and Land Acts. The Big House novels explore the domestic life of the Big House, often standing as a metaphor for what is happening in the wider political milieu. The female gothic has the ability to dislocate male patriarchal kinship structures through female sexuality. McCabe's Gothic writing is written through the prism of an ecological vision and nature and the natural world are coded as animalistic.

The most recent historical material is then covered in our analyses of McCabe's short stories. The McAleer brothers and Isabella Lynam dislike Gallagher's gung-ho attitude, which was a well-recognized feature of Northern Irish culture during the Troubles. When jobs and opportunities were scarce in Northern Ireland, masculine collectives gave people a sense of identity. On

meeting Jack Gallagher Lynam acknowledges that Gallagher is dangerous and could be described as a psychopath and his attitude toward women is also violent. Examining this study on the basis of gender and her maternal features, Mrs. McAleer is a prime illustration of the monstrous feminine. In gothic literature, the family, and the mother in particular, are frequently the scene of trauma in the theorization of the grotesque and the abject.

This series of commentaries opens with ‘Cancer’ and the titular term stands as a powerful figuration for the Northern Irish ‘Troubles.’ McCabe’s gothic 'Cancer' is an allegory for the seething inter-communal hatreds of rural borderlands. The blood motif and the handing on of legacies becomes essential in McCabe's story. This project was undertaken to design and evaluate the Gothic trauma in McCabe’s writing and equally the deployment of blood can be linked to the ways in which sectarianism and racial identity come to the fore. McCabe's next story, 'Heritage', explores the trauma of living along the border during the ‘Troubles.’ This study has shown that the ‘Troubles’ invade the home, and its psychological impacts damage its social structure, with families often torn apart by sectarianism. The main goal of the current study was to determine gothic trauma in McCabe’s work, and Eric, caught between the crossfire of his parents' unhappy marriage, and pressurised into action by his uncle George's belligerent Protestantism, struggles to remain faithful to his Protestant culture and remain loyal to the customs and laws of his own community. The trauma of sectarianism appears in the novella, ‘Victims,’ which was written as a modern-day Big House story. Starting in the seventeenth century, the Big Houses and their inhabitants were the hub of power, riches, and influence. Usually, these Big Houses were normally inhabited by Ascendancy families, Anglo-Irish in blood and Anglican in faith. The background to the story includes the kidnapping of a local Anglo-Irish family the Armstrongs and five IRA militants who are holding the Anglo- Irish family hostage. This study has identified 1970s Northern Ireland as an extremely traditional patriarchal society and, in many ways, the hierarchy of the IRA reflected the absolute control of the Catholic Church. Women’s bodies and

reproductive rights feature prominently in 'Victims' and, despite Lynam's reproductive autonomy, she is still fearful and unsure of how Burke will respond to her decision and these further compounds her trauma and can be read in terms of the Irish 'national' cause to which she is enlisted here. A feature of Irish nationalist politics is the imbrication between structures of patriarchy, sexuality, and reproduction. McCabe's connection to the natural world invokes eco - gothic imagery and Christina Howes's work addresses the place world in McCabe's 'Victims' . McCabe's Northern Ireland landscapes are a feature of the Irish gothic tradition .The violence from colonial forces at the heart of the conflict ,render the land and the natural landscapes as sites of a dystopian ecological vision. Eco gothic spaces become a metaphor for what is lost and irreplaceable, the damaged home place functions as desecrated Irish gothic spaces.

Throughout McCabe's work, be it drama or literary fiction, he presents the best and worst of Irish history, as well as embracing the trauma of the lives and experiences of local people in his own rural farming community. Here on the border lies the essence of the Northern Ireland conflict, manifested in land ownership, religious conflict, historical betrayal, fear, and trauma dividing the two groups. McCabe writes about that fear of vocalization, with characters trapped within their own communities, constrained by religious bigotry and superstition, and placed in impossible situations. It is as if he is aware that 'trauma is never truly subjective – it is never completely interior or exterior –but involves relation dynamics in which the silenced strain for vocalization' (McGrattan 2015: 16). The scope and range of McCabe's writing reflects the underlying simmering hatreds of the Northern Ireland conflict. In his approach, McCabe delves into some of the darker sides of the human psyche, and the pathos of his work is redoubled by the fact that as a writer on the Irish border he drew much of his material from the real events that took place around him. Ultimately McCabe, like William Faulkner, has been shaped by his historical circumstances into a gothic writer. His challenge is to invigorate and render urgent the struggles – Protestant, Catholic, human – of those who inhabit his realm (Messud 2005). The works under

scrutiny here explore themes which focus on the of historically conditioned power dynamics in Ireland, and each work presents aspects of the Gothic translated to locations in which agents of empire experience disturbing encounters with nature and with indigenous peoples that challenge their ideas about society. As Henry Patterson, appraising McCabe's work, points out that:

> there is a bleak nightmarish quality to McCabe's stories, and they share what Cleary identifies as a lack of any sense of a more emancipatory political revolution, this in part reflects the period in which they were written, when the promise of the civil rights movement had disappeared into the renewed vigour of republican armed struggle (Patterson 2011: 166)

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