DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF DJILLALI LIABES SIDI BEL ABBES

FACULTY OF LETTERS, LANGUAGES AND ARTS

Department of English

TITLE

Irish Woman Identity Fragmentation(s) in Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls* (1960)

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the

Degree of Magister in Post Colonial Woman Literature Written in English

Presented by: Miss Rachida KADDOURI

Supervised by: Prof. Fewzia BEDJAOUI

BOARD OF EXAMINERS:

President: Dr. Mohamed Yamin BOULENOUAR (MC- A) University of Sidi Bel Abbes

Supervisor: Dr. Fewzia BEDJAOUI (Professor) University of Sidi Bel Abbes

Examiner: Dr. Nadia KIES (MC- A) University of Sidi Bel Abbes

Academic Year: 2014-2015

“I think being a woman is like being Irish... Everyone says you're important and nice, but you take second place all the time.”

Iris Murdoch

(1965:30)

Dedications

DEDICATIONS

I would like to dedicate this modest work to the people, too many to name, who hold a special place in my heart, especially to the immortal spirit of my mother that I wish wholeheartedly she is with me to bless the fruits of my efforts, to my father who encouraged all the way and to my eldest brother Mohammed who has always believed in me and has never ceased to tell me so. Ardent dedication is offered to all my family KADDOURI and BELBRAIK, especially to my sister Aicha, her husband Benaamar for their support, to my dear brothers and sisters for their support: No one could have had your noble motives. A special dedication goes to all my postgraduate classmates.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My earnest gratitude is all to Allah, the Almighty, for the accomplishment of this work.

I take pleasure in putting in golden record my fervent thanks to my ideal supervisor Prof. Fewzia BEDJAOUI for her generous support, endless patience, and especially for being such a goodhearted teacher whose amalgamation of humanity and crave has stirred in me a great love and taste for literature and for teaching.

I would not throw to oblivion a great bulk of teachers whose suggestions and criticism loaded my zeal for success, though it is hard to hit the culmination of perfection, viz. Prof. Ilham SERRIR and Dr. Mohamed Yamin Boulenouar.

At last, I should thank all my colleagues and friends for smoothing over the last minutes difficulties, and for being all the time such a stout warm bosom that I always lean on...so many thanks for all.

Abstract

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the work of Edna O'Brien, The Country Girls 1960. O'Brien is an Irish female writer whose works span from 1960-present. Just a decade before the Women's Movement took off in the latter half of twentieth-century Ireland, Irish author Edna O'Brien published her first novel, The Country Girls. Since its publication, O'Brien has written and published over fifteen novels, several collections of short stories, plays, screenplays and poetry.

Throughout her prolific career, O'Brien has been celebrated and denounced for her writing, both censored and anthologized in her home country. She is an imperative author for study as she broke the gender barriers of a double patriarchal system instilled by both Church and State in Ireland, which caused six of her early novels to be banned. O'Brien chose self-exile in London to write about her native women in spite of the 'rapacious' Irish Censorship Board. Edna O'Brien's writing is based on her interrogation of the problems affecting women in Irish society during the past forty years. It was not until recently that O'Brien had an Irish audience that was willing to hear her critique of a repressive Ireland, and it is this audience that is finally able to reflect upon the sacrifices made by early Irish feminists, including Edna O'Brien.

The present research intends to explore the conflicts and compromises of Irish woman identity as this has been represented in the 20th century Irish literature, in relation to the more generalized categories of society, nation, and religion.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Toward A Post-Colonial Feminist Ireland

Chapter Two: Positioning Edna O'Brien in Contemporary Irish Women Fiction

Chapter Three: The Country Girls (1960): Deconstructing the Irish Woman's Myth

List of Tables and Maps

Table:

List of Maps

List of Acronyms

CG: The Country Girls (1960)

IWLM: The Irish Women's Liberation Movement

General Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Throughout the twentieth century, and now in the twenty-first, Ireland **(1)** has contributed a wealth of literature to the world. Over the past thirty years, twenty-three Irish authors have either won or been short-listed for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, and one was awarded the Nobel Prize **(2)**. They have produced literature **(3)** that called for independence from England and literature that dealt with the after-effects once the Irish free-state was created. The country has become economically independent and prosperous since its freedom from English rule, yet the vestiges of colonialism still remain in the country's culture. The Irish Literary Revival of the early 1900's, spawned by authors and activists like W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Douglas Hyde, and the recent economic success of the country solidified Ireland's presence in the world as one of the major nations of influence.

However, the effects of years of colonialism remain in the cultural consciousness of the country and are addressed extensively in contemporary Irish fiction. In contemporary Irish fiction, postcolonial discovery has become a personal quest for subjectivity and authority, a journey to develop an independent and satisfying personal identity as an individual and an Irish citizen. Since the mid-1960's Irish women have participated in a violent political, economic, and social upheaval and a traumatic clash of traditionalism and modernism. They have, so to speak, been wrenched from the security of marriage and family into a complex world fraught with enormous psychic stresses and strains. They have survived that passage and, in surviving, they have begun to define a new social order.

Consequently, more and more women began to write, many of them also about subjects as; social injustice, female sexuality and motherhood which were once taboo, their stories became increasingly outspoken and challenging. Unlike their antecedent generations, Irish modern women writers created protagonists who were no longer prepared to endure passively, but instead forged new identities for themselves and finally began depicting women in 'honest' situations .They became more independent and confident and dared to express their demands, such as equality, woman's recognition and expressing their opinions.

At the time O'Brien began to write, few advances had been made. Her first novel, The Country Girls, sent shock waves through rural Ireland when it was published in 1960. Across the sea, London was about to enter the Swinging Sixties but in Ireland, sex was seldom mentioned openly and especially not when it involved unmarried girls. O'Brien, who was living in London at the time, found her novel banned in her home country and her parents so ashamed that they refused to speak to her.

Edna O'Brien is nowadays regarded as one of the most emblematic and prolific contemporary Irish women writers. Born in 1930, she is the author of nearly thirty books, which include various short stories, novels, plays, several autobiographical essays, screenplays and other miscellaneous works. After publishing The Country Girls (1960), O'Brien wrote The Lonely Girl (1962) and Girls in Their Married Bliss (1964), both hastily banned by the Irish censors. These three novels, written between 1960 and 1964 and later collected as The Country Girls Trilogy, follow two profoundly different heroines, Caithleen and Baba, from adolescence to adulthood.

However, I am interested in O'Brien's first novel The Country Girls for because of two reasons; it was banned and burnt in Ireland and O'Brien left Ireland behind. Second, the writer received *Kingsley Amis Award* for it in 1962. Edna O'Brien is arguably the pioneer of the current generation of women writing about Irish women's struggles. The novel explores the origins and characters of Caithleen and Baba: their family backgrounds, relationships with mother and father, the past from which they will never be able to escape. Edna O'Brien has been a name to remember. It is described as a landmark in the battle for a modern secular Ireland that has, in the cities at least, all but been won. The novel changed the course of Irish feminism.

The present research intends to focus on Irish woman through The Country Girls. It reflects how women struggle to free themselves from the female stereotypes embedded in the culture of modern Ireland. More specifically, this dissertation explores the conflicts and compromises of Irish woman identity as this has been represented in the 20th century Irish literature, in relation to the more generalized categories of society, nation, and religion.

Thus, the following questions are sought:

1. What was it like growing up in Ireland postcolonial period according to Edna O'Brien, as a contemporary Irish novelist who has sought to recapture the experience?

2. To what extent does The Country Girls represent a loss of identity?

3. How does the Irish patriarchal society affect Irish woman identity?

4. Is The Country Girls an autobiographical work?

The preceding aforementioned questions are going to be answered via the study of O'Brien's novel The Country Girls, therefore, the following hypotheses are made to be checked later on throughout the analysis of the novel:

1. Edna O'Brien's The Country Girls is among the most popular novels and the most celebrated. It was published within a period and went a long way toward setting the tone of contemporary Irish fiction in general, especially since it is written by a writer with long, ongoing, prodigious and influential career.

2. The Country Girls is about sudden moments of understanding of life and its dichotomies, freedom and entrapment, failure and success, disgust and bliss. Throughout the novel, woman characters struggle to formulate their own Irish, as well as their own woman identity in the face of a patriarchal society.

3. The pressures from the patriarchal Irish society come in multifarious forms, woman characters in Edna O'Brien's fiction tend to defy unreservedly such extremely constructive forces. They struggle all their life with the patriarchal forces from all directions.

4. The relationship between a writer's biography and their work is always a difficult area of literary criticism. Many of the feelings of emptiness, loss, and loneliness were also felt by Edna O'Brien and then revealed through the characters.

The present research work: *Irish Woman Identity Fragmentation (s) in Edna O'Brien's The Country Girls* is divided into three chapters. The opening chapter entitled *Toward a Post-colonial feminist Ireland* is devoted to a literature review which is relevant to the

subject matter of this research. What we certainly aim to offer in this chapter is a survey of a number of selected theories, perspectives and studies which correspond to the study of post-colonialism and feminism, with a particular emphasis on the Irish context.

On the other hand, the second chapter*, Positioning Edna O'Brien in the Contemporary Irish Woman Literature,* is divided into two parts. The first part tackles the Irish literature precisely, the contemporary Irish women literature and in the second we have tried to position Edna O'Brien amongst contemporary Irish women writer by including; her biography, life and literary works with their criticism.

However, the third chapter, Deconstructing the Irish Woman's Myth, aims at answering to the present research questions and hypotheses by analyzing The Country girls. It provides an overview of the novel, how Edna O'Brien deconstructed the myth of an ideal Irish woman, parallels between Edna O'Brien's life and the novel, a critical reception of the novel and screen adaptation.

The research will attempt to open connected discussions.Especially in teaching method, one expects that the incorporation of Irish women writers in the educational program will make opportunities for more shared comprehension. This study could open up new thinking in new literary works by concentrating on examples of post-colonialism, feminism and Irish Studies. It could help additionally contemplating women's issues, eminently, patriarchy, sexuality, socio-cultural parts and creation itself, and to removing generalizations and shaking inaccurate judgments. Introduction to an alternate society and to different ways of thinking prompts better approaches for taking a gander at one's own particular society.

Notes:

(1) Throughout this dissertation, I am referring to the Republic of Ireland.

(2) Seamus Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995.

(3) The term Irish literature is used to refer to Irish literature in English in this work as Irish literature in Irish is not what the work is aimed at. Definitely, such a theme is so extensive that deserves to be discussed in an independent work.

Chapter One

Chapter One

Toward A Post-Colonial Feminist Ireland

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARD A POST-COLONAIL FEMINIST IRELAND

I.1. Introduction

In the twentieth century, the world saw a radical change. There were revolutions in transportation and communication, decolonialisation of many countries, the nascent phenomenon of globalization, the failure of modernity and a growing recognition of the universality of basic human rights. As a result, there was the rise of new literary theories such as; post-colonialism and feminism, and Ireland, as former British colony, was affected by this development.

The first chapter, a theoretical one, tries to offer some brief, clear, and convenient definitions to the major concepts that have a relationship with the present research work. Moreover, studies and researches, which are relevant to the subject matter of this research, will be referred to in order to corroborate the hypothesis or develop a new idea. What we certainly aim to offer in this chapter is a survey of a number of selected theories, perspectives and studies which correspond to the study of post-colonialism and feminism, and provides an overview of the post-colonial feminist Ireland.

I.2. Studies on Post-colonialism

Since the early 1980's, *post colonialism* has developed a body of writing that attempts to shift the dominant ways in which the relations between Western and non-Western people and their worlds are viewed, in other words, to look from the other side of the photograph and realize that when Western people look at the non-Western world what they see is often more a mirror image of themselves and their own *assumptions.*

Due to the variety and wide range of the field, it is worth considering if one can ever really talk of a post-colonialism, with all the coherency that this term implies. Rather than using an umbrella term that lets in so much, it might be better begin but questioning post-colonialism as a meaningful concept and seeking better ways of accounting for its prevailing, manifold subject matters.

I.2.1. Post-colonialism: Definitions

Post-colonialism designates critical practice that is highly eclectic and difficult to define. The term itself is sometimes written with a hyphen (post-colonial/post-colonialism) and sometimes is left unhyphenated (post-colonial/post-colonialism), with two forms being used to designate the same areas of interest by different critics. The hyphened version was first used by political scientists and economists to denote the period after colonialism, but from about the late seventies it was turned into a more wide-ranging culturalist analysis in the hands of literary critics and others. (Ashcroft et al, 1998)

A possible working definition for post-colonialism is that it involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the

local level of ex-colonial societies, as well as at the level of more general global developments. In this regard, Peter Brooker defines post-colonialism as

> *the study of the ideological and cultural impact of Western colonialism and in particular of its aftermath –whether as a continuing influence (neocolonialism) or in the emergence of newly articulated independent national and individual identities (Brooker, 1999:193).*

Moreover, post-colonialism can be seen as a critical analysis of history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France and other European colonial powers. It focuses on Third World Countries in Africa, Asia, Caribbean and South America as well as Canada, Australia and New Zealand and on the English literature created there.

It is also often misunderstood as a temporal concept meaning the time after colonization has ceased, or the time following the politically determined independence day on which a country breaks away from its government by another state or type of governance it chooses to have. One does share John McLeod's definition that *post-colonialism is not contained by the tidy categories of historical periods or dates, although it remains firmly bound up with historical experiences*. (McLeod. J, 2000:5).

On the whole the term 'Post-Colonial' has ambiguity and complexity of the many socio-cultural experiences and differences it implicates. Though the colonies once subjected to imperial rules are now free, still subject in one way or another to forms of new colonial domination or post-colonial haunt in the form of its language and cultural interactions. This is why post-colonialism is *"devoted to the task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past" (Ghandi. L, 1998: 4)*

I.2.2. Post-colonial Theories: Decolonizing the Mind

Colonialism is a historical fact that has affected, at one time or another, almost the entire world, and for the majority of the world's population their experience of colonialism has been or is one of being the colonized. The notion that some people have the right to rule over other peoples has pervaded history, and the histories of a large and unknown number of peoples have been extinguished, eliminated or assimilated into oblivion throughout the history of colonization.

So, freedom from colonialism comes not just from the signing of declarations of independence and the lowering and raising of flags. There must also be a change in minds, a challenge to the dominant ways of seeing, in Ngugi's phrase *'decolonizing the mind'*.

In the 1950's there emerged much important work that attempted o record the psychological damage suffered by colonized peoples who internalized these colonial discourses. Prominent was the psychologist Frantz fanon, who wrote widely and passionately about the damage French colonialism had weakened upon millions of people who suffered its power. For fanon, the end of colonialism meant not just political and economic change, but psychological change too. Colonialism destroyed only once this way of thinking about identity is successfully challenged.

However, Edward W. Said's Orientalism (1978) is considered to be one of the most influential books of the late twentieth century. Said also looked at the divisive relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, but from different angle, he, like Fanon, explored the extent to which colonialism created a way of seeing the world, and order of things that

to be learned as true and proper; but Said paid attention more to the colonizers than the colonized. It would be grossly reductive to assert that Edward Said is the instigator of post-colonialism because the success of Orientalism (1978) did much to encourage new kinds of study such as: feminism, philosophy, psychology, politics, anthropology and literary theory in provocative and energetic ways.

In the footsteps of Said followed two other central colonial discourse theorists that have had great influence on the thinking in the field. Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, both born in the former British colony of India, have emerged as major challengers to and developers of the ideas set out by Said in Orientalism, and the trio's excellent reputation in the field has led to them being labelled the 'Holy Trinity' of post-colonialist theorists by the critic Robert J. C. Young in his book Colonial Desire (1995). Bhabha has specialised in discovering modes of colonial subjects' resistance to colonial discourses, and his definition of *mimicry* has established itself as central to the understanding of the relationship between colonizers and colonized. Mimicry is especially important in uncovering resistance, subversion and disobedience techniques used by the colonized as a means of coming to terms with, or rather, subverting, the colonial situation.

In her influential essays *'Subaltern Studies'* (1988) and *'Can the Subaltern Speak?'* (1993) **(1)**, Spivak explored the problem of whether or not it was possible to recover the voices of those who had been made subjects of colonial representations, particularly women, and read them as potentially disruptive and subversive.

Since the 1980's, Said, Bhabha and Spivak have opened a wide variety of theoretical issues central to post-colonialism. Certainly, their works are responsible for much of the

expansion of the field since the 1980's and their writings are unquestionably impossible to ignore in any work on post-colonialism,

I.2.3. Post-colonial Literature

Literature is the history of ideas; it is a reflection of thoughts, feelings and culture of a time and place. It is always the means of giving form and utterance to the despairs and hopes of a nation's history. One of the most exciting features of English literatures today is the explosion of post-colonial literatures, those literatures written in English in formerly colonized societies.

From the very beginnings, there were heated discussions concerning the name for literatures that were meant to deal with post-colonialism. In the 1960's, the term *'Commonwealth literature'* emerged. However, according to most critics this term is insufficient and unclear, albeit not strictly negative since literatures that were supposed to be labelled *'Commonwealth literature'* were only different national literary works with only one thing in common and that is the fact that their authors were born or lived in one of the Commonwealth countries.

Indeed, the *term 'post-colonial literature'* became to be preferred *"because it points the way towards possible study of the effects of colonialism in and between writing in English and writing in indigenous languages ...as well as writing in other language diasporas"* (Ashcroft et al, 1989:23). Nevertheless, critics argue that there can appear even a more appropriate term. Whatever the name, the aim is to shed light on the literature and

culture that was previously oversimplified and trivialised and put into ghettos by the colonizers.

Post-colonial literature describes a wide array of experiences. It often involves the discussion of experiences of various kinds such as those of slavery, migration, suppression, and resistance, difference, race, gender, place, and the responses to the discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, anthropology, and linguistics. Thus, it is often self-consciously a literature of *'otherness'* and resistance, and is written out of the specific local experience. It has emerged out of an experience of colonization, asserted by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and emphasized by its difference from the assumptions of the imperial centre.

What indeed constitutes the triumph of post-colonial literature is its having enabled continents, cultures and traditions to come together, interact and move towards a new creative vitality. In the hands of the white and non-white writers, it has emerged as a very powerful and promising response to human situation in a world of change, pulls and pressures. The writers and poets have portrayed a world which can no longer be denied.

I.2.3.1. Post-colonial Novel: the Art of Resistance

Post-colonial writing involves the struggle over projections and issues of representation. It can be seen as a part of the wider context of a resistance movement

against the imperial power and its systematic practice of silencing native voices, as they engage themes of resistance and the search for an independent community.

A major feature of post-colonial novel is the concern with place and displacement leading to a crisis of identity between self and place resulting from migration, enslavement and the concern with myths. It intervenes in the subject by resisting tendencies to homogenize post-colonial experiences and draws attention to cultural specifics.

The post-colonial novel concentrates on the ideas of displacement, identity, home; and stereotyping. I.e. post- colonial writers use detailed descriptions of indigenous people, places, and practices to counteract or "resist" the stereotypes, inaccuracies, and generalizations which the colonizers circulated in educational, legal, political, and social texts and settings. In this respect, Salman Rushdie evokes the potential of post-colonial novel when he writes

> *those of us who have been forced by cultural displacement to accept the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties, [...] are thus released to describe our worlds in the way in which all of us, whether writers or not, perceive it from day to day* (1992: 12, 13).

Here Rushdie alludes to the self-awareness in post-colonial novel as well as the sometimes unstable and shaky construction of meaning involved in all description of the past and indeed in the construction of identity in the present.

When looking at a literary work the first thing we notice is the language and style. In post-colonial novel, these are very important elements. English has been considered the language of oppressors and therefore some writers from the first generation of post-colonial writers refused to write in it and gave preference to their native language.

I.2.3.2. Post-colonial Writer's Attitude towards the English Language

Basically, the task of the post-colonial studies and theories is the way to emphasize the diversity within equality. It means that the theory should follow the ideas of impurity (in the positive sense of the word) of post-colonial cultures and by this abandon the idea of the myths of pure and superior culture. With hybridity or impurity there are several other concepts connected; first of all and most important as far as writing or literature are concerned it is the concept of language – English in particular.

However, there are authors who are more radical and claim that English as the language of the oppressors should be completely abandoned and the literature should be written in the local languages and they usually deal with topics different from those writing in English , though it is not a rule.

Still, more post-colonial authors use English as the language of expression because they make their works available to as wide audience as possible since they aim is to give voice to the literatures (and themes and topics) that were previously avoided. And obviously English is a language that is understood internationally. The other reason is that language generally is a very flexible and *"versatile tool"* (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 39). English is continually changing and growing and thus becoming a part of a group of Englishes, a language that is then capable of expressing cultural complexity; it is suitable for many uses. In literature *"English language becomes a tool with which a "world" can be textually constructed"* (Ibid: 43).

Post-colonialist writers sought a way to use the language of the colonizers without necessarily imparting the traditions and ideologies of the West. For the elite who had been

educated in the language of the colonizer, there was the double edged situation of being fluent enough to '*write back to the empire'*, while seeking to display nationalistic loyalties and reconstruct ethnic identities through the use of the colonizer's language. However, a mastery over the colonizer's language affords writers the power to rewrite history, to re-tell tales, to de-mythify.

I.2.4. Post-colonialism vs. Post-modernism

Since the very beginnings of the post-colonial studies there has been a confusion concerning its parallels and similarities with other literary and philosophical theories. The main debate was about the analogies between post-modernism and post-colonialism.

The term *"post-modernism"* arose in the worlds of art, literature and architecture in the mid-twentieth century to describe a rejection of modernism and a return to some more traditional elements, and a combination of elements across styles and cultures. It was probably first used by Arnold Toynbee, the well-known historian of the 20th century in his Study of History (Vol- I), he says, post-modernism begins to take shape between the two World Wars (1918-39).

It can be said that post-modernism and post-colonialism have their basics in post-structuralism or deconstruction. The name of Jacques Derrida appears in connection with both. Both these theories aim to dismantle the old order of things by presenting a new views and interpretations. In practice it means that they want to destroy the notion of *"binarism"* Centre/Margin or West/East.

Probably the most influential figure as far as comparison of post-modernism and post-colonialism is concerned is Linda Hutcheon. In her essay "Circling the downspout of empire" she points out several similar issues that are dealt with in both post-modernism and post-colonialism. Among these are *"magic realism, thematic concerns regarding history and marginality, and discursive strategies like irony and allegory"* (Hutcheon, 1995:131)

Moreover, post-modernism regarded the *other* as never being able to speak for itself as the *other*, and moreover, post-modem thought refused to turn the *other* into the *same*. The implications of post-modernism on writing strategies was therefore not conducive to the work of representation in literary form which is an important part of the post-colonial response in writing. Post-modem concepts undermined the post-colonialist struggle, which is precisely the struggle to articulate the *other*, and in many cases, to articulate the *other* in the imperial language.

Interestingly, the rise of post-colonialism coincided with the rise of post-modernism. Post-modernism ran parallel to post-colonialism in that both modes of thought promoted the decentering of narrative and discourse, emphasized the need to move away from the notion of the universality of the European culture and thought, however their usage and the purposes they serve for may differ in these two theories.

I.2.5. Post-colonial women writing

Broadly speaking, post-colonialism born out of colonized peoples' frustrations, oppression, struggle. It does so with a view to dealing with the past in order to surpass it to achieve a psychological recovery by suggesting an alternative culture, an alternative epistemology or system of knowledge.

In many societies, women have been relegated to the position of 'Other', marginalized and 'colonized'. Women, like post-colonial people, have had to construct a language of their own when their only available tools are those of the colonizer. Both groups are powerless, exploited and have a subordinate position in society.

Placed in a post-colonial situation, women's writing has undergone colonization, both from outside. Kirsten Hoist Petersen and Anna Rutherford in their book A Double Colonization (1986) have rightly said that there is a parallel in the relationships between man-woman, the empire-colony or colonizer-colonized. This has often been cited in post-colonial theory as the *'double colonization'* of women in colonial situations. This concept became a catchphrase in feminist and post-colonial discourse in the 1980's. It is the notion that women are colonized twice, first by the imperial colonizers from Europe and second by the patriarchal ideologies within their own country. In a colonized situation, women are already under such kind of *'double colonization'.*

Also, Spivak focuses on the 'double colonisation' of women, who can be said to be colonised by both patriarchy and the colonial power. The silencing of women and their lives, and the attempts to recover their lost voices from history are central aspects of a number of Spivak's writings, and especially so in what is probably her most central and certainly most famous essay, *'Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1993)'where *'the subaltern'* is

used as a term specifically describing this double colonisation and the generally low status of women.

Along with other colonized citizens, women not only undergo oppressions executed by the colonizers but also arc targeted by the local patriarchal power structures who are fighting against the colonizers but execute their powers on women within the given situation. Women suffer under both colonial and local power structures, simultaneously; they undergo *'multiple colonization'.* Women's writing may be seen as resisting such kind of *'multiple colonization'* within a larger literary context which is highly patriarchal.

I.3. Feminist Theory and Literature

Throughout history, women have always struggled to gain equality, respect, and the same rights as men. This has been difficult because of patriarchy, an ideology in which men are superior to women and have the right to rule women. This ideology is present in societies throughout the world and as a result, even in the new millennium, women are still struggling for rights that most men take for granted. The struggle is even more difficult for women of color because not only were they dealing with issues of sexism, but also racism. In order to fight patriarchy, feminism and feminist theory was born.

I.3.1. Feminist Theory

Before women's studies classes, before feminist literature, individual women learned about feminism in groups. The women in those groups were the first to begin to create feminist theory which included both an analysis of sexism, strategies for challenging patriarchy, and new models of social interaction.

Feminist theory is seen as an extension to feminism into theoretical or philosophical ground. It encompasses work done in a broad variety of discipline, prominently including the approaches to women's roles and lives and feminist politics in anthropology and sociology, economics, women's and gender studies, feminist literary criticism, and philosophy.

Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relation and sexuality. While generally providing a critique of social relations, much of Feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights, interests and issues. Themes explored in Feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression and patriarchy.

I.3.1.1.Defining Feminism

Feminism is a complex notion that has vast differences in meaning and connotation for people spanning generations, sexual orientations, social classes, nationality, and ethnic identities. *It has been determined differently to symbolize people's variety of thoughts and beliefs beside behaviors from diverse socio-cultural contexts*. (Bedjaoui, 2012: 31)

Literally, the word *'feminism'* itself originated from the French word *féminisme* in the nineteenth century, either as a medical term to describe the feminization of a male body, or to describe women with masculine traits. This term became popular as early as 20 the century showing struggles for securing woman's suffrage or voting rights in the Western

countries and the well-organized scio-political movement for women's oppression emancipation from the patriarchal oppression.

But what, exactly, is feminism? According to Adrienne Rich,

> *It means finally that we renounce our obedience to the fathers and recognize that the world they have described is not the whole world.... Feminism implies that we recognize fully the inadequacy for us, the distortion, of male-created ideologies, and that we proceed to think, and act, out of that recognition.* (Rich, 1977: 79)

Thus, feminism seeks to change the belief that women, purely and simply because they are women, are treated unfairly within a patriarchal society which is organized to prioritise male viewpoints and concerns: where men are regarded as strong, women are weak; where men are rational, they are emotional; where men are active, they are passive; and so on. In this vein, Rebecca West's states:

> *I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute.* (West, 1913:219)

Nevertheless, one should mention two important landmarks in the evolution of feminist criticism; Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1929) which was considered as a classical document of the feminist critical movement and Simone Le Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949), a seminal work that questioned the whole position and role of women in society.

I.3.1.2. Genesis and Growth of Feminism

The history of feminism is often described in three temporal waves. Early feminist movements are often called the first wave feminists. Feminists after about 1960 were called the second-wave feminists. More recently, some younger feminists have identified themselves as third-wave feminists while the second-wave feminists are still active.

Indeed, the first phase being primarily the nineteenth-century woman suffrage movement, followed by the second phase, which began in the mid-1960's and was catalyzed primarily by the Civil Rights movement; and the third wave, referring to a younger generation of women in the 1990's who were certainly influenced by their feminist foremothers but who would define feminism differently.

First wave feminism is described not as the beginning of women fighting for equality, but as the beginnings of an organized, nation-wide movement advocating women's rights in the western world. Focused on women gaining civil rights, or rights as full citizens, including the right to vote (suffrage), equal access to education and health care, and the right to enter and practice in the professions; that is, the right to enter and shape the public sphere. In fact, first wave feminism is important historically because this major feminist push changed the course of history. However, it did not lead to an elimination of all the forms of inequality and this wave is often criticized because women of color were sometimes excluded from participating within white women's organizations.

The second wave of Feminist Movement refers to a period of feminist activity which began during the early 1960's and lasted throughout the late 1970's. Whereas first-wave feminism focused mainly on overturning legal obstacles to equality, second-wave

feminism addressed a wide range of issues, including, official legal inequalities, sexuality, and family rights for women.

A remarkable variety of Western women picked up their pens. One of the most influential was, and remains, the French writer Simone de Beauvoir. Her writings – including four volumes of autobiography and several novels – add up to a remarkable exploration of one woman's experience; women from many other countries responded, saying that Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949) had helped them to see their personal frustrations in terms of the general condition of women.

Yet for all their differences from first-wave and second-wave feminists, third wave feminists have no intentions of thinking, speaking, or writing themselves and other women out of existence. Instead, they aim to answer the *'woman question'* in ways that it has never been answered before. Third-wave feminists are more than willing to accommodate diversity and change. They are particularly eager to understand the ways in which gender oppression and other kinds of human oppression co-create and co-maintain each other.

For third-wave feminists, difference is the way things are. They have emphasized the differences in women's experiences of oppression due to race, class, nationality, and so forth.

As part of their study of interlocking forms of oppression, third-wave feminists engage in research and writing that attends to the lives and problems of specific groups of women. Like multicultural, post-colonial, and global feminists, third wave feminists stress that women and feminists come in many colors, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, and cultural backgrounds.

Thus, feminism at the beginning of the twenty-first century is in some ways very different from feminism in the 1970's or at the turn of the century, yet in other ways, it remains very much the same, seeking women's best interests diligently and the *' woman question'* has yet to be fully answered.

I.3.1.3. Various Models of Feminism

Feminism is a diverse, competing and often opposing collection of social theories, political movements and moral philosophies largely motivated by or concerning the experience of women, especially in terms of their social, political and economic inequalities. However, as with an ideology, political movements or philosophy, there is no single, universal form of feminism that represents all feminists. The most well known types of feminism are: Liberal feminism, Social feminism, and Radical feminism.

Liberal feminists would seek to remove barriers that prevent equal access for women to information technology, jobs not only to provide economic equality but to provide access to higher-paying jobs to women. They are influenced heavily by the values and beliefs of liberalism. Liberals believe that because individuals are rational they should also have the liberty to determine their own behavior although states are also necessary to guarantee the social order which is necessary for liberty to flourish.

Most associated with the second wave, liberal feminism argues women's equality is an inherent right. Liberal feminists believe oppression is caused by the socialization process that constructs women as sexual beings, not citizens. Historically, liberal feminists have supported change through reform rather than revolution.

In contrast to Liberal feminism, Social feminism rejects individualism and positivism. Social feminism believes that technology and the social shaping of technology have often been conceptualized in terms of men, excluding women at all levels. Social feminism was mostly a phenomenon of educated white upper class and middle class women, sometimes in alliance with poor and working women.

Socialist feminist theory analyzed the connection between the oppression of women and other oppression in society, such as racism and economic injustice. Socialists had fought for decades to create a more equal society that did not exploit the poor and powerless. However, socialist feminists did not recognize gender and only gender as the exclusive basis of all oppression.

Radical feminism is another of the developed theories which maintains that women's oppression is the first most widespread and deepest oppression. It is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or, more specifically, social dominance of women by men. Radical feminism views patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power primarily by gender, and as a result oppressing women and privileging men.

Radical feminists tend to be more militant in their approach than other feminists are. Radical feminism opposes existing political and social organization in general because it is inherently tied to patriarchy. Thus, Radical feminism opposes patriarchy, not men. To equate radical feminism to man-hating is to assume that patriarchy and men are inseparable, philosophically and politically.

Therefore, one institutionally predominant type of feminism focuses on limiting or eliminating gender inequality to promote women's rights, interests and issues in society.

Another opposing type of modern feminism, with deep historical roots, focuses on earning and establishing equity by and for women, vis-a-vis men to promote those same rights, interests and issues, regardless of gender considerations. But, whatever the type of feminism, they have one goal of bringing equality among sexes.

I.3.2.Reading as a woman: Feminist Literary Criticism

Literature plays a central role in the development of social attitudes toward women and of women's attitudes toward themselves. Feminist literary criticism is a literary approach informed by feminist theory, and also by the politics of feminism that *changed the way in which literary text are read, taught and evaluated.* Ellen Rooney (foreword, 2006). For a better understanding of how genders have been formed and represented, feminist literary theory has tried to contravene the limitations and restrictions between literature, the social sciences and also philosophy.

Feminist Literary Criticism is the critical analysis of literary works based on feminist perspective. In particular, feminist literary critics tend to reject the patriarchal norms of literature, which privileges masculine ways of thinking/points of view and marginalizes women politically, economically and psychologically. In her most pioneered work, Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness (1981), Elaine Showalter defined and explored the development of women centered criticism which chiefly focuses on the recovery and re-evaluation of women's writing as an expression of women's experience. Showalter writes:

> *Feminist Criticism began when women who were students, teachers, writers, editors or simply readers, began to note the limited and*

> *secondary roles allotted to fictional heroines, women writers and female critics, and to ask serious questions about their own literary study"* (Collier et al 2000: 179)

Therefore, this approach analyses the representation of women in literature and truly discusses the concept of 'dominant discourse' and reflects concern with the silencing and marginalization of women in a patriarchal culture, a culture organized in the favor of men.

Additionally, feminists have examined literature as a tool for creating and keeping belief systems. They revealed that the majority of great works were almost exclusively male-authored, with some exceptions, such as Jane Austen, George Elliot and Charlotte Brontë. One of the first undertakings of feminist criticism was to offer a reasonable cause for the absence of women from literature.

Feminist literary criticism is not simply criticizing women or critique about women, and female author. It is simply defined as sees literature with special awareness, awareness that there are gender injustice which is related to culture, literature and life. These genders differentiate between author, reader, characterization and the extrinsic factor that influence the sense of writing. So, reading as a woman means to read and place ourselves as woman and analyze the work through women's view and paradigms.

I.3.3. French Feminist Theory and "L'écriture Féminine"

An important theoretical formulation in French feminist thought is *'écriture féminine'* or ''feminine writing''. This concept involves the inscription of the female body and female sexuality in textuality and discourse. A concurrently utopian and experimental practice, *'écriture féminine'* seeks to write that for which no language yet exists – namely, the silenced, the marginalized and the repressed – while rejecting the principles of rationality and logic fostered by the masculine Symbolic order, traditional concepts of progression and linearity and the conventional subordination of the body to the mind. This segment offers a range of descriptions of *'écriture féminine'* that varyingly validate or question its existence.

'écriture féminine', literally 'women's writing,' more closely, the writing of the female body and female disparity in language and text, is a strain of feminist literary theory that originated in France in the early 1970's.In fact, i*t* is associated with the French group known as MLF, *Mouvement de libération de femmes*, and is led by four leading female writers, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and the recently deceased, Monique Wittig.

The terminology of *'écriture féminine'* was first introduced by Hélène Cixous in her essay *"The Laugh of the Medsua"* (1976), where she asserts (1976:875) '*Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies*' because their sexual pleasure has been repressed and denied expression. It is also connected to critical theorists Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. Both authors add different dimensions to the concept due to the fact that they are writing from different disciplines. Where Irigaray is writing with a background in philosophy, Kristeva connects semiology and psychoanalysis to the method of 'écriture féminine'.

Therefore, language is essential to the concept of 'écriture féminine'. Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous have analyzed its functions regarding the symbolic masculine and feminine. Cixous opts for a feminine discourse, Kristeva aims to undo structures in language from within and Irigaray shows how two types of subjects in language could coexist. Cixous comes from a literary approach and gives the characteristic of the poetic to feminine language. The four French feminists carry forward the idea of *"writing the body"* and give free rein to it. Writing the body is, in fact, is the refusal to use the tools of the master, instead inventing a new code based not on hierarchy and domination:

> *Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word "silence"* (Ibid: 875)

Generally, French feminists tended to focus their attention on language, analyzing the ways in which meaning is produced. They concluded that language as we commonly think of it is a decidedly male realm, which therefore only represents a world from the male point of view. Thus, écriture feminine, then, is by nature transgressive, rule-transcending, anti-authoritarian, questioning and unsettling as Hélène Cixous asks women: *"Why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it*" (Ibid: 876) and she tells them to write with "white ink" that is, the mother's milk with which women may nourish each other.

I.3.4. Feminism and Patriarchy: The Struggle for Change

Feminism is as an ideology that seeks equality of both men and women. It deconstructs patriarchy and promotes gender equality. It also advocates the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit or marginalize any set of people-women and men, on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, ability, class, caste or ethnicity.

Throughout history male dominance has been asserted through a set of practices that has caused women to be seen as naturally subordinate to men. For example, in a patriarchal system women learn to see themselves from the standpoint of men. Li and Bolaria say that patriarchy is

> *[a] societal phenomenon marked by the domination of certain men over other men, all women and children. A system of ruling where power is exercised as domination over others and stems from the historical emergence of the oppression of women. (1994: 84)*

Since women see themselves from the standpoint of men, they begin to form an internalized view of themselves based on their association with men. This internalized view is the result of adopting patriarchal perspectives which lead to women undervaluing themselves. Generations of patriarchal conditioning are perpetuated as women are socialized to learn they are inferior to men.

Patriarchal societies favor men over women in matters of decision making, positions of authority, and ownership of property. However, the manifestation of patriarchy continues and inferiority is attached to women and superiority to men. It takes on many forms, but it is invisible because it has had a long life and it has become normalized.

I.4. The Irish Context

It is important in this thesis to thoroughly examine the country's colonial background and its consequences before proceeding to literary analysis and one of the more debated topics of late in Irish studies is whether Ireland was a colony or not. Nevertheless, postcolonial theories have become increasingly applied in readings of Irish literature and culture. In order to justify Ireland's postcolonial status, Irish post-colonialism has made its claims through boasting its originality, *Ireland was the first to be colonized and to decolonize*, or its outright exceptionalism, *Ireland is the last to be decolonised* (Graham, 2003: 246).

Regardless of the struggles Ireland has endured because of its troubled relationship with England, the assertion that Ireland is a postcolonial country is not widely accepted. By this standard, Ireland would be put in a precarious position on the outskirts of the postcolonial tradition. In this respect, in Inventing Ireland, Kiberd (1995:6) notes that English colonization of Ireland consisted of

> *political rule from London through the medium of Dublin Castle; economic expropriation by planters who came in various waves of settlement; and an accompanying psychology of self-doubt and dependency among the Irish, linked to the loss of economic and political power but also the decline of the native language and culture.*

Kiberd, as a leading theorist in the field of Irish studies, deal extensively with Ireland as a postcolonial country and examine the ways in which Ireland still struggles to shed the scars of its colonial past.

However, as Ireland moved towards the twentieth century, Irish women's lives were strictly confined to the private domain, and women's issues were largely silenced and hidden from public knowledge. Additionally, both Church and state maintained that women should hold a certain morality, as a result, Irish women's issues remained largely ignored and therefore unremarked upon. As feminism appeared, it encouraged women to seize any occasion to reject the silence so often on them and to instead find the voice to their fears, concerns and desires.

I.4.1. Ireland and Post-colonial Theory

Edward W. Said (1993:01) writes that

> *Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues.*

In Ireland the past is never forgotten and always taken into account, and this preoccupation with the past is also integral in placing Ireland in a post-colonial frame together with other post-colonial nations in the world today. Ireland has often been overlooked in the post-colonial context because it gained independence so early and also because it is a country that is Western and European, and as such belongs to the white world, as opposed to the vast majority of other former colonies.

I.4.1.1. A Brief History of Ireland

During the Medieval period, Ireland saw many invasions such as the Celts, Vikings and Normans. In the early stages of the Iron Age period a new culture started to evolve across Europe. This new culture is today known as the Celtic culture and its influence made its way into Ireland. The Celts were a European cultural group first evident in the 7th or 8th century B.C. The Romans called them '*Galli'* and the Greeks called them '*Keltoi'* both meaning '*barbarians'.* However, there was no actual written history about the arrival of the Celtic culture in Ireland. In fact, when the Celts did arrive in Ireland they brought with them a totally different and new culture, languages, art, technology and beliefs. They had introduced using Iron for making tools and weapons but more importantly brought the sense of kingship, kingdoms and power. They divided their lands up with each being ruled by different kings.

Whereas the Viking invasions of the ninth and tenth centuries resulted in the creation of Viking settlements, that is, Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, Cork and Limerick, **(see map 01)** their power as an invasive force was soon weakened, and finally overcome by Irish high king Brian Ború **(2)** in 1014. After this, the Vikings were merged into Irish society both politically and religiously, thus becoming a part of the Irish population and way of life. The Norman invasion of the following century, however, resulted in the fact that Ireland came to be ruled by another foreign power up until the twentieth century.

Although an important piece of Irish history, the life of the Normans in Ireland was somewhat short lived (+200 years) in terms of occupation **(see map 02)**. In saying this, the Norman invasion of Ireland would lead to the English occupation on Irish soil for over 800 years, a reason why this era held importance in Ireland's history.

I.4.1.2. British Rule in Ireland

The European expansionist, imperialist, colonialist project of the past five hundred years is not an instance of colonization that is forgotten, however, as the effects of it on the world as we see it today still profoundly pervade everyday life all over the world.

In terms of conquering and colonizing foreign peoples, Britain is undoubtedly the nation that has had the most success since the British Empire by the early twentieth century controlled *'well over a quarter of the human race and over a quarter of the world's land surface.'* (Colin Cross, 1968:16) The British Empire's success and duration from its first attempt at organized colonization in the 16th century of its neighbor Ireland until the dwindling of power in the second half of the twentieth century, relied entirely on 'getting *both* This particular way relied entirely on a colonialist discourse that divided the world into nations of civilization and nations of barbarism. This division implied that the colonizing nations (such as Britain and France) were superior compared to the nations of barbarism, primitivism and perpetual difference or otherness. The colonized under British rule were always taught to see themselves as inferior, uncivilized and lacking in value compared to the British mother country, and these realities had of course serious psychological implications as well as social consequences for the peoples who against their wills were subjected to a new reality that almost always involved some kind of military and violent means of forced subjugation.

The first contacts established between the English state and Ireland occurred at the end of the 12th century, when Dermot, the exiled king of Leinster, asked the Norman lords

of South Wales to help him regain his kingdom. Yet, once in Ireland, the Normans turned into conquistadors, occupying and colonizing a region around Dublin, the Pale, and subsequently trying to advance westwards. As a result of this first wave of English colonists, a three-fold division of the island was established, consisting in: the Pale (that region where English law was administered as in an English shire), the West (an area peopled by purely Celtic tribes, ruled by their Irish chiefs), and tracts of mixed control in-between (with Anglo-Irish barons ruling over the native population).

Moreover, English colonization over Ireland spanned a period of nearly eight hundred years, starting from the twelfth century, and ending in 1922, when the Irish Free State came to existence **(see map 03)**. The history of English colonialism in Ireland is unique in the sense that it was discontinuous, unstable, and partial. In the nineteenth century, with the 1800 Act of Union, Ireland became constitutionally integrated with the United Kingdom. This legislative link between Ireland and the United Kingdom was an intentional imperial policy to achieve cultural and political assimilation, in reaction to the rebellion by the United Irishmen in 1789 (Smyth, 1998). In this respect, Britain's relations with Ireland became greatly different from those the Empire maintained with Indian or African colonies (Butler, 2001). Ireland sent MPs to Westminster, something that not even the British white colonies did. Furthermore, Irish citizens were often implicated in the colonial enterprise, reinforcing the ideology and practice of imperialism in their own ways: while some Irishmen enlisted in the British army, other Irishmen and women emigrated to the British colonies, and to London, the very centre of the Empire (Hooper, 2002).

In British overseas territories, Irish became settlers, soldiers and, sometimes, administrators. As O'Dowd (1990: 49) explains, through missionary activity, Irish

Catholics even attempted to create *"an alternative 'spiritual empire' of their own".* Moreover, Ireland's obsession with the past is understood by some critics as one of its anomalies as a post-colonial nation, and not *"the logical condition"* of any decolonizing country *"whose history is yet to be made"* (Lloyd, 1993: 10). The argument may be that, whereas Ireland might have been once a colony, it ceased to be so after gaining independence in 1921, and should have recovered by now from the cultural effects caused by British imperialism.

I.4.1.3. Locating Ireland in the Post-colonial World

Ireland has had an exceptionally hard time in finding its place in the post-colonial discussion sweeping over the academic world during the past few decades. Although Ireland's time as a colony was extraordinarily long, the question of Ireland's status in the colonial world has been considered by Irish historians as no small issue, since, as Said (2003:177) points out:

> *What is at stake is nothing less than the whole question of Irish identity, the present course of Irish culture and politics, and above all, the interpretation of Ireland, its people, and the course of history.*

According to the view of a post-colonial critic, one of the criteria for a country to be post-colonial is the fact that it is geographically distant from the colonizer, then, obviously, Ireland, as a neighboring country of England, does not fulfill the criteria. The geographical position of Ireland has been problematic for some when describing Ireland as post-colonial. Unlike most other colonies, Ireland was located within close proximity to England. Its geographical location in Western Europe, and, at the same time, *marginal to it and historically of the decolonizing world* (Lloyd, 1993: 2), complicates the adoption of a

comparative post-colonial framework. On the other hand, there were affinities of climate, temperament, and culture between Ireland and England. As Butler (2001: 14) explains,

> *The Irish could not be distinguished from their imperial rulers by the color of their skin. They were 'proximate' rather than 'absolute' Others, a disturbing mixture of sameness and difference.*

As a part of Western Europe, It is apparent that the major cultural and political revolutions that have shaped European society - the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment, French republicanism and German romanticism, for example, have also been highly influential in Ireland.

In addition to this, the Irish enjoyed certain privileges granted to no other colony of England. The Irish had, for instance, their own members of parliament in Westminster something that neither the British White settler colonies nor the Asian and African colonies did. They were able to profit from the British colonial enterprise; they could take part in the colonial bureaucracies of the settler societies, and the labor forces were open to them in a manner unthinkable to non-European peoples. Thus, as Joe Cleary (2003:22) points out, *[f]or many, the contention that the Irish historical experience resembles that of other colonized countries is simply a species of auto-exoticism with little conceptual merit.*

In several aspects, Ireland has developed side by side with the rest of Europe and no one should argue that the colonial situations in Ireland and everywhere else were similar. This, nevertheless, does not give basis for arguing that Ireland was not a colony throughout its time under the English regime.

It was suggested in the argument above that the Irish have always been regarded as Western European in cultural, economic, and ethnic terms. Nevertheless, there are several

instances in Irish history which show that Ireland was not seen as being on the same level with the rest of Western Europe. Indeed, Ireland should be considered within a post-colonial framework because its history prior to the twentieth century, and well into the twentieth, is a history of social, political and economical discrimination, in which those who spoke Irish, clung to Irish culture or dress, or married an Irish person *were driven 'beyond the Pale' or, at a later date, disenfranchised* (Innes, 2000: 26).

Moreover, Ireland also suffered dislocations of culture, language and identity similar to those experienced by colonized people in India and Africa. The catastrophic dimension to nineteenth-century Irish history such as; economic stagnation, famine and flight, industrial underdevelopment, the superimposition of English on Gaelic culture all lent force to Ireland as a colonial nation. Hence, Hooper (2002:14), a self-declared post-colonial theorist, summarizes main reasons for considering Ireland within a post-colonial framework as follows: (1) Britain's reluctance to allow Catholic emancipation; (2) the incompetence with which British authorities responded to the Famine; (3) its unwillingness to grant a form of Home Rule; (4) the brutality of the coercion applied against nationalist dissidents during the Easter Rising and especially throughout the War of Independence; (5) the wretched state in which many Irish peasants lived throughout the nineteenth century; and (6) the way emigration was the only possible choice to have access to employment.

Yet, critics situate Ireland *'between the first world and third world',* first world in geography and third world in history. However, there are a great many factors to support that Ireland was a colony rather than an integral part of the United Kingdom, and even if English colonization of Ireland shared features with other cases of small European countries, it should not be forgotten how much it also had in common with English overseas colonization.

1.4.2. Feminism in Ireland

Before examining the way Irish women are depicted in literature selected, it is necessary to justify and explain the situation of women in Irish society was and is like.

In her introduction to a study about Irish writer Kate O'Brien, Adele M. Dalsimer cited the two structures that have long been identified as central to Irish culture: she says, 'the *family is at the centre of communal life; Catholicism is the anchor of unquestioned orthodoxy and cohesive moral standard'* (Dalsimer, 1990: xiii). Related to this, it is therefore possible to recognize

> *the foundations of Irish culture – state control of women's reproduction, and the nationalist and religious mythologies, Virgin Mary and Mother Ireland – that have framed and, therefore, limited Irish women* (Moloney, 2003:198).

This emphasis on both the Virgin Mary and Mother Ireland has resulted in women occupying a unique position in Irish society. They have been reduced to little more than *"symbols"* of the Irish nation, and Because of this objectified status of Irish women, their *contribution to Ireland's cultural and literary heritage has not often been acknowledged or, indeed, recognized* (Hill, 2003: 214).

Moreover, as Ireland moved towards the twentieth century, a series of laws were imposed by both the state and the Catholic Church which served to confine Irish women to the private domain, such as the marriage bar which required women to resign from work upon marriage, and women's issues were largely silenced and hidden from public knowledge. Domestic violence, for instance, was considered an issue to be discussed privately, and the silencing of female sexuality, which was often equated with *'sin'*, meant that single mothers and other women who were seen to flaunt their sexuality were

ostracized for their supposedly *'deviant'* behavior. Both Church and state maintained that women should hold a certain morality, particularly relating to areas of sexuality and reproduction.

1.4.2.1. The Status of Women in Early Medieval Societies

Women in the early medieval period have been traditionally ascribed a high rank in society. Indeed, Dillon and Chadwick (1967:25) note that *it is […] impossible to have any true understanding of either Celtic history or Celtic literature without realizing the high status of Celtic women*. Nevertheless, this remark is mainly grounded on Irish vernacular literature which allows women to occupy positions of leadership and not on the historical reality of women in the early medieval period. In fact, the annals do not present any evidence of a female political or military leader.

Early medieval society was patriarchal, and therefore, women were represented in relation to a male by ties of blood or marriage, their honor-price being always dependent on that of their nearest male relative. Women had generally no legal capacity and were forbidden from providing evidence in legal cases as well as from inheriting property. In fact, The normal type of marriage by this time is *lánamnas comthincuir* , a marriage of joint contribution in which both partners have equal rights and responsibilities: the consent of both partners is needed for establishing contracts and women are allowed to have their own property and to manage it for their own benefit. (Donncha Ó Corráin, 1978)

Indeed, the role of the church in the improvement of women's rank has been recurrently emphasized Religious men and women worked in cooperation in the early

Christian period, but from the ninth century onwards, continental misogyny influenced Irish monks, who started considering women as polluted and sinful, a sexual threat for men. This view probably derives from an association of women with Eve, the evil woman who disobeyed God's word and provoked the fall of humankind. On the other hand, women who accepted their traditional role in society as appendages of male authority were associated with Mary, a figure of motherhood.

In conclusion, while early Irish law was quite restrictive regarding the role of women in society. However, Christianity has had a double impact on the situation of women. On the one hand, the doctrine was sympathetic to women and ecclesiastical law tried to protect them from the abuses of society. Nevertheless, the mythic representation of Irish goddesses as a symbol of fertility and the country as a woman continue developing well into the nineteenth century literary scene and into the present.

1.4.2.2. Women's place in the Irish Society: An overview

There are two main pillars of human life man and woman. Both share equal responsibility in the making of society and hence both are supplement to each other. But from the very beginning, there has been a big question mark on the status of women in our society. All talk of their role and responsibility but none care for their position. For centuries, the place of women in Irish society has been a matter of discussion.

The family has long been at the heart of Irish life, and Irish women in particular were expected to have no ambitions other than those of wife and mother. Though these

attitudes were largely enforced by the Church, whose teachings were adopted by the entire nation, the law in Ireland also reflected these same attitudes:

> *Women working in many other jobs had no legal redress when obliged to resign on marriage. Women were not entitled to unemployment allowances, because it was assumed that some man would provide for them. The income of a married woman was deemed to be her husband's for tax purposes. (Scannell, 1988: 74)*

Thus, women had no financial or legal status, and even in the area of nomenclature, they were dependent on their husband as they invariably took on his family name. For the sake of the nation, woman's role was to be confined to the home where she was to ensure the stability of the state, the preservation of the family and the upholding of Catholic values. By clarifying the role and rights of women in Irish society, *De Valera* **(3)** prescribed a private-sphere role for women and stressed that the work that mothers do, which is raising the next generation, is essential.

Subsequently, the 1930's saw the implementation of various policies in order to remove women, particularly mothers, from the economic sphere. For instance, the Land Commission - implemented to redistribute land in the post-colonial period - included an act which made it impossible for women to inherit land; they literally did not have this right. A marriage bar, introduced in 1932, stated that married women could not be employed as civil servants. In the Conditions of Employment Act (1933) government was allowed to prohibit female employment in any kind of industrial work and it also set quotas for various other sectors.

Additionally, the Irish Catholic Church's position was based on a set of corporatist principles, which were among others subsidiary, family solidarity and social consensus. Because of the predominant role of the Church and the corporatist thought that the state should not deliver social welfare, social services in Ireland only developed slowly and little. Mothers suffered the consequences, as no pre-school, after-school child-care services, or social-care services were established.

In 1970, for instance, the Irish government appointed a Commission for the Status of Women. This commission issued a report in which men and women were equally represented, and which *'contained forty-nine eminently reasonable recommendations for improving women's rights in a number of areas. The government was in no rush to implement them'* (Scannell, 1988:74), which seemed to suggest that the Irish government – Irish society in general, even – maintained a belief that women were only entitled to limited rights and roles.

Given their attenuated status in the Irish public sphere, Irish women's lives were strictly confined to the private domain, and women's issues were often silenced and hidden from public knowledge. In fact, the place of women was definitely in the private familial sphere as they had no defined role in the Irish public sphere. Even when there were attempts to try to improve the situation of women in Ireland, such measures were slow to be implemented.

1.4.2.3. The Irish Women in Post-independent Ireland 1940's

When finally nationalism was fruitful in the creation of the Irish Free State, women did not experience any improvement in their status. The social and cultural advantages of an independent Ireland that the leaders of the Easter Rising envisaged were barely put into practice in the first decades of the Irish Free State (Brown, 1985). Instead, the emancipation from the United Kingdom meant for Ireland an overwhelming social and cultural conservatism which perpetuated women's oppression under a highly patriarchal society.

After the French Revolution, some movements within European nationalism, Irish nationalism included, attempted to control sexuality, to establish *'national'* norms of sexuality and to create a sexual dimension of its own". This may be so because the French Revolution brought with it a wave of feminist texts written by women and encouraged the advent of numerous feminist movements (Marks and de Courtivron, 1981). Countries such as Ireland tried to prevent this upheaval by establishing its own conservative regime.

The first decades of the Irish Free State, following the Treaty of 1921, meant deeper attempts to reinforce and maintain gender stereotypes. The Catholic Church played a vital the State government". Its religious precepts and its beliefs on women's ideal role as *'virginal'* and submissive mothers exerted a tremendous influence on legislative measures. Its impact on the State and mainstream society is observed in the government's concern with sexual morality in the area of birth control. Thus, this sexual repression and women's invisibility in the public and political arena was reinforced when Eamon de Valera became President of Ireland and Fianna Fáil leader. Ireland became an inward-looking, isolated, rural, conservative Catholic country in which its citizens lived under a culturally repressive atmosphere. Shannon (1997: 258) describes well enough the social consequences suffered

by women: *they were nearly inactive in the public arena, they had limited educational and employment opportunities*, and consequently their only aspiration was to get married.

In the 1940's and 1950's, the situation of Irish women consequently was characterized by their domestic role and the absence of access to contraception, abortion and divorce. It would, however, be wrong to simplify the picture too much in agreeing on the fact that because of the construction of women as wives and mothers that their situation was an utterly passive one.

The everyday life for rural Irish Catholic women in the 1940's remained oppressed and constricted in many ways. Mothers are representative of the majority of Irish women of the time, in that they possess a minimal level of education and do not work outside of the home. Moreover, they are also victims of extremely unhappy and abusive marriages. Leaving one's husband at this time was very difficult, if not impossible, for several legal, economic and social reasons. Firstly, divorce was illegal in Ireland until 1995, secondly, many rural families lived in poverty in the 1940's, and some, even still, in the 1990's, and thirdly, it was a strong social taboo to separate from one's husband. As Yvonne Scannell reveals:

> *The battered wife and mother could not exclude her violent husband from the home (which was almost invariably his) except by resort to the most cumbersome procedures. If she fled the home, her husband had a right to damages from anyone who enticed her away, or who harbored her or committed adultery with her.* (2001: 73)

Thus, an Irish woman in such abusive situations had very few options for escaping her circumstances. In her discussion of the Irish female identity in 1930's and 1940's Ireland, Mary arm Valiulis reveals that women were strongly encouraged by the

institutions of the Catholic church and the Irish government to confine themselves within the private, domestic sphere of the home. Although many women participated in various capacities in Ireland's battle for independence (including actively fighting as revolutionaries), when the battles were over women were expected to settle back down, to create a comforting home for their husbands and children and to serve as the 'guardians' of the national culture and religion. As Valiulis describes:

> *'Political and ecclesiastical leaders argued that women needed to be returned to their rightful position within the home, a position some had vacated during the revolutionary struggle. Returning women to the home, these authorities declared, was essential to the stability of the family, the State, and a Catholic society'* (2001: 154).

Therefore, the social and political power that Irish women briefly possessed during Nationalist struggles was quickly taken away from them as soon as the goal of Independence was achieved by the State. The limited role prescribed to Irish women in post-Independence, 1940's Ireland is perhaps no more clearly emphasized than in *Article 41.2 of the 1937 Constitution*, written by Irish president and revolutionary Eamon de Valera, which states:

1. In particular the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2. The State shall therefore, Endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labor to the neglect of their duties in the home, (Reproduced in Scannell 72).

Therefore, one can see how this Article strongly emphasized, or even ensured, that an Irish woman's proper 'place' was within the home, tending to her husband and children.

This unsatisfactory situation made a large number of single women leave the island in the 1940's and 50's. Thus, these centuries constituted a hard and discriminatory time for women. However, non-feminist organizations such as the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) and the Irish Housewives' Association (IHA) (1942) played a great role in making women's lives easier in the home. It can be seen as a link between the suffrage movement and the establishment of feminist movements in the 1970.

1.4.2.4. The Development of Feminist Movement

The Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM) was founded in 1970. Mary Maher, Mary Kenny, and Mary Anderson should be mentioned as founder members of this movement. They fought for equal pay, equal access to education and employment, equality before the law, the legal availability of contraception and just treatment of single mothers and deserted wives and widows. Consequently, issues that were related to women were publicly discussed in the media and women's pages began to appear in newspapers.

Although this movement splintered in 1971, the publication of the report of the National Commission on the Status of Women in 1972 constituted another important step. It included forty-nine recommendations for reform and justified these by giving explicit evidence of the discrimination women had to face. In 1973, the Council for the Status of Women was established which aimed at supervising the implementation of the suggestions. Unfortunately, these modern aspirations did not cover all aspects of life and cannot be said to having changed the people's attitudes

With the social and cultural changes experienced by Ireland from the 1970's onwards, the Irish women's movement has been renewed. Indeed, five factors prompted this change. First, the transmission of the international feminist upheaval, through television and print media, has encouraged Irish women to manifest their anger over "the second class status" that the Church and State policies imposed on them. Secondly, the 1972 publication of the report of the first Commission on the Status of Women promoted women to a more active participation in the political arena. Third, the entrance of Ireland into the European Union in 1973 forced the government to tackle issues concerning the discrimination Irish women had to face. Fourth, the increasing industrialization and urbanization of Ireland expanded women's job opportunities, subverting their traditional roles of mothers and housewives. Last, the growth of educational opportunities has enabled women to fulfill a career or degree (Shannon, 1997)

As feminism began to change the lives of women around the world, Irish feminists decided to work towards improving the situations of women in their country, women who had for so long been repressed by Church and state. This meant that many women's issues, including reproduction and sexuality for instance, were no longer confined to the private sphere, as Irish women's groups *'brought about collective knowledge of the reality of women's lived experience, still "invisible" and unexplored in Irish public discourse at this time'* (Connolly, 2005:27).

However, critics of the women's movement in Ireland have argued that Irish women's rights activists were *'essentially an interest group of well-educated, middle-class, Dublin-based feminists who secured extra rights for already privileged women while "ignoring" their working class and rural sisters'* (Ibid:197). As a result, these "militant

activists" only tended to represent a very small proportion of Irish men and women, while other issues affecting the majority of Irish people were often largely ignored.

Ironically, by bringing some issues into the public sphere, other issues, by default, remained unvoiced in the private sphere, and these were often issues that were more domestic and which affected women engaged in more traditional role activities.

The range of opportunities opened to late twentieth century Irish women would have been unimaginable in the early 1990's. Women have gained a more equal position in the political and work terrain. This is clearly observed in the fact that two women have become Presidents of Ireland at the end of the twentieth century; Mary Robinson, (elected in1990) and Mary McAleese (in 1997). For the first time in Irish history, a woman was the Head of State in a country where national politics had been traditionally a male domain.

1.5. Conclusion

The goal of this introductory chapter has been to give a broad and a general overview about the theories of post-colonialism and feminism in relation to Ireland. Yet, several definitions and views about some key-concepts in those theories are reviewed within this section in order to explain the Irish context.

It becomes more obvious that Ireland should be seen as a postcolonial country just by looking at some of the predominant themes in Irish politics, social life and, of course, literature; themes such as language, resistance, nationalism, migration, representation and gender are all themes that are central to any study of a postcolonial country. Irish literature, which is the specific focus of this thesis, also fits well into one broad. Thus, the next chapter sheds light on the Irish literature in general, then, Irish woman literature in particular.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

(1) ***'Can the Subaltern Speak?'*** **(1993)** is Spivak's best-known essay; it is certainly her most controversial. Postcolonial critics, like many feminists, want to give silenced others a voice. But Spivak worries that even the most benevolent effort merely repeats the very silencing it aims to combat. A subaltern, according to the dictionary, is a person holding a subordinate position, originally a junior officer in the British army. But Spivak draws on the term's nuances.

(2) **Brian,** also called **Brian Boru** (born 941, near Killaloe, Ireland—died April 23, 1014, Clontarf, near Dublin), high king of Ireland from 1002 to 1014. The Celtic military leader Brian Boru was the first king of a united Ireland. His fame was so great that the princes descended from him, the O'Briens, subsequently ranked as one of the chief dynastic families of the country.

(3) **Eamon de Valera,** original name **Edward de Valera** (born Oct. 14, 1882, New York—died Aug. 29, 1975, Dublin, Ireland), Irish politician and patriot, who served as a prime minister and president (1959–73) of Ireland. An active revolutionary from 1913, he founded the Fianna Fáil party in 1926. In 1937 he made his country a "sovereign" state, renamed Ireland, or Éire. His academic attainments also inspired wide respect; he became chancellor of the National University of Ireland in 1921.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two

Positioning Edna O'Brien in Contemporary Irish Women Fiction

CHAPTER TWO

POSITIONING EDNA O'BRIEN IN CONTEMPORARY IRISH WOMEN FICTION

II.1. Introduction

After the independence of the Irish Free State, there were a society in which patriarchal ideas were idealized, the woman had to be a mother and women's rights were just beginning to be an issue. Ireland wanted to appear strong and move away from the notion of being female to being a *Mother Ireland*. So, patriarchal ideas were established in politics and society. As time went by, women could not bear this situation any longer and Women's Rights Movements were established. Their wishes and demands led to an uproar in Irish society, but also found many followers. The change of the current situation was immediately taken up by literature, especially by female writers, which was new to the men-dominated Irish literary scene.

In an introduction to Stories by Contemporary Irish Women (1990:9), the editors, Daniel J. Casey and Linda M. Casey, point out that until this time, publishing books in Ireland was a man's '*preserve'*, Edna O'Brien was at the vanguard of this movement into a male-dominated literary genre known as *'Irish fiction'.* Preceding O'Brien, there were a

small handful of women writers, such as Somerville and Ross, who found it necessary to hide their female identity to achieve a serious and fair treatment.

Moreover, a general overview about the Irish literature is provided within this chapter and then precisely, the contemporary Irish women literature. In this chapter, we have tried to position Edna O'Brien amongst contemporary Irish women writer by including; her biography, life and literary works with their criticism.

II.2. Irish Literature: an Overview

> *The literature records pleasures, pressures and tensions within an island of mixed races and religious where the instinct for survival-against local enemies, invaders, occupiers, poverty and climate-has resulted in the acceptance of intuition and awareness of the supernatural, in frequent assertion of nationalism against the domination of the neighboring island, in praise of particular places and in a mixture of dreaming and often exaggerated talk that marks the influence of an oral culture.* (Jeffares, 1997:431)

Literature always reacts at what is around; therefore it is necessary to look at the development of the Irish Ireland. Ireland is extraordinary rich in many of the expressions of literature, including the legends upon which storytellers recall an event or a place. Myths and legends are replete in Irish history. As always such myths and legends contain a certain amount of truth, and a certain amount of creative thinking, or in some cases, wishful thinking. There are tales of fairies, mystical gods, and Celts.

For being such a small island, Ireland has produced a remarkable number of literary figures who have played an important role in the development of English literature. In fact,

the Irish are regarded as particularly gifted writers and the list of important Irish writers throughout the history is astonishing; Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Lawrence Sterne (1713-1768), Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1792), Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), John M. Synge (1871-1909), Sean O'Casey (1880-1964), James Joyce (1882-1941), Frank O'Conner (1903-1966) or Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) were all writers, whose importance was not limited to Ireland, on the contrary, they belonged among the best writers of their times.

II.2.1. Early Irish Literature

A remarkable element of Celtic character and mind that now attracts the rest of the world is its peculiar literature, art and music. Their very soul is portrayed in works of art that belong exclusively to the Celts. Celtic literature was the perfect expression of the social state of the people. Literature must naturally be so everywhere, but it was most emphatically so among the Celts. The literature of the Celts was, therefore, impressed with the character of realistic universality, which has been the great pride of the romantic school. It did not concern itself merely with the great and powerful, but comprised all classes of people, and tried to elevate what is of itself undignified and common in human society. They had stories of battles, of voyages, of invasions, of destructions, of slaughters, of sieges, of tragedies and deaths, of courtships, of military expeditions, and all this strictly historical.

However, a literary decline occurred in Ireland during the Middle Ages because of a series of attacks by foreign invaders. In 795, the Vikings began to raid the Eastern and Southern coasts of Ireland. They destroyed monasteries and early Irish manuscripts. In the

late 1100's, Normans from England seized Irish lands and destroyed many valuable texts. The filid **(1)** produced ceremonial poetry until the 1600's, but their style showed more superficial polish than originality. A few poems about chivalry and courtly love also survived. Thus, the early periods of Irish literature were heavy in Eulogies, nature poems, elegies, and historical pieces.

II.2.2. The shift to the English Language and the Irish Literary Revival

Seldom in history of mankind's somewhat lackluster time on earth does one find a small country that is able to develop without the protection, guardianship, or regular attacks of a big brother country. For Ireland this was England, which tried to conquer Ireland in one way or another for century upon century. Overlaying Ireland s history and therefore its literary history, has been its love hate relationship with England. On the one had Ireland would dearly love to completely independent, whereas on the other, there are now and have always been considerable gains by associating to some degree with England.

Irish literature was written either in English or Gaelic. The shift to English started at the end of the 18th century, and was connected in time with a decline in the use of spoken and written Gaelic. Irish poetry was characterized from the middle to the end of the 19th century by the strong influence of lyric poets. Many of the poets presented fiery emotion, which often had political overtones.

The middle part of the 19th century was a time of major disasters in Ireland, which greatly influenced life and literature. In 1831 and 1832 a major cholera epidemic swept the land causing widespread panic and death, followed by a major hurricane in 1839. All of

this preceded the Great Famine of 1845-1849. The combined impact on the country was to last for decades, and led to massive emigration to both the United States and to Britain. The necessity of having to leave their native land had a major impact on literature for many decades.

The end of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century are widely known as the Irish Renaissance, the Irish Revival, or the Irish Literary revival. This period was richly endowed with world famous writers including William Bulter Yeats, Jame Joyce, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, John Millington Synge, Lady George and Sean O'Casey. Note the vast majority of these writers were born in Dublin.

Moreover, James Joyce is of such an importance, not only did his works changed literature and opened new opportunities for an artistic expression but also they still have an influence on contemporary writers. For these, Joyce had models in English and continental languages, which he was familiar with but he had no Irish models at all. Therefore, it is not surprising that, like many others, he appears as innovator in this regard. That he, in turn, stands as the model for so much Irish fiction to follow is no more surprising and *his sole volume of short stories* Dubliners (1914) *defines and introduces modern Irish prose and stands nearly a century after its publication as one of the finest examples of modernist short prose in the English language*. (Mahony, 1998:18)

The Irish Renaissance encouraged the return to the Irish Landscape and the Irish myth as primary sources for new literature. It should be reiterated that this period followed the horrible events of the 19th century, in terms of the epidemics and famines that drained the population. The Revival also encouraged a return to legend, and the emphasis on

peasant life and Irish folk art. Following the Irish renaissance, Irish literature has been permeated by new novelists and writers who seem to stress the themes of the Irish environment in modern life including the politics of day, marriage and divorce, loneliness, and other maladies of contemporary life.

II.3. Contemporary Irish Fiction: Transgression of Boundaries

Ireland has a rich and ancient heritage in both in the oral and written expression of its myths and legends and in the art of storytelling. From early times, the poets of Ireland have been held in high esteem as wise and imaginative chroniclers of the traditions, aspirations, fears and history of a people. This tradition is still alive in many ways in the contemporary period; a great many playwrights, poets and fiction writers are working all across Ireland today – some are acclaimed locally, while many have earned wide international recognition. Therefore, Ireland produced four Nobel Prize winners for literature (Shaw, Yeats, Beckett, Heaney), and a host of other writers of the highest quality (Wilde, Synge, O'Casey, Joyce), as Dermot Bolger (1993: VIII) comments on Irish literary success throughout the 20th century in the Introduction to the Picador Book of Contemporary Irish Fiction*:*

> *Dublin, for example, a city roughly the size of Bologna has produced three Nobel Prize winners in literature - Yeats, Shaw, Beckett - in addition to Joyce (probably the most important writer of the century), Wilde and J.M.Synge.*

In order to make the overview over contemporary Irish literature complete we have to start at the beginning of the 20th century as modernist prose of James Joyce is of such an

importance that it simply cannot be omitted. Not only did his works changed literature and opened new opportunities for an artistic expression but also they still have an influence on contemporary writers. For these, Joyce had models in English and continental languages, which he was familiar with but he had no Irish models at all. Therefore, it is not surprising that, like many others, he appears as innovator in this regard. That he, in turn, stands as the model for so much Irish fiction to follow is no more surprising and *his sole volume of short stories* Dubliners *(1914) defines and introduces modern Irish prose and stands nearly a century after its publication as one of the finest examples of modernist short prose in the English language*. (Mahony, 1998:18)

However, between the 1960's and the 1990's, the most significant feature of the Irish fiction was the emergence of voices that were silenced before. It is the first time that the Irish authors can speak their minds freely and thus marginalized themes find expression. Among these themes, we list child abuse (Patrick McCabe's The Butcher Boy (1992)), domestic violence (Roddy Doyle's The Woman Who Walked into Doors (1996)), self-harm (Dermot Bolger's Father's Music (1997)). There are also themes connected to sexuality - "coming-out" (Emma Donoghue's Stir-fry (1994), being transsexual (Patrick McCabe's Breakfast on Pluto (1998)) or incest (Neil Jordan's The Shade (2004)). All these authors are giving voice to what was once concealed or denied, and they *find themselves in spaces that are not only new to them but also marked by uncertainty* (Peach, 2001: xi)

Indeed, secrecy has always been a prominent feature of Irish cultural life on the national, local and even domestic level, and in contemporary literature authors suddenly have a chance to speak freely of whatever topic they choose, no matter how taboo it might

have been before. However, the authors have been subjected to new influences, and while some of them are still occupied with Irish themes, they have accepted a wider perspective and outlook, sometimes by creating characters who have lost their sense of continuity, as Peach points out: *"... in many contemporary novels the identity of the central protagonist is a matter of fantasy arising from their sense of dispossession".* (Ibid: 12)

Ireland as a country has become much more open in the last twenty years, multicultural and economically stable. Contemporary Irish writers are a different generation from those who were alive when the critical events of the Irish history took place. They have to find their own ways to deal with the past, and in the doubting postmodern times they realize that the glorified version of the past is only one of many aspects of what happened.

II.3.1. The Irish Novel between Tradition and Modernity

The novel undoubtedly celebrates the flourishing of the individual as the new measure of all things, and yet it also suggests the peculiar condition of modernity. Randall Jarrell (1969:50) defines the novel as *'a prose narrative of some length that has something wrong with it'.* Whatever the length of the novel, its evolution is linked only to certain places and certain cultures, and that it perfectly reflects the developments of those particular places and cultures. Concerning the Irish experience, Ireland has produced some of the globally recognised great examples of the novel from writers such as Laurence Sterne, James Joyce, Elizabeth Bowen, Samuel Beckett and John McGahern have demonstrated how wide-ranging Irish prose fiction has been, and can be.

The history of the Irish novel is a history of the struggle towards articulation, of making the novel form express Irish stories and Irish concerns. It is also a history of developing Irish identities, of misrepresentations and the effort by writers to offer something genuinely authentic and complicatedly real. The novel allows for the bringing together of difference in terms of native and visitor, Gaelic and Anglo-Irish, Catholic and Protestant, aristocrat and peasant. Ireland's colonial relationship to Britain is obviously figured in this confrontation between differing identities and differing loyalties. It will be possible; in addition, to reflect on Irish culture's developing relationship not only to Britain but also to Europe, America and the wider world in the contemporary moment of globalisation.

In his book The Contemporary Irish Novel (2004), Linden Peach claims that the novel in Ireland does not have a strong tradition, and thereby manages to avoid the crisis of the novel in England. He points out that due to the long history of the English realistic novel the prose in England has undergone anxiety in the last decades while the Irish novel is an art form that has not been explored thoroughly. He quotes from Garry Smyth's study The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction:

> *The novel, it was felt, was a form that had emerged specifically from the concerns of the British cultural history and the existence of its leisured middle class… . At the same time, it seemed to many that the Irish society was too "thin", not subtle or developed or large enough to sustain a novelistic tradition, and when prose fiction did emerge as a form it was the short story – with its roots in the Gaelic story-telling tradition.* (Peach, 2001:2)

This proves that poetry and drama have always been the genres associated with Ireland and the marginalization of the novel still continues nowadays.

Peach further argues that in Ireland *"there has always been a strong sense of then novel as a mutable and transgressive form"* (ibid: 4). What he means is that in the Irish literary tradition the novel as such has never been strictly defined, and the Irish writers have accepted parody, pastiche and fabulation to be part of the novel rather than representing its crisis.

However, the Irish novel looks both backwards and forwards simultaneously, and increasingly so in contemporary period as writers attempt to be faithful to tradition while also wanting to engage with the possibilities of the unknown. Its ambiguity in terms of content and form registers the fluid nature of an Irishness that oscillates between the poles of tradition and modernity, Gaelic culture and English culture, between the Irish and the English languages. What can be observed the, is a negotiation between opposites and the acceptance of difference.

II.3.2. Irish Writers' Challenge: Reconstructing the Fragmented Identity

Despite its long-standing freedom from English rule, Ireland still displays many of the characteristics of a postcolonial nation in its literature. The fiction produced by Irish novelists in recent years has a distinctly Irish character that is an outgrowth of their colonial past. Irish politics, poetics, and self-conceptualization are overtly present in these fictions, regardless of their subject matter.

As Bhabha, Said, and Fanon all note of postcolonial literatures, Irish literature tends to focus on the role of history and the past in reconstructing the present and thereby the future. In The Irish World: The History and Cultural Achievements of the Irish People, Brian de Breffny (2001: 6) asserts that *"Irishmen have always been acutely, some would say morbidly, aware of their past. Today the country still carries the burdens of history"*. Reconsidering history is not a morbid and unhealthy obsession with the past, but rather a necessary part of moving forward for a country recovering from the psychological effects of years of colonization.

One of the main themes in Irish postcolonial literature writing is the search for a satisfying identity. Writers must cope with the fragmented self-images left for them by the English and must discover how to re-imagine the contradictory identities they have been offered. In Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980, Deane Seamus (1985: 11) highlights the struggle of Irish authors to reinvent themselves in light of their hybrid culture, claiming that Irish literature *"derives from a culture which is neither wholly national nor colonial but a hybrid of both"* .

Indeed, contemporary Irish writers have taken a challenge of recreating identity and there was the emergence of previously silenced voices trying to deconstruct the fixed notions of identity and authenticity and open up new ways of thinking about the globalized society that Ireland is becoming. Therefore, the transgression of boundaries, both literal and figurative, appears as a familiar trope in contemporary Irish fiction, as novelists attempt to reimagine 'Ireland' as a syncretic space, thereby interrogating established narratives of identity and difference.

II.3.3. Contemporary Irish Women's Literature

Although Irish women's writings began to flourish in the 1960's, their contribution to Ireland's culture has not been acknowledged for a long time and their writing suffers the fate of very often being ignored, denied, erased or trivialized. The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse, which was published in 1986, for instance, did not mention women writers at all. Four years later, The New Penguin Book of Irish Poetry (1990) indeed included women; but a few ones. The three-volume The Field Day of Anthology of Irish Writing, published in 1991, asserted to be a comprehensive collection of Irish writing. On its 4,000 pages, however, it presented hardly any woman writer. Only eleven years later, two additional volumes dealing with women's fiction were published.

Because there were no acknowledged great works of prose, drama, or poetry that included women's contributions, the works of the best women writers have gone unappreciated. They are typically cited in a note or in paragraph or two in the literary histories. Iris Murdoch (1965:30), herself a Dubliner, says, *" I think being a woman is like being Irish… everyone says you're important and nice but you take second place all the same"* What then of Irish women writers? Nuala O'Faolain (1983:88) answers: *"Women don't count for much in contemporary Ireland, and neither does woman's writing."*

Since works on Irish women's writing were unknown for a long time, the question arises whether Irish women have written fiction at all. Moreover, it could be asked whether the fiction produced by women is of any artistic value and whether it is unique

enough to deserve a category of its own. Although Irish women writers were oppressed for a long time, they indeed produced literary texts, first in Gaelic, then in English. Women's writings in general were dismissed until the 1970s; thus, it is not surprising that Irish women's writings were not highly esteemed as well.

II.3.3.1. Irish Women Novelists: Seeking a Tradition

Since the mid-1960's Irish women have participated in a violent political, economic, and social upheaval and a traumatic clash of traditionalism and modernism. They have, so to speak, been wrenched from the security of marriage and family into a complex world fraught with enormous psychic stresses and strains. They have survived that passage and, in surviving, they have begun to define a new social order.

Although no more imaginative than those who precede them, Irish women writers explore themes that have never before been addressed in Irish literature, they evolve female characters who challenge society and characters who reflect strictly female experiences. They are intrigued by *what disturbs questions, offends, angers, or my even be morally and culturally subversives* (Francis Stuart, 1982: 5). Living in a modern world, women writers portray a society in flux, a society whose traditions and values are in question. However, the revolution of thirty years has shattered stereotypes and wrought profound social changes.

To speak of women's difference may not always be essential or even desirable but, as Elaine Showalter (1977: 11) argued

> *thirty years ago, when women writers are studied as a group we may discover recurrent patterns, themes and images which are almost impossible to perceive if women are discussed only in relation to male writers.*

Also, Christine St. Peter makes a similar point in her introduction to Changing Ireland (2000) where she defends her decision to treat women writer as separate category by demonstrating, in the light of the separate social conditioning of women, the importance of establishing a specific social tradition of writing in order to foster women's creativity. Hence, Irish women's writing, from all parts of the twentieth century, implicitly or explicitly deals with women trying to find a place for themselves within the narrative of the Irish nation.

II.3.3.2. Contemporary Irish Women Fiction: Themes and Developments

In the 1970's and 1980's, the upsurge of feminist movements also caused women's literary activities to flourish. Publishers such as Attic Press or Arlen House began to publish *"books by, for and about women"* (McCarthy, 2004: 105). Consequently, more and more women began to write, many of them also about subjects which were once taboo, as Ingman argues (2007:1) 'an *explosion of Irish women's writing' from the 1980s onward*. So, starched by the developments of the previous decades, women writers' stories became increasingly outspoken and challenging. Unlike their antecedent generations, modern writers created protagonists who were no longer prepared to endure passively, but instead forged new identities for themselves. They became more independent and confident and dared to express their demands.

Therefore, there were important themes in 20th century and contemporary Irish fiction by women writers such as; violence, living in poverty, injustice, conflicts, female sexuality and motherhood. Mary Beckett, born in 1926, for instance wrote her stories about women trapped within poverty and confronted with violence. Another writer, Fiona Barr, deals with social injustice and patriarchy towards women and Mary Dorcey's writings, for instance, deal with new aspects of women's presence, such as sexual exploitation or emotional deprivation. A further prevalent theme of Irish women writers is the incestuous, aggressive father and the negligent mother. Such a dark family portrait is for example drawn by Leland Bardwell, Dorothy Nelson or Jennifer Johnston (Weekes, 1995). These writers also emphasize the vulnerability of children and their need for love and security which facilitates parental manipulation.

When talking about contemporary Irish women writers, one has to mention authors like Claire Keegan, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Julia O'Faolain, Maeve Brennan, Claire Boylan, Patricia Scanlan, Cecelia Ahern and Marita Conlon-McKenna, amongst others. Maeve Brennan commonly wrote about Catholic bourgeois family life and familial emotional bonds. Claire Keegan writes, amongst others, about women's changing roles and the effect on the entire family. Indeed, Edna O'Brien was among these female fiction writers, and the following section will be devoted to her in details, as she is The Country Girls' (1960) novelist, the focus of this thesis.

II.4. Edna O'Brien: a Prolific and Controversial Writer (2)

> *In all her work, O'Brien continues to shock, puzzle, delight, and scandalize her readers as she ventures into new territory.* (Robert Hosmer, 2005:319)

Edna O'Brien is nowadays regarded as one of the most emblematic and prolific contemporary Irish women writers. Born in 1930, she is the author of nearly thirty books, which include various short stories, novels, plays, several autobiographical essays, screenplays and other miscellaneous works.

Anne Enright, one of Ireland's most celebrated contemporary novelists, was born during the 1960s and acknowledges O'Brien as a remarkable figure in Irish literary history. Enright argues that O'Brien is an exception to all those rules that made a successful writer in Ireland, *she* was not a man, she was not wealthy, and she came from the west of Ireland from an unknown family. Because of this, Enright calls Edna O'Brien *"the great, the wonderful mistake in all of that scheme of things"* (Moloney, 2003: 55). Similarly, Miriam Dunne writes that *"It would be difficult for any Irish woman writer to ignore the impact of her work during the repressive Ireland of the 1960's"* (Ibid: 49). Virtually all contemporary Irish women writers, particularly those interviewed by Helen Thompson and Caitriona Moloney in Irish Women Writers: Voices from the Field(2003), express their gratitude to O'Brien for both inspiring them and opening up the possibilities for women's writing in Ireland.

Indeed, a gender consciousness pervades O'Brien's literary oeuvre. Together with Julia O'Faolain, Leland Bardwell and Maeve Kelly, she belongs to what Christine St. Peter (2000:8) identifies as *"the most radical"* generation of Irish women writers that emerged in the 20th century*, "both in terms of experimental forms and in political perspectives"*.

While acknowledging *"the competitive presence of her artistic predecessors"*, most notably James Joyce (Gillespie, 1996: 110). O'Brien has made a place of her own in a male-dominated literary genre by particularly bringing their real love experiences on to the page. This view is also shared by Irish feminist Mary Kenny (2000:240), who notes that her fiction is *"certainly regarded as breaking new ground for women"*.

II.4.1. Edna O'Brien's Profile

Edna O'Brien Edna O'Brien, Irish novelist, short story writer, dramatist and screen play writer, was born in Tuamgraney, County Clare, Ireland on 15th December 1930 to Michael O'Brien and Lena O'Brien (neé Cleary) and she is the youngest of four; two sisters Patsy and Eileen, and brother John. Miss O´Brien was born in this small and quite isolated village in the west of Ireland. At that time, County Clare was one of the poorest parts in an already very poor Ireland, the town was small, consisting of about 200 people, rural, and very Catholic. Books were scarce. She remembers the women passing around pages of books to escape the monotony of everyday life.

She was educated at the local Parochial School in Scarriff and as boarder in the Convent of Mercy in Loughrea (1941-1946), Country Galway. At the age of almost twenty, she went to Dublin to study pharmacy in the apprentice system at the Pharmaceutical Night College Dublin, Ireland. Then in vogue and began contributing to the Irish Press. In 1950 she was qualified as a licentiate of the Pharmaceutical society of Ireland. At this time, she developed an interest in books and writing. She once said:

> *I one day bought a book for four pennies called "Introducing James Joyce," by T. S. Eliot, and I opened it to a section from "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," the Christmas dinner scene, with the blue flame over the Christmas pudding. Up to then, I had been writing rather fancifully, with a lot of adjectives. When I read that, I realized one thing: that I need go no further than my own interior, my own experience, for whatever I wanted to write. It was truly, without sounding like St. Paul, an utter revelation to me.* ('Lit Chat' with Edna O'Brien, 1995)

In 1952, Edna O'Brien married the Czech/Irish novelist Ernest Gébler, She married against her parents' wishes in the summer of 1954 and the couple moved to London, where they had two sons, one is the writer Carlo Gébler and the other the architect, Sasha Gébler. The marriage lasted twelve years and ended in divorce in 1964. Ernest Gébler died in 1997. Hence, Edna O´Brien, who had by then already tried her luck at writing, made writing a full-time occupation after the divorce and she currently lives in London.

Her family was opposed to anything to do with literature. When O'Brien was a student in Dublin and her mother found a book of Sean O'Casey in her suitcase she wanted to burn it. During college life, she wrote small pieces for the Irish press. In Ireland she read such writers as Tolstoy, Thackeray and F. Scott Fitzgerald. The first book O'Brien ever bought was Introducing James Joyce by T.S. Eliot. She has said that Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man made her realize that she wanted to pursue literature for the rest of her life. In this context Edna O'Brien said in an interview for Durham (Dec.3, 1971)

> *When I was young, I always wanted to be a writer and since then I have realized this dream. It's some sort of ache or dissatisfaction which makes me go on. It's something terribly intangible-almost like seeing something superb in the sky, in behavior, or in the land, and seeing it is*

not enough: you have to somehow set it down for someone else to see, even though that sounds arrogant.

She once described how her total library of fiction consisted of two books; Daphné Du Maurier's Rebecca (1938) and Margaret Mitchell´s Gone with the Wind (1936) . These books were - from diligent study - in such physical condition that the pages had to be assorted before reading. Apart from these two books there were only books on horses, cooking- and prayerbooks. Other sources of culture were occasional cinema or theatre plays and, of course, the Church as well as the Public House.

What was taught in the Public was of as much importance as the teachings of the Church. It was a mixed and motley society where equality between sexes was an unknown concept. The man in general and the family father together with the priest in particular, had almost unlimited and unquestioned power. In this society almost everything was considered as sinful - the only things officially permitted were *"eating, drinking, the carnival, the mission and the horse races. These activities were very much part of the men´s world and thus not forbidden"* (O´Brien, Mother Ireland: 33).

This is the society that gives birth to mental disease, alcoholism, sexual aberration, inbreeding and degeneration, something amply displayed in Miss O´Brien´s writings. It is also a paradox that this same society has brought forward such great authors as Joyce, Yeats, O´Casey and Synge. Edna O´Brien is - both from an English and Irish point of view - unique: The combination of woman, catholic, lower middle class - should vouchsafe for a very bad start in her career as an author.

II. 4. 2. Edna O'Brien: Irish Woman Writer

In a recent interview with Edna O'Brien (Weekend Edition Saturday 2013), she described how she started writing fiction

> *"[I wrote] fanciful little things ... foolish things. And I did write a little novel when I was about 8. It had all the elements of Gothic Victorian fiction. Not that I had any knowledge of Gothic Victorian fiction, because there were no books in our village ... and there was no library. There were prayer books, and there were cookery books. Even at that young age, I knew that there was a great suspicion on my mother's part about writing. My mother, who was a very gifted woman, hated and mistrusted the written word. It was as if she felt it was redolent of sin. So I hid the little book in a trunk. That was my first fling into* fiction."

Edna O'Brien is a conscientious novelist of twentieth century. She is a prolific and deeply engaging writer. Her novels and short-stories focus mainly on female problems. She is known for her bold and frank writing. Her works exhibit an authentic knowledge of female experience. Her works often revolve around the inner feelings of women, and their problems in relating men and society as a whole. Her writing deals with the issues like male treachery, Irish nostalgia, and celebration of certain moments in her life. She distinguishes herself from her contemporary writers by exposing acute female sensuality. Her novels are concerned primarily with female experiences, loss of guilt, loneliness and self-division. Her novels are characterized by a certain lyricism and nostalgia combined with a detached humor which has become bitterer as her work has developed.

The major themes of her fiction are the ineffable pain of loneliness, guilt, and loss. Her works record a bleak odyssey from naïve optimism, through rancor, bitterness, and hatred, to a resigned but nonetheless content nostalgia. Her insights into the conflicting

forces experienced by women today have won her international acclaim. For her rich contribution to literary field, she was awarded Kingsley Amis Award in 1962 and Yorkshire Post Novel Award in 1971. In the University of Durham interview, Edna O'Brien said: *"What makes a novel, or any work of art valid, is the degree of truth and authenticity behind it," And her goal is always to write a "truer book"* (Durham Interview). She uses the material from her rigid Catholic upbringing for her fiction which examines the man-woman question in her native country. Due to her frank portrayal of human sexuality, many of her works are still banned in Ireland. Several of her books deal with childhood and disappointment in sexual love. Her works have gained wide acclaim, particularly among American readers.

She has been called a feminist. She develops not so much from an ideal or from a philosophical cause but from a realistic appraisal of the female condition and of the male-female relationship. Due to the frank discussion of realistic sexual experiences, her books were banned in her native country. Recalling this she writes:

> *They used to ban my books, but now when I go there, people are courteous to my face, though rather slanderous behind my back. Then again, Ireland has changed. There are a lot of young people who are irreligious or less religious. Ironically, they wouldn't be interested in my early books-they would think them gauche. They are aping English and American mores. If I went to a dance hall in Dublin now I would feel as alien as in a disco in Oklahoma.* (An interview with Guppy, 1986).

O'Brien is considered a pioneer in exploring the condition of women in a society dominated by men. Coping with loneliness, repression, religious upbringing and sexual needs, O'Brien's women are their own victims – passive and often ineffective because of

emotional entanglements. Critics sometimes imply that her male characters are stereotypical puppets and serving only as props for their female counterparts. O'Brien's focus, however, is not romantic but realistic, confronting the key issues of feminism. Influenced by Joyce, her style is lucid, exhibiting a lyrical quality, like the works of several of her fellow countrymen.

II.4.2.1. O'Brien's Works and Awards

In her essay 'Irish Women and Writing in modern Ireland', Nuala O'Falolain (1985: 1602) declared that in the last two centuries Ireland had produces *"no woman writer of the very highest ambition and achievement – no Emily Dickenson, no Dorothy Richardson, no Christina Stead".* O'Faolain felt it necessary to lower her sights considerably to find any female figure of stature, acknowledging, perhaps provocatively, Edna O'Brien as the only contemporary Irish woman writer to have *reached* a mass audience. The impact of O'Brien's work has been significant in that it made a specifically Irish contribution to the surge of western women's fiction in the sixties.

Hence, it has become characteristic of Edna O'Brien scholarship to begin with lament about the relatively limited selection of criticism dedicated to a writer who has produced such a considerable body of work. Miss O'Brien is the author of nearly thirty books, which include eight collections of short stories, eighteen novels, five plays, several autobiographical essays, one collection of poetry, various screenplays and other miscellaneous works. That she is a *good* writer, worthy of scholarly interest, even a place

in the canon of contemporary Irish writing, is an assertion either started with less certainly many of the reviews and essays on her work.

However, Edna O'Brien's first novel The Country Girls 1960, the focus of this thesis, was banned by the Irish government and vilified by her local community. It is one of The Country Girls Trilogy (1960-67), (The Country Girls 1960, The Lonely Girl 1962 reprinted as Girl with Green Eye 1964, and Girls in Their Marries Bliss 1964). In this trilogy, O'Brien contextualizes the lives of female characters in newly independent Ireland to demonstrate the social and psychological effects of nationalism and the foundation of the Irish state on Irish women, particularly those in the rural west.

The novels of the sixties and seventies continued to focus on women, their thwarted illusions of romantic love or their susceptibility to male domination and abuse. The 'urbane' trend in the next novel August is Wicked Month (1965), in which Ellen, divorced from her husband, sees him and their eight-year old son Mark off on a camping trip in Scotland. After a brief fling at an unsuccessful affair, she takes a vacation on the Riviera where, among wealthy film people, she learns that her son has been killed in an accident.

The next novel, Casualties of Peace (1966), returns to London setting with a heroine who attempts to heal the psychic scars left by a destroyed marriage. At twenty-six Willa McCard seems to live in a situation becoming more stable, her terrors derived from her past becomes proportionately less her relationship with Auro, her dark lover, improves. But counterpointing her improvement is the damaged relationship of her household help, a married couple, Patsy and Tom.

The next novel, A Pagan Place (1970) returned to the Irish setting but featured a marked departure in technique. Written in a second person free-association style subtly modified to fit the demands of plot and chronology, A Pagan Place is reminiscent of the early passage of Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Edna O'Brien said: "I wanted to make A Pagan Place a book that would seem to be a piece of life, yet have a mesmerizing quality to the language. I hope it reads like a little trip to a lucid hallucination" (Dunn, 1965: 92).

Night, completed in 1972, is a witchery of words that depends largely on the naturally rich, melodious, and archaic diction off O'Brien's native Country Clare. Yet the views of Mary Hooligan are those of cosmopolite who, acknowledging her restricted catholic background with pathos and humor, refuses to be confined in her thinking to any creed or nationality.

The last three books representing three distinct view points, serve as corroboration of the extent to which O'Brien lives this dictum of intellectual freedom.

Like Joyce, O'Brien figures Ireland as mother. However, unlike Joyce, who writes from the privileged position of patriarchal power despite his deliberate outsider stance, O'Brien creates different metaphor for Ireland. Ireland is not an old sow that eats her farrow but, as described in her powerful memoir, Mother Ireland (1976), *a woman who has been raped by various enemies, a woman with whom other women can identify, indeed, must identify, and always to their sorrow* (Colletta and O'Connor, 2006: 8).

However, in Johnny I Hardly Knew (1977), bitterness and invective detract from its technical merits. The High Road (1988) is a sensual exquisitely perceptive work in which the landscape of the heart is laid with mines, and new dangers attend on new loves.

Vibrating with romantic sensibilities and dazzling linguistic effects, it haunts us with its beauty and brilliance; and, more recently, Time and Tide (1992) is a story of a young wife who faces a personal crisis when she leaves her husband and is forced to fight for the custody of her two sons.

She is also the author of a trilogy of novels about modern Ireland: House of Splendid Isolation (1994) winner of a European prize for literature, European Association for the Arts in 1995, in which she writes about Irish nationalism and sectarian violence; Down by the River (1996), based on the true story of a young Irish rape victim forced to travel to England for a legal abortion; and Wild Decembers (1999), recently filmed by RTE and about a farmer, Joseph Brennan, and his sister, Breege, living in an isolated rural community.

In the Forest (2002), is based on the true story of a disturbed and abused young man who murdered a young mother, her infant son and a Catholic priest in the west of Ireland in the early 1990's.

Edna desires The Light of Evening (2006) as on umbilical novel. In a corner sits the small wooden desk where O'Brien still writes her novels in long-hand, fitting each chapter with all its drafts into a separate box. The walls are lined with books, the classics that O'Brien often re-reads mixed with those written by friends. O'Brien admits: "*The novel is inspired by my mother and the very deep effect she had on me"* (Interview with Wheelwright, 2006).

In her latest trilogy, House of Splendid Isolation (1994), Down by the River (1996), and Wild Decembers (1999), the same attitudes toward women prevail in the rural west of

which O'Brien writes. However, in her investigations of politics, sexuality and land, we see that her female characters are all active in their own survival.

Therefore, many of O'Brien's novels are now available in translation, not only in French, German, and Dutch, but also Greek and Portuguese, suggesting the breadth of her appeal outside the sphere of British and Irish criticism. In fact, Edna O'Brien has received many awards such as becoming an honorary member of the American Academy of Letters, Kingsley Amis Award for The Country Girls (1962), Yorkshire Post Book Award (Book of the Year) for A Pagan Place (1970) , Los Angeles Times Book Prize (Fiction) for Lantern Slides (1990) , Premio Grinzane Cavour (Italy) for Girl with Green Eyes (1991), Writers' Guild Award (Best Fiction) for Time and Tide (1993), European Prize for Literature (European Association for the Arts) for House of Splendid Isolation (1995), Irish PEN Award2000, Ulysses Medal (University College Dublin) 2006 , Bob Hughes Lifetime Achievement Award in Irish Literature 2009, Shortlisted for Irish Book of the Decade (Irish Book Awards) for In The Forest (2010) , Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, Saints and Sinners (2011) , Irish Book Awards (Irish Non-Fiction Book), Country Girl (2012).

II.4.2.2. Edna O'Brien's Prose Style

Edna O'Brien's fiction is said to be too heavily autobiographical, especially concerning national and sexual identities, but there is hardly enough evidence for that in her fiction. The reductive tendency to identify the author with her female protagonists has been largely instrumental in her relegation to popular fiction. Indeed, Grace Eckley (1974:14) sums up that

> *Miss O'Brien's novels – written for the most part in the first person – give the impression that they are a personal odyssey beginning with the background in County Clare, the convent school education, removal to London, birth of children, and dissolution of marriage.*

Nearly always from a female narrator's point of view, O'Brien has brilliantly transmuted her personal experiences into art. Her recall and selection of the tiny details that make up the texture of life, particularly in her Irish scenes (The Country Girls, The Lonely Girl, A Pagan Place) are most dazzling. Impressive, too, is her evident love and savoring of words—sometimes clearly in a fashion reminiscent of James Joyce—for their own sake, and often in good dialogue. Perhaps because of the speed with which she works, the vivacity and brilliance of her prolific output is frequently marred by awkward grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Apparently, her editors have felt these stylistic lapses are all part of her Irish use of the language and have accordingly let them stand.

Thus, Colletta and O'Connor (2006: 5) argues

> *O'Brien's deliberate, stylized, highly theatrical stagings of the self have traditionally drawn the most critical fire, as they not only make porous the boundaries between author and text but also reveal the constructed nature of national and sexual identities, as well as the unacknowledged interdependence of those constructs.*

In giving the women of Ireland an overdue presence, O'Brien creates female characters .who, through their victimisation, deal repeatedly with the same theme of isolation, loneliness, and loss. O'Brien sends many of her characters on a quest for love and security, often unsuccessfully searching for answers outside of themselves. The outcome is almost always disillusionment and powerlessness. O'Brien herself states,

> *I have depicted women in lonely, desperate, and often humiliated situations, very often the butt of men and almost always searching for an emotional catharsis that does not come. This is my territory and one that I know from hard-earned experience* (Philip Roth, 1984: 6).

However, O'Brien's language is both rich and precise. At times her prose is closer to poetry with lyricism. She also experiments with narrative points f view in her fiction as well as with form. While A Pagan Place (1970) has a second-persona narrator, House of Splendid Isolation (1995) has multiple perspectives and Night (2001) is a stream of consciousness monologue.

O'Brien is an honest and truthful writer often accused of not being able to write outside of herself; she admits that she holds to James Joyce's precept that all fiction is fantasized autobiography. She continues to say she could not write a novel that was not located both physically and psychically in territory I know inside and out (An Edna O'Brien Reader, 1994: ix). Joyce is O'Brien's first and foremost influence and, indeed, her writing is often filled with "the dense Joycean language" ('Independent' 1996). Faulkner is her other love. It is their language that stirs her the most. She once said, there are writers and there are writers. But there is Joyce and Faulkner, for me ('Lit Chat' with Edna O'Brien, 1995). The country's physical and psychic pulse comes alive as O'Brien reconstructs her own life within her books.

II.4.2.3. The Irish's Response towards Edna O'Brien

'Irishness' is especially problematic for the exiled writer and it must be borne in mind that O'Brien has almost, always worked as an exile. She has lived in London since

1959, the years before The Country Girls (1962) was published. In fact, Haberstroh (1996: 4) highlights the exclusion of Irish women writers from publishing circles, pointing out, for example

> *The publication of The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing (1991) --- has been severely criticized for spares representation of writing by women. With no woman editors and little space devoted to women writers, this anthology calls attention to the continuing problems women have in getting their works published and recognized. Because such anthologies in effect create a canon, they will continue to perpetrate a vision of Irish writing dominated by male writers*.

The Field Day situation has been reminded, that the issue of exclusion remains relevant to a writer who has been published since 1960. O'Brien's dilemma is, of course, one related not so much to the achievement of publication as to acceptance within the *'canon'* created by institutions such as Field Day.

Critical and Cultural response to O'Brien's output exemplify the unenviable position of the Irish woman writer under review, Mary O'Connor (2006: 30) argues, in line with Haberstroh:

> *As woman write, or try to publish, they define themselves (or not) as writers, and are encouraged to do so (or not) by society in various ways --- woman trying to publish in Ireland have a veritable hurdle-track of obstacles ahead of them: the fallen bodies of past women writers --- the received vision of self with its limiting idealizations and expectations', the ungenerously of 'father figures' in the literary world to whom they have perhaps served apprenticeships; the implicit misogyny of mainstream publishing structures.*

Emer Kelly relates O'Brien's perceived *'wistful (ness)'* specifically to her *Irishness*, commenting that:

> *In Britain, her home for more than 30 years, she is seen-to put it somewhat, cruelly as a professional Irishwoman, her fey suffering girlishness to be admired as an enduring stance but never to be taken too seriously (1999: 11).*

Also, Rebecca Pelan's focus on O'Brien's 'stage –Irish' persona places this within the context of *'the dominant discourses of Anglo-American literary criticism'*, Pelan (1993: 68) argues:

> *The authorial persona became the critical focus in direct correlation with the perception of O'Brien as a writer who challenged the dominant discourse by failing to confine her work within the parameters set for it.*

Basic to the criticism by the Irish of Irish writers is of course, the fear of an unfavorable presentation. Answering such criticism Edna O'Brien said in 1971:

> *I have only written three novels about Ireland --- and you people seems to be oversensitive about it --- I am not writing for the Tourist Board! Nobody outside this country considers that I write a condemnation of Irish life; they just take it that I am writing about a set of people in Ireland* (Publishers Weekly).

Pointing out O'Brien's 'uniqueness in the tradition of Irish woman's writing' Pelan identifies O'Brien's Southern Irish Catholic background and breakaway from the 'big house' tradition of writer such as Maria Edgeworth and Elizabeth Bowen as crucial factors in challenging dominant discourses. It seems that the more O'Brien's work is perceived as

‘challenging’, the more critics and reviewers insist on constructing her as a ‘particular kind of mick’.

II.4.3. Edna O’Brien’s Fictions: Critical Perspective

It has become characteristics of Edna O’Brien’s scholarship to begin with a lament about the relatively limited selection of criticism dedicated to a writer who has produced such as a considerable body of work. That O’Brien is a prolific and often controversial writer is consistently acknowledged. That she is a ‘good’ writer, worthy of scholarly interest, even a place in the canon of contemporary Irish writing, is an assertion either stated with less certainly in many of the reviews and essays on her work, or with forceful defensiveness by those scholars who have chosen her as the subject of critical attention. Her status as a ‘literary’ figure, rather than a popular Irish woman writer with a history of controversial novels and notoriously flamboyant persona, continues to fuel a debate within British and Irish scholarship in particular.

Many of O’Brien’s novels are now available in translation, not only in French, German and Dutch but also Greek (her biography of James Joyce has recently been translated into Portuguese’s, suggesting the breadth of her appeal outside the sphere of British and Irish Criticism.

Although the number of O’Brien’s critics remains remarkably small, there is nexus of scholars who have challenged existing hostile and repetitive reading of her work. Rebecca Pelan’s often-quoted article, ‘Edna O’Brien’s *‘Stage-Irish’* Persona,’ published in 1993, set the scene for considering the actual reception of O’Brien’s writing, the ways in

which criticism of her work has been conflated with at once fascinated and cynical responses to her public persona. More recently, Heather

Ingman, in her article, *'Edna O'Brien: Stretching the Nation's Boundaries'* has shown how reductive reading of O'Brien's work as simply autobiography and romance have excluded the possibility of recognizing her as "*a political writer, concerned to challenge her nation's particular brand of gendered nationalism"* (Ingman, 2002: 253). Amanda Greenwood's monograph, published in 2003, offers the fullest assessment of O'Brien's *Oeuvre* up to that date, usefully outlining a history of O'Brien criticism as well as providing alternative readings and perspectives on her fiction.

Robert Ellis Hosmer, Jr's entry in the Dictionary of Literary Biography (2006) provided the most up-to-date information on all O'Brien's publications, productions, and interviews, a broad survey of her work and a useful (although not all inclusive) bibliography of O'Brien criticism.

The 2005 exhibition of penguin cover art at the Victoria and Albert Museum, in which some of O'Brien's books feature highlights specifically how, in the case of O'Brien, the material text, its physical appearance, has contributed significantly to the shaping of assumptions about O'Brien's fiction.

O'Brien is most popular in the United States, where she gives frequent readings of her work. She is a gifted re-creator of the sights, smells, tastes, and feel of Ireland-with a vivid way of capturing what people might say at their colorful best. Edna O'Brien's talent was early recognized for its natural lyrical qualities.

In The New Yorker (1972) Pauline Kael wrote:

Reading Edna O'Brien's fiction, I've been surprised by perceptions of what I thought no one else knew-and I wasn't telling. Yet Miss Kael expressed disappointment that O'Brien didn't move outside the magic circle of women's emotional problems.

.

In 1996 *the Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* produced its special Edition on Edna O'Brien which marked a turning point in criticism of her works. The eight essays in his collection cover a wide range of texts and theoretical perspectives. Maureen Grogan addresses the vexed issue of *'autobiography'* comparing passages from the novel A Pagan Place and semi-autobiographical Mother Ireland in her analysis of narrative technique and authorial control. Identifying the disturbingly gender-based nature' of much previous O'Brien criticism, Grogan sets out to question the labeling of her work as *'women's writing'* by revealing the distance between the characters and *their 'creator'* and arguing*: "O'Brien's insights into the human condition transcend gentler lines"* (1996: 5).

Such a response has ensured that O'Brien continues to gain notoriety, but public emphasis on the subject matter of her work should not detract from the literary achievement of her writing. Her striking dramatization of emotions and relationships, her ability to project humor and irony without displacing sensitivity, and finally, her instinctive narrative control should all be taken into account when assessing the pioneering impact of her fiction.

O'Brien's fiction is always in dynamic communication with the land of her birth. Her relationship to that country is an intimate. She depicts the constricted, hardscrabble life of the villages and farms of the west. Irish culture and history has preserved functions metonymically for the nation in O'Brien's fiction, which insists on the link between domestic and political colonization and between obsession about the control of land and

the control of women. These links inform only the work of O'Brien but also the work of many contemporary women artists.

II.4.4. Edna O'Brien and Feminism

O'Brien was a feminist before the term became fashionable, but her works also affirm a wider humanistic sympathy for all people. Early, she took up the topics of women's attitudes toward their bodies, their sexuality, and their roles as mothers and daughters. In Ireland, several of her books have been banned because of their negative commentary on the Roman Catholic Church, more common in her early work, and her frequent use of graphic sexual terms and scenes, As Daniel J. Casey and Linda M. Casey (1990:5) explain

> *women writers following Mary Lavin, Edna O'Brien, and Julia O'Faolain write with conviction against the background of 1960-1990 Ireland. They are feminists, experimentalists, and stylists; political and social reformers; and, as Irish writers accomplished storytellers.*

Edna O'Brien has constructed gender roles criticizing the capitalist patriarchy that is particularly Irish and Catholic. The differences pointed out in the gender question are not necessarily simple or natural, it is a category constructed through social and cultural systems. It is not biologically determined, but sociology has discussed sex roles for a long time, calling attention rather to the assigned than determined nature of gender.

Furthermore, she does not only focus on the status of the woman in society, but also on the status of the woman in literature: *'...[Her] texts offer a commentary on the*

prescribed roles for women in literature, challenging the adequacy of the female romance plot for representing women's experience in fiction." (Kristine Byron, 2006: 15). O'Brien's fiction works against male literary culture, as it depicts female life. It is not necessarily about life and solutions offered for women living in a patriarchal society. If you are born in Ireland, it is conveyed as if it was the *worst of luck* (James Haule, 1987: 223) *Women are objects of literature, neither subjects nor producers of it* (Helen Thompson, 2006: 32). Mary Salmon praises O'Brien as she does exactly this in her fiction, *the impossibility of a woman living as her authentic self in worlds ruled by men is the theme of O'Brien's fiction* (as cited in Mooney 2006: 202).

O'Brien's fiction consistently interrogates the cultural and political imperatives that reproduce femininity in Ireland b showing the ideals and the impossibilities of actually living up to them, O'Brien undermines the sanctity of the family by exposing its dysfunctions, high lighting its subsequent disintegration, and showing its repressive and, therefore, debilitating effects on women's psyches.

By writing from her own Irish experience Edna O'Brien reveals that which is different, unprecedented, and entirely necessary. She is the first Irish woman to bring fearlessness to women's literature. Philip Roth (1984), in an interview with O'Brien, mentions the foreword that he wrote for her book, A Fanatic Heart. Here he refers to a quote by, Frank Tuohy, in which he pointed out a unique difference between Joyce and O'Brien:

While Joyce in Dubliners and Portrait of the Artist, was the first Irish Catholic to make his experience and surroundings recognizable, 'the world of Nora Barnacle' had to wait for the fiction of Edna O'Brien.

Hence, O'Brien has seldom been regarded as a feminist writer at first, although her literature has encouraged her generation of Irish women novelists to write about their experiences and sell books. Edna O'Brien did not necessarily want to have a feminist voice in her fiction; she wanted to write and hope to write with vigor, with muscle. *I don't care whether I 'm a man or a woman, I want to write as an androgynous person for whom language is sacred* (Edna O'Brien, 1998).

II.5. Conclusion

The 1960's marked an important time for women in fiction, due to the fact that female authors finally began depicting women in honest situations. It is important to understand two elements that forced the emergence of the female voice in the 1960s; the place of women writers in Ireland until this time and the historical and political state of women in Ireland.

By voicing the realistic position of women in Ireland rather than empowering them or idealizing them, Edna O'Brien protests merely by finally exposing the victimisation. She will no longer be a co-dependent bystander to her country's social and political

problems by letting them recur with no acknowledgment of the fact that these conditions are authentic. In order to do this O'Brien creates the Irish woman who is consistently repressed and victimized not only by Ireland, but also by herself. Indeed, O'Brien has earned an international reputation for her fiction and this is due to her early work The Country Gils (1960) which was banned by the Irish government and vilifies by her local community. Moreover, this novel will be the subject matter of the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

(1) "The Filid" is an old Irish word which, when translated, comes out as a mix between poet, story teller (often through song), and prophet. Celtic Christians would actually commission people as "Filid," sending them out to tell stories, sing songs, and speak truth in creative ways to the people in the outlying towns and country sides.

(2) *'That is Edna O'Brien is a* ***prolific and often controversial writer*** *is consistently acknowledged'* cited in Mooney, Sinéad; O'Connor, Maureen (2006) (eds). Edna O'Brien: New Critical Perspectives. Dublin: Carysfort Press Book. Page 2

Chapter Three

Chapter Three

The Country Girls (1960): Deconstructing the Irish Woman's Myth

CHAPTER THREE

THE COUNTRY GIRLS (1960):

DECONSTRUCTING THE IRISH WOMAN'S MYTH

III.1. Introduction

The restrictive cultural and political climate of 1940's post-independence Ireland placed great limitations on women, in that a rigidly-defined Irish Catholic female identity was socially constructed, upheld as the ideal, and enforced systematically. The ideal Irish Catholic woman was pure and good, with a particular appreciation for the beautiful, the pleasing. Woman was seen as the angel in the house who creates a haven to which men can retreat after their sordid dealings in the world of political and economic power. The ideological construction of the Irish Catholic mother is based upon the maternal perfection of the Virgin Mary; she is glorified as a myth and woven into the ideal of the Catholic family. Mother is the spiritual and emotional foundation for the family, the source of love and affection and of moral values.

Nonetheless, one of the greatest changes in the 1960's concerned the rise of Irish women writers. They introduced topics such as female sexuality, mother-daughter relationships and women's struggle for liberation and freedom. Although women soon dominated Ireland's publishing scene, the period was not an easy one for them. Women, however, dared to speak openly about sexual restrictions and the female body in this period. Also as far as their writings were concerned, they were eager to try out new styles. Regarding contents, Irish women writers remained tied to the realist mode instead of

writing about the future. They were occupied with describing the life of a previous generation of women and how they dealt with their difficult life situations. Their new openness, however, was not fully approved by the Church as well as the government. Edna O'Brien's first six novels, published in the 1960's, were all banned by the Irish Censor as they contained too explicit sexual content. Copies of the books were even burned by the curate of O'Brien's local church and The country Girls, was one the banned novels.

Hence, the third chapter is devoted to Edna O'Brien's first novel, The Country Girls (1960). It endeavors to analyze this novel through a post-colonial feminist perspective. This chapter provides an overview of the novel, how Edna O'Brien deconstructed the myth of an ideal Irish woman, parallels between Edna O'Brien's life and the novel, a critical reception of the novel and screen adaptation.

III.2. Historical Context

The historical and political state of women in Ireland needs to be at least briefly mentioned as the persona of O'Brien's female character roots itself in the rural and political isolation of Ireland. These aspects contributed to O'Brien's childhood in Ireland and are reflected in the characters within her novel The Country Girls.

As seen in chapter one, the Irish have a long history of death, war, destruction, poverty and depression., the country has known invasion and war from the first Vikings at the end of the eighth century up to the struggles of today.

Another factor influencing the state of Irish women is the entire country's adherence to Catholicism. In his book, Inventing Ireland (1995), Declan Kiberd discusses the effect of

the loss of Irish language on the people. He claims that in about 1790 the people of Ireland were willing to learn English only if that meant they could hold on to their religion. What followed was the Irish being wracked with guilt and therefore throwing themselves even deeper into their religion. As a result, Catholicism saturated the lives of the Irish from the moment they were born until days after their death. Catholicism was and still is taken most seriously by the Irish, especially in matters of sex, which, due to biology, has affected women far greater than men.

The changes in literature are also due to the changes in politics, not just because of the upcoming of Women's rights movements. Eamon de Valera was replaced by Sean Lemass as Taoiseach. The women's main role as child bearer was challenged, there were more women working outside the domestic sphere, although this cannot be generalized for all women, especially, as already mentioned, for those who lived in rural areas. Th*e 'new'* generation of women who strived for higher education and went to university, knew that the image of females being wives and mothers were still more accepted by society.

Many women writers of O'Brien's generation used to have strong, powerful mothers who stood up against politics during the Easter Rising in 1916, but then became a housewife, denying themselves. Hence they failed to provide an empowering role model. This led to a new generation of women who rejected this image of females in their development. In 1960 for example,

> *Ireland had the lowest marriage rate in the world with 5.5 per cent out of 1.000, at the same time the average age was 27.2 years. This shows*

> *that the idea of becoming a wife, not to mention mother, became more and more obsolete to young Irish women* (Gartner, 1996:23).

So, women started writing about these changes. However, O'Brien said about her society that she had depicted her writings

> *Before I knew what it meant to be a writer, I had resolved on that path. It was a way out of County Clare. What I did not know was that the homeland was the font from which to draw stories and drama. I now realise that if I had grown up in a city I would not have had such a legacy. That landscape with its beauty and its hardships, its harvests and its hungers was central to my thinking and sensibility.(The Guardian,2008)*

At the time O'Brien began to write, few advances had been made. The 1960's marked an important time for women in fiction, due to the fact that female authors finally began depicting women in honest situations. Indeed, O'Brien's first novel, The Country Girls, sent shock waves through rural Ireland when it was published in 1960. Across the sea, London was about to enter the Swinging Sixties but in Ireland, sex was seldom mentioned openly and especially not when it involved unmarried girls. O'Brien, who was living in London at the time, found her novel banned in her home country and her parents so ashamed that they refused to speak to her.

III.3. The Country Girls: an Overview

In the National Portrait Gallery Bill Brandt's black and white photograph of Edna O'Brien (1980) is exhibited alongside portraits of Doris Lessing and Germaine Greer.

The Gallery's implicit recognition of O'Brien as a contemporary woman writer of significance is reinforced by the portrait's caption, which reads: *'since her first novel The Country Girls (1960), O'Brien has addressed the subject [sic] of women in society, of solitude and sexual repression'.*

The Country Girls (1960) begins the bitter sweet story of Caithleen and Baba, two girls brought up in the close-knit, cruel world of a small Irish village, narrated by the soft and sympathetic Caithleen and confessional in tone. It traces the tender development of Caithleen Brady from age fourteen, when her beloved mother dies in a boating accident. When she was seventeen years old, she freed from a convent through a ruse devised by her friend Baba. Caithleen finds employment in Dublin. There an expected rendezvous with Mr. Gentleman fails to materialize. She is left in a very ordinary Dublin, with neither glamour nor hope.

However, this was followed by The Lonely Girl (1962) (also known as The Girl with Green Eyes) and Girls in Their Married Bliss (1964) which form a trilogy, charting the disillusionment and failed romance of the two women. Through confessional first person narratives, O'Brien reveals the intense and often sexual frustrations of women raised on false romantic expectations of love and marriage. O'Brien highlights the sexual desire and attitudes of the women in her novels, and there is wantonness in the heroines' search for lovers and husbands which led Stanley Kauffman to describe her novels *'as lyrics of the loins'*.

In fact, The Country Girls (1960), The Lonely Girl (1962), and Girls in Their Married Bliss (1964) were republished in 1986 as The Country Girls Trilogy and Epilogue.

Along the way, O'Brien kept making revisions, rewriting, and thereby unsettling the story. In 1971, for instance, she dramatically altered the conclusion of Girls in Their Married Bliss, undercutting the optimism of the first ending. The epilogue to the Trilogy further annihilates any possibility of a stock happy ending by allowing us to see, twenty years later, exactly what has become of her two heroines.

Hence, O'Brien's first novel, The Country Girls (1960), published in twelve languages other than English, is a classic coming-of-age narrative set in rural Catholic Ireland. In fact, she wrote in The Guardian in 2008

> *The Country Girls took three weeks, or maybe less, to write. After I brought my sons Carlo and Sasha to the local school in Morden, I came home, sat by the windowsill of their bedroom and wrote and wrote. It was as if I was merely a medium for the words to flow. The emotional crux hinged on Ireland, the country I had left and wanted to leave, but now grieved for, with an inexplicable sorrow.*

Sean McMahon (1967:74) noted that the first novel The Country Girls established O'Brien: *'as an important new Irish writer with a fresh, unselfconscious charm, an acute observation of life, and a fine ribald sense of humor.*'

Edna O'Brien moved to London in 1959, in order to write The Country Girls she has narrated the reasons behind it:

> *I realize now that I would have had to leave Ireland in order to write about it. Because one needs the formality and the perspective that distance gives in order to write calmly about a place. Ireland is a wonderful incubator and --- I would rather be from Ireland or Russia as a writer than from any other country. To live there and actually write is*

> *quite difficult; it is not simply the question of censorship* (Durham Interview, 1971).

Of the fluent writing of The Country Girls, she said in The Guardian (2008):

> *It was my first novel and by far the easiest one to write. True, there was a welter of emotion to be countenanced, but I was happy to be doing it and became lost to the outside world. It had been commissioned by my great supporter Iain Hamilton of Hutchinson and he, in conjunction with Blanche Knopf, paid me a £50 advance, which, true to my profligate nature, I presently spent.*

Moreover, she added: '*When I sat down to write the book I did not have to search for a title. It spoke itself - The Country Girls'.*

The Country Girls, about teenagers are leaving rural villages for the wickedness of Dublin and London ever since its publication. Edna O'Brien has been a name to remember. It is described as a landmark in the battle for a modern secular Ireland that has, in the cities at least, all but been won. The novel changed the course of Irish womanhood.

III.3.1. The Plot

The Country Girls (1960) describes the childhood and adolescence of the shy and sensitive Caithleen and her volatile friend Baba. The setting is an Irish '*Boghole'* near Limerick in Ireland. Cathleen Brady '*Caithleen*' and Bridget Brennan '*Baba'* are the two young Irish Country Girls; they are friends from their childhood. Caithleen, dreamy and romantic, yearns for true love, while Baba just wants to experience the life of a single girl. Though life had been quite easy for Baba, with caring and well doing parents; it is just the opposite for Caithleen, with drunkard father who beats her mother every now and then.

Caithleen earns a scholarship to a convent school, the same day she learns that her house is mortgaged and that Baba is going to the same convent in the fall. While at Baba's house, Caithleen soon discovers that her mother has drowned while out with another man. Her childhood is over. She remains with the Brennan family over the summer and feels conflicted: She is happy to be safe from the fists of her father, but she is devastated by the loss of her mother.

Mr. Gentleman sees Caithleen waiting for the bus to Limerick and gives her a lift. At lunch, he flirts with her, and on the way home in the car, he holds her hand. This day becomes a precious memory for Caithleen.

However, the convent is a cold, loveless place where the girls band together against the grim atmosphere. Both girls despise it here and eventually are expelled for writing a vulgarity on a holy card. Reveling in their newfound freedom, Caithleen and Baba are unrepentant when chastised by their respective families over the incident. Caithleen has a distant and uncomfortable relationship with her father but finds a new friend in Mr. Brennan, Baba's father, who protects her from the wrath of her own father. He is kind to her as well.

Baba goes to Dublin for technical school, and Caithleen goes with her because there is nothing left for her at home. She works in a grocery store, and both girls room with a German couple, Joanna and Gustav, in Dublin. Caithleen becomes more outspoken and does not let Baba bully her. They become close friends, and Baba frequently finds double dates with dull but rich older men. Neither girl is looking for a life partner at this point. Mr. Gentleman finds Caithleen in Dublin and begins an illicit, albeit chaste, affair with her.

Baba becomes ill with tuberculosis and goes to a sanatorium for six months. Meanwhile, Caithleen continues her affair with Mr. Gentleman, and they plan a vacation to Vienna to consummate their relationship. Caithleen waits for Mr. Gentleman to show up, but she receives only a telegram that ends their affair.

III.3.2. The Characterization

In The Country Girls, Edna O'Brien's intimate narrative style seems to direct all attention to the intricacies of the character's life. At times the specific characters in the novels seem so self-absorbed that they have little or no awareness of a larger world. Their personal tragedy or euphoria seems to be all-encompassing. But when these women are considered collectively or the novels are considered as a part of O'Brien's canon, the total effect is of something much larger. O'Brien has a distinct and passionate vision of women - women who are victims of their own inability to deal with life's circumstances - women who out of necessity frequently band together against the austerity of a man's world. The Country Girls is the foundation of O'Brien's myth: the creation of voice and a vision of the feminine life. The main characters of the novel are as follows:

- *Caithleen Brady (Kate)* is the protagonist, an fourteen-year-old girl ,tells the poignant story of the drowning of her adored mother, the brutal rages of her alcoholic father, the stifling conventions of the convent school to which she and Baba are sent. When she is expelled, she loses her chance to attend college. Instead, with her friend Baba, she goes to Dublin, where she works in a grocery store. When Mr. Gentleman breaks off their love affair, Caithleen thinks her life is over. She is very simple and innocent country girl. She loves her Mama. She is very sensitive and she fears her father. However, Caithleen seems

to be the observer, the outsider, not a participant. But despite her innocence and her fears she has an amazing capacity for insight and introspection. She has a keen eye for natural beauty and detail and often sees other people's relationships with great clarity.

- *Bridget Brennan (baba)* is a pretty, spoiled young girl. She is Caithleen's neighbour, friend and classmate. She is a daughter of Mr. Brennan and Martha. Baba is the veterinary surgeon's daughter. She is coy, pretty, and malicious. She is Caithleen's friend. She is the person whom Caithleen fears most after her father. As a child, she uses Caithleen as a target for her cruelty; at the convent, she finds Caithleen to be a useful confidante and confederate. Selfishly, Baba decides to get Caithleen, as well as herself, expelled so that the two of them can move to Dublin. In Dublin, she enrolls in a business course, but she is really interested only in men and what she can get out of them. After contracting tuberculosis, Baba leaves for a sanatorium.

If Caithleen is the epitome of submission, Baba is deceit, defiance and action. Her life is just as full of calamity but she approaches daily problems as adventure a game to be fought and won. Baba is a brazen cynic with a sense of humour and few inhibitions. Despite her gruffness she too is insightful. Although her daily behaviour often appears selfish, in times of crisis she is helpful and supportive. Baba is also haunted by her past and the stifling nature of the Irish community.

- *Mrs. Brady (Mama)* is Caithleen's mother, a loving, devout woman. When she learns that her husband is about to lose the farm, she goes out to borrow money. On her way home, she is accidentally drowned. Although the mother only appears in the novel for five pages her presence will permeate the entire novel.

• *Mr. Brady (Dada)* is Caithleen's father, an irresponsible, abusive drunkard. He sells his property to pay his debts. Like the rest of his family, he lives a lie; privately, he is brutal but he fosters the public reputation that he 'wouldn't hurt a fly.' Caithleen fears him who appears usually drunk.

After his wife's death, he sells the house to Jack Holland. The behavior of father is narrated by the daughter. The effects of his behavior are long lasting and deep. They are the root cause of tragic end of the protagonist as well as her mother.

• *Jacques de Maurier* is called Mr. Gentleman, a wealthy, middle-aged French lawyer. After courting Caithleen for years, he breaks off with her without ever consummating their relationship. He lived in a white house on the hill. Mr. Gentleman used to play chess in the evenings and work as a solicitor in Dublin. It is not his real name. His name is Mr. de Maurier. But no one could pronounce it properly. He is such a distinguished man with his gray hair and his satin waist coats that the local people have christened him Mr. Gentleman. He likes this name. He used to sign his letters J.W. Gentleman. He has a sad face, but his smile is beautiful, remote and very condescending. He has never lost his French accent.

• *Martha Brennan*, Baba's mother, an attractive woman who is bored with her husband. She amuses herself by drinking and flirting. Martha is kind to Caithleen, giving her a home after the death of her mother. She was too beautiful and cold for that. Baba called her mother- Martha. Martha looked pale, but then she was always pale. She had a pale Madonna face with eyelids always lowered, and behind them her eyes were big and dark. Most nights she went town to the Greyhound Hotel; dressed in a tight black suit with nothing under the jacket, only a brassiere, and with a chiffon scarf knotted at her throat.

Strangers and commercial travelers admired her. Pale face, painted nails, blue black pile of hair, perched on a high stool in the lounge bar of the Greyhound Hotel, they thought she looked sad. But Martha was not ever sad, unless being bored is a form of sadness. She wanted two things from life and she got them- drink and admiration.

- *Mr. Brennan*, Baba's father, a veterinarian. He sometimes hints to Caithleen that he wishes Baba were more like her. When Caithleen's father hits her, Mr. Brennan throws him out of the house. The Brennan house also is dominated by deceit and drinking but the tone is very different. Mr. Brennan is 'sarcastic'; the rest of the family deliberately ignore him or patronize him. In the game of the Brennan household, Mr. Brennan is the dupe, but a knowing dupe.

- *Hickey* is the Bradys' workman. Hickey has been with them for twenty years. He has been there since before birth of Caithleen. He used to fetch eggs for breakfast to them. Caithleen is insisting him to call her *Dotey*. At the age of eight, very innocent Caithleen loves Hickey. She is fond of him but she couldn't get her father's love. When she was seven or eight, she used to say that she would marry him. Hickey is not the man of greed and avarice. He is simpleton. He is faithful servant and attached to their family. When Mr. Brady sells the place to Jack Holland, Hickey leaves the country village and goes to England. However, Caithleen keeps in touch with him writing letters and sending telegrams.

- *Jack Holland* is a Spirit's merchant in Caithleen's hometown. He wants to marry Caithleen even though he is much older. He still lives with his mother. He is Caithleen's neighbor and he has a grocery and bar up the street. Jack Holland has attraction for Caithleen's mother; even he is attracted towards Caithleen. He wants to marry her. He tries

to molest Caithleen. She fears him. Jack Holland is jealous of Hickey because her Mama relied on Hickey so utterly. He buys the Bradys' house.

In fact, O'Brien's vision centers on female sensuality, male treachery and the guaranteed pain of relationships. But ultimately the novels are a celebration of the intermittent good times which her long - suffering and self – abusing heroines enjoy, and thrive on. The characters are distinguished by whether they choose to focus on the despair or the elation. What emerges is a lyrical voice, remarkable for its descriptive powers with a lack of inhibition which is profoundly moving and disturbing.

III.3.3. Themes

The Country Girls focuses on questions of indignity, women's bodies, and the land and how their representation is shaped by colonialism and its negative consequences for women in newly independent Ireland.

O'Brien's novel manifests the acute losses, resulting due to certain loss of ethical values and culture. Her protagonist Caithleen and Baba suffer due to heterosexual relationship. The maternal figures in the novel suffer due to 'Mean' men naturally the daughters are affected by this. Caithleen's romantic relationship with Mr. Gentleman is the results of her interactions with her abusive father and suffering mother. Her relationship with Mr. Gentleman offer her comfort and reward of the familiar it makes death of herself leading her to tragic suffering for the whole life. The daughters tread the immortal path of sexuality as they ate deprived of their parents love and cares while out of the need of paternal love and comfort Caithleen falls in love with Mr. Gentleman, Baba engages loves affairs as she is most spoilt girl and desires to enjoy life freely. But Baba also is the

outcome of her parent's wrong behaviour. The innocent girls having romantic nations and craving for rich amenities develop sexual relationship with elder persons and naturally they have to suffer.

O'Brien has varied realistically depicted how elder persons exploit the younger girls by offering them gifts. The elders persons depicted in the novel are not happily married and hence they develop extra marital relationships. These unhappy family relationships, sexual repression, spoilt children, poverty, problems of land arise due to colonialism are the theme handed by O'Brien very realistically. She has also harshly criticizes catholic religion. She feels it a bondage and burden. The realistic presentation of all these issues was unbearable for the Catholics and they banned the novel. The style is simple and realistic. The presentation of the events is poetic. Her simple, lucid and lyrical style makes the novel readable.

III.4. The Country Girls: 'Weep and you weep alone'

O'Brien develops feelings of physical and emotional isolation and loneliness by associating different elements of the Irish condition into the lives of the characters. A rural setting, the patriarchal society, the domineering Catholic church, and the lack of any positive female influence not only help to establish the background from which Caithleen stems, but also establish the world in which she must continue to live.

The opening of The Country Girls creates the remote and isolated upbringing from which Caithleen has been raised. The physical and emotional coldness within the structure of Caithleen's world places her within the first stage of her journey. This is extremely important to O'Brien because throughout the narrative, she emphasizes the importance of the women's early years. From the very beginning of The Country Girls, loneliness and

sadness pervade the text. Caithleen is very scared, young, and painfully naive about the bigger world around her. The first words create uneasiness and trouble:

> *I wakened quickly and sat up in bed abruptly. It is only when I am anxious that I waken easily and for a minute I did not know why my heart was beating faster than usual. Then I remembered the old reason. He had not come home. (CG: 1)*

Perhaps it is her unconscious awareness of fear that is most disturbing. Her body knows and reacts before her mind can even acknowledge what has happened. The body knows what it has known so many times before. The intimate use of the first person along with the repetition of simple, short sentences adds to the disturbing rhythm of the passage. The anxiety of her beating heart is heard within the last three staccato sentences.

Through stark and desperate images, O'Brien establishes a sad reality and a vast Irish landscape of emotions as well as land early in the book Caithleen expresses her feelings of detachment and loneliness toward both her family and her environment. As Caithleen gets out of bed, her feet cold on the bare floor, she notices the mist rolling off the fields, the darkness of the morning, and the wetness from the dew. These physical images of darkness and dampness initiate the constant references to a bleak world. The sheepdog, who had not slept in his usual place, affirms the fact that her father has not come home. It is the type of writing that O'Brien is known for. It is honest and.twe and too real not to be believed. This is a house and a childhood devoid of warmth, acceptance, and love.

Not only do all of Caithleen's faculties of sensation (touch, hearing, sight, smell and taste) slowly become alert in emotional perceptions and connection to the outer world is

awakened. It would be an over-statement to suggest that O'Brien is symbolically presenting the birth process but there is definitely a sense of coming to life, an awakening, which is reinforced by having Caithleen slowly shake off the effects of sleep. This phrase *'weep and you weep alone'* will echo for Caithleen throughout the entire novel: Not only must she suffer; she must suffer alone, in silence. In fact, Caithleen is obsessed with the fear of losing her mother and unable to face the terror that is her father:

> *In fear and trembling I set off for school. I might meet him on the way or else he might come home and kill Mama ...I was always afraid that my mother would die while I was at school. (CG: 9)*

Part of Caithleen's growth in the novel will be the physical and emotional movement away from her mother and the ability to express her feelings about her father. O'Brien's message is clear for these women: love is a disappointment. This theme is reinforced when her mother drowns while seeking the companionship of a male friend. The tragic Irish mother is extinguished, as she will be in the entire novel, and Caithleen is left alone and afraid. This element works to enable her isolation further. Her mother death makes Caithleen admitting, *'It was the last day of childhood'* (CG: 59). O'Brien makes Caithleen's mother a problem not only in her existence, but also in her absence.

From the beginning of the novel, the reader, like Caithleen, has a built-up resentment towards him. She deserves more than an abusive, absent, and inebriated father and a mother who in the next several passages goes to her *'watery grave'*. At this point in the novel, O'Brien makes Caithleen as good as parentless. This establishes the basis for Caithleen's rejection of the past.

This present isolated situation makes Caithleen susceptible to the beginning of an affair of sorts with a man interestingly known as Mr. Gentleman. Mr. Gentleman preys on our lonely fourteen-year-old Caithleen as he takes her to town one day for lunch where she is given wine even though she would much prefer lemonade. She is given special treats that are also accompanied by inappropriate handholding and suggestions of future dates. Mr. Gentleman and his sophisticated trips into town serve as a temporary solution to her loneliness. However, at this point she is far too young for this to be a conscious decision on Caithleen's part. Although the trips make her feel special, the situation works to isolate her from more appropriate relationships.

Another element O'Brien uses to further Caithleen's fear and abandonment is Catholicism. *'O'Brien doesn't hold back when it comes to her wrath at the Catholic Church, and at the small-minded Irish who slavishly follow it at the expense of their own humanity'* (Zacharek 2). Caithleen wins the scholarship and gets admission in the Convent school. Baba also is going there as paying student. The atmosphere at the convent is dark and bleak. The dark sheet of water of lake and the sad poplar trees and the strange dogs outside the strange shops make her indescribably sad, but her father feels that it is nice place. She says: *'The convent was a gray stone building with hundreds of small square curtain less windows, like so many eyes spying out on the wet sinful town'* (CG: 83).

However, they are expelled from the convent and they are punished because they wrote a wicked sentence concerning 'father Thomas' the chaplain, and 'Sister Mary' the nun. Their parents are informed about this. They are put in the infirmary for night. Caithleen is insulted and ashamed of this act. She wants to put an end to her life. It is the act of disgrace. They are called as 'children of Satan.

It is at this point in The Country Girls that O'Brien's female characters begin the second stage of their development: the search for love. Both girls, feeling lost and lonely, escape to Dublin searching for the love and security that they were unable to find at home. Because neither Caithleen nor Baba has experienced a true loving relationship as a child, their quest becomes problematic and frustrating. As they have no foundation, there is little hope.

There is no greater place to start the second stage of their journey than a big city. Caithleen states upon arrival, *''I suppose it was then we began that stage of our lives as the giddy country girls brazening the big city'* (CG: 121). Dublin represents hope, change, and promise for Caithleen and Baba, while also offering the opportunity to meet new people, especially men. Not knowing what to expect, they are happily met by the vibrant city. Caithleen refers to it as a *'neon fairyland'* and admits, *'I loved it more than I had ever loved a summer's day-in a hayfield. Lights, faces, traffic, the enormous vitality of people hurrying to somewhere'* (CG: 169).

The girls are armed very differently as they begin their lives in Dublin, the second stage of their journey. The contrast of their personalities is essential in the unraveling of their story and the development of their characters. Caithleen spends her first few days in Dublin with only the awareness of what she does not want to be. She clings to what she knows and can think of nothing more exciting to do on a Saturday night than to go to confession. Baba, on the other hand, has. a thirst to try it all as she finally feels free after being, *'cooped up in jail for three thousand years'* (CG: 129). She is consistently creating as much excitement as she can for the two country girls. They soon spend their evenings at

dance clubs or bars searching for companionship, men, and love. Juxtaposed to Caithleen's wish to attend confession, Baba desires to *'blow up this town'* (133).

Their different desires are made quite clear when Baba states:

> *We're eighteen and we're bored to' death ... We want to live, Drinking. Squeeze into the front of big-cars and drive up outside big hotels. We want to go places. Not to sit in this dump [...] we're here at night, killing moths for Joanna, puffing DDT into crevices, listening to that lunatic next door playing the fiddle.* (CG: 185)

The two separate wishes Baba and Caithleen have for their lives are quite obvious. It is true that both are seeking a man, but each has her own vision of who that will be. Baba holds no romantic vision of her childhood or her present day life. She is searching for more, bigger and better, older and richer men. Caithleen wants love, but not just any kind of love; she wants romantic love. She clearly saw her mother unhappy and disappointed in romantic love, but she knows that it was what her mother most desired.

Ironically, Caithleen's major romantic interest in the novel is Mr. Gentleman, who reappears in her life while living in Dublin. Now, however, their relationship is more romantic and Caithleen is older and more comfortable being the object of his desire. She never questions this position, nor has she really hoped for it. He is not at all close to the Prince Charming she had envisioned nor does she ever consider her own wants. She is completely undiscerning as to who chooses to love her.

This affair offers Caithleen an opportunity to discover her own sexuality, and explore a male body for the first time. A one point Caithleen is promised a trip to Vienna by Mr.

Gentleman where they will consummate their relationship. Through their discussions, it becomes quite obvious that they relate to each other as father and daughter much more than as lovers. Caithleen is constantly told what to do and where to do it. Sadly, this is comfortable for her.

Even though the affair allows Caithleen an exploration of love, it undermines her religious beliefs as well as her own previous standards. O'Brien illustrates this in a scene where Mr. Gentleman keeps Caithleen out so late she had to miss mass the next morning leaving Caithleen faced with conflicting interests. Symbolically not attending mass shows her disregard for the Catholic Church. This marks the beginning of Caithleen's disengagement with the Catholic Church and, therefore, her own family values. This loss is troublesome for Caithleen because she finds herself leading more and more of a contradictory life.

On the other hand, being a good Catholic girl equals being subservient, modest, unloved, and inexperienced This is what Caithleen was, this is what her mother was, and this is what she is rejecting. It is more important to fill the void than live up to the constraining moral standards imposed on her earlier in life.

At the end of the book, the affair abruptly dies when both Mr. Gentleman's wife and Caithleen's father discover the relationship. She is left all alone. *'The message is clear: a gentleman is a failed promise'* (Broyard, 1986: 2). Caithleen, like her mother, has victimized herself by assuming an unassertive, submissive attitude. She, also like her mother, finds herself having sleepless nights over a failed attempt at love. She again feels a tremendous loss and must once again start over:

> *Doing this, the thought came to me that I was foolish and disloyal, not only to Hickey, who had been my best friend, but to Jack Holland and*

Martha and Mr. Brennan. To all the real people in my life. Mr. Gentleman was but a shadow and yet it was this shadow I craved. I sent the telegram, instantly made myself forget about Hickey, and thought of our holiday in Vienna. (CG: 221)

At the close of The Country Girls, feeling completely alienated, Caithleen has no one on whom. She can rely. O'Brien symbolically illustrates this isolation in the description of a conversation Caithleen attempts, to have with a fellow tenant in her boarding house. The non-English speaking tenant does not understand what Caithleen is saying, nor does she understand him. She literally has no one with whom to communicate. Even her relationship with Baba' has been thwarted. Due to a six-month stay at a tuberculosis sanatorium, Baba cannot offer any solace. She is left with no one. Caithleen is now being forced to rely on herself.

III.5.Irish Woman's Quest for an Identity

The Country Girls is about sudden moments of understanding of life and its dichotomies, freedom and entrapment, failure and success, disgust and bliss; moments of lucid insight that transcend the individual and point to a more universal apprehension of the human condition. What gives the novels such complexity is the way O'Brien develops an intimacy with her characters through their daily routines, the crises and the humdrum in their lives.

Her protagonists are sexually starved. They are yearning for love, sex and acceptance. But due to misconception about female sensuality they are not accepted. Females are disappointed. The pleasure of sex is mixed with guilt and shame.. Their

unhappy life is main concern of the novel, which is outcome of immoral (so called) sensuality. There is frank treatment of female sexuality. There is conflict with Catholic Church. Throughout last four decades and more, she has dealt with female sensual/sexual problems as a leading female literary voice. It is reformative vision of O'Brien, dominant in her fictional world. It has made her modern female Irish writer. She has made taboo subject very interesting and reformative. The haunting sensuality leads to tragic ends, but there is no sympathy expected on the part of readers; she expects change in callous attitude and behaviour of males. In her novels - there is kaleidoscopic description of Irish female life, with landscape and dangers, prevailing in Ireland.

Throughout The Country Girls, Caithleen Brady struggles to formulate her own Irish, as well as her own female identity in the face of societal -- for which read 'patriarchal' -- constructs of what this should be. Caithleen's Nationalist background is referred to early in The Country Girls, when her impoverished family have not been able to live in *'the big house'* since it was burnt by the Protestant Black and Tans. Her mother, Mrs. Brady, reinforces her own position as political victim, maintaining that *'Protestants were cleaner [than Catholics] and more honest'* (CG: 26). This is concurrent with her subservient relationship to her husband. Significantly, references to nationalism within a family context crop up like ill omens at points in the text where Caithleen is trying to assert herself. The boundaries between national and sexual colonization are blurred.

O'Brien writes about the sensual problems of big house in Ireland. She deals with a bewitching Celtic beauty of Ireland as a woman, a womb, a cave, a cow, a snow, a bride, a harlot, and of course, the gaunt Hag of Bears. The country Ireland is called as a damsel in distress. O'Brien is against the colonizers. She severely criticizes the masculine and virile

force of patriarchal society. She is against the cultural imperialism of men on women sensuality of Ireland. Women in Ireland are subjected to male dominance. She points out this concept of maiden Ireland or Mother Ireland. Her fiction reveals the devastating practical implications of such representations through woman sensuality. She has created new image of Irish woman, different from *'Mother Church'* and Mother Ireland or Virgin Mary. According to her women must not be treated only as muses or mates but as human beings. She criticizes patriarchal hostility and repression in Irish life. Through realistic presentation of female sensuality, she brings respect for them.

Rebecca Pelan argues somewhat more astutely that The Country Girls can be seen to trace not only an entertaining tale of two young Irish girls but the loss of female identity', and that this *'was consistently passed over in favour of an emphasis on the humour and the freshness and clarity of the style [which] accorded to some notion of lighthearted whimsy which was also perceived as typically Irish'* (Pelan, 1993: 73-74). Explaining why O'Brien has not been significantly taken up by feminist critics, Pelan suggests that *'[her] writing ... fails to qualify [as 'feminist] through its representation of women's oppression and powerlessness with no apparent attempt to analyse those conditions'* (Ibid: 75). *'Apparent' is crucial; Pelan goes on to point out that '... writers like O'Brien write from marginalised social positions about women in similar positions'* (Ibid: 76). Pelan is interested largely in the *'Irishness'* of O'Brien's *`marginalisation'*, but the treatment of 'loss of female identity' or compromised female subjectivity in The Country Girls and beyond does manage to transcend cultural context.

It is possible, however, to identify parallels between O'Brien's exploration of relationships between men and women and her treatment of nationality, since political

allusions in The Country Girls tend to serve as expressions of the protagonist's sexual displacement. The quest for an Irish identity with which it is possible to be comfortable is analogous with the search for a heterosexual relationship which avoids 'sell-out' in terms of female identity.

Only five years after the publication of The Country Girls, Betty Friedan identified *'the problem that has no name'*, arguing that '*the core of the problem for women today is not sexual but a problem of identity'* (Friedan, 1965: 68). Friedan went on to point out *that 'a woman who is herself only a sexual object, lives finally in a world of objects, unable to touch in others the individual identity she lacks herself'* (Ibid: 293). In this condition, women are likely to enjoy reading fiction which itself explores *'loss of female identity'* (Pelan, 1993: 73)

III.6. Edna O'Brien Double Representation of Irish Woman

Of primary concern in O'Brien's novels is the role of woman in representing Irish national character and reflecting the Irish Republic's hierarchy of social and religious values. O'Brien's *'heroine'* moves reflects the inability of the Irish woman to achieve productive development and exposes the physically disabling environment of mid-century Ireland.

In The Country Girls, O'Brien creates two female main characters. She explains in *'Why Irish Heroines Don't Have to be Good Anymore'* (1986) that she wanted to have *'one who would conform to both my own and my country's view of what an Irish woman should be and one who would undermine every piece of protocol and religion and hypocrisy there was'* .

Interestingly, there are many women in all of the novels who contribute to the further isolation of their fellow women. The first and most obvious of these characters is Baba, Caithleen's best friend. Baba's favorite name for Caithleen is a *'right looking eejit.'* When she enters the novel, she steals lilacs Caithleen cut for her teacher so that she can give them to her. Caithleen even admits, *'Coy, pretty, malicious Baba was my friend and the person I feared most after my father'* (CG: 16). While Caithleen is meek, Baba is bold and brazen; Caithleen wants to be accepted, Baba wants to deny; Caithleen comes from a complete lack in her life, and Baba wants to broaden that lack. Both girls are comfortable within these roles. When Baba devises a plan to get them expelled from convent school, Caithleen is unable to stand up to Baba as she is more comfortable as the victim than the aggressor. Even Baba's own father says, *'Poor Caithleen, you've always been Baba's tool'* (CG:109). Caithleen knows that she is being used by Baba. However, it is the price she pays because Baba is *'fun'* and *'doesn't mean any harm'* (CG:109). The relationship also supplies another need of Caithleen's. Baba's father, Dr. Brennan, is the only male who provides a positive parental figure in her life. Her relationship with Baba ensures the continuance of this support.

Edna O'Brien was once asked if there was an original character of Baba. Ms. O'Brien responded:

> *I think I did have school friends who were the opposite of myself, and they were extroverts and mischievous. I was drawn towards them as I always am towards opposites. But now I think it was partly my other person, my alter-ego. I had a sort of streak of submersed rebellion in me always, which I never let out, unfortunately; I was really too frightened, too meek.* (Eckley 1974: 67)

Caithleen is attracted to Baba as someone who is different, goes against the rules by creating her own to live by and then enforcing on others. This, however, does not free Baba from experiencing the same three stages that Caithleen must go through. While the emphasis of the novel is clearly on Caithleen, Baba is important as she is both an intrinsic opposite of Caithleen while also being an extension of her.

Baba's character is constructed as a contrast to Caithleen. Part of the novel of growth will be built on the distinct characters of these two girls' comparison and contrast. The relationship brings out not only the worst in the girls, but also sometimes some of the best. Baba angers Caithleen to the point where she is motivated to act and defend herself. For Baba, Cait is creative,*'Grown-ups like Baba and [give] her a lot of attention'* but Caithleen's helplessness, when confronted by her drunken father, gives Baba the opportunity to show her clear, cool thinking and her ability to stay calm. Baba lacks Caithleen's eye for her surroundings. Baba's insight is in her knowledge of people which at this point she uses mostly for manipulation. Baba's wit and sarcasm are most effective on Caithleen; Caithleen is Baba's straight man.

But even at this early stage, Baba is supportive and generous as well: when Caithleen is told her mother has left, Baba simply states *'Stay with us'* (CG: 31). Baba has the ability to make Caithleen focus on things other than her fears and anxieties. Caithleen covets this friendship as much as Baba covets Mama's jewelry. There is a magnetic draw between the girls, but because they are so young, it most often manifests itself awkwardly, painfully.

In fact, O'Brien re-exposes the gendered narratives that create an Irish femininity unable to break free from the nationalist ideology that ensnares its women in the role of submissive national ideal and biological reproducers of this nation/narrative. Most

significantly, O'Brien not only describes an oppressive Irish culture that impedes the social progress of its women but also reflects through her characters a psychological reliance on the very narratives that seek to contain them. Caithleen's undoing is, in many ways, her own. Her refusal to move beyond idealized narratives of romance, domesticity, and religious devotion signals only that she too can imagine no better fate for the Irish woman.

III.7. The Intermixed Clash of Colonialism and Patriarchy: Voiceless women

The Country Girls determines the crushing pressure imposed upon modern Irish women, be it from family, church, or nation. Overall, the novel tells of the adventures of two girls, Caithleen and Baba, escaping from their Irish hometown and convent school to Dublin and then London in search of their castle of love. The trials, temptations, and temporary excitement they encounter en route, however, bring home to them the hard-won realization that they are walking on a path of frustration. In the novel, the patriarchal power viruses virtually spread far and wide around Caithleen in the form of father, male lover, religion, and so forth. In a sense, Caithleen's life is composed of her aspirations toward love and, sad to say, complete bafflement and desperation caused by a long line of rascals, including his drunken father, Mr. Gentleman and nation.

Isolated in such a stifling world of men, Caithleen stands little chance to secure a room of her own. As a matter of fact, Caithleen's problem is foreshadowed in that of her mother, who has long been a victim of her father's abusive drunkenness. Such worries about her husband, coupled with the responsibility to care for the whole family, crumple Caithleen's mother, which explains why she has a tighter relationship with her daughter, from whom the mother manages to seize a slice of solace and identification. The lack of a

reliable husband happens to be compensated for by Caithleen; on the other hand, her mother's love significantly makes up for the absence of a responsible father. The mother and the daughter then combine in an interlocking, interdependent bond. How are Irish children influenced by the previous generations? O'Brien's comment on the problem of Irish people in *Mother Ireland* is helpful in figuring out such connection. *"The children inherit a trinity of guilts (a Shamrock): the guilt for Christ's Passion and Crucifixion, the guilt for the plundered land, and the furtive guilt for the mother frequently defiled by the insatiable father"* (Eckley, 1976:19). The three concerns for children of Ireland mentioned here, Catholicism, nation, and family actually pose tremendous threat to the lives of modern Irish people, especially those of Irish women. While the word trinity connotes strong religious flavor, the term shamrock is suggestive of nationalistic spirit.

Clearly, while her father's phantom sticks around, Caithleen suffers from still another romantic breakdown caused by Mr. Gentleman, her lover. Her agony and helplessness can be discerned from the ending of the story: *"I came out to the kitchen, and took two aspirins with my tea. It was almost certain that I wouldn't sleep that night"* (CG: 227). Nevertheless, as a secondary, marginalized woman in the suffocating modern Irish society, what else Caithleen could do but take the long day's romantic journey into night.

The repressive effects of the patriarchal society are hardly assuaged by the Catholic Church and its proscriptions. On the contrary, the Catholic Church in reality intensifies the restriction on Irish women from still another aspect. The influences of Catholic religion on Caithleen can be found everywhere in the trilogy. From her early years on, guilt-ridden Caithleen has always been afraid of divine punishment. Her young love for the workman,

Hickey, makes her much embarrassed, for sexual desire is prohibited for a girl of her age. *"I got out of bed six or seven times every night as an act of penance. I was afraid of hell"* (CG: 3). In addition, the pure image of Virgin Mary is so rooted in Caithleen brain and she is determined to be nuns when she grows up. To be a nun then becomes another escape from the troubles in this mundane world. As Caithleen recalls later, her mother would like her to be a nun in the future, for being a nun "*was better than marrying"* (CG:67). Living in such Catholicism-centered surroundings, Caithleen cannot help projecting her ideal dream onto the religious world, yet her later life in the convent brings her more disappointment than happiness.

Therefore, though pressures from the patriarchal Irish society come in multifarious forms, rural female characters in Edna O'Brien's fictions tend to defy unreservedly such overwhelmingly constructive forces. Caithleen struggles all her life with the patriarchal forces from all directions, but she fails time and again in her attempts. From early childhood, her life is overshadowed by the unhappy marriage of her parents. In contrast to her mother's care and kindness, her father's irresponsibility and brutality produce a feeling of repulsion in her mind. Thus she manages to run away from her father's control by turning to some male lovers for help.

Following the deconstruction of the representation of women in O'Brien's fictions, how women can break loose from the prison-house of language and culture constructed by male culture, and express instead their own voices has been a perplexing issue for an ocean of critics. In effect, this tough problem is by no means peculiar to the Irish condition but rather widespread throughout the post-colonial world.

As a female scholar straddling the first world academy and her indigenous Indian origin, Spivak is exceptionally sensitive to the subjugated position imposed upon the marginalized third world women. The large majority of the colonized has, for Spivak, left no mark on history because it cannot, or is not allowed to make itself heard. This inability is common to colonized man but even truer of colonized women, for within the colonial, patriarchal society women are doubly unheard. Her research on sati, the widow sacrifice, reassures her of the complete absence of women's voices as a result of the intermixed violence of colonialism and of patriarchy. Therefore, In her essay '*Can the Subaltern Speak*' (1995), Spivak observes that *"both as an object of colonialist historiography and as a subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant"* and that if *"in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow"*. This very idea of the gendered subaltern well exemplifies the predicament modern Irish women encounter and might help shed light on why Caithleen in The Country Girls suffers so much. Unable to be heard either by her father or, Father and Mr. Gentleman, Caithleen is forced to experience another symbolic "widow sacrifice" in the Irish atmosphere.

III.8. Where Fact and Fiction meet

In many ways it's not surprising that O'Brien pushes all the wrong buttons for many. She is been wildly successful, opinionated, and larger than life. She is written too many books with similar themes, and her political stances both within her novels and in interviews have often left would-be fans uncomfortable. This experience deeply influenced

her writing which is now considered to be autobiographical and sometimes confessional. This is particularly true with O'Brien's first work, The Country Girls.

In The Country Girls, O'Brien tells the story of growing up and the experiences of her youth, except she does not use herself; the character is called Caithleen. Although the latter is a work of fiction, it is easy to draw strong parallels between the writer and the character. Indeed, many presuming that the book is a thinly veiled autobiography, given certain shared elements between the protagonist Caithleen and O'Brien – both have an alcoholic father, go to convent school, and found a certain liberation in Dublin. This is reductive nonsense though – as, for example, one of the most moving scenes in the book revolves around the death of Caithleen's mother, while O'Brien's mother lived long enough to be deeply embarassed by her daughter's work. O'Brien also went to University in Dublin while Caithleen is a grocer's assistant. The relationship between a writer's biography and their work is always a difficult area of literary criticism, but one can't help but feel a certain amount of fanaticism dismissing her work as a thinly-veiled memoir. Those, of course, are the facts that are similar. But many of the feelings of emptiness, loss, and loneliness were also felt by Edna O'Brien and then revealed through Caithleen. However, in recalling the furor surrounding publication of The Country Girls, Edna O'Brien said

> *Images of roads and ditches and bog and bog lake assailed me, as did the voice of my mother, tender or chastising, and even her cough when she lay down at night. In the fields outside, the lonely plaint of cattle, dogs barking and, as I believed, ghosts. All the people I had encountered kept re-emerging with a vividness: Hickey our workman, whom I loved; my father, whom I feared; knackers; publicans; a travelling salesman by the name of Sacco, who sold spectacles and sets of dentures; and the tinkers*

> *who rapped on the door demanding money in exchange for mending tin pots…. the lost landscape of childhood.* (The Guardian, 2008)

For much of the sixties and seventies, critical analysis focused heavily on the autobiographical elements of her work, particularly in The Country Girls, as Caithleen's trajectory from Irish upbringing in the west of Ireland to adolescent life in Dublin and marriage and divorce in London bears undeniable resemblance to O'Brien's own life. Peggy O'Brien's "*The Silly and the Serious: An Assessment of Edna O'Brien"* (1987) offers one such autobiographical reading, which mistakenly conflates Caithleen's narrative emotions with those of O'Brien.

In "*The Art of Fiction No. 82",* O'Brien herself admits to the autobiographical influence in her work but defends herself against criticism by insisting that *whether a novel is autobiographical or not does not matter. What is important is the truth in it and the way that truth is expressed.* (1984: 38)

Overwhelmingly, critics have exhibited a tendency to judge O'Brien's writing in terms of her accuracy in describing twentieth century Ireland. By treating The Country Girls as the autobiography of O'Brien's life, however, reviewers have compromised her status as a talented fiction writer, ignoring the aesthetic qualities of her work in favor of a reading that retells the gritty and miserable details of the author's own experience.

Such readings of her novels as memoir are reinforced by Ernest Gebler, O'Brien's ex-husband and father of her children, who accuses her of ―*selling in print the private and very intimate details of their married life* (Letter from Ernest Gebler to O'Brien, 1964). Although the inclination to read her novels as true stories has undermined aesthetic

considerations of her work, O'Brien herself also encourages such readings and adopts James Joyce's maxim that ―all fiction is fantasized autobiography (*An Edna O'Brien Reader*, ix). By choosing to write fiction while defending it as true, O'Brien emerges as one of the most controversial figures in Irish writing. She critiques Irish society while remaining inextricably connected to it. As I intend to show, O'Brien is at once representative and anomalous; she envisions herself as a typical Irish woman but is the first female Irish writer to challenge the institutions that create the ideologies of Irish womanhood.

Yet, whether O'Brien's subject is a personal narrative or a narrative based on political and social turmoil within Ireland, she continues to represent the victimized protagonist and her quest for love, only to realize she has nothing left but herself.

III. 9. Critical Reception

The reception of O'Brien's work, The Country Girls, in Ireland varied significantly, with churchmen, civil officials, media outlets, academics, feminists and members of the public responding to the torrent of controversy surrounding the publication and censorship of her first novels. The diversity and intensity of the reactions to O'Brien indicates that the atmosphere in 1960's Ireland was hardly homogenous in its attitudes towards women and to the Irish authorities. Instead, fissures and divisions within Irish society are revealed in response to the contentious social issues that O'Brien brought to the forefront.

In an interview with Julia Carlson O'Brien suggests that The Country Girls may have been banned in Ireland largely because *'[she] betrayed [her] own community by writing about their world'* (Carlson, 1990: 76). Six months after the novel's publication, by which time it had attracted wide critical attention, winning the Kingsley Amis first novel prize in 1960, it was still being largely ignored by the press of the rural West. In 2008, Edna O'Brien wrote about the publication of The Country Girls

> *The novel, published in 1960, caused a bit of consternation. People were outraged. The few copies purchased in Limerick were burnt after the rosary, one evening in the parish grounds, at the request of the priest. I received anonymous letters, all malicious. Then it was banned; nameless gentlemen who sat in some office in Dublin added it to that robust list of novels which were banned in Ireland at that time.*

Virtually all of the essays and criticism on O'Brien published in the past decade begin with what seems to be a requisite acknowledgement of the dearth of academic interest in such an important and successful Irish author. While O'Brien has enjoyed commercial success worldwide, her status as an Irish writer has veered between recognition as an accepted popular writer of light fiction and a respected artist worthy of academic attention. Immediately after O'Brien published The Country Girls, a reviewer described it as a lightsome story '*about the romp of two wayward wenches'* (Bell, 1968). Even now, five decades since the publication of The Country Girls, critical attention to her work remains almost exclusively relegated to a small but influential group of literary critics and women's studies specialists.

In her recent memoir, The Country Girl (2013), Edna O'Brien recalls an early, pre-publication response to her first novel, The Country Girls. Buoyed by the enthusiastic praise she had received for the finished manuscript in the course of a celebratory dinner

with her publisher, Iain Hamilton of the Hutchinson Group, and one of the manuscript's readers, the novelist Clifford Hanley, O'Brien left a copy for her husband, writer Ernest Gébler, on their hall table. He surprised her a few mornings later '*by appearing quite early in the doorway of the kitchen, the manuscript in his hand'*. What she records as his reaction was one that would become general all over Ireland: *'You can write and I will never forgive you'.* That was in 1959, and by the end of the following year, many in Ireland would come to find the novel unforgivable, following the lead of Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, whose purity campaign had contributed to a brisk uptick in the business of the Irish Censorship Board in the 1950's. When, with the support of then government minister and moral guardian Charles Haughey, he declared O'Brien's book a *'smear on Irish womanhood'*, McQuaid inaugurated a decade of controversial persecution of Irish writers, leading to, inter alia, the novelist John McGahern losing his position as a primary school teacher in 1965.

However, in the spring of 1960 when The Country Girls was first published, initial reviews and opinions in Ireland were favourable. Maurice Kennedy's review in *The Irish Times*, for example, described the novel as having 'a fresh dewy sincerity about it, a nice accuracy of observation and feeling … With any luck Miss O'Brien should have an immensely successful literary career'. Benedict Kiely, who saw the proofs in February of 1960, remained her staunch champion for the rest of his life. Frank McEvoy, getting ready to launch *The Kilkenny Magazine* with James Delahunty, wrote to O'Brien in June 1960, congratulating her on a *'marvelous achievement'* and asking for a chapter for his fledgling publication of the next installment of what was already known to be the planned Country Girls trilogy. In the letter he also asks whether she expects the novel to be banned, suggesting that this would be a great boost to sales.

In the United Kingdom, especially after its second printing there by Penguin in 1962, it was received in similar terms. While O'Brien does not betray much concern about having been banned in Ireland in her correspondence with Hamilton about the future of her writing career, she was not happy with Hutchinson's decision to issue the novel in 1960 in the experimental format of an expensive paperback rather than in hard cover, blaming this decision for a relative lack of early reviews. However, according to *The Sunday Times*, the novel was *"a buoyantly youthful novel, with all the freshness in the world and undertones of something much more lasting".* The *Evening Standard* said the book offered an "*excellent and highly unusual bland of bawdiness and innocence"*. VS Naipaul in the *New Statesman* described it as *"a first novel of great charm by a natural writer ... fresh and lyrical and bursting with energy"*, and Kingsley Amis awarded it his first-novel prize of the year.

In 1960, though The Country Girls perceived *'irreverence'* was taken very much at face value and seems largely to account for its popularity. In his review in The Irish Times (1960)., Maurice Kennedy states that books such as The Country *Girls 'shock, and refresh, and stick in the memory, making one read them again and again, while a shelf of unacknowledged masterpieces sits shiny and untouched'* The specific titles of whatever *'unacknowledged masterpieces'* Kennedy has in mind remain undisclosed, as do the particular episodes of The Country Girls which *'shock'* and *'refresh'*. But the generally enthusiastic tone of this review is significantly tempered by the comment that halfway through the novel there is *'a certain sense of strain, a forcing of invention, a slackening of pace'*.

Critical and cultural responses to O'Brien's output and persona exemplify the unenviable position of the Irish woman writer under review. Mary O'Connor argues that:

> *As women write, or try to publish, they define themselves (or not) as writers, and they are encouraged to do so (or not) by society in various ways ... Women trying to publish in Ireland have a veritable hurdle-track of obstacles in front of them ... the received vision of self with its limiting idealisations and expectations; the ungenerosity of 'father figures' in the literary world to whom they have perhaps served apprenticeships; the implicit misogyny of mainstream publishing structures* (O'Connor, 1994, 30).

Similarly Eavan Boland points out that *'a woman's life was not honored'* in literary circles and that she herself *'began writing in a country where the word woman and the word poet were almost magnetically opposed'* (Boland, 1995: x). While it did help to popularize her, the negative reactions from her countrymen made O'Brien feel ashamed and quite rejected. In a recent interview with Tina Srebotnjak, O'Brien discusses the banned the novel: *'I was made to feel ashamed of a book that was at the time a kind of little song to my own country and to that part of my own country'* (2000). This rejection simultaneously forced O'Brien to live outside the country where she continued to write fearlessly about the land she knows so well.

III.10. Screen Adaptations

Edna O'Brien's first novel, *The Country Girls*, originally published in the UK in 1960**,** was one of the first feature films funded and distributed by Channel 4 , and was

directed by Desmond Davis in 1984. So, to what extent did the director succeed in adapting O'Brien's novel?

By the time Edna O'Brien was an internationally recognized author and in her home country she was just as notorious, her novels had been made into films. Under Desmond Davis' sensitive direction, the heroines (Maeve Germaine as Caithleen and Jill Doyle as Baba) are carefully shown to be at best misguided but always innocent and the camera treats them with some respect while making sure that they hold the narratives together.

Moreover, Maeve and Jill's onstage relationship recreates the oscillating and fervid friendship of teenage girls charged with excessive hormones, ideals, sexual energy and self-absorption. Personifying the oftentimes cruel but eminently practical Baba, Jill Doyle's performance is the ideal foil to Maeve Germaine's luminous and emotional portrayal of Caithleen. The surrounding company of actors works with concentration, energy and unity to deliver O'Brien's fast flowing dialogue and scenes including them the famous actor Sam Neil.

Indeed, Davis succeeds in pulling the background into the foreground, making it part of the story. One of the pleasures of the film for contemporary audiences is their use of Irish locations, many of them now so altered as to be unrecognisable.

London Film Production of *The Country Girls* captures Edna O'Brien's celebration of youthful innocence and her lamentation that with such innocence and idealism coexists an extraordinary vulnerability. O'Brien's adaptation transforms the novel dynamically reimagining the original narrative. The film enhances nuance, characters and detail so that, while the story is essentially the same, its re-expression is physical, sensual and original.

Significantly, however, some scenes are not included in the film, for instance, when Caithleen falls on the ground running from Mr. Holland and the conversation between Baba's father and Caithleen. Despite this, the film retains and expands upon the novel's power not because of its physical exposure of the body but because of its poignant exposure of the heart.

Furthermore, the best-known screen adaptations of O'Brien's novels are: Girl with Green Eyes (from the novel The Lonely Girl) in 1963 and I Was Happy Here 1965 were all directed by English director, Desmond Davis.

Year	1984
Length	108 minutes
Country	U.K.
Production Company	Channel 4 / London Film Productions
Director	Desmond Davi
Screenplay	Edna O'Brien
Cast	Sam Neil, Maeve Germaine, Jill Doyle, John Kavanagh, Niall Tobin

The Country Girls: Cast and details

III.11. Conclusion

Although O'Brien has achieved much recognition and commercial success on an international scale since the publication of her first novel, The Country Girls, in 1960, her writing has often been cloaked in controversy, especially in her native Ireland. Over the past four decades, O'Brien has courageously confronted subjects in her writing that have been widely seen as taboo in her Irish homeland such as: pre-marital sex, extra-marital affairs, domestic abuse, suicide, alcoholism, sexual assault, and incest. Through her female protagonists, O'Brien has shed significant light on the emotions, hardships, and sexualities of women and adolescent girls in twentieth century, post-Independence Ireland in a frank, sensitive, scathing-yet-witty style that was unprecedented and initially very unwelcome in her Irish village of Tuamgraney in County Clare in the 1960's, and in Ireland as a whole.

While O'Brien has been called the '*Irish Faulkner'* and *'perhaps the greatest living Irish prose writer along with William Trevor'*, she has also encountered a wide range of often scathing and intensely personal criticisms throughout her literary career. This backlash against O'Brien, which has lasted throughout most if not her entire career thus far, seems to point to a much larger, more complex issue involving highly restrictive social expectations and stereotypes about the 'Irish female writer.' Shedding light upon these restrictive attitudes, in a 1988 interview, when asked if she thought the position of women in Ireland made it more difficult for the woman writer, O'Brien responded, *'It does because she is not supposed to write. She is supposed to keep her thoughts to herself. And she is supposed to be doing maternal, domestic, useful things; not things that are the provenance of a man'* (Carlson, 1990:75). Thus, O'Brien is also keenly aware of the fact that many of the criticisms she has received are not directly personal but are really symptomatic of a dominant patriarchal culture existent both within and outside of Ireland and its tendency to be cautious of or even ignore the female artist.

General Conclusion

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Ireland as a country has become much more open in the last twenty years, multicultural and economically stable. Contemporary Irish writers are a different generation from those who were alive when the critical events of the Irish history took place. They have to find their own ways to deal with the past, and in the doubting postmodern times they realize that the glorified version of the past is only one of many aspects of what happened.

Edna O'Brien has spent the last forty years giving voice to “the voiceless” rural women of Ireland. When she left Ireland in 1959, she rejected much of what Ireland had taught her while also feeling the need to voice that which she was rejecting. Through her fiction, O'Brien has represented the victimized and sacrificial women of the Irish countryside. She began this tradition in the 1960's with The Country Girls and has continued it up through her second trilogy written within the last decade. Her truthful representations of Irish country life and most significantly, her unprecedented expression of Irish women’s experience deserve closer critical attention. O’Brien created some of the most realistic and thus brutal images of what life in rural Ireland was like for women during the 1940’s, 50’s, and 60’s.

Much of Irish society was not ready to confront neither her brutal honesty nor her scathing criticism, and as shown by the scarcity of early analysis, neither was much of the academic community. As the volume of work by and about O’Brien has grown, both are evolving, partially due to the inevitable passage of time but also due to the complicated

nature of the issues they both rely on to exist. The muddled mix of societal values that O’Brien references throughout The Country Girls is deeply complex.

O'Brien has succeeded in voicing the unheard women of Ireland while also growing as an artist. Throughout her career, she has succeeded despite the fact that her book has been both banned and burnt. She has survived awful reviews, the rejection of a country's approval, and the disapproval of her own mother. Through it she has continued to be title to her subject and her calling. Recently, she has pushed herself further and has bravely changed her style. Her stylistic changes became quite evident, particularly when comparing the two trilogies. In the last trilogy she has withstood both pans and praises and with each book, her writing has become more sophisticated and rich. Her most notable change has been her poetic use of language.

All of her characters struggle with gender stereotypes deeply rooted in these societal forces, whether they embrace or reject them, and through this process O’Brien places herself firmly amongst the company of authors seeking to create authentic female characters in Irish literature. However, rather than giving the reader easy answers, O’Brien’s novels tend to leave lingering questions. Given the variety of female characters in her work, her own evolution as a writer is so evident in The Country Girls. Although some critics express discontent with the unhappy, oppressed, and bleak portrait of the female character that O'Brien paints, many others point out that however bleak the picture is, it is true and real. And it needs to be painted.

However, O’Brien’s female characters do occupy a fascinating space within Irish literature, and as such, offer some answers about the author’s space in the Irish literary canon. To merely categorize all of O’Brien’s female characters as progressive is to

overlook the historical context in which they exist and the diversity of the many characters she has created.

By harkening back to previous lyrical Irish female characters and identifying what made them able to achieve a sense of agency despite their lack of control over their fates, O'Brien was able to create a new type of character that succeeded in criticizing Irish society on many levels. That the characters are based on much older archetypes underscores that Irish society has not changed, and that they all – Caithleen and Baba– to some extent rebel against that society underscores that it needs to. This is the thread that truly ties O'Brien's work together and that is universally recognized by those who analyze her work. O'Brien's work, within the Irish canon and the power of her uniquely, poised work in its ability to criticize Irish society.

O'Brien's Ireland reflects well the people who, with much history behind them, are stuck in their loss and isolation, unable to move forward. O'Brien's Ireland is a character unto itself in every novel she has written and its effects on the women within it are: much stronger than was previously thought. O'Brien's message to the women of Ireland has remained constant: they are left alone because they are the only ones who can make themselves feel whole.

O'Brien's work in itself harkens back to the literary women she is so fond of – certainly whether viewed as a lifetime literary quest for self identity or as an academic quest for social criticism and justice, what is unquestionable is O'Brien's unceasing command of language to explore difficult topics. There is nothing meek or passive about her writing, regardless of personal preference or editorial opinion. Whether or not Irish

society, or even the literature reflecting that society changes, O'Brien has left her mark on the canon – a radical achievement in itself.

However, in The Country Girls, O'Brien created Caithleen from her own childhood experience. Caithleen soon became a prototype for many of O'Brien's characters. This character showed the world what it was like to be a Catholic female growing up in a small village in Ireland. Conservative and dependent, Caithleen falls victim to the all forms of patriarchy, against which Baba fights incessantly for excitement and exploration without hesitation. Indeed, while Caithleen tends to be more reserved in her attack of the injustice imposed on women, Baba always utters her censure outspokenly. If Caithleen is on behalf of the traditional, underprivileged women, then Baba in a striking contrast .As the speaking subject of the narration, Baba to a certain extent takes charge of the story. If Baba speaks, can Irish women's voices be far behind?

The researcher hopes that this research would give new insights to the instructors, teachers and learners in literature, especially woman literature. Notwithstanding, it is definitely undisputable that any research is a complex enterprise that runs the risk of overconfidence, of incorrect generalizations, of invalid data, of irrelevant outcomes, of unexpected issues, and of some biases that might float on the surface. However, any academic research starts in wonder and ends in wonder. The accumulated final results do not stop the researcher's drive to explore new areas of concern. On a personal note, I had the chance not only to share my own findings but also to realize some of the fascinating ways that O'Brien's fictional portrayal of Irish women can tie into historical as well as contemporary discussions on Irish feminism and identity. Therefore, by employing an interdisciplinary scholarly approach, there continues to be many new ways in which

O'Brien's fiction can be explored not only by literary scholars but also within other academic fields such as Women's Studies, Irish Studies, History, and Cultural Studies.

Bibliography

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Edna O'Brien's Novels

Edna O'Brien (2007) The Country Girls (1960), London: Phoenix.

---------- (1962) The Lonely Girl New York: Random House. Reprinted as Girls With Green Eyes. (1964) Harmondsworth: Penguin.

---------- (1964) Girls in Their Married Bliss. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

---------- (1965) August is a Wicked Month. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

---------- (1966) Casualties of Peace. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

---------- (1970) A Pagan Place. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.

---------- (1972) Night. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

---------- (1977) Johnny I Hardly Knew You. Harmondsworth London: Penguin.

---------- (1988) The Country Girls Trilogy with New Epilogue. London: Penguin.

---------- (1988) The High Road. London: Penguin.

---------- (1992) Time and Tide. London: Penguin.

---------- (1994) House of Splendid Isolation. London: Penguin.

---------- (1996) Down by the River. London. : Weidenfield and Nicolson.

---------- (1999) Wild December. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.

---------- (2002) In the Forest. London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.

---------- (2006) The Light of Evening. London: Phoenix.

---------- (2012) Country Girl: A Memoir London: Little and Brown Company.

2. Books

Abrams, M.H. 2005, A Glossary of Literary Terms. 8th ed, Boston: Thomson Wadsworth.

Ashcroft, B and Al (1998).Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts London: Routledge

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (2002) The Empire Writes Back. London: Routledge

Beauvoir, S. (1953) The Second Sex (1949), Harmondsworth: Penguin,

Bhabha , Homi (1994) The Location of Culture . London : Routledge

Bhabha , Homi(1990) Nation and Narration . London: Routledge

Boland, Eavan (1995).Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman Poet in Our Time. New York: W.W. Norton and Co

Bolger, D. (1993). The Picador Book of Contemporary Irish Fiction. London: MacMillan Publishers

Brian de Breffny The Irish World The History and Cultural Achievements of the Irish London: Thames & Hudson

Brooker, P. (1999), A Glossary of Cultural Theory, London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd,

Brown, Terence (1985). Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-1985. London: Fontana Press

Butler , Judith (1993) Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity NewYork: Routledge

Butler Cullingford, Elizabeth (2001). Ireland's Others: Gender and Ethnicity in Irish Literature and Popular Culture. Cork: Cork University Press & Field Day.

Butler, Judith (1993) Bodies that Matter : On the Discursive Limits of Sex NewYork: Routledge

Byron, Kristine. (2006) *"In the Name of the Mother…" Reading and Revision in Edna O'Brien's Country Girls Trilogy and Epilogue.* In: Colletta Lisa, O'Connor Maureen (eds.). Wild Colonial Girl. London: University of Wisconsin Press.

Cahill, T.(1995), How The Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe, New York: Doubleday,

Carlson, Julia (1990). Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish writer. London: Routledge.

Casey, Daniel J. and Casey, Linda M. (1990) Stories by Contemporary Irish Women (Irish Studies) New Jersy USA: Syracuse Univ Pr

Cavallaro, D. (2007) French Feminist Theory: An Introduction London: Continuum

Chuileanáin, Eileán Ní (1985) Irish women: Image and achievement Dublin: Arlen

Clare Carroll and Patricia King (2003) Ireland and Post-colonial Theory, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Cleary, Joe. (2003) *"Misplaced Ideas? Colonialism, Location and Dislocation in Irish Studies."* Ireland and Postcolonial Theory. Ed. Clare Carroll and Patricia King (eds.) Cork: Cork UP

Colletta Lisa, O'Connor Maureen (2006) Wild Colonial Girl. London: University of Wisconsin Press.

Collier, Peter and Helga Geyer-Ryan. (2000). Literary Theory Today. New York: Cornwell University Press.

Connolly, Linda, and Tina O'Toole (2005). Documenting Irish Feminisms: The Second Wave. Dublin: The Woodfield Press.

Cross, Colin (1968) The Fall of The British Empire 1918 – 1968 London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Dalsimer, Adele M (1990). Kate O'Brien: A Critical Study. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd.

Deane, Seamus (1985).Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980. London: Faber and Faber,

Dillon and Chadwick (1967) The Celtic Realms London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson

Doyle, Roddy (1996) The Woman Who Walked into Doors US: Viking Press

Du Maurier, Daphne(1938) Rebecca London: Victor Gollancz Limited

Eckley, Grace (1974). Edna O'Brien. New Jersey: Cranbury Associated University Presses

Emma Donoghue (1994) Stir-fry London: Penguin Books Ltd

Epinoux, E. (2007), Introduction to Irish history and civilization, France: Presses Univ. Limoges,

Friedan, Betty (1965) The Feminine Mystique, second edition Harmondsworth: Penguin

Gartner, Meta. (1996) Women who rode away: Three Twentieth-century Irish Novels About Women Who Leave. Wien: Diplomarbeit.

Ghandi, L. (1998) Postcolonial Theory New York: Columbia University Press

Gillespie, M.P. (1996) "(*S) he was too scrupulous always: Edna O'Brien and the comic tradition"*, in T. O'Connor (Ed.). The Comic Tradition In Irish Women Writers. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Graham, C (2003). *'Ireland (Postcolonialism) Scotland'*, in Edna Longley, Eamonn Hughes and Des O'Rourke (eds.), Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, Contexts, Comparisons. Belfast: Queens University

Green, A. (2010), History of the Irish State to 1014, New York: General Books LLC,.

Greenwood, Amanda (2003) Edna O'Brien (Writers and Their Work) UK: Plymouth Northcote House

Haberstroh, Patricia Boyle (1996). Women Creating Women: Contemporary Irish Women Poets. New York: Syracuse University Press

Hill, Myrtle, (2003). Women in Ireland: A Century of Change. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.

Hooper, Glenn (2002). *"Introduction",* in Glenn Hooper & Colin Graham (Eds). Irish and Post-colonial Writing: History, Theory, Practice. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hooper, Glenn (2002). *"Introduction"*, in Glenn Hooper & Colin Graham (Eds). Irish and Post-colonial Writing: History, Theory, Practice. London: Palgrave Macmillan,

Hosmer, Robert, Jr. (2005) Dictionary of Literary Biography: British and Irish Short Fiction Writers, 1945-2000 Stamford, CT: Thomson Gale

Howe, S. (2000) Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture Oxford*:* Oxford U P

Hutcheon, Linda. (1995) *Circling the Downspout of Empire* in The Post-colonial Studies Reader. (Eds. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin) London, New York: Routledge.

Ingman, Heather (2007).Twentieth-Century Fiction by Irish Women: Nation and Gender. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited

Innes, Catherine L. (2000). *"Post-colonial Studies in Ireland",* in Ashok Bery & Patricia Murray (Eds). Comparing Post-colonial Literatures: Dislocations. London: Macmillan Press

Jarrell, Randall (1969) An Unread Book The Third Book of Criticism New York : Farrar Straus & Giroux

Jeffares, Norman (1997) The Critical Heritige: W.B.Yeats Ireland: Routledge

John McLeod (2002) Beginning Postcolonialism Manchester: Manchester University Press

Jordan, Neil (2004) The Shade USA: Bloomsbury

Joyce, James (1914) Dubliners London: Grant Richards Ltd.

Kenny, M. 2000 Goodbye to Catholic Ireland. Dublin: New Island.

Kiberd, Declan (1995). Inventing Ireland. Cambridge: Harvard U P

Li, P. & Bolaria, B.S. (1994). Essentials of contemporary sociology. Mississauga, Ontario: Copp Clark Longman Ltd.

Liam Harte and Michael Parker (2000) Contemporary Irish Fiction: Themes, Tropes and Theories London: Macmillan Press Ltd

Lloyd, David (1993). Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-colonial Moment. Dublin: Lilliput Press.

MacCurtain, Margaret and Ó Corráin, Donncha (1978)Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension Dublin: Dillons

Mahony, C.H. (1998). Contemporary Irish Literature: Transforming Tradition. New York: St. Martin's Press

Marks, Elaine; De Courtivron, Isabelle (1981) New French feminisms: an anthology New York: Schocken Books

McCabe, Patrick (1992) The Butcher Boy UK: Picador

McCarthy, Áine *(*2004) *"Oh Mother Where Art Thou? Irish Mothers and Irish Fiction in the Twentieth Century*". *Motherhood in Ireland Creation and Context*. Ed. Patricia Kennedy. Cork: Mercier Press

McLeod, J. (2000), Beginning Postcolonialism, Manchester: Manchester University Press

Mitchell, Margaret (1936) Gone with the Wind USA: Macmillan Publishers

Moloney, Caitriona (2003). Irish Women Writers Speak Out: Voices from the Field. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press

Moloney, Caitriona, and Helen Thompson (2003). Irish Women Writers Speak Out: Voices From The Field. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Mooney, Sinéad; O'Connor, Maureen (2006) Edna O'Brien: New Critical Perspectives. Dublin: Carysfort Press Book.

Murdoch, Iris (1965) *The Red and the Green* UK: Chatto & Windus

Myles Dillon and Nora Kershaw Chadwick (1967), The Celtic Realms, New York: Booksales

O'Dowd, Liam (1990). *"New Introduction"*, The Colonizer and the Colonized by Albert Memmi. London: Earthscan Publications.

O'Faolain, Nuala (1983) *'Women, Writing and Ireland Now'*, in Ireland and the Arts, ed. Tim Pat Cogan London: Literary Review

O'Brien, Edna (1994). An Edna O 'Brien Reader. New York: Warner

Peach, Linden (2001). The Contemporary Irish Novel. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Peter Brooker (1999) Cultural Theory: A Glossary London: Arnold

Petersen and Rutherford (1986*)* A Double Colonization UK*:* Dangaroo Press

Rich, Adrienne (1977) Forward To Working Out New York: Patheon

Rooney, Ellen (2006) The Cambridge Companion To Feminist Literary Theory New York Cambridge: University Press.

Rooney, Ellen (2006). The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory. New York: Cambridge University Press

Roth, Philip (1984) Foreword A Fanatic Heart. By Edna O'Brien. New York: Penguin

Rushdie, Salman (1992). Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991. New York: Penguin.

Said , Edward (1978) Orientalism . London : Vintage

Said , Edward(1993) Culture and Imperialism .London : Vintage

Said , Edward(1994) Power , Politics and Culture . London : Vintage

Said , Edward(1994) Representations of the Intellectual : the 1993 Reith Lectures London: Vintage

Said, Edward (1993) Culture and Imperialism London: Vintage

Scannell, Yvonne (1988). From *'The Constitution and the Role of Women'* in The Irish Women's History Reader, 2001. Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart (Eds.). London: Routledge.

Scannell, Yvonne (2001) Excerpt from *"The Constitution and the Role of Women."* Ed. Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart. The Irish Women's History Reader. London: Routledge

Shannon, Catherine B. (1997). "The Changing Face of Caihtleen Ni Houlihan: Women and Politics in Ireland, 1960-1966", in Anthony Bradley & Maryann Gialanalle Valiulis (Eds) Amherst, Mass: University of Massachusetts Press

Showalte, Elaine (1981). *"Feminist Criticism in Wilderness"*, Critical Enquiry: University of Chicago

Showalter, Elaine (1977) A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing New Jersey: Princeton university press

Smyth, Gerry (1998). Decolonization and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature London: Pluto Press

St. Peter, Christine (2000) Changing Ireland: Strategies in Contemporary Women's Fiction New York: St. Martin's Press

The New Encyclopedia Britannica (1974), Volume 8 Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago USA

Thompson, Helen. *Hysterical Hooliganism – O'Brien, Freud, Joyce*. In: Colletta Lisa, O'Connor Maureen (Eds.). Wild Colonial Girl. London: University of Wisconsin Press 2006. 31-57.

Toynbee, A. (1947), A Study of History: Abridgement of |, Volumes 1 to 6, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Trinh, T. Minh-Ha (1989) Woman , Native , Other : Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism

Valiulis, Maryann. Excerpt from (2001). *"Neither Feminist Nor Flapper: The Ecclesiastical Construction of the Ideal Irish Woman."* Ed. Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart. The Irish Women's History Reader. London: Routledge

West, R. (1913) *Mr*. Chesterton in Hysterics in the Young Rebecca New York New: York Viking in association with Virago.

Woolf, V. (1989) A Room of One's Own (1929) New York: Harcourt.

Young, Robert J.C. (1995) Colonial Desire : Hybridity in Theory , Culture and Race, Theory, London : Routledge

Young, Robert J.C. (1996) Torn Halves : Political Conflict in Literary and Cultural Theory, Manchester : Manchester University Press

Zoomba , Ania (1998) Colonialism / Post Colonialism . London : Routledge

3. Articles/Reviews

Bannon, Barbara (1970). *"Authors and Editors"*. Publishers Weekly p. 197 (25 May,): 21-22. Print.

Bedjaoui, F (2009) *"Woman, Gender and Identity in Indian Woman Writing"* In Dialogue: a Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation, India, n 1, Vol V, p

Bedjaoui, F (2010) *"Towards a Definition of Postcolonialism"*in Revue des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences , Djillali Liabes University; Algeria 2010

Bedjaoui, F (2012) "Feminist Trends towards Permissiveness" in the Journal of the Odisha Association for English Studies , edited by Santwana Haldar, vol 2, Issue 1, India

Bedjaoui, F (2013) *" Prix littéraires: espaces de lutte"* in Espace et mondialisation, L'Harmattan, France

Bedjaoui, F (2014) *"Towards an Understanding of Post -Colonialism and Feminism"* in Literary Oracle of Orissa, Vol.1, Issue 1, India

Bedjaoui, F. (2012),*'Feminist Trends Towards Permissiveness'*, Journal of the Odisha Association for English Studies (Volume 2), Baleswar Edition, India.

Bennet Fintan, (2002). "*The Country Girls Home Truths"*, Guardian Saturday Review, 4 May8. Print.

Birch, Carol (1996) *"Rosaries and Ovaries."* Independent Oct10.

Broyard, Anatole. (1986) "*The Rotten Luck of Kate and Baba."* Rev. of The Country Girls

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) "*Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses boundary" 2*, Vol. 12, No. 3, On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism.(Spring - Autumn, , pp. 333-358).

Cixous, Hélène. *(*1976). *"The Laugh of the Medusa."* Vol. 1, No. 4 Summer (English)

Davies, Bonnie Lynn (1996*) "Canadian Journal of Irish Studies: Special Edition on Edna O'Brien".* 22December, p. 73-82. Print.

D'haen Theo (1997) *"What is Post/Colonial Literature, and why are they saving such terrible things about it?"* Links & Letters.

Eire- Ireland (1979) "*That trenchant childhood Route? Quest in Edna O'Brien's Novels"* Vol. XIV No.1 Spring p.74-83. Print.

Haule, James. (1987) "*Tough Luck: The Unfortunate Birth of Edna O'Brien*." Colby Quarterly 23, no 4: 216-24

Hillan King, Sophia. (2000) *"On the side of life: Edna O'Brien's Trilogy of Contemporary Ireland", in New Hibernia Review*, 4:2 (summer/samhardh) 49-66. Print.

Irish Studies Review, (2002 '*Edna O'Brien: Stretching the Nation's Boundaries'* pp.253-65

Kael, Pauline. (1972).*The New Yorker* February 12, Print.

Karen Offen (1988) "*Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach"* Reviewed in Signs, Vol. 14, No. 1 Autumn, , pp. 119-157Published

Maureen L. Grogan. (1996) *'Using Memory and Adding Emotion'*, The (Re)Creation of Experience in the short fiction of Edna O'Brien in CJIS: Special Edition on Edna O'Brien, 22:2 p.9-20. Print.

Morgan, Eillen (2000*) "Mapping out a Landscape of female suffering: Edna O'Brien's Demythologizing Novels",* Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal. Aug; 29(4) 449-76. Print.

New York Times (1986) Trilogy and Epilogue, by Edna O'Brien. *Book Review* 1 1 May

Nuala O'Flailain (1983) *"Women, Writing, and Ireland Now", in Ireland and Arts, ed Tim Pat Coogan(London: the literary review)*

O'Brien Edna (1970). *"Dear Mr. Joyce",* Times Saturday Review, 19 December, Print.

O'Brien Edna (1986) *"Why Irish Heroines Don't Have to Be Good Anymore",* New York Times Book Review, 11 May,. Print.

O'Brien Edna (1986)*"Why Irish Heroines Don't Have to Be Good Anymore",* New York Times Book Review, 11 May, Print.

O'Brien Edna (1988) *"She was the other Ireland",* New York Times Book Review, 19 June, Print.

O'Connor, Mary (1994). '*The Thieves of Language in Gaol?'* in Krino, 15, Spring. p.30-42. Print.

O'Faolain Nuala, (1983) '*Edna O'Brien' in Ireland Today [Irish na Roinne Gnothai Eachtracha/Bulletin of the Dept. of Foreign Affairs]* [Sept.] p.10-13. Print.

O'Brien, Peggy, (1987) *'The Silly and the Serious: An Assessment of Edna O'Brien'*, in *Massachussetts Review*, 28 474-488

Pelan, Rebecca (1993) *"Edna O'Brien's "Stage – Irish" Persona: An "Act" of Resistance"*in the Canadian Journal of Irish Studies (henceforth CJIS), 67-78. Print.

Pelan, Rebecca, *' Edna O'Brien's "Stage-Irish" Persona: An "Act" of Resistance'*, in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 19, no. 1 (1993), 67-78

Richard Rorty (1993) "*Feminism, Ideology, and Deconstruction: A Pragmatist View"* Source: Hypatia, Vol. 8, No. 2, Feminism and Pragmatism (Spring, pp. 96-103 Published by: Indiana University Press

Sean McMahon (1967) *"A Sex by Themselves: An Interim Report on the Novels of Edna O'Brien," Éire-Ireland* 2.1 79–87, esp. 79.

Showalter, Elaine(1981).*"Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," Critical Inquiry 8*. University of Chicago: Winter,

T.M.J.Indra Mohan (2006) *Post-Colonial Writing – Trends In English Drama* The Indian Review Of World Literature In English, Vol. 2, No.Ii – Jul,

Trevor, William (1976) *"Edna O'Brien", in: Contemporary Novelists*. London: St. James Press [Macmillan] Print.

Weekes, Anne Owens (1995*) "Ordinary Women: Themes in Contemporary Fiction by Irish Women," Colby Quarterly*: Vol. 31: Iss. 1, Article 11.

Zacharek, Stephanie (2000). "*Rev. of Down By the River, by Edna O'Brien".* Salon 2 1 April (1997). 20 April.

INTERVIEWS

Durham University Interview with Edna O'Brien, 3rd December 1971.

Durham University Interview with Edna O'Brien, 3rd December 1971. Print.

Edna O'Brien, "The Art of Fiction No. 82: Interviewed by Shusha Guppy," *Paris Review* 92 (1984): 38.

Guppy, Shusha, 'Edna O'Brien', an interview in George Plimpton (ed.), writers at work: The Paris Review Interview. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986. p.243-265. Print.

Guppy, Shusha, 'Edna O'Brien', an interview in George Plimpton (ed.), writers at work: The Paris Review Interview. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986. p.243-265. Print.

Interview with Edna O'Brien, NCPR stuff 'Country Girl' Edna O'Brien On A Lifetime Of Lit, Loneliness And Love Weekend Edition Saturday 2013, northcountrypublicradio, New York , 25 April.

Kelly, Emer. 'This Country Girl Is Not a Real Woman', Saturday Independent, 3 October 1999. p.11. Print.

Lit Chat with Edna O'Brien." Salon 2 Dec. 1995. 24 July 2000. <http://www.salon.com/02dec1995/departments/litchat.html>.

Millicent Bell Baba and Kate Review of The Country Girls. The Nytimes Book Review 18, February1968.http:<//www.nytimes.com/books/00/04/09/specials/obrien-bliss.html >

O'Brien, Edna. Speaking on The Book Show, New York State Writers Institute – Writers Online, vol.2, no.3; (1998). <http//www.albany.edu/writers-inst/olv2n3.html >

Pearce, Sandra Mangoogian. 'An Interview with Edna O'Brien, in the Canadian Journal of Irish Studies (CJIS), 22:2, 1996 December, p.5- 8. Print.

Wheelwright, Julie. Why writing is about beauty and terror. Interview with Edna O'Brien. Friday 29 September 2006. p. 12-15. Print.

WEBLIOGRAPHY

Cooke, Rachel "Edna O'Brien: A writer's imaginative life commences in childhood" 6 February 2011
<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/feb/06/edna-obrien-ireland interview?INTCMP=SRCH>

Davies,Tracy "The Country Girls by Edna O'Brien"
<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/library/services/childrens/book_review_comp/country_girls.htm>

DiEmanuele, "Elizabeth Feminist Theory"
<http://qwiklit.com/learn/feminist-theory/>

"Edna O'Brien Biography"
<http://www.enotes.com/topics/edna-obrien>

*Ellis, Steven "*Turning Ireland English" *17 February2011*
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/elizabeth_ireland_01.shtml>

"Ireland a short guide to the British in Ireland"
<http://www.greatbritain.co.uk/history/ireland.htm>

"Key Terms in Post-Colonial Theory"
<http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.htm>

Lalwani,Puja "Feminist Literature " 23 September 2011
<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/feminist-literature.html

Lewis, Peter "Paying the price for passion Edna O'Brien"
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/books/article-2216207/Paying-price-passion-COUNTRY-GIRL-BY-EDNA-OBRIEN.html>

Martínez chaveli Suárez, Ana « Post-colonial literature »
<http://html.rincondelvago.com/post-colonial-literature.html>

Mullan, John "Readers' Responses To Edna O'Brien's The Country Girls"26 April 2008
<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/apr/26/featuresreviews.guardianreview24>

O'Connor, Maureen "Girl Trouble" 6 May 2014
<http://www.drb.ie/essays/girl-trouble>

O'Beirne Ranelagh , John " Ireland" 19 August 2014
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/293754/Ireland>

OConnor. M "The Country Girls –by Edna O'Brien"
<http://www.threemonkeysonline.com/the-country-girls-by-edna-obrien/>

"Post-Colonial Criticism (1990s-present)"
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/722/10/>

"Post-Colonialism: Definition, Development and Examples" 2 August 2008
<http://www.nilsole.net/referate/post-colonialism-definition-development-and-examples-from-india/>

Sanai, Leyla « Country Girl, By Edna O'Brien" 14 October 2012
<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts entertainment/books/reviews/country-girl-by-edna-obrien-8210243.html>

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica Irish literature The 1960s and beyond"
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/294109/Irish-literature/272051/The-1960s-and-beyond>

"What Is The Definition Of Postmodernism?"
<http://www.essortment.com/definition-postmodernism-20903.html>

THESES

Jessica A. Itzel: “Troubling Irish Women: Edna O‘Brien‘s *Country Girls Trilogy”* 2010, Emory University Georgia USA

Bedjaoui, Fewzia : " Femininity between illusion and Social Construction : the Cade of Indian Prose Writing " , Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Djillali Liabes University, Algeria, 2005.

Sarah Marie Gray: “Irish Disability: Postcolonial Narratives Of Stunted Development” published Master Thesis, University Of Illinois At Urbana-Champaign, 2011

Shobana L. Breeden: “From The Encoded To The Explicit In The 20th Century Irish Romance: A Study Of Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Last September* And Edna O’Brien’s The Country Girls Trilogy”. Published Master Thesis Oregon State University 2008

Amy R. Johnson Stranger: “In The Room: Illuminating Female Identity Through Irish Drama” published Master, Indiana University 2007

MOVIE

The Country Girls (1984), British Board of Film Censors. Produced by Aida Young; directed by Desmond Davis

Appendices

Appendix A : Edna O'Brien Timeline

1930	Edna O'Brien was born in tuamgraney, County Clare, Ireland, to Michael O'Brien and Lena, née Cleary. She is the youngest of four; sisters patsy and Eileen, and brother john.
1936	O'Brien attends the National School in Scariff
1938	Daphne du Maurier's popular novel Rebecca published O'Brien recalls her impressions of the novel as pages were secretly circulated among women In her village.
1941-1946	Edna O'Brien attends boarding school at the Convent of Mercy in Loughrea, Galway.
1945	End of World War II
1946- 1950	O'Brien moves to Dublin where she works in a pharmacy and studies at a pharmaceutical called. James Joyce becomes her lifelong muse and mentor following her purchase of T. S. Eliot's, Introducing James Joyce, and a small book containing excerpts of Joyce's major works.
1984	O'Brien begins writing small pieces for the Irish press.
1950	Edna O'Brien is grated her license to practice as a pharmatist, Ernest gélber, O'Brien future husband, published his most famous novel, The Voyage of "Mayflower"
1952	Edna O'Brien elopes with Czech/Irish writer Ernest Gélber. The marriage will be dissolved in 1964, but during the marriage, O'Brien's literary success is often attributed to her husband, some going so far as to say that he wrote the majority of the works for her. Sasha Gébler, son of Edna O'Brien and Gébler, born. Sasha will become an architect.
1954	Carlo Gelber, son of Edna O'Brien and Gébler , born. He willo become a writer, producer and director.
1958	O'Brien moves to London where she continues to live.
1958-1959	In the fervor of three weeks around Christmas and the New Year, O'Brien writes The Country Girls, for which she is given a £50 advance
1960	The Country Girls published. It is the first of six novels by Edna O'Brien to be banned in Ireland. Copies of the book burns by a curate on the grounds of the local church in her home parish. Edna O'brien's mother relates to her that women even fainted over what she had written. O'Brien is declared by

	the Minister for Culture and the Archbishop of Dublin as a "smear on Irish womanhood"
1961	31 December, initiation of Irish National Television Service (RTE), published and subsequently banned I Ireland; reprinted in 1964 as Girl with Green Eyes, Edna O'Brien's short story "Come into the Drawing Room, Doris" printed in New Yorker. Through her career she will also write for Harper's bazaar, Redbook, vogue, Vanity fair, The Country Girls win the Kingsley Amis Award for Fiction. A cheap Bunch of Nice Flowers, O'Brien's first play, staged in London in 1962. Published in Plays of the year.
1963	The Wedding Dress television play for ITV Television Play-house) airs and is published in Mademoiselle (November). United States President John f. Kennedy pays a formal state visit to Ireland and his ancestral home in June. JKF assassinated 22 November in Dallas, Texas.
1964	Girl with Green eyes (Screenplay) adapted by O'Brien from the novel The Lonely Girl, Girls in Their Married Bliss (novel) published and subsequently bannd in Ireland. Edna O'Brien and Ernest Gébler divorce
1965	August Is a Wicked Month published and subsequently banned in Ireland. Three O'Brien television plays produces: the Keys of the Café for ArmchairTheatre, Give My Love to the Pilchards for love Story, and A cheap Bunch of Nice Flowers for Festival.
1966	Causalities published and subsequently banned in Ireland. Time and time remembered (screenplay) adapted from short story I was happy Here (1965).
1967	*Which of These Two ladies Is he Marries to? (*Television play) airs. Edna O'Brien attends a teach-in at university College Cork. Her reputation as a rebel and voice for women's sexuality makes her attractive to oppositional student movements. Northern Ireland civil Rights Association founded and modeled on the civil rights movements in U. S. Attacks on NICRA demonstrations become an important marker in thirty years of violence and unrest in northern Ireland known as "The troubles".
1968	*I Was happy here* (Screenplay) produced. Nothing's Ever Over (television play half hour Story) airs. The love Object (short story) published
1969	*Three into Two Won't Go* (screenplay adapted by O'Brien from the novel

1970	Andrea Newman) produces as a play in London 1984. The Troubles take hold of Northern Ireland, spreading to the Republic of Ireland and parts of England with deployment of British troops to Northern Ireland 14 august. A Pagan Place, Edna O'Brien sixth novel, published and subsequently banned in Ireland. It is the last of her novels to be banned in Ireland, but not the last to cause controversy there.
1971	A Pagan Place wins the Yorkshire Post Novel Award. Zee and co (play) published.
1972	Night (novel) published. Echoing Joyce's "Penelope", the novel is a dream soliloquy. Bloody Sunday (30 January). Thirteen civil rights marchers are shot in Derry (Northern Ireland).
1973	A Pagan place (play) published. Produces in London in 1972, New haven Connecticut in 1974. The Fifth Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1972, is signed into law in Ireland (5 January) removing the special position of the Catholic Church.
1974	*A Scandalous Woman* (Short stories) published. *The Gathering* (play) published in Dublin, Ireland.
1975	End of Vietnam war.
1976	*Mother Ireland (*a travelogue with photography by Fergus Bourke)
1977	published.
1980	Johnny, I Hardly Knew You (novel) published. *The Gathering* produced at the Manhattan theatre Club, New York. Arabian Days (nonfiction) published. Edna O'Brien's mother, Lena dies. O'Brien discovers a copy of one of her books in which her mother had "blacked out all the offending word".
1981	*Virginia* (play) based on the life and works of Virginia Woolf. First performed at the Stratford Shakespearean festival of Canada later performs in England in 1981 at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, and first performs in New York in 1985. Edna O'Brien turns fifty and celebrates twenty years of writing. B this point, she has written eight novels, two nonfiction books, three collections of short stories, a children's story, five theatrical plays, numerous television screenplays, and multiple pieces for news and leisure periodicals.
1984	James and Nora: a Portrait of a Marriage, (nonfiction) the first of several

	explorations of Joyce's life and work.
1985	
1987	*A Fantastic Heart* (short stories with a foreword by Philip Roth) published in the U. S. by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, benchmark recognition of Edna O'Brien as a major literary figure. Three into Two Won't Go produces as a play in London.
1988	*The Country Girls* (screenplay) produced. Flesh and Blood (play) produced.
1989	The Country Girls Trilogy, new edition of The Country Girls, the Lonely Girl, and Girls in their Marries Bliss, published with the tradition of an epilogue. The epilogue is controversial; O'Brien later states in an interview that she was never quite satisfied with it".
1990	The High road (novel) published with dedication "To my grandson Jack Raymond Gebler"
	Blood Memory (play). *On the Bone* (poems) published. Samuel Beckett, whom Edna O'Brien knew personally and cites frequently as a great inspiration for her, dies at eighty-three in Paris.
1991	*Lantern Slides* (short stories) published. *Lantern Slides* wins the Los Angeles Times book award. Mary Robinson becomes the first female president of Ireland. Early 1990's: Edna O'Brien interviews Dominic Mc Glinchey and others at Long Kesh Prison.
1992	
1993	
1994	Girl with Green Eyes wins the Premio Grinzane Cavour (Italy).
1995	Time and Tide (novel) published Time and Tide wins the Writer's Guild Award for Best fiction.
1995-2007	House of Splendid Isolation (novel) published. Edna O'Brien interviews Gerry Adams for the New York Times (published 1 February)
	House of Splendid Isolation wins the European Prize for literature from the European Association of Arts.
1997-1998	Ireland sees a boom of economy known as the Celtic Tiger. Publication of Down by the River (novel). Edna O'Brien becomes a member of Aosdana, an organization honoring artists who have made extraordinary contributions to Irish culture.
1998	
1999	
	Edna O'Brien is writer in residence teaching at New York University.Edna O'Brien ex-husband, Ernest Gébler, dies.
2000	James Joyce published. A biography in the writer's Lives Series, it is a project of great importance to O'Brien. Wild Decembers (novel) published;

2001	movie version filmed in County Wicklow 2009. Edna O'Brien is awarded an honorary doctorate by Queen's University Belfast.
2002	*Love's lesson* (short stories) published. O'Brien receives the literary Award of the American Ireland Fund.
2003	O'Brien receives the Irish Pen Lifetime Achievement Award with encomium by poet, Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney.
2004	In the Forest (novel) published. Based on a triple murder. It creates controversy.
2006	Edna O'Brien is playwright in residence at San Francisco Magic Theatre
2009	O'Brien receives an honorary doctorate from the University of Limerick.
2010	The Light of evening (novel) published. University College Dublin awards Edna O'Brien the Ulysses medal, announces the Edna O'Brien Prize, and appoints O'Brien adjunct professor.
2011	*Byron in Love* (nonfiction) published. O'Brien receives the Bob Hughes Lifetime Achievement Award in Irish Literature. *Haunted (*play) published. In the forest is shortlisted for the Irish Book of the Decade (Board Gais Energy Book Award). Celebrations mark of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of The Country Girls and Edna O'Brien's eightieth birthday.
2012	*Saint and Sinners* (short stories) published. *Saints and Sinners* wins the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. Haunted is produced I New York. Dermot Bolger Launches the Edina O'Brien Lecture Series at the Scariff Public library, County Clare. Country Girl: A Memoir published 24 September in the U. K., 30 April 2013 in the U.S.A.

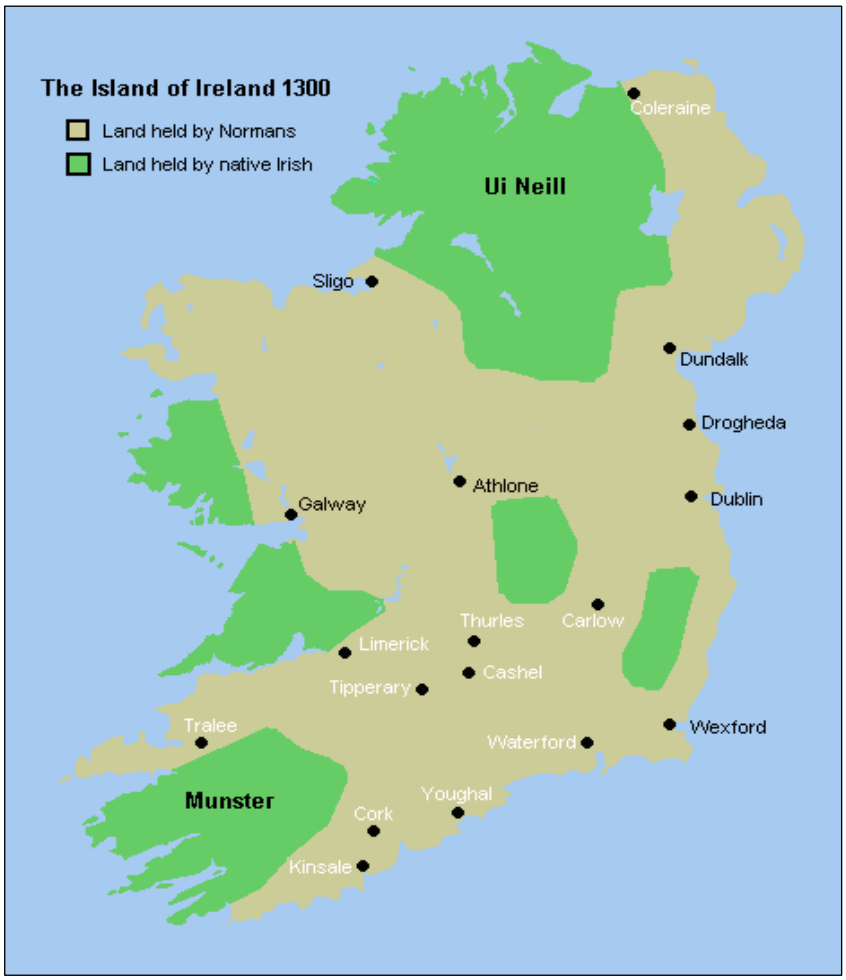
Appendix B : Edna O'Brien's photo

Edna O’Brien Published by Salem Press, Inc.

Appendix C

Map 01: Ireland division during the Vikings in 1014

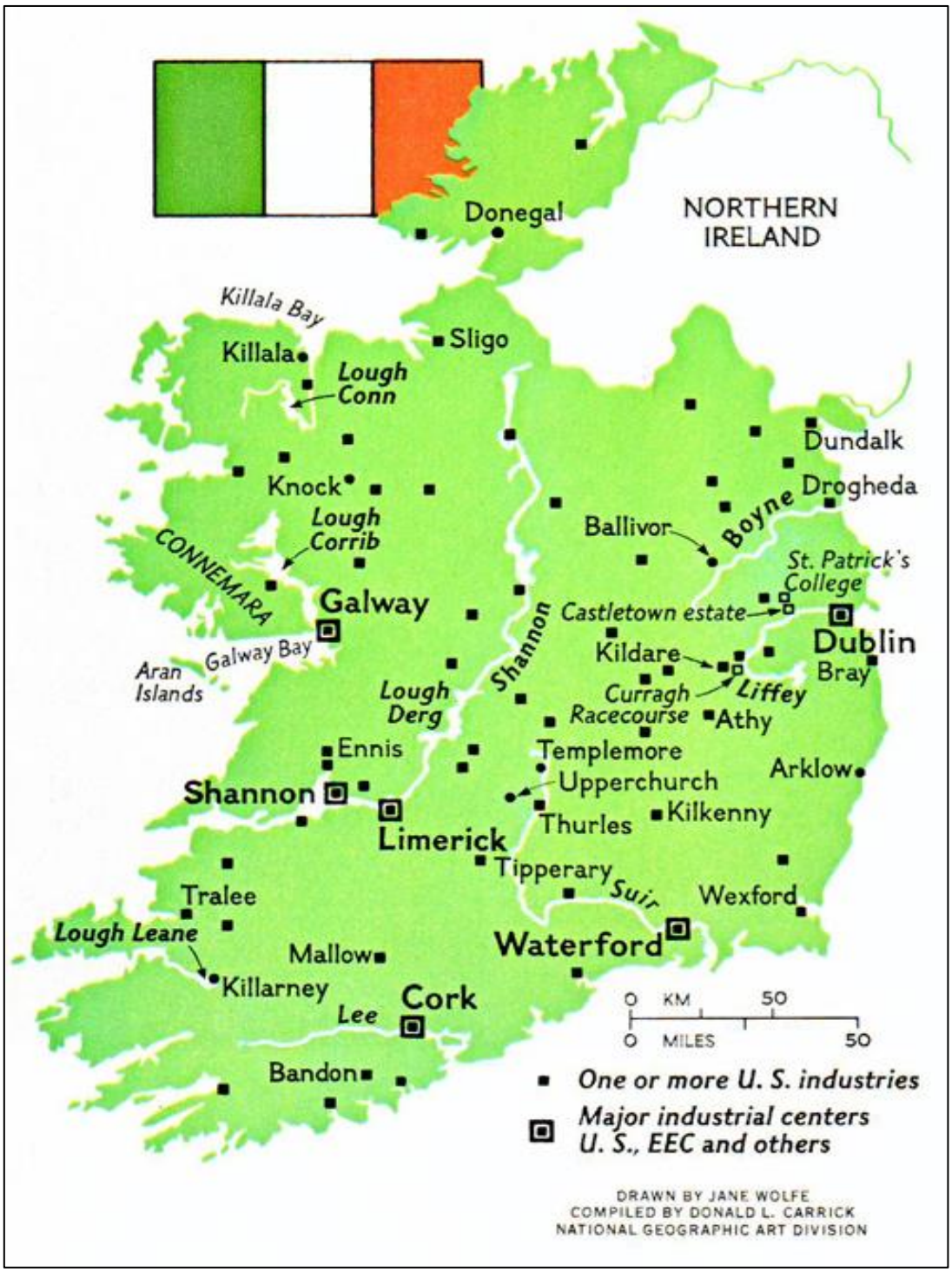
(Source: Www.wesleyjohnston.com-users-ireland-maps-historical-map1014.gif)



Map 02: Normans' occupation of Ireland in 1300

(Source: Www.wesleyjohnston.com-users-ireland-maps-historical-map1300.gif)

Appendix C



Map 03: Ireland after the English colonialism

(Source: http://www.foudemonnaies.com/images/map.ireland.republic.JPG)

Glossary

GLOSSARY

Colonial literature: Colonial Literature: it is written in the colonial countries before they got their independence, countries of the English Empire that inherited the British language and customs: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Sub-Saharan Countries and some Caribbean countries. We will consider Africa and the Caribbean as a region.

Cross-cultural : dealing with or offering comparison between two or more different cultures or cultural areas

Cultural identities : is often defined as the identity of a group, culture or an individual, influenced by one's belonging to a group or culture. A developmental psychologist, Jean S. Phinney, formulated a three stage model describing how this identity is acquired.

Culture : Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. It is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.

Deconstruction :the tendency of binary oppositions within a text to shift or reverse their valuation.

Essentialism : an educational theory that ideas and skills basic to a culture should be taught to all alike by time-tested methods

Feminism :is a term commonly and quite indiscriminately used. Some of the currently used definitions are: a doctrine advocating social and political rights for women equal to those of men, an organized movement for the attainment of these rights, the assertion of the claims of women as a group and the body of theory women

have created, belief in the necessity of large-scale social change in order to increase the power of women

Feminist writing : to assert a feminine language particularly challenges men literary canon (criteria). Ecriture feminine is the focus in the so-called French school of feminist criticism on the existence of a distinctive *woman's language* .

Fragmentation: People often have an image of an exploding bomb when they think about fragmentation, and that sense of something breaking into tiny particles is a useful way to think of the word, no matter how it's used. A burst water balloon experiences fragmentation, and so does a city disrupted by violence. The Latin root word, *fragmentum*, literally means "a piece broken off," or a fragment.

Gender :is the cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. Gender is a set of cultural roles . Unfortunately, the term is used both in academic discourse and in the media as interchangeable with *sex*. In fact, its widespread public use probably is due to it sounding a bit more *refined* than the plain word *sex*... Such usage is unfortunate, because it hides, mystifies the difference between the biological given-sex and the culturally created-gender. Feminists above all others should want to point up that difference and should therefore be careful to use appropriate words. Gender is expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity. It is largelly culturally determined and effects how people perceive themselves and how they expect others to behave.

Gender Identity : The gender to which one feels one belongs, a continuous and persistent sense of ourselves as male or female.

Identity : is always in process .It is a word carrying with it connotations of rootedness (to engage in various aspects of being an individual within a world which is plural)

Ideology:the body of doctrine, myth, belief, etc., that guides an individual, socialmovemen t, institution, class, or large group.such a body of doctrine, myth, etc., with referen ce to some politicaland social plan, as that of fascism, along with the devices for p utting itinto operation.

Myth: a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially associated with religious belief. It is distinguished from symbolic behaviour (cult, ritual) and symbolic places or objects (temples, icons). Myths are specific accounts of gods or superhuman beings involved in extraordinary events or circumstances in a time that is unspecified but which is understood as existing apart from ordinary human experience. The term *mythology* denotes both the study of myth and the body of myths belonging to a particular religious tradition

Other : The other is anyone who is separate from one's self . The existence of others is crucial in defining what is *norma*l and in locating one's own place in the world . The colonized subject is characterized as *other* through discourses as primitivism as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view

Patriarchal : An assumption of feminist criticism that culture is rather ruled with its institutions and traditions so structured to promote masculine values and to maintain the male in a privileged position

Patriarchy : In its narrow meaning, patriarchy refers to the system, historically derived from Greek and Roman law, in which the male head of the household had absolute legal and economic power over his dependent female and male family members....Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestations and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of rights, influence, and resources. Women's struggles are located in a context where the patriarchal control of major social and political institutions makes for special forms of discrimination against women .

Perception : Reader's insight or comprehension of a text. From different critical perspectives, the reader's perception of meaning can be a passive receipt , an active discovery or a creative construction .

Protagonist : is the central figure of a story (e.g. anecdote, novel), and is often story's *main character.* Often the story is told from the protagonist's point of view. The protagonist's attitudes and actions are made clear to the larger extent than for any other character.

Representation : has a semiotic meaning in that something is *standing* for something else. Representations are constructed images that need to be interrogated for their ideological content. There is always an element of interpretation involved in representation . There are negative images that can have devastating effects on the real lives of marginalized people.

Sex : Women are sex .Women are a separate group due to their biological distinctiveness. The merit of using the term is that it clearly defines women, not as a subgroup or a minority group, but as half of the whole. Men are the only other sex. Obviously , we are here not refering to sexual activity, but to a biological given.

Sexuality/sensuality: A major theme in contemporary reflections on identity, informed especially by *psychoanalysis*, feminism, , the term is related to but distinct from "sex" (used to refer both to the physical distinction between men and women and sexual intercourse) and "gender" (the social and cultural distinctions between men and women). Sexuality is used rather, say Jackson and Scott, to refer to "erotic desires, practices and identities" or "aspects of personal and social life which have erotic significance." This suggests a highly varied set of meanings. Debates on sexuality in the recent period are marked above all by an increased awareness of this tension; between an acceptance or affirmation of diversity on the one hand and a defense of the established norms on the other.

Stereotypes : are characteristics ascribed to groups of people involving gender, race, national origin and other factors. These characteristics tend to be oversimplifications of the groups involved, however. For example, someone who meets a few individuals from a particular country and finds them to be quiet and reserved may spread the word that all citizens from the country in question are quiet and reserved. A generalization such as this doesn't allow for diversity within

groups and may result in stigmatization and discrimination of groups if the stereotypes linked to them are largely negative. That said, even so-called positive stereotypes can be harmful due to their limiting nature.

Subaltern: Everybody who has limited or no access at all to the cultural imperialism is thus subaltern . G.C. Spivak points that speaking is a transaction between speaker and listener, but it does not reach the dialogic level of utterance.

Third World : is a rather pejorative way to mean post-colonial world. It was first used in 1952 by Alfred Sauvy, the French demographer.