

Re-envisioning the Rising:

Irish Literary Memories of 1916

Phyllis Boumans s4250915
MA Dissertation Literary Studies
Supervisor: Dr M.C.M. Corporaal
Second reader: Dr R.H. van den Beuken
Radboud University Nijmegen
phyllis.boumans@student.ru.nl
28 February 2017

Radboud University Nijmegen



Masteropleiding Letterkunde

Docent voor wie dit document is bestemd:

Dr M. C. M. Corporaal

Titel van het document:

Boumans_Corporaal_MAThesis

Datum van indiening:

28 februari 2017

Het hier ingediende werk is de verantwoordelijkheid van ondergetekende. Ondergetekende verklaart hierbij geen plagiaat te hebben gepleegd en niet ongeoorloofd met anderen te hebben samengewerkt.

Handtekening:

Naam student: Phyllis Boumans.....

Studentnummer: 4250915.....

Radboud University Nijmegen



Samenvatting met trefwoorden

Deze Engelstalige masterscriptie tracht de ontwikkelingen van het culturele geheugen van de Paasopstand in kaart te brengen door literaire herinneringen aan deze historische gebeurtenis te analyseren en in hun historische, politieke, en culturele context te plaatsen. *Memory studies* vormen het theoretische uitgangspunt van deze studie, die probeert bloot te leggen hoe de herinnering van 1916 verschillende vormen aanneemt in Sean O'Caseys *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green* (1965) en Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* (1999), en hoe deze werken bijdragen aan de constructie van Ierse culturele identiteiten. O'Caseys toneelstuk getuigt van een in zijn tijd ongekennde vastberadenheid om de mythes rondom de Paasopstand te doorbreken en af te rekenen met de onaantastbare verering ervan in het Ierse culturele geheugen. Murdoch's roman daarentegen wordt gekenmerkt door de angst om te vergeten, en poogt recht te doen aan de verschillende narratieven en herinneringen rondom de Rising voordat het uiteindelijk het standpunt inneemt dat de Paasopstand gevierd moet worden als een overwinning tegen onderdrukking. Doyle's werk representeert de vermeende heroïsche strijd om Ierse onafhankelijkheid als een kapitalistische machtsovername die de omverwerping van de traditionele klasse- en genderhierarchieën niet wist te bewerkstelligen, en probeert door deze alternatieve lezing aan te voeren, de officiële geschiedschrijving te ondermijnen en daarmee de selectiviteit en kneedbaarheid van het culturele geheugen aan te tonen. Door hun uiteenlopendheid getuigen deze werken van de meervoudigheid en plooibaarheid van het culturele geheugen.

Trefwoorden:

1916 Easter Rising, (Irish) cultural memory, modes of remembering, cultural identity, *The Plough and the Stars*, *The Red and the Green*, *A Star Called Henry*

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Chapter 1: Cultural memory, literature, and modes of remembering	16
1.1 Cultural memory and identity	16
1.2 Cultural memory and literature	19
1.3 Literary modes of remembering	23
1.4 Irish modes of remembering	25
Chapter 2: Sean O’Casey’s <i>The Plough and the Stars</i>	28
2.1 1916 in 1926: A historical, cultural and political context	28
2.2 <i>The Plough and the Stars</i>	36
Chapter 3: Iris Murdoch’s <i>The Red and the Green</i>	50
3.1 1916 in 1966 and the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising	50
3.2 <i>The Red and the Green</i>	61
Chapter 4: Roddy Doyle’s <i>A Star Called Henry</i>	78
4.1 1916 in the 1990s and the revisionist debate	78
4.2 <i>A Star Called Henry</i>	86
Conclusion	102
Works Cited	106

Introduction

“But it is not like 1916.”

“It wasn’t like 1916 in 1916.”

- Bernard MacLaverty, *Cal*

“Once we were men, now we are epochs”

- Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916*

The 1916 Easter Rising was a seminal event in modern Irish history. Although perhaps initially perceived as an ill-conducted and militarily abortive attempt to seize power (Sean Farrell Moran 1), the Rising rapidly became the foundational narrative of the Irish independent nation (Wills 2; James Moran 4). From its onset, the Rising has been reviewed differently by different communities: on the one hand, it was revered by republicans as a heroic fight for freedom which marked the birth of Irish independence; on the other, it was reviled by unionists who regarded the rebellion as unjustified carnage at a time when the British were at war (“The Easter Rising”).

The different meanings and memories of 1916 bear witness to two mutually antagonistic narratives that vie with each other for dominance over the narrative of Irish history. The fault lines between Protestant royalists and Catholic nationalists had been emerging long before the events of 1916. The nationalist narrative focuses on the suffering and violent oppression of the Irish by English (later British) imperial rule that reached back over 800 years. Their nationalist identity is founded on Irish resistance against political, economic, religious, and cultural subjugation, which manifested itself most notably in the Irish Rebellion of 1641 (and the wars that followed) and 1789 against British rule, and the Fenian dynamite campaign between 1881 and 1885 (G. Dawson 33). Conversely, the loyalists considered the British conquest of Ireland in the late sixteenth century as legitimate and did not side with the Irish’ hostile and violent attempts to cast off the British yoke, which

conflicted with Protestant inclinations to remain loyal to the British. Their Protestant resolve not to waver their British identity took shape in the establishment of the Orange Order in 1795, which supported Protestant interests against the United Irishmen, the foundation of the Ulster Unionist Movement in the 1880s, which tried to thwart Home Rule for Ireland, and the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1912, which tried to procure this, and which two years later enlisted in its entirety to the British Army during the First World War (G. Dawson 33-35).

Although this schism had come into existence long before the leaders of 1916 were born, the 1916 Easter Rising became the ultimate watershed which cemented these divisions. The nationwide rebellion and the siege of the General Post Office in 1916 by the joint Irish Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers of about 1500 men in total instigated the eventual overthrow of British rule (Wills 2). Despite the fact that the revolt was crushed in six days and that fifteen of the leaders were executed in Kilmainham Gaol two weeks later (in fact, these executions only fuelled the ire of many of the Irish people), this decisive moment in history had tremendous impact, as the legacy of the war of independence that followed the putsch led to the partition of Ireland (John O’Riordan 71; BBC Newsnight). Two years after the *Proclamation of Independence* was read by the leader of the Irish Volunteers Patrick Pearse on the steps of the GPO in 1916, *Dáil Éireann* (an independent Irish government) was established as a result of a resounding victory for Sinn Féin’s mandate at the British General Elections in 1918. A War of Independence followed between 1919 and 1921 which led to the Anglo-Irish Treaty that became effective in 1922, in which Britain acknowledged independent statehood for twenty-six out of thirty-two counties, which in 1949 became the Republic of Ireland. Dawson speaks of an “unfinished revolution”: the six counties in the North-East were not included in the jurisdiction of the Irish Free State, and were partitioned from the rest of Ireland as they became a statelet that was part of the United Kingdom (G. Dawson 33-35).

The Irish past, then, is a “conflicted terrain” that is “occupied by two powerful grand narratives”, which reverberate through the present (G. Dawson 15). The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising fuelled and perpetuated the tensions between nationalists and unionists. Celebrations in Dublin in 1966 were marked by triumphant pageantry and pomposity (Higgins 1). These celebrations were organised by a committee formed by Lemass, *Taoiseach* at the time, and included members of Fianna Fáil, the government party (Higgins, Holohan, and O’Donnell), proving that the nation-state plays a prominent role in the creation of cultural memory (Erll “Travelling” 7). *Vis-à-vis* the other side of the border, Ian McBride has noted that the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising “spawned a new generation of republicans in Belfast, rekindling the fears of loyalist extremists who took for themselves another commemorative name, the Ulster Volunteer Force” (3).

This dual memory, of denouncing or supporting the Rising, is wittily captured by Yeats in his poem “Easter, 1916”, in which he voices his ambivalence towards the rebellion. The poem bears witness to Yeats’ negotiation between his personal inclination to interrogate the legitimacy of the Rising, and his public duty as the national bard to eulogise the fallen heroes (Kiberd *Inventing* 213). On the one hand, Yeats wonders whether the “casual comedy”, a highly deprecating reference to the Uprising, was not mere unnecessary bloodshed spurred by blinding nationalism (“And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?”), since Britain had promised Home Rule as soon as World War I had ended : “Was it needless death after all? / For England may keep faith / For all that is done and said.” (Yeats lines 72-3; 67-9). On the other, regardless of Yeats’ reservations, he continues to name and commemorate the leaders, and the vehemence with which he expresses the rebels’ unwavering allegiance to the revolutionist cause suggests he admired their bravery. The oxymoron in the line “A terrible beauty is born” epitomises this contradiction (Yeats lines 16, 40, 80).

Even now, 100 years later, the centenary celebrations in April 2016 were surrounded by controversy: public debates about them bear witness to the unresolved tensions between Ireland and Northern-Ireland. Although recent times have been relatively stable and non-violent, the cultural divisions and strained relations are still very much felt. In Ireland, the centenary is marked by a year of celebrations and commemorations all over the country, during which copies of Pádraig Pearse's *Proclamation of Independence* have become cultural commodities which feed a sense of Irishness. Hölscher discusses the self-fashioning capacity of souvenirs as media of collective remembering which help create a sense of community – perhaps these copies of the *Proclamation* were disseminated through society as material reminders to create this long-lasting commemorative effect (173-4). In his commemorative speech, Irish President Michael D. Higgins honoured the Rising as a “stunningly ambitious act of imagination” (“Speech”). He championed the ideals of the rebels, praised them for the sacrifices they had made in their aspirations for the Republic of Ireland, and cited passages from the Proclamation.

Meanwhile, the Irish commemorations of the Rising were often met with disdain in Northern Ireland. First Minister Arlene Foster dismissed the Rising as a legitimisation of the violence used during the Troubles and a celebration of militarism that was not fit to be commemorated in an official way (BBC Newsnight). The Troubles were and are seen as a continuation of 1916: James Moran remarks that “scholars saw the IRA shedding fresh blood in the name of 1916” (13). Although it is generally assumed that 5 October 1968 (when a march in Londonderry resulted in rioting) marks the beginning of the Troubles, the murder of Catholic John Scullion in Belfast in June 1966 by loyalists can be seen as the starting point of the long-standing conflict (Higgins 1). Higgins claims that although the fiftieth commemoration of the Rising was not the immediate cause of the conflict in Northern Ireland, unionist politicians do in fact regard it as fundamental to the mounting tensions and the

ensuing disturbance of the public order (1). Dawson states that public commemoration has become “a battlefield where selective, discrepant and antagonistic narratives of the past clash and compete” (G. Dawson 76). Loyalist commemorations of 1916 remember exclusively those who died during the Battle of the Somme; nationalist remembering of 1916 focuses solely on the martyrs who died for Ireland during the Easter Rising (G. Dawson 76). The fact that memorialisations of 1916 remember either those who fought against the British or those who fought for the British illustrates that what is ethical memory for one community, is political ‘amnesia’ for the other (Pine 14-15). Yet despite the different ways in which 1916 is remembered and the competing narratives that exist side by side, the 1916 Easter Rising will always be a significant part of Irish collective memory on both sides of the border.

Contesting memory and history

It has repeatedly been said that the Rising is about contesting memory and history (BBC Newsnight). The Rising has acquired a mythical status and its significance reaches far beyond the actual events of 24 April 1916. Its meaning changes continuously with every generation and within different communities. Within Irish history, the event operates on the level of the real as well as the imaginary. 1916 has come to mean so much more than just the Easter Rising: through time it has gathered such a cultural and political legacy that it is almost impossible to approach it as a mere historical event separated from the imaginative framework that gradually has been built around it (Higgins 5-6). The first epigraph bears witness to this, what Declan Kiberd calls “dialectical tension between an action and its representation” (*Inventing* 213). MacLaverty already indicates in his novel *Cal* (1983) that the meaning of 1916 is constantly reproduced and reinvented, and the connotations of and imaginative properties that are attributed to 1916 now are not comparable to its meaning at the time. The quotation from *Cal* suggests that in 1916, the Rising was not as charged with meaning as it is

today. The second epigraph, too, shows that the leaders of 1916 have become mythicised as glorified martyrs.

In *Transforming 1916*, Roisín Higgins argues that the selectivity of memory through which nations, groups and individuals remember or forget, highlight or sideline, hone in on or overlook pasts, accounts for the construction of competing and contradictory narratives of republicans, unionists and northern nationalists, whose recollections of the same event differ immensely (19). She claims that “beyond its factual past, the Easter Rising has had another life as conveyer of ‘truths’ or purveyor of fiction”, and that it has functioned as a framework for the nation (28). In this sense, the rebellion has become a cultural memory that could be claimed by many communities. The same names and ideals connected to the Rising have been invoked by antithetical parties to sustain their often mutually exclusive beliefs (Moran 1). Co-existing and contesting narratives are reinvented continuously so as to “serve the needs of a changing Ireland” (Pine 4).

In *Memory Ireland*, Oona Frawley calls for a new way of re-envisioning Ireland’s past through ‘postcolonial memory’. She argues that the fact that Ireland has been “deprived of nationhood” as a result of cultural and linguistic subjugation requires a different way of approaching the workings of cultural memory compared to countries like England, which has not had go through a process which involved “the recovery of memory occluded during the colonial period” through imaginative repossession as a result of colonisation (Frawley 29-31). Frawley defines Irish cultural memory in similar terms as Higgins: as an imaginative reconstruction of the past that is “not an etched-stone memorial without change” but a “shifting subject that depends on present positioning” (xv). Frawley argues that constructing narratives is an integral part of cultural memory and she, too, believes that these “must rely not only on symbols, repositories, museums, places and so on, but on narratives about these things”, and that “narratives in their many guises develop and circulate in culture form the

spine of cultural memory (24). In words of similar import, Higgins asserts that it is primarily in a discursive space that the recalibration of the meaning of the Rising takes place: aside from official commemoration, the Rising lives on informally through artistic expression (19).

In *Inventing Ireland*, Declan Kiberd states that the Rising has been textualised relentlessly, and that some Irish writers tried to account for the Rising in artistic and imaginative terms (199, 213). It is often said that the event in itself was staged: with most of the figures behind the Rising having worked in theatres and some of them writers or poets themselves, the event is said to be reminiscent of a Greek tragedy (“Speech”). Later it was described as a ‘street theatre’ or a ‘unique example of insurrectionary abstract art’ (Higgins 6). Kiberd also states that “The rebels [...] sought a dream of which they could not directly speak: they could only speak of having sought it. The invention was that the Irish Republic was initially visible only to those who were agents of freedom glimpsed as an abstract vision before it could be realized in history.” (Kiberd 200). Pearse visualises the realisation of his image of the Republic in his poem “The Fool”:

O wise men, riddle me this: what if the dream come true?

What if the dream come true? and if millions unborn shall dwell

In the house that I shaped in my heart, the noble house of my thought?

(Pearse qtd. in Kiberd *Inventing* 200)

These lines indicate that, in the same way as the Rising lives on through artistic expression, the Rising took shape imaginatively in the minds of the rebels. Hence, artistic expression is crucial to understanding the Rising. Yet although both Higgins and Frawley, and to some extent Kiberd, stress the importance of narratives in carrying cultural memory, their works do not contain thorough analyses of literary representations of one of the most pivotal

moments in Irish history, Easter 1916.

In Emilie Pine's study of Irish memory, she underlines the importance of the past for Irish culture. The effect of this obsession with history is the construction of new narratives that recollect the past. She claims that remembrance culture "is not a straightforward act of retrieval and re-presentation of past events, and the resulting performances are not innocent" (3-4). Novels and plays, as well as other forms of cultural remembrance, reconfigure the past for presentation and consumption, and can hence be seen as acts of cultural mediation, which means that they are heavily influenced by the time in which they are produced.

Research question

Although Higgins, Frawley and Pine stress the importance of literature or other forms of cultural remembrance as a vehicle for as well as a manifestation of cultural memory, none of them offer in-depth readings of literary representations of the Rising to gain new insight in the ways in which Irish cultural memory operates through literature. While textual memories of the Rising have been studied in other scholarly works (particularly James Moran offers insightful readings of 1916 as theatre; Lanter, too, provides an apt analysis of Rising literature), there have been no previous studies which focus exclusively on Rising literature. It is this lacuna that I aim to fill in my dissertation.

Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green* (1965) and Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* (1999) have come to be known as the most pertinent literary expressions through which the Rising is remembered. In all of these works, the Rising takes centre stage, and, published at significant moments in history (ten years after the event; one year before the fiftieth anniversary; and almost a century later), these fictionalised retellings of the Rising are as revealing about the event itself as they are about the Irish cultural climate in which they were produced. These texts have been selected

deliberately, as they will enable me to examine literary configurations of the Easter Rising at crucial moments of commemoration that lie apart from one another and thus can trace developments in memory over time.

Then, based on the premise that literature produces cultural memories by re-presenting the past in the shape of narratives, and assuming that fictional recollections of the past can be read as performative acts of remembrance, the main question I aim to answer is: how do literary representations of the 1916 Rising published at different points in history re-envision the same event, and what does this reveal about the cultural context in which they were produced? In other words, what competing narratives of 1916 are expressed in Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green* (1965) and Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* (1999)? Sub-questions that ensue from this are: how do these literary representations of the Rising contribute to the construction of Irish cultural identities, and which literary aspects (focalisation, genre) play a role in the reconfiguration of the memory of 1916 in these texts?

Given the fact that O'Casey was a protestant and a dedicated communist, I presume that his portrayal of the Rising will be overtly critical. His 1919 work *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army*, in which he condemns the Irish Citizen Army for neglecting its ultimate purpose, which was to protect labourers' rights, for its unification with the Irish Volunteers, already suggests this. A pacifist at heart, O'Casey did not support the violence, and poured contempt on the leaders for trading socialism for nationalism (Murray xi). On the fourth day of production of *The Plough and the Stars* riots broke out at the Abbey theatre: studying the play's reception at the time of its production by analysing reviews will generate interesting perspectives on how O'Casey's irreverent rendition of the Rising was met by contemporaries.

Published in 1965 and written by an author born to protestant parents, who migrated from Ireland to England in her infancy, I suspect that Murdoch's revisioning of the Rising is

influenced by the inception of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. I expect that the novel, published a year before the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the rebellion, might be affected by the cultural and political complexities and tensions that enveloped this problematic commemorative event at that particular time.

Written at a time which saw the emergence of memory studies, I suspect that Doyle's novel will bear witness to a multiplicity of versions of the past and a plurality of different, perhaps conflicting narratives and memories. With the sectarian violence of the Troubles fresh in the nation's mind, the difficult realisation of the peace agreement and the influence of the revisionism which dominated the historical discourse of the latter half of the twentieth century, I believe that *A Star Called Henry* will debunk the myth of the 1916 Rising and attempt to undercut the Rising's mythogenetic power.

It is true that the selected primary texts have attracted scholarly interest before. Particularly *The Plough and the Stars* has produced a substantial amount of scholarship. However, *The Red and the Green* and *A Star Called Henry* have generated less scholarship and have been studied predominantly in isolation, rather than in the broader context of 1916 literature. Never before have these three texts, carefully selected for their strategic position in the course of a century, been juxtaposed and studied in relation to each other. This innovative approach will allow me to compare and contrast three texts with markedly different perspectives on the 1916 Easter Rising, which will ultimately shed new light on the ways in which Irish cultural memory has shifted and transformed through time. Understanding the past is a prerequisite for understanding the present: hence, studying these texts in the circumstances in which they were written is an important step towards understanding contemporary Irish culture. Furthermore, what will ensue from this is a greater understanding of the power of literature to re-enact and ultimately recreate the past. This dissertation will therefore bear witness to the fruitful cross-pollination of literary studies and cultural memory

studies as well as once more stipulate the merits of analysing literature as a medium of cultural remembrance.

I will limit my selection of literary representations of 1916 to the three aforementioned primary texts. Literary works that only deal with the Rising on an indirect or implicit level, such as Sebastian Barry's *A Long Way* (2005), are not taken into consideration. In terms of theoretical frameworks, I aim to use definitions of cultural memory by Marita Sturken, Oona Frawley, Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, as well as Jan Assman in order to examine the ways in which collective memory shapes cultural identities. I will draw on work by Erll and Rigney to explain the importance of literature in the production of cultural memory, and I will focus solely on the role of literature as a medium of remembrance, as this approach will allow an analysis of how literature recalibrates past events. Rigney's understanding of literature as a "portable monument" is crucial to my approach and will function as the foundation of my analysis ("Portable" 383). Furthermore, Erll's distillation of three textual modes of remembering and her claim that textual choices (such as focalisation) generate specific modes of remembering, will provide a useful framework in understanding the ways in which textual choices influence the way we remember.

In terms of methodology, I will perform a textual analysis of the three primary texts and place them in a theoretical framework of memory studies and Irish cultural memory, which will be presented in the first chapter. In the subsequent three chapters, I will adopt a novel-based approach, which enables me to compare and contrast the texts in the conclusion, in which I will use a thematic approach. Applying (postcolonial) memory theory and using applicable terminology such as anti-nostalgia and Erll's modes of remembering, will help forge a more profound understanding of the ways in which the memory 1916 has been shaped and transmitted through literature.

Chapter 1: Cultural memories, literature, and modes of remembering

This theoretical framework attempts to offer an adequate consideration of the role of literature in the production of cultural memory and the cultural memory theory adopted in this study before it is applied to *The Plough and the Stars*, *The Red and the Green*, and *A Star Called Henry*. It aims to acquaint readers with the terminology and to aid them in forging a sophisticated and conceptual understanding of a number of key concepts in (Irish) memory studies, such as collective memory, anti-nostalgia, and textual modes of remembering. This chapter starts out with an abstract and theoretical approach in its definition of cultural memory and identity before concretising it in the subsequent chapters.

1.1 Cultural memory and identity

Taking as a starting point a social-constructivist perspective, cultural memory is the product of selectively chosen images and events of the past that are consciously and collectively constructed and distributed, through which a society remembers and defines its relationship to the past, and from which it draws a sense of unity and identity in the present (Rigney “Portable” 366; Erll and Rigney 111; Assman 130). It is not a storage cellar from which memories are retrieved as exact replicas in the same shape as they were once created. On the contrary, memories are narratives that are “reconstructed in the present, rather than resurrected from the past” (Rigney “Plenitude” 14). I consider using the plural form of cultural memories more appropriate, for, as shown in the introduction, it is through an active process of selective remembrance that certain aspects of history are highlighted or sidelined, remembered or forgotten by certain communities.

In order to understand the meaning of 1916 in its afterlife, it is important to take into consideration the discursive and imaginative paradigms that were created in the course of a century, which is via cultural memory (Erll “Travelling” 5). These discursive and imaginative

paradigms become visible through representation. Sturken argues that cultural memories are articulated and circulated through representation. Museums, official commemorative ceremonies, monuments, visual arts, images, cinema, poetry and fiction are examples of “technologies of memory, not vessels of memory in which memory passively resides so much as objects through which memories are shared, produced, given meaning” (Sturken 9). These acts of remembrance become the foundation for the memories that prevail within and across generations (Erll and Rigney 111).

What ensues from this is that representing the past is inherently a vicarious exercise. Assman makes a distinction between *communicative memory*, which is the initial phase during which memories are directly lived by eyewitnesses or participants, and *cultural memory proper*, which is the phase that starts years later when only ‘second-hand’ stories remain (Rigney “Plenitude” 14-5). Our conception of 1916 is predominantly dependent on and determined by later representations. This vicariousness, which will only increase as time progresses, underlines the degree to which memories are mediated, transferred, and inherited (Rigney “Portable” 367). This fissure that arises between the actual past moment that is remembered and its later representation defines the nature of memories. Erll’s apt characterisation of the nature of memories is key here:

Memories are not objective images of past perceptions, even less of a past reality. They are subjective, highly selective reconstructions, dependent on the situation in which they are recalled. *Re*-remembering is an act of assembling available data that takes place in the present. Versions of the past change with every recall, in accordance with the changed present situation. Individual and collective memories are never a mirror image of the past, but rather an expressive indication of the needs and interests of the person or group doing the remembering in the present. (*Memory* 8)

In other words, memories are not “flies in amber” (Rigney “Portable” 367), but organic, phantasmagoric, even, indicators of the present collective needs of a culture, and hence the way we remember reveals as much about contemporary collective desires as about the event that is recollected (Sturken 2-7). Sturken describes cultural memory as “a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history” (1). Contrary to Pierre Nora’s contention that history and memory are antithetical, Sturken calls for a revisioning of the way we perceive the relationship between history and memory by suggesting that history and memory are in fact intertwined. The question is not which memories recall the past most truthfully, but what their telling brings to light about the here and now (2-5). Remembering or recollecting is an active performance or re-enactment which occurs in the present, whereby memories are incessantly tailored accordingly to facilitate the needs of the present, and whereby the relationship between past and present continuously changes (Rigney “Plenitude” 17). Assman beautifully captures this notion by calling memory “the contemporized past”, as cultural memory “always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation” (129; 130).

The workings of cultural memories should therefore be considered as top-down instead of bottom-up. Consequently, if we want to learn anything about the cultural reconfigurations of 1916 through time, it is important to direct our attention at the social, cultural and political contexts from which they have sprung. Erl’s conceiving of memory as travelling memory or transcultural memory is a useful concept here. She suggests that memories cannot exist without movement between social borders, for memory is immaterial, lacking meaning in itself. In order to survive, memories must continuously be re-interpreted and renewed by processes of actualising and re-actualising contents of cultural memory and the unremitting exchange of information in the minds of people (“Travelling” 12-5). She states that “in the transcultural travels of memory, elements may get lost, become repressed,

silenced and censored, and remain unfulfilled. This is a consequence of the existence and variable permeability of borders” (14).

Hence, more often than not, cultural memories are as much a political matter as they are cultural, as it is through this interplay of remembering and forgetting that political agendas are revealed. In his pioneering article “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity”, Jan Assman demonstrates how national identities are founded upon collective and cultural memories. Although Assman neglects the fact that the nature of the bearers of cultural memory are also in part determined by the identity of a nation and that the interaction between cultural memory and identity is more of a two-way street than he makes out (after all, our identity preconditions the way we recollect the past), he does make a valid point. He views cultural memory as a “store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity” (130). In this way, cultural memory becomes a means through which groups preserve what identifies them, either in terms of what they are or what they are not. Sharing the same set of cultural memories creates a sense of belonging and becomes thus the core of identity (130). Identity thus rests on a shared cultural heritage which makes a society’s self-image visible (133). In turn, this cultural heritage is made visible by concretions of memories: as was mentioned previously, memories in themselves are not observable, but manifest themselves in concrete and tangible expressions of memory, such as works of literature.

1.2 Cultural memory and literature

When Sean O’Casey was asked why he was an author, he answered “It’s the only way I can keep something alive. Writing is living. When you write, when you create something, it never dies” (qtd. in Karena O’Riordan). Indeed, the role of literature is invaluable to the production and circulation of cultural memories, as it allows memories to live on and be revitalised at later points in time. Literature profoundly shapes present ideas about past realities (Erll

Memory 165). Halbwachs writes:

When the memory of a series of events is no longer sustained by the group involved and affected by them, who witnessed them or heard about them from the actual participants; when a memory has become a matter only for disparate individuals immersed in new social settings where the events have no relevance and seem foreign, then the only way to have such memories is to fix them in writing and in a sustained narrative; whereas words and thoughts die out, writings remain.

(Halbwachs qtd. in Rigney "Plenitude" 12)

He views the capturing of memories in writing as secondary to lived, oral memories.

Furthermore, Halbwachs here seems to only appreciate 'authentic' memories, defined by Assman as communicative memories as mentioned above, or as Halbwachs himself calls them, 'internal' memories, such as O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*. He downplays any kind of information or attempt at remembering by individuals who did not experience the event in question ('external' memories), such as Murdoch's and Doyle's interpretations of the Rising (13).

However, as demonstrated previously, it is irrelevant to distinguish between authentic or inauthentic memories. Moreover, this distance between internal and external memories should be celebrated rather than lamented. Huyssen argues that the chasm that grows between the original past event and the way it is remembered as time progresses is inevitable, and should therefore be understood as an inspiration for artistic creativity and engagement with the past (Sturken 9). This fissure is highly significant as it is here where mutations of the same event take shape. Discontinuity is intrinsic to the dynamics of memory, and fictionality and poeticity should therefore be regarded as integral rather than inauthentic qualities of cultural

memory (Rigney “Portable” 361). Works of literature are negotiators between internal memories and external memories: “literary narratives mediate between pre-existing memory culture on the one hand and its potential restructuring on the other” (Erll *Memory* 156). In fact, they can function as bridges across generations.

The ways in which memories and literature come into being are very similar in nature. Both involve formative processes of collecting, arranging, and synthesising pieces of information to be formed in a specific way to convey a certain focus of thought (Cassirer in Erll *Memory* 145). To not divert too much from the scope of this study, let it suffice to point out here that literature is a medium *par excellence* for studying cultural recalibrations in the representations of the same event and for laying bare the processes through which memories are shaped and reshaped in the time span of a century.

Erll and Rigney attribute three roles to literature in producing cultural memory:

- 1) Literature as a medium of remembrance
- 2) Literature as an object of remembrance
- 3) Literature as a medium for observing the production of cultural memory (112)

Studying literature as an object of remembrance involves studying works of literature in their intertextual frame of reference (for example Joyce’s *Ulysses*, through which he gives Homer’s *Odyssey* a new lease on cultural life), in which literature creates a literary memory of its own by rewriting earlier texts. Since the works selected for this study do not directly allude to each other or other works of literature, this will not be my line of approach. Studying literature as a medium for observing the production of cultural memory sets out to determine how collective memory works (112-3). Since this is not the point of departure of this study, I will solely focus on the role of literature as a medium of remembrance, as this approach allows me to

analyse how literature recalibrates past events: “Works of literature help produce collective memories by recollecting the past in the form of narratives.” (112). By relaying images of the past, contents of cultural memory are formed and disseminated by literature (Erll *Memory* 164).

Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire* and Rigney’s paradigm of literature as a portable monument are particularly helpful here. Texts become portable *lieux de mémoire*, a term Nora has developed to denote all sites of memory, be they places, monuments, relics, or artefacts, that are imbued with cultural significance and become a “self-perpetuating vortex of symbolic investment” when they are read and reread (Rigney “Plenitude” 18). Rigney describes the power of literature to recycle memories, because texts are mobile and transportable carriers of thoughts and memories, and therefore have certain advantages over immobile monuments (Rigney “Portable” 383). Books can be reproduced endlessly and are more durable than most media of cultural memory. Works of literature can travel through time and space without any kind of limitation, as they are not tethered to temporal or spatial boundaries. They can be passed on from hand to hand for centuries, reaching an infinitely larger number of people than set in stone monuments. In the same way as texts can re-appropriate pre-existing cultural memories (by piously reiterating or challenging them), they can be re-appropriated by different groups of people, at different points in time, and at different places in the world (who can then, in turn, also piously reiterate or challenge them). Furthermore, literary works can create ‘imagined communities’ of people who share the same stories and memories (Rigney “Plenitude” 20). In this way, a novel or a play can come to represent a group of people who share the same frame of reference set out in that particular work of fiction. Under the condition that these literary works are read repeatedly, they can become part of a common frame of reference and hence constitute cultural memories of their own (Rigney “Plenitude 20”).

One final point about the role of literature in producing cultural memories is literature's ability to give room to voices that have been marginalised in society's memory. The manner in which fictional works can "foreground certain memories, while marginalizing others, indicates that the role of novels is not just a matter of recalling, recording, and 'stabilizing', but also of selecting certain memories and preparing them for future cultural life as stories." (Rigney "Portable" 382-3). In *The Plough and the Stars*, O'Casey gives voice to a minority of people who believed the socialist cause was snowed under by nationalist aspirations. The fact that riots broke out during the fourth performance demonstrates a clash of two opposing cultural memories.

Now that I have established that literary works are crucial in the construction, reconstruction, re-appropriation, resuscitation, and dissemination of cultural memories, the question arises as to how texts go about this. In other words, how do literary texts shape images of the past?

1.3 Literary modes of remembering

Erll asserts that "making sense of the past involves putting events in a temporal and causal order, perceiving them from a certain angle, and condensing complex metaphors and symbols. Poetic and narrative strategies tend to play an important role in the symbolic transformation of experience into memory" ("Rewriting" 165). These textual strategies are in themselves not neutral; in fact, they are inherently biased, for textual choices generate specific modes of remembering. Analysing the use of intertextuality, metaphors, narrative voice (e.g. authorial or personal), focalisation and plot structure exposes the semiotic processes that are at work in producing re-visionings of the past (163). In my discussion of the texts I will lay bare some of these textual strategies, to not only expose how they view the past, but also how they construct this image.

Furthermore, Erll distinguishes between a number of different modes of remembering: the experiential mode, the antagonistic mode, the reflexive mode, the monumental mode, and the historicizing mode (Erll *Memory* 158). With the different cultural and political climates in 1926, 1965 and 1999, the mode of remembering will indubitably change too. I will provide brief considerations of some of these modes before applying them to *The Plough and the Stars*, *The Red and the Green* and *A Star Called Henry* in the subsequent chapters.

(i) Experiential mode

With the experiential mode, a past event is presented as the here and now, whereby characters are immersed in and become part of the past. This mode is closely related to Assman's communicative or living memory, as the characters experience the event as eyewitnesses or participants. By definition, it is the opposite of cultural memory proper, whereby living memories have become part of cultural memory through processes of mythmaking. The experiential mode is thus the opposite of the monumental mode. These modes of literary remembering often inform literary genres such as the historical novel and fictional autobiographies (Erll "Rewriting" 179). Testimonial first-person narration, stream-of-consciousness, the use of present tense and sociolect, and detailed descriptions of everyday life are techniques that are used to express a sense of immediate and inner experientiality (Erll "Rewriting"; 165-9; Erll and Nünning 391; Erll *Memory* 158-9). In *A Star Called Henry*, Doyle draws on the experiential mode as the main protagonist Henry Smart becomes one of the rebels embroiled in the siege of the GPO during 1916. By seemingly promising to express 'authentic' lived experience, Doyle gets as close as possible to the original event, which allows him to create and circulate his own imaginative appropriation of history in order to rewrite it with his view and version of what happened in 1916.

(ii) Antagonistic mode

The antagonistic mode downgrades one view on the past in order to endorse another. Through negative stereotypic or we-narration, the status quo or one particular reading of a past event is rejected in favour of an alternative version of cultural memory. The antagonistic mode works by portraying certain memories as true while deconstructing memories that challenge them by way of 'biased perspective structures'. This mode often informs works which represent certain identity groups and their subjectivities (Erll *Memory* 159). It also often pervades politically motivated work, such as O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, in which he negatively portrays the republicans who were willing to die for Ireland, who in O'Casey's eyes were blinded by nationalist proclivities, and who neglected the needs of the poor working class in the Dublin tenements.

(iii) Reflexive mode

The reflexive mode comments on the ways in which literature makes memory observable by reflecting on the workings of memory on a meta-level. Through explicit comments on the way remembering functions, metaphors of memory, the concurrence of multiple versions of the past and experimental narrative forms, the reflexive mode critically observes, reveals and comments on how representations of the past come into being (Erll *Memory* 159).

1.4 Irish modes of remembering

A less narratological and a more content-based mode of remembering is what Pine has termed 'anti-nostalgia'. Much in the same way as Sturken and Erll, Pine underscores how the past is used to strategically accommodate present needs (14). Under this premise, she explains the concept of 'anti-nostalgia' a term she uses to denote a cultural strategy in which the past is presented as traumatic and filled with suffering so as to emphasise the fact that the present is

devoid of this. In the same way as nostalgia, the cultural identity brought forth by anti-nostalgia still rests on the relationship with the past. Yet the nature of this relationship differs: with anti-nostalgia it is the future, not the past, that becomes the idealised space. The future is seen as malleable, abound with potential that can be progressively idealised, so to speak, instead of looking backwards to an irretrievable past (8).

Pine provides a rough timeline of Irish modes of remembering from the nineteenth century to the present. The Gaelic and Literary Revivals from the late nineteenth century were manifestations of a longing for a romanticised past which compensated for a degenerate present. They aimed at restoring a sense of Irishness that had gradually been lost after the failed 1798 Rising, the exodus as a result of the Famine, and years of colonial oppression, by promoting Irish language and old Gaelic myths and legends. The early twentieth century based its sense of identity on nationalism –1916 only confirmed this nationalist narrative, sustained by a gallery of heroic Irish martyrs. The last thirty years, however, the still fresh travails and traumas of Bloody Sunday and the Troubles were still as pressing, and cultural subjectivities took a turn whereby Irish remembrance culture looks back at a traumatic past, in order to mitigate the present. This anti-nostalgia fulfils three functions: it confirms the historical suffering as the authentic foundation of the Irish nation; it celebrates the values of Irish modernity that are far removed from this past suffering; and it emphasises the liberal, inclusive and productive nature of the present (Pine 6-8). Although Pine uses anti-nostalgia as a concept by which she analyses acts of remembrance, I believe it can also be applied to literature, as it will prove to be a suitable framework through which to read Doyle's novel. Written during the Celtic Tiger Era, *A Star Called Henry* bears witness to the confidence borne out of this period, as it makes use of a newfound freedom to critique unassailable myths of the past (Frawley 34).

The main purpose of this chapter was to provide a framework in support of a more

informed and targeted reading of the primary texts. In the following three chapters, I will first outline the political and cultural contexts from which the texts have emerged before analysing how the texts re-envision the rebellion and how their textual properties convey this particular version of the past.

Chapter 2: Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*

Before presenting my analysis of Sean O'Casey's rendition of the 1916 insurrection and exposing the ways in which he proffers this in his 1926 Abbey play *The Plough and the Stars*, I will first describe in broad outline the cultural context and most pressing political preoccupations of that period. Then I will give a succinct overview of the attention the tenth anniversary of the Rising received in Irish newspapers to provide a backdrop, as a gauge for O'Casey's unpatriotic sentiments. After my reading of the play, I will consider its reception to expose the irreconcilable ideologies and conflicting interpretations of 1916 that prevailed in 1926.

2.1 1916 in 1926: A Historical, Cultural and Political Context

By 1926, the Irish Free State had already been instated for four years under a Cumann na nGaedheal government led by W.T. Cosgrave. Partition had become a fact after the victory of the pro-Treaty forces under Michael Collins when on 7 January 1922 the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed, which ended the Civil War and established the Irish Free State, much to the dismay of anti-Treaty forces such as the IRA and Cumann na mBan (a Republican women's organisation which liaised with Sinn Féin and the IRA), who fought for a united Ireland (Morash 163). Morash explains that 1920s Ireland was still very much tainted by the polarising forces of the Civil War (163-5). Even though the IRA had signed an armistice in May 1923, they never truly surrendered. The war between anti-Treaty nationalists and pro-Treaty forces continued tacitly, albeit in a new, vestigial form, whereby a knock on a Republican's door could still lead to a search for arms (163). Meanwhile, Sinn Féin and Cumann na mBan continued to recruit underground. The assassination of the leader of the IRA, Liam Lynch, by Free State force in April 1923, deepened the rift between supporters and opponents of the Treaty. The semblance of calmness spread by Cosgrave's government of the

new Free State was punctured by a grave sense of disappointment and disillusionment that dominated the 1920s (Morash 172). “A free Ireland would not, and could not, have hunger in her fertile vales and squalor in her cities. A free Ireland would, in short, govern herself as no external power – nay, not even a government of angels and archangels could govern her”, Pearse had exclaimed with great fervour (qtd. in Morash 172). Yet when there did in fact prove to be hunger and squalor in a free Ireland, after the Civil War and the severe winters and wet summers of 1923 and 1924, people felt betrayed by the broken promises (Morash 172).

In February 1926, *The Irish Times* reported of the new policy statement of the Independent Labour Party, which called for a socialist approach to “carry us rapidly through the period of transition from the old to the new civilisation. The scourge of unemployment, the failure of capitalist industry to reorganise itself after the shock of the Great War, our daily experience of the intensified struggle between the possessing classes and the workers are proof that the old order is breaking down” (“Militant” 8). This bears witness to the state Ireland and its workers were in, living on “semi-starvation wages”, lacking “adequate food, clothing and housing, and the essentials of civilisation” (“Militant” 8). Moreover, Moran points out that with the leading rebels no longer alive, their radical thinking was lost too, and was replaced by conservative thinking which rendered the rebels’ radical nationalist achievements and sacrifices without avail (20).

As we will see later, all this was grist to O’Casey’s mill. The years after the Civil War were dominated by a sense of bitterness which lasted, through the depression in the 1930s and the economic austerity of the early 1940s (which Frank McCourt captures so aptly in *Angela’s Ashes*), well into the 1950s. Morash describes the zeitgeist in which O’Casey wrote *The Plough and the Stars* as a period which rankled “with an awareness of limitations, constraints, and lost opportunities” (172). Cleary confirms that there was a feeling of “post-revolutionary,

post-Civil War bitterness and disillusion that settled in over several decades as the first Cumann na nGaedheal and then the Fianna Fáil regimes failed to deliver the radical social renovation of Irish society that Sinn Féin had promised.” (140). What happened in many postcolonial societies was that “when the great expectations of the national struggle were not realised, there followed a period of post-revolutionary disappointment marked by a literature of satire or disenchantment” (141). O’Casey’s play is a pungent manifestation of this discontent. Yet despite the political turmoil in a divided Ireland (both in the literal and figurative meaning of the word), the meaning of the Rising was never put under pressure, and its meaning did not seem to falter (Roche 133).

1916 in 1926 newspapers

Roche points out that as post-1916 Irish politics saw a growing variety of splintered political views, the Rising was promoted more and more for its formative calibre for a free and independent Ireland (133). It was as if the proximity to the event precluded responses that evoked anything other than praise, and rendered critical tones as blasphemous. Poulain even claims that it had become a taboo (167). A thorough search in newspaper archives between January and December 1926 yields not one critical article on the Rising; none even in *The Irish Times*, which at the time was a Protestant unionist paper (although, as Kiberd already pointed out, the paper dedicated surprisingly little to the Rising’s anniversary, *Inventing* 268). A multitude of articles in numerous national and local newspapers printed between April and May 1926 reports of nationwide commemorative ceremonies in honour of the sacrifices of the insurgents, during which Gaelic poems were recited, speeches were delivered, wreaths were laid, processions were held and celebratory concerts were largely attended. To give a few examples: on 5 May 1926 *The Irish Times* describes the annual commemoration ceremony at Arbour Hill, where the executed rebels are buried, attended by President Cosgrave and his

Cabinet (“1916 Insurrection” 4); on 6 April 1926 *The Irish Examiner* reports of the demonstration in Fermoy held in honour of the local men who died during Easter Week and of a wreath-laying in honour of Lynch, remarking that the event, which was confined to a small number of people, attracted a very large gathering (“Easter Week Fermoy” 4). Similarly, on 13 February 1926 *The Evening Herald* announces the opening of an instalment of the history of the Anglo-Irish war in Dublin Castle to commemorate Easter Week (“the Army” 6). It is worth noting that almost all of these articles are marked by powerful patriotic rhetoric which leaves no space for dissident voices.

That historic date! What memories does it keep shimmering within our souls –
 Unselfish patriotism! valour unconquered even by death! – A noble 16 were singled
 out by Britain to pay for their temerity in facing the battle-line of a mighty Empire:
 they stood erect, undaunted, in that terrible moment which separated them from a
 tomb lined with quicklime – for Ireland’s honour, for Ireland’s glory! Our nation’s
 heart chrobbed in union with theirs. Our Ireland conquered in their death

reads the *Connaught Telegraph* of 8 May 1926 (“How Major” 5). What we see here is an active process of selective remembrance at work, whereby only the aspects of 1916 (“unselfish patriotism”, “valour unconquered”, “a noble 16”) that should be remembered are highlighted, and thus become part of cultural memory. Representations of 1916 such as these contribute to the construction of a discursive and imaginative paradigm that surrounds 1916 and survives as *cultural memory proper* when it outlives *communicative memory*.

Furthermore, this fragment bears witness to a deep and collective need for unity (“Our Ireland”, “Our nation’s heart chrobbed in union with theirs”) in a time of increasing polarisation. It foregrounds a shared cultural heritage which forges a sense of cultural identity.

The rest of the article goes on to eulogise the names of the fallen rebels in a Yeatsian fashion, sings the praise of Major MacBride, “who died for Ireland like a martyr”, and paints “the last glorious episode of a noble life” in glowing terms. In a similar tone, the *Southern Star* publishes an article on 10 April 1926 which reports of a commemoration concert in Upton, stating that “the memory of the glorious struggle which it commemorates will never die” (“Easter Week Anniversary” 4). An article from 4 December 1926 in the *Butte Independent* seems to want to rebut the charge that Ireland was struggling to uphold the goals the rebels had given their lives for: “Ireland has gone further on the road toward liberty since 1916 than she went for hundreds of years before. (...) Those who declare that the cause has failed and that the Rising of Easter Week in 1916 has passed futilely do not speak the truth” (“Cohalan” 1). Éamon De Valera refers to this too in his speech during the commemoration ceremony in Dublin on 5 April 1926, yet in a more nuanced manner. After stating that “ten years ago the last conquest of Ireland appeared to be complete”, he urges the Irish people not to forget that the revolution is not finished, and that there is still a lot of work to be done:

the homage of our appreciation is not enough whilst the task to which they devoted themselves remains unfinished. The Ireland that they set out to deliver is still unfree. In this land, ‘soft as a mother’s smile’, thousands still mourn. The only fitting homage that we can pay is to dedicate ourselves anew to the completion of their unfinished task, and in silent resolve to pledge ourselves to the watching spirits of those who lie buried that they shall not have given their lives in vain. (“Commemoration” 3)

De Valera seems to use the anniversary of the Rising to hearten the people, to create a sense of unity and spur the people to set their shoulders to the wheel to finish the revolution the rebels had started.

An article titled “Re-opening old wounds” from the *Limerick Leader* on 20 November 1926 points out the injustice “the promoters of Armistice celebrations are causing the Irish people” (7). It goes on to suggest that we must “respect the dead, and refrain from criticism”, and that “promoters of such displays fanning the flames of racial hatred by re-opening old wounds, which the years have just been healing” (7) are not tolerated. Although this article is directed toward those who publicly remember those who fought for the British, it follows from this line of argument that the same would go for those who openly condemn Easter 1916.

A few trends now become readily discernible. What typifies many of the articles is a strong tendency for elevation and a focus on heroism. Furthermore, it becomes clear that in the second half of the 1920s the sentiment prevailed that the battle for an independent Ireland was unfinished as Ireland remained unfree. But perhaps the most striking finding is that the cultural memory of 1916 in 1926 that emerges from the newspaper articles reveals that it is a memory that still needs to heal, and that it is still rather painful, and hence criticism on this emotive memory is ill endured.

Now how does this remitting and incontestable elevation of 1916 relate to O’Casey’s rendition of 1916? While in 1926 Cumann na nGaedhal spent a small fortune on the reconstruction of the GPO, leaving the bullet holes in tact as a tangible and sustained reminder of Irish bravery, O’Casey was busy creating his sceptical attack on 1916, as he abhorred the way the event was being glorified (James Moran 33-4). It is not surprising, then, that on the fourth day of the production of O’Casey’s play, riots broke out as two clashing versions of 1916 came into collision at the Abbey Theatre on 11 February 1926.

O’Casey’s political views

Born in a poor working class family in a tenement house in Dublin in 1880, Sean O’Casey

had always sympathised with and stood up for the underprivileged (Murray vii). With twelve siblings, the third to be named Sean after the two sons born before him died in infancy, O'Casey was "the embodiment of both his class' tenacity and its harrowing poverty" (Pierse 70). He led a precarious life, working as a clerk, van boy, and brick layer's assistant before becoming unemployed and later malnourished (70). At the turn of the century, O'Casey became a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (which later organised the Rising). He became a fervent patriot, changed his name to Seán Ó Cathasaigh, and joined the Gaelic League. He devoted himself to learning Irish and used his talent for writing to create anti-British propaganda.

However, when he met Jim Larkin, the founder of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, his zeal for socialism was ignited, and he soon grew impatient with the tenets of the IRB, which he believed neglected the cause of Labour (Murray x). During the 1913 Lock-out, a dispute between workers and employers about the right to unionise, thousands of Dublin workers and families were driven to unparalleled poverty as employers, backed by the police, boycotted the protesting Dublin workers and instead employed strike-breakers from Britain and other parts of Ireland. O'Casey, who barely escaped death from starvation himself, took the faiths of the poor Dublin workers at heart, grew disillusioned with the aims and purposes of the nationalistic cause, and his loyalties transferred: "not in the shouts of deluded wage-slave Volunteers but in the hunger cry of the nation's poor is heard the voice of Ireland", he said (qtd. in John O'Riordan 73). He now believed nationalism was subordinate to socialism, and considered emancipating the rights of workers more important than reviving the Irish language or overthrowing British supremacy: "the problem of havin' enough to eat was of more importance than of havin' a little Irish to speak" (O'Casey qtd. in Kiberd *Inventing* 221). Striving for an Irish Republic was no longer enough – it had to be an Irish Workers Republic, and so in 1914 he joined the Irish Citizen Army after being appointed

its secretary by Larkin (James Moran 31-2). The ICA was established to defend the strikers and tenement-dwellers from police assaults during the Lock-out. Yet when it became a full blown army, O'Casey, as well as Francis Sheehy-Skeffington (whose wife was one of the rioters during the fourth production of *The Plough and the Stars*), had distanced themselves from it (John O'Riordan 83-4). O'Casey was now entirely secluded from any political activity, and when the Rising began, he had become a spectator of political struggle, rather than a participant (Murray x).

O'Casey viewed the 1916 Rebellion as a squandering of lives and effort. He was critical of the merge of the ICA under Connolly and the Irish Volunteers led by Pearse: in his opinion, the socialist cause was deflected by Connolly, and he had "betrayed the true purpose of the ICA and had taken part in a charade" when he made a pact with Pearse's nationalist force (Murray xi). To O'Casey, the starry plough flag was only meant to signify the worker's struggle to rise, yet after 1916 and the forged alliance, its meaning lost momentum: hence his deploration with the unnecessary bloodshed of 1916 (Murray xviii-xix). O'Casey lamented that instead of a small group that would procure the socialist revolution, it was the bourgeois democrats in the Dáil who assumed power. After 1916, a sundering of views united under Sinn Féin, and Labour was left in the lurch. At the end of the Civil War, O'Casey had abandoned all hope that, like the Russian Revolution, the power vacuum that was briefly created after the Rising would have resulted in a defeat of the ruling bourgeois in service of a socialist government (James Moran 33). Yet instead of a labouring class, it was a new middle class that emerged and seized power (Pierse 52).

By 1926, O'Casey decided to launch an attack on the complacent Irish by lambasting the 1916 Rising. Although he never ceased to support the Republican ideals, always opposed Partition, and in the 1950s and 1960s he helped IRA prisoners in England, he was ultimately dedicated to guard the interests of the labouring class (Pierse 52). He believed the Rising "was

wrongly remembered to have unreservedly endorsed popular mass politics and the social attitudes of bishops and priests” (James Moran 35). He assumed that the Rising had unchained the violence and terror that followed Civil War and had caused the rift between proponents of the Treaty and those who considered it a betrayal of Easter week (Murray xxiv-xxv). Hence, O’Casey wrote *The Plough and the Stars* to dispel the fatal misconceptions surrounding the mythical status of the Rising in 1926, and as an attack on unwarranted reverence towards the dominant order and the cultural afterlife of the Rising (James Moran 35). Ultimately, through this play, O’Casey gives voice to the working class men and women who had to endure all the misery that followed the Rising and did not get to share in its winnings.

2.2 The Plough and the Stars

O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars* is the third play in his Dublin trilogy, each of which centralises a seminal event in Irish history. The play is preceded by *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923) which is set during the War of Independence, and *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) which chronicles the Civil War.

The first two acts are set in the autumn of 1915. The play opens in the room of the Clitheroes, where Fluther is fixing a lock on the Clitheroe’s door while Peter sashays jauntily through the room in his Irish Foresters’ garments, provoked by The Covey, who taunts both him and Fluther with his unpatriotic attitude. Domestic trivialities are played out against the backdrop of preparations for the insurrection by Irish nationalists. Jack enters, and a knock on the door reveals that Nora tried to conceal his promotion to Commandant in the ICA. Against Nora’s wishes, Jack leaves with Captain Brennan to lay plans for the Rising. The second act is set in a pub on the northern side of O’Connell street. Outside a demonstration is held by the ICA and the Volunteers (John O’Riordan 92). The Figure in the Window delivers a bombastic speech made up of fragments of Pearse’s lectures. The characters in the pub become

intoxicated, and petty fights break out between Mrs Gogan, a charwoman with her consumptive child Mollser, and Bessie, a Protestant unionist whose son is fighting with the British Army in Flanders. Rosie, a prostitute, leaves the pub with Fluther. Jack and Brennan enter, carrying the Starry Plough, and vow to die for Ireland. The third and fourth acts are set in Easter week. The fighting at the GPO is in full swing, and Nora has gone to find Jack. Nora returns without Jack and suffers a miscarriage. Meanwhile, Mrs Gogan and Bessie fight over a perambulator to carry their looted goods. The last act is set a few days later in Bessie's attic room. Nora is no longer *compos mentis* as a result of the loss of her baby and her husband. In her delusional state of mind, Nora calls out for Jack, ignoring Bessie's pleas to stay away from the window. In an attempt to save Nora, Bessie is mistaken for a sniper and is killed. The violence continues in the background while the burning logs in the fireplace give off homely, sputtering sounds (Schrank 49-51).

The play lacks a single leading plot, and eschews centralising one or two single characters. Lacking a conventional plot as such, the play thrives in its juxtaposition of the domestic and the public world, and in its mixture of tragedy and comedy (Murray xxx). It is this structure which upholds the play. The consequences these literary techniques have on the content of the play are of great symbolic value: it allows O'Casey to focus on a whole community instead of individuals, and enables him to exchange the hero for multiple anti-heroes (Kiberd *Inventing* 234).

In my reading of the play, it will gradually become clear that O'Casey makes use of all three modes of remembering to give voice to his vindication of workers' rights. O'Casey contests the contemporary status of the Rising by bemeaning nationalist aspirations as futile to tenement-dwellers in order to elevate the importance of socialism, and by unstitching the sacred image of sacrificial Irish motherhood. The play is also a comment on history-making itself, as it debunks the myth that has been constructed by the rebels and nationalist

historiography in the decade that followed it the Rising (Poulain 156).

An attack on nationalism

It is the experiential mode which allows O'Casey close proximity to the original event and which grants him the ability to re-appropriate and reimagine it (the experiential mode is inherent to theatre as historical dramas are by definition performances of memory). However, it is mainly through what Erll has categorised as the antagonistic mode that O'Casey constructs his version of 1916, as it is primarily through indirect negative stereotyping that he attempts to subvert the status quo to promote his alternative version of cultural memory as the most candid one.

This is particularly visible in O'Casey's rendition of the rebels. The second act is structured by a juxtaposition of a fictionalised version of the meeting on 25 October 1916 between the Volunteers and the ICA outside the public house, and a mundane scene that involves the characters in the pub, who, as the night progresses, grow increasingly intoxicated and become embroiled in one petty brawl after another. Here, O'Casey brings together two sharply contrasting spheres – the world of principled politics and the world of the humdrum lives of tenement-dwellers unabashedly fulfilling their human needs. The external world is articulated by The Figure in the Window (Murray xxxi). The Figure's oratory contains direct quotations from Pearse's speeches: the analogy is thus unmistakable. James Moran points out that Pearse is literally portrayed in a bad light: his rhetoric is delivered by a phantasmagorical figure with no name, whose presence can only be detected through a backlit silhouette in the window shielded from the audience who more often than not is lost to sight and hearing (46). Through this staging technique, the rebels have almost become cartoonish versions of themselves (Kiberd *Inventing* 176). James Moran even goes as far as drawing a comparison between Jung's characterisation of Hitler: "just as Jung would later characterise Hitler as the

shadow of Germany's collective subconscious, so O'Casey had rendered the rebel leader of 1916 as the unfortunate shadow side of Irish nationalism" (48). Whether this comparison holds is questionable, but it does demonstrate the extent of O'Casey's aversion to the rebel leaders. O'Casey's rebels are blustery and vain at the beginning, and end up as cowards who are quick to fling off their uniforms when it becomes too dangerous (Kiberd *Inventing* 229). He indicts them with solipsism, and indicates that Jack's main motivations to join the *ICA* are boredom and vanity (Pilkington 127; Kiberd 230). Nora reproves Jack for leaving her out of mere lust for honour: "your vanity'll be the ruin of you and me yet" (O'Casey 30).

The juxtaposition O'Casey sets up between "noble inspiration and ignoble action" time and time again works to belittle the power Pearse's words carry (Pixley 78). All three speeches are set off against base desecrations. After the first speech, in which the silhouette praises masculine virtues and idolatry of bloodshed ("It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen"), the sanguinary words of the speaker are fouled by Rosie, who, after complaining about not having any customers, blurts out "It's th' sacred truth, mind you, what that man's afther sayin'." (O'Casey 34-5). During the second speech, the orator's comparison between blood spilling on the battlefields to red wine spurs Fluther and The Covey to gulp down their drinks. The Covey responds by saying: "Give us a glass o' malt, for God's sake, till I stimulate meself from th'shock o'seein' th' sight that's afther goin'out!" (O'Casey 37). The third speech extolling heroism precludes the squabble between Mrs Gogan and Bessie, after it is first countered by the Covey ("There's only one war worth havin': th' war for th' economic emancipation of th' proletariat") (O'Casey 43; Pixley 79). Pearse's words are constantly diluted by the farcical comedy that is played out on stage. The heroic status of the rebels is punctured further nearer the end of the act. Jack, Captain Brennan, and Lieutenant Langon enter the tavern carrying the banner of The Plough and the Stars and the Tricolour flag, enthralled by the fervour of the Figure's words. Their jingoistic sentiments ("Th' time

for Ireland's battle is now – th' place for Ireland's battle is here") is Rosie and Fluther's cue to leave the pub staggering arm in arm (O'Casey 53). The men's heroic calls for battle are juxtaposed against Fluther's indulgence in earthly needs (Pixley 77). The noble heroism that the Figure calls for is continuously counterblasted to the point that his rhetoric seems ludicrous in contrast to the contemptible action that accompanies it (79). It is almost as if O'Casey is suggesting that nationalism is "prostituting" the nation, whereby nationalism is sold to the people as a commodity in exchange for their loyalty and lives.

O'Casey seems to make a point about the effect that the rhetoric has on the plebeians. Most of the characters seem susceptible to the Figure's illusory language, save The Covey. Murray points out that the brawls in the pub can be read as "a parody of the fight for freedom being eulogised by the Figure in the Window", and that the juxtaposition of high and low ideals allows O'Casey to expose "the dangerous inadequacy of the Figure's language and doctrine" (Murray xxxii). O'Casey demonstrates that political rhetoric provokes dangerous political madness: by rendering Peter and Fluther literally intoxicated, he equates language with the dazing effects of alcohol.

The anti-war speeches delivered by Nora in the third act function as a response to this rhetoric (Murray xlvi). When Jack, inspired by Pearse's nationalism, pleads to Nora "Let me go, can't you, Nora? D'ye want me to be unthru to me comrades?", she responds, "No, I won't let you go.... I want you to be thru to me Jack... I'm your dearest comrade; I'm your thruet comrade... They only want th' comfort of havin' you in th' same danger as themselves" (O'Casey 73). Nor is The Covey won over by Pearse's fervency. With O'Casey as ventriloquist, The Covey expresses his horror at the desecration of the flag by the ICA and fires quick ripostes to Pearse's romantic nationalism. He is also the one to expose the wrongful statement by Corporal Stoddart, who, claiming that he is a socialist too, gives precedence to his (English) nationalism (Murray xxxviii). He states "I'm a Sowcialist moiself,

but I ‘as to do my dooty’, whereupon The Covey ironically replies: “Dooty! Th’ only dooty of a Socialist is th’ emancipation of th’ workers” (O’Casey 88). O’Casey uses the reflexive mode for antagonistic purposes: the fact that Peter is enamoured by the rhetoric and that The Covey’s attitude is scornful, shows that O’Casey allows the concurrence of multiple versions of the past. Yet it is ultimately The Covey’s point of view that takes precedence in the play, when it turns out that the Rising and the folly of nationalism has brought them nothing but death and more harrowing poverty.

Another response is complete disregard: Mrs Gogan in particular is not concerned with the nationalist scene that is taking place outside. She is preoccupied with Mollser and the baby, and has very little to say about Pearse’s proclamation (Roche 133). In the third act, Mrs Gogan and Bessie seize their chance and resort to looting. Providing for her family is the most important thing for Mrs Gogan and this way, as ideals cannot feed mouths, they can take advantage from the Rising after all. Fluther too, exploits the situation for his own gain, and loots, among other things, a gallon jar of whiskey. His drunken exclamation “Th’ whole city can topple home to hell, for Fluther!” shows that he does not care about the nationalist cause. Kiberd and Cleary have argued that O’Casey’s play is in fact a repudiation of the value of political action rather than a commendation for socialism (Kiberd *Inventing* 235; Cleary 143). Although this debate is not relevant for my approach *per se*, it is apposite to point out here that O’Casey’s message is socialist, not nihilist, and is directed towards the policy of the Free State (Pierse 54). Furthermore, the fact that Captain Brennan is willing to shoot the looters (“mobbin’ th’ men that are riskin’ their lives from them. If these slum lice gather at our heels again, plug one o’ them, or I’ll soon shock them with a shot or two meself!”), reveals that there was total disregard for the poor, who in O’Casey’s eyes were never going to benefit from the Rising (O’Casey 71). Pierse points out that apparently, the rebels did not care for those they supposedly tried to liberate, and after their ‘sham revolution’, Dublin’s working

class would still be treated as slum lice, and their needs were only further eclipsed (54).

It seems that what is hinted at here is the fact the Rising did not really concern the people at large. Pearse is deliberately denied the spotlight and robbed of his pedestal in favour of the ordinary characters, who, as a result, are thrust into the limelight and become the main focalisers and agents of the play. Yet the characters remain peripheral to this influential moment in Irish history. Pierson has termed this “alienation of the centre”. This adroitly captures the way the characters are actually present at the political happenings, yet have no political power and are alienated from it. Consequently, they remain on the margins of political change and are ultimately powerless (53). This becomes even clearer in act three, where the characters are left outside on the streets, away from the fight for freedom. Particularly the brief moment in which the woman from Rathmines enters poignantly reveals how she gets to find safety in her middle-class suburb, while O’Casey’s characters have nowhere to go (Murray xxxiii). Cleary points out that the staging indicates that the characters are spectators of political change instead of activators. The political tumult is played out off-stage, and the characters are mostly enclosed in domestic spaces and have no part in the history-making that is happening around them. The staging directions indicate that the attic room of the final scene has a “look of compressed confinement”, and that there is only “one small window at back. A pane of this window is starred by the entrance of a bullet.” (O’Casey 78). Their world is immobile, historically paralysed, and instead of agents, they are victims. This underscores the fact that the revolution was a bourgeois affair, which only added to the adversity of the poor working class instead of improved their circumstances, and did not divide its spoils (Cleary 142).

By the end of the fourth act, the characters are left impotent: the surviving characters are stuck in Bessie’s attic room as their tenement is surrounded by British soldiers searching for snipers (Pixley 80-1). Jack died fighting for Ireland, yet is denied heroism as Nora refuses

to see it that way and Bessie is quick to note that he was left behind in a burning building; Mollser has succumbed to consumption, the main cause of death amongst tenement-dwellers, which the ruling class after the Rising failed to prioritise as an issue in urgent need of a solution; Bessie is killed in an act of noble kindness; and Nora is left a childless widow. Bessie's needless death suggests that bloodshed is not as cleansing or sanctifying as the Figure made out (Roche 138). Nora's attempt to protect the home by having Fluther install a new lock at the opening of the play has failed, and what is left is disconsolate desolation: the Rebellion has utterly distorted the characters' lives. The external world has invaded the private home when English bullet holes shatter the windows.

An antidote to 'Mother Ireland' and the sacrificial woman

The Plough and the Stars was unprecedented in its undoing of the image of Mother Ireland and replacing her by the courageous flesh-and-blood woman (Kiberd *Inventing* 236). The leading rebels initially strove for an Ireland that was equal in terms of sexuality, and many of the leaders, especially Connolly and Clarke, were proto-feminists. In the years leading up to Easter week, women were called to take up arms, and during Easter week, women strode in battle in the ICA next to the men, while Cumann na mBan women attended the wounded, handled dispatches or prepared food. Women's roles grew even more indispensable after the Rising, when they continued to organise underground while the men were imprisoned (James Moran 19-20).

Yet, the feminist cause was snowed under just as the socialist cause. The male leadership that recuperated after most of the leading rebels had been killed was not as acquiescent towards women as their predecessors, and the women felt excluded by post-1916 chauvinism (James Moran 27). O'Casey was the first to bring this into the open through dramatic performance. Previously, Irishwomen were rendered as compliant stay-at-home

mothers and wives who were supposed to be chaste and pure; and Irish men as valiant, self-sacrificing fighters for Ireland (21). O'Casey inverts these ideas, for he substitutes heroes for heroines in his frontal attack on the "myth of female purity beloved of Irish nationalists" (Kiberd *Inventing* 236). Interestingly, O'Casey was nursing his dying mother during the Rebellion. Regarded in this light, Captain Langon and Jack's assertion that Ireland is greater than a mother and wife sound rather nonsensical (225).

The traditional image of Mother Ireland draws on the idea of the poor and old woman whose duty it is to produce and nurture courageous male offspring to defend and revitalise her green fields with the blood lost in battle for the nationalist struggle (James Moran 39). This trope is spurned by O'Casey when he pours scorn on the idea that Irish women and mothers willingly sent their sons and husbands to die (39). Through Nora he voices this subjectivity as she advocates that it is fear, not bravery, which has sent her husband to the frontlines: "An' there's no woman gives a son or a husband to be killed – if they say it, they're lyin', lyin', against God, Nature, an' against themselves! (...) An' he stands wherever he is because he's brave? No, but because he's a coward, a coward, a coward!" (O'Casey 60-1). The assumption that women were to remain on the sidelines and remain silent is disproved here.

Roche usefully points out that Nora's next line is directed at Pearse and his mother: "One blasted hussy at a barricade told me to go home (...) That I wasn't worthy to bear a son to a man that was out fightin' for freedom." (O'Casey 60). O'Casey directly targets Margaret Pearse here, and alludes to Pearse's poem 'A Mother', in which he expresses that his mother does not begrudge him and his brother for dying for Ireland (134-5). Margaret Pearse was Mother Ireland in the flesh, and O'Casey relished in demolishing her pedestal too. James Moran points out that she had become "a kind of metonym for all the things O'Casey found unpalatable about contemporary nationalism" (40). Hence, there is no space on stage for characters like her. Nora, then, provides a counterpoint against Margaret's role of the

sacrificial woman. O'Casey's stage instruction that Jack's face "has none of the strength of Nora's" is telling (qtd. in John O'Riordan 91).

O'Casey further unravels the idea of the sacrificial mother by suggesting that what is at the core of the Rising is inadequate child rearing, and that it was failed Irish motherhood that lay at the heart of it (James Moran 43-4). Mrs Gogan and Bessie use a perambulator for looting rather than for carrying a child; Mrs Gogan lets her baby sip whiskey while they are in the pub and later neglects the baby after it is referred to as "that bloody thing"; and Nora loses her unborn child when she tries to retrieve Jack (O'Casey 47). Rosie is perhaps a foil to Margaret since she encourages men to shirk their duties instead of fulfilling them. The scene in which Rosie and Fluther take off together plays out an opposite version to the ending in Yeats and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, in which Michael is persuaded by the poor old woman (i.e. Ireland) to refrain from earthly desires to go and fight for her (James Moran 45). The song Rosie sings here depicts a cartoonish rendition of motherhood: it glorifies sex for pleasure, and renders the birth of children as incidental (45):

I once had a lover, a tailor, but he could do nothin' for me,
 An' then I fell in with a sailor, as strong an' as wild as th' sea.
 We cuddled an' kissed with devotion, till th' night from th' morning had fled;
 An' there, to our joy, a bright bouncin' boy, Was dancin' a jig in th' bed!
 (O'Casey 54)

O'Casey's heroism is allotted to the women, not the men, as they have to bear the brunt for the men's blind commitment to empty ideals (Schrank 55). The men are portrayed as misguided, drunk, and absurdly patriotic. Deane has pointed out that it is through language that O'Casey encourages the audience to sympathise with the women over the men. Whereas

the women use a humane and relatable sort of language, the men resort to nonsensical jargon, so that the former wins sympathy over the latter (James Moran 40). O'Casey refuses to render the women as incapable of fighting: "Women is terrible when they start to fight. There's no holdin' them back", Fluther says (O'Casey 47). Instead, it is suggested that they abstain from fighting deliberately, and that protecting family and the home is more important.

Here too O'Casey resorts to the antagonistic mode to downgrade the prevailing view on Irish motherhood and the role of women in order to endorse his own opinion about destructive masculinity and the strong woman. Through Nora's anti-war speeches and the irony that is brought about by the loss of her unborn baby in her frantic search for Jack in the midst of the Rising, the image of sacrificial motherhood is deconstructed in favour of a more humane and equal view of mothers and wives. O'Casey's portrayal of motherhood shows that the abstract principle that makes people die for Ireland is ultimately flawed. The idea that 1916 was not the birth but the miscarriage of the nation resonates through the entire play (Karena O'Riordan).

Contesting memories: the play's reception

O'Casey's treatment of the Rising completely goes against the cultural memory of his contemporaries. The play was not the first to denigrate Easter 1916, but it was the first to do so with such unconcealed irreverence (Morash 164). And although this was not O'Casey's first play that satirised war and patriotism, this time the object that was subject to ridicule was too sacred, and mocking it was seen as blasphemy. The Abbey was reluctant to stage the play, as it was a state funded theatre. But with Yeats and Lady Gregory as its heads, artistic freedom triumphed, and the play opened to record crowds. Yet, it is hardly any wonder then that the play had incited its own riot on the fourth night. It was during this performance that the audience was filled with veterans and women from Cumann na mBan, such as Kathleen

Clarke (Tom Clarke's widow), Fiona Plunkett (Joseph Plunkett's sister), Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington (Francis Sheehy-Skeffington's widow) and Margaret Pearse. As mentioned before, Pine has pointed out that that which is remembered of the past are indicators of present collective needs of a culture (14). O'Casey's memory of 1916 did not stroke with the needs of his audience: where O'Casey needed to give room to the marginalised voices in society's memory, the widows and mothers of those who fell in battle needed to hear their husbands and sons did not die without avail.

O'Casey's lampooning of the Irish rebels punctured "the heroic aura surrounding the GPO" (Wills 147). Instead of romanticising the event or perpetuating its mythical status, the play focuses on the underbelly of the whole event. The play was an attack on the Rising as much as on the myths it fostered (Wills 149). This did not go down well with anti-Treaty republicans: especially those who had lost a loved one in the battle were not ready to hear O'Casey critique the cultural memory of Rising in the national theatre, nor were they willing to accept his bleak and pessimistic viewpoint that their relatives had died in vain and that redemption failed to appear (Karena O'Riordan). "You have no right to earn your bread by insulting Ireland", a voice in the audience shouted, and not long afterwards a lump of coal was hurled at Ria Mooney, who played Rosie (Morash 168). James Moran insightfully explains why the audience behaved so riotously: "*The Plough and the Stairs* needed to be denounced because it represented a threat to those who sought to establish a conservative version of the Easter Rebellion, and the sacrificial woman associated with it, at the heart of Irish political life." (49). It is clear that there was an irreconcilable clash of cultural memories, and the fact that he was tearing apart a much cherished national narrative was not taken lightly. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington accused O'Casey of rendering a sacred event as a travesty, and that he cast aspersions on the heroism of the fallen rebels, whereupon O'Casey replied that he never wanted to write about heroes and that he never would (Murray xxviii). She also

indicted him with falsely claiming that women did not find themselves in Margaret Pearse, when in fact they did (James Moran 48).

Wills' analysis of the play's reception is crucial in understanding why the play caused so much outrage. She claims that it is O'Casey's (whether or not wrongful) use of the experiential mode of remembering that caused much of the problems: "The riot crystallised for perhaps the first time the battle between first-hand experience and fictional (or historical) interpretation which was to centre on the events in the GPO. The play purported to show the Rising through the eyes of some who did not take part, and whose lives were blighted by it." (148-9). What Wills essentially gets at here is what Erll has described as literature's role of the negotiator between internal and external memories; or the mediator between pre-existing memory culture and its capacity to restructure it. As the audience was filled with eyewitnesses who had still remembered the *communicative memory* from ten years ago, O'Casey was soon accused of appropriating an event that was not his to rewrite, as he did not take part in the struggle because he was caring for his mother in East Wall. This conflict between one individual's interpretation versus that of popular recall essentially boiled down to a conflict between idealism and realism, with the women championing the former.

Mapping the reconceptualisations of the Rising in literature allows us to grasp the vehemence with which icons of revolutions have a grip on modern political imagination and the ways in which these icons can be contended over and exploited in service to changing needs (Wills 218). Wills shows that this conflict between realism and idealisation was reignited in the 1960s in the revisionist historian's search to accurate historical analysis. His plays gained popularity as they were now valued as real insights in the lives of working class Dubliners. Meanwhile, the rioters were accused of obdurately holding on to myths, yet their sentiments too were given a place in history as they were as much part of the experience as O'Casey's was (149-50). In light of this, it would be fitting to end this chapter on the words

spoken by Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington's son about his mother: "She didn't deny at all that what he said in the play was true, but she said, it's not the whole truth", demonstrating that the conceiving of cultural memory is a matter of cherry picking those elements in history which suit present collective needs best (qtd. in Wills 150). Yet it is not just collective needs, but also individual needs that determine the production of cultural memory, as O'Casey's play should make clear, since it is in his play that he reshapes the memory of 1916 as he himself sees fit. Although a dissident voice at the time, O'Casey's re-envisioning of 1916 has become part of Irish literary and cultural memory of 1916, as it became the most performed play at Ireland's national theatre and is still performed and read widely today (Karena O'Riordan). Moreover, as we will see later, the play has inspired both Murdoch's and Doyle's novels, and has thus become both what Erll and Rigney have defined as a medium as well as an object of remembrance. Yet what Sheehy-Skeffington's remark ultimately shows is that cultural memory constantly has to negotiate between vying memories, and that contesting memories have to compete for a place in history.

Chapter 3: Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green* (1965)

In the course of half a century, the cultural memory of the 1916 Easter Rising recalibrated and reinvented itself anew in light of new developments. While *The Red and the Green* shares a number of similarities with *The Plough and the Stars*, such as a dismissal of the sacrificial woman and the role of women in defending Irish identity, the greater distance to Easter 1916 appears to have caused a larger degree of reflection in the treatment of its cultural memory. Consequently, in Murdoch's recollection of 1916 different aspects come to the forefront, such as the plurality of memories, the transfer of memories, and the effect its fiftieth anniversary had on the impending Troubles.

3.1 1916 in 1965 and the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising

The economic austerity that scourged the early 1940s lasted well into the 1950s, and the Fianna Fáil under de Valera that followed the Cumann na nGaedheal regime, which ruled when O'Casey wrote his play, did not bring about the radical social renovation that had been promised (Cleary 140). Instead, from the 1930s up until the years of the Second World War, it steered a course of isolationism on a global level and conservatism on a national level (Trotter 115). With the ascendancy of Costello as the new Taoiseach in 1948 came an end to Fianna Fáil's sixteen-year uninterrupted leadership. A year later, the ratification of the Republic of Ireland Act ensured the termination of the British statutory role regarding external relations, and under Fine Gael the Republic of Ireland was officially declared. All ties with the former coloniser had now been severed. In response, the UK introduced new legislation which granted special rights for the Irish wishing to move to the UK (Trotter 115). However, the friction between the ROI and the UK about the future of Northern Ireland remained unresolved. As Ireland persisted to exert its power over the north, much to the consternation of the Protestant unionists, in 1949 the UK passed the Ireland Act which promised to give up

its claim over Northern Ireland only at their request (115). Tensions between nationalists and unionists rose as both countries looked at each other with Argus' eyes, and sectarian violence increased. However, economic stagnation and increasing emigration caused the dwindling of the fervency with which the nationalist aim to undo partition had been fought before (115).

After a decade during which Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil governments alternately succeeded each other, Ireland embarked on a new course towards modernisation. The appointment of Seán Lemass as Taoiseach in 1959 is often taken as the starting point for this new direction towards industrialisation in place of protectionism (Morash 209; Trotter 116). Lemass' execution of the Programme of Economic Expansion, which lasted from 1958 to 1963, aimed to accelerate modernisation and to put an end to the entropy that had pervaded since the mid 1920s (Morash 209). Lemass' strategy proved successful: a 4% growth rate was reached within five years. Some, however, were afraid that the Irish nationalist ideals would be put under pressure at the expense of economic interests (Trotter 116).

It is not surprising that this new direction and the concomitant changing priorities influenced notions of cultural identity: whereas the national identity was founded upon an idealised past, the government was now steering away from tradition and was instead looking at the future (116). Trotter explains:

The image of the idealized Irish peasant within the nationalist movement at the start of the century was replaced with cynical expressions of the personal hardships and oppressions fostered in Irish rural life. Patrick Kavanagh's poem, 'The Great Hunger', did not mourn the famine as its title implied, but addressed the sexual frustrations concomitant with familism in rural Ireland. Irish art no longer attempted to mythopoeticize an idealistic Irish past, but instead to seek out the directions in which the nation was going. (116-7)

This development manifested itself most notably in the commemoration of the Rising's fiftieth anniversary in April 1966. Higgins points out that the Rising's jubilee celebrations were used to send out a message of progress (24). The new world order provoked a new way of perceiving 1916. The atrocities of World War II were a major watershed which irrecoverably altered the way 1916 was remembered and commemorated. In October 1965, as the preparations for the jubilee were in full swing, *The Irish Times* reported that in a post-Auschwitz and post-Hiroshima context, the question was no longer if the ideals of the men of 1916 had been sufficiently realised. Instead, the newspaper argued, the best way to honour the legacy of 1916 was to ask what was *now* best for the Irish people (Higgins 24). Second-wave revisionism declared the post-imperial state failed, and hence instead of being a retrospective affair, the anniversary occasioned a "conscious act of reinvention", which directed its attention to the future and enabled the projection of a more positive view of Ireland (Whelan 188; Higgins 3-4). The cultural memory of 1916 was used as a political expedient to facilitate the needs of the Ireland of the present. Lemass eschewed viewing Ireland as the poor old woman, and in January 1966, he wrote about the Rising's golden jubilee:

It is inevitable (...) that the occasion will be used (...) to review the progress of the nation under freedom, and to measure the achievement of national endeavour against the revolutionary vision of fifty years ago. The people of Ireland understand very well, in a clear-headed and realistic way, that the past cannot be changed, that it is in the future that our nation must live. (qtd. in Higgins 24-5)

Reporters from abroad were given the lowdown on Ireland's achievements: they were informed about declining unemployment and emigration rates and their attention was drawn to factories and electricity generators. 1916 had taken on a new meaning in 1966: novelist

Dermot Bolger argued that “[f]or anyone who grew up in the 1960s, the Easter Rising meant 1966 and not 1916” (qtd. in Higgins 27). Fintan O’Toole, editor at *The Irish Times*, too, pointed out that 1966 “had its own truth”, and that “the images of 1916 were renewed and refashioned for a new generation, just at the time when they had finally lost all reality”. (qtd. in Higgins 27).

That is not to say that the past was to be forgotten. On the contrary, the committee strove to connect Ireland’s new direction to its past. The revolutionary generation would soon die out and in a way, the commemorations tried to defy the passing of time (24). The official commemoration committee tried to convey the idea that 1916 had facilitated 1966: the economic and technical developments were meant to testify to the real victory of 1916 (26-7).

But while Lemass’ project of modernisation did instil hope for a better future, it also worked to destabilise the present (24). The fact that De Valera, commander in the Rising, only won the presidential elections in 1966 by less than 10,000 votes bears witness to the growing disjunction between the Irish past and present and the polarisation in Irish politics in the 1960s (“Presidential Election”). The cultural memory of the Rising was approached with different agendas, and so the way the 1916 Rebellion was remembered by three different political parties was three-fold. Where Cumann na nGaedheal used the anniversary as an opportunity to memorialise Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith and Kevin O’Higgins as the founding fathers of Ireland, Fianna Fáil used the occasion to assert the party’s authority and historical position by focussing on de Valera’s prominent role in the Rising and his long lasting and influential political leadership. Different yet were Sinn Féin’s and the IRA’s approaches, which used the memory of 1916 to rekindle the nation’s nationalist spirit by seizing the opportunity to oppugn partition and stress that the rebel’s dream was still to be realised (Higgins 14).

What was meant to be a new point of departure from which to move forward became

the starting point of thirty years of guerrilla violence. As Higgins puts it, “1966 made 1968 inevitable”: the commemorations reignited the malice unionists and republicans bore towards each other and therefore destabilised the already precarious situation (2). While the ROI directed its attention towards modernisation and economic advancement, Northern Ireland became ensnared in a downward spiral which lasted until almost the end of the century (Trotter 117). The Troubles put the myth of the Rising as an anchor of national identity under tremendous pressure (Higgins 28).

1916 in 1966 newspapers

The tenor of most of the articles dedicated to the Rising’s fiftieth anniversary published in and around April 1966 is comparable to that of 1926. Articles of similar import appeared in national and local newspapers, as well as in the *Ulster Herald*, which reported of celebrations, commemoration ceremonies, Irish recitals of the rosary, the erection of monuments, and wreath-layings. Some newspapers featured special supplements in honour of the festivities, such as the *Nenagh Guardian*, which published a special edition featuring biographical sketches of the leaders. It seems as though the cultural memory of 1916 had not much changed, as the country’s blatant veneration for 1916 was still unwavering.

However, as half a century had passed, the occasion of the Rising’s 50th anniversary gave rise to a shift in the focus with which 1916 was remembered. Careful scrutiny of the articles makes a number of developments in the cultural memory of 1916 observable. A fear of forgetting, a focus on the microcosmic, strong feelings of indebtedness and increasing discontent about partition are trends that come to the forefront in 1966 recollections of 1916.

Absent from the 1926 newspapers but very much prominent in 1966, is the emphasis on ‘not forgetting’. The proximity to the event in 1926 for obvious reasons did not necessitate active remembering as a mere decade had passed, yet fifty years on, it seems as though a

reverence for the cultural memory of the Irish foundational narrative ought to be instilled in the younger generations to keep the memory alive and tangible. As what might be called a conscious investment in the transfer of memories, the *Meath Chronicle* of 12 March 1966 dedicated a short series of articles to young readers to educate them about the Rising. The article addresses a young readership in order to transfer *communicative memories* onto a generation that is only exposed to the *cultural memory proper* of the event. As we will see later, this awareness of the vicariousness and transferability of memory preoccupies *The Red and the Green*, too. The article begins to dispel the misconception that the Rebellion was something old and tedious, not directly of interest to but rather imposed on the younger generations: “Maybe you are not very excited about it, because you think of it as something that you learned about at school; something that happened long ago, that has nothing at all to do with your own lives, your homes, your school, your amusements, your future. If you think that you are wrong” (“Remembering” 6).

The concluding paragraphs try to evoke the same spirit of rancour that actuated the Rebellion: “If you had been there in that crowd, praying out loud, crying, angry, seeing the little door open for a soldier to put up the notice proclaiming that the execution had been done, you would have been angry, too. You would have sworn in your heart, as all in the crowd swore, never to forget, and in this year of 1966 you would still remember” (“Remembering” 6). This fragment bears witness to a reluctance to let the memory of 1916 rest in the past, and a desire to re-activate the feelings of injustice that prevailed after the execution of the men of 1916. The abundance of commemorative services all over Ireland, too, was a manifestation of this fear of forgetting. On 16 April 1966 the *Leitrim Observer*, which reported of a remembrance service in Kiltyclogher where Séan MacDiarmada’s nephew, whose uncle was a native of country Leitrim, had been invited to speak, reads: “It was 12 noon on April 24, 1916, when the Proclamation of the Republic was read from the

colonnade of the GPO in Dublin and it was 12 noon on Sunday, April 10, 1966, that the people of Leitrim and Ireland commenced the ceremonies to commemorate the 50th anniversary of that historic event” (“Leitrim” 1). A direct line is drawn between April 1916 and April 1966, indicating uncompromising support and unchanged feelings about the event. The frenetic urgency that accompanies these acts of remembering cannot but have antagonised and rekindled the strife in Northern Ireland.

Apart from this ‘Lest we forget’ mode, there is a strong sense of indebtedness which pervades the articles. The last quoted article continues: “That memorable day in Irish history and the important part played by Leitrim’s son in the Rising and the days and weeks which followed are now being recalled with pride and gratitude.” (“Leitrim” 1). The children’s article in the *Meath Chronicle*, too, expresses strong tributary feelings and tries to pass these on to the new generation:

You owe to the men and women of 1916 all that is best in your lives and in the Ireland you live in to-day; they fought, and many of them died, that you might be free and happy; the least you and all of us should do is, to thank them – to salute their memory fifty years after. (...) [T]hey fought against fearful odds and endured imprisonment and the horror of hunger strike that you, boys and girls, might be born into a free Ireland. (“Remembering”6)

This sense of indebtedness that pervades these articles can perhaps be linked to the government’s attempts to connect the economic prosperity of the 1960s to the deeds of the brave men and women of Easter 1916. As we saw in the previous section, the official commemoration committee endeavoured to convey the idea that 1916 had conditioned present successes and technological developments: similarly, the article emphasises that later

generations ought to remember that they owe their (care-)free existence to the rebels.

That same article is imbued with a focus on the microcosmic family, which, again, also returns in Murdoch's novel. It reads: "There is something else that should bring the jubilee closer to the lives of the young people: the men and women who fought in the Rising, and in the years that followed, were your own people, the parents or grandparents of some of you, the neighbours of all; men and women from your own town or village or country parish" ("Remembering" 6). The excerpt tries to summon a sense of unity in the vehemence with which it stresses that these were 'our own people'. Indeed, the choice of phrase in the aforementioned article of the *Leitrim Observer* is telling: the phrase "Leitrim's son in the Rising", i.e. Séan MacDiarmada, effects a personification of Ireland and its counties, and evokes the idea that the heroes of 1916 were produced by the land and have in turn helped produce the present successful Ireland ("Leitrim" 1). What we see here is a parallel drawn between the nuclear family at microcosmic level and the nation as a macrocosmic family. From the family, the local parish, town or village, feelings of unity are extended to the Irish nation.

The last point I want to raise here evidences that traces of growing discontent about the partition question are readily discernible in the articles. Not in any of the archived newspaper articles between January and May 1966 can a hint of prudence in the consideration of this sensitive subject in light of the growing tensions be traced. On the contrary, David Trimble's labelling of the fiftieth anniversary as an "orgy of self-congratulation" proves to be true, just as his claim that the fiftieth commemoration "had a devastating impact on the position of moderate politics in Northern Ireland" (qtd. in Higgins 1). Some of the articles bear witness to the build-up of tensions that was central to the escalation of the conflict in sectarian Northern Ireland. *The Nenagh Guardian* of 9 April 1966 published a politically charged evocation of Wolfe Tone, viewed by many as the ideological founder of Irish

republicanism, in a call for a united Ireland (English 85): “Wolfe Tone is one of the most inspiring figures in Irish history. Indeed, he was the man who most influenced Padraig Pearse, and hence can claim much of the credit that goes to Easter Week. (...) [H]is aim was to unite all Irishmen, and through unity of aim and unity of action ‘break the connection with England’” (“The Memorable” 9). On 12 March 1966, *Western People* writes:

It was a very fine thing to build memorials to honour those men who gave everything for Ireland’s sake, but the ideals for which they died were not fulfilled. They could build memorials and do as they liked but while their ideals were not fulfilled they had deviated completely from Tone’s principles. In 30 years they had lost one and a half million people to the country which he termed ‘racial suicide’. (...) He [Cathall Quinn] could not understand why Irishmen could not have the right to live in their own country. They would not wait another fifty years. Something must be done (...). (“Unity” 16)

In what can almost be called a seditious pamphlet, the article draws, again, on Tone’s legacy in its bid to incite the people of Ireland to fight for a united Ireland. Its appeal to undo partition could not have been expressed in clearer terms.

This renewed unrest about British interference in Northern Ireland, the focus on remembering, and the relation between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic all manifest itself in *The Red and the Green*. Kiberd has noted that “there is a real whiff of the 1960s from every page of a book set half a century earlier in time” (“Introduction” 1). Indeed, *The Red and the Green*, published on the brink of the Rising’s jubilee, seemed to anticipate the forthcoming Troubles (de Petris 268). The novel was published during a brief lull in the problems in Northern Ireland: in lieu of arms the IRA had embraced political means as a way

of achieving their now more socialist oriented goals. However, when in August 1964 riots broke out in Belfast after Billy McMillan, an Independent Republican candidate, hoisted the Tricolour and the Starry Plough outside his office in Belfast, Murdoch would have been able to recognise this as a presage of the approaching Troubles (DeSalvo 121-2). As my reading will reveal, the novel can be interpreted as a warning against British intervention in Northern Ireland (112).

Iris' Irishness

As a Protestant exile, Murdoch was able to write about her homeland with distance and great clarity. She was born an only child in Dublin in 1919 to a Presbyterian Northern Irish father and a Dublin Protestant mother (Ingman 172). The family would have been anti-nationalist in 1916, but their loyalties swayed after the executions. Though green republicans, the family felt that their position as Southern Protestants grew more and more uncertain as Britain was losing its hold over the island, and in 1921 they moved to London (d'Alton, par. 5).

Murdoch's family, of Irish ancestry tracing back over three centuries, never fully integrated into English society (Conradi, par. 10).

Having lived in England almost her entire life while feeling a strong connection to Ireland, her ambivalent identity allowed her to view her native Ireland from a distance as well as from within. Kiberd notes that Murdoch "came to know the strange condition of declaring herself Irish in England while feeling herself to be English in Ireland" – a condition she has one of the novel's characters, the Anglo-Irish Andrew Chase-White, negotiate when he visits Ireland ("Introduction" 1):

The scene was, for Andrew, intensely familiar and yet disturbingly alien. It was like a place revisited constantly in dreams, portentous and fleeting, vivid to the point of

necessity, but not entirely real. (...) Andrew had grown up in England and more especially in London, and felt himself unreflectively to be English, although equally unreflectively he normally announced himself as Irish. (...) Ireland remained for him a mystery, an unsolved problem. (Murdoch 10)

In 1978, Murdoch stated: “I’m profoundly Irish and I’ve been conscious of this all my life” (qtd. in Spear 2). Indeed, her biographer, Peter Conradi, pointed out that she deeply identified with Ireland, and that romanticising and mythologising was a prominent aspect of her sense of Irishness (par. 4). In 1963, she wrote, “The pattern of English life can be dull, making little appeal to the imagination” – Ireland offered just that (qtd. in Conradi, par. 3). Up until 1968 she supported Irish republicanism and she fiercely backed the rebels. She voices her discontent for British policy through one of the novel’s characters, Barney, who remarks, “England had destroyed Ireland slowly and casually, without malice, without mercy, practically without thought, like someone who treads upon an insect, forgets it, then sees it quivering and treads upon it again” (Murdoch 216).

Yet, as Conradi remarked, Murdoch’s diasporic status as both an insider and an outsider allowed her “to slip in and out of Irishness”, and less than five years after the novel’s publication her allegiance switched drastically (qtd. in d’Alton, par. 6). When the Troubles started she abandoned her romantic and nationalist ideals and became a rigid unionist supporter of Ian Paisley (Conradi, par. 3). *The Red and the Green*, then, a novel which, as my reading will reveal, glorified violence, lionised the nationalists, and invested “in that self-perpetuating mythology of blood sacrifice on which the IRA fed”, was the one novel she felt ambiguous about (Conradi, par. 17). This ambiguity is manifested in the plurality of memories the novel gives voice to, as well as in the ambivalence that agonises two of the characters, Andrew and Barney. Aware of the multilateral nature of memory, the novel is

pro-revolution while simultaneously representing a plurality of conflicting memories.

3.2 The Red and the Green

The novel is set in Dublin during the weeks leading up to the Rebellion and chronicles the lives of a motley set of characters who are all members of the same closely-knit Anglo-Irish families. There are the Chase-Whites, the Bellmans, the Dumays and the Kinnards – all of them related through marriages between both Catholic and Anglican cousins and in-laws on both sides of the Irish Sea (Conradi, par. 15). The novel follows Andrew Chase-White, a timid dragoon in the British Army, on leave visiting his family in Ireland before rejoining his division in France, in his despondency over his rejected marriage proposal by Frances Bellman, a contemplative semi-crypto-sympathiser with the rebels and Murdoch's most nuanced and sensible character. Frances is secretly in love with Pat Dumay, Andrew's foil. Pat, who shares O'Casey's idea that the rebels should not have worn uniforms for fear of reducing the revolution to a costume drama, is the embodiment of virility and pragmatic nationalism and a full member of the ICA. He becomes the object of his cousin Andrew's secret envy and admiration (Kiberd "Introduction" 5): "His various cousins, all of whom lived in Ireland, had served him in those long hated and yet loved holidays of childhood as sibling-substitutes, temporary trial brothers and sisters, for whom his uncertain affection took the form of an irritated rivalry" (Murdoch 12). Cathal, Pat's younger brother, who is seized by an adamant awe for Pearse and is utterly consumed by a romantic love for the nationalist cause, is determined to fight alongside his brother. He is the incarnation of Lenin's belief that the Irish rose too soon, before the revolution of the European proletariat had matured (Kiberd "Introduction" 6).

The novel also figures elder characters. There is Christopher Bellman, Frances' father, a scholar of Irish history who fosters Irish patriotic feelings. Hilda Chase-White, Andrew's

mother, has an eye on Christopher and has moved to Dublin for fear of the air raids in London. She is portrayed as an Edwardian ignorant snob: “I can’t stand this jumped-up Irish patriotism, it’s so artificial. English patriotism is another thing. We have Shakespeare and the Magna Carta and the Armada and so on. But Ireland hasn’t really had any history to speak of.” (Murdoch 39). Then there is Barney, Hilda’s brother and a converted Catholic alcoholic ascetic who abandons his book on St Brigid to write his own memoir; his wife Kathleen, a self-abnegating Catholic; and Lady Millie Kinnard, a cigar-smoking and trousers-wearing aristocratic New Woman, who with her revolver and anti-bourgeoisie attitude reminds the reader of Constance Markievicz¹ and is the object of both Christopher’s and Barney’s unrequited love while she herself loves Pat (DeSalvo 113-4; de Petris 265; Kiberd “Introduction” 3).

Similar to O’Casey, Murdoch weaves domestic storylines through the main political theme: while the planning of the Rising progresses, the run-up to a farcical bedroom scene unfolds. Having suffered a blow from his marriage rejection, Andrew flees to Millie in Rathblane seeking comfort. Meanwhile, frustrated upon hearing the Rebellion has been cancelled, Pat, too, makes his way to Rathblane intending to comply with Millie’s sexual advances, but finds her in bed with Andrew. At the same time, Barney secretly enters the house and, overhearing Pat and Millie, is shocked to discover what has happened. In his flight from the house, Pat stumbles into a man approaching the house. The man turns out to be Christopher, on his way to inquire whether Millie will accept his marriage proposal. He has a rude awakening when Millie divulges that she will not accept his proposal as she is now with Andrew. Christopher makes his way homewards to inform Frances about the absurd events that have just unfolded, who then tells him she has resolved to become a Voluntary Aid

¹ In the epilogue, Millie, although boastful of her heroism during the Rising, has become a helpless old woman. Similarly, in his lamentation of the newly emerged commercially-minded Republic “In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz”, Yeats’ claim that Markievicz lost all physical and spiritual beauty after the insurrection, is reminiscent of the fate Murdoch reserves for Millie: “and she seems / When withered old and skeleton gaunt / An image of such politics” (Scanlan *Traces* 33; Yeats qtd. in Brett 171).

Detachment in England.

Two days pass, and on the morning of the Rising Andrew goes to make peace with Pat. Yet upon his arrival he is held hostage by Pat as he is inadvertently let in on the fact that the Rising is to take place that morning. Not wanting to jeopardise the Revolution, Pat handcuffs Cathal to Andrew, as he thinks him too young to fight, and Andrew to a kitchen cabinet, to prevent him from raising the alarm. Freed by Christopher and Frances a few hours later, Andrew and Cathal stagger together towards the GPO to view the Rising. The novel ends with an epilogue set in Frances's household in England in 1938 in which she tells her son about the Rising.

A comment on history, historiography and the fictionality of history

One of the novel's chief preoccupations is the transference of distant memories to later generations and a concomitant fear of forgetting. The epilogue functions as a reflexive comment on the transmission of cultural memory to new generations and the relation between history and art. In the final chapter, we see the vying of two diametrically opposed cultural memories of the Rising. The chapter, in which Frances' son asks her to retell the events of 1916 and listens to her with admiration while her English husband vilifies Ireland, bears witness to contesting cultural memories. Conscious of this, Frances remarks "Each country tells a selective story creditable to itself" (Murdoch 315). Her husband's standpoint, resembling that of Hilda, reveals that England's view on Ireland has not much changed: he believes that the Rising was pointless as Home Rule was coming anyway: "Only a lot of disgruntled fanatics wanted to draw attention to themselves. It was pure bloody-minded romanticism, the sort of thing that makes people into fascist nowadays." (Murdoch 313). He critiques the fictions of history by viewing Ireland as "A provincial dump living on German capital. A dairy-farming country that can't even invent its own cheese.", and reacts scornful to

Frances' attempts to refute his opinion, "all that nineteen sixteen nonsense that your family was mixed up in. (...) Who's heard of nineteen sixteen now?" (Murdoch 313-4; Scanlan "Fictions" 375).

The headline of the newspaper lying on the kitchen table reads "Franco Threatens Barcelona", suggesting that the heroes of 1916 have long been forgotten and that history will just repeat itself (Murdoch 312). But Frances' son does not share his father's opinion, as he avidly elicits the details of what happened in 1916 from his mother. When his father is done lampooning the rebels, his son says:

Well, I think nineteen sixteen was wonderful. It was a reminder that people can't be enslaved forever. Tyrannies end because sooner or later people begin automatically to hit back. That's the only thing which really impresses the tyrant and makes him give way. Freedom belongs to human nature and it can't vanish from the earth. Even though we forget the details of the fight, the fight goes on, and men have to be ready to go down among the details that are forgotten. And whenever it's the turn of a country, however small, to rise against its tyrants, it represents the oppressed peoples of the whole world. (Murdoch 316)

Frances' son asserts that the rebels will not disappear into oblivion (Kemp 403). When Frances says people will forget them, he says that these names have now become part of European history (Murdoch 315). He is proof that the memory of the rebels will not cease to exist in the cultural memory of a new generation, albeit in an altered form. When he urges his mother to tell him more, he says "You haven't talked about them for years now and I've got them all mixed up together in my mind" (Murdoch 316). The novel underscores the idea that memories are not set in stone but constantly fluctuate, and like a Chinese whisper, they take

on a different form for every individual. Similar to the series addressed to young readers in the *Meath Chronicle*, Frances has purposely educated her son so as to teach him about his past and to prevent the memory from dying out (DeSalvo 120).

The reference to the Spanish Civil War bears witness to the dynamics of cultural memory, as it demonstrates how memory is constantly in motion in light of new developments. The historical relatedness of the Spanish Civil War prompts Frances' son to interpret the Easter Rising as the everlasting struggle between oppressor and the oppressed. His father states: "It'll be the same in twenty years with these Spanish war events you make such a fuss over. Guernica, Irun, Toledo, Teruel. No one will remember" (Murdoch 314). But Frances' son does remember, as the actuality of what is happening in Spain reconceptualises his memory of 1916 and occasions his previously quoted speech. Frances is concerned that her son might join the fight since his friend has recently joined the International Brigade, and parts of her son's speech echo Cathal's words, suggesting that the same spirit that inhabited Cathal lives in Frances' son, too. Indeed, she exclaims that he even starts to look like Cathal. We get the impression that history is repeating itself, with the evocation of the same combative spirit in a new generation of sons, instilling fear in a new generation of mothers (Kemp 403-4).

Murdoch's understanding of the mnemotechnical mechanisms of memory bears a likeness to Rothberg's definition of multidirectional memory. Rothberg calls for a turn away from perceiving memory as a competitive zero-sum game, and argues for a new way of understanding memory whereby hierarchy of memory makes way for intercultural dynamic transfers which can occur across different temporal, spatial, and cultural realms (Rothberg 11). The cultural memory of 1916 is influenced by the dialogical interaction with other historical memories and other forms of memory: therefore, Rothberg contends, memory must be viewed as multidirectional: "as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and

borrowing; as productive, not privative” (3). This makes memories fluid, never set-in-stone, and susceptible to constant reconstruction (5). In its interaction with the Spanish Civil War, for Frances’ son, the Easter Rising comes to represent the justified and inevitable severance from oppression, rather than a victory ensuing from deep-rooted Irish nationalism and a vindication of Irish rights. In this sense, as a second generation diasporic subject for whom the Rising is distant memory, Frances’ son might possibly be the embodiment of Murdoch’s own position and views.

The fluid and ever-changing nature of memories is inherent to Murdoch’s mode of writing. As an existentialist philosopher, she insists on evoking “multiple and unsystematic facts of experience (...) which are less certain, untenable to logical sorting and arranging, more a welter of distorting images” (Rome 97). The existentialist belief that “all genuine perceptions are subjective” is an aphorism which is perfectly applicable to the production and circulation of cultural memories (96). Rome points out that Murdoch

shares this belief and expresses it in her novels by the use of numerous points of view. The impact of contrary definitions underlines the complexity and confusion of the world the individual has to face. Just as no objective truth lingers behind the philosophical propositions of Sartre and Camus, so no single point of view can explain the multiplicity of experience and attitude in the fictional world of this writer. (96)

She believes that “reality is not a given whole” and incomplete (qtd. in Rome 88). Therefore, literature should not aim to present it as such, and by stressing the contingency and opting for the reflexive mode in allowing the concurrence of multiple versions of experience she has tried to attain this (Kemp 411).

Barney’s memoir functions as a comment on the fictionality of history and the relation

between history and art. In his memoir, Barney creates a fantasy life for himself which grossly distorts the truth as he blames his wife for all of his sufferings (Scanlan “Fictions” 374).

When he comes to the realisation that what he has written was “not quite true, and that ‘not quite’ was the stuff of a most wicked lie”, he tries to redeem himself by resolving to write “ALL THIS IS NOT QUITE TRUE” at the bottom and to make it into a novel (Murdoch 199, 213). Scanlan points out that “facts are distorted almost as quickly as they occur” and that works of art play a major role in sustaining historical facts and cultural memories (“Fictions” 374). Art has a tremendous impact in determining our perception of history. The parallel with the novel itself should not be missed here (Kiberd “Introduction” 7). When they discuss the Spanish Civil War, Frances remarks that “people will only remember Guernica, and that will be because of Picasso”, suggesting that memory always interacts with other forms of memory (Murdoch 314). What is hinted at here is the idea that both artists and revolutionaries “are never entirely free from each other, that they share a common impulse to shape reality. In doing so, they necessarily impose on it the limitations of their own perspectives.” (Scanlan “Fictions” 376). In writing a historical fictional novel which negotiates between history and literature, Murdoch implies that the two are inextricably bound up with each other. “Most history is fictional; much of our literature promotes illusions about history; literature can never be independent of the historical world” (376).

Murdoch’s microcosm: a distorted family as a premonition of a divided nation

What ensues from Murdoch’s existential belief in the multiplicity of experience and memory, is a considerable degree of ambiguity in the novel’s treatment of the Rising. As in the newspaper articles, one of the novel’s chief preoccupations is a focus on the family as a microcosm, as it is here where the fluid nature of the plurality of memories is manifested. The complex Anglo-Irish extended family Murdoch evokes serves as a microcosm which allows

her to domesticate a great variety of (political) opinions and beliefs covering the entire political spectrum (Charpentier 91; de Petris 264). Each semi-allegorical character represents a certain attitude towards the Rising and more broadly the Irish Question (Kemp 403). To illustrate, we have Cathal personifying a Pearseian romantic nationalism; Pat, who is a Connollyean pragmatic nationalist; Hilda, who is a unionist; Frances, who is an anti-colonialist; Barney, who is a Gaelic revivalist, Kathleen, who is a poor mother; and Millie, offspring of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. Charpentier has pointed out that “the family is a kind of microcosm and in that sense the novel has a diagrammatic quality and the characters a schematic quality” (91). Indeed, it is through their actions and reactions that the characters embody the forces and attitudes that lead up to the Rebellion (Kemp 208).

I would like to borrow Gerstenberger’s term ‘objective multiplicity’ here to illustrate Murdoch’s method in representing the Rising (52). The Rising is presented to the reader through refraction. We do not get one univocal and coherent representation of the Rising – the sundry vignettes that are narrated by an authorial voice focalised through the individual characters serve to illustrate the divided loyalties in the fictional present, that is the world of the novel, as well as the realistic present, in the form of the prevailing cultural memories of 1916 in the 1960s. This approach, which would be labelled as reflexive in Erll’s framework, is an attempt to approximate the Rising with great nuance, inclusivity and hence truthfulness, as it enables Murdoch to shed light on more than one version of the past. Gerstenberger explains: “in this novel, the Rising and the Irish are something which one has opinions about and, apparently, the more varied the expression of opinions, the more truthful the novel tries to be” (52).

The extended Anglo-Irish family, then, is a pre-eminent choice to illustrate Ireland’s dilemma (Spear 51). For, as the novel unquestionably draws on the early 19th-century genre of the national tale, it is justified to say that what is played out at familial level, by extension,

represents the situation on a national level. The national tale became the most important literary genre in post-Union Ireland as a way of understanding and explaining Ireland's position within the awkward political rather than cultural unit of the "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland" (Ferris 1-11; Connolly 399). A pedagogical effort at restoration, it sought to establish cohesion and impose order after the 'incomplete' Union of 1801: ultimately, it set out to solidify the Union by literally enacting national unity (Burgess 43-44; Ferris 6). Motivated to reconcile British rule and Irish claims, a romance plot with a marriage between an English or Anglo-Irish landlord and a native Irish girl would allegorically cement a political union between the two countries (Ferris 48-9). Political issues were thus domesticated, whereby the female body functions as an allegorical surrogate for the Irish national body, and the male hero embodies the British ruler.

It is the novel's allusion to the national tale which justifies a reading positing that what happens on a micro level represents what happens on a macro level. The distorted family relations function as a premonition of a disunited Ireland. With family members personifying the divided cultural, religious, and political loyalties and the juxtaposition of an Anglo-Irish soldier and an Irish rebel, the family functions as a metaphor to show the complex, indissoluble relation between the two islands (d'Alton, par. 10). Kemp, too, points out that the issues that pre-occupy the narrative on an international scale are also played out on a familial level: the discords that pull apart the family members, such as religious intolerance and volatile antagonisms, are also the forces which disjoin England and Ireland. The distance that is felt in the family as well as between the countries is crystallised by Pat when he reminds Andrew that they are cousins, not brothers. This abrasive relationship is observable in the novel's language (405). The fact that Christopher tries to take advantage by proposing to Millie when she is in no position to refuse due to financial destitution, parallels Ireland's strategic move to rise when Britain was occupied elsewhere: "Millie's difficulty would be

Christopher's opportunity" mirrors "It's the old story. 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity'" (Murdoch 77, 45). Central to the following section, Andrew's proposal to Frances is essential to what Murdoch is trying to say about the relationship between England and Ireland.

Rewriting the national tale: an indictment against English imperialism

Despite the novel's ambiguity – the novel never saliently leans towards one particular experience of 1916 – it becomes clear which character Murdoch's authorial voice endorses, and by extension, which political stance is allowed precedence. In the novel's rewriting of the national tale, Murdoch's conviction that any form of (colonial) oppression is to be condemned takes definite shape.

In my reading of the novel as a rewriting of the national tale, DeSalvo's argument that *The Red and the Green* is a scathing attack on English policy in Ireland and British imperialism in general proves to be true (113). Although Pat and Cathal might seem the most revolutionary characters at first glance, it is actually Frances who is the most profound defender of Irish independence: when she sees a woman and her child begging on the streets, she wonders "What will Home Rule do for that woman begging in the street", a question O'Casey could have posed (Murdoch 120). Her remark that being a woman is like being Irish, "I think being a woman is like being Irish. (...) Everyone says you're important and nice but you take second place all the same." (Murdoch 36) demonstrates that she equates the woman question and class struggle with the Irish Question (DeSalvo 115).

In the novel's refusal to conclude with a joyful marriage between Andrew and Frances, it undermines the unity the national tale originally strove to achieve. Instead, it tries to challenge the allegorical Act of Union. Frances' rejection of Andrew's proposal in order to be an independent woman symbolises her aversion to subjugation and a refusal to be

colonised. Indeed, Andrew's imagining of his proposal has despotic resonances: "Suddenly he was omnipotent, the benevolent despot of his little world. (...) He saw himself suddenly in the future, a strong *pater familias*, ruling his womenfolk and his children with a benevolent firmness" (Murdoch 161, 163; de Petris 115). Christopher's opportunistic proposal to Millie, too, is an example of domination: he views her as "a gorgeous, desirable object" (Murdoch 76). When Barney gets wind of the engagement, he remarks: "What awful desperation must lie behind this choice to wear the collar of slavery?" (Murdoch 145). Both marriage proposals, then, should be read as miniature versions of colonisation, which both women successfully avoid.

Murdoch draws on a distinctively (though not exclusively) Irish literary form to give voice to her anti-English sentiments. It is important to explain here that originally the national tale was an answer to the English genre of the Irish tour. The Irish tour presented Ireland as alien territory to be explored and then retold through an English subjectivity within the comfort of its English readers (Ferris 51). The project of the national tale, however, was to voice the claims of a small nation against a larger one (Burgess 50). In its dismissal of an 'us' versus 'them' paradigm, the national tale achieved this by presenting Ireland as an active participant instead of a foreign object to be studied, and thus compelled English readers to view Ireland as a place within its own right (Ferris 51). Burgess explains:

The textual contest that takes place when an educated Englishman enters Ireland is the key plot dynamic of the national tale. Removed from his native context and immersed in a new one, the metropolitan observer finds that his reading and his cherished assumptions are not universal orthodoxy, nor are they wholly confirmed by his material experience. This plot dynamic is paired with a reading dynamic in which the presentation of Ireland as a 'problem' to be comprehended and addressed by a

metropolitan audience is displaced by the demands of Ireland to be heard speaking for itself. (55-6)

Ironically, Andrew's behaviour personifies the mode of writing of the Irish tour. When he proposes to Frances, he does so on the basis of a self-constructed image of her which does not dovetail with reality. Having never taken the time to fully understand Frances, he has fabricated an image which he imposes on her (DeSalvo 115). The poem he writes for her crystallises this: "Now as you trip with little tiny steps", he versifies, when in fact she is earlier described by the narrator as resembling a pony (Murdoch 160). When Andrew does come to the realisation himself that she was someone who "rather tended to stride along", he refuses to exchange the real Frances for his poetic persona of her since "it was symbolically right" (Murdoch 161).

This behaviour becomes emblematic for the Anglo-Irish relationship: just as Andrew ignores and fails to understand Frances' 'otherness', so has England neglected to grapple the Irish' 'otherness'. DeSalvo explains:

Taking the time to understand another person or another nation is, after all, the ultimate admission that another person or another nation is one's equal, and this neither the English nor Andrew can do with Frances or the Irish. And so Ireland, like Frances, is viewed as a seething, primitive, powerful, terrifying possibility. (116)

On account of his rejection, his long-cherished assumptions have been disproved (never had it entered his mind she might refuse), and he turns to Millie, a live remnant of Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. He is punished for his colonial way of thinking, as Frances defies this picturesque entrapment (Burgess 55). In order to be morally correct, Murdoch feels, it is important to eschew fantasy and to be willing to respect the other's otherness (Kemp 208).

The novel might have served, then, as a warning about how the Northern Irish Catholics would retaliate if the English continued to intervene in Northern Irish affairs (DeSalvo 122). The novel as a whole makes a strong case against political intervention and domination. Murdoch's political philosophy was that larger, dominating countries have ethical and moral responsibilities toward weaker countries: "People have the right, one might call it the natural right, to be the proprietors of their own national territory", she asserted in 1967 (qtd. in DeSalvo 122). By extension, the analogy also criticised the United States for its intervention in Vietnam. However, first and foremost, the novel makes a strong case against British intervention in Ireland. It endorses the resistance against such tyranny and is thus a staunch advocate of the 1916 Easter Rising (123). In Christopher's words, "the only way for Ireland to become really independent is to fight. England will delay Home Rule and pare it away until there's practically nothing left. An imperialist won't really budge without a show of force" (Murdoch 57). The analogy is finalised in the epilogue, where the Rising is compared to other instances of resistance against oppression, such as in Guernica, Irun, and Toledo, and specifically in Frances' son's previously quoted speech (124). The novel's endorsement of the Rising is also apparent in its use of pathetic fallacy. Murdoch's Dublin is predominantly gray and rainy, but when the Rising breaks out, the sun breaks through the clouds (Kemp 404).

The epilogue extends this warning against all forms of oppression in its wariness towards the direction in which Ireland is heading. The year in which the epilogue is set is significant. Frances, disillusioned with the new Ireland, has moved to England, and her voluntary exile is reminiscent of O'Casey's (de Petris 266). Kathleen's letter reveals that nothing has changed for the better after the Rising. Yet with the Second World War impending, pro-German nationalism in Ireland was growing. Motivated by the idea that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend', the IRA were seeking rapprochement with the Nazis (Fanning

76). In 1938, IRA chief of staff and 1916 veteran Seán Russell and Clan na Gael leader Joseph McGarrity conspired with the Germans to execute a bombing campaign in Britain, which began in January 1939 (Hanley, par. 2). In her letter, Kathleen narrates that she has a former major of the British Army for a lodger, and that Frances' old house is renamed Hillcrest by its new English inhabitants, "which is a silly name as it isn't on the crest of the hill at all", suggesting that the English still do not understand the Irish (Murdoch 311). Perhaps the dating of the epilogue hints at the dangers of history repeating itself: while the British have not even fully left the island, Irish nationalists are already embracing another larger, potentially usurping, nation.

Identity, gender dimensions and nationhood

The novel lays bare a number of connections between identity, gender and Irish nationhood. Murdoch seems to argue that what lay at the heart of the Rebellion was a struggle to overcome a crisis of identity: the Rising is represented as Ireland's way of asserting its own cultural identity after years of cultural suppression after the 1800 Act of Union. Pat ponders this: "His Ireland was nameless, a pure Ireland of the mind, to be relentlessly served by a naked sense of justice and a naked self-assertion" (Murdoch 87). When Hilda claims "After all, England and Ireland are really once country", Christopher refutes Hilda's English blatant superiority by responding "So the English soldiers evidently think when they sing 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. But it's always easy for the top dog to extend his sense of identity over his inferiors. It's a different matter for the inferiors to accept the identification" (Murdoch 39). Andrew, Pat and Barney seek to define their own identity, and their suffering resonates through the struggle of Ireland against England (Rome 89).

Andrew is confused about where his loyalties lie and envies his cousins for having a clearly defined sense of national identity. As Frances rejects his marriage proposal, by

extension, she refuses to take on the allegorical role of the mythical, gendered representation of Ireland. Concomitantly, she deprives Andrew of his opposite role, leaving him emasculated. Trying to retain his status as British hero, he seeks comfort with Millie but he turns out to be sexually inadequate (Rome 91). In fact, Andrew is left so paralysed that he does not even attempt to stop the Rising, and meekly suffers his fate on Pat's kitchen floor.

Pat, too, is a character at war with himself: feeling "a sense of belonging not to himself but to some design of history", he abstains from everything to do with sex in order to prepare himself to fight the nationalist cause (Murdoch 86). He abhors carnal desires, and so, as a way of self-castigation, he punishes himself by going to prostitutes and by visiting his aunt Millie after he discovered the Rising had been cancelled (Rome 91-2). In its allusion to Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, the novel suggests that, in the same way that Stendhal's Julien cannot love a woman because he is possessed by a more dominant force in his life, Pat cannot love because of his passion for *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (DeSalvo 118). Pat exemplifies the struggle between dedicating himself to his country or to a woman. In his loyalty to *Cathleen*, he chooses Ireland and the national idea over carnal love. Fighting and dying for Ireland is for him the ultimate triumph of will over flesh (Kemp 407). Pat reminds us here of O'Casey's Jack Clitheroe, who at one point in the play exclaims: "Ireland is greater than a wife" (O'Casey 53).

Barney, too, struggles with the choice between Ireland and a woman. He seems to live in the past, obsessed with the creation of his memoir. He has lost his heart to Millie and neglects his wife Kathleen, suggesting that his loyalties lie with the Union and the Ascendancy, not with *Cathleen*. As a result of his unwavering unrequited love for Millie, he fails to consume his marriage with Kathleen. After Barney has given up priesthood for Millie, she loses interest in him, and he is left with neither the comforts of Church life, nor the fulfilment of carnal love. Then, towards the end of the novel, Barney's actions show a

remarkable reversal in his resolve to participate in the Rising and fight for Ireland, bearing witness to the ease with which sentiments can change.

Another point Murdoch raises seems to echo O'Casey's sentiments regarding the position of women. She seems to share O'Casey's view that the women were more sensible than the men. At the end of the play, only three women have survived: all the female characters have outlived the male characters, all of whom have died either during the Rising, in the Civil War, or the First World War. The novel seems to suggest that it is the women who are in fact the carriers of cultural memory and Irish identity:

The fact that only three women survive at the end of the novel, all of them victims of men's wars and feuds, reveals the red thread running through the plot, i.e. that, at the heart of centrality of gender in historical understanding, we find a pervasive use of female figures to defend the essence of Irish identity and the national project, the price being attending to the agenda of living Irish women. (de Petris 266)

Just like in *The Plough and the Stars*, it is the women who are left behind to tell the stories that eventually create and help circulate cultural memories. Frances is the only character who gets to transfer her memory of the Rising to her offspring, marking the transition from *communicative memory* to *cultural memory proper* and perhaps challenging male historiography (Ingman 187).

We also see a repetition of O'Casey's dismissal of the sacrificial woman. Hilda is the only female character who is rendered rather negatively, and her foolish pride for her son going to war contrasts sharply with Kathleen's more sensible response of fearing for her sons' lives as she desperately urges them to refrain from fighting (Kemp 407). Kathleen's sentiments are supported by Frances, who says, reminiscent of O'Casey's Nora, "Why do the

men go and fight in that stupid ghastly war? Why don't they all say no, no, no?" (Murdoch 119). As in *The Plough and the Stars*, it is the women who suffer under the burden of their husbands' and sons' heroic sacrifices as they guard the Irish identity their sons and husbands died defending.

At the end of the novel, all of the characters are greatly affected by the Rising. The great variety of characters Murdoch evokes allows her to shed light upon the different viewpoints that prevailed at the time. Charpentier notes that it is as if Murdoch "tried to tell about a certain duality in her own nature and about a unity in the two islands linked indissolubly by contiguity and the history it produced" (95). This unclear nature of identity is voiced by Frances: "I ought to be in uniform, but I don't know which one to wear!" (Murdoch 121). The Irish Question the novel takes as its central theme is approached with self-conscious equivocality and although she sets out to explore every different facet, the novel does celebrate Irish nationalism (Gerstenberger 51).

Chapter 4: Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*

In its insistence on the existence of multiple narratives and multiple pasts in its rewriting of sanctioned history, Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* evinces that the interaction between memory studies and historiographic revisionism is an interesting one. A postmodern equivalent of *The Plough and the Stars*, Doyle addresses a great number of issues O'Casey already anticipated in 1926, while concurrently sharing Murdoch's awareness of the plurality of memories. As will be revealed in my analysis, Doyle's novel bears witness to the selective nature and the malleability of cultural memory, and interrogates the Rising's already vacillating status in its suggestion that Ireland's foundational moment spawned a capitalist power structure which traded English oppression for Irish oppression and which maintained the traditional class and gender hierarchy the Rising initially sought to overthrow.

4.1 1916 in the 1990s and the revisionist debate

Towards the end of the 1960s, Lemass' project of revitalisation was stymied by a resurgence of political violence in the North. The Troubles inevitably and irrevocably problematised the reassessment of the Rising, and its function as an anchor of national identity was put under tremendous pressure (McGarry, par. 5). It became problematic to defend or even condone the bloodshed that was used to procure an independent Ireland back in 1916 at a time when it was deemed vital to condemn such violence, and it was argued that official State support for the elitist violence of 1916 conflicted with the need to avoid the Troubles blowing over to the Republic. As a result of the impact of the Remembrance Day bombing in Enniskillen in 1987, which weighed heavily on the collective memory in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, issues surrounding the Rising's commemoration were treated with more caution than before (McCarthy 310). While the Provisional IRA continued to claim the legacy of the Rebellion as a mandate for their own means and objectives, other government influentials and their ilk

hastened to distance themselves from the revolutionaries' deeds either by letting the Rising's anniversary pass unnoticed or by rejecting it altogether (McGarry, par. 5). In 1988, novelist Dermot Bolger observed a "curious ambivalence in public attitudes" towards the Rising to the extent that it had become "a controversial topic and one in which people are often left in a no-win situation" (qtd. in McCarthy 311).

Southern politicians embraced the revisionism that dominated the historiographic debate between the 1960s and the 1990s. Where early revisionism set out to ground historical analysis in scrupulous research and objective accuracy in order to eradicate misleading versions of Irish history and to unmask "partisanship masquerading as even-handedness", its later version grew heavily politicised and biased, determined by the present, often taking up anti-nationalist stances as a result of "the dire past still overhanging the dire present" (Pierse 223-6). Eschewing rhetorical green nationalism and anti-Britishness served as an antidote against the PIRA, which used the traditional nationalist story to acquire new members (Whelan 190). The language that dominated the rhetoric of late revisionism (words such as 'cleansing' and 'disinfecting') was meant to emphasise the virulence and contagiousness of the nationalist myth. Binary oppositions were used to downgrade traditional historiography in favour of a more accurate and moderate narrative: rational vs. emotional; objective vs. subjective; sceptical vs. credulous (191). As we will see later, these binaries emerge in newspaper articles too. In the latest phase of revisionism, which appeared from the 1980s, a "notable coarsening of the rhetoric" became discernible in the revisionist historians' quest to recalibrate public attitudes to the past in order to ostracise republicanism and influence popular opinion about the origins of nationalist violence (Whelan 192). Whelan explains that "the pressure on the past to explain and justify the present intensified the historiographic debate, propelling the anxious search for a history that would liberate Irish people from their history" (179). In this sense, revisionism functioned as a "protective shield". For example, in

an active attempt to consciously control the media which circulate expressions of cultural memory, the state's broadcasting service was censored to prevent unpalatable manifestations of unrevised history from invading Irish households, such as traditional ballads (193).

Interestingly, as will be briefly discussed below, the negative effect of folk songs on Irish identity is an issue Doyle explores in great depth in *A Star Called Henry*.

Subsequently, in the beginning of the 1970s the yearly commemorative parade was deferred, and Sinn Féin's resolve to celebrate the Rising's diamond jubilee was considered detrimental and as such prohibited by the government. In 1991, the cultural memory of the Rising reached a low point: its seventy-fifth birthday occasioned an animated discussion as to whether it should be commemorated at all, resulting in a tepid attempt to do so. Precarious advancements in the northern peace negotiations engendered a "gradual rehabilitation of the Rising" (McGarry, par. 6). The government celebrated the Rising's eightieth anniversary in 1996 by organising an official commemorative ceremony, while the Provisional IRA marked the occasion with an attempted bombing in London.

Ten years later, however, the success of the Good Friday Agreement and the confidence generated by the Celtic Tiger made for the largest commemoration of the Rebellion since 1966. The patriotism that typified these celebrations was of a conciliatory and dignified nature, rather than narrow and triumphalist (McGarry, par. 6). With the advent of the Celtic Tiger, a preoccupation with an idealised past had conceivably ended, and was replaced by a future-oriented vision booming with opportunities. Nicholas Miller expresses this shifting cultural focus appositely: "history's once blinding insistence in the present is dimmed by the floodlights of real economic power" (qtd. in Downum 76). Trotter points out that a narrow and single definition of Irishness demarcated by nationalism, Gaelic romanticism and Catholicism was no longer viable in a changed Ireland. From the late 1970s and onwards, numbers of Catholic churchgoers dwindled as a result of the exposure of long-

hidden scandals within the Church. Support for the feminist cause grew and membership to the European Economic Community was established (Trotter 153). Whelan observes that with the arrival of Celtic Tiger Era and the IRA cessation in 1994, “there was an audible collective exhalation of the national breath”, and “there was a palpable sense that modern Ireland was at last shucking off a baleful historical inheritance” (179). Modern Ireland was leaving its past behind with great strides. Concomitant with the emergence of memory studies, which emphasises the plurality and the present-centredness of cultural memory, the last decade of the twentieth century saw a further bifurcation of the national narrative, which manifested itself in a surge of memoirs and autobiographies. Although Doyle’s novel belongs to neither of those genres, it does share its privatisation (by way of imaginative repossession) of cultural memory in its deliberate deviation from sanctioned cultural memory (Whelan 193).

A cultural imperative to address bleak and buried moments of the past was a result of this period of peace and prosperity: Doyle’s novel bears witness to the confidence this period had generated, as it makes use of a newfound freedom to critique unassailable myths of the past (Frawley 34). Towards the end of the twentieth century, the past was no longer a place which summoned feelings of nostalgia. Instead, Pine argues, anti-nostalgia dominated Irish remembrance culture, whereby the past has become a space of trauma and pain (8). This too, returns in Doyle’s novel, which in its revelation of the social blind spots and its debunking of the nation’s foundational myth becomes a materialisation of Pine’s theory (Firetog 64).

1916 in 1990s newspaper articles and editorials

To illustrate how this historical revisionism manifested itself, I have selected a number of newspaper articles and editorials marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Rising in 1991 and its eightieth anniversary in 1996. These articles demonstrate how the Rising’s significance had to be relayed in a changed cultural and political climate. Just as there is a

vast difference between the cultural memory of 1916 in the 1960s and in the 1990s, there is a difference in tone between the 1991 and the 1996 articles. While the 1991 articles vehemently stress that it is fatuous to cite 1916 as a validation for new violence and point out the futility of it all when Home Rule was on its way, the 1996 article adopts a more moderate tone, neither condemning nor endorsing Easter 1916.

The varying tones that reverberate through the articles marking the Rising's seventy-fifth anniversary bear witness to the fluctuation of cultural memory. The trends I have distilled from the material all reveal a pressing urgency of the present on remembering the past. Specifically, these articles lay bare a tripartite divide in the public opinion between those who feel the occasion should be celebrated with uncompromising pride, those who believe it should be treated with sensitivity and nuance, and those who deem it undeserving of commemoration. The time of blatant veneration had ended and opinions grew divided. A multitude of articles was dominated by a tone in a similar vein of this excerpt from the *Irish Press*, which asserts that "that our state itself grew out of the ashes of the Easter Rising has obviously become an embarrassment to many" ("Window" 34). However, a commensurable amount of articles shared the opposite conviction, namely that "it would be psychophantic not to celebrate it in a proud and proper fashion" ("Divided Bandon" 7). The need for the phrase "All supporters welcome" would have been inconceivable in the 1960s, but unrelenting support was no longer self-evident in the 1990s ("1916 Easter" 2). Voicing an opinion shared by a number of other publications, the *Irish Independent* argues that it is not fortuitous to celebrate the Rising in the current turbulent climate: "While we Irish are proud of our history, we believe that the time for the public celebration of it is not now propitious" ("1916 the Easter Rising" 10). The *Mayo News*, however, claimed that it was just as wrong to ignore the occasion as it was to use it as a political strategy for self-legitimation: "It was as wrong for those who claimed that the Easter Rising should not be commemorated as it was for those

who tried to use the event to justify violence as a means of attaining political objectives in modern Ireland” (“Wreath-laying” 1).

A great many articles bear witness to what Whelan described as a coarsening of the rhetoric (192). The *Irish Times* reads: “What is this strange phenomenon called 1916 that seems to raise the blood and paralyse the intellect for so many?” (“What is”). In an attempt to re-educate the public by disseminating this piece of revisionist history, the editorial clearly enunciates its disapproval of the rebel’s deeds: “The Rising was many thing; treachery and bravery, idealism and opportunism, patriotism and fanaticism, self sacrifice and self importance, vision and myopia.” (“What is”). The *Irish Examiner*, too, poses critical questions about the Rising’s significance: “Have we subverted the ‘blood sacrifice’ of Calvary in the name of some mystical and impossible Republic? Have we attempted to use Christian symbolism to give legitimacy to an armed revolt by a minority who did not make any pretence at seeking a democratic mandate?” (O’Mahony 8). Suffice it to say here that the memory of 1916 was no longer as unequivocal as before, as current political unrest spawned the emergence of a conflicting plurality of memories.

Different interpretations of 1916 manifest themselves most visibly in the PIRA’s claim to Easter Week to justify their terrorist actions to violence and other parties’ repudiation of this. The *Munster Express* reports that “the IRA which came into being in the 1916 Rising is the same IRA fighting the same cause that confronts British occupation” (“1916 Rising Commemorated” 7) , and the *Strabane Chronicle* uses the Rising’s seventy-fifth anniversary to mark the death of Oglagh na hEireann volunteers: “It was also with pride that the people of this area paid tribute to the memory of the brave young men from the West Tyrone area who as volunteers in Oglagh na hEireann made the supreme sacrifice in the continuation of that same struggle” (“Easter Rising anniversary marked” 7). Interestingly, in their recollection of a number of IRA-attacks, opponents evoke the same Rising to condemn this behaviour:

“When we recall that over the grave of O’Donovan Rossa, Padraig Pearse called on ‘all who could hear, to speak out for the Fenian dead slain by evil men’, surely it is appropriate for us to speak out on behalf of the innocents in Enniskillen, Birmingham, Craigavon ²and throughout these islands who have been murdered by evil men” (“1916 Rising Commemorated” 7). Similarly, many articles recall the rebel’s decision to surrender to avoid further casualties to dismiss the PIRA’s violent strategy: “What distinguished the insurgents of 1916 and the Provos was the political vision and common humanity of the leaders of Easter week, which was far removed from the sectarian violence of the Provisionals. The statement of surrender issued by Pearse and Connolly spoke of their decision being necessary “to prevent further slaughter of Dublin citizens” (“State pays” 9). This once again stipulates the ways in which the past is used to facilitate present needs.

The last trend I want to mention here is that the 1991 articles reveal a growing awareness of the workings of memory which manifests itself in a focus on the distinction between fact and fiction. In a quintessential piece of revisionist philosophy entitled “Separating fact from symbol”, T.P. O’Mahony exposes the myth that surrounds 1916 which no longer holds in the 1990s. He writes, “Attempts to encapsulate episodes as complex as the Easter Rising are doomed to failure. So are attempts to package its ‘meaning’. (...) [T]hese packages and observations often are an exaggeration, even a distortion.” (8). He continues, “The Rising is a *fact*. But facts neither constitute all of the reality of what we are, nor do they exhaust that reality. It is what we make of facts that matters, even facts as big and as potent as the Insurrection of Easter Week 1916.” (8). Here, O’Mahony comments on the thin line between fact and fiction in the cultural memory of the Easter Rising. “There was a time when to scholars, politicians and the general public Pearse was the pre-eminent figure of the Rising, a kind of 20th century saint of Irish Republicanism and, as such, above scrutiny or critical

² These sites are associated with (IRA; PIRA; RUC; PAF and/or UVF) bombings, attacks and murders during the Troubles.

appraisal. The passage of time, and the growth of scholarly interest in the Rising and the period, has shifted our perspectives on the pivotal event itself and also on the leading personalities.” (8). This revisionist insight led many to believe the Rising was “a calculated conspiracy to spill blood” (“What is”).

Five years later, a preoccupation with the past made way for a preoccupation with the present. As McGarry observed, the precarious success in the northern peace project enabled a gradual rehabilitation of the Rising, evinced by the many reports of greater attendance than previous years (par. 6). This rehabilitation is visible in the moderate tone many of the articles adopt: “Every generation has to work with what it has received: it is responsible for its present and future, but not its past. It need not condemn, and it need not follow” (“The message”). With titles such as “Neutrality asserted at Easter commemoration – Plea made for a renewed effort to secure peace”, many of the articles testify to a need to be liberated from an oppressive past which must no longer determine the present (2). What emanates from this is a focus on the present, which materialised specifically in attempts to restore peace on the island. More than before the Rising’s anniversary was seized to impact current party politics. During the commemoration in Derry, Gerry Adams used the occasion to launch an attack on Taoiseach Bruton in an attempt to make plausible that only Sinn Féin and the IRA could establish peace (“Sinn Féin” 1); Bertie Ahern, too, discredited the Fine Gael Taoiseach during the Arbour Hill commemoration in favour of his own party politics (“Ahern claims” 6).

A Star Called Henry bears testimony to the fraying of the myth surrounding Easter 1916 in the 1990s. As will be discussed below, Doyle’s novel demonstrates that the cultural memory of 1916 was no longer unequivocal, and that, concomitant with the rise of memory studies in the 1990s, a growing awareness of the workings of memory, manifested in a focus on the distinction between fact and fiction, was dominating the debate surrounding 1916.

4.2 *A Star Called Henry*

The first novel in Doyle's The Last Roundup trilogy, *A Star Called Henry*, offers a postmodern revisionist tale of the birth of the modern Irish nation. In his unapologetic and magic-realist account of the Easter Rising and the War of Independence, Doyle reviews and rewrites history from below, following the life of narrator Henry, a larger-than-life self-invented hero who develops from a street urchin, rebel in the GPO, IRA hit-man, and wanted renegade, to an Irish diasporic subject (Foster, par. 2).

The novel is divided into four parts. Strongly redolent of McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* in its vigorous depiction of the squalor typical of Irish slums, the first part tells of Henry's birth. Born to the feeble bead factory-worker Melody Nash and brothel bouncer and assassin Henry Smart who sports a wooden stick for a leg, Henry is the first child born to survive. Just as O'Casey, Henry has to live under the burden of a third-hand name, his mother pointing to the stars embodying his siblings who died in infancy (Skloot cii). At the age of five, his father abandons his family and his mother succumbs to alcoholism. Henry takes his little brother Victor under his wing and together they thieve and beg to survive on the Dublin streets until Victor dies of consumption.

Part two is set in the GPO during the Rising. Distraught at his brother's death and feeling utterly disheartened, he joins the ICA during the lock-out and then the Fenian movement, before becoming one of Connolly's partisans. The now fourteen-year-old Henry fights side by side Collins and Pearse in the GPO, and after being solicited by Pearse for advice, Henry adds a clause to the Proclamation of Independence about children's rights. At the GPO, Henry re-encounters his former school teacher, Miss O'Shea. Already indicating Henry's lack of selfless interest in the nationalist cause and his disrespect for the Republic, while the fighting is in full swing, Henry and Miss O'Shea are having sex in the GPO's basement. The stamps are still sticking to his back when he and the rebels flee the building.

The third part focuses on Henry's role in the run-up to the Anglo-Irish War. He spends the first few months as a dock worker while seeing Piano Annie. However, as soon as Jack Dalton, propagandist for the IRA, draws Henry's attention to a rebel song that is going around and is featuring his name, he is easily lured to exchange the socialist ICA for the republican IRA (Pierse 236). A peripatetic soldier cycling all over the country, he recruits and trains new IRA members, occasionally working as a gunman for Collins. He finds Miss O'Shea again, who later acquires the sobriquet "Lady of the Machine Gun", they fall in love, get married, and together they plan and execute numerous ambushes and gelignite bombings against the Royal Irish Constabulary.

The final part is set against the backdrop of the early stages of the Civil War. Henry gradually becomes aware that there is no place for him in the new Republic. Ivan, one of Henry's soldier-apprentices who evolves from a poor peasant into a wealthy farmer, reminds Henry that he has been fighting the wrong cause: "All these years I thought I was a soldier, a warrior even. A fuckin' nation builder. Fighting for Ireland. And I was. But here's the truth now. All the best soldiers are businessmen. There had been a reason for the killing and late nights, and it's wasn't Ireland." (Doyle 314). Here, Doyle expresses O'Casey's view that the Rising did not bring about a proletarian revolution but merely effected a change in oppressors: "It's about control of the island, that's what the soldiering's about, not the harps and martyrs and the freedom to swing a hurley" (Doyle 314). His wife helps him escape Kilmainham Gaol, where he has been tortured, and when he finds out that it was Alfie Gandon who ordered all the assassination he executed, the same man behind his father's murders, he bludgeons him to death using his father's leg. Now deemed a dangerous deserter to be urgently eliminated by those he served for years, he briefly visits his newborn baby Saoirse, before fleeing to England and, as the rest of the trilogy reveals, to America.

Rewriting sanctioned history

The thread running through Doyle's peerless body of work is a sheer lack of reverence for Irish hegemonic ideologies and values, and in this respect *A Star Called Henry* novel is no different (Pierse 241). This manifests itself in particular in its postmodern dismissal of traditional historiography and sanctioned history, and as such the novel jibes with the revisionist debate which has engaged Irish Studies for the few last decades. Hence, Doyle's return to the nation's moribund myth should not be branded a regressive fascination for the Irish past, but as a revisionist preoccupation with the interaction between myth and history and between fiction and historiography, which inspired many modern writers to historicise fiction and fictionalise history (Mikowski 186-7).

The novel's epigraph – a distinctly non-Irish music quotation for a novel which takes a distinctly Irish topic as its subject – presages a rather unconventional angle at Irish identity (Jacklein 132). While taking real events, persons and verifiable facts as points of departure, the novel pushes the boundaries of accepted history, in its enlarging, distorting and vilifying treatment of some of the key aspects of the accepted cultural memory of 1916. In this sense, the narrative positions itself on the blurred line between myth and historic verisimilitude (Lanters 248). In its insistence on myth-making, the novel strongly emphasises the myth-making element inherent to the cultural memory of 1916. Dawson points out that Yeats was intrigued by the legend of Cuchulain for its disregard for historical correctness and its symbolic interpretation of reality (J. Dawson 172). Doyle operates in a similar fashion, combining fact and fiction to convey this is a crucial part of storytelling.

Henry's resemblance to Cuchulain cannot be missed, as the self-evident analogy is not fortuitous: both heroes show supernatural strength and virility; are highly desirable to women; have an obscure ancestry; share the same chronology (just like Cuchulain, Henry is five when he leaves home); Henry's wooden-legged father is reminiscent of Cuchulain's father Long

Arm Lugh; Granny Nash seems to be an incarnation of the Celtic goddess Morrígan (who in the shape of a crow sat on Cuchulain's shoulder drinking his blood, mirrored by Granny Nash' betrayal when she reports Henry to the IRA); and, with her innocent pre-marital virginity, his mother fits the traditional role of a hero's mother (J. Dawson 172-3).³ In drawing on the Cuchulain myth, Doyle's technique of juxtaposing the sublime with the absurd works to destabilise the tradition of the noble heroic sacrifice which emboldened the rebels (J. Dawson 174). In mixing the bizarre with the sublime (Lugh's long arm is substituted for a brothel bouncer's leg; and while it is usually the blood of Ireland's sons which fertilises Irish earth, by metonymic extension, in Henry's case it is his shite which fertilises the earth⁴), Doyle not only undermines the heroic narratives that inspired 1916, but also suggests that myth and reality have become inextricably linked in historiography (J. Dawson 174). This idea is further developed through Doyle's insistence on the significance of storytelling and inventions.

In the same way as Pearse draws on the mythical symbolism of Cathleen ni Houlihan in his appeal to an invented image of a motherland as a poor old woman to be revitalised and transformed by the blood sacrifice of her sons, Henry invents his own mother before he was born, and resolves to create a rejuvenated image of her:

An old woman. Big, lumpy, sad. Melody Smart. I see that woman sitting on the step and I try to bring her back six years, I try to make the age and pain drop off her. I try to make her stand up and walk back, to see her as she had been. I take three stone off her, lift her mouth, I try to put fun into her eyes. (...) I can make her a stunner.

(Doyle 5)

³ See Janis Dawson's article for further similarities between Henry and Cuchulain and the effect of this.

⁴ In the second chapter, Henry narrates that his excrement was used to fertilise Lady Gregory's roses, an Irish symbol for sacrifice (J. Dawson 180): "Lady Gregory's head gardener [came] knocking on the door wanting to buy whatever fell into my nappy to spread around Lady Gregory's rose-bushes; there'd be a man with a carriage and a bucket to carry my shite west to Coole every evening." (Doyle 23).

Similarly, Henry contemplates that his father literally survives on stories: “He made his life up as he went along. (...) He invented himself, and reinvented. He left a trail of Henry Smarts before he finally disappeared. (...) He’d killed sixteen Zulus with the freshly severed limb. Was he just a liar? No, I don’t think so. He was a survivor; his stories kept him going.” (Doyle 7). The effect of this insistence on the fantastic fabrication of stories further undermines the myth of heroic sacrifice in its suggestion that 1916 is a myth built on older the myths of Cathleen ni Houlihan and Cuchulain.

Lanters rightly terms Henry’s narrative a palimpsest in the sense that it attempts to write a new narrative which covers over the already existing narrative of the Easter Rising (249). However, while the novel presents itself as true (the list of sources appended at the end ostensibly aims to convey the impression of historical accuracy⁵), its version of events never made it to the official history books. This is trenchantly made visible at the beginning of part two, where Henry narrates: “I’d played *The Last Post* at the grave of O’Donovan Rossa the year before. The history books will tell you that it was William Oman but don’t believe them: he was tucked up at home with the flu” (Doyle 90). In the same vein, the passage in which Henry asserts that, contrary to public record, he was present when de Valera was captured, crudely lays bare how easily people or events can be erased from cultural memory if they do not conform to the desired dominant narrative, challenging the reliability of cultural memory in post-independence Ireland (Frawley 33):

The famous photo. The last man to surrender. (...) I was there, to the left of de Valera (I never called him Dev). (...) But I wasn’t important. The first time I saw the photo my elbow was in it, but even that went in later versions. No room for Henry’s elbow. (...)

⁵ Linda Hutcheon has observed that such intentionally awkward paratexts are a prominent feature of postmodernist literature geared to exasperate historians (Pierse 229).

If Hanratty had moved his camera just a bit to the right, just a fraction of a bit, I'd have been in. You'd know my face, you'd know who I was. (...) It became the photograph of Eamon de Valera. It became proof, part of the legend. There he is, the soldier, the father of the state. A foot taller than his guards. Serious and brave, undaunted and straight. I was there. He was wearing red socks and he smelt of shite. (Doyle 138-9)

Henry's involvement in the Rising is thus never evidenced – he is present but not visible, just as many others who were obliterated from official historiography, such as tenement-dwellers or sexually active women (Lanters 248). Although absent from the history books, Henry's account is evidence that such histories do exist, yet, as Ivan crudely points out, "It's only my version that'll get talked about" (Doyle 316). The Miss O'Shea's and the Henry's are withheld from laying claim to the hagiography that continued to dominate the cultural memory for at least half a century. Hence, Doyle writes those who were airbrushed off the picture of Ireland's foundational moment back into history, and at the same time, in his anti-hagiography, he robs the rebels of their pedestal (McMullen 129): "A fine body of men: Clarke was there as old and as frail as Ireland; MacDiarmada, left lopsided by polio, was leaning on his stick; Plunkett had his neck wrapped in bandages and looked like death congealing" (Doyle 93).

The effect of Doyle's alternative version of 1916 is a liberation from "the straitjacket of a fixed identity", which allows for "other possibilities of being" (Kearny qtd. in Lanters 248). While Henry's narrative will never be corroborated, its right to legitimacy undercuts sanctioned historiography, laying bare the subjectivity and malleability of historiography, ultimately suggesting that every national cultural identity is a fiction (248). As a result of the postmodern insight that there is no meta-narrative which can serve as a reference point against

which to test all (historical discourses), we are left without the ability to ever ascertain what is real or truthful, the result being an infinite amount of subjective versions (Dolmányos 126).

By extension, Doyle's conscious blurring of fact and fiction serves to interrogate the very nature of historical discourse, in that the novel implies that the writing down of history does not necessarily follow the course of historical happenings, but in fact sometimes precedes it as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Mikowski 188). Doyle adroitly demonstrates this through the character of Jack Dalton, the IRA-propagandist, spin-doctor, and mastermind behind Henry's rebel song. When he figures out it was Jack who invented the hero song which inspired Henry to fight a cause which was never in his own interest, it becomes clear to Henry he has been used as a pawn, a marionette in a narrative orchestrated by those who were only after increasing the power and wealth of their own class: "And every night when we were walking home Jack Dalton sang sedition. *The heart of a Fenian had the bold Henry Smart*" (Doyle 175). Jack, then, symbolises the ways in which all discourses are created in order to legitimise means and objectives, just as the nationalist narrative relies on "harps and martyrs" (Doyle 314; Mikowski 188-9). Just like O'Casey did in *The Plough and the Stars*, Doyle insinuates here that political rhetoric can provoke dangerous political madness. Hinting at the rebels' complicity in the creation of myths, Jack replies to Henry when he is confronted with the self-fabricated song: "You wrote it yourself, you fuckin' eejit." (Doyle 326). Doyle takes a sideswipe here at the manipulative effects of folk songs on Irish identity, suggesting that they idealise the use of violence and lionise past heroes and martyrs and their feats which ultimately has a dangerous effect on Irish values and ideals (Jacklein 130-1).

In its unbalancing of the alleged dichotomy between fiction and reality, the novel aims to make the reader aware of the process of narrative creation (Pierse 228-9). What is usually understood as a choice between fiction and reality is now exposed as a choice between fictions (Cronin, par. 2). Henry recalls that "the stories were flying, facts and rumours and

little bits of extra we made up ourselves to get us through the day” (Doyle 109). Doyle stacks layer of fiction upon layer of fiction in his attempt to make the reader aware of how easily it dismisses Henry’s narrative as untrue and contrived while readily accepting the official narrative. Pierse explains: “The reader’s task must lie with extrapolating the subtext of the novel, with looking beyond (...). Self-conscious reader participation is invited (...). The reader is thus made aware of his or her own hermeneutic agency in the process of *creating* historical meaning” (228). While Doyle’s use of the experiential mode lends credibility to Henry’s narrative in that it creates the impression of what Halbwachs would term authentic internal memories, the same critical eye with which the reader pierces through Henry’s tall tale should be applied to official history. Ironically, in the novel’s insistence that reality will always be a chimera in that it can never be approximated and therefore always is to be distrusted, this piece of revisionist history torpedoes the very task revisionist historiography set out to complete in that it renders it impossible (Cronin, par. 2). Revisionism’s attempt to describe ‘history as it really happened’ is a fatuous attempt in that historical reality is ultimately unfathomable.

Unravelling the sacrosanct tapestry of 1916

In his portrayal of the Rising as an autoschediastic and amateurish putsch that failed to overturn bourgeoisie rule, perpetuated traditional ideas about womanhood, the only achievement of which was a capitalist assumption of power administered by the Irish themselves instead of foreign oppressors, Doyle’s take on Easter 1916 is strongly redolent of O’Casey’s. Doyle shares many of O’Casey’s indictments against established Irish cultural hegemony as he strikes a blow at nationalism, in its suggestion that nationalism is a luxury, a privilege that means nothing to those who have no home (Anderson in Pierse 232); at the hoary conceit of Mother Ireland and the chaste, submissive Irish woman; and at independent

Ireland, which according to Doyle was no better off after Easter 1916.

In *The Plough and the Stars* O'Casey sets up a juxtaposition between “noble inspiration and ignoble action” in order to undermine this supposedly noble inspiration (Pixley 78). Doyle achieves the same effect by undercutting the whole idea of noble inspiration from the start. It can be said that the first part of the novel serves as a psychological foundation to explain Henry's participation in the Rising: at the end of part one, Henry is left hungry and alone, fending for himself on the squalid streets of Dublin, filled with resentment for all he has lost and is denied. The second part fast-forwards to his involvement in the Rising, suggesting it was solely a combination of anger, frustration, and boredom which led him there. Doyle propounds that Henry's motivations for joining the Rebellion are all but noble, yet Henry thinks they are. As he himself is keenly aware when he shouts at King Edward VII to fuck off, it was never romantic nationalism that spurred Henry to rebel: “Was I a tiny Fenian? A Sinn Feiner? Not at all. I didn't even know I was Irish” (Doyle 52). Later, when he is asked if he loves Ireland, he thinks: “We didn't understand the question. Ireland was something in songs that drunken old men wept about as they held on to the railings at three in the morning and we homed in to rob them; that was all. I loved Victor and my memories of some other people. That was all I understood about love.” (Doyle 69). However, mesmerised by Connolly's political beliefs, the young and ignorant Henry is convinced he is fighting a class war: “We were fighting a class war. We weren't in the same battle at all as the rest of the rebels” (Doyle 107).

In his identification with the working class looters, who just like Henry could never afford to fight for Pearse's romantic nationalism and idealism, Henry points his rifle at Pearse at his suggestion to shoot the looters. This makes all the more visible that Henry is in fact rebelling out of spite over all he was ever denied. Significantly, the first shot Henry fires is at a shoe shop; his next bullets are reserved for a number of shop windows displaying cakes,

creams, tobacco, cigars, suits and hats; and a café he and Victor were ousted from even before entering. He narrates: “I shot and killed all that I had been denied, all the commerce and snobbery that had been mocking me and other hundreds of thousands behind glass and locks, all the injustice, unfairness and shoes – while the lads took chunks out of the military” (Doyle 105). Henry is not fighting for *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, nor is he imperilling himself to procure a proletarian revolution for his people. Pierse explains that Henry fails to see beyond his own material reality and that for this reason, it is impossible for him to devote himself to an abstract ideology, as this is incompatible with the concrete poverty that governs his life (Pierse 232-3). This is abstract idealism which is essentially meaningless to Henry, is typified in his mother. Fixated on the past and more concerned with her ideal sons in heaven than her living one, Henry’s mother closely resembles Cathleen ni Houlihan⁶. Melody, just as Cathleen, symbolises romantic nationalism here: the “devotional, sentimental nonsense of nationalism” could not possibly be further removed from working class realities (Pierse 232). Hence, as Pierse remarks, Henry is not portrayed as “an active vehicle for historical change, but as a highly determined and self-absorbed product of environmental factors” (Pierse 234).

This seems to be, according to Doyle, the darkly comic truth to the Rising. Unlike in O’Casey’s play, where the characters remain peripheral to all the history-changing processes and thence end up with none of its spoils, in *A Star Called Henry*, a working-class character is at the centre of history-making processes. In spite of this, however, to make it all the more poignant, he is still denied all its spoils, and is used merely as a pawn trampled by others in

⁶ In the opening scene of *A Star Called Henry*, Henry sits beside his mother on the steps to their tenement house as his mother picks out a star in a vast sea of stars and claims it to be the embodiment of her lost “twinkling boy”, her “other little Henry” (Doyle 1). Henry looks up at the stars and hates his dead brother, feeling a neglected substitute for his dead ideal brother: “She held me but she looked up at her twinkling boy. (...) Poor me. And poor Mother” (1). Strikingly, this scene is strongly reminiscent of the scene in *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in which the Old Woman catalogues her sons who died for her: [...] [t]here were others that died for love of me a long time ago. [...] Come here beside me and I’ll tell you about them. [MICHAEL sits down beside her at the hearth.] There was a red man of the O’Donnells from the north, and a man of the O’Sullivans from the south, and there was one Brian that lost his life at Clontarf by the sea, and there were a great many in the west, some that died hundreds of years ago, and there are some that will die to-morrow” (Yeats and Gregory 7).

their manoeuvrings for power (Cronin, par. 2).

The conclusion the novel arrives at is horrifyingly bleak in its suggestion that Henry unwittingly helped facilitate a Catholic and capitalist Ireland which has no compassion for working-class heroes. When his friend Mr Climanis, a Latvian-Jewish refugee, is murdered out of sheer xenophobia, Henry finally realises that “[he] was a complete and utter fool (...). Everything [he’d] done, every bullet and assassination, all the blood and brains, prison, the torture, the last four years and everything in them, everything had been done for Ivan and the other Ivans, the boys whose time had come. That was Irish freedom.” (Doyle 317-8). Never having questioned the names on the slips of paper he was given, he realises he even would have killed Connolly if they had asked him to, and that he was simply a pawn in a game plotted by others in which he would never call the shots:

There was no Henry Smart M.P. (...) I hadn’t been asked. I was bang in the middle of what was going to become big, big, history, I was shaping the fate of my country, I was one of Collins’s anointed but, actually, I was excluded from everything. (...) None of the other men of the slums and hovels ever made it to the list. We were nameless and expendable. (...) We were decoys and patsies. We followed orders and murdered. (...) I was one self-important little rebel. I had no idea of my tininess and anonymity. I was the Henry Smart of song and legend. (Doyle 208-9)

Although a hero in his own narrative, his version will soon be erased completely by the new ruling powers. Jack confirms this later when he tells Henry: “You’ve no stake in the country, man. Never had, never will. We needed trouble-makers and very soon now we’ll have to be rid of them. And that, Henry, is all you are and ever were. A trouble-maker.” (Doyle 327). Pierson’s “alienation of the centre” applies not only to O’Casey’s play, but to Doyle’s novel

too (53). Once proven useless, Jack slips Henry a piece of paper with Henry's name on it, sealing his death sentence on the principle that "If you're not with us you're against us" (Doyle 327).

The stark reality is that post-1916 Ireland continued to sustain the hierarchies of class and gender it sought to overthrow. While having scorned his father for being a puppet at the end of Alfie Gandon's strings, ironically, it turns out Henry treads exactly in his father's footsteps, using the same weapon to execute murders ordered by the same man. Doyle has described this as the "circular quality" of the novel, implying the Rising's futility in its failure to change anything for the better (qtd. in Pierse 229). The frequently reoccurring 'thanks-for-what'⁷ motif underscores the fruitlessness of the entire venture. The fact that pre-Rising gangster Alfie Gandon has become the respectable TD Alfie O'Gandúin post-Rising, demonstrates the triumph of opportunism and egotism over idealism. As Pierse puts it, "The Volunteers and ICA men alternately dreamed of stamping money with harps or starry ploughs, but while they haggled over symbolism, the capitalist system of monetary exchange remained unquestioned." (243). The chance at a working-class revolution from below is thwarted by impenetrable supremacy from above (245). It is the likes of Ivan who have taken control of the country: "I've freed fuckin' Ireland", master-exploiter Ivan boasts, "Nobody works without the nod from Ivan. A sweet doesn't get sucked without a good coating of the profit ending up on Ivan's tongue" (Doyle 315). It is in this final exchange between Henry and Ivan that the tragedy of the Rising, a capitalist coup disguised as a heroic battle for Ireland, is laid bare (Pierse 317). Ivan visits Henry to ask him to stop his wife from killing the Tans, the Auxiliaries, and the Military, all the enemies Ivan has made a deal with.

- Have you any control over your wife at all?

⁷ Whenever Henry thanks someone who has helped him in the country, he gets the reply: "For what?" (Doyle 340).

- No, I said proudly. (...)
- If she wants to join Cumann na mBan and give the boys a hand, fine. No better woman. We'll always have need of the rucksacks and sangwidges. But she's going bananas out there, Captain.
- What's she doing? (...)
- She's queering things for the rest of us. (...) She's costing me a fortune, Captain. She's interfering with free trade and I can't have that. (Doyle 312-6)

It is Miss O'Shea answering *Cathleen ni Houlihan's* call which inconveniences Ivan's capitalist deal with the enemy, and it is exactly those who fought the noble fight that are ultimately denied its spoils. Doyle's jibe at post-1916 Ireland could not be expressed in clearer terms than in the brief exchange between Ivan and Henry:

- I'll be ready to lead my people into the new Ireland.
- And it'll be very like the old one.
- It might well be, Captain, but it'll be ours.
- Yours. (Doyle 315)

The new Ireland is very much like the old, continuing to disfranchise poor non-Catholics like Henry and non-subservient women like Miss O'Shea who continue to be subjected to the same old hierarchies of class and gender, and their poverty and struggles persisted under consecutive Dáils and Taoiseachs (McMullen 128-130).⁸

⁸ Interestingly, on 29 March 2016, Fintan O'Toole observed that the tragedy Doyle addresses is still pertinent a century after the Rebellion: "'Free' Ireland was a terrible place for many of the citizens who most needed a real revolution. And an Ireland that has almost doubled consistent child poverty has no right to forget how horribly mocked were the promises of the first Dáil that the physical and spiritual welfare of children would be the first duty of the Republic." ("We should" par 18).

It is telling that it is Miss O'Shea who plays the role of Ireland's son instead of Henry. In his subversion of traditional gender roles, Doyle substitutes the myth of women as virtuous virgins for the sexually active and non-submissive flesh-and-blood woman (Lanters 249). It is particularly Miss O'Shea who acts out Doyle's anti-patriarchal stance. Her motivation to join the Rising is a feminist one, fighting to cast off the yoke of traditional gender roles that have been imposed on Irish women for centuries:

- I'm here for my freedom. Just like you and the men upstairs.

- Yeah, I said.

- I want my freedom too, she said.(...) To do what I want. (...) Do you know what I'm talking about, Henry?

- Yeah, I said. – You want to behave like a man.

- Yes, she said. – I think you understand.

- But they'll never let you, I said.

- Who?

- The shower upstairs.

- I know, she said. – I knew it the minute they started shouting for their tea.

- I hate the stuff, I told her. (Doyle 122-3)

Refusing to just make sandwiches, nurse the men or cycle all over the city as a messenger like the other Cumann na mBan women, she is fighting to be able to do what she wants, and together with Henry she murders G-men and sets up ambushes and gelignite bombings. When they are both in imminent peril, it is Miss O'Shea who rescues Henry and brings him to safety: "I'd carry her there", Henry resolves heroically, when a few lines later he relates: "she was carrying me. (...) I'd been saved by Miss O'Shea" (Doyle 265-6). It is she who managed to

free Henry from Kilmainham Gaol the night before his execution, and long after his withdrawal from the fight for freedom, the pregnant Miss O'Shea kept going, robbing banks and the big houses, killing Black and Tans, until she is incarcerated: "I had the baby but there was no Miss O'Shea. She was out there somewhere, hanging on for the Republic, fighting Ivan and the new National Army" (Doyle 329). The name O'Shea cannot be fortuitous: the controversy associated with the name O'Shea as a result of the adulterous relationship between Kitty O'Shea and Parnell and the sexual scandal leading to his political demise must be characteristic for how people would have regarded women who behaved as the fictional Miss O'Shea, and it is exactly this stigma the fictional Miss O'Shea fights against (Lanters 255).

Doyle uses sex to turn his back on the myth of the chaste Irish woman or the loving mother (Lanters 255). The novel counts numerous instances in which Henry and his sex partners are too preoccupied with each other to care for Ireland: when Miss O'Shea tears her skirt when they are having sex while the fighting is in full swing, she says: "I'll say I tore it for Ireland"; when he is sleeping with Piano Annie while the rebels are being executed, she says: "Lie back and think of Ireland"; during a *céilí*, Henry "was riding the arse off the mother of one of 1916's executed heroes. I won't name names. Her son's portrait was wobbling on the opposite side of the wall as the dancers cantered past him and his grieving mammy backed into me." (Doyle 119, 148, 177). Not only do these scenes irreverently undermine the sacredness of the myth of Easter 1916⁹, the abundance of unrestrained sexual relations works to undercut the sanctity of the Irish woman, and, moreover, puts a more sordid meaning to

⁹ Especially the scene in which Henry's listing of Irish and British forces is juxtaposed with Miss O'Shea's moans of sexual pleasure until they both reach a climax has this effect: "She grunted. – Pearse and Plunkett? She licked my ear. – The *British*? – Oh God. – The Dublin Fusiliers? – Oh *God*. – The Royal Norfolks? – Yes. The Royal Irish Rifles? – *Yesss*. I was running out of soldiers. She pulled my ear with her teeth. She growled. – The Scottish – oh fuck – the Scottish Borderers? – *Maithú*, Henry! – The Sherwood Fah-fah-foresters? – *Maithúúúúú* – oh – *maithú* –" (Doyle 121).

'excess of love' which in *Cathleen ni Houlihan*¹⁰ and Yeats' "Easter, 1916" meant giving your life for Ireland (Lanters 255).

Despite all its bleakness, the novel does seem to end on more positive terms. In his parting with the Cuchulain analogy on the final page, Henry ends the tradition of heroic blood-sacrifice, liberating himself from Cathleen ni Houlihan's conjuration (J. Dawson 180): "I was going. I couldn't stay here. Every breath of its stale air, every square inch of the place mocked me, grabbed at my ankles. It needed blood to survive and it wasn't getting mine. I'd supplied it with plenty." (Doyle 342). With the birth of his daughter Saoirse, significantly named Freedom, Doyle perhaps articulates a cautious hope for a new generation to end the gender and class inequalities his generation failed to eradicate (McMullen 130). Perhaps Doyle's venture of rewriting history from below can be seen as an optimistic enterprise which opportunistically makes use of the growing destabilisation of the authority of historiography and the ascent of memory studies which acknowledges the existence of multiple and sometimes 'amnesiated' narratives.

¹⁰ Recalling the lines: "But there were others that died for love of me a long time ago" and "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?" (Yeats and Gregory 7; Yeats lines 72-3)

Conclusion

The capriciousness that distinguishes the cultural memory as well as the literary legacy of the 1916 Easter Rising bears witness to what Frawley observed as the complex psychological manoeuvres performed by postcolonial Ireland recollecting its past (33). As the three previously discussed works demonstrate, literary memories of 1916 attest to a presumably endless heterogeneity in mood, tone, and substance in their recollection of the nation's founding moments, ranging from glowingly pious reiteration, irreverently mocking satire, to sincere interrogating and questioning. However, despite the differences between these literary memories, I would like to end this thesis by extracting a number of re-occurring themes which all three texts address, in order to establish some commonalities within Rising literature.

All three texts break the mould of ideal female purity and the sacrificial woman, and instead offer non-submissive, sexually active, and courageous flesh-and-blood heroines in lieu of heroes. Nora, Frances, Millie, and Miss O'Shea all refuse to take on the allegorical role of the mythical, gendered representation of Ireland, thereby (save in Henry's case) emasculating the men. Drawing on the antagonistic mode, all three texts rewrite older literary traditions (*Cathleen ni Houlihan* and the national tale) in order to subvert the traditional gender roles they uphold. Furthermore, all three texts suggest that it is women who are the carriers of cultural memory and Irish identity: Nora, Frances and Saoirse (with her mother in prison and her father emigrating to America) are the sole characters remaining in Ireland and who live to transfer their memories, the men having either died as a result of misguided heroism or fled the country. Heroism is closely connected to gender in this sense: in all texts, heroism is allotted to the women, not to the men, whose alleged heroism is revealed to stem from drunkenness, blinding patriotism, identity crises, frustration, discontent or manipulation. All these texts, then, critique the traditional gender roles the Rising failed to overthrow.

The Rising's failure to overturn the traditional class hierarchy, too, preoccupies two of

the discussed texts. While Murdoch's novel champions the Rising as a result of Murdoch's conviction that any resistance against any form of (colonial) oppression is to be celebrated, both O'Casey and Doyle give voice to the post-revolutionary disappointment which followed the realisation that the rebels' noble aspirations were not achieved (Cleary 141). Doyle's novel can be read as a confirmation of O'Casey's premonition that post-1916 Ireland would continue to sustain the class and gender hierarchies the Rising sought to overthrow. While the emergence of the Celtic Tiger re-examined the parameters of the debate surrounding 1916, Doyle's critique of post-Rising Ireland echoes much of O'Casey's discontent, suggesting that under consecutive Dáils and Taoiseachs not much had changed. Both texts suggest that the Rising was a bourgeois affair which only increased instead of improved the adverse conditions of the working class, and ultimately spawned a capitalist power structure which merely generated a change in oppressors. Both novels strike a blow against nationalism in their suggestion that nationalist ideals, opposed to proletarian ideals, are meaningless to those who have no home. The use of the experiential mode in these two works becomes highly ironic in the sense that while the characters are participants in the Easter Rebellion and thus are at the centre of history-making processes, they still remain peripheral to them.

The last trend I want to point out here is Rising literature's focus on the relation between history and memory, which reoccurs in all three literary memories. This manifests itself most notably in the use of the reflexive mode which increases as the time between the original event and its recollection progresses. While the unpalatability of O'Casey's play at the time already bears witness to the conflicting ways of remembering the past, it is predominantly the two later novels which feature reflexive comments on the transference of cultural memories. Both novels insist on the existence of multiple narratives and multiple pasts and show an awareness of the plurality of memories. However, while this manifests itself in a variety of characters representing the entire political spectrum in Murdoch's novel,

in Doyle's novel it is expressed through dismissal of traditional historiography and sanctioned history. Moreover, while the plurality of memories in *The Red and the Green* stems from Murdoch's existential belief that whole and coherent realities and memories do not exist, Doyle's distrust towards the reliability of memories in post-1916 Ireland stems from the conviction that approaching historical reality is always a chimera, which crudely lays bare that every national cultural identity is a fiction. Lastly, while Murdoch's novel attests to a fear of forgetting, Doyle's novel articulates a need to forget and cast off the limitations of a traditional official historiography and to substitute it with a history from below. In 1991, Edna Longley remarked that the deconsecration of Irish memory was long overdue (in Higgins 207). *A Star Called Henry*, with its unconcealed irreverence towards the nation's founding myth and its postmodern refusal to subscribe to sanctioned historiography, undeniably meets this pressing need.

Despite these trends, the limited scope of this study renders it difficult to generalise about the cultural memory of 1916 as expressed in these literary memories. However, perhaps within this resistance against generalisation lies the essence. For, just as facts are like "fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean; and what the historian catches will depend, partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses to fish in and what tackle he chooses to use", a different selection of Easter Rising literature would have yielded markedly different interpretations (E. H. Carr qtd in Pierse 245).

Ultimately, then, together these texts testify to the plurality and fluidity that is intrinsic to the nature of memory. Cultural memories are highly selective and subjective reconfigurations of past realities which are subject to processes of ongoing negotiation and re-invention as they relay their significance through imaginative (re-)appropriation in light of different economic, political and cultural contexts. The cultural memory of the 1916 Easter Rising will never be set in stone, however many monuments of the Easter week may be

erected. As Higgins points out in her discussion of the Rising's half-centenary, "the Rising had not been in itself an act of completion, but instead had required future events to relay its true significance" (Higgins 8). Nor will it ever be, for cultural memories will always fluctuate as a consequence of changing needs of the present.

For this reason, it will be interesting to see how the memory of 1916 reconceptualises in the course of the twenty-first century. The extensive celebrations surrounding the Rising's centenary in Ireland and in Irish diasporic communities, now celebrated in a more open and inclusive manner but still a controversial affair with Northern Irish unionists shunning the event, prove that the memory of 1916 is still very much present today, albeit perhaps in a more commercialised form, evidenced by the publishing and media bonanza which veiled the event ("The Guardian", par. 2). The British vote to leave the European Union will unquestionably affect the Rising's memory and the ways in which it will be invoked by different political camps. O'Toole points out that Queen Elizabeth II's visit to the Republic in 2011 prompted "a relief from centuries of both British condescension and Irish Anglophobia" ("The English", par. 3). Yet this is not likely to last long in a post-Brexit context, for the reinstating of the border between the Republic and Northern Ireland as a direct consequence of Brexit will unashamedly violate the cornerstone of the Good Friday Agreement (par. 8). This will undoubtedly leave marks in future expressions of the cultural memory of Ireland's foundational moment and its catalytic role in the realisation of partition, in that it will cause a rethinking of these seminal moments in Ireland's turbulent history. As the events of Easter 1916 recede further into history, the thin line between fact and fiction becomes more blurred, and its narrative potency will only grow. Studying literary memories of Easter 1916 will thus remain relevant for the next decades to come ("The Guardian", par. 2).

Works Cited

Primary sources:

Doyle, Roddy. *A Star Called Henry*. London: Vintage, 2000. Print.

MacLaverty, Bernard. *Cal*. London: Penguin Classics, 2000. Print.

Murdoch, Iris. *The Red and the Green*. London: Vintage, 2002. Print.

O'Casey, Sean. *The Plough and the Stars*. London: Faber & Faber, 2001. Print.

Yeats, W.B. "Easter, 1916" *The Norton Anthology of English Literature 2*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: Norton & Company, 2012. 2093-2095. Print.

Yeats, W.B. and Lady Augusta Gregory. *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. Distributed via Blackboard.

Newspaper sources (from 1926, 1966, 1991, and 1996):

"1916 Easter Rising 75th Anniversary Commemoration", *Irish Press*, 18 April 1991. Irish Newspaper Archives.

"1916 Insurrection. Commemoration at Arbour Hill Barracks", *Irish Times*, 5 May 1926. Irish Newspaper Archives.

"1916 Rising Commemorated", *Munster Express*, 5 April 1991. Irish Newspaper Archives.

"1916 the Easter Rising", *Irish Independent*, 30 March 1991. Irish Newspaper Archives.

"Ahern claims confidence on peace lost by the govt", *Irish Independent*, 22 April 1996. Irish Newspaper Archives.

"Cohalan Speaks in Optimistic Vein", *Butte Independent*, 4 December 1926. Irish Newspaper Archives.

"Commemoration of Easter Week. Procession in Dublin", *Irish Times*, 5 April 1926.

The Irish Times Newspaper Archives.

"Divided Bandon opinion 1916 commemoration", *Southern Star*, 30 March 1991. Irish

Newspaper Archives.

“Easter Rising anniversary marked with parade”, *Strabane Chronicle*, 6 April 1991. Irish

Newspaper Archives.

“Easter Week Anniversary. Commemoration concert at Upton”, *Southern Star*, 10 April 1926.

Irish Newspaper Archives.

“Easter Week. Fermoy Demonstration.” *Irish Examiner*, 6 April 1926. Irish Newspaper

Archives.

“How Major MacBride died” *Connaught Telegraph*, 8 May 1926. Irish Newspaper Archives.

“Leitrim People Commemorate Easter 1916. Impressive Ceremonies at Kiltyclogher”, *Leitrim*

Observer, 16 April 1966. Irish Newspaper Archives.

“Militant Socialism: Bolder Policy Suggested”, *Irish Times*, 22 February 1926. Irish Times

Newspaper Archives.

“Neutrality asserted at Easter commemoration – Plea made for a renewed effort to secure peace”, *Irish Examiner*, 8 April 1996. Irish Newspaper Archives.

O’Mahony, T.P. “Separating fact from symbol”, *Irish Examiner*, 1 April 1991. Irish

Newspaper Archives.

“Remembering Easter Week, 1916”, *Meath Chronicle*, 12 March 1966. Irish Newspaper

Archives.

“Re-opening Old Wounds”, *Limerick Leader*, 20 November 1926. Irish Newspaper Archives.

“Sinn Féin”, *Irish Examiner*, 8 April 1996. Irish Newspaper Archives.

“State pays its tribute”, *Irish Examiner*, 1 April 1991. Irish Newspaper Archives.

“The Army Journal. Dublin Castle From the Inside in Easter Week 1916.”, *Evening*

Herald, 13 February 1926. Irish Newspaper Archives.

“The Memorable Insurrection. Easter Week of 1916”, *Nenagh Guardian*, 9 April 1966. Irish

Newspaper Archives.

“The Message of Easter”, *Irish Times*, 6 April 1996. BBC History Archive.

“Today we celebrate and commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the 1916 Rising and we do so with pride.”, *Sunday Press*, 31 March 1991. BBC History Archive.

“Unity Appeal for Easter 1916 Ceremonies”, *Western People*, 12 March 1966. Irish Newspaper Archives.

“What is this strange phenomenon called 1916 that seems to raise the blood and paralyse the intellect for so many”, *Irish Times*, 30 March 1991. BBC History Archive.

“Window on the past”, *Irish Press*, 24 April 1991. Irish Newspaper Archives.

“Wreath-laying ceremony to mark Easter Rising”, *Mayo News*, 3 April 1991. Irish Newspaper Archives.

Secondary sources:

d’Alton, Ian. “In praise of Iris Murdoch, by Ian d’Alton.” *Irish Times*. The Irish Times, 3 June 2015. Web. 30 November 2016.

Assman, Jan. “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity.” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125-133. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 September 2016.

BBC Newsnight. “Easter Rising Centenary – BBC Newsnight.” YouTube, 24 March 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmaIOG9-BBk>

Brett, Raymond. *Faith and Doubt: Religion and Secularization in Literature from Wordsworth to Larkin*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1997. *Google Books*.

Burgess, Miranda. “The national tale and allied genres, 1770s-1840s”. *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, edited by John Wilson Foster. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 39-59. Print.

Charpentier, Colette. “The Critical Reception of Iris Murdoch’s novels (1963-1976). II. ‘The Red and the Green’”. *Études irlandaises* 6 (1981): 87-98. Web. 16 September 2016.

- Cleary, Joe. *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland*. Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2007. Print.
- Connolly, Claire. "The National Tale". *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume IV: The Irish Book in English, 1800-1891*, edited by James Murphy (eds). Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011, pp. 399-409. Print.
- Conradi, Peter J. "Iris Murdoch: A Life by Peter J Conradi." *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 8 September 2001. Web. 30 November 2016.
- Cronin, Michael G. "The Dub Republic" *Dublin Review of Books*.
- Dawson, Graham. *Making Peace with the Past? Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007. Print.
- Dawson, Janis. "Aspects of the Fantastic in Roddy Doyle's "A Star Called Henry": Deconstructing Romantic Nationalism" *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 12.2 (2001): 168-185. Web. 18 January 2017.
- DeSalvo, Louise. "'This Should Not Be': Iris Murdoch's Critique of English Policy Towards Ireland in *The Red and the Green*" *Colby Quarterly* 19.3 (1983): 113-124. Web. 30 November 2016.
- Dolmányos, Péter. "Non-conformist history or non-historic conformism? Roddy Doyle's *The Last Roundup* trilogy" *British and American Studies* 21 (2015): 125-132. Web. 12 January 2017.
- Downum, Denell. "Learning to Live: Memory and the Celtic Tiger in Novels by Roddy Doyle, Anne Enright, and Tana French" *New Hibernia Review* 19.3 (2015): 76-92. *Project Muse*. 16 January 2017.
- English, Richard. *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. E-book.
- Erl, Astrid. *Memory in Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.
- . "Re-writing as Re-visioning: Modes of Representing the 'Indian Mutiny' in British Novels,

- 1857 to 2000.” *European Journal of English Studies* 10.2 (2006): 163-185. *Routledge T&F Group*. Web. 16 September 2016.
- . “Travelling Memory.” *Parallax* 17.4 (2011): 4-18. *Routledge T&F Group*. Web. 14 September 2016.
- Erll, Astrid and Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008. Print.
- Erll, Astrid and Ann Rigney. “Literature and the Production of Cultural Memory: Introduction.” *European Journal of English Studies* 10.2 (2006): 111-115. *Routledge T&F Group*. Web. 14 September 2016.
- Fanning, Bryan. *Racism and Social Change in the Republic of Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002. E-book.
- Ferris, Ina. *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.
- Firetog, Emily. “Roddy Doyle. Interivew by Emily Firetog”. *Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art* 50 (2012): 64-80. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 January 2017.
- Foster, Roy. “Roddy and the ragged-trousered revolutionary”, *Guardian*. *Guardian*, 29 August 1999. Web. 12 January 2017.
- Frawley, Oona. *Memory Ireland. Volume 1: History and Modernity*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2010. Print.
- Gerstenberger, Donna. *Iris Murdoch*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1974. E-Book.
- Hanley, Brian. ““Oh, here’s to Adolf Hitler’? ... The IRA and the Nazis” *History Ireland 20th Century Contemporary History*, 13.3 (2005). 3 January 2017. <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/oh-heres-to-adolph-hitler-the-ira-and-the-nazis>.
- Higgins, Roisín. *Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the*

Easter Rising. Cork: Cork UP, 2012. E-book.

Higgins, Roisín, Carole Holohan, and Catherine O'Donnell. "1966 and all that: the 50th anniversary commemorations". *History Ireland*. 2.14 (2006). 31 October 2016.
<http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/1966-and-all-that-the-50th-anniversary-commemorations/>

Hölscher, Meike. "Performance, Souvenirs and Music: The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria 1897". *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 173-186.

Ingman, Heather. *Irish Women's Fiction. From Edgeworth to Enright*. Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2013. Print.

Jacklein, Charlotte. "Rebel Songs and Hero Pawns: Music in A Star Called Henry". *New Hibernia Review* 9.4 (2005): 129-143. *Project Muse*. Web. 14 September 2016.

Kemp, Peter. "The Fight Against Fantasy: Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green*". *Modern Fiction Studies* 15.3 (1969): 403-415. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 November 2016.

Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. London: Vintage, 1996. Print.

Kiberd, Declan. "Introduction". *The Red and the Green*. By Iris Murdoch. London: Vintage, 2002. Print.

Lanters, José. "Demythicizing/Remythicizing the Rising: Roddy Doyle's "A Star Called Henry." *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 8.1 (2002): 245-258. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 September 2016.

McBride, Ian. *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. *Google Books*.

McCarthy, Mark. *Ireland's 1916 Rising: Explorations of History-making, Commemoration and Heritage in Modern Times*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. *Google Books*.

- McGarry, Fearghal. "How Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising Has Been Commemorated Over a Century", *Time*. Time, 22 April 2016. Web. 12 January 2017.
- McMullen, Kim. "New Ireland/ Hidden Ireland: Reading Recent Irish Fiction" *The Kenyon Review* 26.2 (2004): 126-148. *JSTOR*. Web. 11 January 2017.
- Mikowski, Sylvie. "Reimagining the Irish Historical Novel in Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* and Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*" *Ireland: Revolution and Evolution*, edited by John Strachan and Alison O'Malley-Younger. Bern: Peter Lang, 2010. 183-192.
- Moran, James. *Staging the Easter Rising. 1916 as Theatre*. Cork: Cork UP, 2005. Print.
- Moran, Sean Farrell. *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption: The Mind of the Easter Rising, 1916*. Washington: CUA Press, 1997. *Google Books*.
- Morash, Chris. *A History of Irish Theatre 1601-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.
- Murray, Christopher. Introduction. *The Plough and the Stars*. By Sean O'Casey. London: Faber & Faber, 2001. Print.
- O'Riordan, John. "A Guide to O'Casey's Plays". Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984. *Google Books*.
- O'Riordan, Karena. "Sean O'Casey versus Ireland part 1 and 2". YouTube, 6 April 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDIRplZRxYs>
- O'Toole, Fintan. "We should not replace one form of forgetting with another", *Irish Times*. Irish Times. 29 March 2016. Web. 14 February 2017.
- . "The English have placed a bomb under the Irish peace process", *Guardian*. Guardian, 24 June 2016. Web. 14 February 2017.
- Petris, Carla de. "'Who am I? Well, I'm Irish anyway, that's something.' Iris Murdoch and Ireland" *Studi Irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies* 6 (2016): 259-270. Web. 30

November 2016.

Pierse, Michael. *Writing Ireland's Working Class: Dublin after O'Casey*. Basingstoke:

Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. E-book.

Pilkington, Lionel. "Staging the Body in Post-Independence Ireland". *Ireland, Memory and*

Performing the Historical Imagination, edited by Christopher Collins and Mary P.

Caulfield. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 118-136.

Pine, Emilie. *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish*

Culture. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.

Pixley, Edward. "'The Plough and the Stars': The Destructive Consequences of Human

Folly." *Educational Theatre Journal* 23.1 (1971): JSTOR. Web. 14 September 2016.

Poulain, Alexandra. "Playing out the Rising: Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* and

Tom Murphy's *The Patriot Game*." *Études anglaises* 59.2 (2006): 156-169. Web.

14 September 2016.

"Presidential Election Pamphlet, 1966." Clare Library.ie. Web. 15 December 2016.

http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum/acquisitions/1966_presidential_election_pamphlet.htm

Rigney, Ann. "Plenitude, Scarcity, and the Circulation of Cultural Memory." *Journal of*

European Studies 35.1 (2005): 11-28. *Sage Journals*. Web. 18 September 2016.

--. "Portable Monuments: Literature, Cultural Memory, and the Case of Jeanie Deans."

Poetics Today. 25.2 (2004): 361-396. *Project Muse*. Web. 14 September 2016.

Roche, Anthony. *The Irish Dramatic Revival 1899-1939*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. Print.

Rome, Joy. "A Respect for the Contingent: A Study of Iris Murdoch's novel *The Red and the*

Green". *English Studies in Africa*. 14.1 (1971): 87-98. *ProQuest*. Web. 16 September

2016.

Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of*

Decolonization. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. E-book.

Scanlan, Margaret. "Fictions and the Fictions of History in Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green*". *Clio* 9.3 (1980): 365-378. *ProQuest*. Web. 30 November 2016.

--. *Traces of Another Time: History and Politics in Postwar British Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014. *Google Books*.

Schrank, Bernice. *Sean O'Casey: A Research and Production Sourcebook*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996. Print.

Skloot, Floyd. Rev. of *A Star Called Henry*, author Roddy Doyle. "Irish Myth-Making and Myth-Breaking". *The Sewanee Review* 107.4 (1999): c-civ. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 September 2016.

Spear, Hilda. *Iris Murdoch*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1995. Print.

"Speech by President Michael D. Higgins at the National Flag Presentation Ceremony." *Ireland.ie*. 2016 Commemorative Speeches by President Michael D. Higgins, 2016. Web. 2 October 2016.

Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: the Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Print.

"The Easter Rising: Understanding 1916". Informational plaque at the exhibition of the same name in: *The National Museum or Ireland Decorative Arts and History, Collins Barracks, Dublin*. Visited 24 June 2016.

"The Guardian view on the Easter Rising centenary: Ireland's history lesson for Britain" *Guardian*. *Guardian*, 25 March 2016. Web. 14 February 2017.

Trotter, Mary. *Modern Irish Theatre*. Cambridge: Polity, 2008. Print.

Whelan, Kevin. "The Revisionist Debate in Ireland" *Boundary 2* 31.1 (2004): 179-205. *Project Muse*. 24 January 2017.

Wills, Clair. *Dublin 1916. The Siege of the GPO*. London: Profile Books, 2010. Print.

Cover image: the photo of this plaque was taken by myself at the GPO in Dublin on 24 June 2016.