NO ANGELS IN THE HOUSE IN MARTIN McDONAGH'S *THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE* AND EIMEAR McBRIDE'S *A GIRL IS A HALF-FORMED THING*

NO HAY ÁNGELES EN LA CASA EN LA OBRA DE MARTIN McDONAGH LA REINA DE LA BELLEZA DE LEENANE Y EN UNA CHICA ES UNA COSA A MEDIO HACER DE EIMEAR McBRIDE

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Abstract:

This paper aims at analyzing the complex female constructions of identity, trauma and personal failure in Martin McDonagh's The Beauty Queen of Leenane (1996), and Eimear McBride's A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing (2013). As the title suggests, "No Angels in the House" refers to the central role motherhood has firmly held in traditional Irish society, and how progressively this sublimation of the mother figure has evidenced a deeper somber side of domestic life. I explore the concept of the maternal in both works, and how the devastating consequences of a rigid religious upbringing will stigmatize the protagonists' lives forever. I also analyze the post-traumatic stress disorder that the two female protagonists suffer when they fail to assert themselves in such a hostile environment. In this framework, the final part of this work is devoted to reflecting upon the acknowledgment of personal failure and the impossibility of redemption. The illusion of freedom coupled with the sociocultural breeding causes the subversion of the moral edicts, and the death of the protagonists who seem to disintegrate and fade away into a non-existence of their own.

Keywords: Female Irish identity, abuse, trauma, failure.

Resumen:

Este artículo pretende analizar las complejas construcciones femeninas de la identidad, el trauma y el fracaso personal en The Beauty Queen of Leenane (1996), de Martin McDonagh, y A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing (2013), de Eimear McBride. Como sugiere el título, "No Angels in the House" hace referencia al papel central que la maternidad ha tenido en la sociedad tradicional irlandesa, y cómo progresivamente esta sublimación de la figura materna ha evidenciado un lado más sombrío de la vida doméstica. Exploro el concepto de lo maternal en ambas obras, y cómo las devastadoras consecuencias de una rígida educación religiosa estigmatizarán la vida de las protagonistas para siempre. También analizo el trastorno de estrés postraumático que sufren las dos protagonistas al no conseguir imponerse en un entorno adverso y hostil. En este marco, en la parte final de este trabajo reflexiono sobre el reconocimiento del fracaso personal y la imposibilidad de redención en las dos protagonistas. La ilusión de libertad unida al sustrato sociocultural provoca la subversión de los edictos morales, y la muerte de las protagonistas que parecen desintegrarse y desvanecerse en una inexistencia propia.

Palabras clave: Identidad femenina irlandesa, abuso, trauma, fracaso.

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Socio-cultural consruction of the woman's kingdom in 19th and early 20th C. in Ireland

"Woman reigns as an autocrat in the kingdom of her home. Her sway is absolute[1]"
Mary E. Butler

The oral tradition in Ireland has always considered the concept of the mother figure a keystone in the political system and leadership of the country. Whether myth or legend, according to Wood[2] (1985), the truth was that in everyday life women did not seem to hold such powerful roles. It is during the 18th and 19th centuries, due to the industrialization process and social shifts, that women are confined to the home sphere, especially devoted to domestic affairs. Home becomes the woman's kingdom where the mother is responsible for the wellbeing of the family members, the peacekeeper, loving wife, and caring mother[3] . Thus, when Coventry Patmore wrote the poem "The Angel in the House" inspired by his wife in 1863, he set the basis of the idealized image of the perfect Victorian wife and mother, always caring and, of course, submissive. From a Catholic tradition, Patmore praises the role of the angel-like woman who would mostly stay home, devoted to her husband and children.

Despite the emergence of new female voices who would start questioning the role of women in society and within the family sphere throughout the 19th c., this paragon of womanhood was popularized and significantly relevant during the following decades. In 1931, it was Virginia Woolf who clearly stated in a paper entitled "Professions for Women", the need to kill the "angel in the house" as she thought it was "part of the occupation of a woman writer".[4] Her vindication had to do with the fact that women would always be engaged in the cultural consciousness as responsible for the comfort of their home, given the patriarchal discourse and religious tradition. Thus, Woolf foresaw the difficulties for women to access the professional world and claimed the right to it. Since then, advancements have certainly been made, but despite the theoretical legal equality between men and women, in Irish society, it was not only a religious issue but also a constant preoccupation for the political system. In fact, in 1937 the Irish Constitution proclaimed that the natural place for a woman was her home, with her family. Article 4.1 stated that: "by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved".

1 Mary E. Butler quoted in E. Ap Hywel, (1991). "Elise and the Great Queens of Ireland: Femininity as constructed by Sinn Féin and the Abbey Theatre, 1901–1907". Gender in Irish Writing (eds) T. O'Brien Johnson and D. Cairns London, Open University Press, p. 24.

2 Wood, Helen Lanigan. (1985) "Women in Myths and Early Depictions", Irish Women: Image and Achievement, E. Ni Chuilleanain, ed. Dublin, Arlen House. pp. 13-14.

3 Bourke, Joanna. (1993). Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change and Housework in Ireland, 1890-1914 Oxford: Clarendon Press. p 262.

4 Showalter, Elaine. (1992). "Killing the Angel in the House: The Autonomy of Women Writers". The Antioch Review, 50(1/2), (pp. 207-220).

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As Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland questioned: "Who has been enforcing the law? Who has been providing legal services? The answer is the same in each case: either exclusively or predominantly, men. No woman had a hand in drafting the Constitution"[5] . A woman's place was therefore determined by the State and not by her own volition. Nothing is mentioned about the man's place, which appears to be free to choose and absent of any responsibility within the family sphere. As Marjorie Howes (1996) remarks: "women could best embody and safeguard the national character by staying home and becoming mothers, and in this context female emigration, women working outside the home, and resistance to traditional gender roles were all linked as threats to the national being" (p.137). It is precisely at this point where the heroic Irish father is recalled as the authoritarian figure who is to preserve the national identity against the usurpers. Thus, his presence at home is often evasive and most of the time remembered. That absence of the father determines the role of the typical Irish woman as an iconic sufferer who would sacrifice her own desires for the sake of the family, nation, and religion. In the words of Gerardine Meaney (1991), "Women become the guarantors of their men's status, bearers of national honour and the scapegoats of national identity, ... the territory over which power is exercised." (p.7)

As Conrad (2004) examines, the Irish principles of cohesion and integrity are rooted in the heterosexual family, as the essential communal unit. It is "the family cell" where women are "trapped".[6] Conrad observes that much of the fight to preserve the traditional Irish values against the foreigner, mostly from the British empire, had to do with the role of women as the backbone of religious activism. Thus, the mother figure is strongly related to the Virgin Mary and, according to Marina Warner (1976) that is "the Church's female paragon, and the ideal of the feminine personified" (p. xxiv). In other words, mothers who are virtuous, loyal, obedient and devoted to their husbands and family, are just as abnegated and faithful as the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. This contradiction between what is stated by the law and what is expected by society is certainly problematic. The socio-cultural construction of the Irish woman supports an imposition of the mother figure and, at the same time, the resistance to that is a constant vindication in Irish literature. This representation also embodies the perpetuation of a role that continues to undermine women's freedom. It is precisely the mother figure who will be responsible for ensuring tradition and stability in the family. Literature emerges as the fictional platform through which women's voices appear through lines of repression, conflict, and dismantlement of the mother.

5 Quoted by Mary Robinson in "Women and the Law in Ireland" in Irish Women's Studies Reader, (p. 100).

6 Conrad, Kathryn A, (2004). Locked in the Family Cell: Gender, Sexuality and Political Agency in Irish National Discourse. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. (p. xxiv).

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It is unquestionable that the Anglo-Irish modernists attempted to deconstruct the figure of the mother, a social and cultural reality, over which patriarchy remained inert. The mother becomes the perpetuator of that social order that denies her any authority and, inevitably, its victim. Authors like Bradbury and McFarlane (1976) consider Modernism a compelling separation from the burden of the historical in "breaking away from familiar functions of language and conventions of form".[7] (p.24). As Diane Stubbings (2000) observes:

> To be subject to the desired father necessitated first dissolving subjectivity within an Irish mother, a mother-Ireland. Yet, as writers such as O'Casey, Moore and Joyce emphasize, such a transformation is doomed to defeat when there is no effective father within either Irish society or Irish lore, and when the dominant mother-figures within Irish discourse insist on the death of the child in order to preserve their own status (p.140)

As a consequence, the traditional representation of the mother figure appears distorted and under question.

As Kristeva points out,

> That the Anglo-Irish modernists effectively murdered the mother should not be contested: she became the focus of blame for the stagnation and inertia of Irish society, for seducing Ireland's `children' into the service of timeworn authorities, and for the destruction and `disappearance' of Ireland's greatest source of potential renewal of her `sons'. Yet it must be remembered that in so constructing the mother, the writers were responding to and in many senses doing little more than exposing and deconstructing a figuration of the mother that was, effectively, a social and cultural reality[8]

The emotional paralysis that is symbolized in Joyce and Yeats' mother Ireland is certainly a product of the mythical tradition which pervades the literal. Both authors confront in their works the traditional patriarchal and religious social order and question the symbolic structures that sustain it. Myth and tradition are related through the mother figure - motherland and mother church as cultural elements that define Ireland. The paralysis that permeates Joyce's characters who suffer the weight of a traditional religious society are not redeemed by exile or through their silence. However, the deconstruction of these maternal figures within the Irish cultural tradition allowed new discourses and new voices to emerge. Thus, for McDonagh and McBride the strife for the liberation of myths and symbols is the primary focus of their particular revolution against the established order.

7 Bradbury Malcom and James McFarlane (1976), "The Name and Nature of Modernism", Modernism: 1890-1930, M. Bradbury and J. McFarlane, eds. London, Penguin, (p. 24).

8 Grosz, Elisabeth. (1989). Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, p. 54.

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Mothers and daughters: dwelling in entrapment

> For man and for woman the loss of the mother is a biological and psychic necessity, the first step on the way to becoming autonomous.
> Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*

The relationship between mothers and daughters is a universal theme with complex ramifications. One of the most problematic major themes implicit in this relationship is the question of identification, power and self-fulfillment.

According to Chodorow (1978), identity or personal identification is linked to power. In this sense, the exercise of power within the family unit is established according to issues such as gender, age and position within the family. She also differentiates the degree of identification between mothers and daughters, sons and mothers. While daughters usually remain in a problematic identification with the mother, sons tend to break this identification with the mother to the father. Furthermore, Carol J. Boyd (1989) explains that according to psychoanalytical theory, daughters unconsciously internalize values and behaviors that would explain their subsequent reproduction in adulthood (p 292). At the same time, Bell (2021) argues that the patriarchal role assumed by mothers whose husbands are absent reproduces coercive and dominant behaviors (p.129). Hence, the problematization of the bond and relationship between mothers and daughters results in wounded daughters, emasculated and vulnerable to the power and authority of mothers who perpetuate the patriarchal model of the traditional family. These interrelated aspects are key to understanding Martin McDonagh and Eimear McBride's works.

McDonagh and McBride present the reader with compelling stories that portray mothers who maintain a traditional social order that needs to be subverted and overcome. Their protagonist characters, Maureen and the unnamed girl, are the victims of a futile attempt to demythologize mother Ireland along with its deep religious heritage. As Adrienne Rich (1995) states that "the loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter, is the essential female tragedy" (p. 237) in which "matrophobia"[9] builds up.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane is a rural domestic drama written in 1996. The play tells the dark and bleak story of Maureen Folan, a forty-year-old virgin and unmarried woman who lives with her ranting mother, Mag Folan, in a country cottage in Leenane, Galway. McDonagh portrays the violent relationship between mother and daughter as a metaphor for the resistance of a country to deflate the idyllic myth of the Irish woman, Mother Ireland. Right from the very beginning, in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the readers learn that Maureen has been Mag's caregiver for over twenty years and yet

9 "Matrophobia can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mother's bondage". Adrienne Rich, Of woman born, p. 236.

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she, Maureen, feels "not appreciated" (McDonagh, 1996, 1:7). Despite her daughter's commitment, Mag is never grateful and always appears demanding: "Me bad back" (scene 1: 6); "Me porridge Maureen" (scene 1:7); "Me mug of tea you forgot!" (scene 2: 10); "No sugar in this, you forgot, go get me some" (scene 2:11). Maureen's replies to her constant requests are blatant and angry as a consequence of her continuous distress and neglect: "You´re oul and you are stupid and you don´t know what you are talking about" (scene 2: 10). "I could live with you so long as I was sure he´d be clobbering you soon after [...] with a big axe or something and took your head off and spat in your neck, I wouldn´t mind at all, going first. Oh no, I´d enjoy it, I would." (scene 2:11)

Her anxiety increases throughout the text as a response to her impossibility to flee from the family burden in which she is imprisoned. Her captivity and long-term relationship with her mother have firmly laid the foundations of an idle struggle for control. The psychological consequences of the recurrent subordination to her mother are shown in every scene of the play. Mag embodies the figure of the abuser who prevents the abused, Maureen, from pursuing her goals in life: "Interfering with my life again? Isn't it enough I´ve had to be on beck and call for you every day for the past twenty years?" (scene 2: 19). Her mother's constant meddling in her daughter's affairs reaches its climax when Maureen's boyfriend, Pato, writes a letter proposing Maureen to flee with him to Boston. "There's your sisters could take care of your mother and why should you have had the burden all these years, don't you deserve a life?" (scene 5: 41) When Ray (Pato's bother) delivers the letter, Maureen is not at home, but Mag reads the letter and decides to hide it from her daughter and burn it. In doing so, she is shattering Maureen's dreams and future expectations for good and all. When Maureen returns home and discovers the truth, she "stares at her [mother] in dumb shock and hate", (scene 7: 52). As Mag tries to justify herself: "He won't be putting me into no home! (scene 7: 53); "But how could you go with him? You do still have me to look after" (scene7: 54). Maureen, consciously appalled, hurts her mother violently and beats her to death with a fireplace poker. As Herman observes, the victim's rage turns into violence as an impossibility to manage long-term frustration and anxiety (Herman, 2001, p. 104). Paradoxically though, Maureen's revenge in killing her mother will not liberate her from her mother's haunting ghost. As she had foreseen previously in the play, Mag has finally taken over Maureen's self despite her apparent final liberation, which, in fact, is just an illusion. The harm has already been done after years of anxiety and distress. Maureen: "I suppose now you'll never be dying. You'll be hanging on forever, just to spite me. Mag: I will be hanging on forever!" (scene 2: 21).

The same impossibility to create affective bonds with her mother and develop an identity of her own is also found in *A Girl is a Half-form Thing*. Written during the years of economic growth, the novel was published a few years afterwards in the post-Tiger

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recessionary period, in 2013. Eimear McBride presents the reader with a first-person story of a girl who narrates her life from birth to her death by suicide in her early twenties. The protagonist, an unnamed girl, is a direct witness and victim of a rigid and dogmatic religious upbringing marked by verbal and sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional suffering. At the age of thirteen, the unnamed girl is sexually abused by her uncle, which will determine her sexual development and emotional breakdown. Aligned from her unloving mother and bonded to her brother who recovers from an operation for a brain tumor, the protagonist leaves home for college and only returns home when her brother's tumor reappears again. Her compelling homecoming will confront her again with her mother who will obliterate her persona to her final suicide. The protagonist tells her story in a fragmented, harsh, and almost unspeakable voice. Language becomes a representation of her vulnerability, broken state, and mental distress. According to Herman, victims of child abuse suffer altered states of consciousness and "speak in disguised language of secrets too terrible for words" (Herman, 2001, p. 96). It is precisely this fragmentation that appears to be "a defense mechanism that enables the victim to cope with ordinary life" (Herman, 2001, p. 103).

Despite the generational gap between Maureen and the unnamed girl, both literary works interlace common tropes of female Irish contemporary literature: the idyllic rural setting, male abandonment (the figure of the absent father), the role of the mother framed within a dogmatic religious discourse, and domestic strife.

It is not coincidental that McDonagh and McBride have chosen to represent their stories in rural Ireland, which has traditionally symbolized the bucolic "Emerald Isle". McDonagh depicts life in a rural cottage in Leenane, Galway, as an empty boring place, far from the recurrent pastoral setting: All you have to do is look out your window to see Ireland. And it's soon bored you'd be. 'There goes a calf.' (Pause) I be bored anyway; I be continually bored. (McDonagh, 1996, 9: 59). Similarly, MacBride describes the rural site like "…the country cold and wet with slugs going across the carpet every night […] Streaming down the walls and windows full of damp. God forsaken house it is look out it's lashing down. (McBride, 2013, p. 3). This gloomy environment parallels the murky atmosphere in each story. As Pato (Maureen's boyfriend) complains: "You can't kick a cow in Leenane without some bastard holding a grudge twenty year." (scene 9: 59). Likewise, in *A Girl is a half-formed thing*: "With all the people breathe the air around who think me strange and odd. It empties me. It throws me out." (McBride, 2013, p. 19).

In such an environment, McDonagh and McBride also debunk the bases of Irish nationalism by undermining the concept of the traditional family. At this point, both authors put on stage dysfunctional families with absent fathers, neglected daughters, and bitter mothers who constantly blame their daughters for their own misery. As

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Kathryn Conrad has remarked that "If the [family] cell is stable, so too are the social institutions built upon it, and one can present to the world one's capacity to rule. Instabilities must therefore be constructed and treated as foreign—not only to the family, not only to one's political position, but also to the nation as a whole." [10](Conrad 204, p.10)

The lack of a father figure in both stories provokes the mothers' frustration. As the unnamed girl wonders: "Where's Daddy? Gone. Why's that? Just is […] Of course, he wasn't surprised he ran off. Walked she said… What kind of father is that you tell me?" (McBride, 2013, pp.1-10). Furthermore, their self-inflicted suffering makes them disclose their moral obligation to perpetuate a patriarchal religious discourse, which activates domination and abuse against their daughters, only to preserve women locked in a mythical construction despite the irretrievably disintegrating reality. In the words of Diane Stubbings (2000), "In the profound suffering that the mother reflects, the child is drawn- through guilt - into a position that demands sacrifice. The mother, thereby, creates the space for the martyr. And the martyr, concomitantly, creates the space where the mother may be venerated for the suffering she endures." (p. 65).

Therefore, the maternal archetype displayed in both stories corresponds to that of the suffering mother, a self-induced victim, who is also ready to dismantle any attempt of subversion to keep a gendered hierarchy of dominance and submission. Both mothers suffer from their daughters' defiance of the traditional rules, but far from reaching out to them, they display cruel verbal attacks: Mag (in Beauty Queen): "Young girls should not be out gallivanting with fellas! Whore!" (scene 2: 20). The unnamed girl´s mother: "Telling me what to do you're a fucking slut and all the world knows that. Shut up. Shut up." (McBride, 2013, p. 47).

As De Beauvoir (1972) describes, "the mater dolorosa forges from her sufferings a weapon that she uses sadistically; her displays of resignation give rise to guilt feelings in the child which often last a lifetime; they are still more harmful than her displays of aggression."[11] (p. 530).

Both physical and psychological harm systematically occur in both narratives. By keeping a rigid control over her daughter, Mag tries to disempower Maureen and eventually, she manages to disconnect her daughter from reality. Maureen: "I get ... I do get confused" (scene 9:62). The transformation Maureen undergoes in the story put her in a mental state in which she can no longer differentiate the real from the imaginary. Her futile attempts to develop her own life have finally collapsed into a meaningless existence. Mag: "But how could you go with him? You do still have me to

10 Conrad, K ,2004, p. 10. Locked in the Family Cell: *Gender, Sexuality and Political Agency in Irish National Discourse*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

11 Simon de Beauvoir, 1972. The Second Sex, p. 530

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look after". Maureen: "(*in a happy daze*) He asked me to go to America with him? Pato asked me to go to America with him?" She enters into a state of bewilderment with "a single and almost lazy motion" (scene 9: 54).

In *A Girl is a half-formed Thing*, the protagonist's mother verbally and physically abuses her daughter as a consequence of her inability to cope with her own misfortunes. Violence happens erratically. At this stage, victims can never find protection. The unnamed girl is unable to rely on her mother or any member of her family. Her mother's recurrent speech is usually enhanced by multiple religious references, which contributes to undermining the girl's reference world. Of course, religion and indoctrination play a crucial role in the process of victimization.

> Slap and slap and slap. Push you in the corner. Mammy. Mammy. Getting red face. Getting sore face. Slap again she. Slap again. Screaming. You imbecile. You stupid. I cupping all my blood nose in my jumper. Crouch. You. Bold. Boy. You. Stupid. Stupid. You'll never manage anything. You're a moron. He's right. You're a moron. Hail Mary. How hard can it be? Hail Mary. (McBride, 2013, p. 12)

This recurrent aggressive language, riddled with insults and hatred, is a common aspect of both works. Some references in McBride's narrative suggest that the story might take place during the nineties. This fact indicates that McDonagh and McBride have contextualized their works during a time in which new forms of representation appear. The "in-yer-face" theatre emerged in the nineties to expose life in harsh and brutal ways. Authors such as Sara Kane, Martin McDonagh, Tracy Letts, Mark Ravenhill and Mark Neilson, among others, stand out in this theatrical current. In fact, the theatrical influence in McBride's work comes precisely from the works of Sara Kane and Martin McDonagh. As White (2018) contends "With its form and style blurring the boundaries of the literary and the theatrical, her novel can be read as a play or a monologue (p.12). One of the fundamental characteristics of this type of theater lies in the emotional stress that affects the characters. The anxiety and tension generated usually unleash psychological and physical abuse, violence, and cruelty. Schemes are broken and the moral principles of society are altered. As Alex Sierz states, "Violence becomes impossible to ignore when it confronts you by showing pain, humiliation and degradation [….] Violent acts are shocking because they break the rules of debate; they go beyond words and can get out of control." (Sierz, 2000, pp 8-9).

This portrayal of abusive mothers in a traditional Irish society certainly unsettles readers and provokes immediate reactions. Both authors succeed in confronting and articulating feelings of anxiety, rage, and trauma through women who feel grief and contempt. Furthermore, McDonagh and McBride use their protagonist characters to demand the reader's understanding and engagement. Maureen and the unnamed girl find credibility is often questioned which causes them a deep feeling of helplessness

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and neglect. Both women try to fight against oppressive mothers and a society that denies them any support. In this sense, Laura Brown's feminist analysis of the history of the term trauma in psychology is noteworthy.

> This picture of "normal" traumatic events gives shape to my problem as a feminist therapist with the classic definitions of appropriate etiologies for psychic trauma. "Human experience" as referred to in our diagnostic manuals, and as the subject for much of the important writing on trauma, often means "male human experience" or, at the least, an experience common to both women and men. The range of human experience becomes the range of what is normal and usual in the lives of men of the dominant class; white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men. Trauma is thus that which disrupts these particular human lives, but no other. (Brown, 2001, p. 101).

In that light, it can be considered that any traumatic event that does not fit within those parameters aforementioned can be questioned or simply denied. That is, if traumatic events do not respond to what has been traditionally acknowledged, then others are "to be tolerated; that psychic pain in response to oppression is pathological, not a normal response to abnormal events. It is not seen as traumatic". (Brown, 2001, p. 105). That explains that from a "feminist perspective, which draws our attention to the lives of girls and women, to the secret, private, hidden experiences of everyday pain, reminds us that traumatic events do lie within the range of normal human experience" (Brown, 2001, p. 110).

Maureen and the unnamed girl are drawn together as victims of their mothers in a society that ignores their suffering and permits continuity. Their constant impossibility makes them share feelings of apprehension, bewilderment and unfulfilled identity. Their individual trauma needs support from the community, so they can reconnect and recover in a form of identification and fraternity. If the community fails to embrace victims within the scope of a collective matter, then victims "continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to" (Erikson, 1976, p. 154). At this point, it is where Maureen and the unnamed girl find themselves entrapped in a vicious circle from which they can't escape. Their final desperation provokes their self-collapse. For Maureen, after years of distress, the brutal acknowledgment that her mother has hindered her last attempt at a life of her own puts her in a state of meaningless existence. For the unnamed girl, her brother's death accelerates her final emotional downfall. The only affective bond in her life abandons her, leaving her as void of meaning as of spirit: "I shake. Feel that dizzy. Sit but alone. With my vomit. Behind eyes blunt. What I'd be. Demure. If I could. This wrong doubtful body should not have been mine […] I will and sit and drown and drown if the. Come water. Over land. Swallow up. Swallow me down. Drag me in the gullys. In the pipes please and the drains." (McBride, 2013, p. 162)

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These angry young women who dare to defy the conventional rules of the Irish society become visible to remind us of the devastating force of emotional disengagement, neglect, and oblivion. Even though there is a continuous social discussion on trauma and gender issues, the nature of the suffering and the consequences of the pain inflicted must be recognized to prevent victims from their "traumatic stressors"[12]. Only when there is a social understanding that faces and acknowledges this reality, we may believe that social change is possible.

Conclusion

Martin McDonagh and Eimar McBride grant readers with two unsettling stories that remind us of the resistance of a society that seems incapable of defeating the traditional mores of its history. Readers are witnesses to representations of the culture of shame in which repression and cruelty towards other human beings are supported by the patriarchal construction of women. A forty-year-old woman, Maureen, and the unnamed girl, in her early twenties, are clear examples of the generational transmission that perpetuates dysfunctional models of moral judgments on women. Mothers who belittle their daughters and neglect them, and daughters who fear their mothers and can't define their own identity. This dimension of trauma generates affliction and anxiety, and it is undeniable that both authors convey stories that appeal to public opinion, society, and political institutions. McDonagh's The Beauty Queen of Leenane and McBride's A girl is a half-formed Thing transcend the narrative of trauma and make us accomplices to acknowledge that there are no more angels in the house.

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12 Brown, Laura. (1995) p. 111.

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