



“Violence is the woman you never had” : Trauma of Women in Christina Reid's *The Belle of the Belfast City*

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<https://doi.org/10.36231/coedw.v36i1.1794>

Received: 20 April 2024; **Accepted:** 26 June 2024; **Published:** March 30, 2025

Abstract

This paper examines *The Belle of the Belfast City* by Christina Reid through the lens of trauma theory as outlined by Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth. The play depicts the influence of the Troubles in Northern Ireland as a religious and sectarian conflict between Protestants and Catholics on women. Reid's work is mainly about the reunion of three generations of working-class Protestant women during the time of the Anglo-Irish agreement in 1985. The play's female characters face many obstacles, including racism, forced migration, religious persecution, economic struggle, social exclusion, and abuse. The study presents how religion is used as a tool to justify violence against women. Women become targets of verbal and physical abuse, violence, and discrimination based on religious identification. This study delves into the ways trauma impacts the lives and identities of the characters, shedding light on the crucial role of memory in their recovery. Moreover, the study examines use of symbols and songs to make the women's trauma experiences stronger. It shows both the visual and emotional parts of their lives and stresses the healing power of art and cultural expression.

Keywords: religion, trauma, the Troubles, violence, women.



"العنف هو المرأة التي لم تحظى بها من قبل": صدمة النساء في مسرحية كريستينا ريد "حساء مدينة بلفاست"

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<https://doi.org/10.36231/coedw.v36i1.1794>

تاريخ الإستلام: ٢٠٢٤/٤/٢٠، تاريخ القبول: ٢٠٢٤/٦/٢٦، تاريخ النشر الإلكتروني: ٢٠٢٥/٣/٣٠

المستخلص :

يقدم البحث دراسة لمسرحية "حساء مدينة بلفاست" للكاتبة كريستينا ريد من خلال نظرية الصدمة كما وردت في أعمال جوديث هيرمان وكاثيري كاروث. تصور المسرحية المعضلة الإيرلندية في إيرلندا الشمالية باعتبارها صراعاً دينياً وطائفيًا بين البروتستانت والكاثوليك وتأثيرها على النساء. يتناول عمل ريد بشكل رئيسي لقاء ثلاثة أجيال من النساء العاملات البروتستانتيات خلال فترة الاتفاقية الأنجلو-أيرلندية في عام ١٩٨٥. تواجه شخصيات المسرحية النسائية العديد من العقبات، بما في ذلك العنصرية والهجرة القسرية والاضطهاد الديني والصراع الاقتصادي والاستبعاد الاجتماعي والإساءة. يشرح البحث كيفية استخدام الدين كأداة لتبرير العنف ضد النساء. تصبح النساء هدفًا للإساءة اللفظية والجسدية والعنف والتمييز بناءً على الهوية الدينية. يتعمق هذا البحث في الطرق التي تؤثر بها الصدمة في حياة وهوية الشخصيات، مسلطاً الضوء على الدور الحاسم للذاكرة في عملية تعافيهن. وعلاوة على ذلك، يدرس البحث استخدام الرموز والأغاني لتعزيز تجارب الصدمة لدى النساء يظهر البحث كل من الجوانب البصرية والعاطفية لحياتهن ويؤكد على القوة الشافية للفن والتعبير الثقافي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدين، الصدمة، المعضلة الإيرلندية، العنف، المرأة.

1. Introduction

The issue of violence against women in patriarchal societies is a serious matter that has extensive implications. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the profound effects that various forms of violence have on the physical, mental, and social health of women during the Troubles. In order to make society safer and more equal for women, people need to comprehend all sides of this issue.

Within the history of literature, some writers stand out in the history of literature because they write about things not brought up in historical books (Alolaiwi, 2023). Christina Reid's *The Belle of the Belfast City* is a good example, the play takes place in Belfast in 1986, along with the anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The play portrays the familial inner struggles within the political upheaval occurring in the streets of Belfast during the Troubles. In order to accomplish their own personal goals and exert their influence, extreme groups take advantage of religious and sectarian conflicts. This is especially true with regard to vulnerable individuals, particularly women.

The reunion of three generations of working-class women is the central theme of the story. Dolly, the grandmother, Vi, the oldest daughter, Rose, the second daughter, who arrived from London with her mixed-race daughter, Belle, their cousin Janet joined them. Jack, Janet's sibling is also present at the family gathering. He and his sister Janet experienced the loss of their parents during their childhood, and Dolly took care of the children with her now deceased husband Joe.

In the midst of sociopolitical upheaval and protests, the play's plot centers on its characters, whose lives are profoundly affected by the consequences of this sectarian war.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Key Words

2.1.1 The Troubles

The Troubles were a thirty-year conflict in Northern Ireland between nationalists and loyalists. It started in the late 1960s and ended in 1998. People around the world sometimes refer to it as an "irregular war" or a "low-level war," and they also call it the Northern Ireland conflict. The signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 marked the end of this war, which started in the late 1960s. Most of the Troubles happened in Northern Ireland, but there were also times when bloodshed spread to parts of the Republic of Ireland and England. The struggle was primarily political and nationalistic, and events from the past made it worse. Although the two sides were known as Protestant and Catholic, it was not officially considered a

religious fight, despite the racial and religious aspects. The condition of Northern Ireland was a crucial issue. Historical loyalists, the majority of whom were Ulster Protestants, desired Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom. The majority of Irish Catholic nationalists and republicans opposed Northern Ireland's membership in a unified Ireland and sought separation from the United Kingdom (Henriksen, 2008).

2.2 Related Works

When analyzing *The Belle of the Belfast City* (1989), a play by Christina Reid that looks into the trauma experienced by women during the Troubles, it is important to refer to relevant literary works that provide additional insight into this topic. A noteworthy connected piece is *Women Divided Gender, Religion and Politics in Northern Ireland*, (1997) a book by Rosemary Sales that explores the effects of the Northern Irish conflict on women. Judith Herman's book, *Trauma and Recovery the Aftermath of Violence— From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1997), provides an academic viewpoint regarding the emotional trauma endured by individuals throughout times of conflict and war. Rachel Tracie's book, *Christina Reid's Theatre of Memory and Identity Within and Beyond the Troubles* (2018), examines the manner in which societal expectations and gender norms contribute to the fear and distress endured by women residing in areas afflicted by conflict. Regarding gender and violence, an article titled "Gender based violence, religion and forced displacement: Protective and risk factors" (2023) by Sandra Pertek and a group of authors sheds light on the experiences of women directly affected by violence and horrific events. These interconnected literary pieces provide essential references for comprehending the trauma endured by women throughout the Troubles, laying a solid groundwork for further investigation.

3. The Analytical Part

3.1 Methodology of the Study

Trauma theory is a psychological framework that seeks to understand the impact of traumatic experiences on individuals. It explores the complex interplay between the event itself and the subsequent psychological effects it may have on an individual's mental and emotional well-being. Traumatic experiences can range from a single event, such as a car accident or physical assault, to ongoing and repeated instances of abuse or violence. In the psychological and psychiatric domains, the term "trauma" was adopted to describe the psychological impact of distressing or disturbing events. This usage emerged from the work of Sigmund Freud and his followers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Freud developed the theory of psychoanalysis, which explored the influence of unconscious processes on human behavior and psychological well-being. He believed that the mind

had various defense mechanisms in place to protect an individual from overwhelming or distressing experiences. He referred to this defense mechanism as the "psychical apparatus" or the "shield" of the psyche. According to Freud, the purpose of these defense mechanisms was to keep distressing or traumatic thoughts, memories, and desires outside of conscious awareness, thereby protecting the individual from psychological harm. However, Freud also suggested that under certain circumstances, such as when someone experiences a highly traumatic event, the defense mechanisms might fail, and the individual could be overwhelmed by the intensity of the experience. This could result in the surfacing of repressed or unconscious material, leading to psychological symptoms or distress (Hartman, 2003).

Cathy Caruth, a prominent literary critic and professor in the field of trauma studies, employs literature in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* to deepen her investigation into the framework of traumatic occurrences. Caruth's work uses a comprehensive analysis of literary, psychoanalytic, philosophical, and film texts to effectively demonstrate that although certain events lack complete comprehension, they acquire significance through the act of narration and reception by others. Caruth examines how communities grapple with the aftermath of violence, trauma, and conflict, and how these events shape the remembrance of history and personal narratives, while highlighting the role of literature in providing solace and comprehension amidst the anguish of war (Caruth, 1995)

While Judith Herman is an influential psychiatrist and trauma expert known for her groundbreaking work on trauma and its effects. She has made significant contributions to the field of trauma studies, particularly in relation to complex trauma and the experiences of survivors of interpersonal violence. Herman has written extensively about the traumatic effects of war on individuals and communities. In her book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, she devotes significant attention to the psychological and social consequences of war-related trauma (Herman, 1997).

3.2 Data Analysis

The stories of the Dunbar family are reflected in the memories of Belle 's onstage narration as Belle recollects her first visit to Belfast, the Dunbar family adeptly depicts major family events, moving the play smoothly through time. By challenging the boundaries of structure in this manner, Reid not only creates a stimulating but also a creative theatrical experience, she demonstrates a theatrical sense of amusement. Additionally, Reid employs photographs to reveal the connections between familial representation and individual identity (Tracie, 2018).

The play has twenty-two songs, and they all have different lyrics, lengths, rhymes, beats, and styles. Folk songs, ballads, baby rhymes, negro-spirituals, and Sunday school chants are some of them. The title sets the mood, sounds nice and serves as a nickname for the singer Dolly. By using "the" repeatedly, the author wants to hint that Belle is more than just the Belle of Belfast. It is clear that there is only one Belle and one Belfast.

In the same way that the word "of" gives it some kind of shape, it also suggests a break. Also, Reid creates a tension between continuity and discontinuity by making the name "Belle" vaguely refer to either Dolly when she was young or to her granddaughter. The fact that Dolly occasionally transforms back into "Belle" on stage, appearing clearly revived, adds to the interest. Fragmentation in the play makes the reader think of Belfast at the time, which was in chaos and fragmentation. It is not just for aesthetic reasons that songs used in Reid's play; they also criticize contemporary society by bringing it up at the light of the past (Prlvas-Breaute, 2011).

The scene opens in 1986 in Belfast City, effectively evoking a sense of time travel for the reader. Numerous photographs, each capturing a unique moment in time, decorate the room. The walls are adorned with a tapestry of recollections, fostering a spirit reminiscent of the past. The most prominent and sizable image is a concert poster depicting a young Dolly in 1925 when she gained fame as "The Belle of Belfast City" and was performing in music venues. Memories pour out of her like a torrent. The room shrinks in size as she journeys back to a time when she was a celebrated and renowned singer. Reid mixes together the insecure, unstable, and frightening reality of current Belfast with the romanticized memories of the past.

As in the case of Dolly, having positive memories can greatly help to cope with traumatic events. They offer comfort, optimism, and the ability to fight back. Recalling happier moments and encouraging people to concentrate on the positive aspects of their lives can function as a resource for resilience during difficult times. Reflecting on pleasant memories can also help people gain perspective and identify ways to reinterpret traumatic experiences more positively (Contractor, et al., 2020).

The involvement and representation of women in politics were impacted throughout the Troubles. The conflict was mostly between militia groups and political parties mostly made up of men. This made it harder for women to get involved in choices and change economic policies that would help them. As is the case with Vi, she remains unmarried and responsible for providing financial support and care for her family. She directs the family's shop, which continues to sell just necessities and is closed most days because

of the chaos on the street. In Belfast during the 1980s Irish women faced significant challenges in their efforts to endure political oppression and economic struggle. The shop, which supports Vi and her family financially in living a modest life, is not saved from the greed of the Unionists, who want to use it for their political advantage. It is situated on one of Belfast's main streets, and that is what makes it important.

Societies that have undergone violent conflicts due to ethnic differences or national identity have frequently been characterized by traditionalist views on the roles of women. There has been evidence of extreme opinions on social and moral issues in Northern Ireland. Many women in Northern Ireland also hold these views. A closer examination reveals a more complicated situation. Women definitely feel very connected to their families. Women typically put more effort into helping their communities and families than they do into fighting for gender equality. Because of this, women all over Northern Ireland have been involved in a wide range of difficult labor (Davies & Roulston,2000).

Vi tells Jack that Davy wants to participate in the coming protest while his mother prevents him from doing that. Vi asks Jack to tell Davy not to join the protest to keep him safe, but Jack refuses. Vi says, “He can’t hear the grand speeches Jack. He goes because the flags and the banners and the crowds excite him. The violence excites him” (Reid, 2008, p.10). The cycle of violence can be perpetuated by untreated personal trauma; such as abuse or witnessing violence. As a coping method, violence may be more common among men who have unresolved trauma. Davy could be considered a typical male who feels excited about violence. The extension of a culture of violence can be attributed to societal standards and expectations surrounding masculinity. Typical concepts of masculinity that emphasize qualities such as dominance, aggression, and control can potentially create a climate in which certain men may feel driven to engage in acts of violence as a means to establish their authority or uphold their social standing (Meyer-Parlapanis & Konstanz, 2018).

When Vi asks Jack to prevent Davy from joining the big demonstration, she is concerned about Davy’s mother if anything bad happens to him. Vi tells Jack, “Look at him Jack. In God’s name do you need the like of him on the streets of Belfast in order to win! He has a mental age of ten” (Reid, 2008, p.10). Fear and anxiety are common among mothers throughout the Troubles due to the continuous bloodshed and instability.

Frequently, they were worried that their children may be abducted, hurt, or trapped in the middle of a sectarian conflict. As a result of being arrested, imprisoned, or moving to avoid abuse, some women were separated from

their children against their will. Being away from their kids, even for a short time, can cause a lot of psychological suffering and trauma. Tragically, women who lost children during the Troubles went through a period of profound grief and pain. Loss and emotional trauma may remain for a long time after the passing of a child in a politically tense and violent environment. Mothers frequently assume the responsibility of guardianship for their children, employing ways to ensure their safety and protect them from possible harm. Constant vigilance and heightened awareness of potential hazards can be factors in the development of long-term stress and trauma (Merrilees et al., 2010).

Multiple political groups exploited the grievances and vulnerabilities of deprived people and minority communities to achieve their own objectives during the Troubles in Ireland. Davy's presence in the play is significant in several ways. For instance, he is the only one in the cast who relies entirely on sight. Davy cannot hear or speak, so Vi and Belle are his only means of communication. Davy embodies the type of person Jack and his companions rely on—someone who neither demands nor asks questions.

The dominant power seeks to create a deceptive atmosphere in order to deceive people (Chassib & Lazim, 2024). Jack has a significant base of supporters by manipulating religion for his own benefit and by relying on the assistance of common people like Davy. As Davy's case shows, politicians during the Troubles used religion for personal gain, even if it harmed common people and families. Although Davy's mother is worried about him, Jack ignores Vi's demand when she asks him to persuade Davy not to take part in the protest. Davy's participation in the protest and his inability to hear or speak put him in danger, which makes his mother fearful. But Jack disregards Davy's mother's concerns and puts her son at risk of losing him. Using faith and religious belief as an excuse puts the mother through psychological suffering. Furthermore, when Davy becomes entangled in the chaos, Jack immediately uses him as a symbolic figure for the loyalist faction (Tracie, 2018). Partisan groups prey on the anxieties and injustices experienced by underrepresented groups to increase their membership and support base. People from lower-class origins, who experience economic hardship or unfairness because of their race or religion are frequently their targets. These groups attract people at risk of radicalization by providing a platform to express their frustrations and a sense of belonging.

Vi informs Jack that Janet is on her way to see the family after separating from her husband. Jack was surprised because he has no idea about her visit or trouble. He criticizes that marriage, saying he has never been satisfied with it from the beginning. Jack comments, "That marriage has always been

a thorn in my side” (Reid, 2008, p.6). Meanwhile, Rose, Dolly’s second daughter, arrives with her mixed-race daughter Belle.

For the first time in her life, Belle travels to Belfast, giving the audience the chance to observe the strange and unusual conditions that exist in the city, which the characters regard as normal. Belle is a passionate person with such an intense connection with Dolly that she is full of self-confidence and enjoys the pleasure of living her life. Belle explores the memories of her mother, aunts, and grandmother to recover her place in Belfast and her family's past.

Belle is a young black woman who has spent most of her life in London. She has her first visit to her relatives in Northern Ireland. While discussions of several Irish identities are commonplace now, Reid makes important contributions in this area, showing the roles played by gender, disability, and race in her community. Belle, in particular, embodies an individual who could uphold her diverse identities—Irish, English, British, American, black, Protestant, and more—without submitting to any of them (Lonergan, 2015). Belle introduces herself, “I’m not from Africa. I’m from England. And my mother is from Belfast and my father is from America. I think that makes me an Anglo/Irish Yank” (Reid, 2008, p.12). Black women have to deal with suffering every day because their race and skin color are criticized. The racial institutional structure keeps these traumatic events lasting and helps them arise (Naseef, 2020).

Belle describes herself as having multiple nationalities and identifies herself with varied characteristics, indicating an identity crisis. Her mother is white Irish and her father is black American, and she was born as a result of an affair between them, thus, she is caught between different backgrounds. Belle is raised by a single mother who was a refugee in London from a racist society in Belfast. On the contrary, Belle’s father exploits Rose and rejects Belle, depriving her of the safety and kindness each child needs, which causes her a kind of trauma of identity and belonging. Belle tells her mother Rose, “You’re not black. I am. You can decide not to be a Protestant. I can’t decide not to be black.” (Reid, 2008, p.51). The Troubles deeply impacted the identities of women. Belle’s speech reflects the attempt to regain one's sense of self in the face of violence, loss, and a fractured background.

Creating a new sense of self or being is like choosing a new set of values and facts to live by (Allawi, 2023, p.15). After all these years, Belle is eager to learn whatever there is to know about Belfast when she finally gets there. It becomes evident during the play that Belle only watches and remarks on what is happening rather than actively participating. This clearly distinguishes those who are permitted to engage in daily life in Belfast. She

must fight for a place in family history as an African American and Irish lady who stands apart from their memories. Dolly is going through the family photo album with Belle, who asks her to slow down and elaborate on each one. Her curiosity about her family's history has been sparked. The more she learns about Ireland, the more she knows about herself. The photos serve as recollection tools; Belle is able to place herself in her family's stories. Her grandma's narration changes the flat two-dimensionality of the picture into a three-dimensional performance, and Belle observes the whole process curiously (Tracie, 2018).

In an attempt to establish her place within her family, Belfast, and Ireland, Belle chooses to engage in the forthcoming protests actively. However, her mother, Rose, warns her against it. Rose has escaped Belfast seeking liberty and security in London, and now she has come back, she is determined to protect her daughter from any possible threats in Belfast. Rose says, "I didn't give you a life to see it destroyed on the streets of Belfast." (Reid, 2008, p.51). Rose is familiar with Belfast's history of sectarian conflicts, where the weak, women, and children often become victims. She recognizes that her daughter, above all, is a woman of mixed race, which makes her an easy target in the protest arena. Women and children are frequently the most negatively affected during times of war and conflict. They endure the full force of violence, displacement, and loss. Amidst the destruction of infrastructure and shattered communities, women face challenges in maintaining the means to support their surviving children. Women must assume a pivotal role in mitigating the impact of violence among their families (Madzima, 2013).

Uniquely, each female character in the story encounters the sectarian division and gender politics of the North. Reid's most apparent victim is Janet. She is stuck between her religious brother Jack, who is fundamentally religious, and her husband Peter, who is unable to have children. Throughout the play, she is on a journey to gradually find her independence. She has a temporary affair with, David a younger man, while visiting Rose in London. She is terrified of her new sexual freedom, "I don't feel guilty, and I should feel guilty. I need to feel guilty." (Reid, 2008, p.23). She is ultimately capable of dismissing both Jack and Peter as the action progresses, having embraced her newly discovered strength. Sexual repression and impotence are used as metaphors for issues related to masculinity in this play. They address the conflict in the North by referring to stability in contrast to change, but they additionally assert against the idea of the Ulster Protestant man as being strong and in charge (Macbeth, 1999).

After separating from her Catholic officer husband, Janet passes through a difficult time. Janet has abandoned Peter, according to her brother Jack, "I

knew no good would come of that marriage," (Reid, 2008, p.6). Peter, in contrast to David, is only present in the play in Janet's hallucinations; his brief stage appearance is in a hallucinating situation when he remains silent, emphasizing his absence from the play as a result of her delusions. Janet faces her demons, even if only in her mind, by switching between Jack and Peter. Peter reminds her of her unhappy marriage, while Jack represents her psych-religious trauma, which got worse when he got religious (Saunders, 2023).

The effects of the woman's traumatic childhood are evident in her feelings of shame, fear of sin, submission, and hesitation regarding her own life. First, she endures the psychological and physical isolation of her Presbyterian upbringing, and then she lives under the oppressive rule of her tyrannical brother, who poses as her religious protector. As a woman, Janet still lacks the maturity to know her worth and how to advocate for herself (Ojrzyńska, 2013).

Caruth claims that it is possible to characterize the relationship between traumatic experiences and memory as intricate and diverse. Traumatic events significantly impact memory fragmentation, memory formation, and memory recall capacity. The link between traumatic experiences and memory is complex and multi-dimensional. Experiencing a traumatic event can significantly alter the processes of memory creation, recall, and fragmentation (Caruth, 1995). Janet gets hallucinations and fragmented memories; because of her traumatic experience, she feels confused, and she becomes nostalgic for those days when she was a child to be saved in Dolly's arms. Janet says:

I want what I can't have. I want it to be like it was. Like the old days in the photo album. I want Dolly to put her arms around me and sing me to sleep. And when I waken, I want Jack to have gone away forever. And Peter too. I'm tired being the sister of a devil and the wife of a saint (Reid, 2008, p.26).

Despite being in a nearly all-Protestant relationship for over a decade, Janet seeks peace between her two confessions by marrying Peter, a Catholic member of the RUC. After a love affair in England, Janet returns to her home country a completely changed person. She succeeds in severing her ties to her brother and husband, rejecting the role that Irish tradition expects her to perform; she is now a woman in her own right rather than a wife and sister (Middeke & Schnierer, 2010). Janet says, "I want a life of my own. My own! Nobody else's! Not his, not Peter's. Not yours. Most of all not yours. I am walking away from this violence." (Reid, 2008, p.57). Even though she feels very guilty about her sins, she has an affair with a married man. Both her former husband and her brother, who hold different but equally harsh

religious and politically conservative views, have an effect on her spirit and body. The two men, who usually disagree with each other over faith and politics, work together to demand and declare their control over the female body and life (Bradford, et al., 2021).

Even when Janet attempts to challenge her brother and husband and defy societal, cultural, and religious standards, she falls into another male-dominated trap. David informs Janet that he is married. He takes advantage of Janet's weakness. She is mentally and emotionally suffering because of her impotent husband and her abusive brother. Janet tells Rose how he has told her, "Before we went to bed. So I can't even claim I was tricked. Or seduced. I don't even feel guilty about that." (Reid, 2008, p.25).

These perspectives on marriage and the family often conceal domestic violence. Women who have experienced violence in both Catholic and Protestant communities discover that families are frequently unsupportive based on religious beliefs. At the same time, they must be the most significant source of support. Few women from either community find clergy helpful, despite their widespread interaction. As a result of the Catholic Church's anti-divorce attitude, clergy frequently push wives to reconcile with their abusive husbands. Certain men seek assistance from the clergy in an effort to persuade their wives to return. 'Community shame' had an impact on women who left their husbands. People may perceive women involved in paramilitary activities as betraying the community (Sales, 2002).

It becomes evident that patriarchy and masculine norms contribute equally to the Troubles and the struggle among the sects. Additionally, tensions exist within the Protestant community, as evidenced by Janet's alienation from her brother Jack; however, the matter is more than religious conflict between two sects. Janet exemplifies the younger generation, which continues to value family and history while also trying to find new meanings for these concepts; she is adaptable and seeks a balance between the present and the past, with the expectation that future developments will be more favorable (Middeke & Schnierer, 2010).

As Jack grew up to be a politician and gain social status with a large group of supporters, he needed to maintain a specific pattern of strength. He has power through violence, which he then uses to control his position. It is complicated for Jack to build a good, long-lasting relationship, so he remains single. Jack lacks both psychological stability and emotional balance, which are required for this type of relationship. As a result, he decides to attain this equilibrium by violently attacking his sister. Janet tells him, "You love it, Jack. You need it. It excites you. Violence is the woman you never had." (Reid, 2008, p.57).

In an innocent scene from their childhood, Janet brings a statue of the Virgin Mary to place beside her bed, but Jack violently takes it from her and crashed it because he thinks that is a sin; “It’s a blasphemous Popish statue. A heathen image of Christ’s mother... You have sinned Janet. You have broken the fourth commandment. You must be punished.” (Reid, 2008, p.22). He thought that he had the right to abuse his sister just because she was female. Even though they were children, Janet believed that Jack wanted to dominate her beliefs and thoughts after this happened. During her early years, when she was still developing her own ideas and sense of religious identity, Jack abused the power of his impact on his sister.

The ability to develop independence, responsibility, industry, identity, and closeness emerges sequentially, starting with the fundamental trust formed in early childhood. Every subsequent stage of development is impacted when fundamental trust is affected. Thus, it makes sense that the corrective approach will be more successful the earlier it is applied. When people who went through traumatic events as kids become adults, healing is a challenging and complicated process, and what is good is that it is possible to get better (Herman, 1997).

In patriarchal societies, men usually believe that women are sources of temptation and sin and that it's their job to guide and train them or even punish them when they commit a sin. Jack declares, “Women! Women! Temptation! Deception! You’re the instruments of the devil! The root of all evil!” (Reid, 2008, p.23). Jack's view of women is not far from that conception. As a result of the religious nature of the Northern Ireland conflict, violence against women has attracted significant attention throughout the period of the conflict to strengthen religious affiliation. Jack “Guard your mothers. Guard your daughters. Guard your sisters and your wives.” (Reid, 2008, p.55).

Sociologist Jack Katz's book *Seductions of crime: moral and sensual attractions in doing evil* makes a significant contribution by examining the methods used to perpetrate specific types of violence. It includes the lifestyle of the violator, the thoughts and emotions immediately preceding and after the act of violence, and the way of life of the perpetrator. Katz tries to get around the problem of asking the wrong questions in criminological theory by looking into the feelings and experiences of people who commit crimes. Within the framework of criminal behavior, Katz examines the function of violence and its effects on the people involved. He stresses that, for some violent behaviors, logical choice and profit are not the only motivating factors. According to Katz, some people justify their violent actions not based on pure cost-benefit analysis but also because they help them maintain a certain social role and lifestyle that define their lives. As well as talking

about the physical effects of violence, he suggests that limiting it because of materialistic worries might make people less intense in disagreements with others and make people question their dedication to the manner in which they live. As a result, Katz's writings recognize the significance of violent crime and the potential trauma that it causes to both the victims and the perpetrators involved (Katz, 1988).

In this context, Jack's violence against his sister Janet is attributable to the fact that both were subjected to physical abuse by their mother in their childhood. Dolly mentions, "You know the sort. Goes to church on Sunday, an' prays to God to give her strength to beat the kids on Monday" (Reid, 2008, p.15). This shows that Jack himself could be defined as a victim of these acts. This is what Vi suggests when she is asked by Rose why she always defends Jack. Vi replies, "Somebody has to defend him. Everybody needs a friend on their side" (Reid, 2008, p.35).

On the other hand, Jack grew up in a patriarchal type of community where he has the right to punish his sister. Hence, his mother's authority regarding male protection is approved by her own religious beliefs when she tells him to protect his sister from seduction and temptation since she is a female. This reinforces religiousness in paternalistic communities such as Northern Ireland.

The most pervasive and largely unacknowledged human rights violation worldwide is violence against women. It is a serious health issue that lowers women's self-esteem, weakens their physical and mental health, and consumes their energy. Violence increases the long-term risk of trauma and physical disability, substance and alcohol abuse, depression, and chronic pain, among other health issues, for women, in addition to causing physical harm. Institutions worldwide justify, conceal, or ignore violence against women, despite the enormous costs of the offence. Men frequently direct towards women, particularly those within the family, the same actions that would be met with repercussions if directed at an employer, neighbor, or someone familiar (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005).

Jack is not included in the familial bond that comprises these five ladies. Vi says, "It wasn't easy for him, livin' in a household of women, with no man to..." (Reid, 2008, p.35). In the opening flashback, Dolly and the other girls get ready to dance, sing, and dress. It also shows Jack's distinction from the girls; he does not participate in their family's atmosphere of joy and happiness. The evident solitude further complicates his persona by connecting it with vulnerabilities. His childhood is blamed for his religious fundamentalism and the emotional isolation that comes with it. Dolly describes how their mother verbally abused Jack and Janet by using

derogatory terms such as vice, morals, and evil. As the male of the family, Jack is responsible for protecting his sister against temptation (Macbeth, 1999). Dolly clarifies, "Not with a big stick. With words. Words like, sin, the world and the devil. Moreover, the worst sins were the sinful lusts of the flesh. Jack's job as the man of the house, was to protect his sister from temptation" (Reid, 2008, p.15). In contrast to the short-term effects of physical punishment, the psychological, emotional, and social impact of using religious thoughts and beliefs to instill fear and terror can cause far-reaching trauma.

The female members of a family can offer each other significant assistance while dealing with male authority figures by creating a sense of unity, strength, and empathy. Upon Janet's arrival in Belfast, she avoids confronting Jack. However, Vi pushes her to confront him, taking advantage of the presence of her female relatives. Assistance and motivation from those around her are essential to enduring and helping the process of getting better. Vi says, "She has to face him sooner or later. And I told her, better sooner while the family's all here gathered round her." (Reid, 2008, p.31).

The Irish patriarchal society often marginalized the perspectives and voices of women during the Troubles. Social norms and traditional gender roles restricted women to the private sphere and restricted their participation and representation in formal political processes. Women were neglected in political parties and decision-making positions where males predominated. The main characters in Reid's works challenge the obstacles built by oppression, sectarianism, racism, and class, all the while dealing with their preoccupation with their own gender. With their proto-feminist content, at the very least, these plays perform political employment (Wyss, 2015).

Reid's characters are very challenging, and they take away the system's outer veneer. Years of violent conflict and bloodshed not only inflict damage on a state, but also gradually erode law protections, resulting in injustice and power struggles. Reid's plays employ various forms of intellectual and physical disability to expose the rigidity of concepts such as political and religious identity, norm and freedom, and tradition and taboo. Characters who are disabled are either direct victims of military violence whose bodies are badly damaged by explosions and bullets, or they are mentally ill people who experience sectarian conflicts by losing their mental stability (Lachman, 2018).

Indeed, Reid provided one of the most obvious feminist analyses of the Troubles when she argued that sectarianism served to obscure other kinds of injustice, such as the subordination and marginalization of women affected by the conflict. Reid's plays reveal her deep awareness of social injustice,

her devotion to the working-class community, and her knowledge of their culture. Despite the wide variety of settings and characters presented in Reid's plays, they all have a common thread: they are all dramatizations of individuals' journeys towards self-realization, free from the limitations of socially constructed roles (Loneragan, 2015).

4. Conclusion

The trauma that women have endured during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, as well as the issue of violence against them, are compelling and deeply interconnected topics. Reid's *The Belle of the Belfast City* introduces the various and complex ways in which women have been affected by the Troubles. The play depicts the hardships and challenging circumstances they encountered, including physical violence, emotional trauma, and loss of business and sense of safety. The characters in the play navigate a society marked by political and religious divisions, wherein women's voices and reports are frequently marginalized or silenced. Furthermore, *The Belle of Belfast City* emphasizes the tenacity and power that women possess in the face of hardship. It depicts their ability to forge connections, assist one another, and challenge oppressive systems. The play stresses the importance of unity amongst women and the power of collective action in seeking justice and healing.

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