Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of English Language and Literature
British Cultural Studies

SATIRIC REPRESENTATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN MARTIN McDONAGH'S *THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE*, *A SKULL IN CONNEMARA* AND *THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE*

İmren Yelmiş

PhD Dissertation

Ankara, 2014

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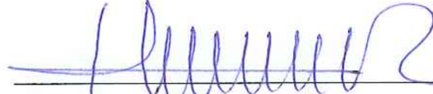
KABUL VE ONAY

İmren Yelmiş tarafından hazırlanan "Satiric Representations of Violence in Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*" başlıklı bu çalışma, 11 Nisan 2014 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Doktora Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

Prof. Dr. Burçin EROL (Başkan)

Prof. Dr. A. Deniz BOZER (Danışman)

Prof. Dr. Belgin ELBİR



Doç. Dr. Huriye REİS

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Şebnem KAYA

Yukarıdaki imzaların adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduğunu onaylarım.

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ÖZET

YELMİŞ, İmren. Martin McDonagh'nın *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (Leenane'in Güzellik Kraliçesi), *A Skull in Connemara* (Connemara'da Bir Kafatası) ve *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (Inishmore'un Yüzbaşısı) Adlı Oyunlarında Şiddetin Hicvedilişi. Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2014.

1990'lar, İrlanda ve İrlandalılara özgü pek çok problemle özdeşleştiği için, onlar için çok önemlidir: ekonomik problemler ve bunun sonucunda meydana gelen işsizlik ve göç, yurtdışında yaşanan ırkçılığa dayalı tacizler, psikolojik sorunlar, ciddi etkisi İrlanda Cumhuriyeti'nde de hissedilen, Katoliklerle Protestanlar arasındaki Kuzey İrlanda'nın politik durumu hakkındaki anlaşmazlıklardan dolayı ortaya çıkan ve 1960'ların sonunda başlayıp 1998'deki Belfast Anlaşması ile son bulan Kuzey İrlanda sorunu ("the Troubles"), 1995-2000 yıllarını kapsayan ve İrlanda'nın ekonomik bakımdan gelişmesi anlamına gelen Celtic Kaplanları döneminin bir özelliği olan ben-merkezcilik ve son olarak, şiddet sorunu, bu problemler arasında sayılabilir. Anglo-İrlandalı oyun yazarı Martin McDonagh, özellikle *Leenane Üçlemesi*'nde yer alan *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996) ve *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) ve *Aran Üçlemesi*'nde bulunan *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001) adlı oyunlarında, doksanlarda yaşanan şiddet sorununu vurgulayarak eleştirel ve grotesk biçimde bu problemlere değinmektedir. McDonagh, bu oyunlarda, bu yıllarda gözlemlenen şiddet sorununu yukarıda belirtilen sosyo-ekonomik, sosyo-politik, sosyo-kültürel ve psiko-sosyolojik problemlerin doğrudan sonucu olarak yansıtmaktadır. Her bölümde, farklı bir şiddet türü, farklı bir oyun doğrultusunda analiz edilmektedir. Birinci Bölüm'de, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, McDonagh'nın aile içi şiddet üzerine eleştirisi bakımından analiz edilmektedir. İkinci Bölüm'de, *A Skull in Connemara*, aile içi ve kurumsal şiddet üzerine eleştirisi doğrultusunda incelenmiştir. Son olarak, Üçüncü Bölüm'de, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, politik şiddet üzerine eleştirisi bakımından tartışılmaktadır. McDonagh'nın 1990'lar İrlandasında yaşanan farklı şiddet çeşitleri üzerine eleştirisi üzerinden şu sonuca varılabileceği tartışılmaktadır: McDonagh'nın eleştirisi sadece İrlanda veya İrlandalılarla ilgili değildir; aynı zamanda evrensel bir boyutu da vardır. McDonagh'nın, İrlanda'da geçen oyunlarında İrlanda'yı ve İrlandalıyı karikatürleştirdiğine dair

eleştirilerin aksine, bu çalışma, bu üç oyunu, McDonagh’nın 1990’lar boyunca İrlanda’da yaşanan “gerçek” şiddet olaylarını hicvetmesi ve “suratına tiyatro” özellikleriyle grotesgi eleştiri araçları olarak kullanması bakımından analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Martin McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *A Skull in Connemara*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, aile içi şiddet, kurumsal şiddet, politik şiddet, şiddet hicvi, 1990’larda İrlanda, suratına tiyatro, grotesk, evrensel şiddet

ABSTRACT

YELMİŞ, İmren. Satiric Representations of Violence in Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*. PhD Dissertation, Ankara, 2014.

The 1990s have been of utmost importance for Ireland and the Irish as this decade is characterised by a great diversity of problems: economic problems, unemployment and migration which came as a result of these problems, racial harassment experienced abroad, psychological problems, the Troubles whose serious impact was felt not only in Northern Ireland but also in the Republic of Ireland, which emerged as a consequence of the conflict between the Catholics and the Protestants because of the political status of Northern Ireland and which began at the end of the 1960s and ended in 1998 with Belfast Agreement; self-centredness emerging as a repercussion of the Celtic Tiger period which was witnessed between 1995 and 2000 and which means economic development in Ireland, and, lastly, the problem of violence. Martin McDonagh, an Anglo-Irish playwright, represents these problems emphasising the problem of violence encountered in this decade in a satirical but grotesque way particularly in his *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *A Skull in Connemara* (1997), which are included in his *Leenane Trilogy* and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001), which is in his *The Aran Trilogy*. In these plays, McDonagh reflects the problem of violence observed throughout the decade as a direct consequence of the above-stated socio-economic, socio-political, socio-cultural and psycho-sociological problems. In each chapter a different kind of violence is analysed in relation to a different play. In Chapter I, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is analysed in terms of McDonagh's satire on domestic violence. In Chapter II, *A Skull in Connemara* is examined in relation to his satire on domestic and institutional violence. Lastly, in Chapter III, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is discussed with regard to political violence. It is argued that McDonagh's satire on different kinds of violence witnessed in Ireland in the 1990s relates not only to Ireland and the Irish but is also universal in scope. Contrary to the general argument that McDonagh caricaturises Ireland and the Irish, this dissertation aims at analysing these three plays with respect to

McDonagh's satire on "real" violence witnessed in Ireland throughout the 1990s, and to his use of in-yer-face theatre characteristics and the grotesque as means of his satire.

Key Words: Martin McDonagh, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane A Skull in Connemara*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, satire on violence, Ireland in the 1990s, in-yer-face theatre, the grotesque, universal violence

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INTRODUCTION

"Is Irishness an integral part to the trilogy[ies],
or is it merely the 'icing on the cake?'
And, most importantly, what remains of McDonagh's play[s]
when most of the Irish features have been cut?"
(Vandevelde 350)

"If I was writing a book about Martin McDonagh,
I'd call it Monstrous Children*"*
(Garry Hynes, qtd in. Lonergan, The Theatre and Films *163)*

Martin McDonagh has always been in the foreground in the Irish literary scene and film industry since his career as a well-known playwright began with the production of his play, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* in 1996. He has either been hailed as a great success as a playwright or has been severely criticised on the grounds that in his works he uses extreme violence observed between individuals, in animals, between ideologically different group members, on societal level or even international level, and that he caricaturises Ireland and the Irish as mad people in his plays that deal with Ireland, which is considered by many as an insult to the nation. Another interesting characteristic about McDonagh that attracts the attention of critics is that he communicates all the serious violent actions to his audience/ readers through farce, in a grotesque and humorous manner. By virtue of his use of violence and unusual style, McDonagh became one of the most spoken-about Irish playwrights since the mid 1990s.

McDonagh's use of violence has certainly been studied and analysed by many critics from different perspectives. The following works can be shown among the most significant of these studies: In her "Gender, Sexuality and Violence in the Work of Martin McDonagh," for example, Mária Kurdi discusses the relationship between sex and violence observed in

McDonagh's plays adding that McDonagh's depiction of Western Ireland is "exaggerated" and "imaginary" (99). Moreover, Marion Castleberry in his "Comedy and Violence in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*" mainly focuses on the juxtaposition of comic elements with the serious issue of violence in McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*. Similarly, Maria Doyle, in her "Breaking Bodies: The Presence of Violence on Martin McDonagh's Stage," deals with the presence of comedy together with violent acts in the performance of McDonagh's plays on stage and audience reactions to these plays. On the other hand, Laura Eldred, in her "Martin McDonagh and the Contemporary Gothic," presents a discussion about McDonagh's use of gothic horror elements as means of reflecting acts of violence. According to Eldred, reflective of gothic horror which makes the audience uncomfortable, McDonagh's "plays critique his audiences' love of violence even while presenting violence aesthetically" (125). In addition, Norma Alfonso, in her article, "Trapped in Ireland: Violence and Irishness in McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*," examines *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* in terms of in-yer-face theatre to show how barbaric human beings can be. She argues that, by using the characteristics of in-yer-face theatre, McDonagh criticises the contemporary world and the main reason for the violence that the characters apply is "the longing for rootedness" ("Trapped in Ireland"). Alfonso suggests that since the characters cannot feel a sense of belonging to their country Ireland, they resort to violence. Besides, Erdinç Parlak's book *Martin McDonagh'nın Oyunlarında Şiddet* (Violence in Martin McDonagh's Plays), which was published in 2012, mirrors violent acts in McDonagh's plays (excluding *a Behanding in Spokane*). In this study, Parlak tries to discover the reasons lying behind the serious violent acts performed by McDonagh's characters. He presents the main reasons of violence in the plays as lack of love between family members (57), loneliness, the inability to fulfil the wishes (146), ignoring the laws (146), the vicious circle that the characters are caught in, and hopelessnes (146). He also accentuates that characters generally apply violence for the sake of violence without any logical reason (79). Parlak's presentation of violence in McDonagh's plays is not limited to Ireland. He also analyses *Pillowman* as his main idea is to analyse all of McDonagh's plays in relation to violence.

As can be observed clearly, McDonagh's use of violence has been analysed by quite a few different critics from different perspectives. Different from all these works about McDonagh's use of violence, however, this dissertation aims at analysing McDonagh's use of violence from a satirical perspective and within the limits of McDonagh's Irish plays. In this dissertation, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* will be analysed in relation to domestic violence, *A Skull in Connemara* in terms of domestic and institutional violence and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* as regards political violence. It will also be argued that, unlike the general criticism levelled at McDonagh stating that his plays about Ireland do not reflect Irish facts and that he uses violence for the sake of violence and that McDonagh, rather than reflecting the realities, "caricaturises Ireland and the Irish" (Grene, Seminar notes), this dissertation argues that the violent acts shown in these three plays are reflective of real Irish problems related to violence and are direct or indirect results of Irish socio-economic, socio-political and psycho-sociological problems observed in Ireland in the 1990s, and that McDonagh satirises these acts of violence no matter what the reasons behind them are.

Martin McDonagh is regarded as an Anglo-Irish playwright as a result of his inseparable link with England where he was born and where he still lives, and with Ireland which he visits during his holidays. As his life as an Anglo-Irish playwright offers profound insights to his plays, it will be useful to give concise biographical information on McDonagh. He was born on 26 March 1970 in London to Catholic working class Irish immigrant parents (Stone 1) and grew up in Elephant and Castle in South London, England in an environment surrounded by Irish immigrants (Chambers and Jordan 2). This experience of being born and brought up in a diasporic community is, in fact, a significant detail because it renders it possible for McDonagh's audience/ readers to observe traces of this biographical information in some of his characters depicted as in exile and experiencing the discomfort of liminality and being considered as 'the other.' Furthermore, throughout his childhood he went to Easkey, County Sligo and Connemara in Ireland on his summer holidays. When he was a boy, McDonagh was also in the Catholic parish church as a choirboy, and he was brought up with stories about Irish nationalism (O'Toole, "*The Pillowman*" 387). These experiences display that living abroad as a minority has not prevented him from being

surrounded by the religious codes of Catholicism and cultural codes of the Irish nation such as maintaining strict ties with Irish national identity. These cultural codes, however, were questioned by him in the later phase of his life, and both the Church and the concept of national identity have been used as nothing more than topics for his plays that he uses as tools for his satire. It is also important to note that even after his parents went back to Ireland to live in Lettermullan, he preferred to stay in London with his elder brother (Grene, "Ireland" 299) John Michael McDonagh, who, like Martin McDonagh, is a screenwriter and film director.

Given McDonagh's continuous interaction with Irish culture along with English culture, it can be argued that his works and personality have been thoroughly shaped by these two different cultures, which give him a hybrid identity. What he revealed to Sean O'Hagan is a typical reflection of a hybrid person's condition: "I don't feel I have to defend myself for being English or for being Irish, because, in a way, I don't feel either. And, in another way, of course, I'm both" (qtd. in Chambers and Jordan 3). This in-betweenness and difficulty of identifying oneself with one specific national identity is an inevitable consequence of the socio-cultural fact called diaspora, which creates ambivalence and problematic cultural representation for a person who has cross-cultural experiences. Hence, as Chambers and Jordan state, it will not be wrong to define McDonagh as "the man from nowhere, elsewhere, anywhere and everywhere, displaced without the longing for a place or a position either within a single nationality or canon" (10-11). It may also be argued that this hybridity, in a way, makes it possible for him to depict Irish characters in a caricaturesque way. His hybrid identity also brings him closer to his characters for whom individual identity is more important than any specific national identity, as later confessed by McDonagh himself to O'Toole in an interview. He stated that he "was never any sort of nationalist" (qtd. in Lanters, "The Identity" 17). Moreover, as Sayın puts it, according to McDonagh, there has never been such a thing called 'Irish national identity'; this identity is an artificial concept created in theatre and other branches of art in order to make people believe in their intrinsic value and to unite under the same flag (27).

McDonagh's hybrid identity, however, has not prevented him from being identified with Irish drama; nevertheless, he has taken his place among contemporary Irish playwrights. Before his outstanding work *The Pillowman* (2003), he wrote mainly about the Irish and Ireland. According to Chambers and Jordan, as the setting of his earlier plays was mainly Ireland, as Irish actors were very influential in the production of these plays, as these plays were created with particularly "Irish stage environments in mind," and "conceived of through the mobile lens of Irishness, whatever that happens to mean, McDonagh is categorised by many as an Irish playwright" (2) and a successful and acclaimed one, too, as confirmed by Sternlich, who states that "[i]t is not just Nobel laureates who are recognised internationally, but also many excellent writers [such as] Martin McDonagh" (14).

Before McDonagh obtained his place as a significant Irish playwright, he, however, had to struggle very much, and he became a playwright only after many difficult failed attempts. At the age of 16, he left school, and faced long-term unemployment which created the opportunity for abundant free time that rendered it possible for him to write (Thorson 29). McDonagh admits that he began to write because he had no other choice, and "[i]t was a way of avoiding work and earning a bit of money" (qtd. in Sierz 222). As a matter of fact, his journey of writing started with writing film scripts and radio plays which ended in total failure and frustration. As Sierz points out, the twenty-two radio plays that McDonagh wrote before he became a playwright were rejected by the BBC (222). McDonagh, however, did not stop writing. It may be said that he owes his contemporary success in writing plays or film scripts to his great effort and sheer determination that he exhibited in the face of his previous failed attempts.

The influential figure in recognising Martin McDonagh's dramatic talent is actually Garry Hynes, who works as the Artistic Director of the Druid Theatre in Galway. As Sayın emphasises, for Hynes, the Irish dramatic tradition and the nationalist labels or messages associated with it are problematised by contemporary playwrights and directors in parallel with the new dynamics of the Irish society. Sayın further states that it is the very questioning nature of McDonagh that attracted the attention of Hynes (11). In his plays, the role of nationalist ideas is distorted, ridiculed and deconstructed. His stylistically and

thematically different approach towards Ireland compared to the first two phases of Irish playwrights which will be dealt with in detail in the following parts of the dissertation, and his unusual usage of expressions in his plays gradually brought him fame and success. As a result, in Lanters' words, McDonagh's "success story began […] in the West of Ireland" ("Playwrights" 212) with his *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* when it was first performed in Galway on 1 February 1996 (Huber 13). Thus, since 1996 McDonagh has been in the foreground as one of the most significant playwrights for the academia and for many literary critics.

His being given many prizes only within a year is reflective of his success as a playwright. Only in 1996 he was the recipient of many respected awards such as the George Devine Award for Most Promising Playwright, the Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Newcomer and the Writers' Guild Award for Best Fringe Play (Huber 13). These awards are also indicative of the views of the critics in London and Dublin on McDonagh as "a new voice, a new quality in Irish drama, which could be described as action-centred, grotesque, manipulative, postmodern even, as regards its ironic potential for deconstruction" (Huber 13). The plays that he wrote shortly after *The Beauty Queen*, that is, *The Lonesome West* (1997), *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) and *The Cripple of Inishman* (1997) brought him even more fame.

Throughout his writing career, McDonagh has been inspired by different sources; two of the most influential ones are, obviously, television and films that are inseparable parts of his life. After leaving school at the age of sixteen, he continuously watched television and films (Lanters, "Playwrights" 213). He confesses that films and producing films play an important part in his life, and, he, in his own words, sees theatre from "a film fan's perspective" (qtd. in Lanters, "Playwrights" 213). McDonagh actually has been actively working and making a determined effort in the film industry particularly since 2005, the year he produced his first film called *Six Shooter* (2005) which is set in Ireland. For this film, McDonagh was awarded an Academy Award for Live Action Short Film (Chambers and Jordan 2). Moreover, his film, *In Bruges* (2008) may be seen as another success for McDonagh as he was presented with many significant awards for this film such as the

British Independent Film Awards (Best Screenplay, 2008), BAFTA (Best Screenplay - Original, 2008), BSFC (Best New Filmmaker, 2008), Edgar Allan Poe Award (Best Motion Picture Screenplay, 2009), Evening Standard British Film Award (Best Screenplay, 2009), Irish Film and Television Award (Best Script for Film, 2009) and Irish Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild Award (Best Film Script, 2009) ("Martin McDonagh Awards"). The last film that he wrote and directed is *Seven Psychopaths* (2012) which received good reviews from both the audience and film critics. McDonagh's above-mentioned films prove that he has achieved success not only in the theatre but also in the film industry.

It is noteworthy to state that McDonagh has written eight plays until today: *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) and *The Lonesome West* (1997), which constitute his *Leenane Trilogy*, and *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (1996), *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001) and *The Banshees of Inisheer* (incomplete and never published), which comprise his *Aran Trilogy*. As a matter of fact, these earlier six plays in his two different trilogies are his Irish plays as they take place in western Ireland. Later, he wrote *The Pillowman* (2003), his first play that is not about Ireland and whose setting might be anywhere in the world as it is not mentioned in the play, and *A Behanding in Spokane* (2010) whose setting is the United States. Thus, it is seen that since 2003 the settings of McDonagh's plays have exhibited a shift from Ireland to different places in the world.

At this point, brief information on McDonagh's plays that will not be included in this dissertation may be useful in terms of getting a general idea about his dramatic career as a whole. As in this dissertation the first two plays of *The Leenane Trilogy*, that is to say, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *A Skull in Connemara* will be studied, it will be meaningful to begin with a short analysis of the trilogy's last play *The Lonesome West*, which premiered in 1997 in Galway, and to which sometimes references are given particularly in *A Skull* to clarify McDonagh's satire on violence. *The Lonesome West*, which, similar to the above-mentioned two plays, is set in western Ireland, and which is about the quarrels and conflicts of the two brothers, Coleman and Valene, is a significant play which incorporates elements of tragedy and comedy. Different from *The Beauty Queen* and *A Skull*, which criticise family and police institutions respectively, *The Lonesome West* is a satire on the

Church, which has proved ineffective in solving the problem of violence in society. In Lonergan's words, in the play "McDonagh offers a [...] critique of the west of Ireland. [...]. [H]e is showing that the West should not be idealised as a place of stunning natural beauty [...]; it is also a place that has been [...] impoverished in many ways – not just economically, but culturally" (*The Theatre and Films* 31). The description of family relationships in the play is as abnormal as the deaths in the surrounding areas. The disclosure of the murder of Coleman's and Valene's father by Coleman only because the father dislikes Coleman's hair style is as strange as the deaths of the neighbours as none of the deceased has died naturally but in a strange way. Moreover, psychological and physical violence is at its peak when the brothers harass and depress each other through physical and verbal attacks. All these clashes are bleak pictures of life in both contemporary Ireland and the contemporary world. In other words, they are representative of the social problems related to violence witnessed today not only in Ireland but also throughout the world. Furthermore, that Father Welsh cannot prevent the serious clashes between family members and in society and, as a consequence, commits suicide, is, in fact, symbolic of the loss of the Church's authority in contemporary Ireland. In fact, the crucial question asked by Father Welsh summarises the condition in Leenane and the world: "What kind of a town is this at all?" (ii.140). The town here is actually "a conglomeration of social problems which are hyperbolized through slapstick routines" (Murphy, "The Stage Irish" 64) and a microcosmic representation of the entire world. The family relationship in the cottage is as unpleasant as the one between neighbours, and both the family institution and the town itself reflect the dark sides of life.

As for *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, which is the first play of the *Aran Trilogy*, it premiered at the Royal National Theatre in 1997 (Jones 123). The play deals with the rural Aran Islands and its inhabitants who always complain about the place. This rural and isolated place gains importance for them only when the film director, Robert Flaherty comes there to make a documentary called "Man of Aran," which is significant in terms of mirroring McDonagh's interest in the film industry, of presenting "how much [the] safety [of the ones living on the Aran] is at the mercy of the weather, the landscape and, in particular, the sea" (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 61), and in reflecting Irish culture in the Aran Islands and the local

colours related to it in the 1930s such as “a typical Aran family[’s] [...] traditional stone cottage (where they sleep side by side with their livestock),” the *curragh*, “a small [Irish] boat used for fishing,” “seaweed, which is used to fertilise the [...] crop of potatoes,” and “the sea” (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 61-62), which is vital for the ‘Man of Aran’ living mainly on fish. This documentary is also used as a dramatic device, which creates a chance for orphan and crippled Billy, who seems to be suffering from tuberculosis, to be among the film cast and eventually to escape from ‘boring’ Ireland and his two old nagging aunts to the USA to be able to pursue his own American dream. He leaves Ireland to discover his own individual identity. Yet, ironically, he realises that he can only find his individual identity in Ireland. Billy, in the end, returns to Ireland and when blood comes out of his mouth, he understands that his death is soon. The audience is sure that he is going to die in his own hometown where he belongs. To some extent, through Billy and the other characters, “Ireland [becomes] a country redefining itself” (Sierz 221). Ireland represents different meanings for the characters. First, it represents a place and national identity from which all the characters want to escape while later it comes to mean the only place for them to discover their individual identities.

Moreover, old mother images and, in Grene’s terms, “negative figurations of mother Ireland and her children” (“Ireland” 301) are important devices for McDonagh in the play. Billy’s two elderly aunts, like old Mag in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, are associated with old mother Ireland that has overshadowed the new generation with her history, struggle for independence and her old institutions (Sayın 79-80). Younger people feel trapped by the traditional Irish way of life and are in need of a fresh start. That is why McDonagh’s characters try to escape their old mothers or mother-like figures, as does Billy.

As for *The Pillowman*, it was first put on stage at the National Theatre in 2003. It was declared as the Best New Play of the year 2004, and McDonagh was given the Olivier Award with this play (Thorson 5). In spite of McDonagh’s tendency to reflect violence in a humorous way, the play can hardly be regarded as humorous (Cliff 135) as his serious satirical tone is also felt in the play. As McGrath points out, some members of the audience

felt disturbed and left the play while it was being performed (qtd. in Cliff 135) because of the violence openly exhibited on stage, which brings the play in close proximity with in-yer-face theatre. The play is about mysteriously and violently murdered children. Katurian, the protagonist of the play, writes strange, mysterious and fairy-tale-like short stories which are all about children and violence. As the police understand that there is a relationship between the tactics that are used in the murders in real life and the ones in his stories, Katurian is closely interrogated, even violently treated by the police and imprisoned together with his brother, Michal. Gradually it is revealed that the murderer is in fact nobody other than Michal, who kills children as a result of his *naivité* and innocent way of understanding Katurian's stories. These horrific stories, actually, echo Katurian's own childhood experiences. It is later understood that his parents have applied violence to his brother; on the other hand, they have brought up Katurian with more tenderness and care. Realising what his parents have done, Katurian has smothered both of his parents with a pillow, saving his brother from parental violence. As a result of this tragic event, in a short story Katurian later creates a Pillowman, who helps children die as he does not want children to be victimised by the corrupt adult world. It is with this idea in mind that Katurian, in the end, kills his own child-like brother with a pillow, turning into a Pillowman himself, saving his brother from the violence in the world and becoming the strange and frightening hero in his own story. In the end, Katurian is killed by the police detective, Ariel. Within the framework of psycho-analytical analysis, the play may be reflective of how the personality of the writer may be shaped by what s/he has experienced throughout her/ his life even during the infancy. *The Pillowman*, in a way, becomes the epitome of "the way the narrator's unconscious problems keep asserting themselves over the course of the story" (Tyson 35) and of the "psychological history that begins in childhood experiences in the family" (Tyson 12). The play, as a consequence, may be regarded as the embodiment of a psychologically disturbed writer, and how his previous problematic experiences are unconsciously reflected in his literary works, and how they negatively shape the present.

It is also important to reiterate that *The Pillowman* is McDonagh's first play whose setting is not Ireland unlike his previous plays. Its setting can be any country in the world and at

any time under a totalitarian dictatorship, which makes the play universal in scope. Within this context, it may also be important to state that the play's premiere in 2003 coincides with the Iraq War, and in this sense, the play might also appeal to this war which was made in the name of the so-called "democracy." As Jordan argues, even though the play

> denies any specific context, it must be kept in mind that it was first performed in late 2003 as the War in Iraq (War on Terror) was ongoing, with democracy as one of its key motivations. Indeed, the interrogation techniques, notionally in the name of democracy, deployed by American army forces in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq find many parallels with the McDonagh play. (175)

The Pillowman, in this sense, mirrors the oppression of the state upon its people in the name of law and through the police institution. The people living within the totalitarian regime are already in a metaphorical prison. Hence, Katurian's being imprisoned is nothing more than his being transferred from a metaphorical prison into a physical one, and the physical prison is also the symbol of people's literally being suppressed by the state. The play is actually about the violation of human rights through state violence. When the play is considered in this respect, it may be argued that McDonagh deals with the rights of individuals in totalitarian regimes, state terror, the relationship between an individual and the state, the effect of family and the state on creating an identity, and social responsibilities of a writer (Sayın 112).

Lastly, McDonagh's most recent play, *A Behanding in Spokane*, his second play which is not set in Ireland, is a black comedy. Written in 2010, the play deals with the theme of violence, especially physical violence. Moreover, as Lonergan points out, it also "seems like an extended exercise in provocation: teasing us, testing its audiences' tolerance of bad language (notably in its use of taboo words absent from the other plays, such as 'cunt' and 'nigger')" (*The Theatre and Films* 116). The play, in fact, tells the tragic experience of Carmichael when he was seventeen in Spokane, Washington. A gang of youths consisting of six members, with whom he is not familiar, takes him to a mountainous area away from the town, and, without any reason, they tie his hand upon a railway. Then, a train which approaches very fast cuts his hand. What is more tragic and traumatic for young

Carmichael is the gang's "wav[ing] [him] goodbye" (*A Behanding*, i 10-11) with his own cut-off-hand. Carmichael, who is now in his forties and who exhibits abnormal characteristics as a consequence of his emotional breakdown, devotes his own life to finding his own left hand that was sold to a man whom he does not know. With this aim in his mind, he goes to a small town to buy his own hand from a white woman, Marilyn, and a black man, Toby. At this point, the tragic and violent event of the missing hand turns into black humour as later it is revealed that, in fact, Toby has stolen the hand that he wants to sell Carmichael from a museum which exhibits Aboriginal black hands. After the revelation of the truth, Carmichael gets very angry, and handcuffs Marilyn and Toby.

A Behanding, along with the theme of physical violence, is also about racism, otherness, the marginalised, and gender discrimination. Toby is always harassed by Carmichael and his mother because of his blackness. Moreover, Mervyn's following words are significant in terms of reflecting the issue of otherness: "I'd always hope something exciting would happen, y'know? Maybe a prostitute would get stabbed and I'd have to go rescue her? Or some lesbians would get stabbed? I wouldn't mind they were lesbians, I'd save 'em. You've gotta look out for people, y'know, even if they're different from ya" (ii 21). The play is significant in terms of its touching upon different topics related to the idea of 'the outcast' forced to live in the peripheries of society.

Before discussing McDonagh's satirical use of violence in relation to in-yer-face theatre, it will be useful to illustrate his place in Irish theatre. Although McDonagh is not considered as a traditional Irish writer, he is thematically, plot-wise and stylistically inspired by the writings of remarkable Irish writers such as John Millington Synge (1871-1909), Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) and Tom Murphy (1935-). The title of his play, *A Skull in Connemara*, for example, is taken from Lucky's speech in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (Lanters, "Playwrights" 213), which will be dealt with in detail in the second chapter. At this point, however, it may be briefly stated that the term is used functionally in both of the plays to present the dark side of life and dark moods of the characters. Furthermore, the similarity with Beckett is noticed "[i]n the repetitive bleakness of [their plays'] dialogue[s]" (Lonergan, *The Beauty Queen* vii). The note of desperation in the voices of the characters is

clear in both playwrights. Beckett's influence can also be felt in the last scene of *The Beauty Queen* in which Maureen, just "like the woman in Beckett's *Rockaby*, has already taken her mother's place in that same rocking-chair" (Grene, "Ireland" 301); the rocking chairs in both of the plays are symbolic of being trapped, and of lack of hope for the future. Besides, despite the fact that McDonagh denies having read Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* before he wrote *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the thematic similarity between these two plays is quite noticeable: the theme of the desire for killing a parent – the father by the son in the former play, and the mother by the daughter in the latter. As Grene argues, "[i]t is as though McDonagh has to take up where Synge left off, outdo him in violence, destroy the parent that Christy so repeatedly failed to kill" ("Ireland" 307). In both plays, killing the parent is associated with liberty from pressure on individuals. *The Beauty Queen* also bears close similarity to *The Playboy* in terms of each parent's being representative of a different country: Christy's father in *The Playboy* signifies England, which represents colonial pressure on Ireland and her children while Maureen's mother in *The Beauty Queen* is the symbol of Ireland which has been in a bad condition economically and as regards social issues in the postcolonial period. In this regard, considered in relation to *The Playboy*, *The Beauty Queen* might be regarded as reflective of Ireland's journey from the colonial experience into the postcolonial one. Another point worth mentioning is that McDonagh resembles Synge in terms of using dialect, storytelling and grotesque humour as well (Dean, "Tales Told" 67). Moreover, both Synge and McDonagh present the Irish and Ireland with stereotypical delineations, which, as a consequence, has resulted in much criticism directly levelled at both dramatists.

The similarities with Irish playwrights continue as follows: the common theme of entrapment and a terrible sense of desolation of women within the borders of traditional rural Ireland, to put it more specifically, in the cottage, which is clearly observed in Tom Murphy and Brian Friel, is used by McDonagh as well. Akin to Murphy's important work, *Bailegangaire* (1985), the focus of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is on a very antagonistic but mutually dependent "relationship between two women living in rural" Ireland (Lonergan, *The Beauty Queen* vii). *The Beauty Queen* is also similar to Friel's *Dancing at*

Lughnasa (1990) in that both introduce “women whose loneliness is occasionally interrupted by a radio” (Lonergan, *The Beauty Queen* vii). It is also important to note that the themes of being in exile abroad and in self-exile in Ireland – which are tragically delineated by Murphy in his works – are also of great significance in McDonagh’s works as will be illustrated in the second chapter. Moreover, as Lanters notes, “[s]torytelling as a ‘Western’ device is what ties Synge, Murphy, and McDonagh together, but through that device, each dramatist reflects the concerns and anxieties of his age” (Playwrights” 221). In conclusion, in relation to these above-explained similarities, it may be deduced that McDonagh has been inspired by and owes much to many Irish playwrights such as Synge, Beckett, Murphy and Friel, all of whom have substantially shaped his work.

It is true that McDonagh’s works are the combination of “old and new” (Chambers and Jordan 1). Examined in detail, however, his plays are seen to reflect his own style as well. In order to better understand and illustrate McDonagh’s writing style and the differences that he brought to Irish theatre, it will be necessary to give brief information on the three distinct phases of Irish theatre, which consists of the revival of Irish nationalism with the Abbey Theatre, continues with the novelties brought especially by playwrights such as Brian Friel, Hugh Leonard and Thomas Kilroy, and finally with the third phase represented especially by Anne Devlin, Marina Carr, Billy Roche, Enda Walsh, Mark O’Rowe and Martin McDonagh.

Ireland, which had been an English colony for centuries and, as a result, had been gradually Anglicised – as can be observed in the gradual replacement of the use of Gaelic with English, the gradual burial of rich Irish myths – was in need of a revival that would bring back ‘the Celtic twilight.’ At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, theatre became one of the instruments used particularly to create an Irish national identity by William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932) and J. M. Synge (1871-1909). As Flannery states, especially for William Butler Yeats, one of the founders of the Abbey Theatre in 1904, “Ireland was formulated in terms of three interrelated concepts – Unity of Being, Unity of Culture, and Unity of Image” and “these concepts […] may be seen […] to underlie most of the theories and practices upon which

he based the Irish dramatic movement" (58). The nationalistic efforts paved the way for Irish theatre founded by William Butler Yeats and (Lady) Augusta Gregory (Harrington 11), who, together with J. M. Synge and Sean O'Casey (1880-1964), constitute the first wave Irish writers "capable of dealing with a nation on the move" (Jordan, *Theatre Stuff* xix). The Abbey Theatre, which took its name in 1904 (it was previously called the Irish Literary Theatre and had opened in 1899), could not escape representing on stage the complicated political issues of the time (Richards, "Plays" 3), and is a key Irish institution in its exhibition of "the nationalist narrative of Irish political history" (Morgan xviii). The topics employed by the first wave Irish dramatists range from the myths and legends of Ireland as seen especially in the plays of Yeats and Gregory and Irish folklore observed in Synge's works mainly focusing on rural Irish life to political issues such as the clash between the Unionists and Republicans, the struggle of independence from England as reflected in O'Casey's works mainly set in urban Ireland. It may be stated that the first wave Irish dramatists primarily deal with issues related to national independence issues and cultural identity, and the first wave continued until the 1960s, until Sean O'Casey's death in 1964.

The 1960s, on the other hand, witnessed a completely radical change together with the second wave Irish drama. Change in the political status of Ireland in 1948 as a Republic and as fully independent from England influenced the topics in the works by the second wave dramatists such as Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, Hugh Leonard, John B. Keane and Thomas Kilroy. They mainly dealt with topics related to the problems especially encountered after the independence of the Irish, such as the fragmentation of the 'self.' As can be conspicuously seen in Brian Friel's works, for example, "the shape and nature of [Irish] society" is depicted as "fragmented and destablished" (Roche 74), which is later to be reflected by McDonagh himself as well. In addition to fragmentation, their focus was mainly on the topics such as migration and being in exile abroad rather than Irish nationalism for the creation of which the first wave dramatists had struggled so much. In Kiberd's words, "[i]t was as if the old nationalist narrative was beginning to break down, and 'Ireland' once again became a problematic notion, as its people renewed their interest

in its constituent parts" (qtd. in Morgan xviii). In short, the second wave dramatists now began to deal with their contemporary problems which required a new beginning rather than being restricted within the limits of the past concerns.

In the 1960s, the Abbey, "Ireland's official theatre," despite continuing to be a significant cultural place for Dublin, was no longer the centre of dramatic production (Morgan xviii). The playwrights of the second wave, as Fitz-Simon and O'Toole put it, established a reputation as a consequence of their plays' having their premieres in London and New York (qtd. in Morgan xviii). Thomas Kilroy thinks that he himself and his contemporaries who wrote in the 1960s are transitional figures and adds that "[h]aving been born into a traditional culture and seeing it undergo massive change, [he and his contemporaries] faced a problem in bridging the present and the past" (qtd. in Lanters, "Playwrights" 211). Living in a period of transition for Irish drama, second wave playwrights experienced in-betweenness; they were caught between the traditions of the past and the changes in the present. Nationalist ideologies may not be the main concern of these writers; however, as these writers are representative figures of transition from one period into another, they may sometimes reflect traces of the previous traditions, which may be exemplified by Friel's *Translations*, which is "a lament for the destruction of Gaelic civilisation" (Roche 105).

As for the third wave in which a radical change with regard to the idea of a nation and dramatic traditions has occurred, it may be put forth that this wave is very different from the first two waves stylistically, thematically and technically. Besides, while the previous century had to deal with the difficulties of creating a national theatre and "an indigenous dramatic tradition," the 1990s were totally against this notion in addition to the idea of "a continuous dramatic tradition as a totalizing and simplified concept" (Morgan xvii-xviii). To put it more clearly, each playwright of the third wave exhibits her/ his own peculiar style, and mainly they do not want to be continuously associated with any particular group or literary tradition. The third wave playwrights, as the most "alienated generation," have replaced the Abbey with international or regional theatres, which reflects that they have lost interest in or enthusiasm for a national theatre (Morgan xviii). Contemporary playwrights

do not want to be limited within the borders of one country, and for many what matters is individual identity rather than national identity. As John Peter argues,

> [a]ll important drama bears the imprint of its nationality; but countries that are battered, colonised, exploited, corrupt or insecure [...] tend to produce plays of conscience and self-examination. Who are we as a nation? Have we an identity? Should we be proud of it? If not, are we to blame? Such plays are the opposite of patriotic reassurance: they are made up of guilt, pity, anger and subversion. That is why the plays of Synge and O'Casey were first greeted with such fury. There is now a new generation of Irish writers who have moved on… This is the voice of a new Ireland that knows itself well enough not to be either guilty or completely self-absorbed… (In the trilogy [of McDonagh, for example]) you can see portraits of Ireland, but these pictures are neither parochial nor tribal; they would be understood all too well on several continents. This is a time of maturity. (qtd. in Vandevelde 301)

This "new Ireland" image is totally different from the times of Synge and O'Casey in which Ireland was considered according to the idea of nationalism in which an individual is thought of in relation to strong feelings of devotion to her/his country. Contrary to the late 1800s and early 1900s, however, the third wave is not shaped by nationalist sentiments. Such opinions, on the contrary, have been thoroughly questioned by contemporary Irish playwrights as a result of their postcolonial and in-between position, which has weakened their nationalist sentiments. That is why these playwrights, similar to the second wave dramatists, mainly deal with the search for ways "to discover the identity of the undivided Self" (Etherton 111) and to complete the missing parts of their fragmented selves in their works.

It may be put forth that the third wave, also called the new Renaissance, began in the 1980s with Anne Devlin, who is regarded as a significant Irish female voice and another Irish writer who has always been in search of "the ever-illusive Irish identity" (Farrelly 3,5). Devlin, through her characters, tries to create a female identity which is Irish and Catholic. The third wave continued in the 1990s with Marina Carr, who deals with the issue of being a woman in Ireland, and with Marie Jones, Sebastian Barry, Frank McGuinnes, Billy Roche (Farrelly 5,7), Enda Walsh, Mark O'Rowe and Conor McPherson. With this new wave's works, critics, rather than complaining about the great loss of a nationalist theatre, were

really content with "the possibilities of a decentralised Irish theatre and a peripatetic tradition" (Morgan xxii). Third wave dramatists, in a way, celebrate the diversity brought to Irish drama.

Although one of the playwrights of the third wave, McDonagh reflects also some traces of the first and second waves of Irish drama. However, unlike the writers of the first wave dramatists for whom Irish national identity had been of great significance and literature was a device to unite the nation, and the second wave generation in whose works national ideologies could still be observed to some extent, for McDonagh, there is not such a thing called national identity that encompasses a community or a nation; his work, on the contrary, has been a means to satirise the notion of national identity (Farrelly 2,10). Identity is still important for McDonagh; however, the key element that will remove the burden of the past that has been sitting on the shoulders of Irish people (Farrelly 10) is individual identity rather than national identity as discussed in the short analysis of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. McDonagh's characters immediately begin to talk about another topic when, on any occasion, they face questions of Irish history and identity (Vandevelde 295) as can be observed in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* in the egg game that represents the Anglo-Irish relationship. Bartley's main concern throughout the egg game is his hair and jumper that have been dirtied with the eggs, not Irish history (vi 71-72). As Farrelly points out,

> McDonagh understands the past – the playwrights who have come before. He understands their frustration but does not share it. For McDonagh, the answer is simple – Irish identity does not [exist] and has never existed. It was a dream created to give an oppressed people a reason to believe in their own importance. It served a valuable purpose, but it can no longer be considered useful or helpful. Ireland is beginning a new chapter and must do so without the chains of the past. (10)

In this regard, it might be argued that McDonagh's works deconstruct the established thematic norms of writing prior to the 1990s, which gave specific significance to representations of Irish nationality and history. As Michael Billington puts forward, "McDonagh constantly plunders the past" (qtd. in Lanters, "Playwrights" 212). He profoundly makes use of elements of the past not because he is devoted to Irish history but

because he uses these elements as dramatic devices and instruments for his works. McDonagh satirises and ridicules the Irish writers of the past who respond to tragedy merely with passivity (Farrelly 11). He cannot bear a passive role as, in his own point of view, the only way to cope with the tragedy is taking on an active role in life through defying fate, country and history (Farrelly 11). In addition, he does not want to be entrapped within the limits of history and in Harris's words, he wants to see himself "as rootloose and fancy-free" (51) in order to be able to feel the freedom of writing according to his own wishes and without being restricted by any rules of any convention or any ideology.

McDonagh may be totally against the idea of being entangled in the past; however, this should not mean that he is indifferent to the harsh conditions of postcolonial Irish people. On the contrary, he portrays the fragmented nature of the Irish in postcolonial Ireland. Critics who praise him, such as Michael Billington and John Peter, approach his plays, especially his trilogy, as "postcolonialist critiques of the human condition in general and of the Irish condition in particular" (Lanters, "Playwrights" 220). Throughout centuries what the Irish wanted was total independence from England. Ironically, however, this desired independence in 1948 did not bring the desired peace to the country since the postcolonial condition brought identity crisis and the problem of the divided self to the Irish. As reflective of this postcolonial experience, McDonagh's postcolonial characters who are all the time questioning their conditions face psychological and social problems. Ireland for them has become a locale associated with a mother suffocating her children and with "distorted images of 'home'" (Arrowsmith 240). Moreover, as O'Toole suggests, "[t]hat gap between place and people, between the search for a fixed national space and the existence of an unfixed, mobile population is the great contradiction of Ireland" (qtd. in Vandevelde 295). In this complicated atmosphere, defining Irishness becomes hard for the Irish. McDonagh's characters' continuous search for identity, particularly seen in Cripple Billy in *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and in Maureen and Pato in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, reflects his "postcolonialist critique […] of the […] Irish condition" (Lanters, "Playwrights" 220). The fragmentation experienced by the Irish and the feeling of

belonging nowhere is, in a way, summarised by Pato in *The Beauty Queen*: "[W]hen it's there [in London] I am, it's here [in Ireland] I wish I was, of course. Who wouldn't? In England they don't care if you live or die. But when it's here I am… it isn't *there* I want to be, of course not. But I know it isn't here I want to be either" (iii 21-22). This dilemma and the feeling of alienation both abroad and in one's own country are symbolic of the outcome of the fragmented self's quest for the 'whole self.'

In fact, the beginning of McDonagh's career as a playwright coincides with serious events witnessed in the 1990s. The 1990s were shaken by the news of shocking violence ranging from "spree shootings, armed robbery, **serial killing** [*sic*], [to] drug-assisted sexual assault and wrestling […] [and] more than half of the cases examined involve killings and half of those involve more than one victim" (Boyle 7). The media at that time was full of news that reflected "war and killing: terrorist bombs, ethnic cleansing and most graves left indelible images on the public imagination" (Sierz 206). As reflective of the violence observed in this decade, stages began to be used as instruments for many young playwrights to voice their objection towards these events. Furthermore, these stages also turned into locales where violent acts were acted openly. Consequently, characters such as serial killers, rapists and abusers began to be seen very commonly on the English stage (Sierz 207).

As a result of these events in the 1990s, this decade is associated with a new theatre movement known as in-yer-face, which was pioneered especially by Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill and Anthony Neilson. The general qualities characterising this new dramatic writing are its aim to shock the reader, use of dirty language, nakedness of the characters, their mimicking sexual intercourse in front of the audience, violence at its peak, characters' humiliating one another and the use of comedy as the most influential device that creates a critical distance between the audience and the play (Sierz 5-6). In addition, as a third wave Irish playwright living in London, McDonagh was influenced by the English dramatic movement of the 1990s – that is, in-yer-face. Aleks Sierz, who is the author of the book, *In-Yer-Face Theatre* (2001), classifies McDonagh among the playwrights who show the characteristics of this movement. His "depicting breathtaking brutality, cruelty" (Dean,

"Tales Told" 64) by employment of in-yer-face techniques causes him to be thought of in relation to this theatre movement. Particularly, his use of extreme violence which exhibits "a staged Ireland of violent absurdity" (Grene, "Ireland" 309-10) and his use of comedy can be stated among in-yer-face characteristics, which will be dealt with in regard to McDonagh's satire on violence and in relation to the plays in question in the following three chapters of this dissertation.

Theatre, as one of the performing arts, is very significant because actions take place in front of the audience. As a performing art, in-yer-face theatre exhibits everything from sex and broken taboos to physical and verbal violence in front of the audience; there is nothing hidden from them, and as a result, the audience may be shocked, which is one of the most outstanding characteristics of this theatre. Such kinds of plays were not welcomed by most of the audience because of their shocking qualities. As Sierz notes, however, "[t]he role of in-yer-face theatre was precisely to question received ideas in such a way as to make audiences uncomfortable. The experience of watching harrowing plays – however physically safe the theatre – imprinted indelible images of human suffering" (239). As Armstrong puts it, "*in film,* […] *the camera selects what the viewer will see; in theatre, the viewer sees everything*" (qtd. in Buchler 34) [*emphasis in original*]. This is why there has been so much criticism levelled at this particular anti-establishment theatre. According to Sierz, however, in-yer-face theatre has a lot to say and it is not without aims:

> Usually, when writers use shock tactics, it is because they have something urgent to say. If they are dealing with disturbing subjects, or want to explore difficult feelings, shock is one way of waking up the audience. Writers who provoke audiences or try to confront them are usually trying to push the boundaries of what is acceptable – often because they want to question current ideas of what is normal, what it means to be human, what is natural or what is real. In other words, the use of shock is part of a search for deeper meaning, part of rediscovery of theatrical possibility – an attempt by writers to see just how far they can go. (5)

Martin McDonagh, just like other in-yer-face theatre playwrights, transcends the limits of all taboos, all traditions and he goes as far as he can through exaggerated language and characterisation, extreme violence and an intense focus on life with all its cruelty. When his

plays are criticised for their "darkness," McDonagh defends them saying that all his plays have "heart," and argues that "what the blackness does is allow the heart to shine through" (qtd. in Pocock 61). He also stated to Dominic Cavendish that he "always like[d] a dark story that's seemingly heartless, but where there's a heart, tiny and camouflaged as it might be. I care about the characters an awful lot" (qtd. in Pocock 60). Thus, it may be stated that his characters are chosen with great care to serve his demand from the audience/ readers to face the human reality.

In order to better understand McDonagh's works within the framework of in-yer-face theatre, it is necessary to provide a definition of "violence" at this point. Krug defines the term as "the use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation" (5). The Irish characters in McDonagh's plays reflect all the features mentioned in this definition and are depicted as psychologically problematic people who are prone to using psychological and physical violence on each other within domestic spheres, on societal level or on military level. The world in McDonagh's plays is fraught with characters who are almost always dominated by hatred towards each other, and who do not act in accordance with the socio-cultural norms. The idea of a warm, healthy and lively family relationship is impossible for them. The "domestic nightmares" (Dean, "Tales Told" 62) present in the cottage in his plays completely distort the cult of holy family and traditional relationships among its members. Families and all the characters in his plays (from the start of his career till his recent work) are portrayed as psychologically depressed, and "[t]he family, from *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* onwards, is a site for psychological and even biological warfare" (O'Toole, "Murderous Laughter" 382).

Paradoxically, however, these violent and psychologically problematic Irish characters appear funny, which "can sometimes completely defuse an emotionally fraught situation" (Sierz 6). McDonagh mainly uses black comedy to criticise violence, which may make the audience/ readers laugh despite so many violent acts and this condition seems to make the audience/ readers feel uncomfortable as may be observed from the comment of a female

member of the audience whose opinions were asked after watching McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*'s Young Vic performance in 2010: She says she did not know whether to feel uncomfortable or to laugh at what was going on on stage ("Vox Pops"). Similarly, O'Toole states his views on McDonagh's *Aran Trilogy* as follows:

> We have […] spent nearly six hours laughing ourselves sick at some of the blackest, bleakest stories that have ever been told in the Irish theatre. We have laughed at the Famine, at murders and suicides, at children drowning in slurry pits, and old men choking on vomit. And the question that McDonagh asks us is: When does the laughing stop and the thinking begin? For at its core, the trilogy is a comedy about the need to take something seriously. ("Murderous Laughter" 381-82)

Thus, it may be deduced that McDonagh wants the audience to think critically and seriously about the conditions reflected in the plays by means of the alienation effect of comedy within so much violence. In other words, comic elements and scenes to which the members of the audience react by laughter are used as a tool for enabling an alienation effect (Sierz 6), which renders it possible for the audience/ readers to criticise the tragic condition of humanity in the contemporary world. In this sense, comedy may be less innocent than it may appear at first.

As a matter of fact, the discomfort the audience/ readers may feel after watching/ reading McDonagh's plays may arise after their realisation of the fact that what they have laughed at so much is nothing more than the representation of modern life/ modern reality which is full of violence and in need of change. As Sierz points out, "there is always the possibility that what we enjoy watching might tell us unwelcome truths about who we really are" (9), implying tendency for violence in human beings, which is suggested by McDonagh himself as well:

> Well, we're all cruel, aren't we? We're all extreme in one way or another at times, and that's what drama, since the Greeks, has dealt with. I hope the overall view isn't just that, though, or I've failed in my writing. There have to be moments when you glimpse something life-affirming even in the most twisted character. That's where the real art lies. See, I always suspect characters

> who are painted as lovely, decent human beings I would always question where the darkness lies. (qtd. in O'Hagan, "The Wild West")

It may be argued that McDonagh tries to give universal messages to the audience/ readers in relation to violence or the darker side of humanity. That is why disgusting brutal behaviours of his characters and animalistic desires in human beings are foregrounded in his plays. The basic concern of McDonagh is the nature of violence in human beings, and that this violence tried to be suppressed by the norms of society should be reflected in front of the audience so that people can begin to criticise the negativities in life itself.

Moreover, as Duffy notes, the writer is "witness and interpreter of place, landscape, and identity" (64-65). Similarly, McDonagh, as a "witness" of Ireland in the 1990s, mainly focuses on the following socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural and psycho-sociological problems that Ireland had to deal with in this decade and which caused an increase in the degree of violence in Irish society: The Troubles (the end of the 1960s-1998) experienced as a result of the serious conflict between the Catholics and Protestants on the Irish Island because of the political status of Northern Ireland; economic problems in Ireland which resulted in unemployment and emigration; racial harassment experienced abroad which resulted in psychological problems; the decline in the controlling power of the Church; the emergence of a selfish consumer society in Ireland as a result of the Celtic Tiger period (1995-2000) in which economic development in Ireland was seen. McDonagh, as a writer witnessing these problems, which he exhibits as the reasons of violence in the plays to be analysed in this dissertation, also takes the role of an observer satirist, and he satirises and interprets the wrong-doings in society in grotesque ways. As Hutcheon emphasizes, "postmodernism challenges our mimetic assumptions about representation (*The Politics* 30). McDonagh, in a similar strand, defies the fixed representation of Ireland as 'the paradise of Emerald Isle.' According to him, there is now an image of Ireland whose meaning is entirely unsettled. The definitions of Ireland have thoroughly changed throughout the journey from Yeats' times to the present: "What once preserved mythological or ritualistic value, be it unifying or dividing, now remains obsolete. [...] Family, neighbourhood, church, language, as well as places like the country kitchen, village

pub, farm, land and so forth stand merely as one dimensional iconography" (Lachman, qtd. in Wallace 164). In this regard, it may be pointed out that McDonagh deconstructs and subverts the constructed meaning of Ireland through grotesquely reflecting its 'negative' aspects rather than the positive and beautiful ones.

The way McDonagh interprets Ireland and the Irish has sometimes been opposed furiously as his interpretations have been thought of as humiliations upon the country and its people. In fact, rather than humiliating Ireland and the Irish, he "transform[s] a fixed conventional setting into a fluid psychological space" (Roche 85). By means of deconstructed representation of Ireland, McDonagh aims at reflecting his views that Ireland is a country which has problems, one of the most serious ones is, without doubt, violence, and these problems can only be solved if one accepts the existence of these problems rather than taking an escapist role as if there is nothing wrong in society. In this sense, he "writes from a stance of moderation, aiming to correct vice and folly" and "wishes to correct conduct" (Peck and Joyle 170). McDonagh's plays are tools for him to criticise the contemporary monstrous image of humans, and he wishes his audience/ readers not to accept serious events full of violence as they are, instead, he wants them to make an effort to create solutions for them as violence worsens the already bad conditions. In this sense, he serves the major purpose of in-yer-face theatre: the requirement of change in a particular society and in the world in general.

In conclusion, Martin McDonagh's three plays – *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001) – will be analysed in three different chapters respectively, in terms of McDonagh's satire on violence, particularly on domestic, institutional and political violence and in relation to his use of in-yer-face theatre characteristics and the grotesque.

CHAPTER I
FAREWELL MOTHER, FAREWELL: DEBUNKING THE MOTHER MYTH THROUGH SATIRIC USE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS REFLECTED IN *THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE*

"I object to violence because when it appears to do good,
the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent."

(*Mahatma Gandhi*)

Martin McDonagh may be thought of as one of the most controversial Anglo-Irish playwrights because of his writing style that intermingles fact and fiction. Irish and international audiences/readers may have seen different representations of Ireland by many different playwrights such as realistic and heroic, but the representation of Ireland by McDonagh must be one of the most shocking and surprising representations due to his grotesque presentation of Ireland rather than employing elements of formal realism. Given different representations of the Irish and Ireland, a variety of answers might be given to the question, 'How is Ireland to be represented?' Whether McDonagh reflects the real Ireland and the real Irish in his plays has been the concern of many critics. Maria Tymoczko's views on McDonagh may be regarded as one of the fairest and most appropriate comments as she does not ignore the social facts of Ireland mingled with fantasy mentioned in McDonagh's plays. According to her, McDonagh's plays about Ireland mirror the themes of "image and reality, abuser and abused" as "timely analogues of the national Irish discourse at present: What is it to be really Irish? How does this image relate to the reality?" (qtd. in Lanters, "Playwrights" 220-21). It cannot be denied that in his presentation of Ireland, McDonagh does not disregard Irish social and economic problems in the 1990s. Vandevelle's following statement proves that in the 1990s, when McDonagh's *Leenane Trilogy* was written, the Irish had still been experiencing social and economic problems that led them to fragmentation: The "statistics [in the 1990s] in fact

reveal a devastating picture of the fragmentation of Irish social life. Suicide rates and the number of people diagnosed with depression reach alarming figures and the rural to urban migration breaks down local communities" (299). Moreover, this fragmentation, and immigration have had devastating effects on the Irish such as "disruption of social ties, low marriage rates and social isolation" (Coward 69). As this is the case, it may be argued that, although in an exaggerated manner, McDonagh's characters also reflect a depressive nature as a result of experiencing such economic and social problems in Ireland.

As O'Brien notes, the characters who exhibit immoral and degenerate behaviours have a close link with the place called Leenane, which may be regarded as another character having powerful negative effects on "the human community." He also argues that McDonagh, through emphasising the imaginary ugliness of Galway, which is in reality a very beautiful place, tries to "explore human depravity" (187). McDonagh's plays describe a "mental universe of people" (O'Toole, *Martin McDonagh* xiii-xiv) as well; therefore, given the exaggerated manners of the characters, it may also be stated that the characters are reflective of McDonagh's mental images used for the purpose of reflecting violence.

In relation to the information given above, this chapter aims at analysing McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, which premiered at the Town Hall Theatre in Galway on 1 February 1996 (Middeke 215) in terms of McDonagh's satire on domestic violence which is presented as a direct consequence of socio-economic, socio-cultural and psycho-sociological problems witnessed in 1990s Ireland. The play is depicted as "a well-plotted thriller" (Sierz 221), in terms of domestic violence as it mainly focuses on the family institution and in relation to this, [McDonagh's] "pessimism about humanity" (Sierz 219). In this play, although McDonagh is concerned mainly with "the human condition" and less with "contemporary Ireland" (Pitzpatrick, qtd. in Middeke 229), the realities and social problems of the country are still important. The following analysis will first deal with McDonagh's reflections of the universality of violence and its presence in the human psyche, then the social and economic problems of Ireland will be discussed – both of which complement each other – in relation to McDonagh's satire on violence through debunking the mother myth.

Sierz highlights that at the end of the 1990s, McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* "had been translated into twenty-eight languages" (220), which reflects the high degree of interest in the play. Does this number show the great interest in McDonagh only because of his successful way of storytelling? Or, is it the result of his touching upon what is really happening in the human psyche, or the interest in his universal topic, violence, seen everywhere in the world in an increasing degree? It may be difficult to answer these questions assuredly but what Lonergan in his *The Theatre and Films of Martin McDonagh* emphasises may be suggestive:

> [McDonagh's] point appears to be that the plays could indeed have been set anywhere: that, far from being anomalous, the people of Leenane are perhaps not all that different from the people of Galway city – or from the people of Dublin, London, New York, Sydney, Toronto or any the other places where the *Trilogy* has found an audience. What follows, then, is a discussion of each of the plays in turn – an attempt to think about them *not* as realistic depictions of Irish life, but instead as collectively offering an analysis of the conditions that determine human relationships. (6)

What is significant in McDonagh's writing in the *Leenane* and the *Aran Islands* trilogies is that he manages to reflect the universality of violence through mentioning the problems and violent events of particular small places like Leenane and the Aran Islands, or generally western Ireland, using them symbolically as microcosms, for a globalised violence or as metaphorical "'present representations' – of reality" (Castillo 78). At this point, McDonagh's manner may be discussed in relation to what Kearney mentions as "genuine internationalism (working at a global level)" and "critical regionalism (working at a local level)" (64). According to Frampton, an architectural theorist, critical regionalism is "an attempt to mediate the impact of universal civilisation with elements derived from the peculiarities of a particular place" (qtd. in Kearney 64). McDonagh, similarly, widens the borders of a country; contemporary Ireland is with no geographical boundaries for him. In this way, he sometimes presents the audience/ readers an "alternative model[…] of universality" (Kearney 117). The caricaturised and seemingly unrealistic depiction of the Irish and Ireland, the exaggerated manners of the characters, the grotesque may be tools for

him to create a violent atmosphere to be able to underline serious issues and better express the aggressiveness and violence in human nature anywhere in the world, which is, in fact, a means of satirising cruelties. Hence, the audience/ readers of McDonagh plays should bear in mind not his non-idealised image of Ireland and the Irish, but the aim behind it.

Actually, the existence of violence is always there, beginning with the first stage directions of the play, which makes the Leenane cottage a signifier of chaos within domestic borders and an irritating and frightening place which lacks warm family life: "*a framed picture of John and Robert Kennedy on the wall*" (i 1), indication of violence as both of them who were of Irish origin were assassinated in the USA, "a reference[…] to the wider world" (Sierz 223). Besides, "*a heavy black poker beside the range*" (i 1), the most important dramatic device which is reminiscent of violence, is given in the very opening of the play. The description of the cottage as pee-smelling (iv 29), and the unhappy atmosphere (which is understood from the unhealthy communication of the mother and daughter) prepare the ground for a violent atmosphere in the domestic area. Locale, in this sense, is used functionally as another dramatic device. As Middeke explains, "[t]he play is set in a […] deplorable persiflage of the myth of the idyllic country cottage of the olden days in the west of Ireland" (215). The dystopic depiction of the cottage is reflective of the moods of the characters and of the "mutually sadistic bond shared by" (Diehl 106) them.

In this cottage where the traces of violence are dominant in every step, the play tells the story of a cruel mother, Mag, who psychologically destroys, hence metaphorically kills, her daughter, Maureen, a woman who is unmarried due to "socio-economic and cultural factors that influence [...] marital status and household composition" (Coward 72), which will be dealt with in the following parts of the dissertation. She is waiting for any kind of hope that will save her from her boring and depressing life. Their relationship is based on continuous hostility towards each other and psychological (mainly applied by Mag to Maureen) and physical violence (applied by Maureen to Mag). In this respect, "[f]rom the start their interaction is a destructive one which escalates into a nightmarish albeit compelling vision of emotional and physical violence" (Middeke 215). The audience/ readers watch/ read a selfish mother depiction of Mag, whose main concern is only to make Maureen take care of

her because of her dependency complex; that is why throughout the play Mag is depicted as a mother always trying to obstruct Maureen's future plans, and all the time nagging and asking for something from her, who, in turn, feeds her mother on the food that she herself hates, only to symbolically take revenge from her mother as may be understood from her following words to Pato: "I hate Kimberleys. I only get them to torment me mother" (iii 19). These biscuits that have been used as a substitute for proper food symbolise hatred between family members, in other words, Maureen's hatred towards Mag.

Taking into consideration the violent deeds in a domestic locale, *The Beauty Queen* is a clear-cut example of domestic violence as the two family members portray an "antagonistic relationship" (Diehl 99). "Violence," as Aktaş defines, "is all the individual and collective actions that cause the individual to get harmed physically or psychologically, be injured and get crippled. And, in domestic violence, these behaviours and actions take place in the family" [*my translation*]. She further maintains that, "family, a unit in which care, nourishment and sense of security for individuals are satisfied and which protects and improves the physical and mental health, is sometimes observed to be a place where violence is nourished and applied. The deficiency of the skill of communication […] can be counted among the reasons of violence" [*my translation*] (Aktaş 152). The communication of the two family members in the play merely consisting of nagging at each other is suggestive in terms of Aktaş's aforementioned expressions related to violence. In the domestic sphere, Mag's and Maureen's communication occurs only through violence of different types including verbal violence. The hatred and disrespect of Maureen towards her mother may clearly be understood from her following speech: "You're oul and you're stupid and you don't know what you're talking about. Now shut up and eat your oul porridge" (i 6). In this respect,

> [t]he play speaks to several aspects of cultural transition in the Ireland of the 1990s, such as the disintegration of the ideal family unit as depicted in traditional Irish melodrama. It shatters the idea of the idyllic home and family and offers a horrific portrait of the dysfunctional and destructive relationship between Mag and Maureen. This aspect of the play points to a wider, more global concern: the breakdown of the contemporary family and the physical and psychic violence that often accompanies it. (Castleberry 56)

As a result, it may be inferred that "the intergenerational, intrafamilial struggle between codependence and independence" (Diehl 99), between the two characters, reflects the fact that "[t]he West of Ireland [is] a geographical and historical construct [and] McDonagh's strategy is to dramatise a view of the changing communal and individual values of the territory" (Kurdi, *Codes* 41). More importantly, however, the play represents the changing family relationships and increasing violence not only in the 1990s Ireland but also in the world in general.

The family life of McDonagh's characters and the atmosphere surrounding them are just the opposite of what Freud describes as secure. The characters are in the foreground with all their instinctual violence and totally free of the norms imposed by society. According to Freud, as civilisation developed, "the dwelling house was a substitute for the mother's womb, the first lodging, for which in all likelihood man still longs, and in which he was safe and felt at ease" (43). With regard to the family institution in this McDonagh play, however, there is no trace of civilised behaviour; cruelty is always there with all its ugliness. "[S]ly, poisonous humanity of the household" and a "focus on petty grievances and cruel recriminations" (Sierz 222) are observed. The daughter's hatred towards the mother in the play is so much that the desire for killing the mother and seeing her dead is always there. When Mag mentions the man in Dublin she heard about killing an old woman he did not even know, Maureen only wishes him to come to Leenane to kill Mag as well (ii 7). Maureen's dream about her mother constitutes such a horrific image as well: "I have a dream sometimes there of you, dressed all nice and white, in your coffin there, and me all in black looking in on you" (ii 16). In fact, the play is the reflection of Maureen's, a psychologically unhealthy person's, very personal struggle for freedom against her imprisoning mother. As a result, Maureen equates killing her mother with freedom.

In McDonagh's opinion, tendencies in human beings to exhibit violent behaviours cannot be denied. His views seem to be based on the theories of significant psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein, who argue that human beings are born with instincts of violence. Klein, after arguing that violence is inborn, states that "[o]riginal aggression is

expelled as a danger and established elsewhere as something bad, and then the object invested with dangerousness becomes a target at which aggression arising subsequently can be discharged" (13). Similarly, according to Freud, civilisation, which tries to obstruct extreme violence, must make a great deal of effort to restrict the natural tendencies of human beings towards aggression and control their "manifestations […] by physical reaction-formations" (69-70). Freud goes on to state that

> [t]he tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. Civilisation, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city. (84)

In-depth analyses of McDonagh's plays, however, show that the world of McDonagh's characters reflects no traces of civilisation. Through his plays, and, particularly through *The Beauty Queen*, McDonagh may be stating that no matter how much the society/ the superego tries to suppress the violence and aggression in human beings, it can never be totally successful as innate violence or the "dangerous desire for aggression" that Freud mentions sometimes tears the layers of the suppressing social and cultural structures and even destroys them.

When the psychological content of *The Beauty Queen* is taken into consideration, it may be thought that the play "constitutes an emotional roller coaster ride into the abysses of the human psyche. No matter how macabre, how cruel, how grotesquely absurd the violence might seem, McDonagh succeeds in creating genuinely moving passages amid all the farce" (Middeke 216). He, just like in his *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, uses crippled body parts to express the psychological crippledness of the characters in *The Beauty Queen*. This time, the crippled body parts are symbolically the heart and mind of Maureen as the play intensely focuses on the psyche of the characters. Maureen is "emotionally crippled by thoughts of her experiences" (Castleberry 46) in the past when she spent some time in a mental hospital, which can be understood by the confession made by Mag to Pato: "D'you want to know what Difford Hall is, fella? […].

It’s a nut-house! An oul nut-house in England I did have to sign her out of and promise to keep her in me care. Would you want to be seeing the papers now?” (iv 30). This confession reflects the deep psychological problems experienced by Maureen, who worked as a cleaner in Leeds where the English swore at her (iv 31). In fact, Maureen’s past, like a ghost, follows her to the present. This not only explains the psychosis that Maurren is experiencing now but also shows that she is also entrapped by her past which was a secret for Maureen before its selfishly being revealed by the mother.

This selfish behaviour of Mag mirrors the weak family ties between the mother and the daughter, and, as a result, the cottage comes to connote a hellish atmosphere. In such a place, in which it is impossible to discover any traces of a peaceful family life, Maureen dreams of another life: “Of anything! […]. Of anything. Other than this” (ii 13). She is “trapped by Mag, who represents both an albatross hanging around Maureen’s neck and a responsibility which Maureen expects to continue fulfilling ‘from now and ’til doomsday’” (Diehl 99). Mag does not want her daughter’s freedom. Rather, she does her best to imprison Maureen as her caretaker, more specifically, as the virgin caretaker of the cottage who is not given the chance to fulfil her psychological and sexual desires. Rebecca Wilson draws a parallel between Maureen’s life and a fairy-tale image, which is very allusive: “In a tower on top of a mountain, incarcerated by an ogress-cum-wicked witch, the virgin heroine, albeit a 40-year-old resentful, frustrated and repressed virgin, waits for a lover-saviour” (qtd. in Castleberry 42). Only when Pato, Maureen’s childhood friend, comes from England does Maureen get the possibility of leaving her unhappy life behind. After the party Pato gives, to which he invites Maureen as well, their relationship becomes closer and Maureen psychologically begins to be freed from bondage.

Maureen’s costumes may be interpreted symbolically at this point as the coat that she wears in the first scene represents the pressure upon her, and her half-naked position when she is together with Pato in the cottage symbolises her hope for freedom from pain-giving entrapment and is “an act of political power, of liberation from convention” (Sierz 8). Lonergan comments on the significance of the costume at the Young Vic Theatre version of the play in 2010, and Susan Lynch’s role as Maureen as follows:

> At the start of the play, Lynch arrives on stage almost entirely covered by a raincoat; she's slouching so much that we can almost feel her sense of being oppressed by her environment. As her relationship with the returned builder Pato Dooley develops, her body becomes both freer and more expressive. It thus becomes possible for us to understand how she could once have been considered a 'beauty queen' – but we understand too how she instead became a 40-year-old virgin. ("*The Beauty Queen*")

This half-naked position exhibited by Maureen may be considered as her symbolical effort to voice herself and the pressure upon her and to relieve the troubles in her inner world. As Grosz underlines, "[b]odies speak, without necessarily talking, because they become intextualised, narrativised; simultaneously, social codes, laws, norms, and ideals become incarnated" (35). In a similar strand, Maureen's body speaks as well. Through her daily clothes which are symbols of "social codes," she reflects the repressions and suppressions of "laws, norms, and ideals" stated by Grosz. By means of her half-naked position, however, she tries to prove her liberation from the restrictions of traditional ideas and ideals shared by the mainstream culture. In this sense, her body becomes a symbolic battlefield where her id and superego fight with each other and her id is victorious. This relief, however, lasts only for a short while, because this momentary dream is later transformed into a nighmare by Mag, which deteriorates Maureen's psychology.

In order to better understand Mag's psychological deterioration, to give a short summary of the rest of the play will be useful. Pato, once abroad, sends Maureen a letter in which he proposes marriage to her and invites her to the USA to live there together and suggests that they leave Mag in a nursing home so that Maureen can start a new life for herself (v 36). Ray, Pato's brother, does not give the letter directly to Maureen and hands it to Mag, who, thinking that there will not be anybody to look after her, burns it after reading it. Mag, accidentally uttering some words from the letter to Maureen, reveals herself. This time what Mag has done to prevent Maureen's future happiness is too much for the latter, and leads to aggression. This condition may again remind one of Freud's ideas about the destructive nature of the individual: "The instinct of destruction, moderated and tamed, and, as it were, inhibited in its aim, must, when it is directed towards objects, provide the ego

with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature" (81). According to Maureen, now, Mag has lost all her humane characteristics and she begins to see her mother as nothing more than an "object" in Freud's word. Maureen's aggression is followed by a very violent act that would psychologically compensate for her loss. She, after turning up the volume of the radio, begins to physically torture her mother by pouring boiled oil on her hand; Mag's cry of pain is heard. This is most probably not the first physical violence inflicted upon the mother by the daughter as may be understood from the stage directions in the first scene which depict Mag's left hand as "*somewhat more shrivelled and red than her right*" (i 1). For Maureen, this torture is not enough; more must follow to take her revenge. The stage directions given in the eighth scene describe what happens next, which may create suspicion and anxiety in the audience/ readers and gradually prepares them for the approaching dark end, a very shocking one indeed:

> *The only light in the room emanates from the orange coals through the grill of the range, just illuminating the dark shapes of* **Mag***, sitting in her rocking-chair, which rocks back and forth of its own volition, her body unmoving, and* **Maureen***, still in her black dress, who idles very slowly around the room, poker in hand.*
>
> [...]
>
> *The rocking-chair has stopped its motions.* **Mag** *starts to slowly lean forward at the waist until she finally topples over and falls heavily to the floor, dead. A red chunk of skull hangs from a string of skin at the side of her head.* **Maureen** *looks down at her, somewhat bored, taps her on the side with the toe of her shoe, then steps onto her back and stands there in thoughtful contemplation.* (49-51)

As Diehl emphasises, this murder is the most important evidence of the lack of "familial rootedness" (109). Besides, in this murder there is "a dark sense of irony" in that Maureen kills Mag with a fireplace poker which usually stands for "familial togetherness, warmth and security" (Diehl 109). In this atmosphere, warmth, love and respect are replaced by screams caused by agony, hatred and violence.

The disturbingly violent play ends in a very pessimistic tone, with Maureen's turning into what she really hated, that is to say, her mother as she takes the place of her mother in the

rocking-chair that moves back and forth but does not go forward and stays wherever it is. At this point, the audience/ readers might hear McDonagh's voice asking this question: 'Is there any possibility of change in our life which is full of violence?' The end of the play offers no such hope. The rocking-chair may signify this hopeless condition and may be, more importantly, standing for the 'vicious circle,' a key term for *The Beauty Queen* as from the beginning till the end, this term is always associated with Maureen. As Karadağ underlines, the audience/ readers meet a Maureen, who makes great effort to make her mother understand that she is a human being as well, and the murder in the end is a step that she has taken unconsciously in order to be able to escape from the vicious circle that she is trapped in (46). However, killing the mother does not improve the conditions for Maureen. That is why, similar to the rocking chair, she stays where she is and all her deeds turn out to be futile. What she does entraps her much more within the cottage, and within her madness. In the end, "[s]he becomes a veritable death-in-life image of utter paralysis" (Middeke 215), and the victimised, in a way, is transformed into a victimiser.

McDonagh exhibits not a judgmental but an objective stand towards the mother and the daughter. In-yer-face theatre, "[u]nlike political and feminist drama, […] doesn't show you who is guilty and who is innocent. It avoids simplification. Typically, it presents ideas within individual lives and grounds them firmly in the contradictions of character" (Sierz 244). A kind of shift of the role of the monster is created between the two characters. On the one hand, neither Maureen nor Mag is totally guilty. McDonagh justifies the reasons lying behind their selfishness: Both have to be selfish for reasons of survival, and for each person violence is used as a medium to reach her private goal. On the other hand, one is as guilty as the other in terms of preventing a happy future life for the other: for Mag, inside the cottage, while for Maureen, outside it. Castleberry highlights that after the violent acts, one begins to question who

> the real monster [is], Mag or Maureen? Given Maureen's sexual repression, which is a central focus of the play, one might assume that Mag's torture session is merely a sadistic act charged with repressed sexuality. Yet McDonagh gives Maureen a kind of pathos that elicits our sympathy. While the brutal act is taking place and the audience is sympathising with Mag, it is

> simultaneously being reminded of Mag's previous treachery and cruelty. As the torture subsides, Mag is still oblivious to what her actions have done to her daughter's future. She thinks only of herself: "But who'll look after me, so"? (53-54)

As Aktaş points out, there are many reasons for violence against the old such as the old person's becoming very much dependent on the family members, weak and broken family bonds, weak psychological conditions of the person (most probably a woman) who is responsible for looking after the old or her being exposed to violence as well, the psychological or physiological condition of the old person (such as extreme aggression or illness, the shared living conditions and the weakness of social support) (156). All these are reflected in *The Beauty Queen* in which the dependency complex of Mag is foregrounded along with Maureen's psychological problems and her own personal desires. Both are depicted as people with problems. In this case, "[w]ith a mother like Mag, with a home like Leenane, matricide is all but justified" (Grene, "Ireland" 301-02).

As discussed before, unlike Yeats' Ireland, which is a heroic world where Ireland is idealised, McDonagh's Ireland is a dystopic one. Hence, the country's depiction by McDonagh is more suitable for "black pastoral," a term coined by Nicholas Grene, who uses it "to suggest the character of 1990s works" ("Black Pastoral" 245). McDonagh's Ireland may be summarised as follows:

> [It] is populated by evil mothers, bored daughters, warring brothers, and belligerent neighbours. Their antics are often narcissistic, brutal, and yet somehow mercilessly funny. Murder, thievery, and mayhem occur so often in McDonagh's Ireland that such actions appear to be normative. The town of Leenane is a place of gratuitous violence, greed, and amorality where death appears to be nothing more than a meaningless intrusion into the self-absorbed ritual of daily life. (Castleberry 44)

McDonagh, actually, parodies the traditional idyllic depictions of the first wave Irish dramatists. Due to this different and new representation of Ireland, he has been criticised by many critics such as Grene and O'Toole, as was mentioned in the Introduction. When parody is added to his style, the depiction of his Ireland becomes much more unusual, as

dark and full of violence. His use of parody, however, is very significant in terms of reflecting his satire on violence and in reflecting "the satiric potential for reform" (Bloom and Bloom 17). Parody, as Hutcheon puts forward, is a significant device

> because of its paradoxical incorporation of the past into its very structures often points to these ideological contexts somewhat more obviously, more didactically, than other forms. Parody seems to offer a perspective on the present and on the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally recuperated by it. (*A Poetics* 35)

Parody, therefore, helps McDonagh criticise everything traditional and question the idea of "Reality" with a capital "R," which implies a dogmatic approach where there is no way to question the settled norms and realities. In fact, there is not "Reality," but there are "realities." Rather than representing life and human beings as they are, he interprets them. It may also be added that "parody is [not] an unreliable medium for truth" (Rose 204), and this is valid for McDonagh's use of parody as well. In McDonagh's "parodistic consciousness," "the freeing of the new from the old" is observed (Roberts 184). Parody, in this sense, is "the means of expressing [the] rebellion against the demand to write about Irish matters in the realistic mode" (Molloy 239). So, unlike Sean O'Casey, for example, whose plays reflect ideological views, McDonagh chooses not to reflect any ideological point of view in his plays. In his work, the liquidity of the boundaries between reality and imagination may be observed. To put it more clearly, although he still reflects the problems going on in Ireland and the experiences that the Irish face, real events are told in an exaggerated and caricaturised manner, giving the impression that all the things told in the play are mere imaginations. In addition, the focus of McDonagh's description of Ireland is mostly on the dark atmosphere in the country, not on its natural beauty. By doing so, he prepares the ground for the coming violent events.

Besides, McDonagh parodies the old styles and Irish facts to make the audience/ readers laugh and this distancing effect, as mentioned previously, may make the audience/ readers think about the violent and problematic events in a more critical way. As Wallace emphasises, McDonagh's work is different from the other in-yer-face playwrights' works

"in its exploitation of destructive absurdity and exaggerated, often cruel, comedy" (135-36). In relation to this, it may be stated that, similar to the pastoral that may be used as a means of satire, "black pastoral," may be used for the same purpose, which is seen in *The Beauty Queen*. As Grene argues,

> it is not just that [the play] turn[s] the green idyll of Ireland into a black dystopia. 'Black pastoral' as a concept is formed by analogy with black comedy, a genre that self-consciously inverts or flouts the earlier conventions of the form. Comedy normally avoids the more painful dimensions of the human situation; black comedy makes laughter out of unhappiness, suffering, death, all the things traditionally ruled out by the comic mode. Black pastoral involves a similar kind of travesty of the pastoral mode. ("Black Pastoral" 245)

Black/dark comedy or the blend of comedy and cruelty is an inseparable part of the play. In the black atmosphere of cruelty, domestic violence and death seem to create discomfort in the audience/ readers, yet, laughter is still possible in the mock-serious tone of this type of comedy. Use of comedy and cruelty is characteristic of in-yer-face theatre as well and McDonagh's following expressions show that, according to him, comedy and cruelty complement each other and without one, the other cannot exist: "I walk that line between comedy and cruelty […] because I think one illuminates the other." He goes on to state:

> And yeah, I tend to push things as far as I can because I think you can see things more clearly through exaggeration than through reality. It's like a John Woo or a Tarantino scene, where the characters are doing awful things and, simultaneously, talking about everyday things in a really humorous way. There is a humour in there that straight-ahead funny and uncomfortable. It makes you laugh and think. (qtd. in O'Hagan, "The Wild West")

The character depiction of Ray, Pato's brother, as a person who likes *Sons and Daughter* because of the high number of murders in it (vi 37), for example, has a special purpose in that it creates grotesque humour which is suitable for a violence-oriented play. Moreover, Ray's constant demand for buying the poker in the cottage to hit "a half a dozen coppers and then clobber them again just for the fun of seeing the blood running out of them" (vi 39) may sound funny and may make the audience/ readers laugh at even the thought of violence. After this distancing effect of comedy, however, when the audience/ readers

understand that Mag, in a way, gives way to her death by refusing to sell the poker (Castleberry 55), they may feel uncomfortable for laughing at the joke-like expressions uttered by Ray. McDonagh, similar to Beckett, O'Casey, and Synge, likes to "creat[e] laughter in darkness and find[…] humour in the pain and torture of living. In their comedy, laughter is never very far from tears" and he "follow[s] the same tradition of using comedy to explore the darker side of the human experience" (Castleberry 41). His grotesque humour and "entertainment," therefore, "often raise[…] seminal questions of ethics, justice, and artistic responsibility" (Pilný 162).

There are, in fact, critics such as John Waters, who argue that "the implication that Irish audiences could or should view the exuberant spectacle presented by a McDonagh play as a realistic sketch of life in rural Ireland is an insult to their intelligence" (Pilný 164). However, as Sierz emphasises, "[w]hat strikes the reader about nineties writing is its vitality and immediacy, both of which recall and mimic real speech, but without being either documentary or realistic" (244). The audience/ readers of McDonagh plays, hence, should not expect documentary realism from him. Although Irish social realities are reflected in the play, due to his use of grotesque style, these reflections may look problematic. O'Toole puts forward that

> [a]s descriptions of sociological reality, these are, of course, dramatic exaggerations. But they are not pure inventions. McDonagh makes sure that the action is continually brushing up against verifiable actuality. Contemporary events do sneak their way into the plays, so that every time the audience sinks into the comfortable feeling of lapsing into a world that has long passed, it is jolted with a reminder that all of this is very much of the 1990s. (*Martin McDonagh* xv-xvi)

McDonagh's Ireland suffers from economic decline; murders in the country are at the peak; the country has not yet recovered from the effects of colonialism. What Diehl points out is very suggestive: "By exploring the dark undertones of the every-day (i.e., murder, betrayal, resentment, envy), McDonagh spins tales of exile, isolation, and frustration […]. These tales […] register a keen awareness of Irish history and its consequences in the present" (112). Although McDonagh was raised in London, he was closely connected with Irish

culture and he had the chance of closely observing two real expatriates in London: his Irish mother and father who had to migrate to England as workers. His father went there as a construction worker while his mother worked as "a cleaner and part-time housekeeper" and they met and married in the nineteen sixties, in London, where they had moved from Ireland in search of better wages" (O'Toole, qtd. in Jordan, "McDonagh" 199).

Actually, the Irish have experienced the same kind of migrations for centuries and especially after the Second World War, there were many who chose to go to England for better opportunities; however, they faced a hostile approach there contrary to their expectations. Jordan's following statements reflect the fact that there was not much change in the difficulties that the Irish experienced in England from the 1950s to the 1990s:

> After the Second World War, the sheer poverty of the country and the absence of work opportunities meant that many of its citizens were forced to emigrate. […]
> For many of that generation of the Irish abroad, the issues of how they transacted, worked, schooled, communicated and socialised were shaped by a longing to return home. There was a yearning then to regain the space from which they had been banished, due to social, religious, family, economic or sexual reasons. While a small minority deliberately chose to leave Ireland, most felt they had no option but to leave. Some left to make their fortunes, some to disappear. The work that many acquired was often menial, and it is well documented that the Irish faced a vast range of prejudices in Britain from the 1950s right up to the late 1990s. ("McDonagh" 199)

It will also be useful to give the information that, in the 1990s, 37,400 people emigrated from Ireland (Sweeney 8) for a chance of better life opportunities. Actually the economic problems in Ireland continued until the mid-1990s (Sweeney 10) when economic growth named as the Celtic Tiger economy started, which will be dealt with in the second chapter.

As a matter of fact, as Coward puts forth, in addition to being reflective of the economic problems of the country, emigration also reveals many social facts in Irish society: Emigration also mirrors "harmful social and psychological consequences" of "migration loss" "on community life. Thus apart from the removal of the young, migration loss is sex-selective and rural areas in particular have been affected by the greater propensity of

females to leave, producing distorted sex ratios which have important implications for the maintenance of community cohesion and marriage rates" (Coward 66). Migration loss which had to be experienced by both sexes is the main reason of late marriage age or staying unmarried, too, as can be seen in Maureen, who, as a result of her migration to England, not only loses the chance of marrying but also experiences discrimination as stated above. Given this social fact and thought of in terms of these two negative results of migration, the reason lying behind Maureen's psychosis can be understood more clearly.

Emigration because of economic problems is explained in *The Beauty Queen* through striking and bitter expressions. Irish expatriates in the play such as Pato and, for a short while, Maureen and the ones who voluntarily plan the life of an expatriate like Ray might be regarded as symbolising the real Irish migrants for whom "emigration simply represented opportunity" (Einri xi). The play, therefore, has traces of McDonagh's power of observation about the Irish who live not only in Ireland but in England as well. The cottage signifies Ireland in general, and also the characters coming to and leaving the cottage reflect her countrymen. All the characters have intermediary roles between the inner and outside worlds as through their conversations it is possible to hear in the cottage the harsh historical, economic, cultural and social problems the Irish experienced in Ireland and abroad. Maureen's following words, for example, are reflective of the colonial realities and the obligation of migration to England: "If it wasn't for the English stealing our language, and our land, and our God-knows-what, wouldn't it be we wouldn't need to go over there begging for jobs and for handouts?" (i 5). Likewise, the conversation below which is between Maureen and Pato is about the suffocating nature of life in Ireland, hence the obligatory migrations from Ireland:

> Maureen: England? Aye. Do you not like it there so?
> Pato: (*pause*) It's money. (*Pause.*) And it's Tuesday I'll be back there again.
> […]
> Maureen: That's Ireland, anyways. There's always someone leaving.
> Pato: It's always the way.
> […]
> (*pause*) I do ask meself, if there was good work in Leenane, would I stay in Leenane? I mean, there never will be good work, but hypothetically, I'm

> saying. Or even bad work. Any work. And when I'm over there in London and working in rain and it's more or less cattle I am, and the young fellas cursing over cards and drunk and sick, and the oul digs over there, all pee-stained mattresses and nothing to do but watch the clock … when it's there I am, it's here I wish I was, of course. Who wouldn't? But when it's here I am… it isn't *there* I want to be of course not. But I know it isn't here I want to be either. (iii 21-22)

These statements are the cries of the children of old mother Ireland who are in a mood of despondency within her borders. That is why, after working for some time in England, Pato seeks his dreams for better wages and a better life in the USA, again not in Ireland. The photograph of the 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, on the wall of the cottage has a second function in this sense: This photograph signifies Kennedy's visiting Ireland in 1963, which resulted in the USA's strongly affecting the Irish economy for the better (Diehl 100). So, contemporary Ireland has a new image, that of an Ireland which is globalised, and no longer "the Centre" or a part of a Grand Narrative. "[G]iven the collapse of traditional spaces (e.g., home, region, nation) and identities (e.g., mother, daughter, Irish citizen, emigrant)" (Lanters, qtd. in Diehl 11), life in any place that will bring hope for a better life is possible for McDonagh's characters in the post-nationalist era in which individual identity rather than national identity is important. Moreover, "[b]y reminding us of the many migrant minds which make up its heritage, Irish culture reveals that the island of Ireland is without frontiers, that the surrounding seas are waterways connecting it with 'foreigners'" (Kearney 101).

Moreover, the TV and the cottage door are used functionally in terms of reflecting the events in the Ireland of the 1990s. The audience/ readers are informed by Mag that "[t]here was a priest the news Wednesday had a babby with a Yank" (ii.10), which reflects the sexual affair of Bishop Eamonn Casey from Galway with an American woman called Annie Murphy, the shock of which created cracks in many Irish people's belief in the Catholic Church. RTE One, Ireland's national television channel, calls the event as "[t]he first, but by no means the worst sex scandal to rock the Irish Catholic Church in the 1990's" ("The Rise and Fall"). [As this sexual scandal took place in 1992, the audience/ readers can understand that the play takes place in 1992 Ireland.] Besides, the door and

Mag's and Maureen's always reminding Ray to close it are used as other dramatic devices in that the news of the real outer events in Ireland always pass through this door and create further discomfort. The audience/ readers are reminded of the 1991 tragic event of the Birmingham Six, who were thought to have connections with the IRA, via Ray coming to the cottage through this door. In 1991, the "'Birmingham Six,' wrongly accused of involvement in the 1974 pub bombings, [were] released from prison in England" (Pritchard 151). In his conversation with Maureen in the cottage, Ray draws a parallelism between this violent action by the British and the violence applied to him by the Irish police:

> Ray: I suppose they do only have their jobs to do. (*Pause*) Although no fan am I of the bastarding polis. Me two wee toes they went and broke on me for no reason, me arsehole drunk and disorderly."
> […].
> Maureen: Oh. Tom Hanlon said what it was you kicked a door in just your socks.
> Ray: Did he now? And I suppose you believe a policeman's word over mine. Oh aye. Isn't that how the Birmingham Six went down?
> Maureen: Sure, you can't equate your toes with the Birmingham Six, now, Ray.
> Ray: It's the selfsame differ. (ix 53)

Thus, exposed to police violence, Ray, too, is not content with mother Ireland, and, like Pato and Maureen, wants to leave the country. With all its difficulties and harshness, Ireland resembles a monstrous rather than a supportive location, which implies a horrifying and cruel mother. Ray is very much critical of Ireland, and voices his wish to leave in the following words:

> 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. (*Pause.*) London I'm thinking of going to. Aye. Thinking of it, anyways. To work, y'know. One of these days. Or else Manchester. They have a lot of more drugs in Manchester. Supposedly, anyways. (ix 53)

He also emphasises the unhappiness and boredom he experiences in the country as follows: "There are plenty of other things just as dangerous [as drugs], would kill you just easy. Maybe even easier. […] This bastarding town for one" (ix 54). In response, Maureen says after a pause and in a sorrowful way: "Is true enough" (ix 54). Here, McDonagh implies

that contemporary "governmental changes, the ever-rising rates of unemployment, the new waves of emigration, and the strong sense of entropy" have limited the chances of a good life in Ireland (Diehl 112). Consequently, for the children fed up with the suffocating mother image of Ireland, who fails to feed her children, who prevents their happiness and who applies symbolic psychological violence, there is one way out: getting rid of her through literally escaping from there. Killing the mother might stand for the hope of leaving all these problems behind through migration which is a kind of revenge taken from the mother.

So, Maureen's killing her mother may lead to an analogy between pain-giving old Ireland and pain-giving old Mag. Mag's dark shadow is cast over Maureen and the cottage as does mother Ireland cast a shadow over her citizens. Through this dark depiction of Ireland, McDonagh is debunking the mother myth: He distorts the holiness of motherhood, and, at the same time, he destroys the traditional outlook upon Ireland, which was a holy mother figure for the first wave Irish dramatists. Unlike Yeats who "offered the myth of Mother Ireland as symbolic compensation for the colonial calamities of history" (Kearney 113), McDonagh, in a way, makes fun of this "mythological motherland [which] served as a goddess of sovereignty who, at least at the imaginary level, might restore a lost national identity" (Kearney 113). As Vandevelde underlines, McDonagh's plays are "dedicated to those who have been left behind in the development of modern […] Ireland" (297).

The play's successful and heart-breaking ending with Delia Murphy's once very popular song, "The Spinning Wheel," is very suggestive given the linguistic and historical link between the terms "spinster" and "spinning wheel." According to the definition in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "spinster" was "[a]ppended to the names of women, originally in order to denote their occupation, but subsequently (from the 17th century) as the proper legal designation of one still unmarried" ("Spinster"). The term "spinning wheel" and, in relation to this, the song signify Maureen's situation, that is her "spinsterhood." In this regard, Maureen, who is going to stay a single and barren woman, becomes the metaphor for a new version of Ireland which will not be able to create any kind of hope for anybody. Moreover, in the Murphy song, the young girl, Eileen, is expected to be representative of

domesticity by dealing with spinning, and in this sense, her condition reflects Maureen's domesticity as required of her by the traditions. Hence, Eileen in the song turns out to be symbolic of not only Maureen but also "women whose lives have been emotionally and sexually restricted by domesticity's demands" (Llewellyn-Jones 76). Furthermore, in the song, Eileen goes with her lover leaving her grandmother sleeping, and the spinning wheel in its own silence and loneliness. The song is left open-ended as it is not certain whether she is going to come back or not. The song, as a dramatic device, also helps McDonagh finish the play with uncertainties and dark, pessimistic question marks in the audience's/ readers' mind. The future of Ireland is implied to be without improvement. Maureen will go on living her life as a barren woman until Atropos cuts the thread of life for her. In the last scene, Maureen is seen to be sitting in the rocking chair, "*rocking slightly*" (ix 60) and listening to the announcer announcing the song for Mag's seventy-first birthday, which is dedicated to her by her daughters. As Mag is dead, the one listening to it is Maureen, who has now become just like her mother sitting in the rocking chair all day till one day death will come and knock on her door. After Maureen leaves the room, the spinning wheel image in the song goes on in the minds of the audience/ readers till the image of the empty rocking chair is buried into the darkness with "The Spinning Wheel" by Delia Murphy (ix 60), whose lyrics are not given in the play but which has the following refrain:

Merrily, cheerily, noiselessly whirring,
Swings the wheel, spins the wheel, while the foot's stirring;
Sprightly, and brightly, and airily ringing
Thrills the sweet voice of the young maiden singing.
(Murphy, "The Spinning Wheel")

The song shows how "female desire has been confined by the limited and literal domestic space of the set and reaffirmed by the inevitability of the [...] fatalistic repetition of circular spinning wheel song, a reiteration rather than a challenge to traditional folk values" (Llewellyn-Jones 82). The rocking chair in this last scene is also noteworthy as it serves the same aim along with symbolising Ireland, a country that stays wherever it is without any kind of improvement in its condition.

What the audience/ readers watch/ read throughout *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is a successful combination of domestic violence which is universal, too, and Ireland's own local and globalised problems of migration, economic crisis and depression, and psychological problems. McDonagh succeeds in reflecting the universality of violence together with the difficult problems experienced in Ireland, intermingling them to illustrate his satire on violence. From McDonagh's exaggerated representations of Ireland, it may be deduced that Ireland as a locale and Irishness as an identity are used only as tools by the dramatist. It might have been any place where the problems of unemployment or migration can be seen, and the characters might have been anybody from any different country experiencing similar problems. Hence, it may not be wrong to state that, in the play, the so-called national identity, "Irish" is used only as a dramatic device that helps McDonagh build a universalised view of the human condition. The play, as Middeke argues, is

> characterised by a sense of cruel and painful personal as well as cultural entrapment and, particularly, of psychic paralysis. Small-town Ireland turns out to be a suffocating death-in-life image. The distancing effect inherent in McDonagh's farce, however, its oversimplification of characters, its relishing of unexpected plot-mechanics combined with the grotesquely heightened instances of violence transpose the particular into the realm of the universal. […] Leenane (and Aran as well as Eire) are fictional models, synecdoches of the modernised, globalised and disenchanted Western world: traces of the violent, petty small town […], McDonagh seems to say, are everywhere and in each of us. (228)

In the light of the analysis of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, it may be stated that the play is a metaphor for the present human condition written as an example of in-yer-face theatre with shock resulting from the characters' flagrant use of language, violence, and with the comic elements intermingled with dark and tragic elements. As Middeke argues, "all the at first sight familiar and idyllic country cottages, fireplaces [and] mantelpieces […] are foiled and, accordingly, disillusioned and displaced by disturbing instances of grotesque verbal, emotional, psychological, physical, structural violence – reason enough for Aleks Sierz to consider McDonagh one of his chief witnesses for In-Yer-Face Theatre" (228). McDonagh has taken his place among the 1990s in-yer-face playwrights reflecting this decade as he

really seems to make the audience/ readers think about the ongoing cruelties in the world. He does this by means of his unique style which reflects the blend of reality and imagination and of comedy, exaggerations and violent acts. Moreover, McDonagh's satire on the cruelty of human beings mirrors his effort to make the audience/ readers feel the need for change.

CHAPTER II
"LET BYGONES BE BYGONES": SATIRIC REFLECTIONS OF DOMESTIC AND INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE IN *A SKULL IN CONNEMARA*

My Ireland has no tin whistle wailing
[...]
And neither has it place for imitation
Thatch on houses, or for mock
Blather to camouflage how dog eats dog.
[...]
The theme is changing, my rage revives.
Memory Ireland. they shoot heroin these
Times in streets where Connolly said lives
Were lost in slumland hunger and disease

(Sean Dunne 496)

Ireland and the Irish have experienced many difficulties throughout centuries; their past is fraught with misery and struggles for life and independence. The 1840s, for example, were of utmost importance for them as the Great Famine at that time shook up the Irish as it resulted in the death of nearly one million people, mass emigration from the country (Murphy, *Plays One* ix-x) to Australia, Canada and the USA, and the destruction of the ecological balance of the country. Later, the start of the 1900s saw immense efforts for independence. The 1920s represent a landmark in Irish history in terms of positive results of the efforts of independence due to the fact that in this decade Ireland became a Free State. Another milestone for the country was the 1940s as this stage of Irish history witnessed Ireland as a totally independent republic, excluding Northern Ireland. All these stages are real turning points for the Irish and represent their struggle for survival and independence. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s they had to deal with unemployment followed by migration (Jordan, "McDonagh" 199). The 1990s, however, represent radical changes and a gradual separation from the miserable past full of pain and struggle for

independence. In Middeke's and Schnierer's terms, "[w]e are witnessing at the moment a period of accelerated Irish history [...] albeit, for better or worse, in an often precarious way" (ix). In addition, in striking contrast to the previous decades, the 1990s saw a generation who was no longer shaped by the collective consciousness of national identity. Two of the most significant reasons for this fact are the profound impact of the Celtic Tiger period which began in 1995 in Ireland, and the centuries-old Church's being shaken by scandals which caused many Irish people to question their belief. These two developments in the country created a self-centred generation devoid of respect for traditions related to family ties, religion and national identity. The economic development brought by the Celtic Tiger period to the agrarian society especially after so many economic, political and depressive problems observed in Ireland throughout centuries, this time, brought many opportunities to the country, which will be dealt with in detail in this chapter. The above-mentioned two changes had great impact upon the country, as a result of which the Irish found themselves constrained "to come to terms [...] with a changing country and its changing people" (Hussey 395). As Gemma Hussey underlines in her 1993 book, *Ireland Today: Anatomy of a Changing State*, in the 1990s, "an inward-looking, rural, deeply conservative, nearly 100 per cent Roman Catholic and impoverished country has become urbanised, industrialised and Europeanised. Its political and social institutions are challenged by the realities of today, and in many cases are proving unequal to the challenge" (1). On the one hand, the loss of trust in the Church had already bad impacts upon the country. On the other hand, although the Celtic Tiger era that sowed the seeds of economic prosperity in the country might on the surface look very advantageous, these radical changes, in fact, also proved to have caused negative results for Ireland.

These contemporary realities have been dealt with by the Anglo-Irish playwright, Martin McDonagh, in his 'outrageous' play, *A Skull in Connemara*, the second play in *The Leenane Trilogy*, which "opened at the Town Hall Theatre in Galway on 3 June 1997, and subsequently premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London on 17 July 1997" (Middeke 216). McDonagh, in this play, mainly concentrates upon the fact of violence that reached its peak in the 1990s, and which was triggered by the Celtic Tiger period. Despite widespread

and unjust criticism levelled at the play on the grounds that it did not have intellectual value or did not reflect the realities in Ireland or about the Irish, *A Skull*, in fact, contains several examples of contemporary Irish problems and facts. Taking into consideration the criticism centred on the absurdity of the play, Vandevelde's following questions as regards *A Skull* are meaningful: "Is the Leenane imagined by McDonagh really so different from the real Leenane? Are the characters simply fictional beings or do they reflect in a grotesque way what rural Ireland means these days?" (299). Analysed in relation to the transformation of Irish society in the 1990s, which reveals the fact that violence in society increased with the start of the Celtic Tiger period, the answer to these questions is that *A Skull* is representative of the 1990s rural Ireland in a grotesque manner. Moreover, it is important to take into consideration that McDonagh reflects these Irish facts not from the point of an Irish nationalist but from that of an objective observer. Hence, it would not be proper to think that he wrote the play for the purpose of praising or denigrating Ireland and the Irish. Neither is he concerned with the benefits brought by the Celtic Tiger period, but his main concern is its serious culminations, especially the rate of violence that increased in the country in the 1990s. As Vandevelde points out, "[i]n a figurative way, McDonagh's [play] reflects also the underbelly of progress. He is not depicting these effects directly, but in his unusual dramatic style he compresses a sense of what *may be happening* in rural Ireland" (299). In the light of these arguments, this chapter aims to argue that *A Skull in Connemara* is representative of the social realities in 1990s Ireland, the most prominent of which is violence during the Celtic Tiger period that continues even until today, and satirises the violence applied not only by individuals to each other but also by significant institutions such as the police, the Church and family. Mostly, however, it satirises the ones who are indifferent to such violence.

At this point, it will be meaningful to give brief information about the Celtic Tiger period, indicating the economic prosperity in Ireland between 1995 and 2000, and the advantages and problems witnessed throughout the period. Before the economic prosperity brought by the Celtic Tiger period, circumstances in Ireland were totally different. At the beginning of the decade the Irish had to deal with the problems of abject poverty and unemployment

which resulted in emigration with the hope of beginning a new and better life for themselves and for their families as discussed in the previous chapter. Hussey underlines the problems experienced in Ireland in 1993 as follows:

> The down side of the high birth rate in Ireland is the tragedy of large-scale unemployment, with its resultant by-products of poverty and crime. The economy has not been able to provide the growing population with work, while world recession has closed off the safety valve of emigration. More than 300,000 were officially on the dole as 1993 began, some 21 per cent of the workforce. All other main economic indicators were healthy: the country asked itself why it had been able to improve competitiveness, increase exports, reduce the massive burden of debt in relation to GNP, keep inflation down to a European low, and not find enough work for its people. Ireland is, sadly, the 'best little jobless economy in Europe.' (3)

At the beginning of the 1990s, Ireland was dealing with such economic problems and "the Irish unemployment rate in 1994 was more than five percent higher than in Germany (14.8 % as opposed to 9.6 %)" (Dean, "Tales Told" 60).

Gradually, and especially beginning with 1995, via the Celtic Tiger period, however, Ireland, especially more urban eastern parts of the country, witnessed a sudden change in terms of economic growth. The rate of unemployment began to fall fast; even some of those who had emigrated because of unemployment began to return. Furthermore, the increasing pervasiveness of consumer culture as a result of increase in income was observed (Kayacıklı 29). The Irish enjoyed the economic benefits of this period. As a consequence of this economic boom, "[i]n 1998[, for example,] the Irish rate of unemployment was two percent lower than Germany's (9.3 % as opposed to 11.5 %) (Andrews C1, C8)" (Dean, "Tales Told" 60).

On the other hand, blinded by the charm of the imaginary realm emerging as a result of the economic boom, the Irish, accordingly, were not aware of the serious realities occuring around them. They were deceived by the economic prosperity of the Celtic Tiger era, and there emerged a selfish consumer culture. In fact, this period brought as much harm as benefit to the Irish. Some of the problems coming into being as a result of this economic

boom can be stated as follows: The "economic changes have encouraged depopulation in the West and over-population and poverty in the more urban East of the Republic" (Waters, qtd in Llewellyn-Jones 13). The Celtic Tiger period is also responsible for the increasing violence throughout rural and urban Ireland. As Middeke and Schnierer point out, "[a]gain and again, violence is often presented as an effect of Celtic Tiger (self-)alienation" (xi). The more the economic prosperity increased the more human relations and ties among family members decreased, and this brought isolation. Moreover, the relief that came with the Celtic Tiger era also gave way to extreme consumption of alcohol. It is true that the Irish have always been associated with pubs and alcohol. In the 1990s, however, a totally different culture that had to deal with violence as a result of extreme consumption of alcohol emerged. As O'Mahony underlines,

> [t]he second type of change -- general cultural change -- is relevant here, especially the growth of binge-drinking and general excess. Alcohol is a central problem because it has strong disinhibiting effects which can make men, especially, more sensitive to slights, more aggressive in their response, more likely to use unrestrained violence and more likely to participate in mindless mob action. The new culture of hedonistic excess and the desire of young people to 'get off their heads' is undoubtedly connected to the lifestyle changes of the Celtic Tiger period. The boom accelerated the spread of consumerism, self-centredness and alienation. ("How Celtic Tiger")

As a consequence of this self-centredness, the social structure of Ireland totally changed, and psychological problems followed by high levels of suicide were experienced. Vandevelde states that "[c]urrent statistics in fact reveal a devastating picture of the fragmentation of Irish social life. Suicide rates and the number of people diagnosed with depression reach alarming figures and the rural to urban migration breaks down local communities" (299). Moreover,

> the criminologist McCullagh has claimed that levels of concern about crime in Ireland are 'as high as comparable figures for major American cities' (McCullagh, 1996: 11). In a survey of a random sample of Dublin citizens, O'Connell and Whelan (1996) reported that people believed that all crimes were on the increase but believed that more serious, violent and extreme offences were increasing more quickly in frequency. For example, people perceived violent assault, sexual offences and murder to be increasing far more

> rapidly than business fraud, social welfare fraud or police corruption. (O'Connell 192)

As one can deduce, the Celtic Tiger period, this so-called beauty, in fact, brought much wickedness with itself. At first, the Irish were deceived by the Celtic Tiger period's charm without being aware of the possible negative results it could have.

Before the analysis of *A Skull* in relation to the violence witnessed in the Celtic Tiger period, it will be useful to give a brief summary of the play. The play takes place in 1995 in the Republic of Ireland, more specifically in Connemara, a district located in western Ireland. It opens with the conversation between fiftyish Mick and his gossipy old neighbour, Maryjohnny Rafferty. They are talking about topics like the weather that at first seem trivial; Mary's nagging voice is heard: "Rain, rain, rain, rain, rain we had. And now the cold. And now the dark closing in. The leaves'll be turning in a couple of weeks, and that'll be the end of it" (i 63). That darker days are going to come soon has ominous implications of the fact that the already bad conditions in the district are going to get worse. Throughout the play, gossips and pieces of news are told about many who die in their own urine and vomit, about Thomas Hanlon, the police officer, who is told to have beaten Ray during the interrogation, and Mairtin's being beaten by his father. Actually, the whole play is centred upon the possibility of Mick's killing his wife, Oona. Gossips about the murder are very widespread in the neighbourhood; however, there is no proof that Mick has committed such a murder. All these events dominated by either real violent events or implications of violence reflect the condition of the area which is very problematic in all aspects. Gradually, it is learned that Mick, as a grave digger, exhumes the graves of the ones who have stayed in their graves for seven years every autumn to create space for the ones who have newly died, and that year it is Mick's wife's turn to be taken out of her grave. In scene two, Mick and Mairtin are observed to be exhuming the graves "at a rocky cemetery at night" (81). When Oona's turn comes, Mick is shocked by the fact that her skull has been stolen. Later, in scene three, Mick and Mairtin are seen while frantically and drunkenly breaking into pieces the bones and skulls of the ones whose graves they have exhumed. It is then that the truth is revealed. During this smashing scene, Mairtin

unintentionally confesses that he has helped Thomas steal Oona's skull from her grave. In order to prove the murder which will enable his being promoted, Thomas tries illegal ways. He steals Oona's skull to make a crack on it to give the impression that Oona was murdered by Mick by being hit with a mallet. In scene four, Mick comes into his cottage, and "his shirt is covered with blood" (111), and he tries to clean the blood on his mallet. When Mary asks him what the red spots on his shirt are, Mick lies saying that he was working outside with red things. Later Thomas enters into the cottage with Oona's skull in a bag. Thomas is there to force Mick to sign a paper confessing that he killed Oona. Later Mairtin comes in with a mortal wound upon his forehead. It is then revealed that the blood on Mick's mallet is Mairtin's. Mairtin, in the last scene, gives the impression that he is resurrected, and does not confess that it was Mick who was about to kill him. As for Thomas, when Mick refuses to sign the paper, he loses his hope of being promoted, and, in great despair, leaves the cottage. The play ends with Mick's insistently saying to Mary that he did not kill Oona, and with his kissing her skull.

As can be understood from the summary, *A Skull in Connemara* is a play dominated by violence, an exaggerated reflection of the problem of violence in the Celtic Tiger period. Actually, the play can also be regarded as McDonagh's effort to end the strong link with the past. McDonagh, similar to Joyce, who wrote in his *Ulysses*, "History is the nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (34), sees the past as a nightmare, and thinks that the Irish should not be stuck in the past, but should awaken from its nightmares, and should concentrate on the contemporary problems. In Vadevelde's words, "[t]he illusion that former times were better now reveals the cracks in the picture, the cruelty of what goes on behind closed doors" (298). *A Skull* is aimed to be an invitation to the audience/ readers to think about contemporary serious problems "behind closed doors" and if it is possible to put an end to violence in society applied by people to each other, and applied or caused by institutions such as the Police and the Church. McDonagh thinks that neither the past nor the present has pleasant associations with any kind of peaceful life and atmosphere. On the contrary, both signify dystopian realities of Ireland. So, McDonagh underlines through the play that the solutions to solve the problems related to the country do not lie in the past in

which “there wasn’t this nice, homogenous, structured, stable, coherent society” (Hynes, qtd. in Vandevelde 299), and that neither can the problems be solved through ignoring the contemporary problems or through escapism. If one escapes the problems, s/he will be followed by them; however, if the contemporary problems are taken seriously, logical solutions can be found.

McDonagh’s choice of Connemara as the setting of *A Skull* can be considered in relation to the problems experienced in this beautiful western part of the country as underneath the natural beauty lie many vices, cruelties, historical miseries and truths. McDonagh intelligently presents the clash between appearance and reality as a tool for his satire on violence which addresses both the past and present. In other words, McDonagh’s choice of Connemara, where unpleasant incidents had occurred in the past, as the setting is really meaningful in terms of presenting the problems of today related to violence. A touristic gaze involving breath-taking vistas might initially create an entirely deceptive impression; however, the things underneath should be taken into consideration, too. As Lonergan states, “McDonagh’s treatment of the play’s environment is [...] another example of his creation of a tension between appearance and reality: the west of Ireland on the surface appears to be a place of great natural beauty – but the memory of a million famine dead lurks just below that surface” (*The Theatre and Films* 27), which is reflective of the miseries encountered during the Great Famine of the 1840s such as the psychological and physical violence that the English applied to the Irish and the physical violence caused by nature itself. In this sense, “[t]he mythical surface of the Irish island idyll is hollowed out by [...] almost atavistic violence” (Middeke and Schnierer xi). The past miseries of the ancestors in the area follow the new generation as a ghost, and never leave them in peace. Thus, in relation to the miseries experienced in the area, the title “A Skull in Connemara,” taken from Lucky’s monologue in Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (Wallace 160), becomes much more meaningful as it reminds one of the strong link between the past and present as regards the ongoing negative experiences and violence. Moreover, as Lonergan states, “one possible explanation for McDonagh’s choice of title – is that Connemara is a place where the

memory of mass death remains a strong presence in the lives of his characters" (*The Theatre and Films* 27). Andrew Gibson portrays the Connemara of the 1840s as follows:

> In the nineteenth century, Connemara was a land of skulls. This is clear from the travel narratives of English 'improvers' visiting the west in the wake of the Famine. Thus the anonymous author of *The Saxon in Ireland* (1851) evokes the Abbey at Cong as having been a 'mere charnel-house, blocked up with rubbish, and strewed with human skulls and bones.' True the images of Connemara as boneyard frequently seem to feature almost by accident... But the Famine supplied only the most recent images of historical devastation. (qtd. in Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 26)

That Connemara is associated with both natural beauty and the Famine culminating in the death of many people is significant as this setting, through the above-mentioned negative implications, serves McDonagh's satire on violence in society. All this negativity prepares the audience/ readers for the upcoming violent events with the beautiful yet suffocating nature of the country. On the one hand, the country connotes pastoral romantic images such as wide green areas, while, on the other hand, it has been associated with mass deaths during the Famine. As regards its connotations, Connemara might be argued not only to be the microcosm of Ireland in general but also to be preparing the atmosphere for the depressive moods and violent behaviours of the characters in *A Skull*. It would be easier for McDonagh to tell about the contemporary miseries in a place on which history left deep scars and which is already associated with miseries hidden underneath the exterior.

Likewise, the smaller outer setting, the graveyard, another image of Ireland, is of great significance as it serves the same aim as the setting of Connemara. The graveyard, which is associated with death, and in the contemporary world, with death resulting from murders and suicides, from the beginning, gives the impression of gothic horror: "A rocky cemetery at night, lit somewhat eerily by a few lamps dotted about. Two graves with gravestones atop a slight incline in the centre. At the start of the scene, the grave on the right is being dug up by Mick, standing down inside it to waist height, shovelling the dirt out" (ii 81). Mick is seen to be digging the graves to take out the bones of the dead who died seven years ago, creating shock in the audience/ readers as McDonagh deconstructs the centuries-

old religious respect for the ancestors and the dead. His depiction of the grave "not [as] the final, hallowed resting place" (Farrelly 100) for the dead but as a place to be dug up to create space for the newly dead (ii 89) has two purposes: First, such a graveyard serves to reflect the realities of Ireland. Mick's saying that he digs the grave as new spaces for the dead are required is, in fact, reflective of the fact that the number of the ones dying as a result of murders, seen in the murder of Mag in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, and committing suicide, which is implied by the suicides of Father Welsh and the police officer, Thomas in *The Lonesome West*, is very high in contemporary Ireland especially since the 1990s. As a report in 2006 called "Houses of the Oireachtas" revealed, the Celtic Tiger period also "led to [...] a surge in suicide especially among young people" (29) and the report further illustrates that "[f]rom the 1970s onwards, Ireland has undergone considerable societal change with a population shift from rural to urban areas. In that time suicide rates in this country rose exponentially, peaked in 1998 and have levelled off somewhat since then" (19). McDonagh's second aim in such a depiction is to suggest that this violence observed in the country cannot be ended by fanatical or blind devotion to the ancestors which is symbolically observed in old Mary, who represents old mentalities and expresses her devotion to her ancestors by always asking what will happen to the bones of her ancestors (i 72). McDonagh's criticism of this blind devotion is implied in the play by Mick's destroying the skulls and bones of the ancestors and later throwing them into the lake. In this way, McDonagh also reflects his criticism of the ancestors' methods of solutions through extreme trust in the Church or law enforcement, which themselves add much to these problems in contemporary Ireland. The institution of the Church, which has been influential even in family matters, was of great significance for the Catholic Irish, and its laws were not questioned much throughout centuries till especially the 1990s when many church scandals were disclosed. Moreover, many scandals related to the police institution were revealed in the 1990s. Since these scandals and the two important institutions will be explained in detail in the following parts of this chapter, they will only be referred to here in brief. Mick, representing McDonagh's criticism, employs a horrifying method by taking the dead out of their graves to question centuries-old traditions and institutions. McDonagh also suggests that there is an urgent need for the society to refresh

their minds, and to discard the darkness of today, which is symbolised by the dark covering the graveyard at "night;" this is possible only through finding new and contemporary solutions.

In fact, considered in relation to the previous larger setting, Connemara and the smaller graveyard, McDonagh's depiction of Mick's cottage, the smallest setting, as a space where violence is experienced is not a coincidence. Similar to the previous settings, this miserable inner setting is used functionally to mirror the moods of the citizens in Ireland and to satirise violence in society. Furthermore, just like the beauty of Connemara hides many problems and troubles inside, in the same way, the cottage in its depiction as a traditional Irish cottage, which signifies the warmth of family and a rural way of life, hides many serious truths related to the troubles experienced in Ireland. The depiction of the cottage at the beginning of the play, first gives the feeling of traditional, rural and Catholic Ireland: "The fairly Spartan main room of a cottage in rural Galway. Front door stage left, a table with two chairs and a cupboard towards the right, and a lit fireplace in the centre of the back wall with an armchair on each side of it. A crucifix hangs on the back wall and an array of old farm tools, sickles, scythes and picks etc., hang just below it" (i 63). Moreover, as Fitzpatrick argues, the initial depiction of the cottage might at first make one think that *A Skull* is a peasant play (147).

Suddenly, however, it is revealed that the cottage, in fact, represents a dystopian world surrounded by the distrust of the authority, family members and neighbours. All these emblems of the country cottage and the rural atmosphere are used in a reversed way to signify danger, violence and the loss of trust in the Church. Only after the traditional depiction of the cottage room, do the audience instantly come across shocking words. They hear Mick saying that there is nothing wrong with cursing as it has become normalised in today's circumstances and that he finds Mary "old-fashioned" only because she criticises the cursing of the youth (i 64). Just as one begins to think that Mary is a traditional and pious old woman who wants to see everybody respectful, she is seen to be addressing Christ as "that man" "pointing to the crucifix" (i 65). Such a detail is used to show the state of the country in those days. The cursing and swearing mirror the condition of the youth

among whom verbal violence is thought of as normal. On the other hand, Mary's disrespectful address to Christ manifests the fact of the loss of faith in the Church. The cottage's first being depicted like traditional Irish cottages and then the cottage atmosphere's suddenly turning into a negative atmosphere reflects one of the most important characteristics of in-yer-face theatre whose "most successful plays are often those that seduce the audience with a naturalistic mood and then hit it with intense emotional material, or those where an experiment in form encourages people to question their assumptions" (Sierz 5). The sudden change in the atmosphere of the play helps McDonagh to create a shock in the audience/ readers and to enable them to reconsider the contemporary condition of society.

These ominous inner and outer settings echo the negative atmosphere in Ireland and the Irish's being entrapped in and surrounded by problems. As *A Skull* is the second play in *The Leenane Trilogy*, it should be considered in relation to the first play of the trilogy, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* as well. Analysed in this sense, it may be argued that the socio-economic problems of Ireland are carried from the domestic sphere, the house of Mag and Maureen in *The Beauty Queen*, to a societal level in *A Skull*. As Lonergan highlights, the play "lead[s]" the audience/ reader "from the individual to the wider and thus showing how the people of Leenane are products of their environment and their community" (*The Theatre and Films* 20). The inner settings and outer settings complementing each other serve this view and aim. Similarly, it may be stated that McDonagh is not interested in writing a peasant play but he particularly uses a rural setting, "the interior of the Irish peasant home" (Richmond 24) in a rural area, in the case of *A Skull*, Connemara, in order to serve his own aims. The gothic, horrifying and corrupt atmosphere are used to tell that everything is not the same as it appears. Such an atmosphere is, indeed, the indicator of the dark moods of the ones living there.

That the cottage does not have the warmth of home and that Connemara does not signify the depiction of any kind of feeling of home are reflective of the fact that the idea of "home," similar to the 1960s and the later years, was questioned by many of the Irish in the 1990s as well. The Celtic Tiger period, which is also associated with self-centredness, can

be regarded as a period of alienation for the Irish. In this new self-centred culture dominated by selfishness, the idea of 'home' has lost its meaning and began to be associated with the idea of "exile." As Mays explains, "[t]oday [...], exile [has] taken on a whole new and very different set of meanings within the context of the rapid social changes that have transformed the country since the 1990s" (9). In a similar strand, O'Toole argues that Ireland's transformation into a totally different country also means "a process of estrangement. Home has become as unfamiliar as abroad" (qtd. in Mays 9). Moreover, as Thomas Murphy has observed, the definition of "home" has totally changed in contemporary Ireland. About this issue he states that "[i]n recent times I noticed that the recurring theme seems to be the search for home. What that 'home' means, I am not sure. It used to appear in the plays in the literal, geographical way that we understand the term. Now, I see it more as a search for the self, for peace, for harmony" (qtd. in Kurdi, "Interview" 234). The highly desired unified self, peace and harmony are, however, far-fetched terms in contemporary circumstances. Today, the Irish are in quest of happiness, a better life which is not dominated by violence, a way to make the highly fragmented society/ individuals a whole, a real 'home' that will provide all individuals living in this 'home' with all these desired possibilities, a 'home' which is no longer associated with being in 'exile,' a 'home' which evokes the beautiful romantic paradise-like image of Erin. Contrary to all these wishes and desires, however, within contemporary reality, 'home' is a far-fetched term for the Irish:

> The speed and scale of those changes have induced a sense of internal exile, a sense that Irish people feel less and less at home in Ireland, that Ireland has become somehow unreal. In one way or another, very many Irish people have experienced a sense of the familiar becoming unknown, unrecognisable. Ireland has become so multi-layered, so much a matter of one set of images superimposed on another, that it is hard to tell home from abroad. (O'Toole, *The Ex-Isle* 173)

In the complicated world of contemporary Ireland, quest for the peaceful life lost a long time ago is associated with quest for a peaceful self, which is, for the time being, lost. Today, the sounds of the songs and poems of the 19th century crying "though between us may roll the broad ocean, / Will I cherish thy name with the same deep devotion/ And

though minstrels more brilliant my place may supply, / None loves you more fondly, more truly than I" (Callanan, "Stanzas to Erin") have been replaced by words such as "What kind of a town is this at all? Brothers fighting and lasses peddling booze and two fecking murderes on the loose?" (*Lonesome West* ii.140). This dramatic shift as regards the depiction of Ireland in literary works from positivity to negativity represents the change in Irish society and individuals' reactions to this serious change, and their suffering in their own 'home.'

Loaded with so much negativity, the characters represent two different kinds of violence in *A Skull*: domestic and institutional. First domestic violence will be concentrated upon, and later the focus will be on institutional violence. It is seen that unlike Pato, who prefers to emigrate first to England and then to the USA, in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, Mairtin's father, in *A Skull*, as reflective of the above-mentioned exiles, is an allusion to the mood of the ones who have not emigrated to other countries, but who have to encounter all the social, political and economic problems of Ireland by staying there. As he suffers from depression due to the problems in society, with sudden bursts of anger, he applies physical violence to Mairtin. He tries to relieve his stress through regularly beating Mairtin without any logical reason: "My own father is right. And if he took his belt off to you for no reason at all eight times a week, it wouldn't be so quick you'd be saying 'Your own father now.' I'll tell you that" (i 70). That the father's name is not given in the play has symbolic significance in that he signifies the mood of everyone in society who is entangled within the disturbing atmosphere of the country, and as a result, who sees physical violence as a way of escape. 'The father,' at this point, becomes representative of domestic violence experienced within the borders of the so-called 'home.' For him and others like him, violence has become nothing more than a daily routine. The ones to whom they apply physical and psychological violence, in a way, are seen as 'things,' 'objects,' not as flesh and blood human beings. *A Skull* shows how monstrous and destructive human beings can become towards the ones around them. It also shows "how the uncontrolled irrational mechanism [...] brings to the fore the basic and animalistic drives not only of individual characters but also of the (Irish) community as a whole" (Lachman 70). Hence, the father

may also be functional in terms of encoding McDonagh's message that one should control these animalistic drives and innate violence. Moreover, a critical look on this father character may lead one into finding solutions to the realities and problems related to violence in society.

Another representation of domestic violence can be observed in Mick's cottage: It is implied but never revealed for certain that he killed his wife, Oona, seven years ago. In this sense, the play might be the representation of domestic violence literally "behind closed doors" (Vandevelde 299), as nobody exactly knows what really happened between Mick and Oona. *A Skull* may be called as 'a play of possibilities' as McDonagh leaves an open door for multiple thoughts and comments; hence nothing is certain and much is implied. Mick says that he caused the death of his wife due to drunken driving: "The only aspersions that could be cast are the ones I've already served me time over. That I had had a drink taken, and a good drink, and that she had no seat-belt on her, and that was the end of it. No other aspersions could there be" (i 78-79). There is, however, widespread gossip and suspicion that Mick had already killed his wife before the car crash with a mallet, which is also voiced by the police officer, Thomas:

> [W]hat I was going to say was ... some insinuation along the lines of ... not that I'm making any accusations, mind ... but maybe your wife's head injuries all those years ago weren't especially conductive to only having been in a car crash at all, and maybe ...
> Mick: (angrily) All that came out at that time, Thomas Hanlon, and didn't the inquest shoot every word of it down!
> Thomas: Y'know, maybe she was already *dead* before you drove her into the wall, that kind of insinuation, like. But nothing harsher than that am I saying. (ii 96)

This conversation shows that after being interrogated, Mick was released from the police station as the police could not prove that he murdered Oona. As a matter of fact, *The Leenane Trilogy*, in general, and *A Skull*, in particular, turn the teachings of the mainstream culture about facts and lies upside down since the facts turn out to be lies while the gossips signify what is factual. The play, in general, is about hiding unpleasant facts and crimes.

Especially considered in relation to, and as a continuation of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, which was dealt with in the previous chapter, this point will be understood more clearly; because this play proves that all gossips are not lies; on the contrary, they prove to be true and factual. In *The Beauty Queen*, until they watch/ read, the audience/ readers are not aware of the fact that Maureen has really been applying physical violence to her mother, Mag, about which Mag always complains, and in the end Maureen murders Mag. Later, in *A Skull*, it is revealed that Maureen's murder has not been proven, and now she lives alone in her cottage rather than being in prison. There is dramatic irony here as only the audience/ readers know for sure that Mag has been murdered, yet for the public, it remains nothing more than a rumour. Similarly, Mick's being interrogated for the death of his wife does not prove anything, and he continues his life outside as if nothing happened. In *The Lonesome West*, the third play in the trilogy, Valene talks about the gossips about Mick and Maureen: "A great parish it is you run, one of them murdered his missus, an axe through her head, the other her mammy, a poker took her brains out, and it's only chit-chatting it is you be with them? Oh aye. / Welsh: What can I do, sure, if the courts and the polis..." (i 134). In this sense, it is possible to mention a clash between appearance and reality which seems to be intentionally created by McDonagh to convey his following message to the audience/ readers: One should never be sure that all appearances including the ones related to the police institution, which may sometimes be ineffectual in solving the problems related to murders or violence, are true. He wants the audience/ readers to be critical of the taught 'facts' around them. In fact, what McDonagh is trying to do here is to criticise the police institution. It may also be put forth that even if the gossips are not true, and Mick has not killed his wife, all these suspicions and the possibility of Oona's skull's being hit by a mallet prepare the atmosphere for one to criticise domestic violence.

Although it is not openly stated that Mick killed Oona, together with gossips' revealing a lot about the facts, there are many clues and implications that he did. One of the strongest implications of Mick's murder of Oona is revealed again in *The Lonesome West*: When Coleman begins to defend Mick saying that it was only a car accident, Father Welsh asks: "With the scythe hanging out of her forehead, now Coleman?" (i 135). This accusation

made by the priest strengthens the possibility of the murder. In addition, Mick's personality is a significant clue in the murder issue. It will be meaningful to state that Mick was already notorious for his bad behaviours in society. As Lonergan argues, "Mick also makes clear that his bad reputation predates Oona's death" (*The Theatre and Films* 23), and he supports his idea through Mick's following words: "[S]he'd always stand up for me against people. Y'know, in a fight or something, or if people were saying things agin me" (iv 114). In relation to this, it may be argued that Mick is already inclined to exhibit physical and verbal violence. Mick also does not give one the impression of a trustworthy person as he always lies, which is witnessed by the audience/ readers many times. The biggest shock for the audience/ readers about his lies comes in scene iii. When Mary asks Mick where he puts the bones of the dead in scene one, Mick says: "I seal them in a bag and let them sink to the bottom of the lake and a string of prayers I say over them as I'm doing so" (i 74). This statement initially gives the impression that Mick shows respect to the dead and is a pious Irish man. In scene iii, however, it is understood that all he has previously said is nothing more than a lie. Mairtin is shocked when he sees Mick "smashing the skulls into even smaller pieces," and Mick says to Mairtin: "In front of the fat one I said, aye. Batter the shite of them is nearer the mark" (iii 103). The audience/ readers witness Mick's second lie after he hits Mairtin on the head with a mallet. After he hits Mairtin on the skull, Mick's "shirt is covered in blood. He wipes some blood off his mallet and lays it on the table," and when Mary, Mairtin's grandmother comes, he "wipes some of the blood from himself." When Mary asks "What's all that on you, Mick? Out painting have you been?" Mick says: "I have, aye. I've been out painting red things" (iv 111-12). Similarly, the conversation below creates suspicion, and strengthens the possibility that Mick killed Oona, as what Mick does to Mairtin is, a similar and repeated version of what Mick might have done to Oona seven years before:

> Thomas: Have him for ramming a mallet through the poor brains of you.
> Mairtin: A mallet? What are you talking about, sure? A pure drink-driving is all this was.
> Thomas: Hah?
> Mick: Hah?

> Mairtin: A pure drink-driving is all this was. What would Mick want to go malleting my poor brains for? Mick likes me an awful lot, don't you, Mick?
> Mick: I do, Mairtin. Sure I think you're a great fella. (i 119)

Mick tries to hide the fact that he hit Mairtin with a mallet on the skull. Moreover, just as he tried to defend himself in Oona's case stating that he loved Oona and that it was only a drunken driving accident (ii 78-79), here again, he manages to get away with whatever he has done through lying and saying that he loves Mairtin, and through his effort to hide his violence, the facts and the clues related to this violence. Since Mick is observed to be continuously lying, it may be argued that it is also possible that he was lying about the death of Oona as well.

Furthermore, Mick's excessive alcohol consumption reveals many significant details about his personality indeed. As mentioned above, during the Celtic Tiger period, there was a high level of alcohol consumption, which caused much more violence. Mick's alcohol consumption is revealed both by himself when he accepts that he caused Oona's death as a consequence of drunken driving, and by Mairtin's following words said to Mick: "Poteen breakfasts and poteen suppers is all I ever see consumed in this house!" (i 75). His always keeping poteen by his side is reflective of not only his tendency for violence as more alcohol consumption brings more violence, and of his escapist nature, his desire to escape from all the previously mentioned social problems experienced by the majority of the society. He tries to forget the problems experienced in western Ireland, and is lost in his self-isolation. In addition, Mick, preferring to stay in the western part of Ireland rather than migrating to other countries, does not have a proper job. He has a "filthy job" (i 66), to put it more clearly, digging the graves in the graveyard every autumn. Hence, he is distressed in the country. Regarding this, it is possible to argue that just as Mairtin's father beats Mairtin as a reflection of his anger towards the social problems, Mick, through killing Oona, might have reflected his own psychological problems and anger upon her during one of his drunken and depressed moments. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that, when he is drunk, Mick enjoys applying physical violence as can be clearly observed during his

breaking the skulls and bones of the dead in his cottage into pieces with great joy. Similarly, while doing his job drunkenly, it is possible that he killed Oona with a mallet.

The possibility of Mick's killing Oona might be indicative of another probability as well. This probability might be discussed in relation to the Church's prohibition of divorce and its pressure upon the private lives of people which leads to domestic violence. In this respect, McDonagh might be criticising the Church's oppression of people, and the rules and laws determined by the same institution. Thus, the play may be regarded as McDonagh's satire on the Catholic Church. For McDonagh, criticising the institution of the Church in the 1990s can be understandable as in that decade many Irish had lost their trust in this institution as a result of the Church scandals. As Paul Murphy explains, "in 1992 Eamon Casey, the Bishop of Galway, was revealed as the father of a teenage boy; in 1994 a Dublin priest died in a gay sauna, while in the same year Father Brendan Smyth's litany of paedophilia came to the fore" (69-70). Moreover, Diarmaid Ferriter writes in his *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* that, in 1995, "the hypocrisy of the country's best-known priest, Fr Michael Cleary, was exposed after his death. He had used his own radio show and newspaper column to espouse his extreme conservatism in relation to celibacy and matters of sexual morality, and was now revealed to have had a child with his live-in house-keeper" (qtd. in Murphy, "The Stage Irish" 70). These scandals and loss of trust in the Church prepared the atmosphere for serious questions related to the oppression of the Church. As one can understand from the play, Oona died seven years ago, at the end of the 1980s when the Church was more influential in all matters in society including the condition of women compared to 1995, the time when the play takes place. The play, in fact, tells "the influence of the Catholic Church and the pressures of a parochial society on individuals" (Molloy 239). The Church had been regarded as the centre of society and influential in matters of life and death. Even the law was dominated by its fixed rules, and decisions about the social roles of women, their roles at home, abortion and divorce were generally decided by the Church itself (Hussey 382), which was also stated by Valene in *The Lonesome West*: "Courts and the polis me arse. I heard the fella you represent was of a

higher authority than the courts and the fecking polis" (i 134). Hussey illustrates the Church's being regarded as the centre of society in Ireland as follows:

> Women were placed in the home: 'In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved' (Article 41.2.1) and therefore, 'No law shall be enacted providing for the grant of a dissolution of marriage.'
>
> Éamon de Valera's 1937 Constitution, which survives almost intact today, was explicitly religious in its overtones and some of its provisions. It formally affirmed the 'special position' of the Catholic Church (Article 44) – removed quietly, almost without debate, in 1972 – as 'the guardian of the faith of the great majority of the citizens.' Backing up this article was a series of provisions on the family, placing it squarely at the centre of life, and giving it right 'antecedent to and superior to all law' (Article 41.1). De Valera worked closely with the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, on this blueprint for his country. (382)

This law showing women's position in society as secondary in rank gives men priority in all decisions. As regards the institutions and decisions mentioned above, one can understand the fact that a woman did not have much say in matters related to her family life and life outside. She was dominated by a parochial patriarchal society; hence, she did not have a voice, which is signified by Oona in *A Skull*. In fact, the Irish "are the most orthodox Catholic community in the western world. [...]. The Catholic Church's teaching on divorce [...] has been enshrined in the Irish Constitution" (Hussey 373). As Farrelly underlines, the strict prohibition on divorce prior to 1997 is reflective of the strong connection between "God's law and human law" (32), which creates pressure upon the Catholic. So, in the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s in Ireland, even if one wanted to escape from family problems, divorce was a problematic issue for both men and women due to the law determined by the Church.

Aware of this fact, "Martin McDonagh, [...] part of the tradition – [...] of using violence and brutality to disturb an audience, often to show the limitations of Irish society" (Eldred, "Martin McDonagh's Blend" 200) opens a new discussion about the psychological oppression of individuals exercised by the law of the Church. Hence, it will not be wrong to

argue that through the domestic violence applied by Mick to Oona, McDonagh opens to discussion the limited role of women at home. As women's role in society, in accordance with the law of the Church, is limited to the domestic sphere, Mick can find the right to criticise Oona's role as a domestic woman and wife:

> Oona didn't have big faults really. She just had little faults. Niggly things, y'know. She'd never wrap up cheese properly. Y'know when she was finished with it. She'd just leave it lying about, letting the air get to it. The same with bread. She'd never wrap up bread properly. Y'know, like after she'd made a sandwich or the like. And she was terrible at scrambled eggs, and I don't know why, because scrambled eggs are easy to do. Oona's scrambled eggs'd come out either grey or burned. (iv 113-14)

Oona does not have an individual identity by which she can act according to her own wishes. When she was alive, she was only "playing out the culturally scripted roles associated with 'femininity'" (Agger 118), which was written by the Church. Herstory is not told by herself but by her husband Mick. It is reported by Mick that Oona mainly talked either to defend Mick against "people [...] in a fight or something, or if people were saying things agin [him]" (iv 114). Her 'scripted role,' in this sense, has been limited to speaking only for her own husband and defending her husband in all cases no matter what the topic was or no matter if he was right in his fight or not.

Women in Irish drama have mainly been depicted as subordinated to men and given the secondary position in the order of importance. As Trotter emphasises, "from Yeats and Gregory's *Kathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) to McDonagh's virgin/ whore "Girleen" in *The Lonesome West* (1997), Irish female characters have embodied the nation, the land, the desires and responsibilities of male characters, but rarely have they been authentic, complex, autonomous women" (164). Oona is depicted in a similar dependent way, and more tragically, she is dead, which metaphorically implies that she does not have a voice of her own. As McDonough strikingly notes,

> Gayatri Spivak's well-known discussion 'Can the Subaltern Speak?,' [...] reflects how women's bodies are the sites upon which conflicts, discussions, arguments, and wars of national identity, independence, and autonomy are

> symbolically fought. Spivak points out that the subaltern does not speak in this discourse but rather is spoken for. Thus, it would seem that within colonial politics, the truly radical act would be to have the feminised subaltern speak – or more accurately within the colonial landscape of Ireland, to listen to the voice of women who have spoken but whose stories too often get ignored or erased. (183)

Oona, similar to and as a representation of mother Ireland, is oppressed and colonised by Mick. Like mother Ireland, her body has been an area of exploitation and colonisation. McDonagh uses the "feminist strategy of placing female characters and their stories in the subject position of the drama, reclaiming an aspect of the Irish experience – women's – which has been alternately idealised and ignored in the Irish mainstream tradition" (Trotter 164). From a feminist perspective, it might be argued that McDonagh deconstructs the parochial and patriarchal point of view in society in terms of women's condition through *A Skull*. As Middeke and Schnierer point out, "Irish feminist writing has deconstructed the 'male gaze,' the marginalisation of women in history, traditional and conventional concepts of wifehood, and motherhood or pregnancy" (xii). McDonagh does the same in the play, and indirectly questions all matters of womanhood in Irish society. Oona is not in the play physically; however, still she is the key and central character in the play, and through her absence she illustrates many problems as regards the place of women in society and the psychological and physical violence applied to them. McDonagh, through her, aims to allude to gender issues. *A Skull*, in this sense, "challenge[s] and subvert[s] culturally-based female stereotypes" and "also critique[s] the oppression of women" (Llewellyn-Jones 11) by the Church and patriarchy. Relying on the law determined by the Church, Mick is far from seeing his wife as an individual. For him, Oona is nothing more than an object which speaks only for his benefit. As he can use her body according to his wishes, it is possible that he killed his wife as a result of one of her minor 'faults.'

Together with Mick's function serving as McDonagh's criticism on domestic violence, it is also possible to comment upon his second function again with regard to Oona. Mick, in many parts of the play, may be thought of as McDonagh's voice as well. Mick may be voicing McDonagh's message that the ones living in this problematic society dominated by

violence should change their minds and begin to think in a more questioning and critical way as regards the teachings of the Church and the law. If Oona is thought of, from a feminist point of view, as representative of all women in Ireland, then, the possibility of Mick's hitting on the forehead of Oona with a mallet before the car crash might be indicative of the urgent need for women to change their mentalities. McDonagh, through Mick, challenges the idea that "what is written on the forehead will never fail" (Kent 1). Contrary to this belief, he thinks that there is always something that can be done to change the wrong norms in society. McDonagh wants people to be aware of the centuries-old pressures and oppressions of the Church, and *A Skull* may also be thought of as a call to women to be aware of the fact that they have rights, too. According to McDonagh, everybody is playing the roles determined and constructed by the Church. One must be aware of this, and "rather than blindly accepting the laws of" (Farrelly 60) the Church, s/he must question them.

In the play, McDonagh manages to employ his satire on the mistakes in Irish society through the seven deadly sins. "[T]he play," in Arons' words, "paints a decidedly non-naturalistic portrait of a small Irish community and the sins, failures, and rages of its inhabitants" ("*A Skull*"). Especially the idea of 'sin' is very meaningful here as it indicates the seven deadly sins each of which is represented by the characters in the play. As Eldred puts forth, "[j]ust as [the movie] *Se7en* focuses on a series of murders designed to represent the seven deadly sins, McDonagh critiques Leenane as a place where greed, envy, pride, wrath, and sloth have found cozy homes" ("Martin McDonagh" 115). McDonagh presents his satire through the terminology or representations of the Catholic sect. Thomas is characterised by greed for fame, envy of the detectives in Hollywood films, and pride, which, in the end, leads to his suicide. Rather than doing his job properly and trying to represent the law enforcement in the best way he can to protect the country and its people from violent actions, he is in pursuit of fame and being promoted and nothing else. Mary represents sloth and gluttony as she is a fat old woman who always sits doing nothing but spreading news about the experiences of the neighbours, and drinking something. Mairtin is representative of lust, which makes him blind to all the wrong-doings in society. As for

Mick, he is characterised by wrath on the indifferent citizens. From this point on, the seven deadly sins, represented by different characters or institutions that are directly or indirectly responsible for the violence will be discussed and illustrated one by one where the relevant characters are closely analysed in relation to McDonagh's satire. However, the last sin, wrath, represented by Mick will be discussed later in relation to the idea of carnivalesque.

First, *A Skull* mirrors the fact that even the supposed protectors of citizens, the police, may sometimes be brutal towards their own people, and be indulged in violent activities without any reasonable excuse. This corrupt police mentality is represented by the sinister policeman, Thomas Hanlon. Thomas serves McDonagh's satire in terms of his being another representative of institutional violence, in his case, the representation of police violence upon prisoners, and the police institution's sometimes triggering violence, and inability to solve violence-related cases, and to enable the desired justice in society. In this case, *A Skull* may also be regarded as a satire on the fact that the police institution sometimes may itself be included in crimes or violence rather than reducing crime and violence in society. It is important to know that the police force of the Republic of Ireland is The Garda Síochána, which is responsible to the Ministry of Justice (*Report to the Irish Government* 13). The report prepared by the European Committee "for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)" in relation to the Garda and after their visit to Irish prisons in Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Shannon in 1993, and which was published in 1995, reveals the fact that there had been police violence in the 1990s upon some prisoners which resulted in injuries, some of which were serious. This report was prepared after interviews with the former prisoners or the ones who were still imprisoned during the visit, and it is also important to note that the report's dealing with the Garda in different parts of Ireland makes it more objective and more reliable. According to the report, "[a] certain number of those interviewed alleged that they had been physically ill-treated whilst in police custody in Dublin. Their allegations were consistent as regards the forms of ill-treatment involved (slaps, punches and/or kicks by police officers)" (*Report to the Irish Government* 14). The condition of one of the seriously ill-treated prisoners is explained as follows:

> One person met by the delegation alleged that he had been severely ill-treated by police officers at Ronanstown Garda Station in Dublin, during the delegation's visit to Ireland. He said that, while held in a cell there, two uniformed officers had repeatedly punched him on his face, chest and left arm and kicked him on his shins. He also claimed to have been ill-treated by detective officers, who allegedly had punched him during an interrogation and, while gripping his shoulders, had banged his head against a filing cabinet. (*Report to the Irish Government* 14)

A similar serious ill-treatment case was observed at Limerick Prison in 1992, which was registered by the delegation: "The inmate in question, whom the delegation met at Mountjoy Prison, alleged that, on 9 April 1992, he was punched, kicked and thrown down two flights of stairs by a group of prison officers at Limerick Prison" (*Report to the Irish Government* 28). As these cases prove, institutional violence is observed not only in the western part but also in the eastern part of Ireland, which shows the seriousness of the situation in the country.

In *A Skull*, used as an allusion to police violence in the country, Thomas is notorious for seriously beating the ones who are being interrogated at the police offices. In order to criticise the police institution, McDonagh presents Thomas as a caricaturesque and farcical character, who seemingly knows a lot about laws and human rights, but in fact who has no knowledge about them. After an argument with Mick about who began the insulting between them, Thomas, proud of himself, and as if he knew a lot about law, says: "It's not the self-same thing at all, and if you knew anything about the law then you'd know it's not the self-same thing. So now I have to turn me vague insinuations into something more of an insult, so then we'll all be quits..." (ii 95). He violates human rights as he applies physical violence to individuals. Rather than protecting the rights of man, he becomes one of the violators of these rights, and he does not accept his fault:

> Mairtin: Aren't the police the experts at battering gasurs anyway? Don't you get a bonus for it?
> [...]
> Thomas: What gasurs do I ever batter?

> Mairtin: Ray Dooley for a start-off, or if not you then your bastarding cohorts.
> Thomas: What about Ray Dooley?
> Mairtin: Didn't he end up the County Hospital ten minutes after you arrested him?
> Thomas: He did, the pisshead, a broken toe. Kicking the cell door in and forgetting he had no shoes on him.
> [...]
> Mairtin: Aye, and don't be invading people's human rights is what the other crux of the matter is. The guards are there to serve the people, not the other way round, if you'd like to know. (ii 92)

As stated before, McDonagh, in his three plays studied in this dissertation, tries to illustrate how human beings can turn into monstrous figures through reflecting their innate violence. In *A Skull*, Thomas is presented as a person who tries to justify his innate violence through the police institution and in the name of law, and this makes him feel strong. Accordingly, Thomas, "an example of Irish law enforcement" (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 21), may be argued to be the representative figure of corruption in society. O'Toole emphasises that "[t]he state that generations of nationalists fought to establish is represented by the ineffectual policeman. Far from halting the violence or the self-destruction of the community, [Thomas] joins in both" (*Martin McDonagh* xiv). Albeit he is the representative of the police institution, Thomas can do whatever he wants without any restriction in Connemara which lacks civilization and justice.

McDonagh, aware of this violence in society seems to be performing the role of the transmitter of the messages of the 1995 CPT Report in which it is stated that "the best possible guarantee against ill-treatment is for its use to be unequivocally rejected by police officers. It follows that the provision of suitable education on human rights questions and of adequate professional training is an essential element of any strategy for the prevention of ill-treatment" (16). The message is that a less violent and more peaceful police institution respecting human rights and applying them in a more influential way may be possible through education and training. Citizens and representatives of law enforcement must be determined to put human rights into practice rather than considering them as theoretical knowledge to be kept on the pages of the Law.

A Skull may also be thought of as a satire on the inadequacy of the law enforcement in solving violence-related events and in finding the really guilty ones. The play, as Lonergan states, "[deals] with the law [...] at a time when the power of [this] authorit[y] in Ireland was being eroded by revelations about political corruption, [...] and institutional incompetence" ("Martin McDonagh" 296). Lonergan also points out that

> [t]he play's dramatic power was based on the revelation of deeply buried secrets – something they had in common with the legal tribunals established to dig into the pasts of some of Ireland's most prominent politicians. *A Skull in Connemara*'s presentation of an inept policeman coincided with a growing Irish anxiety about the ability of the Irish police force to cope with organised crime, particularly after the assassination of Veronica Guerin in June 1996. ("Martin McDonagh" 297)

Veronica Guerin, the crime journalist of *The Sunday Independent* was killed by a gang of drug addicts that she was investigating (Pritchard 154). The Law's inability to solve the murder in Veronica's case is reflected in *A Skull* through Thomas' inability to disclose Oona's murder. McDonagh underlines that no violent action can be prevented "[w]hen the law is both ignorant and criminally inclined in the pursuit of convictions" (Richards, "The Outpouring" 259). In the light of these arguments about the police force, it may be stated that Thomas's being depicted as "the guard" of society creates a deliberate irony: "Enter the guard, Thomas Hanlon, stage right, in full uniform, sucking on, at intervals throughout, a cigarette and an asthma inhaler" (ii 88). This depiction is an ironic indication of not only his inability to protect the citizens as "the guard," but also the fact that he himself is in need of help for breathing properly. As Lonergan argues, "[t]hat contrast between smoking and needing assistance to breathe is very funny in performance, but it also indicates one of the central features of Thomas's personality: he is always trying to do things that he lacks the ability to do properly" (*The Theatre and Films* 24).

Moreover, Thomas is depicted as a person who aspires to be promoted to the position of a detective no matter what the conditions are. McDonagh prefers to present his satire through exaggerations and through portraying Thomas as a police officer who admires American

detective movies, and aspires to be just like one of those detectives who solves mysterious problems and murders:

> It isn't knowing the difference between hearsay and circumstantial evidence that makes you a great copper. No. Detective work it is, and going hunting down clues, and never letting a case drop no matter what the odds stacked against you, no matter how many years old. [...]. Like *Petrocelli* [...], and the first thing I do when they promote me is reopen the case of that lettuce and jam man I was telling you about, 'cos I can't sleep nights sometimes thinking of that poor fella's murder going four years unsolved, as cold and alone in his big at grave he lies. (iv 117)

Besides this admiration for and envy of detectives in American movies, Thomas is portrayed as a person who acts and makes decisions on hearsay evidence and the gossips of the neighbours. He relies heavily on "maybe"s rather than "fact"s which he uses many times. He acts only through implications, suggestions and possibilities, and without proof. For example, without evidence, he wants Mick to sign a confession in which the latter admits that he had killed Oona before the car accident, and he brings Oona's skull which he himself steals from her grave and later fractures (iv 115) to prove that Oona was already dead before the car-crash, which will help him get the promotion, hence reflecting his greed. He creates false evidence to make people believe his lies and so-called knowledge on law. Thus, Thomas creates an image of an unreliable police officer who can tell lies for his own benefit. When Mick burns his confession and does not accept to go to the police office to confess the murder, Thomas is overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness: "I think ... I think ... I think they're never going to promote me" (iv 122). Later, since he cannot manage to get the promotion, he commits suicide, as revealed by Father Welsh in *The Lonesome West*: "Tom Hanlon's just killed himself. [...]. He walked out into the lake from the oul jetty there" (ii 147). Taking into consideration water's traditional connotation of cleansing, Thomas' death in a lake may symbolically be interpreted as the urgent need for immediate cleansing in the wrong-doings of the police force and getting rid of the ones who cannot conform to the rules of human rights and who cannot perform their duties as regards protecting the country.

On the other hand, Mary Rafferty, “a heavy-set, white-haired [woman] in her seventies” (i 63), is characterised by gluttony and sloth as stated above. She is always observed sitting lazily the whole day only drinking booze (iv 125) at Mick’s cottage and eating something, as her weight reveals. Moreover, rather than a grown-up mother, she is depicted like a child, who is in need of improving herself and learning something and growing up. As O’Toole argues, “[w]hat makes [McDonagh’s] characters so like old, mad children is that everyone has forgotten what adults are supposed to learn – the difference between what matters and what doesn’t” (“Murderous Laughter” 383). Mary may be considered as representing mother Ireland in terms of being old and inactive, and in this sense, may be associated with Irish people’s ignorance of and indifference towards the problems in society. To put it more clearly, Mary, the grandmother, is depicted as an opportunist who tries to benefit from all the luxuries and comfort of the Celtic Tiger period forgetting about the problems in the country. Through her, McDonagh satirises passive people. As Farrelly points out, “[i]n McDonagh’s world, tragedies can happen, but nothing is ever viewed as tragic. The only tragedy for McDonagh is passivity” (10), which is embodied by Mary. She, like the police institution, is not interested in and is ineffective in solving the problem of violence. What she is doing is sitting throughout the day, which represents the sloth, and eating or drinking something which can be understood from her fatness, which represents her gluttony.

She is also depicted as an old fogeyish woman who is behind her times. As illustrated previously in this chapter, McDonagh is against the idea of being stuck in the past, and Mary cannot catch up with the present. She still complains about an event that happened twenty-seven years ago: “And the three [of those youngsters] I caught weeing in the churchyard and when I told them I’d tell Father Cafferty, what did they call me? A fat oul biddy!” When Mick tells her she “should let bygones be bygones,” she says “No, I will not let bygones. I’ll tell you when I’ll let bygones be bygones. When I see them burned in Hell I’ll let bygones be bygones, and not before!” (i 65). Moreover, rather than being concerned with the present social and cultural problems in society, she is mainly concerned with what will happen to the bones of her mother and father and to those of the ones she knew after

Mick digs their graves to take their skull and bones: "Questions about where did he put our Padraig when he dug him up is the kind of question, and where did he put our Brigid when he dug her up is the kind of question, and where did he put my poor ma and da when he dug them up is the biggest question!" (i 72). Mary lives in and with the past, which makes her blind to the present social and cultural problems. As Royle points out, "Ireland remains a land that looks to its past. Certain aspects of this past are not attractive and some would say that Ireland has become a land haunted by history" (136). It is true that "[o]ne of the hardest things to do is to make a cognitive break with the past when circumstances demand it. Ulrich Beck has coined the term 'zombie categories' to designate those concepts that blind us to the current realities of our lives by promoting understandings that are impervious to new developments" (Vaughan and Kilcommins 440). Mary's condition is very similar, and hers is a symbolic question showing her past concerns and being entrapped in the past, implying that Ireland can never take a step further in terms of healing the problems of the society unless the Irish learn to live in the present rather than in the past. In fact, the central satire revolves around the symbolic representation of the skull and the breaking of the skulls and bones into pieces. This symbol is reflective of McDonagh's discussion that the Irish should accept that now they live in an era which is very different even from a few years ago. Their ancestors had to fight for different problems than contemporary generations struggle against. So, smashing the skulls and bones of the ones who have lived at earlier times might be symbolic of wanting to keep a distance with the past and concentrating upon present problems. Mary's worrying about what happens to the bones of her family members and of the ones she knew when they were alive after they are taken out of their graves is, in fact, symbolic of her "suffering from 'historyalis,' that is, 'stuckness in the past"' (Grene, qtd. in Middeke and Schnierer x).

As for Mairtin, he is so dominated by his lustful desires that he is not concerned with the corruption and all the wrong-doings in society. Thus, he resembles his grandmother, Mary. He is only in pursuit of the pleasures of life rather than the serious matters concerning the country. Lust is at the centre of his life: "Mairtin [...] idles around with the skulls, placing them against his chest as if they're breasts at one point, kissing them together at another" (ii

85). Also he always asks questions about sexual organs, which, being sexually inexperienced, reflects his interest in sex:

> Mairtin: Hey, Mick!
> Mick: What?
> Mairtin: Where does your thing go?
> Mick: Eh?
> Mairtin: Where does your thing go? When you die, I mean. None of them have had their things at all. And I've looked.
> Mick: I know well you've looked. And the women's too! I think that's why you came on this job, to have a good look. You don't see many living ones.
> Mairtin: I see my share. (ii 86)

Moreover, Mairtin is generally involved in physical violence. He is known to have cooked a hamster (iii 105). In Mick's cottage, he is also observed breaking the skulls and bones into pieces with great joy. As Sayın argues, this suggests how his sexual inexperience creates dissatisfaction and disillusionment, and how he applies physical violence to satisfy his needs and sexual inexperience (61). Since the girls in his neighbourhood do not take interest in him, he cannot satisfy his sexual desires, which brings him closer to violence to satisfy his needs. As Freud puts forth, "[w]hat we call happiness, in the strictest sense of the word, arises from the fairly sudden satisfaction of pent-up needs" (16), and "since sexual (genital) love had afforded man the most potent experiences of satisfaction and actually supplied him with the model for all happiness, this should have told him that he would do well to go on seeking happiness in the sphere of sexual relations and place genital eroticism at the centre of his life" (48). Mairtin is the epitome of the ones in quest for this 'happiness' and satisfaction, but he can never reach his aim. According to Yakupoğlu, dissatisfaction with something invites violence (313). Yakupoğlu further elaborates on the issue stating that some natural instincts occupy the mind of an individual and call her/ him to violence when they are not satisfied with something (314; 317). This dominant instinct in Mick is his sexual desire, which shows that his id is in the foreground, and in civilised societies primitive feelings are suppressed by civilisation. As Freud states, "[c]ontrol is exercised by the higher physical authorities" (20). In *A Skull*, civilisation that suppresses the id is represented by the Church and the police institution. Mick releases his id in Mick's cottage

which is devoid of traces of civilisation, and, as a result, applies physical violence by breaking the bones into pieces to satisfy his sexual needs. Lastly, it may be said that through Mairtin's portrayal as a young person dominated by lust, and, as a result, by violence, McDonagh, in a way, criticises the ones who are blind to the facts in society just because of their personal needs.

It is also necessary to mark the detail that Mairtin, in a similar way to Oona, is hit on the head, again by Mick, who is McDonagh's voice to convey another message. Among the characters who are alive, only Mairtin is hit on the head, which is a deliberate choice by McDonagh, and which is a significant detail. Mairtin is a childish person who does whatever the others want him to do even if they ask for illegal things. He helps Thomas steal Oona's skull from her grave for Thomas to make a crack on her skull to supposedly prove that Mick killed Oona. Also, Mairtin helps Thomas in hiding 'the truth,' and does an illegal thing. Learning what happens to his wife's skull, Mick hits Mairtin on the head. Mairtin survives the mortal wound that Mick creates by hitting Mairtin on the head with a mallet, which may not be realistic, but which is very symbolic indeed. Considering smashing of skulls as the indicator of the need for an urgent change of mentality, Mairtin's head's being hit might be indicative of the same argument that he too should change his way of thinking The necessity for Mairtin's change of mentality is also implied by the following conversation between Mick and Mairtin which is about the relationship between the brain and the skull:

> Mairtin: Sure skulls are great oul things. It's hard to believe you have one of these on the inside of your head.
> Mick: It's hard to believe *you* have one of them anyways, and the brain to go with it.
> Mairtin: I have no brain, is it? I have a brain too, and a big brain. (ii 85)

Here, it is implied that Mairtin, with this mentality is not different from the empty skulls in the graves which cannot think, and unless Mairtin uses his brain, he will go on like a stupid and brainless young person. Since "[t]hey have no brain to be sticking the lesson through the holes knowledge into," in Mick's words, "the only lesson skulls be understanding" (iii

103) is breaking them into pieces which symbolically indicates that empty brains cannot think to find good solutions.

This skull and bone smashing scene in which Mairtin and Mick are seen swearing is the climax of the play, and is, in fact, expressive of many details and discussions in relation to the idea of the carnivalesque. The skull and bone smashing is likened to a game from which both Mairtin and Mick take great pleasure. Moreover, Mick adds pleasure to his work through his turning on the music while battering the skulls and bones. The music belongs to Dana's "All Kinds of Everything," which is a very romantic poem dealing with natural beauty and which is chosen deliberately by McDonagh most probably to indicate the paradox between the serious and tragic realities and the natural beauty of Ireland, in other words, to show how horrible the atmosphere and conditions in the country are, and how they should and can be. This song is used functionally to imply the negative transformation that Irish society has undergone. Considering that they are drunk as well while smashing the skulls and bones with joy while swearing and listening to music, it can be argued that a carnivalesque atmosphere is created in which the sacred are totally challenged and deconstructed through their laughter and joy. In Middeke's terms, "the laughter questions authorities and [...] denies respect towards tradition and institutions alike" and "[i]n quite a Bakhtinian way, the laughter engenders a radically anti-authoritative [...] text (228). In this carnivalesque atmosphere, respect for the dead and for the ancestors, in general, for the past, taught to them as a part of Christian doctrines is totally lost:

> Mairtin: Ohh, Jeebies... Goodbye Daniel Faragher, [...] Biddy Curran, ya currant bun, ya...
> Mick: She was a fat oul bitch.
> [...]
> Mairtin: Ar, you've done two and I've only done one, Mick, ya snatching feck.
> [...]
> Mairtin: I'll be taking a pop at Biddy Curran's pelvis and then I'll see how I'm feeling.
> Mick: Good-oh.
> [...]
> Mairtin: This is more fun than hamster-cooking!
> Mick: It is. Or if it is I don't know. I've never cooked hamsters. (iii 104-05)

During the carnivals the id is in the foreground while the superego is suppressed, and in the case of Mick and Mairtin, the id is reflected through laughter, physical and verbal violence that they apply to the bones and skulls of their ancestors; and they are sometimes seen swearing at each other as well. For Bakhtin, "[i]n the grotesque world the *id* is uncrowned and transformed into a 'funny monster.' When entering this new dimension, even if it is Romantic, we always experience a peculiar gay freedom of thought and imagination" (49). In this illusory world, the dominance of the superego which is valid in the real world is deconstructed. The fun they have by breaking the skulls and bones into pieces signifies a kind of ritualistic rebellion and aggression against the authorities and McDonagh's rebellion against the violence in society. As Bakhtin states, "[a]s opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (10). He also accentuates that "[t]he feast [is] a temporary suspension of the entire official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchic barriers. For a short time life [comes] out of its usual, legalised and consecrated furrows and enter[s] the sphere of utopian freedom" (89). In this newly created temporary, fanciful and whimsical world, temporary escape from disillusionments and the pressures and oppressions of the laws and rules of the institutions is made possible. As carnivalesque means the provisional death of hierarchy, the superiority of the ones at the top of the hierarchy such as the representatives of law enforcement and the Church are momentarily defied. The pleasure of being able to say '*Non-Serviam*' ('I will not serve') to authority even for a short time satisfies Mick and Mairtin.

Together with the reflection of anger through physical action observed in smashing the skulls and bones and the effect of laughter, verbal violence is of great importance for McDonagh's satire in *A Skull*. The close connection between wrath and verbal violence cannot be underestimated as verbal violence is the outcome of wrath against something. "Aggressive and subversive language functions here both as a dangerous weapon and as a form of rebellion against deadening conformity" (Malkin 9). Verbal violence, in the play, first reflects how human beings have lost respect and love for each other in the

contemporary world. Secondly, it can be argued that "[t]he violent action of language is directed both against the audience and against the characters" (Malkin, *Verbal Violence* 1). More interesting of all is that also the audience becomes McDonagh's target with regard to the reflection of his angry language. McDonagh's anger is also directed against the institutions and the citizens. Through this symbolic carnivalesque atmosphere, Mick, exemplifies wrath against authority, tradition, and all of the distressing problems, which, in fact, stands for McDonagh's own wrath against the authority, the ones being stuck in the past and the indifference towards people (including the ones in the audience) about the corruption and wrong-doings in society. Hence, it might be argued that Mick is McDonagh's inner voice. Like the previously discussed six sins, 'wrath' is used as a means of McDonagh's satire to criticise the wrong-doings in society. Unlike the first six which were used as the reasons of the flaws in society, 'wrath,' is used as a means that will help one question the problems.

McDonagh, as a representative of "new writers" of the 1990s, and employing some characteristics of in-yer-face theatre, "felt compelled to tell unwelcome and distressing truths in the most unmediated way possible. Using such images of violated intimacy, extremism became the new form" (Sierz 233) in the 1990s. McDonagh creates this extremism through creating a carnivalesque atmosphere to "question current ideas of what is normal, what it means to be normal or what is real" (Sierz 5). The play, as reflective of many characteristics of in-yer-face theatre, in this sense, "takes the audience [and the reader] by the scruff of the neck and shakes [them] until [they] get the message" (Sierz 4). Through the carnivalesque, gender, the Church, law enforcement are all questioned, and metaphorically, each hitting on the bones, seems to be applied to the ones who apply, cause or ignore violence.

Before concluding the chapter, it will also be meaningful to state the function of McDonagh's presenting the serious issues in society through employing farcical characteristics. Farcical characteristics are given in *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* as follows: "exaggerated physical action (often repeated), exaggeration of character and situation, absurd situations and improbable events (even impossible ones and

therefore fantastic), and surprises in the form of unexpected appearances and disclosures" (Cuddon 330), all of which are used by McDonagh as well. As Middeke emphasises, the play "is a turbulent farce in which central motifs such as drunk driving, mallets and cracks in foreheads function as absurdly comic repetitions with a difference" (Middeke 217). McDonagh uses these farcical elements on purpose to create an alienation effect to challenge all types of wrong conduct in contemporary Ireland. His primary purpose in his choice of farce is to "create the distance that allows the audience to laugh at the horror he presents" (Fitzpatrick 147-48). Farce creates a comic atmosphere, and through this, as Vandevelde argues, "[t]he audience is made to look back on its past, and realise that by laughing it has distanced itself from an atavistic past" (298). Farce is used for McDonagh's satirical purposes. In this respect, McDonagh's use of this genre, technically, refutes Lea's and Cannings' following definitions of farce: Lea argues that "[f]arce is comedy reduced to commercialism. The best farce is what gives the maximum of amusement for the minimum of intellectual efforts" (qtd. in Dean, "Joe Orton" 481). Similarly, Cannings "assumes that farce is primarily an entertainment not to be taken seriously" (qtd. in Dean, "Joe Orton" 481). Contrary to these arguments, McDonagh uses this genre to deal with serious issues, and demands intellectual involvement of the audience/ readers.

The function of the satirist is not merely observing, writing or voicing the flaws in society. Besides this, "[t]he satirist," as Peck and Joyle state, mocks errant individuals and the folly of society, the purpose being to correct conduct" (170). Likewise, in *A Skull*, McDonagh, presents his observation of contemporary rural Ireland to the audience/ readers. He, however, does not content himself with this, and, by means of metaphors and farcical characteristics, he tries to make the audience/ readers question the offences against the society rather than accepting them as they are. *A Skull*, under its very funny and farcical appearance, portrays a very harsh satire indeed. As Alastair Macaulay, a dance critic writing for the *New York Times*, stated in *Financial Times*, "[t]he point is that McDonagh wants not to illuminate Ireland, or its troubles, but to satirise them" (qtd. in Vandevelde 300).

In the light of these discussions, it would not be wrong to argue that *A Skull* is reflective of the difficulties that the Irish who preferred to stay within the borders of Ireland had to deal with rather than migrating to other countries to escape the socio-economic problems in Ireland in the 1990s. The problems which increased day by day as a result of indifferent citizens' mistakes made people more stressful. This is symbolised by people's being drowned in their own urine and vomit in the play. Mairtin says: Did my brother ever tell you the drunk out in Salthill, lay down on the floor to sleep, and where was his head resting? His head was resting in a potty of wee. Drowned he did! On wee! Eh? (iii 106). Likewise, Mick mentions his three uncles drowned due to their own vomit to which Mairtin says: "But, sure, drowned on sick is nothing to go shouting about. Doesn't everybody drown on sick?" (iii 106). They are so much used to such kind of drowning that it does not sound interesting to them. All the characters in the play, like the ones in *The Beauty Queen*, are entrappred within the vicious circle of the problems in Ireland such as emigration, suicide, physical violence and the Catholic Church which has lost its centuries-old power. In this sense, *A Skull*, under its grotesque appearance, is, in fact "a painful portrayal of victims of loneliness and repression" (Vandevelde 298) and the characters are also reflections of "victims of the modernisation of Irish life" (Vandevelde 297). Moreover, as Eldred puts forth,

> McDonagh's pessimistic voice, filtered and crystallised by his use of horror, thus provides a useful tool to express despair about the state of the nation – everything is turning to shit, and those cultural foundations that should help have instead become quagmires. Horror offers a convenient framework through which to express feelings of hopelessness, failure, and lack of control – it can provide an excellent critique of a nation's idea of itself. McDonagh tears very large holes in the ideals of religion, family, community, and nation dear to popular conceptions of Ireland. However, he always presents this decay of the state as a zombie vaudeville show – decomposing representatives of the Irish family, community, and religion stagger across the stage, dropping body parts along the way. ("Martin McDonagh's Blend" 210)

A Skull, in this sense, may be regarded as McDonagh's effort to prepare the ground for the audience/ readers to find what is right for the society. McDonagh is, in a way, stating: This is Ireland today for whose independence once the Irish fought side by side. Now Ireland is

independent; however, the Irish are doing harm to each other through oppressions, murders and injuries; it is the era of the war fought among brothers and sisters. In relation to all these arguments and in conclusion, it may be argued that the play connotes the fact that Irish society is face to face with violence in society, and this evident problem cannot be solved through violence, being selfish and forgetting the other members of society, and violating universal human rights, as applied by the police officer, Thomas; it cannot be solved by ignoring these problems and taking an escapist role, as observed in fat old Mary either. The first step to find the truth for correcting the wrong-doings can be taken by making a new beginning in life by being critical of them rather than accepting them as they are.

McDonagh raises many questions in the minds of the audience/ readers through striking scenes, metaphors and explanations. "Just like most in-yer-face theatre" works, *A Skull*, too, "challenges the distinctions we use to define who we are: human/ animal; clean/ dirty; healthy/ unhealthy; normal/ abnormal; good/ evil; true/ untrue; real/ unreal; right/ wrong; just/ unjust; art/ life" (Sierz 6). When the audience leave the theatre, and when readers complete reading the play, many questions related to these binary oppositions may come into their minds, which may initiate a change. McDonagh, reflecting the characteristic of in-yer-face theatre, emphasises the need for an urgent change in terms of mentality, and, through *A Skull*, he underlines theatre's "job" "to take us into some of the darkest areas of life so that we should leave the theatre crying out for change" (Rickson, qtd. in Sierz 246), which is, in fact, a call for everyone in the world. The setting of the play may be Ireland, however, it also appeals to "any unsettled nation" in "modern life" (Vandevelde 301). What makes *A Skull* a more significant play is that the discussions in the play related to human rights, gender, misconduct of institutions, violence and human relations are not limited to Leenae, thus making it a universal play.

CHAPTER III
TERROR "FOR ABSOLUTELY NOTHING": SATIRE ON POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN *THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE*

"One man willing to throw away his life is
enough to terrorise a thousand."
(Wu Ch'i, qtd. in Martin 15)

The world has experienced many wars and terrorist activities that have caused much psychological and physical pain in people's lives. Wars and terrorist activities have resulted in injuries, traumas and deaths, including those of many innocents; that is to say, they have also had many psychological and physical negative impacts upon many people who were not directly involved in these activities. On the other hand, there have been many protests against wars, and military and political violence as reflected in the streets, in the media and in the field of literature. Especially in literature, various anti-violence voices can be heard in different types of genres, particularly drama.

Anti-violence works, each of which deals with different aspects of violence such as psychological or physical, domestic or global, were commonly observed especially in England in the 1990s among playwrights who were called, in Sierz's phrase, "young writers" (238). These writers

> were Thatcher's children, and their view of the world came from being brought up in the eighties. In the fierceness of its attack on market-economics, in-yer-face theatre was a reaction against the idea that 'there's no such thing as society'; with its images of violent men and rude girls, it stemmed from two decades of growing feminist sensibility; in its ready acceptance of street slang and exuberant bad language, it reflected the importance of 'yoof' culture. (Sierz 237-38)

Margaret Thatcher is remembered with the Falklands War which took place in 1982 between Britain and Argentina due to her claim upon the Falkland Islands, and this war

caused many casualties. Not only Thatcher's ruling power and her firm stand in the 1980s but also the wars going on in the world in the 1990s such as the Gulf War (1990) and the Bosnian War (1992) affected the English youth of the decade in a negative way. These events which were often shown in the media aroused considerable distress among them, made them angry and critical. In Sierz's terms, "[i]n the nineties, media images of Iraq, Bosnia and Rwanda haunt your mind. Political idealism [...] is mixed with cynicism – your friends don't vote and you think all politicians are corrupt. This is the world you write about" (237). In this sense, it is possible to state that such an atmosphere paved the way for the nineties' writers to react and rebel through writing against the war in which their country took part and the wars going on in the world.

Sierz argues that "[i]t would — however, be wrong to be too dogmatic about what makes a 'typical' young writer. Although many share similar tendencies, they are all highly individual, as the diversity of their plays shows" (238). In other words, each writer has his/ her own style in reflecting the matters they are dealing with. It is true that Martin McDonagh reflects similar characteristics with many "young writers" like Sarah Kane in terms of his anti-violence perspective. On the other hand, unlike Kane's serious, satiric tone in reflecting violence, his satire includes grotesque elements, which makes it unique among in-yer-face playwrights. Moreover, unlike Kane and Ravenhill, whose main concern is mainly English political and social issues in the 1990s, McDonagh's first plays in the 1990s are particularly about Ireland and Irish issues. It is important, however, to bear in mind that, as a person of Irish origin who was brought up in London, experiencing the same problems with other "young writers" within the country, McDonagh's dealing mainly with Ireland does not prevent him from writing in a similar rebellious and satirical manner.

For instance, McDonagh's *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, a play that deals with the IRA, non-exceptionally, is reflective of this rebellious and satirical approach towards not only Irish terrorism but also towards all the military/ political violence going on in the world. As Middeke and Schnierer note, the political unrest in Northern Ireland, the Troubles at the end of the 1960s, and the peace process that was launched in the middle of the 1990s in the region, have been commonly reflected in different ways in literature (xiii). As seen in *The*

Lieutenant, for example, modern Irish drama reflects the Irish issue as something still to be settled (Middeke and Schnierer xiii). McDonagh states that "[t]he play came from a position of what you might call pacifist rage. I mean, it's a violent play that is wholeheartedly anti-violence" (qtd. in O'Hagan, "The Wild West"), and it is not limited to the boundaries of the Irish Island.

The Lieutenant has been presented on the stages of many countries. Religious, and, in relation to this, political sectarianism in Northern Ireland "encounters a considerable amount of dramatic political performance [not only] within, and about, its borders" (Harrington and Mitchell 1) but also abroad, in countries such as the Republic of Ireland, Australia and Turkey. It addresses these countries dealing with wars and terrorism, or political violence. The play, in this sense, clearly has a universal aspect. In each of these countries, however, the perception of the play was different (Lonergan, "Martin McDonagh" 300). With regard to the common point between Turkey and Australia, and about different perceptions of the play in Turkey, Australia and later in Ireland, Lonergan puts forth that since

> in December 2003, Mehmet Ergen directed his own translation of the play in Turkey, only weeks after a series of devastating terrorist bombs in Istanbul, [...] [a]udiences in Istanbul must have seen the play in relation to the atrocities carried out within a very short distance of the theatre itself. Conversely, audiences in Sydney were invited to see it in the context of Armfeld's protest against the foreign policy of the Australian government. [...]. It is interesting that the play was presented in Istanbul mainly in the context of terrorist violence, whereas in Australia it was presented as a condemnation of state violence. Yet in Ireland itself, the play's presentation seemed not to condemn terrorism, but to be a glib trivialisation of it. [...]. [A]udiences in Australia and Turkey found *The Lieutenant* relevant to their societies' confrontation with terrorism. Conversely, international reactions to [the play] [...] can, from an Irish perspective, seem deluded. ("Martin McDonagh" 299, 300-01)

As can be understood, McDonagh's objecting to military/ political violence has been perceived in these countries according to their cultural and political contexts. It is really interesting that the play has been received as relevant to the terrorism in Australia and Turkey, whereas it has been reacted angrily in Ireland, the very country which directly

experienced the IRA problems. The play, in fact, reflects McDonagh's own "political reality" (Harrington and Mitchell 1) which is entirely constructed by his satire upon political violence. Most probably, the negative reception of the play in Ireland results from his portrayal of the ugly, monstrous and darker side of human nature and McDonagh's both direct and indirect references to many real IRA events.

Moreover, McDonagh's unusual style in dealing with a serious issue like the IRA caused *The Lieutenant* to be rejected by significant theatre companies such as the Royal Court and the National Theatre (O'Hagan, "The Wild West"). It is due to these rejections that it was only performed five years after it had been written. McDonagh finished writing *The Lieutenant* in 1996 (Luckhurst 116), but the play was first performed on 11 April 2001 by the Royal Shakespeare Company at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon (Burke 157). Its coarse language, which is "comic, hyperbolic and playful" (O'Neill 56) as well, a characteristic of the grotesque, and the unusual way of presentation of terrorism may open *The Lieutenant* to worries and much negative criticism resulting in its being considered by many critics such as Barbara Cannings as "primarily an entertainment not to be taken seriously" (qtd. in Dean, "Joe Orton" 481). The play has been further criticised by other critics. Lonergan, for example, explains especially the Irish audience/ readers' possible interpretation of the play as follows: "The problem here, it could be argued, is not that the play is inauthentic, but that is insufficiently respectful of actual victims of real terrorist atrocities" ("Martin McDonagh" 300). Dean himself criticises the play arguing that it "is openly offensive to Irish republicans, animal rights advocates, and others" ("*The Lieutenant*" 161). Trevor Nunn, in a more worrying way, argues that the play might even cause trouble for the peace process (O'Hagan, "The Wild West") in Northern Ireland, which was built after much effort in the 1990s.

A quick review of the play may lead to such negative criticism at first; however, an in-depth and analytical reading in the light of McDonagh's satiric aim will reveal significant details about the play. As a satirical work written in the vein of in-yer-face theatre and in a grotesque style, the play "present[s] a picture of people in society, and by exaggerating or distorting the picture draw[s] attention to how people often act in an outrageous and absurd

manner" (Peck and Joyle 170). Thus, to criticise the flaws of society, McDonagh makes use of the grotesque, an efficient tool "for comic and satirical purposes" (Cuddon 394), and farce whose main characteristics are "exaggerated physical action (often repeated), exaggeration of character and situation, absurd situations and improbable events" (Cuddon 330). McDonagh's use of violence on stage in an exaggerated and comic way targets the violence applied by the IRA. He aims to make the audience/ readers "confront their approaches to the sentimentality of [this] Irish political movement" (Rees 137), and similar political movements observed throughout the world. In relation to this argument, it may be put forth that McDonagh's use of the grotesque and farcical scenes do not make *The Lieutenant* non-serious; on the contrary, it is a serious political play.

Furthermore, *The Lieutenant* can be categorised as an in-yer-face play due to the violent and cruel characters and behaviours presented, which seems to create a shocking effect on the audience/ readers. Like *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *A Skull in Connemara*, the play, as a characteristic of in-yer-face theatre, aims to underline that McDonagh has "something urgent to say" (Sierz 5), and he "deal[s] with disturbing subjects [...] [to] wak[e] up the audience" (Sierz 5). McDonagh himself emphasises that he has written the play with an aim: "The violence has a purpose … otherwise there's nothing particularly interesting about shooting people on stage. If people who've had violence inflicted on them on either side of the Troubles see this play, I hope they'll see it as anti-violence" (qtd. in Rees 131). His message is based on a desire on a macrocosmic level: a peaceful world not only for the Irish who have to deal with the IRA activities but also for all humanity which is in danger of facing wars or terrorist activities. The farcical and grotesquely violent elements are used to expose the audience/ readers to the seriousness of wars and terrorist activities.

About the play's serious political messages Lonergan states:

> It is difficult [...] for some Irish people to understand why McDonagh decided to set his obviously imagined Irish plays in the real location of Leenane. Is he laughing at the expense of victims of Irish terrorism, therefore intensifying the pain of those still mourning them? Some critics believe so. But perhaps, just as

> the Leenane setting of the *Trilogy* forces the audience to consider the real consequences of those plays, the function of the references to victims of Irish terrorism in *Lieutenant* is to remind the audience that the events on stage have a real political context. The Troubles may seem farcical, the ideology of terrorists may seem ridiculous – but the tragedy is that real people were actually killed. Furthermore, *The Lieutenant* is not simply an attempt to criticise the IRA and the INLA; it is instead addressing the problem of terrorism and political violence generally by exploring how it is represented culturally, and inviting us to think again about our own responses to it. (*The Theatre and Films* 83)

In the light of the information above, this chapter aims to discuss that McDonagh, in his *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, satirises Irish terrorism, a very problematic social and political issue for not only Northern Ireland but also for the Republic of Ireland, by referring to real IRA and INLA events in order to show how much psychological and physical damage it has caused. Violence shown as a direct result of terrorism is presented to the audience/ readers through scenes that contain violence to illustrate the consequences of the "violent" and "extremist ideologies" (Martin xxiv, 220) of military/ political violence. Especially the disturbing atmosphere at the end of the play resulting from the death of four people and two cats is reflective of this characteristic. As Sierz accentuates, "[t]he experience of watching harrowing plays – however physically safe the theatre – imprinted indelible images of human suffering" (239). What McDonagh does through the play is, in fact, reflect human suffering, and accordingly, mirror "psychic realism" as he presents "real and imagined characters from past and present" (Middeke and Schnierer xiv).

In order to better understand and comment on the play, it would prove useful to briefly examine the IRA and later the INLA, their impact mainly on the Irish especially in the 1990s, and the peace process that left its mark on the decade. It is necessary to know that the IRA was set up in 1920 (Pritchard 120), and as Oakland underlines, neither the Republic of Ireland nor Northern Ireland recognises it as legal (127). Moreover, as can be understood from what the IRA stands for, that is, the Irish Republican Army, it is a republican and Catholic group notorious for political violence. The IRA's political violence best suits Gus Martin's definition: "Depending on which side of the ideological, racial, religious, or national fence one sits, political violence can be interpreted either as acts of

unmitigated terrorist barbarity or as freedom fighting and national liberation" (3). Likewise, the IRA's central aim is to unite Northern Ireland with the Republic and to eliminate the British impact on Northern Ireland in the political and military sense. In addition, while the IRA was once a unified organisation, gradually, many splinter groups such as the Real IRA (1997), the Continuity Irish Republican Army (1994), the Irish National Liberation Army (1974) (Fletcher, "IRA Splinter Groups") and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (the 1960s) (Martin 244) emerged, and started acting independently from the IRA.

On the other hand, the INLA (Irish National Liberation Army), which is the focal point of *The Lieutenant*, was "formed from militant dissidents in the Official IRA" in 1974 (Pritchard 143). As Gus Martin states,

> [t]he group followed the pattern of many radical nationalist organisations at the time and adopted Marxist theory as its guiding ideology. Like the Provos, the INLA fought to reunite Northern Ireland with Ireland. The INLA is unique in that it envisioned the creation of a socialist Irish republic. In fact, the INLA considered itself to be fighting in unity with other terrorist groups that championed oppressed groups around the world. The INLA's heyday was during the 1970s and mid-1980s. It operated in urban areas, primarily in the cities of Londonderry and Belfast. Although it never fielded more than several dozen 'soldiers,' it was exceptionally violent and ruthless – arguably more so than the Provos. An internal feud significantly debilitated the group during the 1990s. (244)

In addition, the INLA is now known to be dealing with illegal activities such as drug dealing (Fletcher, "IRA Splinter Groups"). This is also one of the themes of *The Lieutenant*. Lastly, it is also necessary to state that this illegal group called a ceasefire in 1998 realising that "[t]he Northern Ireland State [was] a failed political entity" ("INLA Statement") and that they would not be able to solve the Northern Ireland problem through violence but through politics. They, in this sense, took a great step as regards the peace process seven years before the IRA that took the same step in only 2005. The INLA declared that from then on their major aim would be to defend the rights of the working class and that they would never be involved in abusive activity ("INLA Statement").

The 1990s are not only remembered for the violent IRA and INLA events but are also significant in terms of the steps taken in the name of the peace process. Before the Peace Agreement in 1998, the IRA and many of its splinter groups were known to have participated "in a systematic campaign of bombings, shootings and murders" (Oakland 127). In 1998, however, as Middeke and Schnierer state,

> Ireland […] underwent a political transformation after years of conflict and division. In the early – and mid-1990s the peace process in Northern Ireland gained momentum, having come a long way from the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973, the terrible hunger strikes of the early 1980s, the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 and the IRA agreeing to a ceasefire in 1994. This was consolidated in 1998 by the Good Friday Agreement, which set the basis for a government consisting of parties from both sides of the political divide. (viii)

All these efforts seem to have affected the peace process in a positive way, albeit not permanently but temporarily. As Gus Martin states, although the IRA did not manage to keep its promise to disarm totally until 2005, it cannot be denied that there has been a decrease in the number of violent activities they have caused. Martin goes on to emphasise that "the Irish Republican Army and Protestant paramilitaries [, however,] continued to maintain weapons caches and recruit members. These caches, which contained tons of weapons, became a major hindrance to the peace process" (503-04). Later, in July 2005, the IRA declared that it had disarmed; this change had emerged with the effort of Gerry Adams, the President of Sinn Fein, IRA's legal representative in politics. Adams invited all the members to accept that it was possible to reach their aims via a more peaceful way, namely politics/ democracy. The British Prime Minister of the time, Tony Blair, said it was a "step of unparalleled magnitude" ("IRA Says").

It is clear that there is still much to be done in order to experience the real peace process that is expected. On the one hand, uniting Northern Ireland with the Republic is "a long-term aim" of the Republic; yet, the British government is determined in its decision that the conditions in Northern Ireland will change only if "a majority of the inhabitants" in the area – whether Catholics or Protestants – "agree (consent)" (Oakland 128). Devenport states that, according to the census taken in March 2011, the Protestant majority is gradually

decreasing due to migration, the rise in the number of the people who state that they have no religion, and the high mortality rate in the Protestant population which is "an older population" ("Census Figures"). Devenport also notes that "[t]he census reveals 48% of the resident population are either Protestant or brought up Protestant, a drop of 5% from the 2001 census. 45% of the resident population are either Catholic or brought up Catholic, an increase of 1%" ("Census Figures"). Contemporary upheavals in Northern Ireland prove that there is still considerable disagreement between Catholics and Protestants over the possible fate of Northern Ireland. Whether the desired consent or agreement between Catholics and Protestants will be possible or not, and the future of the IRA and its splinter groups are issues based on time and still more effort. In relation to this, Bew and Patterson ask: "[I]s there any more positive way forward?" (81). The answer to this crucial question is not certain yet.

McDonagh wants the audience/ readers to ask this question to themselves and to question the seriousness and the impact of the act of terrorism through *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, which is to be analysed within the framework of the grotesque and in-yer-face theatre. The grotesque, indicating "the ridiculous, bizarre, extravagant, freakish and unnatural; in short, aberrations from the desirable norms of harmony, balance and proportion" (Cuddon 393), is not a tool that reflects a funny style only for comedy's sake. On the contrary, it has a significant role in terms of presenting serious satire, and is used "for comic, sardonic and satirical effects" (Cuddon 394). The grotesque, since the medieval times, has served as a means of commentary for the "ideals and imperfections of the society of the day" (O'Neill 67), and as Wolfgang Kayser points out, it "instils the fear of life," "[t]he essential trait of grotesque is something hostile, [...] and inhuman" (qtd. in O'Neill 56). These characteristics may be observed in *The Lieutenant*, which mirrors the hostility, inhumanity, and the brutality of human beings in an exaggerated and comic manner. In this sense, the grotesque, in a way, functions as a comic relief for the audience/ readers within the seriousness of violence. Otherwise, in an atmosphere dominated merely by horrible violent scenes, the audience/ readers would experience nothing more than a nightmarish experience.

Due to McDonagh's blend of comedy and seriousness, the audience/ readers of McDonagh plays, however, may not know how to react to McDonagh's grotesque representation of violence. As Lonergan argues, "the audience will inevitably find itself experiencing the guilty pleasure of laughing at somebody that we just should not find funny" (*The Theatre and Films* 84). McDonagh manages to create both laughter and shock at the same time. In a scene where the audience/ readers feel they are witnessing serious events, they may suddenly be confronted with a scene in which they feel like bursting into laughter. They are pulled between shock on one hand and a desire for laughter on the other; the seriousness of the event, however, makes them question if it would be proper to laugh. Taggart's observations of the audience after the performance of the play in the Garrick Theatre in London were similar to Lonergan's above-quoted comments. Taggart, too, mentions the audience's confusion resulting from the senseless murders, extreme bloodshed and violent behaviour reflected in the play. He notes his observations as follows:

> For the first hour, they gazed on in discomfited silence, assailed as they were with images of feline slaughter, casual torture, cow blinding, all underpinned with escalating threats of ever more explicit and inventive brutality – finally attaining their expression in a grotesque *coup de theatre* of dismemberment and blood.
>
> […]. [A]s the night wore on a general unease became increasingly apparent. Individuals glanced around from their seats, more or less surreptitiously, to see just how others were reacting to this stuff. In an oddly theatrical gesture some actually lifted their hands to their mouths (in shock? To stop themselves laughing?), but then managed to compose themselves to carry on. Whilst no one actually walked out, they had the collective look of a group of tourists who had accidentally blundered into a stript-joint and were too embarrassed to leave, but by the same token very determined not to be seen to enjoy it. (162)

This experience, in fact, reflects one of the primary purposes of in-yer-face theatre as defined by Sierz: "[...] precisely to question received ideas in such a way as to make audiences uncomfortable" (239). This experience also shows that presentation of violence through grotesque exaggeration, in a way, creates an alienation effect, which is a necessary tool in in-yer-face theatre. Sierz notes that if a play arouses compassion in the audience/ readers, it is easier for them to sympathise with the characters as compassion is regarded as

the reflection of humanism; plays which lack in compassion alienate the audience (242). The aim behind this alienation is to make the audience have a critical eye on the events in the play. In other words, in-yer-face theatre requires the intellectual involvement of the audience rather than an emotional one. It is true that this particular theatre is criticised due to "[l]ack of heart" (Sierz 242). In-yer-face plays' not reflecting compassion, however, does not mean that playwrights of this kind of theatre do not have compassion and heart. Paradoxically, it is because they have compassion that they write seemingly non-compassionate plays "to spread the knowledge of what humans are capable of" (Sierz 239).

In-yer-face drama, with its disturbing brutality, and "with its compelling new aesthetic of experiental theatre, reache[s] out and drag[s] audiences through ugly scenes and deeply and disturbing situations" (Sierz 239). The audience/ readers suddenly find themselves within a violent atmosphere. Sierz further elaborates on the experiental characteristic of in-yer-face theatre stating that "[e]xperiental theatre aimed to wake up audiences and tell them about extreme experiences, often in order to immunise them to those events in real life" (239). Through this kind of theatre, the audience/ readers experience violent events in an unreal experiental world, that is to say, in the theatre, and they are expected to understand the psychology of the ones who really experience this violence. Sarah Kane's following words explain what is aimed by exposing the audience/ readers to extreme violence: "It's important to commit to memory events which have never happened – so that they never happen. I'd rather risk overdose in the theatre than in life" (qtd. in Sierz 239). Reflective of this experiental characteristic of in-yer-face theatre, *The Lieutenant* seems to leave the audience/ readers in a state of shock; they, in a way, experience a grotesquely horrific life. In-yer-face playwrights want to openly reflect "human suffering" (Sierz 239) and to expose the audience/ readers to as much violence as possible in order to make it impossible for them to forget this violence.

In order to clarify the analysis of *The Lieutenant*, it will be helpful to give a brief summary of the play. It takes place mainly in Inishmore, the largest of the three Aran Islands in the Republic, and only the second scene takes place in Northern Ireland. The play opens with an argument between Davey, a seventeen-year-old boy, and Padraic's fortyish father,

Donny, in a cottage in Inishmore. They argue about Wee Thomas, Padraic's very dear and near cat, which has been killed by someone who is not known. Donny, in great fear of not knowing how to inform mad Padraic about the death of Wee Thomas, later, finds the courage to call him only to say that the cat is very ill. Padraic, an INLA member in Northern Ireland but who originally comes from Inishmore, is, at this moment, punishing James by applying physical violence to him by hanging him upside down and removing his two toe-nails and is about to cut off one of his nipples. James has sold drugs to Catholic children at school, and that is why Padraic is very angry with him. Padraic leaves for Ireland immediately after he learns about Wee Thomas's illness, before which he forgives James because he advises Padraic to buy "some ringworm pellets from the chemist and feed them him [Wee Thomas] wrapped up in a bit of cheese" (ii 15), which will cure Wee Thomas of his illness. Meanwhile, Davey and Donny try to find a way to prevent Padraic from finding out the death of his cat. Davey, unable to find a black cat similar to Wee Thomas, as a solution, takes a yellow cat, and tries to change its colour into black using black shoe polish, which is later understood by Padraic. This realisation results in Padraic's murdering the yellow cat. Later, in scene v, it is revealed that the real murderer of Wee Thomas is Christy, an INLA member who comes to the Republic with Joey and Brendan in search of Padraic, who has left the INLA to form his own splinter group. When they find Padraic in his own home, he is just about to kill his father, Donny, and Davey. Besides, while the three INLA members are about to kill Padraic, Mairead, Davey's sixteen year-old sister, saves him by first blinding the INLA members with her rifle and then killing them. There begins a romance between Padraic and Mairead while Davey and Donny are chopping up the bodies of the three men into pieces on Padraic's order, causing the room to be inundated with blood. Later, Mairead realises that the yellow cat which Padraic has killed is Sir Roger, her dear cat, and when she finds this out, she kills Padraic without hesitating a second. As a result, the short-lived romance turns into a nightmare, and Padraic's and Mairead's dream of creating a splinter group fades away. The play ends in a surprising way when the real Wee Thomas comes on to the scene. It is only then that the audience/ readers understand that Wee Thomas has been alive all along, and the murders have been committed in vain.

Analysed within the frame of the general story, *The Lieutenant* might first give the impression that it has nothing to do with real events, and it is only a silly play which does not have a serious message. It should not be overlooked, however, that the play is the combination of fact and fiction, and that the distinctions between the two are quite clear in the play. Unlike plays written in a realist mode which connotes "the portrayal of life with fidelity" (Cuddon 773), McDonagh deconstructs the realist approach that literary works must reflect what is 'really' happening in life and 'as it is.' It would be wrong to evaluate McDonagh's play in terms of documentation, realistic conventions or mimetic literature. Reflective of the characteristic of the "nineties [in-yer-face] writing" (Sierz 244) for which realistic style is a far-fetched idea, *The Lieutenant* cannot be assessed within the rules of "documentary or realistic" (Sierz 244) writing. Many critics, namely Rees and Shimko, comment on the portrayal of McDonagh's characters with regards to their 'misrepresentation' of reality. For example, Rees accentuates that "[t]he characters in *The Lieutenant* cannot be judged within a naturalistic, believable and realistic context" (138). Likewise, Shimko argues that "the characters in *The Lieutenant*, regardless of how real their guns and blood may look, exist first and foremost within the context of a combination of horror play and farce; they therefore refuse to play neatly within the rules of realism" (13). There is a general tendency for many "to think of realism in terms of the everyday, the normal, the pragmatic" (Cuddon 773). They mainly expect a literary work to indicate "a 'no nonsense' approach" (Cuddon 773). The ones who assess a literary work merely with regard to its plausibility and mimetic characteristics of literature would find McDonagh's work implausible.

However, when "the nature of representation of [events] that can claim a historical identity" (Fokkema 135) is taken into consideration, it may be argued that *The Lieutenant* "reveals the facts that are obscured by Republican rhetoric. The play features an almost sickening number of references to specific events from the Troubles – and many victims of the IRA and INLA are alluded to, sometimes for humorous purposes" (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 82). The following examples from the play are, in fact, references to real IRA and INLA activities either directly or through implications: Padraic, in scene ii, is seen angry

due to his failure regarding the bomb explosion. He says: "I put bombs in a couple of chip shops, but they didn't go off. [...] Because chip shops aren't as well guarded as army barracks" (13). These words are an allusion to the IRA's bombing a chip shop on the Shankill Road in 1993, which resulted in the death of nine civilians (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 82). Also, Joey mentions an event related to Airey Neave, Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, who died as a result of a car bomb installed by the INLA in 1979 while he was leaving the car park of the House of Commons ("1979"). He says: "I'd've never joined the INLA in the first place if I'd known the battering of cats was to be on the agenda. The INLA has gone down in my estimation today. Same as when we blew up Airey Neave. You can't blow up a fella just because he has a funny name. It wasn't his fault" (v 29). Moreover, the reference to the blame put on the Guildford Four is worth mentioning. This group was "wrongfully accused of membership of the IRA and spent fourteen years in prison as a result" (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 82-83). For Padraic, it would be an honour to be included in any IRA activity, and as he says, he is "interested in no social activities that don't involve the freeing of Ulster" (vi 33). When Mairead says, "There's a film on at the Omniplex about the Guildford Four next week," Padraic, angrily answers as follows: "Ah, feck the Guildford Four. Even if they didn't do it, they should've took the blame and been proud. But no, they did nothing but whine" (vi 33). Padraic, here, represents the commitment of the IRA and INLA group members to terrorist ideals. Another allusion is to a 1992 IRA event in which eight Protestant builders were killed since they were working in a job connected with a military base (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 82). Padraic alludes to this event in a grotesque manner. He complains that since his cat, Wee Thomas, is dead, Wee Thomas will not be able to say any more: "'This is for me and for Ireland, Padraic. Remember that,' as I'd lob a bomb at a pub, or be shooting a builder'" (viii 44). Besides, the following conversation between Donny and Davey refers to the 1988 event in Belgium in which Richar Heakin, "an off-duty British soldier," was killed by the IRA, and to the 1990 IRA murder of two Australian tourists, Nicholas Spanos and Stephen Melrose, in the Netherlands (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 83):

> Davey: You know, they're [the IRA] more established.
> Donny: They are. And they do travel further afield than the INLA.

> Davey: The IRA do get a good bit of travelling done, aye.
> Donny: They do. They go to Belgium sometimes.
> Davey: You never see the INLA go to Belgium.
> Donny: You're lucky if they leave the Falls.
> Davey: You never see the INLA shooting Australians. (ix 55)

Donny and Davey, who are not involved in any kind of illegal group, talk about the IRA's murders abroad, and they think that the IRA transgresses its limits and makes its impact felt not only within the borders of Northern Ireland and the Republic but also abroad. Moreover, there is a reference to the Warrington event that took place in 1993, and in which two children, three year-old Jonathan Ball and twelve-year-old Timothy Parry, were murdered by the IRA (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 83):

> Davey: What did Mam say to you when you left?
> Mairead: She said good luck and try not to go blowing up kids.
> Davey: And what did you say?
> Mairead: I said I'd try but I'd be making no promises.
> Davey: And what did she say?
> Mairead: She said so long as you try is the main thing. (ix 57)

These references to real terrorist attacks not only reflect the tragic ends of many innocent people but also make one understand the violent and cruel world of IRA terrorists. Through these acts and conversations, one can imagine the background of the real IRA murders mentioned above and the absurdities of terrorist actions. The play, actually, reflects a "societal problem of militant violence" (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 79), and may be regarded as McDonagh's criticism on "political terrorism in rural Ireland" (Brantley, "Terrorism"), that is, his criticism on the IRA and INLA terrorism. "Most people would agree that politically motivated planting of bombs in marketplaces, massacres of 'enemy' civilians [...] are terrorist acts" (Martin 3), and these acts are observed openly in the play. Dealing with terrorism, the play has much socio-political importance "not just for how we see terrorism, but how we see the interlinking of violence with politics" (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 85). McDonagh observes how the conditions in society really are and tries to lead one into thinking how they really should be. In spite of the fact that he highly exaggerates many significant points, in the very end, the play proves to be a biting satire on

terrorism which may result in very hazardous experiences for both sides; in other words, not only for civilians but also for terrorists.

Moreover, in the *The Lieutenant*, McDonagh severely satirises the Irish who are ignorant of the significance of the IRA problem, and who seem to be satisfied with the conditions in the country; hence, who are not aware of the fact that a fundamental change in the country is required, and all the Irish should do something to prevent the violent crimes that the IRA has been committing. That is to say, McDonagh's other target is the indifferent Irish people who have an 'ignorance-is-bliss' approach. Moreover, as Lonergan highlights, "the Ireland that emerges from *The Lieutenant* is not a small country that suffers from being misrepresented by a large one […]. Rather, it is a place that has entered a state of profound moral crisis, largely as a result of its own people's actions" (*The Theatre and Films* 75). McDonagh's depiction of the Irish as indifferent serves as a means of his political satire. As Lonergan emphasises,

> [i]t is perhaps because of the harshness of its satire that *The Lieutenant* has never been popular in Ireland. [...] [I]n *The Lieutenant* the destabilising force is entirely home-grown. Mad Padraic may fight in Northern Ireland but he was shaped by Inishmore, and we often see how his actions are made possible by the indifference, cowardice or passivity of the other islanders. McDonagh's target is not just Irish terrorism but also the compliant and complacent culture that makes Irish terrorism possible. (*The Theatre and Films* 74)

McDonagh, actually, tries to wake up everybody on the island to do something to prevent other possible terrorist activity, make them question if it is possible to put an end to the violent events of Irish terrorist groups in Ireland and to free the island from the burden of all terrorist acts. In this respect, he conveys a message to the islanders: the necessity for change for the better. In other words, he is "in favour of moderation and responsible behaviour" (Peck and Joyle 170). "[H]ere McDonagh will show a similar need to redress a confusion between morality, ethics, principles, military tradition, political doctrine and Irish custom" (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 75). It is a fact that there is a problematic political reality in Ireland (and in the world). McDonagh, in Harrington's and Mitchell's words, tries to raise questions in the minds of the audience/ readers to make them think if it

is possible to "alter [...] [the] particular definition of [this] political reality" (1), which has negative connotations, and eventually replace all this negativity with new possible vocabulary and definition which would imply hope and peace on the island.

McDonagh displays his satire on the IRA through many animate and inanimate instruments whose functions will be analysed separately in this chapter: The setting, Padraic, animals such as cows and cats, Mairead, culture, James, Christy, Brendan and Joey, who are the other INLA group members, and lastly, Davey and Donny. To begin with the setting, it may be stated that the play has two settings, one of which is "[*a*] *desolate Northern Ireland warehouse or some such*" (ii 10) where Padraic punishes James. The second one is Inishmore, a rural place in the Republic. As the majority of the events take place in Inishmore, mainly this setting will be concentrated upon. However, the connection between the two settings is important. These two different settings are suggestive. As Gus Martin argues, "[i]n the modern era, the *impact* of terrorism – that is, its ability to terrorise – is not limited to the specific locales or regions where the terrorists strike" (3). It may be stated that Irish terrorism's mainly being dominant in Northern Ireland does not mean that it does not have a negative impact on the Republic as well. Moreover, extreme violence in both of the settings implies a sense of connectedness between them. It also suggests that terrorism makes its impact felt not only in rural but also in urban areas.

Particularly the rural setting, Inishmore, which is devoid of love, peace and warmth, just like the other settings of McDonagh's plays, is used functionally and contributes to the horror and violence of the play. This main setting is "a drab rustic cottage that seems to have been created with the malicious intention of boring to madness whoever might live there. That's where the play's title character, Padraic – described as 'him the I.R.A. wouldn't let in because he was too mad' – grew up" (Brantley, "Terrorism"). Also, in this rural atmosphere, all the violent and dark sides of the characters come to surface, and they act just like animals in the wilderness. In this respect, Inishmore is reflective of regional Gothic whose characteristics are mentioned by Eldred as follows: "Regional Gothic plays on possible fears that the people out in the country are lawless, violent, and very possibly incestuous or cannibalistic, which certainly seems to apply to McDonagh's rural settings,

replete with murderers of all sorts getting away with their crimes in a setting without sufficient law or religion to rein them in" ("Martin McDonagh's Blend" 208). It has been generally argued by many psychoanalysts such as Freud that barbaric behaviours and violence that one is born with are suppressed by civilisation as mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation. Civilisation, as Freud highlights, is "like a garrison in a conquered city" (84) in which the superego like a metaphorical soldier tries to suppress the aggression of the id. Inishmore is devoid of this metaphorical "garrison." On the contrary, the world in Inishmore's rural setting is represented as a jungle where people are ready to attack each other. In this sense, the pastoral and idyllic image of rural Ireland used especially by Yeats in his plays as a mythologised dream world is completely debunked by McDonagh. His Ireland connotes a cruel dystopian world and serves as a tool for him to reflect his rebellion against terrorism. His Inishmore exceeds the limits of horror and violence, and, with this characteristic, this place "provide[s] [a] distinctly rural and lonely location[…] that offers ideal settings for the regional Gothic and ideal setting[…] for bloody rural murders" (Eldred, "Martin McDonagh's Blend" 208). Eldred quotes Clover's following words which support his own views: "Going from city to country in horror film is in any case very much like going from village to deep, dark forest in traditional fairy tales… The point is that rural Connecticut (or wherever), like the deep forests of Europe, is a place where the rules of civilisation do not obtain" ("Martin McDonagh's Blend" 208).

The traces of civilisation can only be observed through the reflections of technology in *The Lieutenant*. Guns used by the terrorists, as reflected in the play as the monsters of the technology of modern civilisation, create an atmosphere of terror, and the cottage, which is depicted as a place full of threat and danger, turns into a battle field. There is no safe place either outside or inside. Just as seen in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *A Skull in Connemara*, even the home, which is described as "sweet" (i 3) on "a framed piece of embroidery" (i 3), is under threat, and the setting prepares "an environment which says very little to the audience in terms of justifying terrorism" (Rees 136). McDonagh's point, in relation to this, may be argued to be as follows: Civilisation, when associated with weapons and weapon industry, may sometimes arouse the innate violence in human beings rather

than suppressing violent instincts; hence, it may be hazardous and, without any discrimination, as might be observed both in urban Northern Ireland and rural Inishmore. In both of these places where human beings are silent, weapons speak. As Sierz argues,

> [n]o more cosy suburban life, **no more country nostalgia**. Instead, as dramatist John Mortimer put it, new writing reflected the 'strident, anarchic, aimless world of England [Ireland, for McDonagh] today, not in anger, or even bitterness, but with humour and a kind of love.' This imaginary Britain [Ireland] was a far darker place than that experienced on a daily basis by most of its audiences. […]. New writing's Britain [Ireland, for McDonagh] was a netherscape that forcibly reminded audiences that not **everything in the garden was rosy** [*sic*]. (238)

The 'home' depicted in the play or the above-mentioned 'garden' without roses may represent, a cottage at a microcosmic level and Ireland and the world at a macrocosmic level, both of which are insecure and have turned into war zones. The guns stand for the violence that the paramilitary organisation, the IRA, employs and are also used as a means of criticism of all military/ political violence. Thus, as Brantley argues, the play

> translat[es] into dizzy absurdism the self-perpetuating spirals of political violence that now occur throughout the world. I kept thinking of Macbeth's forlorn recognition that 'blood will have blood.' In Inishmore, that maxim has become such a fact of life that people no longer evoke natural human responses in one another — well, irritation, maybe. ("Terrorism")

In this respect, *The Lieutenant* illustrates overall lack of safety and may be regarded as a representative text of the concept of *Homo homini lupus*, in other words, "man is a wolf to his fellow man." Moreover, the play, as Karadağ argues, is a criticism of the transformation of humanity into a monster in this century, and underlines that we live in a world and system where the motto, "all for one, one for all" is not valid any more (48). Hence, the cottage in which emotions are silent and the terrifying sounds of the guns fill everywhere becomes functional in satirising the arms industry and wars in general. As a result, it is possible to say that the play addresses not only Irish audiences/ readers but also global audiences/ readers. As Lonergan suggests, "[t]he play could easily be set anywhere in Ireland, and might very easily be transferred to a great many other locations internationally

with only a few minor alterations of the language" (*The Theatre and Films* 74). Moreover, "[t]he play […] articulates the widening and hybridising of Ireland into the 'global village'" (Rees 137), and reflects the validity of "globalised terrorism" (Martin 3). Thus, McDonagh is interested in the impact of military/ political violence on people no matter where they live, and he manages to do this through Irish issues.

Padraic, as the focal character, is another significant instrument for McDonagh's satire on terrorism. McDonagh, this time, presents the grotesque through an "extreme character[...] to redefine the image" (Sierz 238) of Ireland. The ironic expressions that Padraic uses and the eccentric behaviours he exhibits throughout the play help to reflect the meaninglessness of terrorist activities. He, the mad and devoted terrorist activist, disregards the meaningless murders he has committed, and thinks that he is doing right in fighting for the IRA cause, that is to say, to unite Northern Ireland with the Republic. As Middeke and Schnierer argue, in contemporary Irish plays, "[a]gain and again, analogies have been drawn between terrorist violence and mental dispositions of the terrorist and sectarian mindset" (xiii). In the name of the so-called big cause, along with the ignored Protestant rights, Padraic disregards humanity and human rights in general. His mentality shaped by sectarian ideas and ideals may be clearly understood when he states that Protestant children are not his concern, but Catholic children are of great significance to him as he sees them as potential supporters of a free Ireland against the English represented by the British police:

> Padraic: […]. You do push your filthy drugs on the schoolchildren of Ireland, and if you concentrated exclusive on the Protestants I'd say all well and good, but you don't, you take all comers.
> James: Marijuana to the students at the Tech I sell, and at fair rates … !
> Padraic: Keeping our youngsters in a drugged-up and idle haze, when it's out on the streets pegging bottles at coppers they should be. (ii 12)

Padraic, in whose behaviours and words there is explicit physical and verbal violence, is so blind that he is not aware of the anarchist behaviours he exhibits, and cannot recognise that he himself is a danger to Ireland, his so-called beloved country. He is so much buried in

violently anarchist behaviour that he responds to the events emotionally and aggressively rather than intellectually. He expresses the Irish cause, which reflects his emotional side, as follows: “All I ever wanted was an Ireland free. Free for kids to run and play. Free for fellas and lasses to dance and sing. Free for cats to roam about without being clanked in the brains with a headgun” (ix 60). He thinks that he will be able to create a free Ireland through violence and anarchy. As Gus Martin suggests, “[t]he perpetrators of violent acts uniformly maintain that they are freedom fighters (in the case of revolutionaries)” (5). McDonagh attacks “the sentimentality of the terrorist movement as a noble response to ‘the love of one’s land’” (Rees 133). That is to say, McDonagh does not accept the activists’ terrorism and violence as an excuse for defending their ‘beloved’ land.

Moreover, in order to criticise terrorists, McDonagh, in an exaggerated way, reflects their activities as their jobs. As Brantley notes, “for Padraic and his colleagues and/or rivals […], killing, bombing and torturing are just jobs, rather like bagging groceries, except you get to be your own boss” (“Terrorism”). In order to support his argument, Brantley gives Padraic’s following words as an example: “I’m at work at the moment, Dad, was it important now?” (ii 13). His “work” at this moment is “torturing one of them fellas pushes drugs on wee kids” (ii 13), meaning “tak[ing] [James’ two toenails] off” (ii 10). Padraic mentions this event as if it were a normal and natural activity. This event reflects McDonagh’s satire on terrorism in that violence leads to more violence and human beings gradually and increasingly become desensitised to violence. Gus Martin argues that “[t]errorism provides a means to justify political violence. The targets are depersonalised, and symbolic labels are attached to them. Thus, symbolic buildings become legitimate targets even when occupied by people, and individual victims become symbols of an oppressive system” (97), that is terror represented by terrorists. As a result, terrorism turns into a great threat for innocent people as well. For Padraic, murdering so many innocent people who are even non-combatant, and installing bombs in places where common people go are honourable acts, and he is angry with the ones who prevent the realisation of his activities that are, according to him, of great magnitude:

> There *are* terrible men, and it's like they don't even know they are, when they know well. They think they're doing the world a favour, now. (*Pause*) I haven't been up to much else, really. I put bombs in a couple of chip-shops, but they didn't go off. (*Pause*) Because chip shops aren't as well guarded as army barracks. [...]. I was pissed off, anyways. The fella who makes our bombs, he's fecking useless. (ii 13)

Similarly, it may be put forth that Padraic's violent instincts are at the highest degree, which leads to some negative criticism by critics such as Mary Luckhurst: "McDonagh's characters are […] *all* psychopathic morons" and "the only competition is between who can say the stupidest thing and who can commit the stupidest act" (119). On the other hand, Rees, unlike Luckhurst, defends McDonagh's characters:

> To question the intelligence of McDonagh's characters is also to overlook the fact that he does not want us to find them intelligent and eloquent spokespeople for a political cause, such as John Osborne's Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* (1956) or David Hare's Susan Traherne in *Plenty* (1978); rather he would prefer we saw them as the gang from Edward Bond's *Saved*, brutal and thuggish without offering any justification for or comprehension of their actions. (137-38)

The interesting question, as regards McDonagh's character depiction, is: "How can such people contribute to the national struggle?" (Parlak 100), and the conclusion reached is that their merciless actions that cause a great deal of agony to everybody and their violence committed only for the sake of violence cannot be justified or legalised.

The portrayal of Padraic, who has all the above-mentioned negative characteristics, is very different from that of Irish heroes such as Cu Chulainn of the Celtic legends and Charles Stewart Parnell, the famous Irish nationalist leader in the 19th century, both of whom died bravely for the Irish cause. In this sense, unlike Yeats, who "believed in an *anima mundi*, an ideal world of heroic passions" (Armstrong 9), McDonagh creates a new kind of playwriting in which even the talk of heroic ideals is grotesque. McDonagh, for whom the national effort for independence is passé, presents a mock-hero in Padraic, who dies for nothing. He is determined, brave, and has faith in himself and is fighting for his own country; in other words, he has all the characteristics required to be a hero, to be like Cu

Chulainn, who died for his country. The only difference is that Padraic dies in vain, only because of a cat, however, one which is very meaningful for him. As Russell puts forth, “McDonagh’s sympathetic monster[…], Padraic […], refuse[s] to conform to stereotypical, romantic constructions of Irish national identity that obtained during the nadir of Irish nationalism under former leader Eamon de Valera and, somewhat disturbingly, offer counter-narratives to a neatly defined nationalist history” (6). Through this mock-heroic play, McDonagh parodies ancient Irish heroic deeds.

Similar to classical tragedies, the play ends in catastrophe. Unlike a tragic hero who has an action of magnitude, however, Padraic has an action of insignificance and turns out to be an anti-hero. What he does is to play a clownish and stupid role rather than performing truly nationalistic deeds. As Middeke and Schnierer state, “[o]n the surface of contemporary Irish drama the nostalgic reverence for the olden days […] gives way more and more to a debunking of the idea of a glorious past or of the superficial desire for heroic versions of the past” (x). McDonagh benefits from the debunking of the Irish heroic age as a means for his satire through emphasising and mocking Padraic’s insignificant actions which are, in fact, allusions to real and significant terrorist actions.

Sierz states that “[t]he best plays of the decade [the 1990s] were most provocative when they viewed terrible acts as psychological states, usually characterised by complicity and collusion” (239). The characters’ being depicted as frustrated, disturbed, and unbalanced in *The Lieutenant* seems to reflect these “psychological states.” Especially the psychological state of the anti-hero, Padraic, might be observed both via his abnormal and unbalanced behaviour, and from the conversation of Davey and Donny in which his mental disturbance is confirmed:

> Davey: Don’t they call him ‘Mad Padraic’?
> Donny: They do.
> Davey: Isn’t it him the IRA wouldn’t let in because he was *too* mad?
> Donny: It was. And he never forgave them for it. (i 7)

Furthermore, Sierz states that "[t]he metaphors typical of nineties drama – summed up by stage images of abuse […] and addiction – could be criticised for being literal images of horror" (239). Just like in many of his plays, in *The Lieutenant* as well, McDonagh uses crippled body parts metaphorically. This time, the "crippled" body part is Padraic's head. In this sense, Padraic's mental disturbance might represent a country decaying due to terrorist activities which have never totally ended for decades, and might also be aiming to reflect the mental conditions of the individuals during the ongoing chaos and violence in the country. In other words, the madness in the characters reflects how a country can be transformed into hell and a person into a psychopath as a result of terrorism.

When political, moral, social deterioration in Ireland as reflected in *The Lieutenant* is taken into consideration, Sarah Kane's following statements are also very suggestive: "I don't think that the world is neatly divided into perpetrators and victims.' Those kinds of divisions result 'in very poor, one-dimensional writing'" (qtd. in Sierz 244). Here, Padraic's portrayal suits Kane's argument. He is depicted as a flesh and blood character who is not completely bad but has love for his cat, Wee Thomas, which is observed especially when he learns that his Wee Thomas is dead (viii 44). In addition, being brought up in a society where the IRA dominates, it is, of course, inevitable for Padraic, who supports the IRA, to be corrupt. Here, the argument that men are made violent in a corrupt environment is observed. In relation to this argument, it may be stated that there is a negative flow first from the society to the person (first the corrupt society has made Padraic corrupt); then, another negative flow, this time, from the person to the society is observed (this time Padraic does harm to society as a result of his corruption). In the latter, the corrupt individual scatters his/ her corrupt activities, anger and hatred on the society, and as Bozer states, this gives the impression of vomiting (Seminar Notes 1). The individual symbolically vomits all this corruption and negativity back into the society, and, in this way, harms it. Padraic, in this respect, in a way, throws up all the problems and disgusting issues experienced throughout centuries in the country into the society itself. He, as a victimiser, was first victimised by the society itself.

McDonagh satirises the threat of anarchy and the narrow-mindedness of the anarchists who do not understand the difference between binary oppositions: culture and anarchy. In this respect, in a way, there is an allusion to Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* in which the significance of culture, particularly high culture, in preventing anarchy is emphasised. Arnold, in this work, blames people of high culture for ignoring uneducated working-class people, who, as a result, become inclined to apply violence. Arnold criticises the inability of the same high class to prevent anarchy and bestiality in society: "[M]an of culture […] are again and again failing, and failing conspicuously, in the necessary first stage to a harmonious perfection, in the subduing of the great obvious faults of our animality" (486). In the same manner, McDonagh blames "people of civilisation" for indulging too much in the weapon industry rather than literature. Ironically, the more civilisation develops, the more the gap between culture and anarchy increases. Padraic is reflective of this increasing gap between civilisation and anarchy. While praising anarchy and terrorism, he humiliates culture and the cultural activities of Dominic Behan and his brother, Brendan Behan, who were Irish republicans, political activists, poets, short story writers, novelists and dramatists: "If they'd done a little more bombing and a little less writing I'd've had more respect for them" (vi 32), referring to Brendan Behan's former IRA membership and later his leaving the IRA after which he dedicated himself to writing in the 1940s (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 78). In this sense, Padraic openly represents an anti-culture and pro-anarchist vein, serving McDonagh's satire. According to the 'truth' that he himself created, anarchist "[a]ction is superior to [intellectual] debate" (Gus Martin 97).

Padraic is also functional in terms of reflecting McDonagh's criticism on the conflicts, illogical behaviours and inconsistencies of terrorist groups such as the IRA and its splinter groups which emerged as a result of ideological clashes among themselves. Even the splinter groups' ideas later clashed with each other. It is important to remember that in the 1990s INLA members had disputes among themselves. They were mainly notorious for the violence they exhibited especially until 1998 when the INLA called a truce. As Sanders explains, instead of laying emphasis on Irish integrity, they were in the foreground with their stress on questions of the division and disagreement observed within their own group

members and their perpetually being involved in feuding (n.p.). Furthermore, "[t]he strong personalities that the lack of structured recruitment policy allowed into the movement inevitably clashed and turned their guns on each other" (Sanders n.p.). McDonagh's references to the fragmentation within the INLA may be alluding to this fact and may also be the reflection of McDonagh's harsh criticism and political message that these group members – who cannot restore peace and political and ideological unity among themselves and who cannot reach any agreement – cannot bring unity to Ireland and the Irish. On the contrary, they enlarge the distance among the members of the same group, and accordingly, they become more of a hindrance to the political development of the country than a help. Fragmentations within illegal groups are reflected in the play through Padraic's following words:

> One thing about the IRA anyways, as much as I hate the bastards, you've got to hand it to them, they know how to make a decent bomb. […] Sure, why would the IRA be selling us any of their bombs? They need them themselves, sure. Those bastards'd charge the earth anyways. I'll tell ya, I'm getting pissed off with the whole thing. I've been thinking of forming a splinter group. A splinter group is the best kind of group to splinter from anyways. It shows you know your own mind. (ii 14)

The unbalanced and disunited behaviours of these terrorist group members, in this sense, contradict all Marxist ideas and beliefs, the very ideology that they claim to be loyal to. They, for example, contradict the Marxist argument that what is needed is not grasping the meaning of the world but trying to change it (Marx and Engels 571). Let alone exhibiting any logical attempt to change the world together, they do not even take any reasonable step towards forming an alliance within themselves or sharing the ideals of fraternity. So, the audience/ readers are expected to question how these people can change the world with these fragmented ideas. It might be put forth that Padraic's dream of founding another splinter group contradicts what Nehemia Friedland argues about terrorist organisations: "[T]errorism is a group phenomenon ... perpetrated by organised groups whose members have a clear group identity – national, religious or ideological." Rather, splinter groups are instances of political terrorism which "has its roots in intergroup conflict [and] 'insurgent terrorism'" (qtd. in Martin 12). In *The Lieutenant*, the characters cannot even manage to

have a stable group ideology or target. Moreover, Padraic, who was already a member of a splinter group, INLA, leaves it, and later together with Mairead, plans to found another splinter group (ix 59), whose name will be "Wee Thomas's Army" (ix 59), after his 'dead' cat.

At this point, it will be appropriate to discuss Wee Thomas' importance and contribution to McDonagh's satire. One should remember that Wee Thomas is Padraic's cat's name. "Wee" serves as a pun here. As an adjective, the meaning of "wee" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "extremely small, tiny." On the other hand, as a verb, "wee" means "to urinate" ("Wee"). Both of these meanings apply to *The Lieutenant*, and especially to splinter terrorist groups in general. This word carries, in fact, a very clever wordplay: As an adjective, it paradoxically implies the magnitude of the harm that this "small" Wee Thomas has caused, and, at the same time, as a verb, it gives the impression of getting rid of or passing waste which suggests, according to terrorists, getting rid of human beings who are against their activities and aims and who do not support the freedom of Ireland or who prevent them from taking action in the name of freedom. In this sense, the army that Padraic and Mairead planned to put together in the name of Wee Thomas as "Wee Thomas's Army" is very important. Wee Thomas is magnified and all the work that will be done in his name are thought to be magnificent even if they are insignificant or meaningless as may be observed in the first target of the army: This army's "first plan of action will be to find a fella [Padraic] owe[s] a torturing to" (ix 59), who is none other than James. In this respect, Padraic and Mairead "become[...] political tools, larger-than-life cartoons who have lost any sense of what they are fighting for" (Rees 136), and Wee Thomas is seen to be the central meaning of everything. It is by means of this cat, a very significant "political tool," that McDonagh builds his argument that the works or jobs of terrorist groups are pointless, and they serve no other function than harming people.

Wee Thomas and the other cats are functional also in terms of reflecting the confusion of the personal with the political from the points of view of terrorists. It is clear that McDonagh, unlike many traditional writers, refuses to write or state his points directly. Eco-critically, the play may look as disregarding animal rights at first sight due to the fact

that throughout the play many animals such as cows and cats are injured or killed. Luckhurst, for example, openly and severely criticises McDonagh with the following serious question: “What do McDonagh’s characters actually do other than brutalise one another (or animals)?” (119). It is, in fact, “impossible to appreciate [the play] without an understanding of its context” (Rees 138). It is important to be aware of the fact that McDonagh uses these animals as a medium for the grotesque, to express his serious ideas through comic depictions. As Burke suggests, in fact, “[c]ats are used […] as the bench-mark by which to measure the core meaning and moral dimensions of notoriously painful events in Irish history, be they in the recent past” (159). From Padraic’s point, his cat, Wee Thomas, is his main personal interest, more important than anything and anybody else in life, and he ascribes many meanings to this cat. That is why he associates the cat even with the so-called Irish cause, in other words, with uniting Northern Ireland with the Republic. The importance he gives to the cat can be understood from the following words he utters after receiving news of the cat’s death:

> I will plod on, I know, but no sense to it will there be with Thomas gone. No longer will his smiling eyes be there in the back of me head, egging me on, saying, ‘This is for me and for Ireland, Padraic. Remember that,’ as I’d lob a bomb at a pub, or be shooting a builder. Me whole world is gone, and he’ll never be coming back to me. (*Pause.*) What I want ye to remember, as the bullets come out through yere foreheads, is that this is all a fella can be expecting for being so bad to an innocent Irish cat. Goodbye to ye, now. (viii 44)

In relation to these statements, “one of McDonagh’s main tricks” might be “to off-set an adherence to the brutal abstractions of terrorism with a maudlin attachment to a particular pet” (Taggart 170) that supposedly dies as a result of other terrorist groups’s killing it. At this point, McDonagh, at first sight, may be thought to be trivialising Irish terrorism and Ireland through the cat itself. This seeming trivialising, however, is used functionally. McDonagh wants to show that the personal is confused and intermingled with the political, and the slogan used so commonly by feminists, “the personal is political” (Hanisch 4), is valid in a reversed and misrepresented way in *The Lieutenant*. Only because of Padraic’s personal issues with regard to Wee Thomas, two other “innocent” cats, Mairead’s cat and

another cat in the street, which have no direct relationship with Wee Thomas, are killed in vain. It may be argued in this regard that the cats in the play are references to and symbols of innocent human beings who die during terrorist activities.

Another instrument for McDonagh's satire is Mairead, a significant female character in *The Lieutenant*, depicted as a "mad" person by her brother, Davey (iii 18). Her femaleness is very suggestive in terms of her transgressing and deconstructing traditional gender roles due to her violent actions dominated by militant activities; for Mairead, violence is a routine pastime. She recklessly and thoughtlessly shoots with her rifle here and there (iii 17), does not hesitate even a second before blinding the eyes of the cows (iii 18), blinds Brendan, Joey and Christy before they kill Padraic (viii 50), and she, in the end, kills her lover, Padraic, when she learns that he has killed her cat, Sir Roger (ix 65). As pointed out before, when she leaves home to found a splinter terrorist group, called Wee Thomas's Army, she cannot promise her mother that she will not expose children to bombing events (ix 57), implying that she does not have mercy even on innocent people while doing her job, in other words, while bombing somewhere or trying to kill anti-IRA people. It is also implied that the death of any person, children or adult is regarded as job accidents by the terrorists. Moreover, she postpones her marriage with Padraic till "Ireland is free!" (ix 61), which reflects her militant ideals. Besides, at the end of the play, when she kills Padraic, she even announces herself to Davey and Donny as the lieutenant of the newly founded splinter group: "One of ye's chop up Padraic, the other be chopping the fella there with the cross in his gob. And don't be countermanding me orders, cos it's a fecking lieutenant ye're talking to now" (ix 66). In addition, Mairead's name seems not to have been coincidentally chosen either. She derives her name from Mairead Farrell, "a convicted bomber who led the evening rosary in Irish at Armagh", and was "gunned down in a Gibraltar street by the British SAS on 8 March 1988" (Scanlan 162). Mairead, similar to her namesake, is an activist who yearns for the unification of Northern Ireland with the Republic. Mairead's "strong, masculine Republican" (Eldred 203) behaviours may be argued to question the generally accepted idea that only male power is identified with the use of guns, and fighting.

Mairead is a "politically-motivated woman" (Mahony 152) who has hence been masculinised. Generally, "[i]n a literal, as well as figurative sense, people wear the markings of the gender with which they are associated" (Bonvillian 190). Mairead, however, deconstructs gender norms. McDonagh's description of Mairead in the stage directions may be argued to be in relation with the socially-constructed gender depictions determined for males; and except for the two adjectives, "*slim, pretty*" (iii 17), she is portrayed completely as a male figure: "Mairead *is a girl of sixteen or so, slim, pretty, with close-cropped hair, army trousers, white T-shirt, sunglasses. She carries an air rifle*" (iii 17). In this sense, "the body becomes the site of contested power for those women who choose to rebel against the normative standards established by the patriarchal society," and in this way, she "reclaim[s] control of her own body" (Russo, "Shackles of a Distance"). Moreover, she stubbornly does not care for the comments made about herself:

> Padraic: When you get up close to you, you don't really look like a boy at all.
> Mairead: Thank you.
> Padraic: Just except for your hair.
> Mairead: From you that's some kind of compliment, I suppose?
> Padraic: Would you let your hair be growing out a tadeen, Mairead? Just to about here, now. Like Evie off *The House of Elliot*?
> Mairead: Would you like me to?
> Padraic: Aye.
> Mairead: Well, me hair's staying the way it is and feck Evie off *The House of Elliot*. (ix 58-59)

Considering the behaviours and appearance of Mairead, one may "speak of the deastheticisation of the female body, the desexualisation of violence, the deoedipalisation of narrative" (de Lauretis 146). She shapes her appearance according to her political ideals rather than the social roles constructed for women. Her rebellion against the patriarchal society also parallels her ideology dominated by her rebellious and independent thoughts, and underlines that, without gender distinction, together with male activists, there are also female ones within Irish terrorist groups. Thus, as a woman, Mairead contributes to the "political culture" (Mahony 151) of Ireland.

It is also important to mention Mairead's relationship with animals, especially cows. The cows injured by Mairead are used as a means of expressing how nonsensical terrorism is. She uses physical violence to cows, blinds them as a "political protest" "against the […] meat trade" (iii 18). She tries to defend her point:

> Don't you know that if you take the profit out of the meat trade it'll collapse in on itself entirely, and there's no profit at all in taking ten blind cows to market, I'll tell ya. There's a loss. For who would want to buy a blind cow? […] So in those circumstances I did see the cows as valid targets, though my thinking has gone full tilt since then, and they are valid targets no longer. (iii 19)

Lonergan puts forth that "[t]he notion of blinding animals to protest against the meat trade is a very good joke, but it is also a harsh criticism of the way in which terrorist organisations justify their destruction of human life in terms of such abstractions as the resistance of oppression, the search for freedom, and so on" (*The Theatre and Films* 76-77). Thus, just as blinding cows harms them, in a similar manner, causing so much serious injury, and even deaths, harms human beings who are exposed to that violence.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that just as Padraic's mock-heroic deeds are parody of romantic nationalist ideals, in a similar strand, Mairead is used as a tool to parody previous characters associated with nationalism such as Cathleen ni Houlihan in Yeats' and Lady Gregory's short play, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (Bozer, Seminar Notes 2). Mairead's cat, Sir Roger, in this respect, plays a functional key role in that, similar to Padraic's cat, Wee Thomas, for Mairead, Sir Roger is associated with nationalism. Sir Roger was named after Sir Roger Casement, "the Irish diplomat and patriot" who "attempted to smuggle arms into Ireland from Germany for use in the Easter Rising against British Rule" in 1916 (Lonergan, *The Theatre and Films* 251). At this point, it may be argued that the cat and the value given to it help McDonagh's depiction of Mairead as the subversion of a nationalist heroine. Through this mock-heroic play and parodying ancient Irish heroic deeds, McDonagh may be argued to be reflecting his post-nationalist argument that the era of fighting in the name of nationalism is over now.

It is also necessary to comment upon Mairead's mother's function as regards her contribution to the discussion of IRA terrorism in the Republic and Northern Ireland. This mother figure is only mentioned by Mairead and Davey. That is why one may comment upon her only according to the conversation between the mother and daughter, Mairead, before the latter leaves for the splinter group; the conversation is later reported to Davey:

> Davey: What did Mam say to you when you left?
> Mairead: She said good luck and try not to go blowing up kids.
> Davey: And what did you say?
> Mairead: I said I'd try but I'd be making no promises.
> Davey: And what did she say?
> Mairead: She said so long as you try is the main thing.
> Davey: I suppose it is. (ix 57)

The mother, mentioned only in these lines may be representative of mother Ireland depicted as a weak character who cannot have a say in matters related to her children. Now, the children of mother Ireland are rebellious and disobedient, in the face of which the mother is very passive, so much that she cannot do anything to prevent IRA terrorism in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. On the one hand, her problematic condition is a metaphor for the problematic condition of politicised Ireland. On the other hand, her passive character may represent the Republic's passive and inadequate responses to the IRA issue and to the violence mainly dominant in Northern Ireland. Many people, including J. Bowyer Bell, an American critic and historian, complain about the view that the violence in Northern Ireland is "an acceptable level of violence," a phrase used in England for the Troubles (Scanlan 172). About this serious issue Scanlan states as follows: "Bell, in his eloquent peroration to *The Gun in Politics*, spells out his own fear of that phrase, pointing out that even the British and Irish governments largely ignore the conflict in the North and seem to have little investment in ending it: 'The Troubles have been institutionalised at an acceptable level of violence'" (172). Hence, indifference towards and the normalisation and naturalisation of the events are in question here. Likewise, the mother's wish of good luck for Mairead in her terrorist activities, and again the mother's condoning the death of innocent children, reveal similar "acceptable level[s] of violence."

As for Christy and Brendan, the other two INLA members, they are two important devices as regards McDonagh's effort to reflect the illogical behaviour of terrorists who are observed to be devoid of political and historical awareness. They, so to speak, try to prove that they know much about the INLA and its ideals; however, as Luckhurst puts forth, these characters "certainly do not show signs of an intellectual or emotional life, and never engage in meaningful political discussion – indeed they appear bankrupt of historical knowledge" (119). Christy and Brendan pretend to know much about history and culture, and aspire to seem elite. In this sense, they reflect Gus Martin's following depiction of terrorists: "Terrorists consider themselves to be an elite vanguard" (97). From a Foucauldian perspective these characters may be argued to be misrepresentations of the idea that "knowledge is power," and, ironically, they try to have power and create their own truth through their narrow knowledge of Marxism. As their focus is on violence, any intellectual discussion based on full ideological knowledge of Marxism would be a far-fetched act for these characters. Ironically again, rather than bringing into effect the requirements of Marxism which is against the authority of the minority, in other words, the authority of the capitalist over the proletariat, they try to impose by force their own hegemonic power and control upon common people through their limited knowledge. In this respect, they become just like the ones they harshly criticise. Moreover, as Middeke states, "McDonagh unmistakably lays bare how far ends and means have grown apart in the terrorist mind, as the pseudo-intellectual blathering and half-knowledge among the INLA henchmen sufficiently corroborates" (221). One may observe many illogical discussions between these characters about culture and Marxist ideology as seen in the following one:

> Christy: We none of us enjoyed today's business, Joey-o, but hasn't the plan worked? And like the fella said, 'Don't the ends justify the means?' Wasn't it Marx said that, now? I think it was.
> Brendan: It wasn't Marx, no.
> Christy: Who was it then?
> Brendan: I don't know, now. It wasn't Marx is all I'm saying. (v 27-28)

Luckhurst's following argument is also meaningful in that it reflects these terrorists' being devoid of any kind of reasonable aim or target: "Broadly, the play depicts an orgy of

random violence, and individuals fuelled by a [...] mindless fanaticism, whose political aims have long been subsumed by a desire to terrorise for its own sake" (119). These characters lack theoretical knowledge of Marxism, and they merely enjoy practicing their violent activities upon innocent people and different places which have no direct relationship with them. Therefore such terrorism is action-based rather than being based on ideological background. In fact, until the INLA members declared ceasefire in 1998, the group members continued with their aimless violence. McDonagh, actually, presents this fact through the characters who are representative of the INLA in the play. That these characters lack the intelligence and sophistication to understand what Marxism, an area of interest for the INLA, really is, does not result from "McDonagh's personal dismissal of [the] significance [of the knowledge of Marxism] but is because the characters are operating in a world which no longer understands [this historical knowledge]" (Rees 135).

At this point, it will also be relevant to state two important points related to Joey, another functional member of the INLA working together with Christy and Brendan. First, he indicates the disunity within the INLA, which has been discussed in detail, as he does not agree with the other two killing an innocent cat. This instance signifies that they, as group members, are devoid of any sense of fraternity. Christy and Joey do not exhibit any sign of mercy or regret while Joey feels agonised as a result of their killing the cat, which can be understood from his following words: "[W]hat I don't have, I don't have to go out of me way to pick on wee fellas I'm twenty times bigger than and who are unarmed, and who never will be armed because they have no arms. Just paws" (v 27). Innocent cats here, in fact, represent innocent people who are killed even without being given the right to defend themselves. In this sense, Joey's second important function is that he may be representative of the illegal group members who begin to question if what they are doing is right, if there is another way of defending their ideas without violence. He reflects his disillusionment as follows: "Battering in the head of an innocent cat was the subject! I don't remember agreeing to batter cats when I joined the INLA" (v 28). He later goes on to state: "I'd've never joined the INLA in the first place if I'd known the battering of cats was to be on the agenda. The INLA has gone down in my estimation today. Same as when we blew up Airey

Neave. You can't blow up a fella just because he has a funny name. It wasn't his fault" (v 29). He is now aware of their destructive ideologies and questions the 'truth' these members have created which is based on inconsistent and offensive violence rather than on justified excuses or reasons. As Foucault accentuates, "[t]ruth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint" (131). The INLA which "is Marxist in orientation and which aims to establish a communist state that would comprise both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland" (Tan 158) cannot recognise that their 'truth' restricts the liberty of common people among whom the proletariat whose rights they always claim to be defending is also included and that they deprive these people of their freedom to live safely. In other words, their 'truth' contradicts their assertions of and so-called fight for social justice and liberty. In this sense, they also contradict the ideologies of Marxism, which aims to enable liberty for men, especially for the proletariat.

On the other hand, the only two characters who do not directly engage in terrorist activities are Donny and Davey. These two characters function as McDonagh's voice which questions violence. Maybe the most significant moment in the play occurs when Davey, in a way, as McDonagh's spokesperson, asks the most crucial question when Wee Thomas, surprisingly and shockingly, appears alive: "So all this terror has been for absolutely nothing?" and he adds "Four dead fellas, two dead cats" (ix 68). In this respect, "[a]s social commentary, [the play] is [...] denouncing terrorism by demonstrating the repulsiveness and futility of its cruelty and destruction" (Anderson 294). Hence, "the political seriousness of this line" (Rees 138) should not be underestimated, and it may be argued that this line is the summary of Martin McDonagh's message in the play: All political/ military violence done as a result of meaningless aims is futile and it brings the country nowhere; on the contrary, it causes the country to become trapped in a vicious circle of unsolvable problems.

McDonagh presents two different endings in *The Lieutenant*. As endings for this play, McDonagh "has used" "open-ended structures to question our ideas of reality" (Sierz 245). The play and its two possible endings suggest multiple and open-ended questions and realities in order to raise many possible questions in the minds of the audience/ readers, and raises the question if one can come up with an alternative to solve this political problem in

Ireland and in places experiencing similar problems. In the first ending Davey and Donny feed Padraic's cat, Wee Thomas instead of shooting him, and Wee Thomas eats the Frosties (ix 69). According to Rees, this ending implies hope in understanding the pointlessness of all violence (138-39). It suggests hope for a positive change in society. Davey and Donny, the two characters who are not directly involved in violent terrorist actions, prefer to welcome Wee Thomas; their approach to the cat which is the cause of everything is very respectful. Besides, the cat accepts to eat the food presented by the two, which reflects a mutual understanding between the cat and the other two, and in this regard, symbolically, between the public (represented by Davey and Donney) and the ones causing all the troubles (represented by Wee Thomas). It is possible that the term, "sweet home" paradoxically and ironically used at the beginning of the play to reflect the chaos observed in the Republic and Northern Ireland, might represent a real peaceful and "sweet" country in the end. The term is repeated both by Davey and Donny in the end when Wee Thomas is served the Frosties: "Davey: Home sweet home. / Donny: Home sweet home is right!" (ix 69). This ending might simply convey the message that avoiding violence eventually brings peace, and the idea of "sweet home" might not be a dream when the violence is over.

On the other hand, the second possible ending is as follows: "*If, however, the cat doesn't eat the Frosties, the above line should be substituted for:* Davey: He doesn't like Frosties at all, Donny" (ix 69). With regard to this possible ending Heath Diehl suggests: "Ultimately McDonagh's voice is pessimistic, offering readers / spectators neither a means of escape nor a hope for a future lived differently" (qtd. in Eldred, "Martin McDonagh's Blend" 210). Although on first reading of the play the second ending may appear to be pessimistic, however, it still does not lack hope. Neither of these endings suggests hopelessness. In the figure of the cat, these two different endings could lead the characters and the audience/ readers to reconsider alternative solutions, and in both cases, McDonagh reaches his aim in making the audience/ readers question their own realities about the world surrounded by violence. As Middeke and Schnierer suggest, finding "means of reconciling Catholics and Protestants in the North" (xiii) and the clashing groups in the world and putting an end to terrorist violence are possible, and peace is not a dream. What Ian Rickson, the former

Artistic Director at the Royal Court Theatre, points is indicative of the possibility of change that in-yer-face theatre emphasises:

> There's something so powerful about the eloquence of the live human event. You find yourself in a cauldron, a crucible in which something is happening physically. Even metaphorical violence or offstage violence can be incredibly powerful because you are implicated and involved. Since the Greeks, one of theatre's jobs is to take us into some of the darkest area of life so that we should leave the theatre crying out for change. (qtd. in Sierz 246)

Moreover, as Sierz argues, "[u]nencumbered by ideology, [the 1990s'] theatre doesn't debate issues" (244). McDonagh, in a similar manner, does not try to defend any kind of ideology. His only concern is to state that terrorism is bad and does not correct the misconducts in society; on the contrary, it worsens the ongoing problems. *The Lieutenant* aims to make one question the seriousness of terrorist violence and terrorist activities. As Lonergan notes,

> [McDonagh] will invite us to laugh at jokes about Irish terrorism before reminding us that we are laughing about the deaths of real people.
>
> This means the confused morality of McDonagh's characters will almost certainly be mirrored by the confused responses of audiences at his play. This confusion often provokes consternation and irritation, but it *should* also provoke thought. McDonagh's work is often described as 'empty', but *the Lieutenant* illustrates that a better word might be 'vacuous': the play leaves spaces that demand to be filled. Faced with the amorality on stage, the only response for an audience is to react *morally*; faced with representations that attempt to manipulate, the response is to mistrust *all* representation. McDonagh is again demanding that his audiences start to think more critically about the images of violence and terrorism that they are presented with on a daily basis. (*The Theatre and Films* 84)

In the light of the analysis of and discussions about *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, it may be suggested that McDonagh's use of grotesque violence, and, "the choice of farce as a form [do] not, as is widely known, presuppose a refusal of serious political debate […], [n]or [do his plays] inevitably contain characters who are hopelessly dumb, out-and-out psychopaths" (Luckhurst 119). In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, events from real Irish life

are reflected with all their assumed ugliness. McDonagh, however, brings real life onto the stage not in a realistic manner but through the use of the grotesque. It is important to highlight that despite the fact that the grotesque dominates the play, this characteristic does not prevent the play from reflecting the serious political realities in Ireland. Moreover, it is important to note that rather than the effort of creating verisimilitude, in Thorson's terms, "the use of the grotesque to portray contemporary society" (1) is observed in the play. "McDonagh's aesthetics of grotesque violence" might be argued to "expose[...], deconstruct[...], and thereby castigate[...] the inhumane corruption of the terrorist agenda, its mindless fanaticism [and] its brutality" (Middeke 213). The play's target, hence, is to create political consciousness in the audience/ readers' minds. In *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, it is implied that verbal and physical violence prevents healthy communication between people and countries. Only through communication, understanding and respect one can solve problems and reach a compromise.

CONCLUSION

"We need these moral ordeals.
Theatre is only alive if it is kicking."

(John Peter, qtd. in Sierz 96)

It is an undeniable fact that violence has always been witnessed in our lives either in the form of self-violence as observed in suicides or as a fight between two people or on a societal level or even on an international level considered in relation to wars between different countries. The media have been dominated by news about people committing suicide or killing each other, even people killing their closest family members such as mothers, fathers, brothers or sisters, serial killers and mass destructions in wars. Moreover, technological progress has unfortunately been associated with more and more destruction as the more technology has developed the more the news about masses of people killed by different kinds of weapons such as bombs or guns is heard of or read about in the modern world. We live in such a world that here, let alone guns and bombs, even household tools such as pokers, knives and mallets can be regarded as potential destructive weapons by many.

That the problem of violence has been experienced throughout centuries brings to mind the question whether human beings are born with violence or whether they are later transformed into violent people as a result of their environments. The answer to this question has been searched for many years by psychoanalysts such as Freud, who believes that human beings come to this world with innate violence; on the other hand, another psychoanalyst, Rafael Moses believes that people become violent due to their violent environments or problems they experience throughout their lives. Until today, however, the ones defending these two poles have not reached a compromise yet, and discussions about this particular matter have been continuing enthusiastically. Rather than whether violence is

innate or formed by the environment, what is more significant at this point is, however, the requirement of self-criticism in relation to the problem of violence and the right assessment of the problem and finding constructive solutions to it. Another important point, in Erten and Ardalı's words, is to be aware of the fact that self-control is a system which prevents individuals or groups from doing harm to themselves and their environment (158). Hence, an individual should lead her/ his control mechanism in the right direction to prevent the emergence of violence.

'Young writers' of the 1990s who were bombarded with reports of wars and murders in the media, and who expressed their anger towards these events in their works deal with the very issues of violence and the transformation of human beings into monsters in the modern world. McDonagh, who is one of these writers, in his Irish plays, particularly in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, not only focuses on these problems and presents the reasons of violence in 1990s Ireland but also makes one criticise the tragic realities of today through his grotesque style and characteristics of in-yer-face theatre. In this dissertation, the above-mentioned three plays have been analysed with regard to McDonagh's satire on violence which was witnessed especially in the 1990s not only in Ireland but also in the world in general; in addition, McDonagh's ability to reflect violence observed in Ireland as a direct result of the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic problems experienced in the country in this particular decade have been dealt with.

It is clearly observed that aggression and violence may result from many factors, some of the most significant of which are poverty, unemployment, sudden anger emerging due to enmities between individuals or groups, terrorist activities or wars (Moses 24) and ideological issues. McDonagh presents these reasons of violence in *The Beauty Queen*, *A Skull* and *The Lieutenant* in his satire on violence. *The Beauty Queen* exemplifies the condition of rural Irish people who experienced serious unemployment problems due to the harsh economic conditions witnessed in Ireland in the beginning of the 1990s. Unemployment was a reason for compulsory emigration for the Irish to England, Australia and the USA, which, contrary to their expectations for a new prosperous life, culminated in

racial harassment, psychological pressure upon the Irish, psychological problems and disillusionment. *The Beauty Queen*, in this sense, mirrors these socio-economic and psycho-sociological problems by Maureen's psychosis caused by her diasporic position in England and the racial harassment she experiences there. Besides, the following reasons may be stated among other important socio-economic or psycho-sociological reasons of violence observed in the play: Maureen's being entangled in the cottage to look after her mother, Mag, as the traditions require her to do so, her celibacy due to postponed marriage till a late age because of economic reasons and the late marriage age in her environment resulting from the fact that men in the area had to emigrate in order to escape the poverty of the country, and lastly, by Maureen's always nagging mother, Mag. Maureen has to endure these problems which prepare the ground for violence, to put it more clearly, the matricide she is going to commit at the end of the play. When Maureen learns that Mag tries to prevent her marriage with Pato, who will save her from metaphorical imprisonment in such an environment because of these social, cultural, economic and psychological problems, she kills Mag as a result of sudden anger. This homicide of a family member renders it possible for *The Beauty Queen* to be analysed within the framework of domestic violence.

As for *A Skull*, it represents the psycho-sociological problems experienced in rural Ireland during the Celtic Tiger period between 1995 and 2000. Throughout this period, depopulation was witnessed as the inhabitants of the western part of Ireland began to emigrate to the more industrialised east which benefited from the prosperity of the period. As a matter of fact, *A Skull* tells the very condition of the increasing level of violence witnessed throughout Ireland caused by the self-centredness that emerged with the Celtic Tiger period. It also tells the experiences of the ones who preferred to stay within the borders of the rural area and had to struggle with less desirable job opportunities compared to the eastern part of Ireland. Mick's job as a gravedigger, Mary's "cadging off the Yanks a pond a throw the maps the Tourist Board asked [her] to give them for free" (*A Skull*, i 67) are grotesque reflections of the seriousness of the socio-economic problems. These socio-economic problems are reflected as the reasons of the violence that characters apply to each other such as Mairtin's father's continuously beating Mairtin, the possibility of Mick's

having murdered his wife, Oona, Mick's hitting Mairtin on the head with a mallet and Thomas's seriously beating the prisoners. In this play, the problem of violence is seemingly observed between individuals; however, considered in terms of the socio-economic problems of Ireland, the problem of violence observed within domestic and institutional spheres in the play is seen as reflective of the problem on a societal level.

The Lieutenant, on the other hand, deals with the problem of the IRA and INLA terrorism whose impact has been felt throughout the Irish Island, England and some other countries in Europe such as Belgium and the Netherlands. The political and ideological conflict between Protestants and Catholics, in other words, between the Unionists who want to keep the united position of Northern Ireland with Britain and the Republicans who want the unification of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland caused serious violent events resulting in the death and injury of many people. Beginning at the end of the 1960s, these events named as 'The Troubles' continued until 1998 when the Belfast Good Friday Agreement was signed between the two oppositional groups; however, there are still intermittent outbreaks of violence. McDonagh, via *The Lieutenant*, which exemplifies political violence, reflects how ideological differences and political conflicts can result in the death of many people including innocent ones. How the INLA bombs public places remorselessly causing the death of many along with psychological and physical destruction is mentioned in the play by the protagonist Padraic and the INLA members. The play also mirrors the conflicts observed among the INLA members and between Padraic and Mairead who plan to create another splinter group together. The play ends with the murder of the INLA members, Christy, Joey and Brendan, and of Padraic, all of whom are killed by Mairead, which shows the degree of the destruction brought by political violence.

In short, McDonagh, through these three plays, reflects how environment shapes the personality of a person and how human beings can be transformed into monsters when they cannot suppress their innate violence as a result of socio-political, socio-cultural, socio-economic and psycho-sociological problems. McDonagh, in a way, reflects how these problems trigger innate violence. One should also pay attention to the transition of these three plays in terms of setting, in other words, the transition from the domestic spheres of

the cottage in Leenane in *The Beauty Queen* to the public sphere of the graveyard in Connemara area in *A Skull*, and, lastly, to a wider area, to Inishmore and Belfast in *The Lieutenant*. An in-depth analysis will show that the wider the setting gets the more the degree of violence increases.

In this dissertation, Martin McDonagh's plays that particularly deal with rural western Ireland and the local colours of this world such as the Catholic Church, Irish cottages and kitchens have been chosen to be analysed with regard to the socio-political and socio-economic and psycho-sociological problems experienced in this particular area throughout the 1990s. McDonagh's choice of this particular locale in these plays is especially significant in terms of three points: First, considering these problems experienced in Ireland especially in the 1990s, these three plays are representations of true Irish problems experienced especially in the western part of Ireland, albeit in a grotesque way. Secondly, as an isolated rural place, the setting also prepares the ground for the characters to fight each other, and creates an atmosphere where the id is in the foreground while the superego is suppressed, which contributes to McDonagh's satire on violence. Thirdly, it is important to state that McDonagh's choice of rural Ireland as his setting makes him different from other in-yer-face playwrights, particularly, Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, who employ their satire on violence through urban settings.

One should bear in mind, however, that McDonagh's employment of western Ireland as his setting in his *The Leenane* and *Aran* trilogies in which the above-stated three plays are included, and that his plays "look[...] as rural as a cow pat" (Sierz 221) do not make him a playwright of 'the western world' as his primary aim is not to try to reflect rural Ireland and its culture but to criticise violence experienced not only in this area but also throughout the world. Thinking in line with this aim, it would be an injustice to limit him only within the borders of rural Ireland as his ideas in terms of violence appeal to many countries in the world on a domestic level and societal level and, when wars are taken into consideration, on a military level. This shows how he can manage to form universality out of microcosmic representations of 'Irish realities.' In fact, except for his satire on the Church which particularly applies to Catholic countries, and which is criticised because of the Church's

psychological oppression on people, McDonagh's work and satire may be thought of in terms of universality. Moreover, although his two trilogies take place in rural Ireland, his two more recent plays, *The Pillowman* (2003) – which takes place in a timeless and placeless setting and which is a satire on totalitarian state violence upon citizens – and *A Behanding in Spokane* (2010) – which takes place in a small town in the USA and which satirises psychological violence to gays and blacks, sexual and racial harassment upon them respectively and physical violence to individuals – show that he has been writing not only about rural Ireland but also about urban places in any locale in the world. This characteristic proves that his primary concern is to reflect the fact that violence is everywhere, and can be seen in everybody regardless of age, gender and class. In this sense, it might be argued that McDonagh writes beyond the borders of Ireland and England. That is why his plays appeal not only to Ireland but also to many countries in the world.

McDonagh actually knows both English culture – as he was born in England and is still living there – and Irish culture – to which his parents belong – very well. That he feels in-between two cultures, English and Irish frees him from the burden of a nationalist outlook. Hence, he can be regarded as an observer rather than a nationalist playwright. This characteristic not only prepares the ground for him to have a more critical outlook upon Irish problems but also enables him to act more objectively and humorously and less sentimentally towards these problems. He stated in an interview with Fintan O'Toole in 1998: "Maybe it's a lack of connection that I always had. I hope maybe that helps the writing in some ways, to not be quite connected, to see things from a skewed point of view" (qtd. in Cronin 192-93). Hence, as "[t]he liminal London-Irish playwright," McDonagh "can then be seen as writing from a position of self-perpetuating exteriority" (Cronin 199). In other words, due to his liminality and his state as a playwright in-between two cultures, he performs the role of an objective dramatist. Therefore, his plays should be thought of as profoundly framed by his observer position and liminality.

It can clearly be observed that McDonagh presents his satire on violence, on the 'wolf to each other' position of human beings in the modern world through employment of violence on an extreme level, which brings him in close proximity to in-yer-face theatre. The

disturbing extremities of violence ranging from psychological and physical to verbal are seen in relation to all the characters in the play: In *The Beauty Queen*, psychological violence on Maureen and physical violence on Mag; in *A Skull*, physical violence on Oona, Mairtin, the skulls, prisoners, hamsters, verbal violence on the skulls; lastly, in *The Lieutenant*, physical violence on James, cats, many innocent people during terrorist activities, Padraic, Christy, Joey, Brendan. These extremities create an atmosphere of savagery, which is, in fact, a grotesque presentation of the violence witnessed in the modern world.

Along with this employment of violence, McDonagh also makes use of comic elements through farce, such as exaggerated bodily movements and exaggerated character depictions. McDonagh's use of comedy, in fact, is another significant characteristic that makes him different from other in-yer-face playwrights such as Ravenhill and Kane, who mainly write in serious tones. The following characters and situations exemplify the funny elements in *The Beauty Queen*, *A Skull* and *The Lieutenant*: In *The Beauty Queen*, Ray is portrayed as a funny character who is nearly always joyful even when he mentions his desire for hitting the police with the poker, which creates comic relief. Moreover, Mag's pouring her urine into the kitchen sink where one washes the dishes is another comic element in the play. Comedy in *A Skull* is more obvious than in *The Beauty Queen*. Comic elements in *A Skull* range from Mairtin's mock-resurrection after being hit on the head by Mick with a mallet and later by Thomas to Thomas's character depiction as a mock American detective and Mick's and Mairtin's use of swearwords such as 'fuck' while smashing the skulls and bones drunkenly, Mairtin's contrasting the delight in "skull-hammering" with that in "wife-into-wall-driving" (iii 105), people's drowning in their own urine, and Mairtin's being depicted as a stupid and simple-minded person who cannot even understand that the people around him are ridiculing him, one of the examples of which is seen when Mairtin believes Mick's joke that tinkers take the 'things' of the dead to feed their dogs during the famine and that this is "the first thing about Irish history" (ii 87). As for *The Lieutenant*, the following absurdities and comic elements can be noticed in this play: Padraic's thinking of his cat Wee Thomas as the centre of his life and ignoring all human beings around him

when the topic is Wee Thomas, his depiction as mad; the INLA members' discussion about Northern Ireland in accordance with killing cats, which serves no useful purpose for anybody; on the one hand, Mairead's performing the role of a strong man through breaking all the taboos in society, her transformation into a lieutenant in an absurd way, that is to say, through killing Padraic and Christy, Joey and Brendan, her blinding the cows around as a "political protest" "against the […] meat trade" (iii 18); on the other hand, Mairead's brother, Davey's depiction like a feminine character who has long hair and who is frightened of rifles; the violence's being applied only due to Wee Thomas and the supposedly dead cat, Wee Thomas's coming into the room as if nothing has happened. It can be observed that the more violent the action is, the more comically it is represented. With regard to this characteristic, as mentioned before, among these three plays, the most violent play is *The Lieutenant*.

Such kind of a blend of serious violent events and comedy generally leaves the audience/ readers in a quandary as they do not know whether to laugh or not at the events presented on the stage/ in the text; that is to say, they do not know how to react to them. They are totally left in a state of shock due to the extremities of violence presented in a comic manner. McDonagh employs the shock tactic of in-yer-face as he wants the audience/ readers to question themselves and the incorrect conduct around them. As Sierz puts forward, "shock can still force spectators to reassess their responses. It can educate the senses as well as stimulating curiosty" (9). McDonagh, through creating alienation effect with the help of these extremities and shock tactics, in fact, aims to enable the intellectual involvement of the audience/ readers and to create an awareness of the fact that there is an urgent need for change in the contemporary world. The three plays analysed in this dissertation may be thought of as McDonagh's implicit invitation to the audience/ readers to question themselves, their approach to violence and to change their mentalities.

As regards the points discussed above, it can also be put forth that the problems experienced particularly in the 1990s caused Ireland to be entangled in a vicious circle which is represented by the rocking chair in *The Beauty Queen*, the excavation of each grave every seven years in *A Skull*, and continuously killing cats or men in *The Lieutenant*.

McDonagh suggests that the problems that imprison people in a metaphorical whirlpool cannot be solved by violence. Violence that ranges from domestic, psychological and physical to political and institutional causes the already bad conditions to get worse. As Erten and Ardalı argue, the increase in violence will not solve any problems. Let alone solutions, new problems will occur as a result of violence (158). Moreover, as Erşen puts forth, "no matter whether it is observed in the family or in different groups, views, individuals, foundations or countries, violence emerges in an atmosphere where there is nothing to say, nobody to listen [...] and the authority is nothing more than the death drive itself" (136) [*my translation*]. Now 'man is a wolf to man' idiom is illustrated at its peak point, and let alone the ones in society, the ones in domestic spheres are in such a condition that even a daughter cannot trust her mother or vice versa as can be observed in *The Beauty Queen*; one cannot rely on the ones in police institutions who are supposed to protect the society from any kind of danger including violence. In the contemporary world they, too, apply physical violence to many people rather than preventing violence in society as is clearly shown in *A Skull*. Moreover, the ones who are at oppositional poles cannot tolerate each other today, and rather than finding peaceful solutions to bring about reconciliation, different group members kill each other, which brings neither party one step closer as can be seen in the case of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland which is reflected in *The Lieutenant*.

Within the framework of in-yer-face theatre which suggests the need for change in society, McDonagh's message that there is need for an urgent change is indicated through symbolic representation of the head. Given the symbolic significance of the cult of head in Celtic Mythology, it may be thought that McDonagh's choice of this body part of his Irish characters as a means of his satire is not a coincidence. The head is a very reasonable choice for McDonagh as it is representative of the intellect, and, according to the Celts, it was the "power-centre for human action" (Green, qtd. in "Celtic Shamanism"). It is the head that determines what one does or does not do. Hence, McDonagh focuses on this body part to clarify his message of the necessity of immediate change of mentality and that people should make reasonable decisions to solve the problems. In *The Beauty Queen*, *A*

Skull and *The Lieutenant*, either the characters suffer from psychosis as presented through Maureen or depicted as mad as shown in Padraic or they are hit on the head with a poker or a mallet as seen in the cases of Mag, Mairtin and Oona or even shot by a rifle or gun as can be observed in Padraic's being shot in the head by Mairead. These problems related to the head and the hits upon the head suggest an urgent change of mentality. Through Maureen's murder of her mother by hitting her on the head with the poker, McDonagh suggests that the ones who apply psychological violence to others, like Mag, must change their mentalities. In *A Skull*, Mick's hitting Mairtin on the head is symbolic of the need for the youth of the society to change their mentality and to perform an active role in the solutions of violence rather than accepting everything as it is; the possibility of Mick's hitting Oona on the head with a mallet is meaningful as it suggests the necessity of change of the mentalities of women who accept the role determined for them by authoritative institutions such as the Church or patriarchy. As for Mick's smashing the skulls and bones of the dead, it indicates that through relying on the methods of the ancestors you cannot bring solutions to the problem of violence; one should accept that today is a different era whose problems can only be solved through new methods to be created together. This skull and bone smashing scene also reflects McDonagh's belief that "the time for martyrs and mourning is over. The community can only right itself once the individuals within that community start looking to themselves for the answers" (Farrelly 11). Lastly, that Padraic is killed by Mairead's shooting him in the head suggests that problems related to the nation cannot be solved through founding terrorist organisations or splinter groups or through murdering many people including innocent ones. The central point where all these three plays meet is the message that in the modern world the means of communication for people has been transformed into violence to each other; this violence ranges from verbal and psychological to physical. This fact, however, can be changed through communication and trying to understand each other. In this regard, Mick's words, "Let bygones be bygones" (*A Skull* i 65) appeal to all the characters in the play and indicate McDonagh's suggestion for a new beginning in life. McDonagh seems to suggest that unless the Irish stop being haunted by the past, taking a step forward does not seem possible. Given McDonagh's way of expressing his ideas, he may be said to be conveying his messages to the audience/ readers

not in a didactic tone or classical way or directly but in an exaggerated grotesque, farcical and metaphorical style.

In relation to the argument about the need for proper communication, *The Beauty Queen*, *A Skull* and *The Lieutenant* respectively can be thought of as a journey beginning from pseudo-communication in which nobody can understand each other to the hope for possibility of real communication. Compared to the previous two plays, *The Lieutenant* ends in a more optimistic way as, in the end, there is a kind of reconciliation between 'wicked' Wee Thomas and the ones who are totally innocent, which may be considered as McDonagh's effort to create a critical atmosphere for the audience/ readers. Therefore, it will not be wrong to put forth that *The Lieutenant*, in which more casualties, more blood and more injuries are observed, is also the most optimistic of all the three plays. The three plays, in this sense, may also be regarded as a journey from "pessimism about humanity" (Sierz 219) to optimism when necessary steps are taken. McDonagh seems to believe that if one makes the necessary efforts, s/he can suppress the innate violence s/he is born with and the violence that s/he is born into through self-criticism.

Another significant detail about *The Beauty Queen*, *A Skull* and *The Lieutenant* is the way that McDonagh deals with the gender issue and how he reaches a striking critical point for the condition of the country with regard to this issue. Maureen in *The Beauty Queen* is, in fact, the embodiment of an Irish woman who has to suffer the burdens of traditions, the psychological violence applied by her nagging mother, and the harsh economic conditions. In *A Skull*, it is possible to see the epitome of a woman in a worse condition. Although Oona is dead, and, hence, she does not have a voice, through her absence she, in fact, 'tells' many significant things about the condition of women. The possibility of Oona's having been murdered by her husband, Mick, with a mallet makes her a representative woman figure who is silenced and is exposed to suppressions and oppressions by her husband. The most interesting depiction of a woman, however, is observed in *The Lieutenant* in which Mairead is depicted as a girl who defies wearing the apron in the kitchen as required from her, and chooses to wear military trousers and to be a militant in a splinter terrorist group, which in the end paves the way for her to be 'the lieutenant of Inishmore.' Contrary to the

suppressed or oppressed condition of women in the first two plays, McDonagh presents a more liberated portrayal of a woman in *The Lieutenant*. By means of Mairead, McDonagh may be suggesting that violence is genderless, and women are equally violent. Considering the depictions of these women, it may be stated that these three women in the three different plays represent two opposite extremes. McDonagh, through these extremities and the chilling portrayal of the condition of women in society, in the end reaches the conclusion that Ireland cannot improve by suppressing women or by different sexes' acting separately from each other. Both men and women in Ireland should act together to carry Ireland to a better future. The depiction of women in these three plays are not necessarily restricted to Ireland; on the contrary, such circumstances bring to mind again universal connotations as they are witnessed everywhere on an increasing level. Therefore, the condition of women in Ireland and the message of McDonagh regarding gender issues relates to everywhere, every time and everybody.

In the light of these arguments, these three plays analysed in this dissertation may be thought of as McDonagh's effort to find an answer to Father Welsh's following question asked in *The Lonesome West*: "What kind of a town is this at all? Brothers fighting and lasses peddling booze and two fecking murderers on the loose?" (140). Moreover, if the town mentioned here is considered as the microcosm of whole Ireland or the world, in general, the plays might be thought of in relation to McDonagh's effort to find an answer to the question, 'What kind of a world is this at all?' In a way, McDonagh makes an effort to find a meaning in this chaotic world. What he does is reflect the realities of today through either the experiences of different sexes or emigrants, the ones in exile or self-exile fraught with miseries. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, all of which take place in western Ireland, actually provide a wider, even global perspective, on problems related to violence and add a new dimension to these problems experienced by individuals among each other, that is between men and women, the individual and the state, and the individual and the Church. By creating questions in the minds of the audience/ readers and providing the atmosphere for them to evaluate their attitudes towards problems, McDonagh builds a symbolic bridge between the above-

mentioned groups by means of his plays. He, in this sense, may be considered to be supporting the views of Lacan, who argues that "[d]ialogue in itself seems to involve a renunciation of aggressiveness" (86). In short, McDonagh suggests that when the language of communication of any of these groups is violence, they can be beneficial neither to themselves nor to the ones around them or to their own countries or to humanity. So, one should change her/his mentality or perspective with regard to matters through dialogue so that both they themselves and their countries can go one step further.

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