



ISSN: 1999-5601 (Print) 2663-5836 (online)

Lark Journal

Available online at: <https://lark.uowasit.edu.iq>



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Keywords: Christina Reid;
trauma theory; the troubles;
women.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 Oct 2024

Accepted 14 Dec2024

Available online 1 Jan 2025



Unveiling the Silent Suffering of Women in Christina Reid's Tea in a China Cup

A B S T R A C T

Families, groups, and individuals were deeply affected by the Troubles, a period of severe political and sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland that lasted from the late 1960s to the late 1990s. While most of the existing research on the Troubles concentrates on men's experiences and the wider political backdrop, this study turns attention to the often-overlooked suffering of women. The paper examines the trauma experienced by women during the Troubles as presented in Christina Reid's play Tea in a China Cup. The paper extensively examines Reid's play, focusing on female characters' emotional problems, psychological traumas, and the long-term effects of violence and political chaos. It investigates how these women manage their daily lives in the face of violence, strained familial connections, and cultural expectations.

Drawing on trauma theory and feminist perspectives, this study explores how Reid's work exposes the special issues that women faced during this turbulent time. It investigates the portrayal of silenced voices, the influence of patriarchal systems, and the endurance and responsibility shown by female protagonists in their quest for healing and empowerment. The study contributes to comprehending the human cost of violence and the necessity for gender-sensitive historical research by highlighting women's trauma during the Troubles. It points to the necessity of recognizing women's experiences, gaining vital insights into their lived realities, and enhancing the discourse on trauma and conflict.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31185/lark.3875>

كشف المعاناة الصامتة للمرأة في مسرحية كريستينا ريد "الشاي في فنجان صيني"

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الخلاصة:

لقد تأثرت الأسر والجماعات والأفراد بشكل عميق بالمعضلة الايرلندية، وهي مرحلة من الصراع السياسي والطائفي الشديد في أيرلندا الشمالية والتي استمرت من أواخر الستينيات إلى أواخر التسعينيات. وفي حين تركز معظم الأبحاث الموجودة التي تخص المعضلة الايرلندية على تجارب الرجال والخلفية السياسية الأوسع، فإن هذه الدراسة تسلط الضوء على معاناة النساء التي غالبًا ما يتم تجاهلها. وتبحث الدراسة في الصدمة التي تعرضت لها النساء أثناء المعضلة الايرلندية كما وردت في مسرحية كريستينا ريد "الشاي في فنجان صيني". وتفحص الدراسة مسرحية ريد على نطاق واسع، مع التركيز على المشاكل العاطفية للشخصيات النسائية والصدمات النفسية والآثار الطويلة الأجل للعنف والفوضى السياسية. كما تبحث في كيفية إدارة هؤلاء النساء لحياتهن اليومية في مواجهة العنف، والعلاقات الأسرية المتوترة، والتوقعات الثقافية.

بالاعتماد على نظرية الصدمة والمنظورات النسوية، تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف يكشف عمل ريد عن القضايا الخاصة التي واجهتها النساء في هذا الوقت المضطرب. وتتناول الدراسة تصوير الأصوات الصامتة، وتأثير الأنظمة الأبوية، والتحمل والمسؤولية التي أظهرتها بطلات الروايات النسائية في سعيهن إلى الشفاء وتمكين المرأة.

وتسهم الدراسة في فهم التكلفة البشرية للعنف وضرورة إجراء بحث تاريخي حساس للنوع الاجتماعي بتسليط الضوء على صدمات النساء أثناء المعضلة الايرلندية. وتشير إلى ضرورة الاعتراف بتجارب النساء، واكتساب رؤى حيوية تخص واقعهن المعيشي، وتعزيز الخطاب الذي يخص الصدمات والصراعات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كريستينا ريد؛ نظرية الصدمة؛ المعضلة الايرلندية؛ النساء.

INTRODUCTION

War is considered a significant cause of distress and psychological stress (Khalil & Sahan, 2022, p.662), and women in Northern Ireland faced marginalization during the Troubles. The time of political and religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics. The conflict exacerbated existing gender inequalities and reinforced traditional gender roles and expectations, which limited women's opportunities and participation in various spheres of life. (Frawley, 2021, p. 306). Historians, sociologists, and theatre critics have never paid enough attention to the war experiences of Northern Irish women. This is partially due to the fact that the concept of "Mother Ireland" has been so dominant in literary and political spheres that the voices of individual women are frequently ignored. Thereby reinforcing the masculine ideal of the Irish woman as identical to a patriotic and maternal figure. Audiences and critics did not become concerned about this social minority until the 1980s, when Reid, along with a number of other playwrights, frequently transforms into depicting women's suffering (Kao, 2022, p.15). Thus, Tea in a China cup depicts the protagonists' suffering from the consequences of their traumatic experience and reality that strives to break through the everyday familiarity of the world. Reid's multi-generational play employs the same strategy of historical recreation as the politics of Irish drama, which seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the troubled issues of the present day. Many of them want to work through the traumas of previous generations in order to achieve release psychotherapy (Greene, 2003, pp.235-236). This paper examines the application of trauma theory to the characters in the play. Through a close analysis of the characters' experiences and

behaviours, this study explores how trauma shapes their lives and relationships.

2.Theatre of The Troubles

The theatre's activities must be viewed in the context of the communal violence that affected Northern Ireland from 1969 until 1999, when power-sharing agreements were implemented. During the course of this complicated conflict, more than 3,300 individuals lost their lives as a result of the conflict between the most radical sections of the unionists (mainly Protestants), who wanted Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom, and the nationalists (primarily Catholics), who wanted some kind of united Ireland. During this period of unrest in Northern Ireland, artists of all mediums and genres were concerned about whether and how to address the Troubles (Richards, 2004, p.191). In recent decades of the twenty-first century, social and political concerns have been the main focus of literature in general, and drama in particular (Nasser & Khalil, 2021 p.28). Reid's *Tea in a China Cup* can be interpreted as critical examinations of unionist ideology and its violent nature, in addition to serving as a historical account of Protestant Northern Irishwomen and their awakening. By displaying their contradictions through devotion to religion and superstition, the female characters in Reid's plays appear more capable of overthrowing political mechanisms than serving on the front lines of the conflicts. By talking about racial issues, Reid also puts cultural and religious conflicts in a global context. This suggests that Ireland's peace cannot result from isolationist politics, but from the growing number of immigrants and marriages between people of different races. Her plays probably do something new for Irish theatre, which comes out of the shade of anti-

colonial feelings by showing the real, but not always pretty, sides of this divided country (Kao, 2022, p.16).

3.Literary Trauma Theory

Trauma refers to a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. It may result from a single incident, such as a natural disaster, accident, or violent attack, or it may be the result of ongoing experiences, such as abuse, neglect, or living in a war zone. Traumatic events can have a profound impact on a person's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being, often leading to symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety, depression, and difficulty functioning in daily life (Goodman, 2017, p.187). Trauma as an element continues to be an inspiring topic within the context of trauma and conflict (Jaber, 2020, p.3).

Trauma writings explore the power of words to heal wounds; this power can be used as a means of expression and release, as a political weapon, a means of bonding, a means of endurance and recovery, a means of protection, and a means of declaration. Trauma is a complex mix of subjectivity and change that not only shows trauma survivors hard parts of themselves, but also exposes readers of trauma fiction to stories that are both interesting and upsetting because they have elements that are both deeply real and strangely imaginary. Trauma significantly entangles an individual's connection with their memories, leading to unavoidable sensations of disorientation, fear, humiliation, and isolation, or suffering in the form of nightmares, hallucinations, and other distressing recollections. The world does not seem like a safe place anymore. The survivors may experience doubts regarding their judgement, self-esteem, and psychological health (Jose & K., 2021, p.9103).

Cathy Caruth who is a prominent literary critic and professor in the field of trauma studies, in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, employs literature as a means to deepen her investigation into the framework of traumatic occurrences. Caruth's work employs a comprehensive analysis of literary, psychoanalytic, philosophical, and film texts to effectively demonstrate that although certain events lack complete comprehension, they acquire significance through the act of narration and reception by others (Caruth, 1996, p.3). It became evident that part of the idea of narrativeizing has been to comprehend the desire to produce, receive, interpret, and distribute cultural products (Faraj & Mustafa, 2023, p.50).

The investigation of how women experience and express trauma must take into account the diverse effects of social, political, cultural, and ideological elements. There are three main aspects that contribute to psychological stress for women when they encounter patriarchal authorities; however, these effects are varied and based on other conditions. They include the experiences of being silenced, being the object of patriarchal constructions of the Other, and experiencing violence as a means of upholding patriarchal ideology. The purpose of employing these overarching discourses is to provide a framework that situates the experience of trauma for women in patriarchal societies, as well as to expand the definition of trauma (Allport, 2009, pp.25-26).

Traumatic experiences often exceed people's capacity to fully comprehend or integrate them into their conscious understanding. Trauma disrupts the normal process of memory and narrative, and it can manifest as fragmented or intrusive memories, flashbacks, and other symptoms. These fragmented memories persist and continue to haunt the individual, affecting

their psychological well-being and shaping their perception of the world. Furthermore, storytelling and narrative are means of grappling with traumatic experiences, by engaging with and articulating their traumatic experiences through narrative, individuals can begin to process and integrate the memories into their sense of self and history (Caruth, 1995, p.178). Traumatic experiences often exceed people's capacity to fully comprehend or integrate them into their conscious understanding. Trauma disrupts the normal process of memory and narrative, and it can manifest as fragmented or intrusive memories, flashbacks, and other symptoms. These fragmented memories persist and continue to haunt the individual, affecting their psychological well-being and shaping their perception of the world. Furthermore, storytelling and narrative are means of grappling with traumatic experiences, by engaging with and articulating their traumatic experiences through narrative, individuals can begin to process and integrate the memories into their sense of self and history (Caruth, 1995, p.176).

Although they are closely related, trauma and narrative have a troublesome connection. One potential benefit is that an individual who undergoes a traumatic event and feels compelled to share it with others has the option and capability to do so. On the other hand, another person who witnesses the same occurrence may not feel the same desire to speak or write about it. While one's recall of a traumatic incident may drive narrative, it may also obstruct narration. Furthermore, while engaging in the narrative activity may be beneficial for individuals attempting to recount a traumatic event, doing so will inevitably transport that person back to the incident, which may force them to recall details they would prefer to forget (Davis & Meretoja, 2020, p.152).

Judith Herman is an influential psychiatrist and trauma expert known for her ground breaking work on trauma and its effects. She has made significant contributions to the field of trauma studies, particularly in relation to complex trauma and the experiences of survivors of interpersonal violence. Herman has written extensively about the traumatic effects of war on individuals and communities. In her book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, she devotes significant attention to the psychological and social consequences of war-related trauma. Herman argues that war can lead to complex trauma, which refers to the cumulative impact of multiple traumatic events experienced over an extended period. War exposes individuals to extreme violence, loss, displacement, and ongoing threats to their physical and psychological well-being. This chronic exposure to trauma can have profound and long-lasting effects on individuals' mental health and functioning (Herman, 1997, p.251-252).

Herman mentions that traumatic memories often differ from ordinary memories. Traumatic experiences can overwhelm the individual's capacity to integrate the event into a coherent narrative. As a result, traumatic memories may be fragmented, disjointed, and disorganized. This fragmentation can make it challenging to recall or articulate the traumatic event in a linear and sequential manner. Herman discusses the phenomenon of flashbacks, which are vivid and involuntary re-experiences of a traumatic event. Flashbacks can occur during waking hours or as nightmares during sleep. In addition to flashbacks, individuals may also experience intrusive memories, intrusive thoughts, or distressing images related to the trauma. These intrusive experiences can be distressing and disruptive to daily functioning (Herman, 1997, p.256).

For the healing process to proceed, Herman says that creating a sense of safety is essential. This entails establishing real, affective, and social contexts that generate a sense of safety and encouragement for survivors. It could mean separating from abusive circumstances, seeking refuge or secure environments, and setting up appropriate limits. Within the context of the recovery process, Herman stresses the significance of social connection and support. Having access to sympathetic and understanding people, support groups, or treatment is crucial, she asserts, for survivors. These venues offer validation, empowerment, and a chance to share stories with those who may have encountered comparable tragedies. Herman reaffirms the significance of survivors regaining control and self-determination. She focuses on the value of advocacy efforts that tackle the underlying structural problems that contribute to trauma, such as gender inequalities, victim-blaming, and insufficient support systems. Empowerment covers both the process of healing and actively engaging in efforts to bring about social transformation (Herman, 1997, p.266-268).

5.DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Reality dramas try to show what life is really like for middle-class people by focusing on the main problems they face and criticizing the political system that caused these issues (Saeed, 2023 p.311). One of Reid's most realistic play is her first theatrical drama, *Tea in a China Cup* (1983). The play explores how women in the face of tradition and family pressure strive to create their own identities. The main character, Beth, is a woman in her thirties who deals with her mother's impending death. The story takes place during a time of conflict, and the scenes shift between different years. Beth, who is both the narrator and a participant in the play, reflects on the past while remembering her mother, grandmother, and aunt in the present.

As Beth tells their stories, she tries to find a balance between their traditions and her own values. Throughout the play, Beth learns more about herself and transitions from relying on others' memories to finding her own voice. She faces both difficult and joyful memories along the way as she figures out whom she wants to be.

The plays that deal with particular traumatic events illustrate the traumatic effects on their protagonists. Thus, *Tea in a China cup* depicts the protagonists' suffering from the consequences of their traumatic experience that strives to break through the everyday familiarity of the world. Reid's multi-generational play employs the same strategy of historical recreation as the politics of Irish drama, which seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the troubled issues of the present day. Many of them want to work through the traumas of previous generations in order to achieve release psychotherapy (Greene, 2003, p.235-236).

The play's opening scene explores the male-dominated nature of the Troubles, where men held positions of power and decision-making, while women were relegated to subordinate roles. It depicts Beth making funeral arrangements for her mother. She is confronted with the division between Catholic and Protestant burial plots, highlighting the ongoing segregation in Northern Ireland even after death. Reid in the words of Beth questions the validity of this division, emphasizing that death affects everyone equally, regardless of their background. The fear of losing a loved one becomes increasingly distressing for Beth as she feels the weight of choosing the right side for her mother's burial.

Identity and language use are dynamic concepts that are affected by place and time, rather than being stable. Language is the defining factor in human identity (Hamid et al. 864). Reid underscores the significance of

symbolism in shaping Ulster Protestant identity. The play's early scenes feature the sounds of Orange bands and patriotic songs, connecting the present with the past and establishing a predominantly Protestant and male setting (Macbeth, 1999, p.256). Protestant identity is built upon the belief that their poverty is respectable, while Catholic poverty is not. The rituals of the Orange Order and the act of marching serve as acts of self-definition, a means for Protestants to resist assimilation into another group. These rituals allow them to preserve their history and personal narratives within their own community. The symbolic use of china teacups, particularly within domestic rituals, reflects the notion of respectability among Protestants and sets them apart from the perceived "dirty" Catholics. By asserting their superiority over Catholics, Protestants establish their own distinct identity (Doyle, 1995, p.30-31). Furthermore, during the Troubles, the orange color and the display of orange symbols, such as flags and murals, served as a way for unionists to assert their presence, express their political stance, and reaffirm their cultural and religious identity. These symbols also acted as a form of resistance against perceived threats to their position within Northern Ireland (Macbeth, 1999, p.37-38).

Indeed, trauma affects both those who directly experienced it and later generations who did not. This is shown by Beth, the unionist daughter. When she was born, the nurse told her mother to take her home and love her since she was dying. The local Orange Lodge Grand Master disagreed, believing Beth would not die on March 8, the anniversary of William, Prince of Orange's death, which was a good omen. Beth fought for survival from the birth. She was born a female in a community where gender injustice and power inequalities cause hardship for women. Beth recalls her mother,

Sarah, a devoted Protestant working-class woman, attending the 12th of July with her:

She carried me to the Field when I was four months old. She was sitting on the grass, her back to a hedge, giving me a bottle, when a gentleman in a clerical collar came up and patted us both on the head. 'I'm proud of you, daughter,' he said to my mother, 'coming all this way with a young baby. Women like you are the back bone of Ulster.' She was very proud that a man like that had stopped to pay the likes of her such a compliment (Reid, 1987, p.6).

During conflicts, the roles of both men and women vary as a result of social conventions, cultural expectations, and the unique dynamics of the conflict. Although men are more inclined to engage in direct combat or military positions, women frequently assume crucial responsibilities in providing assistance to their families and communities. Sarah experiences a sense of pride when the gentleman refers to her as the backbone of Ulster. She understands that women's contributions are limited to providing assistance to men. The Twelfth of July represents security and continuity for Sarah, it happens every year, and as long as it happens, she can take comfort in its presence and her part in it (Tracie, 2018, p.41). Sarah's response embodies the traditional concept of housewives, who primarily focus on domestic tasks and caregiving to support their husbands and children. The expectation for women to fulfil the role of housewives can limit their autonomy, reinforce traditional gender norms, and perpetuate unequal power dynamics within households and society. A lot of different scholars have looked at and written about mothers' roles from different points of view. All of the debates about women's rights and positions in work, reproductive rights, and gender bias are centered on motherhood. One more thing that

comes up in the debate about motherhood is what society expects of women. For many women, motherhood defines their gender identity (Jaber, 2022, pp.172-173).

Sarah is an embodiment of a traditional mother, her cultural and traditional beliefs influence her parenting practices. Beth and her brother Sammy witness different treatment based on their gender, which results in emotional and psychological distress for Beth. This unequal treatment led to Beth's feelings of rejection, inadequacy, and low self-esteem, causing long-term emotional trauma. Beth says, "When I want a drink of water in the night she shouts at me, she never shouts at our Sammy" (Reid, 1987, p.14).

Furthermore, Reid's artwork concentrates on women's attempts to cope with the economic difficulties and prejudices that are brought or maintained because of the troubled circumstances. Politics has a significant impact not just on official ideology but also on daily life. The shift towards a concentration on the domestic sphere demonstrates how traditionally male agendas affect women as well (Middeke & Schnierer, 2010, p.399). During that period in Northern Ireland, women held a central role within the family and were responsible for making all significant decisions concerning their households. Due to the absence of men, who were either away fighting in wars, working long hours, or drinking in the local inns, women quickly learned to be resourceful. Women often take on additional responsibilities within the household, including managing finances for the family. In such situations, women may face challenges in saving for education due to limited financial resources. These factors have made it challenging for families, as in Beth's case, her mother has been unable to save for her daughter's education. Although Beth is intelligent enough to attend a

grammar school, her mother cannot afford the uniform. The absence of men during the conflict forced women to face the challenges of raising children, maintaining financial stability, and ensuring their family's well-being amidst an uncertain environment. This adds pressure and stress contributes to feelings of anxiety.

Reid also paints a narrow-minded, prejudiced, and stubborn picture of the older generation of women. Concepts of respectability, which these women are entangled in, are associated with class and the perceived sectarian divisions. Being proud to be "not Catholic" is important to Protestant respectability, according to Aunt Maisie and Grandmother. They love to draw comparisons between the Catholic Church's supposed lack of dignity and what they see as the Protestant tradition's dignity (Macbeth, 1999, p.257). Aunt Maisie tells Beth: "Keep still, child . . . there now, that's a bit more Protestant-lookin'. BETH: Are all the Catholic children dirty? MAISIE: I never seen a clean one yet." (Reid, 1987, p.13). In working-class neighborhoods in Northern Ireland, there was a unique and proud culture, but there was also a deep distrust between the Protestant and Catholic communities. This mistrust was ingrained in people's lives, and false ideas about the other side were perpetuated. This is highlighted when eleven-year-old Beth is told not to share about her handmade dress, as it is considered a sign of poverty. However, Beth, being innocent and unaware of these limitations, becomes confused by the short and dismissive responses she receives from adults. They seem to discourage her natural curiosity and honesty by getting angry when she asks questions (Huber, 2010, p.101).

The generational focus on maintaining appearances is on full display in Reid's play. There is a connection between this and the china cabinet and the cup of tea symbol. As a political and socio-critical statement, Reid

includes the tea ritual into the play in what is referred to as a Brechtian *gestus*. This type of dramatization emphasizes how characters' attitudes impact their interpretations of their social situations. The social connections and values of the women are shown as they gather for tea. In Beth's family, tea is traditionally drunk after having a difficult conversation—like in the scene where Sarah is forced to flee her house because of the violence of the Troubles—so that she can relax and find comfort in the hot drink (Huber, 2010, pp.80-81). Beth asks her mother “Would you like a cup of tea?”, Sarah says, “I would love a cup of tea”. Beth and Sarah say (together) “In a China cup. They both laugh” (Reid, 1987, p.6). Tea drinking in the play symbolizes femininity and societal expectations for respectable Protestant women during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. It contrasts with traditionally masculine activities, emphasizing the domestic role of women. Tea serves a social purpose by providing a space for sharing emotions, finding validation, comfort, and solidarity during a challenging time (Huber, 2010, p.81).

According to Caruth, trauma and memory are closely interconnected. Caruth emphasizes that traumatic memories are not simply forgotten or erased but rather persistently intrude into the present through various means, such as nightmares and flashbacks (Caruth, 1995, p.164). Reid creates a retrospective narrative about the events of her life. She writes a semi-autobiographical play that re-examines her life in terms of her attitude towards her past. Reid has tried to depict the trauma of her past by creating an illusory version of her early life. Reid, who was raised by a single mother in a Protestant household, was consequently composing about her personal experiences during this period in Belfast (Tracie, 2018, p.7). Beth is the strong narrative voice in the play. Her dialogue reveals that her words are not often her own, “my head is full of other people’s memories” (Reid,

1987, p.33). The play explores concerns about the way in which falsifying narratives may intentionally or unintentionally be created as a response to trauma. These implications are explored at the level of personal narrative.

Regardless of their diverse backgrounds, almost everyone is captivated by narrative. Personal narrative closely mirrors real life by covering both positive and negative aspects of literature. Narrative employs memoirs from people who are discussing their real-life experiences (Hassoon, 2018, p.3021). Each act in the play contains several flashbacks, during which Beth re-experiences the past. Beth shares with the audience not only the history of her family but also her personal growth from childhood to adulthood, with particular emphasis on a crucial moment; her mother's death with her recollections while on stage. The action of the play revolves around the daughter's struggle to accept her own identity during the period when her mother is dying. Beth's process of identity formation is primarily revealed through her dialogues with her closest friend, the Catholic Theresa, and with her mother Sarah (Modia, 2016, p.4-5). The play highlights the selective nature of memory, as Beth chooses to focus on certain events and experiences while omitting others. This selectivity reflects the way memory can be altered and edited to fit a particular narrative or perspective.

The transmission of old memories regarding the social group to their members maintains and strengthens the interaction between the past and the present; narrative is a key activity in this transmission. Consequently, storytelling has emerged as an effective tool employed by all cultures to instill their cultural values in its younger members. New generations are trapped in the sectarian war of their grandparents, hindering their ability to articulate a national narrative. Theirs becomes a conflict-building process rather than a nation-building process (Yazan, 2008, pp.72-74).

Beth feels haunted by other people's stories, and the only person beyond her own circle who can understand how she feels about this problem is someone from outside the community, her Catholic friend Theresa. When Beth and Theresa remember their childhood days, Beth tells her about the first time Sarah talked to Beth about the period. In a comical yet sorrowful scene, Sarah tries to get Beth ready for her monthly period, but the child is even more confused by the way she talks. Sarah starts talking while she's ironing, using the task as a distraction to hide how embarrassed she is, "You know where you go to the toilet," "down there ... a drop of blood comes out of there ... don't go telling your father or our Sammy ... and another thing, Beth, when you do get older and maybe go out with boys ... don't ever let them do anything that's not nice" (Reid, 1987, pp.17-18). Sarah folds up the ironing board and leaves with a sense of relief when Beth keeps silent, which makes her look confused. As Sarah tells Beth, "God help you child, this is the start of all your troubles" (Reid, 1987, p.17). She claims that being a woman in their society is the starting point of all the difficulties and hardships. These attitudes can contribute to a negative perception of menstruation and the belief that it brings troubles or limitations to women's lives. Teresa's mother, on the other hand, thinks menstruation is a curse when she explains it to her daughter. It is indeed a startling concept to describe to a girl on the verge of adolescence that she is about to be cursed for the rest of her life. Theresa's mother holds the belief that women are born cursed simply because they are female, and the onset of menstruation marks the beginning of this curse. Referring to a woman's menstrual cycle as a "curse" is a subjective and culturally loaded term.

As Beth gets older and Theresa moves to London, they develop an approach to maintaining the appearances that their families expect of them. Reid

shares the decisions both ladies have made to keep things private as Beth gets ready to marry Stephen and Theresa leaves her country. Their decisions reflect how their early learning have affected them. Both fight to be true to who they are while trying to keep up in front of the neighbours in order to please their mothers. Beth marries Stephen because of her mother's wish, not because she loves Stephen. She cannot even recall accepting his proposal, she recalls her mother stressing the importance of her marrying a devout man. Marriage, according to traditional mothers like Sarah, is the proper way for daughters to initiate their position as housewives. When Theresa leaves for London and has relationship with a Catholic man, she does not follow the proper way of getting married; instead, she takes the wrong way and had adulterous relationship. However, there is another clever girl who takes the man for herself and makes him put the wedding ring in her finger as she tells Beth: "I told him I was pregnant on a Tuesday; by Thursday he was gone. I just heard recently that he got married . . . probably to some nice clever well-brought-up girl who made him wait until she'd got a wedding ring safely on her finger" (Reid, 1987, p.27). Being a woman, Theresa is expected to follow the prescribed path and fulfill societal expectations. Because she could not conform to these expectations, there are undoubtedly many others ready to take her place. The societal norm dictates that the right place for women is in the shadow of a man, embodying the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker. These roles are assigned to all women, and those who deviate from this norm are often shunned by society, religion, and family, as was the case with Theresa.

Moreover, Beth addresses the audience at different times in the play in her role as the narrator. By contrasting the non-immigrant Beth with the migrant Theresa, this analysis focuses on discourses of emigration, specifically

female emigration, in an effort to identify possible links between migration and religious identity issues (Modia, 2016, p.4-5). Migration and diaspora have traditionally been associated with negative perceptions stemming from social and psychological unrest. It is thought that they lead to terrible consequences like identity loss, cultural hybridity, mental health issues, and societal instability (Al-Hilo & Marandi, 2020 p.11). Leaving their communities means women are uprooted from their familiar social networks, including friends, neighbours, and community. Losing these support systems could lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and a lack of belonging in the new environment. Furthermore, women in Northern Ireland faced marginalization during the Troubles. The conflict exacerbated existing gender inequalities and reinforced traditional gender roles and expectations, which limited women's opportunities and participation in various spheres of life. As the play takes place in Ireland during a time of major social and political conflicts, women have a lot of complicated ideas to deal with in their daily lives (Frawley, 2021, p.306).

The play looks at the expectations that society has for women, especially when it comes to their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Because of their positions, women have to put up with the restrictions that are put on them. Women have to cope with these complicated and problematic situations. The play centers on Reid's concern with women's identity construction in the face of pressure from traditional roles and societal standards. The expectation that Beth was born with and the place that she has to fit in are always present. As she continues to remember, she recalls the time when she was a young child and her mother took her to the march field. Beth is taught that in order to maintain a unified Protestant identity, not only must Protestants commemorate events, but there must also be total

separation from Catholicism. Even when it comes to choosing her friends, Beth is unable to break away from the rule of maintaining appearances, which she sees as being created by her family. Reid shows the decisions taken by both Beth and Theresa are to fulfill what is expected of them, as Beth prepares to marry Stephen and Theresa leaves for London. This sisterhood allows them to resist the expectations placed on them by society and find strength in their shared experiences. Both attempt to satisfy their mothers by keeping up in front of the neighbors, while attempting to preserve their individuality. Beth tells her friend, "I come from a long line of respectable women, who never let themselves down in front of the neighbours", to which the latter replies, "I was never one of the neighbours" (Reid, 1987, p.32).

Even though the Troubles are mainly a religious and political clash between two groups, women on both sides have similar experiences. Women are not treated differently in the religious and political ways that split Catholics and Protestants. No matter what sect they follow, women are limited in the same ways by religion, politics, and society. Beth comes from a Protestant family, so she is expected to be obedient to her husband. This is because Protestants believe that women should find encouragement and guidance in their husbands. Beth learns how to be an ideal wife from her Protestant family, just like her mother, Sarah. But neither gets the help and guidance that the Protestant faith calls for. Stephen, Beth's husband, and Sarah's husband do not care about their families or their wives. Even though these men make mistakes, they are never held responsible because society recognizes them as men but not as sinners. Under the umbrella of religion, women get their sense of identity from the men in their lives. Although they are unable to create an autonomous identity, women take great pride in portraying an

exaggerated image for their husbands to reflect positively on their own identities as women. The idea that women should conform to specific roles as obedient wives, regardless of their husbands' behavior, can be a source of trauma for women. They have to endure their husbands' bad treatment because even divorce which might bring some freedom for women is unacceptable in their society and religion. One of the most profound challenges faced by women in Irish society during the period of the Troubles is the weight of societal expectations and the absence of liberty.

Reid draws an obvious distinction between the women's space in the home and the men's space outside home. The men who are in the play quickly leave, either to go to war or to the pubs, following what Reid labels the tradition of men not being at home much anyway, which is one of the things women are forced to put up with. The women in the play form strong bonds with one another, providing emotional and practical support to one another as they navigate the challenges of their lives. The relationship between Sarah and Beth is portrayed through their discussions about the experiences that Sarah transmits to her daughter as a means of preparing her for adaptation, which is supposed to be transmitted over generations as a part of feminist customs within their society. Sarah tells her daughter, "It's just one of those things women have to put up with . . . there's a lot of things in life that women have to put up with, you'll find that out as you get older" (Reid, 1987, p.16).

Growing up in an environment with a traumatic mother can expose a daughter to the consequences of that trauma. The quality of the relationship between Sarah and Beth plays a significant role in the transmission of trauma. Sarah has difficulty processing and healing from her trauma, which affects her ability to provide emotional support to her daughter. Sarah is

submissive until the last days of her life. Beth is the one who takes on the responsibility of supporting her and encouraging her to stop putting up with her life. She encourages her to fight, even if for once. Beth begs her mother to “fight it . . . for once in your life, put up a fight. Stop accepting that everything awful has to be, that it’s all part of some meaningful eternal plan. People who fight live longer” (Reid, 1987, p.20).

In the poignant conclusion of the play, Sarah stands resolute in her decision to remain in her home despite the soldier's insistence that she evacuate due to the escalating Troubles outside. Tragically, Sarah ultimately meets her demise within the walls of her beloved house. However, her daughter Beth, deeply affected by her mother's death and seeking to heal her own trauma, takes a courageous step towards reclaiming her own agency and finding solace. In a symbolic act of liberation, Beth chooses to leave both her husband's house and her family's home, carrying with her only a tea cup. This act signifies her departure from the constraints of her past, embracing a journey of self-discovery and healing, where she seeks to find her own identity and forge a new path forward.

Tea in a China Cup vividly depicts the transformation of traditional female roles in Northern Ireland. Three generations of Protestant women attempting to navigate the complexities of motherhood and femininity in a hostile sectarian environment are introduced. Language and symbols are used to help show the theme. The trauma suffered by women in Tea in a China Cup as a result of the Troubles demonstrates the long-term impact of historical and societal turmoil on the female experience in Northern Ireland. The play deeply depicts the intergenerational transfer of trauma and women's perseverance in the face of challenges. Reid highlights the significance of identifying and treating women's trauma by shedding light on

the remarkable psychological and emotional effects of conflict on these individuals through the characters.

6.CONCLUSION

Christina Reid has demonstrated in *Tea in a China Cup* the significant impact of political conflict on women, particularly through the narrative and memory motifs explored in the play. Based on this analysis, it is obvious that women experiencing political upheaval suffer psychological trauma, which affects their sense of identity and how they view the world.

Employment of Caruth and Herman's trauma theory has helped to understand how trauma affected the lives of women in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Reid, through Beth's memories and narratives, shows the trauma's long-lasting impacts and women's fragmented experiences. In addition, the examination of trauma theory within *Tea in a China Cup* highlights the strength and endurance portrayed by women when confronted with hardship. Beth, along with the other female characters in the play, depict adaptability and fortitude in their attempts to regain their identities and voices, despite the deep impact of trauma.

The adoption of trauma theory in the analysis of *Tea in a China Cup* has effectively brought to light the profound consequences of political strife on women, as well as the critical significance of memory and narrative in comprehending and facing their trauma. This study reveals the struggles of women in war zones and the need for an empathetic and inclusive society that facilitates their recovery and empowerment.

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