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"I am only a thing left over, a remnant woman": Memory, Psychological Trauma and Generational Identity in Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture*

This paper explicates and contextualises, through an interdisciplinary paradigm, the traumatic history of the so-called Magdalene laundries, Catholic corrective institutions in Ireland, where thousands of girls and women were imprisoned and subjected to victimisation, as portrayed in Sebastian Barry's novel *The Secret Scripture*. The reminiscence bump in autobiographical memory is the notion of creating a self-narrative from the experiences of adolescence and early adulthood. In *The Secret Scripture*, Roseanne, the protagonist, recalls and narrates the memories of her adolescence to create a personal account that functions as a counter-memory to create a counter-history in order to acknowledge the negligence of countless women's trauma in the Irish historical records. Hence, the paper interprets Roseanne's self-story to represent the aspects of reminiscence bump in autobiographical memory, which functions as communicative memory and constructs a generational identity for the victims of Irish Magdalene Laundries.

1 Introduction

Is it conceivable to examine a fictional mind with the theories of real-mind disciplines? Can we utilise fictional minds and fictive texts to interpret a sociohistorical reality? Alan Palmer, in *Fictional Minds*, employs an intersubjective¹ approach to provide plausible explanations to consider characters as beings and identifies the social elements in the subjective consciousnesses of the characters in order to demonstrate the social aspects of characters' thought processes. He makes use of theories from disciplines, such as philosophy, cognitive science, psychology and psycholinguistics, which are relatable to real-mind discourses adjoining them for the interpretation of fictive texts and to illuminate the interdisciplinary aspect of literary study. In the chapter "The Social Mind", Palmer posits that the characters from fictive texts should be situated in a sociocultural context and analysed by an externalist² view to manifest that individuals' thoughts are "social, public, and observable" (Palmer 2008: 130) because, as to Volosinov's statement, "each person's inner world and thought has its stabilised social audience that comprises the environment in which reasons, motives, and values are fashioned" (qtd. in Palmer 2008: 153). Palmer incorporates the works of theorists James Wertsch, Lev Vygotsky, Alexander Luria, Mikhail Bakhtin and Valentin Volosinov to examine the nuances of social elements in the characters' mental functioning, including "knowledge, beliefs, perception, memories, habits of thought, intentions, purposes and plans" (Palmer 2008: 155). Palmer states that readers have "to enter the storyworld of the narrative and thereby take part in the illusion that fictional characters are individuals with as much freedom and autonomy of movement as real people have" (Palmer 2008:

¹ Palmer adopted contemporary theories of psychology, theory of mind and consciousness, such as simulation theory and interaction theory, to understand the state of the fictional minds through physical gesture and behaviour.

² In externalist view, Palmer refers to "the social context within which minds have to be considered" (2008: 130) to understand the social character of thought.

156). Hence, he bestows a strong claim that the real-mind disciplines are of great importance for analysing the fictive texts and fictional minds to capture specific social, historical and cultural elements from the story world. This paper, in accordance with Palmer's study of the fictional minds, focuses on interpreting the 'reminiscence bump in autobiographical memory' of the fictional character Roseanne of Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture* to identify the social facets of her memory that orient towards constructing generational identity and representing the collective sufferings of victim-survivors of Irish Magdalene Laundries. Palmer states: "When characters are not seen as beings, issues of consciousness do not arise. Of course, characters are elements in the narrative structure as well as beings" (Palmer 2008: 31). Therefore, this paper examines the social nature of Roseanne's autobiographical memory by employing the theories of real-mind disciplines such as psychology, cognitive psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology to answer how her memory functions as counter-memory in creating Irish counter-history.

In memory studies, autobiographical memory (hereafter AM) is a unique form of the human memory system that is inherently linked with both the self and social functions (Nelson 2003; Welch-Ross 1995; Conway 2005), whereby an individual constructs his personal identity from recalling past experiences and the recall itself functions as a social activity because "a person's view of himself or herself results from real or imagined interactions with other persons" (Wilbers et al. 2012: 1). AM helps individuals to construct self-stories which are "one version of the stories that humans share with one another" (Nelson 2003: 125). Self-stories reflect individuals' social roles and cultural values within a specific sociocultural context in which they live; apparently, "the forms and functions of autobiographical memory are socially and culturally variable" (Fivush 2011: 564). Therefore, AM helps individuals to construct personal as well as social narratives. It preserves numerous general, repeated life experiences of an individual. Contrastingly, in self-narratives or self-stories, individuals focus on the memories that "consist of a set of temporally and thematically organized salient experiences and concerns that constitute one's identity" (Robinson / Taylor 1998: 126). The salient autobiographical memories function as self-defining memories that help an individual's reinvention of self. Accordingly, the 'reminiscence bump in autobiographical memory' is a self-defining memory by which "People tend to recall a disproportionately large number of autobiographical events from the ages of approximately 15 to 25 years" (McAdams 2001: 110). The term 'reminiscence bump' refers to the age between adolescence and early adulthood. It is an autobiographical memory that focuses primarily on the experiences of these specific periods. During the period of reminiscence bump, people confront psychosocial challenges and novel experiences to identify their social role and identity. Thus, "reminiscence bump relates to a time in an individual's life that is crucial for the formation and maintenance of self" (Rathbone et al. 2008: 1404). The autobiographical memories from the reminiscence bump are rich in emotional elements and are self-relevant. Holmes and Conway state

[t]he reminiscence bump corresponds to a period when many individuals are undergoing a process of making an external or generational identity with their society. This entails identifying public events, belief systems, activities, etc., which are in some way appropriate to the goals of the self during the period. (Holmes / Conway 1999: 30)

The memories from reminiscence bump involve both self and social functions to reconstruct one's personal as well as generational identity by sharing common social experiences. In this autobiographical memory, "the content of memory varies from individual to individual and from generation to generation [...] generational groups are bound together by sharing memories of common type" (Holmes / Conway 1999: 31). Therefore, an individual is able to recollect both private and public experiences, and the public events are highly effective in reflecting the shared experiences of a specific generation. The self-defining memories have certain qualifications as explained by Pillemer: they

- (a) present a specific event that took place at a particular time and place, rather than a summary event or extended series of events; (b) contain a detailed account of the rememberer's own personal circumstances at the time of the event; (c) evoke sensory images or bodily sensations that contribute to the feeling of "re-experiencing" or "reliving" the event; (d) link its details and images to a particular moment or moments of phenomenal experience; and (e) be believed to be a truthful representation of what actually transpired. (qtd. in McAdams 2001: 109)

Hence, the following section interprets Roseanne's memories in *The Secret Scripture*, which embody the characteristics of reminiscence bump in autobiographical memory to identify the signs of psychological trauma and construct the generational identity of the Irish women who were confined in the Magdalene Laundries through a variety of channels.

2 Historical Overview of Magdalene Laundries

The revelation of Magdalene³ laundries' scandal in Ireland in the late twentieth century implies how the radical underpinnings of religion and its adherents have often controlled women, hindering their social advancement. Magdalene laundries were established to rescue the 'fallen' women, especially those involved in prostitution due to poverty, and control venereal diseases in countries like Ireland, Britain, and North America in the 19th century (O'Mahoney 2018: 1). The sole purpose of these institutions in Ireland was to correct the unconventional sexual behaviours of women and reform prostitutes for their social betterment. However, the massive famine emigration in the mid-19th century and the Irish independence in 1922 diminished prostitution; thus, only ten Magdalene laundries were left to be managed by the nuns. At this time, the Irish Free State yielded to create a Catholic nation; therefore, it adhered to the ordinance of the Catholic Church and entirely concentrated on the sexual behaviours of women "to guard and police the nation's moral climate" (O' Mahoney 2018: 2). As a result, the Magdalene laundries had to change their ethos to keep their existence alive; instead of being the protector of fallen women, they turned out to be the detention centres for unmarried mothers, orphans, victims of sexual assault and "women who violated the social and moral ideal" (Smith 2004: 208) of religious doctrines. The religious extremists labelled such women as unfit for Irish society and confined them into the Magdalene laundries as sinners, "weak minded and in need of supervision and protection" (Bradley 2018: 154). They sabotaged their identities and provided them with

³ "The institutions bore the title of 'Magdalene' in reference to Mary Magdalene, described in contemporary Catholic doctrine as a reformed prostitute who was rewarded for her penitence and service to Jesus with love and compassion" (O'Mahoney 2018: 1).

identification numbers. Thereby, the religious establishment and the government endeavoured to "establish the image of Ireland as a sexually pure and moral nation" (O'Mahoney 2018: 3) by confining women who acted against the moralistic image of religious doctrines. Rosende Perez argued that Irish religious norms portrayed unmarried mothers as the "symbol of sexual transgression that placed women in a situation of absolute social marginalisation and exclusion" (2009: 73). The religious institutions protected the perpetrators and punished the victims by giving them arduous labour in Magdalene laundries. The women were excluded from society, coercively detained and silenced for longer periods in the laundries against their will and punished for being disobedient to their mother superiors and nuns (Conrad 2004: 3). The nuns from these laundries forced the inmates to do tedious tasks such as laundering, ironing, and sewing the clothes of the "public, local businesses and religious institutions, (and) also from numerous government departments, the defence forces, public hospitals, public schools, prisons, and other state entities such as Leinster House, the Chief State Solicitor's Office, the Office of Public Works, the Land Commission" (O'Rourke / Smith 2016: 4). Despite the State's refusal of its responsibility for the ill-treatment of girls and women in Magdalene laundries, the evidence of JFMR⁴ (Justice For Magdalenes Research) supports the State's involvement with these institutions. JFMR has "discovered evidence of girls who were sent to the laundries by social workers, members of the clergy, the Gardaí (police), hospitals, local authorities, County Councils, psychiatric hospitals" (Justice for Magdalenes Research (n.d.)). So, the inmates did not get the chance to interact outside the laundries which helped the administrators to run the laundries without obstacles. If the inmates refused to obey the rules inside the institutions, they were physically and emotionally tortured.

Punishments for refusal to work included deprivation of meals, solitary confinement, physical abuse, forced kneeling for long periods or humiliation rituals, including shaving of hair. Survivors speak of constantly being under surveillance, being verbally insulted, feeling cold, having a poor diet and enduring humiliating and inadequate hygiene conditions. None of the girls received an education, and survivors dwell on this fact as determining their 'loss of opportunity' in later life. (O'Rourke / Smith 2016: 4)

The inmates were excluded from mainstream society, their emotional turmoil was not acknowledged, and their identity was neglected; they were considered inhuman – less than human beings – and thus not part of Irish society. They were marked as a disgrace to the religious culture of Ireland and experienced psychological trauma even after their release from the institutions. Thus, "[t]he Magdalene Laundries (also called the Magdalene Asylums) originally acted as rehabilitation homes for 'fallen women', and quickly transformed into a system of slavery and abuse" (Donohue 2020: 1). The religious system, as a whole, later tried to erase the painful history of the Magdalene laundries from Irish history; thereby, it could keep its dignity. However, after many decades, the truth was found and brought to light by the international media. The religious establishment and the government shrouded the violation of human rights towards the vulnerable sect of women until 1993, when 155 unmarked corpses of women were disinterred in one of the properties of Magdalene laundries during construction.

⁴ JFMR is a non-profit association established in 2003 and campaigned "to bring about an official apology from the Irish State and the establishment of compensation scheme for all Magdalene survivors" (<http://jfmresearch.com/home/preserving-magdalene-history/about-the-magdalene-laundries/>).

At the end of the twentieth century, The Waterford Memories Project⁵ and Justice for Magdalene Research gathered the evidences and resources of the victims of Magdalene laundries through survivor testimonies and attempted to "publicly document their stories, both as an awareness campaign and to encourage academic analysis of the historical, social, and psychological impact of these institutions" (O'Mahoney 2018: 6). As a result, after a long period of struggle, in 2013, the government apologised for its failure to protect the women and for portraying them as a disgrace to society; it began to redress the grievances of the victims that occurred due to the nation's negligence. Therefore, the identity of the inmates changed from abominations to victim-survivors of the Magdalene laundries. It is apparent that the experiences of the inmates have received "little attention in Irish history and literature" (Donohue 2020: 8) because of the organised system of the religious establishment and the government. This historical institutional abuse has become a significant subject matter in Irish national history.

The role of literature in disseminating historical facts is crucial to acknowledge the painful lives of thousands of women. Thus, Sebastian Barry readdresses the emotional past of those women through the experiences of the protagonist, Roseanne McNulty, in the novel *The Secret Scripture*.⁶ The novel portrays the distressing life story of Roseanne McNulty, a centenarian and a Presbyterian, who has been suffering in a mental asylum, Roscommon mental hospital, because of social indifference for nearly eighty years. Besides Roseanne, Father (Fr.) Gaunt – a Catholic priest, Tom – Roseanne's Catholic husband, Eneas – Tom's brother and Dr. Grene play a substantial role in Roseanne's life history. Roseanne lives in the Roscommon mental hospital, which is deteriorated and must be renovated soon. So, Dr. Grene, the psychiatrist in charge of the hospital, converses with Roseanne about the renovation and asks her whether she can leave the hospital. He indulges in learning the life history of Roseanne because she has not spoken to anyone for nearly eighty years and has no proper record of her existence in the hospital. After their meeting, Roseanne musters her courage to share her unsaid life story in the torn papers and wants someone to read it, especially Dr. Grene. She is terrified of confronting her past. However, she begins to put together her experiences that happened during her adolescent period to explain the causes for her long-term confinement in the mental asylum. Roseanne's narrative functions as a survivor testimony to all the women whose lives were shaped and controlled by the religious establishment. She is the last survivor of institutional abuse in the hospital and discusses the role of religious dogmatists in destroying the lives of thousands of women who were the most vulnerable sect of society in her narrative.

Human indulgence in remembrance shapes and develops an individual's personal history, thereby providing one's identity and characteristics. An individual's memory holds the power to reflect social problems by sharing the incidents with many people via various media. Palmer states, the "inner flow of thought can be private and inaccessible unless revealed" (2008: 134); therefore, when the inner flow of thoughts is publicly accessible through narration, it is considered social rather than personal. Remembering

⁵ It is a collaborative project in digital humanities, and aims to collect the valuable data pertaining to the issues of Magdalene laundries to make them publicly accessible via digital media. It is a survivor-centered project and gives importance to the oral histories of the survivor.

⁶ Shortlisted for Man Booker Prize for fiction in 2008.

and communicating the past preserves the social experiences of people, allowing them to recognise and rectify past wrongs. Literary works have been used for a long time to show how people think and how society works through personal and imaginary stories. The perspicacity of information "relating to real minds" is always provided by the fictional minds⁷ (Palmer 2008: 4). Likewise, in *The Secret Scripture*, the personal memory of Roseanne's psychological trauma and marginalised experiences become a public, observable and social narrative since she begins to share her thoughts and experiences of the past with the imagined addressee – the reader. Roseanne recounts the events of her adolescent period and infers that it was a horrific chapter of her life. She was coercively confined into an asylum at a young age for being disobedient to a Catholic priest, Father (Fr.) Gaunt, who ordered her to marry an elderly Catholic man to safeguard her life. After losing her father and living with a mentally unstable mother, Roseanne was left alone and then the priest approached her with a marriage proposal that she refused. She belonged to the Presbyterian community, a minority group in Ireland. At the time of Irish Independence, Roseanne remembers Fr. Gaunt's caveat that "You will be aware, Roseanne, of the recent upheavals in Ireland, and none of these upheavals favor any of the Protestant sects" (Barry 2008: 99). The dispute between Roseanne and Fr. Gaunt caused hatred and distrust between them. Afterwards, her relationship with Tom, a Catholic man, ended in marriage. However, the marriage was annulled immediately due to Tom's realisation that his marriage with Roseanne was impossible because of the prolonged enmity between the Catholics and Protestants. Roseanne remembers Tom's statement: "I couldn't care if you were a Hindu, but, you see, it's the Presbyterian angle, you know. Oh, Jesus, I don't think she [his mother, V.S. / B.P.] ever had a Protestant before set foot in her house" (Barry 2008: 169). Tom sensed that his whole family, especially his mother and the Catholic community, would hate him for marrying a Presbyterian girl. In the newly established Ireland, "[f]or Catholics, Protestants were the 'other' who oppressed them religiously, economically and socially" (Crawford 2011: 55). As a result, Fr. Gaunt intervened in Roseanne's marriage dispute and accused her of being a nymphomaniac stating:

Madness, Roseanne, has many flowers, rising from the same stem. The blooms of madness, from the same root, may be variously displayed. In your mother's case an extreme retreat into herself, in your case, a pernicious and chronic nymphomaniac. (Barry 2008: 232)

Roseanne recalls that she was accused of being a nymphomaniac for not obeying the Catholic Church and was denied the opportunity to engage in the social community. She was pushed into a vulnerable state, as Fr. Gaunt states:

If you had followed my advice, Roseanne, some years ago, and put your faith in the true religion, if you had behaved with the beautiful decorum of a Catholic wife, you would not be facing these difficulties [...] your marriage is deemed null... Tom is free to marry another as if he had never been married. (Barry 2008: 231)

With the titles of minority and orphan, Roseanne was silenced and oppressed by the majority. She was not able to raise her voice against the ill-treatment of people because of fear, and was suffering alone in her pain. Roseanne talks about her bad luck as a

⁷"*Fictional Minds* is about 'people in books'. In particular, it is about the amount, range, variety, and reliability of the information on the fictional minds of people in books that we are able to obtain from those books" (Palmer 2008: 1).

Presbyterian and the pain she went through in solitude in the first part of her story. In the second part of her story, Roseanne was psychologically tortured and forced to be in a mental asylum for giving birth to an illegitimate child. She was deemed a contagious disease that could affect the purity and morality of the Catholic nation. Her unfortunate relationship with Eneas, Tom's brother, resulted in a pregnancy; she was helpless during childbirth and endured great agony in solitude. Fr. Gaunt and Tom's family believed that she had multiple relationships and was disgracing the Catholic community. Roseanne remembers and narrates her approach to Tom's mother to explain her pregnancy: "I was trying to say pregnant, but it didn't seem a word that could be said. I knew in her ears if I said that word it would have the same meaning as whore, prostitute" (Barry 2008: 267). She had no one to hear her side of the story; she gave birth to a child out of wedlock and was deemed unfit for Irish Catholic society. As a result, she was sent to a mental institution as a public embarrassment. The Catholic church and priests either leave "illegitimate babies to die in orphanages and locking inconvenient women up in mental hospitals" (Piatek 2011: 166), or they allowed Catholic families to adopt illegitimate children with "an affidavit that they were Catholics and promise to rear the child as Catholic, to educate them in Catholic schools and to not give the child anyone else" (Hogan 2020: 189) Roseanne believed that Fr. Gaunt must have admitted her into an asylum and taken the new-born child away from her. Fr. Gaunt is shown as a strong follower of Catholic religious dogma who is involved in human rights violations by pushing away vulnerable women from the mainstream society to guard the purity of the Catholic nation. The story of Roseanne shows that she is doubly discriminated for being disobedient and a disgrace to Catholic ideology. In her conversation with Dr. Grene, she clearly explains:

'Oh,' I said. 'No. It's just that I don't like the religious.'

'The religious? You mean, people that believe?'

'No, no, priests, and nuns, and such.'

'And is there any reason for that?'

'They are so certain about things, and I am not. It's not because I am Presbyterian. I don't like holy people.' (Barry 2008: 193)

She claims that priests and nuns play a significant role in abusing the women in need of protection and ignoring their painful legacy in Irish national history. Her autobiographical remembrance primarily focuses on her adolescent age, which denotes elements of reminiscence bump in her autobiographical memory. Her distinctive experiences from adolescence function as an essential source of her life history and identity reconstruction. The tremendous life-changing incidents helped retain the memories of painful experiences for a longer period of time and caused "heightened retrieval of memories from that time" (Rathbone et. al. 2008: 1404). The self-defining memories from this period represent Roseanne as a marginalised woman and reconstruct her identity as a victim-survivor from the asylum for wayward women. Her autobiographical memories have a social connection because they represent the collective experiences of a sect of Irish women who were abused by religious institutions. An individual's memory is personal and inaccessible unless it has been shared or narrated to other people (Nelson 2003; Fivush 2011).

Roseanne's inclusion of abuse and violation in her personal narrative exhibits that her life story has been infused with traumatic experiences. She remembers the incidents vividly, but at the same time, she is unclear and doubtful about her own memories. The

experience of psychological suffocation at times makes memories inaccessible during their retrieval, and so she struggles to explain the events confidently.

I must admit there are 'memories' in my head that are curious even to me [...] well, I don't know what I currently suspect. It makes me a little dizzy to contemplate the possibility that everything I remember may not be – may not be *real*, I suppose. There was so much turmoil at that time that – that [...] But if I put my faith in certain memories, perhaps they will serve as stepping stones, and I will cross the torrent of 'times past'. (Barry 2008: 209)

She holds the traumatic past for long years, which could cause the narration of paradoxical statements about the events. In terms of trauma theory, "certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter loud" (Herman 2015: 1); therefore, the victims of psychological trauma are afraid of sharing the pain to avoid further ill-treatment or social stigma. As a result, traumatic experiences are submerged into the victim's memory and gradually distorted with time.

Survivors who do not tell their story become victims of a distorted memory, that is, of a forcibly imposed "external evil" which causes an endless struggle with and over a delusion. The "not telling" of the story serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny. The events become more and more distorted in their silent retention and pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor's daily life. The longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes in the survivors conception of it, so much so that the survivors doubt the reality of the actual events. (Laub 1995: 64)

In the case of Roseanne's life story, she repeatedly experienced psychological trauma with diverse circumstances. Hence, the continuous emotional turmoil affects the previous experiences and causes difficulties in remembering some events vividly.

Traumatic memories form an exception to the normal pattern of retention. The initial dissociation of the trauma is caused by the overwhelmingly unpleasant emotional arousal activated by the traumatic event. This hampers normal cognitive processing and leaves the memory inaccessible for conscious retrieval. With the passage of time, the individual is likely to be freed from some of the emotional stress connected with traumatic experience, which allows the memory to be retrieved (partly or completely) and maybe integrated in the life story of the person. (Berntsen 2003: 648)

People who belong to the same society have diverse personal, social, and historical experiences based on their living period and their exceptional endurance of events. As Mannheim stated, "a generation is more than simply a group of people born around the same time; they must share, at least to a significant degree experiences and challenges" (1952: 297). Therefore, the life story of Roseanne is a fictive testimony for all the Irish women who had endured so much pain and humiliation in the process of building a moral Catholic Irish nation at the hands of religious dogmatists and the government. Roseanne's reminiscence bump in autobiographical memory does not represent all the Irish women born between 1920 and 1930. Still, it showcases the experiences of a specific group of women who were not allowed to be part of Irish society due to the rigid rules of the Catholic Church. Therefore, the reminiscence bump in the autobiographical memory of Roseanne constructs a generational identity for the victims sharing the institutional abuse at various places in Ireland. According to Holmes and Conway,

[g]eneration identity occurs when the individual recognises that he or she is part of a particular social subgroup with whom he/she shares common goals, existential problems, knowledge, and eventually memories of experiences of a similar type. (1999: 22)

The victim-survivors of institutional abuse share the same level of experiences and trauma under the influence of the Catholic Church and construct a specific generational identity to incorporate their history into the Irish national record.

Life narrative is an integrative psychosocial construction of individuals' self-observation of personal events and experiences, making sense of one's life in a specific social context and bringing their social niche into the limelight. Palmer emphasises that theories of real-mind disciplines are "valid, informative, and, indeed, necessary" (2008: 5) for the interdisciplinary study in literature. Thus, Roseanne's life history is also a psychosocial construction, co-authored by herself and the social context within which her life is embedded and is given meaning. She remembers and narrates the salient emotional memories of her early adulthood as self-defining experiences in order to elucidate her endurance to reveal her identity and existence in Irish society. Though her memory is personal, it has the social qualities to symbolise the painful history of Irish Magdalene laundries. She is positioned as a historical subject by Barry, and her remembrance of the past is testimony to the truth behind the systematic abuse of Irish institutions. The story intertwines the concept of memory, history, and personal trauma to "resurrect the marginalised figures from the past to underscore that there seems to be no place for their stories in the present" (Harney-Mahajan 2012: 54). Roseanne's remembrance of the past enables the reader to construe the physical and emotional suffocation of real-life survivors of Irish Magdalene laundries. "Art and literature are expressions of the common narratives of the culture, not of specific individual lives" (Wilbers et al. 2012: 127).

Roseanne's reminiscence bump in autobiographical memory functions as a communicative memory to register that her experiences have personal as well as social elements to circulate among the contemporaries. In a nutshell, the inclusion of theories from diverse disciplines provides plausible statement that autobiographical memory has the quality of social elements to represent the collective experiences through an individual's mind. In communicative memory, history is told in the form of autobiographical memory involving everyday communication and especially shares the events of recent past "which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations" (Assmann 2008: 111). The painful history of the Magdalene Laundries is recently unleashed, and the memory of victim-survivors is shared among the contemporaries through commemorations, oral history, personal testimony, literary narratives and digital archives. Therefore, the life story of Roseanne reconstructs her original identity as well as the collective identity of women who were marginalised in Irish history by religious dogmatists. Similar to the concept of personal memory, an "individual's suffering must be understood against the backdrop of those larger patterns and process of collective or social suffering" (Kirmayer et al. 2008: 13). Therefore, though Roseanne's pain is personal, it has a collective meaning to symbolise the suffering of thousands of Irish women. She integrates the violence and psychological trauma she experienced all those years into her personal narrative and creates a path for Irish society to acknowledge and retribute the utter injustice of Magdalene Laundries. As Herman states

[s]haring the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a sense of meaningful world. In this process, the survivor seeks assistance not only from those closest to her but also from the wider community. The response of the community has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of the trauma. Restoration of the breach

between the traumatised person and the community depends, first, upon public acknowledgement of the traumatic event and, second, upon some form of community action. Once it is publicly recognised that the person has been harmed, the community must take action to assign responsibility for the harm and to repair the injury. These two responses – recognition and restitution – are necessary to rebuild the survivor's sense of order and justice. (2015: 70)

Roseanne's remembrance of the past acknowledges the collective sufferings of thousands of Irish women who were treated with contempt and punished at religious institutions. Her collection of autobiographical experiences constructs a meaningful story that represents the marginalised history of the women community. Though Roseanne, at times, has uncertain memories during the remembrance, her story remains truthful testimony to construe the pain of Irish women who survived in Magdalene laundries. As a whole, the life history of Roseanne constructs a counter-memory in Irish national history to reconstitute the forgotten, neglected and excluded history of the Magdalene laundries. The official Irish history discusses the colonisation of the British, the Great Famine, Irish independence, the bifurcation of Ireland into the southern and northern parts, making modern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland's economic growth in the 21st century and the reconciliation with the Irish diaspora (State 2009; Hegarty 2012). However, there is no space for the collective traumatic experiences of Irish women even in historical writings of the 21st century. It denotes that the victims' trauma is either forgotten or neglected to be part of Irish history. Though the victims are given compensation and apologies from the Irish government for its own negligence and failure in protecting the thousands of girls and women, their history is still excluded from the official records. Only a few books discuss the victims' long-term traumatic experiences in the laundries. Nevertheless, Barry bestows a fictional character, Roseanne, to create a counter-memory and construct a counter-history to revise the existing Irish history by incorporating the story of an Irish woman who lived in a mental asylum for socially constructed wrongdoings.

3 Conclusion

The core focus of this research paper was to interpret the psychosocial experiences of women who lived in marginalised institutions and the role of religious dogmatists in making the women socially unfit to protect the moral image of Ireland from the standpoint of literary narrative. Barry's *The Secret Scripture* contributes a significant measure to strengthen the protest against the Catholic Church and the Irish Free State. The elements of reminiscence bump in autobiographical memory help construct a generational identity and represent the collective experiences of inmates belonging to religious institutions. The paper emphasises that autobiographical memory can function as a social memory in the form of communicative memory to interact with recent social history and contemporaries. The history of Irish institutional abuse is circulated and communicated in the form of communicative memory to understand the story of Magdalene laundries. Thus, it creates a counter-memory to construct the Irish history with the experiences of the victims of Magdalene laundries. Further, the psychological trauma of Roseanne symbolises the collective sufferings of women who were excluded, abused and silenced by mainstream Irish society. Integrating personal memory and trauma in the life story unveils and acknowledges the pain of marginalised women in Irish history. Thus, an individual's life story is a psychosocial construction to mirror

the social history and to pay attention to the historically oppressed people in order to include their history in the national record.

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