

The Feminisation of War in the Contemporary Easter Rising Narratives of Mary Morrissy and Lia Mills

Marisol Morales-Ladrón

“ . . . history is no less a form of fiction than the novel is a form of historical representation.” (Hayden White 1987: 122)

Abstract: *Traditionally, war and revolution, as male-oriented duties, kept women not only relegated to the domestic sphere but uninformed about what was regarded as more serious concerns. However, if men were involved in the war effort, the daily struggle belonged to women, even though they have remained outside mainstream historical accounts and their stories have been silenced or hidden from official accounts. With the intention of restating such imbalance, many Irish writers have engaged in the recovery of forgotten figures from the past, paving the way for the emergence of a renewed type of historical novel that offers alternative readings from a gender perspective. This would be the case of authors Julia O’Faolain, Emma Donoghue, Evelyn Conlon, Anne Enright or Henrietta McKervey, among a growing list. Within this panorama, two novels stand out, Mary Morrissy’s *The Rising of Bella Casey* (2013) and Lia Mills’s *Fallen* (2014). Both explore female subjectivity at times of war and delve into the struggle the protagonists have to face at a time of nationalist upheaval, while the male leaders of the uprising merely remain backstage, thus subverting mainstream accounts on the foundational myth of Ireland and demystifying revolutionary heroism. Considering these circumstances, the present discussion will attempt to demonstrate that these women played a more “revolutionary” role than the one attributed by history and will argue that these novels endeavor to bring women back to national history.*

Keywords: *Mary Morrissy, Lia Mills, Easter Rising, First World War, history, revolution*

“The 1916 Rising was both profoundly important and profoundly unnecessary” (2005: 1), observed journalist Tim Pat Coogan in the opening paragraph of his study on that

historical landmark.¹ There is no doubt that 1916 influenced the course of Irish history as no other episode had ever done before. For that reason, reflecting on such event in retrospect, precisely at the time when the Irish are celebrating its centenary, invites its reassessment from a myriad of perspectives. Three decades ago, writer Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill augured that the experience of the insurrection would never be forgotten, rather it would “sink deeper into the unconscious, personal and collective, and with its inherent energy act as magnet to all kinds of numinous forces” (qtd. in Bolger 1988: 32). If only to counteract the previous lower key 50th, 75th and 90th anniversaries of the Rising,² on this occasion, the whole country, north and south of the border, has joined forces to celebrate the past attempting to transcend former tensions by means of the organisations of all kinds of events in the academic, social and political spheres that have been widely supported by the public.³ In this vein, the contribution of literature to the revision of the place this national myth occupies in the collective imagery has resulted in the proliferation of a number of historical narratives that rewrite the past from alternative perspectives that seek to challenge mainstream accounts. Such would be the case of Roddy Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* (1999), Jamie O’Neill’s *At Swim, Two Boys* (2001) or Sebastian Barry’s *A Long Long Way* (2005). However, my concern here lies with the outstanding achievements of women authors in their consistent efforts to recover forgotten or suppressed “minor” figures from the past and, more significantly, in their interrogation of the very foundations that sustain the traditional study of history and its servitude to facts and records.

The exclusion of the domestic lives of women from Irish history has informed most accounts from the past. This has been a commonplace practice since historiography has privileged its own way of providing meaning through linear narrations that avoided problematisation and tended to elude the inclusion of marginal records. C. L. Innes argues that: “Locked into confrontation with Britain and contestation over motherland, Irish literature and Irish history have created males as national subjects, woman as the site of contestation . . . Those women who have sought involvement in national liberation have been dismissed as ‘pretty ideologues’ . . ., or as fanatics, as viragos” (1993: 3). In an attempt to correct partial or biased interpretations on history, alternative views, including those transpiring from revisionism, have emerged in the last decades. The concepts of individual and collective memory, for instance, incorporate the complexities, unfitting motives and inexplicable facts that shape cultural identity, providing interconnections through a network of relations that turn out to be most applicable to the study of literature. In this regard, the genre of the historical novel, which is experiencing a renaissance in Ireland, has contributed to subvert received historical assumptions offering readings that highlight both private and public realms. Female writers who have outshined in their contribution to the process of revision of the past from a gender perspective would include Julia O’Faolain’s *No Country for Young Men* (1980), Emma Donoghue’s trilogy formed by *Slammerkin* (2000), *Life Mask* (2004) and *The Sealed Letter* (2008), or her most recent *Frog Music* (2014), Evelyn Conlon’s *Not the Same Sky* (2013), Henrietta

McKervey's *What Becomes of Us* (2015) or Marita Conlon-McKenna's *Rebel Sisters* (2016), among many others. Considering these circumstances, the present essay will look at two such novels: Mary Morrissy's *The Rising of Bella Casey* (2013) and Lia Mills's *Fallen* (2014). While the former narrates the silenced years of Isabella Charlotte Casey, sister of the celebrated Séan O'Casey, during the first decades of the XXth century, the latter provides a more domestic view of the events that took place during Easter week from a female perspective. Along the following pages I will thus contend that, through their novels, Morrissy and Mills attempt at writing back to the privilege male position of history that has dominated Irish culture in the way it has been taught, read and represented.

If the narratives that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, under the label "postmodern historiographic metafiction", aimed at questioning the validity of Grand narratives to offer definite explanations of history,⁴ from the 1980s the postulates of revisionism paved the way for the emergence of alternative ways of negotiating with the past and its celebration at both individual and collective levels. As Derek Hand has explained, the historical novel has traditionally "possessed a certain weighty, if not oppressive, significance in Irish fiction.... A feature of many Irish novels from the early nineteenth century on is the presence of a potted history of Ireland.... Consequently, the facts of who did what and when and, of course, how history is written remain a continuing fascination for both the reader and the writer" (2011: 7). Thus, the resurgence in recent decades of a different type of historical fiction should be seen as the result of a renewed interest in the blurring of boundaries between the real and the fictional, triggered by the need to set limits between the true and the invented. From this perspective, the epistemological postulates of Hayden White or the proposals put forward by French philosophers and historians Paul Ricoeur and Pierre Nora acquire a greater significance in their contribution to the revision of orthodox methodological approaches to the study of history and in their vindication of the ultimate responsibility of human beings to remember and re-possess our past.⁵ It is from such perspective that Morrissy's attempt to recover Bella's story from oblivion and Mill's attention to the domesticity of the Rising will be interpreted in the present discussion. In sum, as Paul Cobley explains, "history as extra-textual real entails actual events that *really* happened irrespective of what has been recorded about them; in addition, though, there is also a practice of *writing* history which relies not on objective knowable truth but on a *representation*" of it (2014: 29).

Morrissy's *The Rising* deals with the long-forgotten life of Bella, sister of the renowned playwright Séan O'Casey, after he wrote her out of his six-volume autobiography ten years before her actual death.⁶ Through a complex narrative structure that intertwines O'Casey's journal with the recollected account of Bella's life in a different temporal realm, the Easter Rising emerges in the background only to be undermined by the more intimate and significant account of a deprived female life caged in a male-oriented society. In a similar manner, Mill's *Fallen* delves into the life of another female character, Katie Crilly, and her struggle to overcome grief after her twin brother, who

had enlisted in the Great War, is killed in action.⁷ Meanwhile, Easter week breaks out in Dublin, taking the town by surprise and causing destruction and confusion. Deeply relying on facts, the narratives re-evaluate this historical landmark in light of how it was perceived by ordinary Dubliners and try to make sense of the unexplained and unresolved intricacies of such fragmented past. Throughout the present analysis I will, therefore, argue that both authors engage in the exploration of the role women played in and around battle, thus reversing their identities as the unheard voices of the community and eventually bringing them back to national history. In sum, the novels interrogate uncontested processes involved in the construction of history and myth, and question the value of official archives and records as the only authoritative foundations upon which the past is narrated. Additionally, I'll try to demonstrate that women played a more "revolutionary" role than the one history has attributed to them.

The probing of received historical accounts that exclude the lives of women is carried out differently in the two novels. In *The Rising*, the overlapping of fact, through the apparent direct transcription of O'Casey's diaries – even though they are nothing more than a narrative of the self –, of memory, through the recall of historical events, and of fiction, with the introduction of invented material that gives cohesion to the narrative, manages to blur the boundaries between reality and fiction.⁸ The fact that the gaps surrounding Bella's life might be filled on the bases of evidential truth or on a creative refashioning of the past is inconsequential to the reader, whose suspension of disbelief is maintained throughout the narration.⁹ In *Fallen*, a novel dedicated to the damaged and destroyed city of Dublin after mayhem during Easter week,¹⁰ attention is mainly placed upon the detailed description of the chaos, confusion and fear that governed the ordinary lives of those who witnessed the uprising without knowing what was being claimed for. In an act of resistance against the amnesia and silence that surrounded such experience, Mills's novel historicises the gaps and empty spaces left behind by nationalist discourses on the foundational myth of an independent country. As the author has explained, the inspiration for her novel arose precisely from the missing information about this stage in Irish history that her own family, who had witnessed it, had never shared:

I used to think my family had nothing to do with the Rising because my parents were of that 'Whatever you say, say nothing' generation. Then I realized that both sets of grandparents were living and working right on the edge of the fighting: my mother's family on Parnell Street, with the British Army camped outside their door; my father's family on Merrion Row, with the British Army camped outside THEIR door. I began to ask myself what that must have been like, when all hell breaks loose on the streets of your city and you don't know what's going on or where it will end. (qtd. in Ní Chonchúir 2014)

Written within the time span of only one year, it is significant that the two novels coincide in their portrayal of female protagonists that outstand in their aspirations, strength and agency, and contest traditional female underrepresentation at times of

political turmoil. In *The Rising*, the character of Bella is shaped around a real woman who received an unusual education for her times. Trained as a school teacher and a gifted piano player, her life and career were ruined when she was raped and became pregnant by Reverend Leeper, the school Principal. Although she concealed her disgrace behind an unsuited marriage that was never approved by her family, her brother Séan misunderstood her motivations and never forgave her, writing her impoverished and shameful existence out of his own memoir, even though she had been a second mother to him. In fact, had not been for Bella, Jack could not have turned into the renowned Séan O'Casey, since she was the one who saw to his needs, sent him to school, taught him to read and put medication in his weak eyes.¹¹ As the author has explained: "This literary sororicide was what prompted me to write *The Rising of Bella Casey*. I felt his was a failure of the imagination; he couldn't understand what had prompted her downfall and he hadn't the capacity to see beyond appearances.... He'd placed her on a pedestal and couldn't bear to witness her fall, so he opted for silence" (qtd. in Salis 2016: 314).

In the case of *Fallen*, the narrative is focalised by Katie, who has a degree in History – thanks to her twin brother –, but cannot fulfil her aspirations of completing a Master because women's access to third level education was a recent privilege seen with suspicion: "As recently as seven years earlier, being a woman, I wouldn't have been admitted to college in the first place. Professor Hayden and her clever friends had fought the larger battle that changed all that" (Mills 2014: 9). The distrust towards liberal thinking women was taken for granted by society of which her mother makes Katie aware. However, her life changes when she is offered a job as a research assistant for an old woman, a historian, who is cataloguing the public – mostly male – monuments and memorials in Dublin. This allows Katie to escape from her daily female activities of knitting, music classes, flower arrangement and other minor duties that she finds useless:

So many people, so much industry – a reproach to my aimless, time-wasting existence. I envied Liam his easy entry to work in Dad's firm. He had a purpose and a pattern for his days. I'd none for mine. I was left casting around for something to occupy my mind while I endured Mother's many schemes for my improvement. I could read books 'till my eyes were near falling out of my head, but to what end? I loved the discipline of chasing an idea, assembling evidence, constructing an argument for college essays. I loved the almost physical sensation of learning, an expansive stirring and waking in my mind. (Mills 2014: 13)

Even though the limitations imposed on women are clearly challenged in the novels through the benefits of a privileged education, the protagonists are caged in a vigilant patriarchal society that guides their choices and sanctions the fulfilment of gender expectations. Interestingly, a source of further subversion is placed on their bodies, for Bella and Katie are portrayed as corporeal women with desires. When Bella realises that she is pregnant after the rape, she resorts to sexuality to undo her misfortune,

manipulating Nicholas Beaver into the belief that he was the one to blame: “She could barely recognize herself – where was the girl who’d been too high-and-mighty to trouble herself with young men, who’d considered herself above all that?” (Morrissy 2013: 119). Therefore, the institution of marriage will ironically contribute to sanctify her “sin” and hide her rape. Although initially as prudish as Bella, Katie’s sexual awakening is also triggered by the discovery that her body has its own drives and desires that need to be fulfilled: “I’d barely been aware of my body, other than as a shell to carry me around, needing minimal care and attention to keep it fed and clean. Now it was wide awake. It rushed forward, pushed past me in this strange matter of love, of loving him – what else could I call it?” (Mills 2014: 269). In a language tinged by watery images, Katie wonders why women have always kept the intimate pleasures of sex to themselves. The representation of the female body as a repressed container has historically functioned as a controlling instrument of patriarchy. Nonetheless, in the two novels, sexuality is reversed so as to act as a mechanism to empower rather than to dominate women; their bodies transformed into threatening vehicles with which to subvert male control. If, on the one hand, for Salis, Morrissy’s “story and its characters stand on the brink of the absolutely forbidden” (2016: 309), on the other, Katie is ultimately able to acknowledge how her limited choices and lack of freedom are restricted to the space her female body occupies.

As the corporeal representation of women takes a central space in the narration, the Rising is consequently displaced to the margins from which its indisputable historical significance will be discredited. Morrissy’s novel starts precisely on Easter week, although attention is given to how families, and specially women, came to terms with the destruction brought by mayhem. The narrative thus reveals how, while soldiers carried their guns in a passive attitude, women gathered in the streets actively supporting each other. The theatricality of the situation is soon noticed by Bella, who cannot relate the presence of armed men to a real fight for a new Ireland, but to a mere “a crowd of travelling players putting on a free theatrical” (Morrissy 2013: 8).¹² In fact, ignoring the warning messages, she does not doubt to put her life and that of her five-year-old son in jeopardy to cross a gunfire that takes place in the middle of devastated and deserted buildings in order to buy some bread. However, enthralled by the vision of a piano that has been abandoned in the streets, she exchanges her basic needs for her irrepressible desire to bring it home: “She *was* mad, maddened with desire, or greed. She was not even sure of the difference. Who knew what had taken hold of her, a respectable fifty-year-old widow eyeing up a piano in the middle of a battlefield and wanting it for herself” (Morrissy 2013: 17). Such undermining of the insurrection, as I will have the opportunity to discuss further on, is blatant in the text; an approach similarly shared in Mills’s novel.

Although the second part of *Fallen* starts on Easter Monday 24 April 1916, the date is only relevant because it is Liam’s first death anniversary. In fact, the narration directs the reader’s attention to how “it was a good-looking day” in which “the sun came up beaming” (Mills 2014: 87). Katie’s first realization of an upheaval takes place while she is in St Stephen’s Green with her little niece and sees a man dressed in a Citizen’s

Army uniform asking people to leave the park in the name of the Republic. She finds the grotesque image so unreal that she asks the soldier whether he comes from the theatre. This comment, which bears striking parallels to *The Rising*, will turn more meaningful as the novel progresses. In spite of the description of the barricades, the windows breaking, noises from rattle, furniture piled up in the streets and the lack of traffic, the narrative likewise emphasises how “an air of unreality to it all” (Mills 2014: 107) prevailed. In parallel to the scene of the piano, on her way back with her little niece, Katie takes her time to feed the swans in the canal with breadcrumbs, suggesting that nothing really serious was happening. That narrative focus on a more humanised image of the city, rather than on the turmoil, ultimately interrogates what constitutes the relevant events that make history. At the same time, the apparent unlikeness of the situation, in which the female protagonists put their lives and those of their little ones in danger, has been interestingly explained by critic Lucy McDiarmid, who has explained that women were treated differently to men and that this discrimination allowed them to move freely in town:

On the streets of Dublin during the Rising, it was unclear, at any given moment, how to “read” an Irish woman. The soldiers might have encountered many women uninvolved in the Rising simply trying to get food for their families or go get home; women curious about the fighting, tourists at the revolution; women from the slums looting; women attempting to return home after the Easter holiday; loyalist women haranguing the rebels; or Citizen Army or Cumann na mBan women in mufti. The soldiers had to make quick determinations when they encountered women out on the street, based on a variety of assumptions about gender: that, for instance, women were weak and required protection; that they were young and attractive and would enjoy smiles and flirtation; that they were collaborating with the rebels and should be searched; or that they were part of the leadership of the Rising and deserved to be humiliated. (2015: 31)

Indeed, as *Fallen* reveals, confusion seemed to govern the town throughout the whole week, uncertain of which side was fighting with which, or even whether there were any sides. John McGahern, in an article written in 1991 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Rising, declared that the reaction of the people went from puzzlement to disillusionment (Maher 2016). While some were involved in different kinds of celebrations, like the Spring Show or a wedding in the Shelbourne hotel, there were injured people in hospitals, casualties in the streets and families locked up in their houses. It does not surprise that some people thought that the Germans were behind it and that there were submarines off the coast, whereas others believed it was the Sinn Féin, and yet another group, including Katie’s mother, who saw the rebels as “a handful of layabouts, taking advantage of the holidays. Do they think they can throw on any old outfit and call it a uniform, make themselves an army, start off their own war in

the middle of town?” (Mills 2014: 131). Attempting to individualise and feminise the experience of the uprising, Mills shifts the attention to a side of the battle that has been absent in history books, the city and its people, and focalises her narrative not on the political struggle but on how the ordinary citizens managed to come to terms with it.

As historical novels set in a similar time lapse, *The Rising* and *Fallen* coincide in their rewriting of the past from a gender perspective, challenging mainstream accounts, with a view to reveal that history belongs to the people who were part of it and not to the construction of extraordinary events. Apart from the insurrection, the First World War also occupies a significant space in Mill’s novel and is indirectly evoked in Morrissy’s, when Bella announces that her son James is also fighting for his country, but in foreign fields. Other events are also briefly recalled in *The Rising*, such as the September 1913 Lockout – yet again highlighting that rebellion had been futile and had led people nowhere –, the Boer War or the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918. In *Fallen*, Katie’s twin brother Liam enlists in the Great War as many other men of his generation, in the belief that this war was Ireland’s opportunity to fight for Home Rule; a subject widely discussed among people, as Katie observes: “the war and whether the Irishmen should take England’s side against the Germans, or fight off Carson’s Ulstermen if they came south, or not fight at all. We’d been on the brink of getting our own parliament, after a hundred-odd years without one. Now people said we’d likely have to wait. Again. And here was Liam, ready to plunge headlong into the thick of a fight that had nothing to do with us” (Mills 2014: 4-5). However, the loss of her brother triggers Katie’s reflection on the thousands of casualties in the Irish regiments abroad and on the excess of platitude on sacrifice and duty that had fuelled the minds of the people. Giving voice to the unheard members of the community who believed in a free Ireland but not in the armed struggle, Katie embodies values of patriotism that separate her from nationalist activism.

At an interesting point in the narrative, Katie has to rescue her friend Frieda’s little sister, Tishy, a six-year-old girl and her inseparable monkey, whose presence in the text will bear an enormous significance. Their escape across the barricades in town in an attempt to find shelter will serve to emphasise the dramatic staging of a mock revolution carried out by intellectuals, writers and playwrights; in sum, of rebels who came from the artistic world: “The whole town’s turned into one big circus, if you ask me. The biggest circus there ever was” (155). Paschal, the little funny monkey that had actually been freed from a circus will, thus, function as a mimetic re-enactment of what Kiberd has described as one of the “most theatrical insurrections in the history of western Europe” (2006b), and what McGahern has seen as: “A more unlikely crowd to spark a nation to freedom would be hard to imagine” (qtd. in Maher 2016). Such approach to the Rising is consistently maintained throughout the novel, eventually resolving that the disappearance of Katie’s young brother Matt was not connected to his likely involvement with the rebels, as the text initially suggested, but to his running away with a theatre crowd.

Likewise, the emasculation of the icons of the Rising in favour of a more female perspective is patent. The official rhetoric of the nation that had glorified the memory of the leaders is truly challenged in favour of the inclusion of the struggling lives of the

ordinary people. From this perspective, Morrissy's and Mill's approaches to the Rising exhibit a more faithful and comprehensive account to what really happened in Ireland at the time than to what history books have recorded. Ironically, when the rebels took the GPO and other public buildings in town, they were not backed up by many people. What is more, Patrick Pearse read the proclamation of the Republic in front of a handful of by-passers who were ignorant of what was being vindicated. In essence, as James Quinn and Lawrence White maintain: "The republican insurgents represented only a minority segment of Irish nationalist opinion" (2015: 16). It was only after the rebels surrendered and were publicly executed that the public opinion sided them, and then:

Schoolchildren were taught to revere Patrick Pearse as a Christ-figure and to study his writings, which presented nationalism as equivalent to Catholic Christianity in its gospels, its martyrology, its unbroken orthodox tradition from which heretics (such as O'Connell, Sadleir and Keogh, and the nefarious John Redmond) were periodically ejected. Pearse's own writings were duly added to the canon and his name inscribed in the martyrology, and one biographer famously predicted his canonisation. (Maume 2015)

Consequently, Mills's *Fallen* corrects the image of the signatories of the proclamation as martyrs of the revolution, and depicts them as a group of young idealistic men, responsible for the mayhem and destruction of the town. From this perspective, the foundation myth of Ireland is dissolved into the belief that, along that week, a majority of the people did not die for Ireland, but were killed as a result of it. With such deflating approach to the Republican myth of the blood sacrifice and the romantic rhetoric of nationalism, history is stretched so as to contain the domestic and more intimate side of war and battle, eventually presenting the futility of the insurrection to the eyes of the people who had to endure it.

Declan Kiberd once asserted that: "In the modern Republic of Ireland, culture is often seen as healing, whereas history is viewed as divisive" (2006a: 9). War and revolution, as all the other traditional male duties, kept women not only relegated to the domestic sphere but basically uninformed about what was regarded as more serious concerns, including the ultimate motives for the fight. As a result, women have remained outside mainstream historical accounts and, therefore, their stories have been kept silenced and hidden from official records. With the aim of restating such imbalance, Morrissy and Mills have engaged in the gender rewriting of history and have contributed to unearth forgotten figures from the past with a view to restore them back in history. Considering that "historians have deliberately inculcated narrativity into their practice to demonstrate processes and causality in real, true happenings" (Cobley 2014: 30), along the present discussion the two novels have been interpreted as 'real' historicalisations of events occurring on and around the Easter Rising, even though they are framed within a fictional realm. By way of excavating into an untraversed past, Morrissy and Mills delve into the struggle Dubliners had to face at a time of nationalist upheaval. Their

most significant achievement is perhaps the perspective from which they look at times of war and battle, mainly focusing on the ordinary people, whose existences have been traditionally outshone from mainstream history. Rather than featuring the deeds of the “great” men, the heroes of war, the martyrs of the cause or the male ideologists that ignited it all, their main interest lies on women and on those who actually suffered the consequences of Martial law, the loss of family members or homes, the food shortages, fear and pain. The novels, ultimately, place past and present into dialogue contributing to overcome tensions derived from historical conflicting views.

Notes

- 1 Coogan argued that the Rising should be read as a “cautionary tale for today. To tell the tale of Easter Week by merely reciting the events which occurred that fateful April would be analogous to attempting to describe the development of the American West solely by reference to events such as the shoot-out at the OK Corral” (2005: 3). Even though Coogan has been criticised by historians for his unorthodox way of dealing with history and for his apparent lack of accuracy, it is precisely the veneration of the facts that has governed the articulation of mainstream historical accounts that will be challenged throughout the present discussion.
- 2 Even though the media coverage has been varied and disputed, Patrick Maume affirms that: “There was a widespread view in academia that 1916 needed to be questioned and reassessed, and a widespread official reluctance to commemorate it in the terms prevalent before 1969” (2015). Also, Gerard O’Neill, in his book *2016: A New Proclamation for a New Generation*, describes how upon preparing the manuscript, he conveyed a survey to probe whether people thought the centenary should be celebrated, and the result was that 81% supported it (2010: 10).
- 3 The year-long programme to commemorate the Rising included exhibitions of archival material in the National Museum of Ireland, State commemorative events and ceremonials, a parade from Dublin castle to the GPO, the celebration of “Proclamation day” in all schools across the country, conferences and seminars convened at Universities, theatre plays, cultural events including concerts, readings or exhibitions, and a digitalisation project displayed at the National Library of Ireland, among many other initiatives. See, in this regard, the official centenary programme, “Easter 1916”, at <http://www.ireland.ie>.
- 5 See, for instance, François Lyotard’s classic study *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), and Linda Hutcheon’s essay “The Postmodern Problematizing of History” (1988), among other studies.
- 6 The novel was long-listed for the 2015 prestigious IMPAC literary award. Previous novels by Morrissy, including *Mother of Pearl* (1995) and *The Pretender* (2000), also engaged with historical accounts that blurred boundaries between fact and fiction, and between historical and textual truth.
- 7 Mill’s novel was chosen to celebrate the “One city, One Book Festival”, which this centenary year of 2016 turned into the “Dublin-Belfast, Two Cities, One Book” with commemorations in the “two” Irelands. For further information, see www.dublinonecityonebook.ie.
- 8 As Cogley explains: “That the historical record is itself a discursive entity made up of signs means that it offers a *re*-presented, thoroughly selective account of what actually happened” (2014: 29).
- 9 For a detailed reading of the uses of history and “truth” and of individual and collective memory in *The Rising*, relying on the theories of Ricoeur, see Morales-Ladrón (2016).

- 10 The first page of the novel reads: “For the city”.
- 11 Originally named Jack, he changed his name to Séan, “the Irish pidgin for his own proper name”, when he converted to Catholicism and defended the Irish cause (Morrissy 2013: 205). Also, their two brothers, Isaac and Tom, married Catholic women, provoking great offence in the family.
- 12 The author has explained that, for Bella, who was a Protestant, “the Rising would still have been an illegal challenge to what she would have considered legitimate British rule. (Unlike Sean O’Casey, her brother, who absolutely supported the break with Britain so you could say the Casey family is a microcosm for all the political divisions of the country at that time)” (qtd. in Salis 2016: 316).

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