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“Identity is generated through culture – especially language – and it can invest itself in various meanings: an individual can have an identity as a woman, a Briton, a Black, a Muslim. Herein lies the facility of identity politics: it is dynamic, contested, and complex” (Graham Harrison 248).

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Roddy Doyle – Concise Biography.....	5
3. Public Reception – The Unique Style of Roddy Doyle	10
4. Identity & Otherness – Opposing or Complementary	14
4.1. The Issue of Identity	14
4.2. The Issue of Otherness.....	17
5. The Identity of the Soul Brothers in <i>The Commitments</i>	23
5.1. Soul Music as Medium of Expression	23
5.2. The Political Mission of The Commitments.....	27
5.3. Soul Versus Jazz - Defining Social Class.....	32
5.4. Developing Soul Identity	33
5.5. The Commitments’ Songs	39
5.6. “Maybe soul isn’t right for Ireland”	41
6. ‘Can blacks be Irish or Irish be black?’ – The Question of Belonging in “Home to Harlem”	44
7. The Stereotypical Shaping of the Other in “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner” & “Black Hoodie”	55
7.1. “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner”	56
7.2. “Black Hoodie”	60
8. “The Deportees” – Multicultural is the Way to Success	65
9. Finding Oneself in a Different World – “New Boy” & “I Understand”	71
9.1. “New Boy”	71
9.2. “I Understand”	75
10. Ways of Measuring Irishness in “57% Irish”	80
11. Masquerading as the Other in <i>The Guts</i>.....	85

12. Conclusion: New Perspectives of Irishness in Roddy Doyle.....	91
13. Bibliography.....	95
13.1. Primary Sources	95
13.2. Secondary Sources	95
13.3. Electronic Sources	97
14. Index	98
APPENDIX	102
Abstract.....	102
Abstract in German (Deutsche Zusammenfassung)	103
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	104

1. Introduction

“Identity is fashionable. Everybody wants to have one, many promise to provide one. Lifestyle magazines advertise identities, fashion stores purport to sell them and pop psychology aspires to discover people’s ‘true’ identities” (Bernd Simon, *Introduction* 1). In times of globalisation and modernisation, the interest in the issue of identity has rapidly grown due to exactly these phenomena. A general view of identity assumes that identity as such is a vital element in humans’ overall well-being and that it underlines their behaviour. In different situations people take up different identities, for example, in a soccer stadium, in a church, in a mosque; every situation and every encounter in the social world points to a number of different forms of identity (1-2). However, “identity is not just a fashionable commodity that people strive to have or think they have to have” (2), but obviously, the issue of identity is also apparent “when a majority group stigmatizes, mistreats or even annihilates a minority group” (1).

As diverse as social interactions appear to be, identity can be understood as a multifaceted phenomenon along these lines. This might even explain why the issue of identity has been adopted by so many scholars from different disciplines, from philosophy to psychology, to anthropology, political studies, cultural studies, sociology and many more. Identity has become a much discussed topic in the 21st century. The nation to which a person necessarily belongs is a principal source of people’s sense of identity in today’s societies (Simon, *Introduction* 1-3). Bernd Simon explains that “[n]ational belonging affects identity because it gives access to a national culture which is ‘a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves’” (15). In defining nationality and a nation’s culture, a number of criteria such as geography, religion or even language have to be taken into consideration. However, nations have to be regarded not only as representations of particular criteria, but as so-called “imagined communities” (Benedict Anderson; qtd. in Simon 15). As such, the boundaries that these criteria imply are as imaginary as the characteristics that constitute a nation which describes a phenomenon that can be referred to as the social constructedness of the concept of the nation. The preservation of its constructed existence is guaranteed by “foundational myths and the invention of traditions, symbols and rituals” which constantly adapt and renew the construct of the nation (Simon 15).

To ensure a nation's imagined singularity, history and the specific national narrative are constantly revised in a social process during which different elites or interest groups compete for social influence, trying to 'sell' their own version of the nation and its culture and thus to affect the identity of all members of the imagined national community. (Simon 15)

As Stuart Hall states, globalisation seeks to unify nations overcoming the boundaries of individual nations, with the aim of "integrating and connecting communities and organizations in new space-time combinations, making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected" (Hall, *Question* 299). Therefore, the context for identity in today's society is shaped by cultural complexity in the light of "cultures of hybridity" (310).

With regard to the Irish nation, Tanya Hedges Duroy and D. Douglas Caulkins highlight that ideas of Irishness have always been subject to constant change. "Given the twentieth century representation of Ireland as a troubled but authentically romantic folk culture and its image in the early twenty-first century as an economically energetic 'Celtic Tiger', Ireland currently contends with an apparently chaotic diversity of identities" (73). Benedict Anderson claims that a nation is a construct that is constantly exposed to transformation and change, and, therefore, it is continually redefining itself. "The Irish case is no exception to this mutability" (Carmen Zamorano Llana 86). Due to the "historical upheavals experienced by Ireland and its people between 1916 and 1922" (87) and the socio-economic changes during the Celtic Tiger years, the Irish nation faced a process of redefinition. Immigration of asylum seekers, Irish returnees, refugees and migrant workers considerably increased (Zamorano Llana 83-87). Massive inward migration had led to a situation in which, for the first time in Irish history, the number of immigrants was remarkably higher than the number of emigrants (Zélie Asava, *Introduction* 2). These drastic changes within the borders of the country were so rapid that Ireland is said to have participated in a "crash course of cultural diversity" (Robert Wilson; qtd. in Zamorano Llana 88) in the late twentieth century. The way for a multicultural society in Ireland was paved and racism was on its way to spread across the country.

Between the 1820s and the 1920s, almost 5 million emigrants left Ireland. This number is even significant today, since about 45 million people living in America now claim to be Irish (Byrne, Kirwan and O'Sullivan 7). "[A]ll these expatriate Irish people have

contributed and continue to contribute to Ireland – financially, socially, politically, intellectually and culturally” (7). Over a long time, these people have not been in the focus of interest. The rise of the Irish economy has led to massive immigration into the country, and a process of challenging “Irish cultural identity both within and beyond the national paradigm” (7) commenced.

The present thesis deals with the constitution of Irishness in three works written by Roddy Doyle, his first novel *The Commitments*, the short-story collection *The Deportees* and his most recent novel *The Guts*. These stories imply that personal well-being, combined with financial and social security, is strongly linked to the feeling of belonging. The protagonists in the stories feel lost in their host country, although they hope to find a new home in Ireland. However, their host society responds to them in a rather reserved manner and the newcomers know only too well that they are not yet accepted. The stories suggest that it is essential to have a place, not only in terms of having a domestic home, but having a place in terms of being part of a nation. Identity has proved to be non-definable since it is subjected to transformation and change in an ongoing process of reformulation and redefinition. National identity proceeds similarly along these lines. Anthony D. Smith claims that “national identity and the nation are complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components – ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political” (qtd. in Yasir Suleiman 53). There is no form of identity that will ever appear as one completed identity since it is constantly shaped by a multitude of influences. Every identity likewise shapes and is shaped persistently. In terms of Irish identity, the matter stays the same. Besides, a redefinition of Irishness has strongly been needed since Irish studies have always focused a homogenous concept of the Irish nation (William Mulligan 231). However, the “notion that Ireland was a monocultural country before that period [i.e. the 1990s] is inaccurate” (Eva White 95). The times in which Ireland experienced oppression by, and dependence on, the British has remarkably contributed to the Irish nation and its culture. The fact that Ireland has always been faced with multiculturalism since the time of colonisation is a striking aspect that cannot be ignored. Therefore, as identity theory suggests, there is no fixed concept of Irishness as such. Irishness has to be regarded as an idea that is subject to ongoing alteration. We can only ever get an idea of what it might be that makes an Irish man or woman truly Irish, since the very idea has already started to be transformed again (Mulligan 231-232).

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the author Roddy Doyle, presenting his development as a writer, publisher and film producer, and illustrating how he has achieved the commercial success he is known for these days.

In Chapter 4 the main focus is on the theoretical background of the concept of identity. It elaborates on the aspect that talking about Otherness is inevitable in discussing the concept of identity. This chapter aims to offer fundamental ideas of identity in terms of belonging and should serve as the basis for the analysis of what makes people become Irish in the works of Roddy Doyle.

Chapter 5 offers an analysis of *The Commitments* in terms of how an Irish soul band tries to fulfil a political mission by developing a form of identity that is basically borrowed from an oppressed community in history.

Chapters 6 to 10 concentrate on seven short stories collected in *The Deportees*. Each of the stories features an individual that is marginalised due to his or her migratory background and elaborates on particular problems of belonging to the Irish nation that people are faced with when not born inside the country. Chapter 6 tells the story of a young Irishman whose Irishness is called into question. The underlying aspect in Chapter 7 is the stereotypical behaviour of Irish locals towards asylum seekers. Chapter 8 deals with the development of a multicultural band whose members do not have a voice in society as they belong to the oppressed and marginalised group of immigrants in the country. Chapter 9 reveals the difficulties and troubles newcomers in the country are basically exposed to. The story that is analysed in Chapter 10 deals with an attempt to measure Irishness by means of a testing programme.

Chapter 11 is based on the novel *The Guts*. It highlights the changes in how Irish locals respond to foreigners in their country, accepting multiculturalism as the norm.

2. Roddy Doyle – Concise Biography

Roddy Doyle's sense of perspective, his ability to distinguish the important from the unimportant, both, in his life and his fiction, have led to his remarkable commercial success. Winning the Booker Prize in 1993 was indeed an outstanding achievement in his career, but Doyle attributes his success to the "context of the larger picture of his life and family. His success as a writer is due, in part, to the fact that he lives and writes this perspective" (C. White 25).

Roddy Doyle was born into a lower-middle class family in Kilbarrack in the north of Dublin in 1958. Doyle's father, coming from working-class background, worked his way up from a printer to the position of a training coordinator for printers. His mother stems from a middle class family and worked as a secretary in a solicitor's office. Doyle himself appreciates his background retrospectively (C. White 26-27):

In my own case, I've grown up with a foot in each class. It's a very useful position, especially socially. People who have grown up solidly working class seem hopelessly lost in a different version of reality. Whereas being from the gray area, you seem to be a little more street-wise. You tend to have more sympathy with things. You don't give out about tax as much, because you know that tax goes to people who need it, and so what if a few waste it? Not all of it is wasted. Whereas those of all middle class tend to see it as their money. It's a useful position to be in, especially as a novelist. (qtd. in C. White 27-28)

He attended St. Fintan's Christian Brother School in Sutton and completed secondary education which became free in the second half of the 20th century. In an interview, he explained that he was part of the generation profiting from free education and so he was one of those to whom education opened the gates from working class to middle class. After college, Doyle studied at University College Dublin graduating with a BA in English and Geography and completing his Higher Diploma in Education. He became a teacher of English and Geography at Greendale Community School. However, Doyle abandoned his career as a teacher after about fourteen years because he was no longer interested in other people's children since he had two of his own by 1993, and moreover, because his job was the reason why the time for writing books was limited. His writing career actually goes back to his time as a teenager, starting with satirical pieces for the college magazine and discovering his love for fiction. During the 1980s, as a teacher, Doyle was able to spare time during school holidays and thought of making some extra money with writing. His first novel has never been published since

he could not find a publisher releasing his political satire *Your Granny Is a Hunger Striker*. In 1986, Doyle renewed his attempts to write fiction and started *The Commitments*, but again publishers were not interested. Thus, together with one of his colleagues from college, Doyle formed the publishing company *King Faroul* and so he was finally able to publish his novel in 1987. Only about a thousand copies were sold but the novel was favourably reviewed which made people take notice of Roddy Doyle as a writer. This first success has even brought him the opportunity to write plays (C. White 25-31). In an interview with Karen Sbrockey, Doyle mentioned that he started writing because, first of all, he loved writing, and secondly, because he wanted to show his Irish readership worlds of which nobody knew they existed (Sbrockey 550): “I’d also like to think that people have recognized themselves in the books. In an Irish context, I’d like to think that people reading my books are seeing their area, not geographically necessarily, but their type of place, for the first time between the pages of the book” (Doyle; qtd. in Sbrockey 550).

It took some time after Doyle finished his next novel, *The Snapper* which should later become the second novel in *The Barrytown Trilogy* besides *The Commitments* and *The Van*. While the latter was short-listed for the British Booker Prize in 1991, he finally won the prize in 1993 for his fourth novel *Paddy Clark Ha Ha Ha*. Doyle’s success continued as his novels were well received by his readership (C. White 1-2). During the 1980s, Doyle also produced two plays, *Brownbread* and *War*, two comedies which were highly successful and therefore gave him “the reputation of being the most commercially successful playwright in Dublin since Sean O’Casey. Considering his popularity today, it seems almost absurd that he initially had to publish *The Commitments*, his first novel, at his own expense” (2).

During the 90s, Doyle wrote a couple of novels in which he blurted out one of the great secrets of Irish society. He created a story around domestic violence and had to face a shocked Irish society. Since Doyle is not a person putting very much value to critics, he has never taken any criticism personally nor has he cared much for critical interpretations of his works since he is basically writing for himself. What he writes is open for readers and critics to interpret for themselves but this does not influence him in his further writing (C. White 31-33). Doyle tried his hand at writing children’s literature and short stories. Between 2000 and 2004 Doyle wrote eight short stories for *Metro*

Eireann, a monthly newspaper which had been established by two Nigerian immigrants. With the slogan *Many voices, one Ireland*, *Metro Eireann* was the only multicultural newspaper in Ireland taking an antiracist and pro-immigrant position (Maureen Reddy 374-375). Doyle had read an article on the founders of the paper and decided that he wanted to write for *Metro Eireann*. He met the founders and they agreed, and even while they were talking, Doyle came up with the ideas for his first story. He had heard a few stories about black immigrants in Ireland and Social Welfare from taxi drivers and came up with the idea of writing some stories on his own. Doyle admits that these stories were not carefully planned; he sometimes did not know how individual stories might continue when he sent off a chapter to *Metro Eireann*. The stories were initially published as 800-word instalments in the paper and were then collectively published in 2006 as *The Deportees* (Doyle, *Foreword Deportees* xiii). In the foreword of the collection, Doyle wrote: "I haven't a clue what's going to happen next, and I don't have to care too much, until the next deadline begins to tape on the shoulder. It's a fresh, small terror, once a month. I live a very quiet life; I love that monthly terror" (xiii). However, *The Deportees* was not the only collection of short stories. In 2001, *Bullfighting* was published. The individual stories originally appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *Guardian* and other collections of short stories by different authors. A further publication is Doyle's *Two Pints* which primarily consists of dialogues between two Irish locals in a pub. Before they were actually published in 2012, excerpts of the text were continually posted on Doyle's Facebook page (Martin Chilton). His latest novel *The Guts* was published in 2013.

Apart from his literary career, Doyle has been involved in filmmaking. His first three novels were turned into successful movies, and *The Family*, his only non-fictional work, appeared as a TV series. Doyle was disappointed that he was not involved in the first production of his books and therefore self-produced *The Van* after founding his own production company, *Deadly Films*, so that the book and the production do not drift apart as in the case of *The Commitments*. A new field of interest had opened for Doyle and he discovered the pleasure to be found in writing scripts (C. White 33-37).

As regards the author's private life, he loves the country he is living in and he is proud of belonging to the Irish nation. He was raised in a Catholic family. Nevertheless, he and his wife refused to bring their children up as Catholics since Doyle firmly believes

that Catholicism is not necessarily a prerequisite for being Irish. For him, religion is not that important in life (39). He is on record saying that:

[i]t kind of depresses me when I see all those people in the church. Particularly the kids. [...] What are they going there for? When you begin to slow down and there's a rattle in your breathing, then you go off to church to make your peace, not when you're seventeen and you should be avoiding at all costs all that crap. (qtd. in C. White 39)

Doyle married Belinda Moller in 1987 after she had been a great help in publicising *The Commitments*. They settled into their home with their three children not far away from Doyle's childhood home. He said that he gave up teaching to have more time for writing, but he decided to "keep the routine because it fits everybody else's routine "It's not the stuff of great literature – I know you're supposed to be a tortured soul and work deep into the night. But that's a lot of crap. I have other little souls to look after" (qtd. in C. White 40). Doyle decided to keep his life as a writer and his private life strictly separate. "I liked what I had before [the Booker Prize] and I want to keep what I have after it" (40). He refused to do much for his publicity after photographers wanted to rearrange the furnishings in his house for a shooting, and became less cooperative with the press than he had been at the beginning of his literary career. He does not want to hide from journalists or photographers but prefers to be reticent as regards his private life (C. White 39-40). Although Doyle tries to keep "his art separate from his life and denies any autobiographical content in his work, he is nevertheless visible in his most successful characters – individuals who keep their troubles in perspective and enjoy everyday pleasures" (C. White 41). Helena Mulkerns argues that being a "[c]elebrity is a question of choice, and the way to avoid becoming a celebrity is just to say 'no'" (qtd. in C. White 40) and so does Roddy Doyle:

The night he received the Booker Prize for *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, Doyle was told by one of the ceremony's officials that he was never expected to give a series of interviews on the following day. He replied, 'No, I'm going home tomorrow.' The official responded, 'But you're a Booker Prize winner.' Prize in hand, he left the next day for home. (25)

Doyle is a rather reserved personality when it comes to interviews and creating a myth around his person. He tries to stay away from interviews that merely focus on his personality. He wants to talk about his books and stories that he is writing since he is convinced that a writer should always be remembered by what he wrote rather than his personality (Sbrockey 552).

To summarise, Doyle has proved to have many qualifications. He has been successful in writing adult and children's literature, had a try at writing scripts, became a publisher and a film producer, writes comedy plays, and, despite the publicity surrounding his personality as an extraordinary writer of contemporary Irish fiction, he stays true to himself.

3. Public Reception – The Unique Style of Roddy Doyle

Roddy Doyle is known for telling stories about the lives of Irish working-class people in an accessible way that is incomparable to any other contemporary writer. Doyle's stories are mainly set in the suburbs of north-eastern Dublin (Dennis Donoghue 237). Drawing inspiration from the place where he had been raised and where he settled down with his own family, Doyle invented Barrytown. Even though it is a fictional place, it is indeed a copy of Doyle's hometown of Kilbarrack (Ulrike Paschel 67), so what the Irish read about is where they actually live. It is the portrayal of contemporary Ireland and the issues of everyday life which have so far been "deliberately excluded from public discourse or representation, such as wife-beating, teenage pregnancy, rape, divorce, and other contentious social issues" (Sylvie Mikowski 186); out of this, Doyle creates the discourse for his stories. He lends a voice to characters that had no voice for a long time, such as women or children, the working class and especially inhabitants of the suburbs (186). Doyle's characters are defined by "class, age, gender and urban region, not religion, history or nationalism. The novels do not look outward to Europe or America, or even to some sense of a larger Ireland; in fact, Ireland seems more a *city-state* called 'Dublin' than a nation-state" (McCarthy 10). Dermot McCarthy argues that Doyle takes up issues that range from moral concerns, social coherence and class divisions, self-growth and self-understanding to individual identity and optimism about the future (19-20).

All of these concerns manifest themselves in the continuous exploration in his fiction of the ambiguous nature of the relation between the individual and the collectivity. Whether the latter is a band of musicians and singers, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Doyle's novels study the ambivalent economies of need and belonging, independence and acceptance, the price of self-esteem and the value of self-identity. (McCarthy 20)

Nick Bradshaw says that Doyle presents a notion of Irishness that is unfolded for being ridiculed outside Ireland. Doyle's vernacular and vulgar portrayal of the so-called weaknesses of the Irish working-class caused a dismissive attitude towards his books and people refused to read his stories (C. White 3). Referring to T. S. Eliot's statement that an artist might likewise have the ability to talk beautiful English in his works or in a pub and to "compose a letter painfully written in a dead language" (qtd. in C. White 8), Anthony Lane declares that the language mostly found in contemporary fiction is almost dead language. In contrast to this norm, Lane argues further, Doyle is an "artisan

who comes home from the public house and makes art from what he heard there” (qtd. in C. White 8). His language reminds readers of the times when the Irish were forced to deny their traditions and use a new official language imposed by the English. A significant decrease of the Gaelic language was the consequence. Thus, Irish speakers developed an English language that was more palatable and then became the new form of spoken English which additionally communicated Irish Gaelic culture (C. White 7-9).

However, other critics such as Lawrence Christon fancy Doyle’s style: “He is the only writer [...] who’s actually read by kids he writes about in Dublin. You don’t see them walking around with *Ulysses*” (2). Doyle himself argues that his works should be readable and apart from that they should be entertaining. His books are “lively, realistic, engaging, and hilarious, featuring characters with whom one can sympathize” (C. White 2-3), since the themes he offers are simple and immediate. In his private reading, Doyle prefers straightforward writings that serve the characters, and this is why the novels he writes himself adjust to a simple type of writing (C. White 2-3). It is often said that “Doyle succeeds in achieving an unobtrusive literary style by using common, everyday language which includes a great deal of profanity and slang, little descriptions of any sort, and almost no authorial commentary” (C. White 3). When talking about literary traditions in Ireland, thinking of Samuel Beckett or William B. Yeats, Roddy Doyle does not regard himself as being part of this tradition. In addition, contemporary Irish writers “have a particular problem of style: how to prevent Yeats, Joyce, or Beckett from taking over their minds and drowning out their voices.” (Donoghue 236) Except for others, Doyle has successfully prevented his mind from being influenced by the voices of traditional Irish authors (236-237). Doyle is said to belong to the new generation of writers in Dublin and to contribute to “the new, modern and trendy image Dublin enjoys in the English-speaking world” (Paschel 67).

Doyle’s method has been to listen to his pupils in Greendale and to their fathers in the local public houses. He has a remarkable ear. On the strength of it, he imagines what and even more thoroughgoing demotic English would sound like. Starting from Greendale and Kilbarrack he has invented Barrytown, a place impervious to the idioms of Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett. (Donoghue 237)

Apart from his depiction of innovative subjects, it is basically these “new stylistic and narrative modes, such as the extensive use of dialogue, the reproduction of contemporary Dublin slang, the insertion of song lyrics or the allusion to pop culture” (Mikowski 187) which characterise Doyle’s unique style of writing. His reason for

offering a language incomparable to any other contemporary writer is that he wanted to keep himself as narrator more and more out of the stories. By using the vernacular, Doyle managed to draw the attention to the characters and therefore transferred the actual speech of children, students, mothers, frequenters of pubs and many other private characters into his books (C. White 8).

“One of the ways to do this is to use the language that the characters actually speak, to use the vernacular, and not ignoring the grammar, the formality of it, to bend it, to twist it, so you get a sense that you are hearing it, not reading it. That you are listening to the characters. You get really close to the characters.” (Doyle; qtd. in C. White 8)

There was a time when Doyle’s novels were listed for being taught at schools but the Ministry of Education put them off the list again for the reason that the texts are less literary because of their language (C. White 1-4). Doyle rejected this argument: “I don’t agree. The decision to use the vernacular was a literary decision. The decision to use that word ‘fuck’ is a literary decision. It’s a decision of rhythm . . . to use images from television instead of books, to use advertising jingles and such - it’s a literary decision” (qtd. in C. White 4).

—Anyway, he said. —Facebook.

—Yeah.

—What is it? Exactly.

[...]

—Why d’yeh want to know? he asked.

—Ah, for fuck sake, said his da.— Every time I ask a fuckin’ question.

—What’s wrong with yeh`

—I ask a fuckin’ question and some cunt says why d’yeh want to know.

—You’re askin’ the wrong cunts, said Jimmy.

—Must be.

—Wha’ question?

—Wha’?

—What question have yeh been askin’?

—Well said his da.—I asked a fella in Woodie’s where the duck-tape was. An’, granted, he —didn’t say why d’yeh want to know. He said, wha’ d’yeh want it for. I told him I wanted to fuckin’ buy it. —He just wanted to help.

—That’s not the fuckin’ point. (G 2-3)¹

This scene is taken from *The Guts*, Doyle’s most recent novel. Jimmy Rabbitte Sr. criticises that, today, everybody wants to be an expert. He argues that if he wants to buy

¹ All quotations abbreviated as G (*The Guts*) are taken from Roddy DOYLE, *The Guts* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2013).

a duck tape, the shop assistant should tell him where to find it, rather than asking him what he needs it for. As regards language, the frequently occurring expletives in this scene serve as means of expressing Jimmy Sr.'s anger about society. Instead of offering a narrative description of Jimmy Sr.'s emotions, Doyle lets his characters speak for themselves. For him, it is important to present the Irish and their culture as they really are. Scenes like this one portray a more authentic picture of Irish everyday life through the use of "the language that the characters actually speak" (Doyle; qtd. in C. White 4). Doyle commented on his style by claiming that "[i]f it is true to me, if I think it's accurate, if I think it's well put together and well structured, if I'm happy with it, then I'm finished with it" (Doyle; qtd. in Karen Sbrockey 544).

Doyle has often been asked why he does not indicate his characters' speech in traditional manner by using quotation marks but dashes. Doyle states that he had seen this style in the autobiography of Sean O'Casey and immediately liked it. In this way, the narrative and the dialogue are closer connected and basically it should be irrelevant how it is indicated that characters are talking, as long as the gap between narrative and dialogue is not too huge (Sbrockey 547).

While Doyle has been also accused of his tendency to avoid descriptive writing by not offering extended descriptions of characters, background or locality, others have argued that Doyle indeed "creates an entire world" (Lawrence Christon; qtd. in C. White 4) in his stories. In Doyle's view, the only function of describing places or the physical characteristics of characters is to interfere. He does not want his stories to be interrupted but, instead, he aims at offering vivid characters so he "allows the characters to speak for themselves. (...) [S]peakers change so often that voices seem to rush out from the page. Surprisingly, little confusion arises as to the identity of the speakers, and the dialogue is easy to follow" (C. White 9-10). In Doyle's books it is essential to understand the characters' speech to follow the storyline (3-9). In *Two Pints*, published in 2012, he brings the matter to a head. The book does not comprise any narrative descriptions but primarily consist of dialogue. This method of writing allows readers to sympathise with the characters that appear more realistic in Doyle's writings. "His work is extremely contemporary in its characters and situations, cutting-edge with its language, yet old-fashioned in its values and conclusions" (C. White 24).

4. Identity & Otherness – Opposing or Complementary

Theories about identity encompass numerous different points of view which are complementary, sometimes even opposing or basically not comparable at all. Besides, scholars differentiate between personal identity and social identity and make a distinction between cultural identity and national identity, while these concepts, in turn, merge so that individual concepts have to be regarded against the background of the remaining ones. Surprisingly, other than expected, identity and Otherness do not represent an opposition but have to be regarded from a position that assumes these issues as strongly connected with each other.

4.1. The Issue of Identity

To start with, Mary L. Gomez and Edie White base their approach of identity on a multi-dimensional perspective so that the very issue can be regarded as “fluid and complex, particular and socially marked; it is shaped by one’s thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and dispositions” (1016). As often highlighted, identity is a phenomenon caused by social practice in the same way as it is continuously transformed through social interactions (1016). In order to identify ourselves, Homi Bhabha reasons, we have to respond to culture, politics and questions of desire (Bhabha, *Culture* 71). David Block does not only highlight identity as socially constructed, but points to the dimension of self-agency as a major influence in the development of identity. He regards identity as a “self-conscious, reflexive project of individual agency” (qtd. in Tope Omoniyi and Goodith White 3) which is finalised through participating in social communities and social activities with friends, family, colleagues and so on. Each one following individual goals and interaction patterns, the aim is to construct “identities in their relationships within these communities. Identity thus becomes something which is a mixture of individual agency and the influence of social structures of various types” (Omoniyi and White 3). The individual experiencing itself amidst a social context is susceptible to the impact of the environments by which it is surrounded so that the interaction with the social milieu includes both, communication with other social individuals and the social environment as such (1-3). In addition, we are also affected by the cultural and historical traditions in which we are living. Taking into account various theories on the issue of identity, Gomez and White come to the conclusion that

an individual has a number of varying identities depending on the time and place it finds itself in. The authors refer to identity as a “hybrid of multiple dimensions of a self” (1016). Amin Maalouf, however, clearly speaks out for identity as one-dimensional. “Identity can’t be compartmentalized. You can’t divide it up into halves or thirds or any other separate segments. I haven’t got several identities: I have just got one, made up of many components combined together in a mixture that is unique to every individual” (qtd. in Yasir Suleiman 51). Personal identity which is, first of all, unique to every individual, and, secondly, complex in its shape insofar as personal identity is always a compound. In contrast to other theorists, Maalouf argues that identity is not only dynamic and changeable but also stable in some sense. There is a hierarchy of elements constituting personal identity in a process of permanently becoming. These components of identity conflict under specific conditions or exist in a harmonious blend. “This is one of the paradoxes of identity: its capacity to combine the forces of relative harmony and fragmentation, of fusion and fission, into a single unit that manifests itself in different ways under different conditions” (Suleiman 51). Maalouf’s elaboration made many scholars shift from investigating mere *identity*, which was primarily focused, to an approach that postulates an *identity repertoire* (Suleiman 50-51).

Linda Alcoff contends that a remarkable aspect of our identity is made up by the visible part of our body through which we are socially positioned in society (Gomez and White 1016). Thomas H. Eriksen claims that even real persons have to demonstrate that they are *real* through the very phenomenon of identity, because otherwise they would not be recognisable by any other person. “All the world’s a stage (Shakespeare), and personality is like an onion [...]. When all the layers of makeup and make-believe are peeled away, do we then encounter the real person – or do we instead meet a faceless monster? The answer from social science is: neither” (Eriksen 247). However, the assumption that there might be different hidden persons behind the social being is per se untenable. Eriksen therefore relies on a metaphor of West African peoples, the tortoise metaphor. “In describing what a person is they compare it to a tortoise. It may stick its head out, making itself visible and vulnerable, but it then retracts its head into the shell, rendering itself hidden and invincible” (248). Eriksen interprets the tortoise metaphor in so far as he regards human beings as constantly jumping ships between being socially introverted and socially extroverted. While the internal world within the shell is “limited to that which is secure and familiar” (248), the external world represents the uncertain

dimension of these counterworlds. Although the aspect of the individual self is not so much represented in this metaphor, it rather casts light on “two forms of sociality; the secure and the insecure, the closed and the open” (248). Belonging to a social group allows the feeling of security which makes Eriksen specifically relate to the realm of the *we* as a feeling of the collective. As part of the *we*, every individual belongs to the, let us say, backstage area, sharing cultural competence with the others which contributes to both, the development of personal identity and social identity in the form of belonging (Eriksen 246-248). What is more, the way we are perceived through systems of classification in our social environment is a striking factor in how we develop our individual identity. (Gomez and White 1016). Basically, what we *are* is not primarily defined by ourselves but rather by the way we position ourselves and the way we are positioned, a view that is also shared by Stuart Hall. He regards identity against the background of becoming, as a production that is “never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Hall, *Diaspora* 222), while distinguishing two forms of cultural identity. Firstly, cultural identity can be understood as sharing a common ancestry in terms of history and cultural frames of reference. People become one by imposing a trivial self that they have in common with everyone who belongs to this “oneness” (223). The second view of cultural identity assumes that what we actually *are* is constituted by major differences. There is no “one experience, one identity” (225) since identity has to be seen as a state of becoming. “It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (225). The categories and perspectives from which positioning occurs, are mostly based on Western beliefs, comparable to Fanon’s view, who stated that “[w]hat is often called the black soul is a white man’s artefact” (qtd. in Bhabha, *Culture* 63). The underlying theory is provided by Foucault’s knowledge-power concept in which he classifies this very type of knowledge as particularly internal, rather than external (Hall, *Diaspora* 226). “It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that ‘knowledge’, not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective non-formation to the norm” (226). Cultural identity, against this background, is permanently shaped by

history and culture, representing something that is indeed not fixed and stable, but linked to an experience of discontinuity (226).

In terms of colonialism, underdevelopment, poverty, and the racism of colour, the European presence is that which, in visual representation, has positioned the black subject within its dominant regimes of representation: the colonial discourse, the literatures of adventure and exploration, the romance of the exotic, the tropical languages of tourism, [...] and urban violence. (233)

While slavery and transportation uprooted especially African peoples from their history and past, they were also united in the course of alienation. “The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation” (Hall, *Diaspora* 225). In contrast to the European continent that is basically associated with power, the African continent is seen as the empty territory which serves as a juncture-point for those who originally do not belong to this country (225). The place in this context therefore serves as a “signifier of migration [...] travelling, voyaging and return as fate, as destiny” (234). Thus, heterogeneity, hybridity and difference are those elements which identity necessarily lives “with and through, not despite” (234).

Concluding this section on what it is that constitutes personal existence, Homi Bhabha neatly summarises that “[f]or identification, identity is never apriori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality” (Bhabha, *Culture* 73).

4.2. The Issue of Otherness

First and foremost, Ernst Boesch argues that there is no concept of the Other. Basically, what we regard as *other* can be only understood as *not like me* which implies that “There is no other without an ‘I’” (qtd. in Gomez and White 1016). Similar to our changing perception of identity, Gomez and White highlight that the way we understand the Other is continuously transforming and adopting new shapes. The more someone is in contact with the Other, the more he or she develops an idea whether the Other is a friend or an enemy. Basically, through our social experiences with the Other, we try to collect as many visible signs as possible in order to develop an understanding of who the Other is and how he or she acts, compared to ourselves. The social and cultural

information that we gain in the process of finding “ourselves in the other and the other in ourselves” (Gomez and White 1016) is not dedicated to defining the Other in the first place. Rather, the ultimate objective is to develop an understanding of who we are, which is, however, impossible without a vision of the Other. Consequently, in order to define what I am, it is a prerequisite to consider the Other, and vice versa. Our viewpoint, however, is vastly influenced by factors such as “the cultural contexts of our growing up, our schooling experiences, our family ideals and interactions, the mass media, [...] and our daily experiences” (1017). To the extent that social interactions shape the way we understand ourselves, they also shape the way we perceive everything else apart from ourselves (1016-1017). This process of meeting the Other, Luce Irigaray argues, is closely connected to losing oneself. In order to make contact with the Other, we need to leave our own world insofar as we need to overcome the natural borders that surround our selves and those of the Other. “Such a self involves all that belongs to one’s own world: the way in which the subject relates to itself, to the other, to the world, but also to a cultural environment where this subject lives, an environment which takes part in our subjectivity, and is often confused with identity itself” (Irigaray 108). The fine step towards recognising the Other is to distinguish between one’s own and the Other’s subjectivity, to recognise that there is indeed another individual whom we can assign subjectivity to and a world different to our own. This does not mean that recognising another person’s world can be immediately subsumed as sharing one and the same world. “In this case, the two are reduced to a local or cultural identity, and the encounter between subjects becomes a simple sharing of the same things: material or spiritual. If we confuse this, we cannot achieve a meeting with the other” (108). Therefore, in its essence, identifying the Other means identifying oneself and, alongside, a self that we do not know and therefore reject. This is where conflicts start, since we cannot accept another facet of our self. But, do we actually talk about the same *Other*? We constantly stay in our own world and what we regard as the Other, are people who live in close vicinity to us or those who are even our domestic partners. Due to the fact that we share a number of things with the people in our near surroundings, we stop regarding these people as the Other since we have been accustomed to these relationships and do not remember that we actually deal with manifestations of the Other (Irigaray 108-109).

In addition, there is another shade of the Other that is mostly forgotten as, in most cases, the obvious things become imperceptible after some time. Luce Irigaray mentions that we sometimes “look through the window to see if someone is coming from outside, a someone who will confirm us in our well-being when becoming two in one. If this someone does not arrive, we are bored, a little asleep, and quarrel with each other to stimulate ourselves” (109). There will always be a place for the Other in our world since culture taught us to construct such a place that is, at the same time, even constructed for *us*. Irigaray indicates that the construction of vacant spaces in our worlds “is part of a global architecture of our world, or our subjectivity. [...] This other will occupy a space built for any other, a place outside our being reached in ourselves” (109-110). Thus, unconsciously we keep a place for the Other. How and if we welcome the Other though, is a different question altogether. The place that we intuitively keep vacant for any guest has to be always discovered anew by experiencing with our existence “how we were reached and how we could respond to this being touched” (110). In essence, this means that every individual has to be open for change, leaving the protected certainty of ideals and self-confidence, in order to recognise the dimension of being apart from us. While we constantly think of meeting the Other, it is more about being *with* the Other. This can be imagined as creating a third world that exists between the self and the Other. “The place that we offer to the other, in fact corresponds to the representation of that which we occupy ourselves: a space apparently open in a closed world” (111). Irigaray points out that this encapsulated world is shared by norms, values and social and cultural rules but still represents a room full of truths for everyone. Being *with* the Other becomes possible by exploring other languages, tastes, believes, behaviours, sounds and manners and integrating the Other into a closed place that is, on the one hand, structured, but on the other hand, constantly restructured. “But no one, no teaching, instructs us that, in order to meet the other, we must first leave our room, our home, our culture, our world, without nonetheless forgetting them. In order to meet *with* the other, we also have to remain ourselves” (Irigaray 112). The ideal process would be to leave one’s home. This home can be regarded as one’s own self-consciousness in this context, in order to meet with the Other, but then again return back to it. There should be a kind of exchange with the Other, while remaining ourselves and not adopting the Other. “This work is imposed on us because of multiculturalism and globalization, the concern for the subjectivity of other generations, the discovery that men and women in fact

belong to different worlds” (119). Irigaray adds that the two worlds, the world of our own and the world of the Other, have to communicate with each other. However, communication in this sense is not meant as discussing, teaching or showing things to the Other because what we actually have to tell the Other, has not yet been determined (108-112).

Therefore, the first word we have to speak to each other is our capacity or acceptance of being silent. It would be the first wave of recognition addressed to the other as such. In this silence, the other may come towards me, and I may move towards the other. This silence [...] gives an indication of our ability to relinquish a meaning organized only by our signs and rules. It announces that we keep a place, not only in ourselves, to appropriate what is coming to us, but outside ourselves in order to save space and time to allow what or who is coming to arrive. (Irigaray 113)

It is communicating *with* the Other, in contrast to speaking *of*, while the actual communication is characterised as silence. The silence between the two worlds is best understood in terms of acceptance and respect of the Other world next to one's own world (Irigaray 113). However, there is still a tendency to respond to “those others” (Kristeva 2) with hatred. Julia Kristeva claims that the reasons for this behaviour stem firstly from the development of Marxism which has led to religious, national and ethnic conflicts and thus, to a loss in subjectivity, personal freedom and religious protection. Secondly, the manner of meeting with the Other can also be ascribed to the fact that these conflicts resulted in a decline of cultures and individualities. We respond to those who have different origins with hatred which leads to a move towards the personal self, including people close to us. They appear to be more trustworthy than the foreigners we are confronted with, when one ignores trivial conflicts that might arise within a family circle in this context. Kristeva describes this attitude as withdrawal into a private paradise of origin in which ethnicity, race, nation and family serve as the cornerstones. The glorification of our own origins finds an opposing dimension in the hatred of origins so that those detesting their origins and “don't want to know where they come from, [...] fuel the same hatred of self, but they think they can settle matters by fleeing. On the contrary, devotees of origins anxiously seek shelter among their own” (3) and therefore draw on the ultimate policy of projecting their hatred on of others, i.e. strangers. A feasible solution might arise from returning to our origins and moving beyond these origins. For Julia Kristeva, the act of returning already happens if we reminisce our childhood or consider our biography in more detail (2-4).

In the introduction to *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha explains that today's life is shaped by survival in which "we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (2). This transition includes the dimension of going *beyond* insofar as we continuously move and struggle with disorientation or changes of directions. This in fact, results in the necessity of moving beyond narratives of the subject. The discovery of the self and development of identity have to be regarded as occurring at these interfaces through the discovery of society and cultural differences. As characterised by "race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation" (2), identities of subjects are primarily formed through a sum of differences. Insofar, social differences symbolise the development of communities moving beyond the subject, a transgressing and moving towards the future evoking a process of constant redefinition of culture (2-3). Homi Bhabha further suggests personal development is not based on the image of the self or an idea of the Other, but that it is the Otherness of the self that necessarily constitutes identity. He describes the process of identification with regard to the development of colonial desire, as based on three conditions. Firstly, "to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look or locus" (Bhabha, *Culture* 63). He concludes that every native secretly dreams of occupying the place of the Other. The place claimed by the Other necessarily becomes the place where the process of identification is based. "This process is invisible in the exchange of looks between native and settler that structures their psychic relation in the paranoid fantasy of boundless possession and its familiar language of reversal" (63). Therefore, it is the desire for inverting roles based on the encounter of the self and the Other that contributes to the process of the formation of personal identity. Secondly, "the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting" (63). The underlying element is the desire to obtain two places at the same time. The state of difference in this case is ambivalent, "to be different from those who are different makes you the same" (64). Identity has to be seen at the interface or the space between the coloniser and the colonised. This space between the self and the Other appears as disturbing but at the same time it constitutes the essential element in establishing both, identity and Otherness. Thirdly and lastly, "the question of identification [...] is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (64). Identification therefore, is

not self-fulfilling, it is a process of identifying with the “differentiating order of otherness” (Bhabha, *Culture* 64), returning to the image of the self and the Other and consequently, returning to the moment of splitting (63-64). “For Fanon, like Lacan, the primary moments of such a repetition of the self lie in the desire of the look and the limits of language. The ‘atmosphere of certain uncertainty’ that surrounds the body certifies its existence and threatens its dismemberment” (Bhabha, *Culture* 64).

5. The Identity of the Soul Brothers in *The Commitments*

The issue of identity is an integral part of Roddy Doyle's literary work. His characters are faced with the difficulties of everyday life through which their individual identities shape themselves and are likewise shaped by the surrounding social world. The protagonists in Doyle's first novel strongly reflect on both, their identity as private individual characters, and their Irish identity in terms of being members of the Irish nation. However, Doyle's stories do not serve as sources for the depiction of Irishness or any attempts to define its concept. Lorraine Piroux is certain that identity "is never fully realized in Doyle's writing, nor is it in the slightest way represented in metaphorical, symbolic or even descriptive narratives" (46). Instead, Doyle separates Irishness from those aspects which, for a long time, were the aspects that actually made people become interested in Irish nationalism. By omitting historically relevant elements and narrative conventions, Doyle is no longer seeking to answer what it actually means to be Irish, but rather following the deconstruction of a notion of identity which manifests through the characters' speeches and the musical elements in his stories. Irishness is inscribed in the characters' choice of words, in their use of slang and abusive words, and in the language of their music (46). In *The Commitments*, Doyle desists to offer a picture of Irish nationalism but tries to convince his readership that Irish identity in fact does not exist since it "springs from variegated possibilities of transnational solidarity with the disenfranchised. Being Irish, his young protagonists contend, is synonymous with being Black because oppression is the only reality that makes the notion of identity meaningful" (Piroux 46). Solidarity with other nations in this sense is the key to understand what it means to be Irish and, alike, what it means to be black in *The Commitments* (46).

5.1. Soul Music as Medium of Expression

The Commitments is the story of a soul band managed by young Jimmy Rabbitte. Jimmy knows his music pretty well and he is enthusiastic about managing a band. He knows what kind of music is needed in Ireland and determines the band's mission: Dublin soul.

- Wha' sort o'stuff will we be doin'? Derek asked.
- Wha' sort o'music has sex an' politics? Jimmy asked.
- Reggae, said Derek.

—No, not tha’.
 —It does.
 —Yeah, but we won’t be doin’ it. We’ll leave the reggae to the skinheads an’ the spacers.
 —Wha’ then?
 —Soul.
 —Soul?
 —Soul?
 —Soul. Dublin soul.
 Outspan laughed. Dublin soul sounded great. (C 14)²

It is not soul in a sense that ordinary people would think of, but Dublin soul, because the essential thing, Jimmy thinks, is to make music for people like themselves, the people of Dublin’s working class.

—Where are yis from? (He answered the question himself.) —Dublin. (He asked another one.) —Wha’ part o’ Dublin? Barrytown Wha’ class are yis? Workin’ class are yis proud of it? Yeah, yis are. (Then a practical question.) — Who buys most records? The workin’ class. Are yis with me? (C 13)

Similarly to the 1960s in America, Ireland had a hard time in terms of economic instability and social oppression during the 1990s. Paul Hewson, the lead singer of U2, felt that he recognised similarities between black people and the Irish. “I was called a ‘White Nigger’ once by a black musician, and I took it as he meant it, as a compliment” (qtd. in Caramine White 46). Irish people and blacks recognised themselves as homeless, foreign, and, simply put, outsiders, since there were no traditions they belonged to. Their homelessness forced them into emigration. During the 1960s, soul music served as a tool for many black African-Americans in the new world to express their selves and their consciousness of *not* being American, although working and living in America. They tried to emancipate themselves from being oppressed, both socially and economically (C. White 45-46). Johannes Riedel explains that those who were forced to emigrate into the United States had their backpacks full of peculiarities of African culture, including gestures, sounds, soul-rhythm and music-dance. Unfortunately, music was the only aspect of African culture that was de facto accepted by the white inhabitants of their host country. “Through the image of soul, many blacks identify themselves as a group with the same terms used to identify and describe ethnic groups. While the analogy between soul and ethnicity has its limits, it has been useful in

² All quotations abbreviated as C (*The Commitments*) are taken from Roddy DOYLE, “The Commitments”, *The Barrytown Trilogy* (London. Vintage, 1988).

helping blacks to find a place within the mainstream of American society” (Riedel 51). In terms of meaning, Riedel emphasises that *black soul* is a synonym for “active blackness” (48). Soul, as was fondly hoped, should be an instrument to reverse the image of blacks being regarded as nothing, compared to whites seen as the superior community. Soul is a term that cannot be defined but it perhaps has “its greatest utility and its tenderest vulnerability in that it has, in fact, no single meaning” (48). Although soul is some kind of indefinite identity, it can be classified as inclusive, since every black person is part of this identity without any fear of being excluded. Fundamentally, all blacks are part of soul. When referring to religion, soul can be understood as a spiritual element that is inherent in a human being. “Just as every individual has soul in the religious sense, every black person has black soul. Soul in both the black and religious senses refers to a spiritual part of man which is distinct from his physical being and immune to physical attack” (49). From its very beginning, soul music was strongly linked to social aggression towards black people and basically connected with black musicians. “This close tie between black soul and black music reflects not only the importance of music in black society in America but also black awareness of the potential of soul as music for providing a sense of black identity and even for breaking social barriers and eroding racist attitudes” (49). The unbelievable aspect of soul and its success is the very aspect that soul was indeed accepted, even though classified as black music. Soul equally appealed to whites as it appealed to blacks and, thus in a manner of speaking, broke down the walls of the isolated ghetto while the two communities still stayed separate as regards social life. Soul should express that there is a difference between being black and being American, but at the same time, it conveys a sense of sameness. “Ironically, consciousness of African roots seems to enable blacks to be like other Americans” (51-52). While being exposed to social aggression, soul music gave black people hope to gather strength in order to resist this very phenomenon. Besides, it made them see themselves in a more positive light regardless of the fact that they were actually a marginalised group in society (Riedel 44-51). Soul, as described by W.E.B. DuBois, offered a new point of view from which they forgot about the miserable perspective of “looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (qtd. in Riedel 52). Michael Vlach highlights that for people who are susceptible to social instability, “verbal power provides important compensation” (qtd. in Cynthia Rose 30), for which

blacks found their tool in soul music. They were able to cry out their feeling of depression and their sense of social alienation through the medium of soul music which was not only received by people like themselves. There has been a gradual development of the meaning of soul music so that today it does no longer signify oppression but self-expression, self-fulfilment and, most importantly, an expression of self-identification. "Being a soul brother or soul sister is belonging to a group that does not measure up by the Anglo-American tape. Being a soul brother or sister is belonging to a group that measures with its own tape!" (Riedel 52). As soul music gained currency within the white community, negative stereotypes started to change rudimentarily. "For example, whites can readily identify with aspects of soul that parallel aspects of their own ethnic identity. The development of soul language and food parallels areas of white ethnic pride and identification" (50). As the language of black soul had its own expressions and words, the English soul language understood by soul brothers was indeed different, featuring a change in the meaning of words when used in soul music. The white population in America, as Riedel argues, was exposed to a foreign language and therefore became the outsiders who were excluded from the soul community. Along these lines, "blacks have turned the table" (51) and have been defined through soul music (50-52).

During the 1990s the economic situation in Ireland recovered but social and financial insecurity still shaped the Irish population since many inhabitants had to face unemployment and a life of poverty. Although people were on welfare, the prospects for their future lives were demanding so that "fifty thousand Irish men and women were leaving the country each year." Accordingly, the history of Irish economic conditions and the times of social oppression in America are obviously a part in history shared by the Irish and African Americans (C. White 46). Lauren Onkey regards the African-American music in *The Commitments* as "a cure for limited possibilities in Ireland. They suggest that African-American music was an available method of expressing alienation and exclusion and that such availability depended on the ubiquity of American popular culture in Ireland" (159). The music in the novel does not represent the contemporary music of the time in which the novel was published, i.e. 1988 in the USA, but refers to the times of exclusion and limited possibilities awakening a certain nostalgia for blackness and black people in the States (159).

5.2. The Political Mission of The Commitments

Jimmy spoke. —Why exactly ——d’yis want to be in a group? [...] —Why are yis doin’ it, buyin’ the gear, rehearsin’? Why did yis form group? —Well —— [...] —Yis want to be different, isn’t tha’ it? Yis want to do somethin’ with yourselves, isn’t tha’ it? (C 10-11)

When he starts The Commitments, Jimmy has a clear idea in mind. He does not want to manage a band performing “bad versions of other people’s poxy songs” (C 11) but he wants them to find themselves back in the world where they came from.

—Your music should be abou’ where you’re from an’ the sort o’ people yeah come from.

——Say it once, say it loud, I’m black an’ I’m proud.

They looked at him.

—James Brown. Did yis know ——never mind. He sang tha’. ——An’ he made a fuckin’ bomb.

They were stunned by what came next.

—The Irish are the niggers of Europe, lads.

They nearly gasped: it was true.

—An’ Dubliners are the niggers of Ireland. The culchies have funkin’ everythin’. An’ the northside Dubliners are the niggers o’Dublin. ——Say it loud, I’m black an’ I’m proud. (C 13)

As the founding father of soul, James Brown is Jimmy’s hero. It is therefore not surprising that most of the songs covered by The Commitments are originally James Brown songs. He had a great influence on many musicians, as is claimed by one of the members of Brown’s band, and so Jimmy decides that it should be James Brown’s style and music that influences The Commitments. Brown was certain about the fact that soul connects blacks with their history and tradition and he knew that history is strongly linked to politics (C. White 48). He wanted to communicate “how deep the codes and meaning of music run in black America, how they evoke an historic continuum, how they can move to unite” (Rose 56). Jimmy’s statement “I’m black, an’ I’m proud” (C 13) originally goes back to a poem written by James Brown:

I worked on jobs with my feet and my hands
 But all the work I did was for the other man
 Now we demand a chance to do things for ourselves
 We’re tired of beating our head against the wall
 And working for someone else
 [...]
 Say it loud: I’m black and I’m proud!
 Say it loud: I’m black and I’m proud!
 [...]
 We’re people, we like the birds and the bees

We'd rather die on our feet
Than be living on our knees (Rap Genius)

It has been said that James Brown made everyone a believer. He made his audience believe that things can change and this is the very attitude that Jimmy adopts for The Commitments. Jimmy wants his band to be “as successful at transporting audiences as was Brown. He hopes that he has more in common with ‘America’s Soul Brother No. One’ than only a first name” (C. White 49). Jimmy is pursuing a clear-cut mission similar to the philosophy of James Brown. He attempts to “establish a sense of brotherhood among Dublin youth as soul music did among African Americans” (45), and he believes that making soul music allows the band, apart from the subordinate goal of easily meeting girls, to speak to Dublin’s working class and unify all people through the political power of soul music (45-49). “Jimmy wants the Commitments to give Dubliners the same sense of power that soul gave to American blacks. He wants to instill a sense of pride in people who have no education and little future” (47) and therefore attempts to fulfil a political mission.

—Soul is the politics o’ the people, Jimmy said again. —The Labour Party doesn’t have soul. Fianna fuckin’ Fail doesn’t have soul. The Worker’s Party ain’t got soul. The Irish people —no. —The Dublin people —fuck the rest o’them. —The people o’ Dublin, our people, remember need soul. We’ve got soul.

—Fucking right we have. (C 38)

In order to prove that the statement “The Irish are the niggers of Europe” (C 13) does indeed represent a political statement and therefore makes The Commitment’s mission a political one, it is inevitable to look back at the history of blacks and the Irish and the disenfranchisement of both communities. Timothy Taylor points out that “the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s looked to the Irish Renaissance of the turn of the century for a model of creating new art that would be by and for themselves, and that would provide more accurate representations of their people” (291). There had been a certain desire to construct new identities at a time when social class and the identification of the self were reformulated and ethnic background became the characteristic of class affiliation. Leaders of the Irish Renaissance, mostly stemming from the Anglo-Irish middle class, tried to create new forms of art “based on something indigenous, distinct from English art and literature, and distinct from traditional cultural forms in Ireland” (292). Similar to the creation of new art in Ireland, African-Americans tried to construct new forms of identity by changing the common parameters of

describing their existence. A poor and illiterate community from rural areas became identified as urban and middle-class. Based on these historical parallels between Irish and African-Americans, inferences about an attempt to create a new identity can be drawn in relation to the birth of *The Commitments*. Taylor claims that *The Commitments* is not a story about creating a new identity as in the historical example of the Irish Renaissance, but rather a form of emancipation or empowering for enhancing the musicians' own identities by committing themselves to soul. The Commitments link politics and music together in order to improve their lives. They do not share the social class of the leaders of the Irish Renaissance since they stem from a working-class background, nor do they develop any kind of high art as intended during the Irish Renaissance. What Jimmy and his band are trying to achieve is changing their lives for the better (291-293).

Following Taylor's argumentation, Jimmy has "'auto-proletarianized' himself: he has a consciousness of his own class position, and sees the world in this way, although the other characters don't always know what he's talking about" (293). His intention is to make people aware of their class affiliation and make Dublin aware of their social status.

According to Jimmy and the band's trumpet player (the only one who has practical experience with soul music), Joey The Lips Fagan, soul is, variously, the rhythm of sex, the rhythm of the factory, revolution, the rhythm of the people, democracy, community. Soul is, in short, whatever Jimmy and Joey want it to be, but usually has something to do with sex and politics. (Taylor 294)

Moreover, although *The Commitments* are trying to "empower themselves in the identity they already have" (Taylor 294), they are borrowing another nation's identity. In this sense, they are expressing their own class and social status through American ethnicity. In short, the identity which *The Commitments* attempt to develop is to be regarded against the background of their national identity (293-294).

The Commitments' mission is indeed a political one. It is about the struggle against political oppression, it is about liberation, it is about "Irishness, Dublinness and Blackness" (Piroux 48) and, in short, about soul politics. With regard to Lorraine Piroux's statement of an overlap between Irish culture and soul culture, which is encapsulated in the statement "The Irish are the niggers of Europe" (C 13), it can be argued that Irishness and Blackness seem to become synonymous. The band share their

commitment to soul with African-Americans and thus their minor subject-position in the political world (Piroux 48). “According to Jimmy, soul music was introduced in the 1960s as a vehicle through which the oppressed black race in America could assert itself—and because the Irish are the ‘niggers’ of Europe, soul music could empower the Northside Dubliners as well” (C. White 43). The term *nigger* serves as a “signifier for radical difference” (Piroux 48) and, to a certain degree, it does not only refer to blacks but does also include aspects of alienation experienced by the Irish. Studies on the nature of minorities show that oppression is indeed a political matter since becoming a minority is in fact an issue of a person’s position. This means that the central aspect to be considered is the position of the subject. Piroux argues further that in recognising themselves as minor in terms of subject-position, *The Commitments* do not only serve as sole justification for sharing similar experiences with African Americans. For Dubliners it is an obvious fact that the Northside of Dublin, in which Kilbarrack is located, can also be described as the home of the working class which “allows Doyle to landmark fictitious Barrytown as a working-class community without resorting to representation” (50).

In order to construct an understanding of identity in *The Commitments*, it is essential to consider ethnic differences. Lorraine Piroux refers to the term “*detrterritorialization*” (46), which was coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It refers to the “obliteration of historical and cultural values on which traditional concepts of identity are forged” (Piroux 46). Doyle adapts this concept of deterritorialisation to ethnic difference to the extent that he does not invent a new picture of Irishness that has never been seen before, but he rather reinvents Irish identity in terms of hybridisation while hybridisation is to be seen as a continuous process (Piroux 46-50).

This is not to say, however, that Doyle effaces ethnic difference entirely from his treatment of Irishness. In fact, to inscribe Irishness within blues and soul music [...] is to retain the memory of a specific colonial discourse that had constructed a common ancestry for the Irish and the African-Americans and had represented both groups with similar attributes of primitive barbarism. (Piroux 46)

Piroux points out that Doyle explores Irish blackness in terms of deterritorialisation by inscribing it in the language presented in the novel. It is to say that deterritorialisation “occurs within a dominant language when its signifying process is altered by a certain writing practice. Writing then ceases to be primarily symbolic and representational, drawing instead its power of expression from an intensive and material use of language”

(Piroux 51). Doyle's language in *The Commitments* is characterised by "indeterminacy, discontinuity, and minimalism" (51) in contrast to other Irish writings which basically display extensive discursive descriptions through which racial determinations are highly revealed. It appears therefore reasonable that Doyle's novels are especially characteristic for displaying a deterritorialised picture of Irish identity or even black identity (50-51).

Traditionally, Irish identity was presented through symbolic descriptions and mythologies, but Doyle's presentation of Irish identity needs deeper examination of the concept of deterritorialisation that is prevalent threefold in *The Commitments* through the use of formulaic language, the use of slang, most evidently through the use of song lyrics (Piroux 51-52). Firstly, the language presented in *The Commitments* is highly formulaic. This aspect especially refers to the language used by the characters. Piroux describes it as rather economical and intensifying language compared with other writings which are rich in extensive explanations that get off the track. "Repetition takes over argumentation" (51) and there are a number of encounters in which characters are tossing in while other characters are speaking. For instance, when Jimmy finds some of the band members consuming hash and Jimmy gives a lecture about the very fact that they cannot say that they are making music for the people when they are experimenting with drugs, characters are cutting in with expressions like "Drugs aren't soul" (C 66) or "Real Brothers say No to the weed. All drugs. —Soul says no" (C 66). Secondly, Doyle's writing style is characterised by a "relentless use of slang" (Piroux 51). Abusive words and expletives are very prominent so that plenty of times the expression *fuck* and all possible versions deriving from this expression appear in the characters' utterances. The expression can be seen as a multipurpose word that is used to express a multitude of concepts, emotions and appreciation. Words like this in particular are indeed important in deterritorialised language because of their unspecific meanings. Piroux points out, that as a linguistic means, all-purpose words can express more precisely what a number of meaningful words cannot cope with in particular situations. Moreover, the choice of words indicates the social status of *The Commitments* and therefore indicates their working-class background. The use of the vernacular is representative of the place in which the story is set. Normally rather negatively assessed, "with Doyle, slang is no longer just a matter of language register. It has completely pervaded language to the point where, for *The Commitments*, slang is

language itself, their mother tongue” (Piroux 52). Finally, the use of lyrics is the most prominent form of deterritorialisation in Doyle’s fiction. He borrows lyrics from soul music which are not merely borrowings but rather presented as instances of onomatopoeia (51-52). “All meaning is lost to give way to materiality of sounds” (52).

—WHEN A MA — HAN LOVES A WO—
 MAN—
 CAN’T KEPP HIS MIND ON NOTHIN’ EH — ELSE ——
 HE’LL CHANGE THE WORLD — FOR THE GOOD THINGS HE’S FOU—
 HOUND—
 IF SHE’S BA—HAD HE CAN’T SEE —
 IT——
 SHE CAN DO NO WRO — O — ON — NG ——
 TURN HIS BACK ON HIS BEST FRIEND IF HE PUT HER DOWN ——
 (C 103)

Since Doyle does not make use of codes and extensive descriptions, his alternative approach in writing allows for a less determinate and therefore rather deterritorialised picture of Irish identity (Piroux 52).

5.3. Soul Versus Jazz - Defining Social Class

The Commitments regard it as their objective to bring soul music back to the people. The people, as defined by Joey The Lips Fagan in an interview with a reporter from the *Herald*, is the proletariat (Taylor 296).

—We are bringing Soul to Dublin, Brother, he said. —We are bringing music, the Soul, back to the people. ——The proletariat. ——That’s p,r,o,l,e,t,a,r,i,a,t. (C 98)

It turns out only a few pages later how the people, the proletariat, or the working class can actually be defined. The saxophone player Dean seeks for development. Starting as a complete beginner, he confesses to Jimmy that soul is not the music enabling him to realise his full potential but that it is jazz which comes much closer to what he has in mind as an artist.

—Ah, Jaysis, Jimmy. I don’t want to sound snobby but ——fuck it, there’s not much to it, is there? [...] —Don’t get me wrong, Jimmy. ——It’s too easy. It doesn’t stretch me. ——D’yeh know wha I mean? Em, it was grand for a while, while I was learnin’ to play. It’s limitin’, know wha’ I mean? ——It’s good crack but it’s not art. (C 122)

Joey The Lips Fagan actually makes clear to Dean what exactly makes jazz the wrong music and why it is inappropriate for their listeners.

—Intellectual music, said Joey The Lips. —It's anti-people music. It's abstract. —It's cold an' emotionless, amn't I righ'? said Mickah. —You are. —It's got no soul. It is sound for the sake of sound. It has no meaning. [...]
 —Polyrhythms! Polyrhythms! I ask you! That's not the people's sound. —Those polyrhythms went through Brother Parker's legs and up his ass. —And who did he play to? I'll tell you, middle-class white kids with little beards and berets. In Jazz clubs. Jazz clubs! They didn't even clap. They clicked their fingers. (C 108)

Joey even goes as far as characterising Charlie Parker as a black jazz musician who abused his blackness and left behind the people in order to entertain a more intellectual audience.

—He won't want to play for the people any more. Dean has soul but he's going to kill it if he listens to jazz. Jazz is for the mind. (C 109)

Insofar as we follow the line of argument about the concept of jazz, it is indeed not the music of the working class, in contrast to soul music.

—Soul is the people's music. Ordinary people making music for ordinary people. —Simple music. (C 107)

Jazz is identified as the antithesis of soul since it appeals to a more educated audience. Taylor interprets Joey and Jimmy's political awareness as an objection to "the aestheticisation, the embourgeoisement of jazz that has occurred over the last several decades" (296). He clarifies that jazz has lost its political meaning by virtue of a so called aestheticisation. Jimmy and Joey, indeed the only two characters who are aware of politics, protest against Dean's taste in music for the reason that they regard jazz as an object of mere aestheticisation, which is the reason why jazz is simply not the musical genre for appealing to their target audience. Soul is the more appropriate tool to unite Dublin's working class and, equally, make people aware of their origins and proud of where they come from (296-297).

Doyle presents soul music not as an ancient relic under glass or the preserve of suffering victims, but a music of energy, pride, community, and wisdom. While there may be some irony and humor in the band's adoption of soul music, the power and glory of the music is unironically asserted on every page in a very direct way, with transcribed lyrics and beats. (Onkey 180)

5.4. Developing Soul Identity

Lorraine Piroux puts emphasis on the aspect that The Commitments, first of all, have to learn soul. The band members have not yet assimilated to soul and are at the beginning

of “literally working to acquire a soul *habitus*” (49). For this reason, Jimmy exposes his band to soul music, he makes them watch soul performances and copy the musicians’ body language in order to develop an identity as a soul band. Obviously, most of the band members have to explore soul culture first before they can actually start working on their fragmented identities. None of them, except for Joey The Lips and Jimmy, have a clue about what soul is all about or basically how to play true soul. Consequently, Jimmy draws on traditions of soul, such as the practice of lectures which should make the band recognise their ties with African-American history (49-50).

He’d give them a talk. They all enjoyed Jimmy’s lectures. So did Jimmy. They weren’t really lectures; more workshops.

—Soul is a double-edged sword, lads, he told them once.

Joey The Lips nodded.

—One edge is escapism.

What’s tha’?

Fun. —Getting’ away from it all. Lettin’ yourself go. (C 34-35)

—An’ the second one is ————REVOLUTION!

Cheers and clenched fists.

Jimmy went on.

—Soul is the politics o’ the people.

—Yeeoow!

—Righ’ on, Jimmy.

—Our people. —Soul is the rhythm o’ sex. It’s the rhythm o’ the factory too. The workin’ man’s rhythm. Sex an’ factory. (C 37-38)

There are a number of aspects that The Commitments need to consider in order to truly convert to soul. Jimmy starts with their name. Initially, Outspan and Derek think they are a band called “And And Exclamation Mark” (C 14), but Jimmy recognises the essential move of abandoning their original name for a name “that rings true to the Spirit of Soul” (Piroux 48).

—Another thing, said Jimmy. —Yis aren’t And And And anymore.

This was a relief.

—What are we Jimmy?

—The Commitments.

Outspan laughed again.

—That’s a rapid name, said Derek.

—Good, old-fashioned THE, said Jimmy.

—Dublin soul, said Outspan.

He laughed again.

— Fuckin’ deadly. (C 15)

The band’s name is not the only thing that needs to be changed. Jimmy wants his band to fully let themselves into soul music and addresses their initial idea of being different

in what they do. To make them indeed different, Jimmy decides to change the names of the new-born musicians and gives them stage names.

- What’s wrong with our ordin’y names? Dean wanted to know.
- Nothin’, Dean, said Jimmy. —Nothin’ at all.
- Well then?
- Look, said Jimmy. —Take Joey. He’s Joey Fagan, righ’? —Plain, ordin’ry Joey Fagan. An ordin’ry little bollix.
- That’s me, Brother, said Joey The Lips. —I’m the Jesus of Ordinary.
- But when Joey goes on-stage he’s Joey The Lips Fagan.
- So?
- He’s not ordin’y up there. He’s special. [...]
- It’s part o’ the image, said Jimmy. —Like James Brown is the Godfather of Soul. (C 41)

The powerful convention of adopting stage names has a long tradition in soul music. Cynthia Rose explains that a new name gave the Negro a new and more essential identity. It can be understood as the black men’s renaissance, which allowed blacks to obtain a sense of their self which remained “very much a matter of private black control” (29) and was therefore unreachable by the white population in America (29). Jimmy’s intention is to create an idea of soul with which people can easily identify. In keeping with traditional conventions of the time when soul became popular in the 1960s, the band generate a “soul cover” (Taylor 295), offering a perfectly adapted image of soul (295). Jimmy does not only change the musicians’ names but makes sure that each name does represent the person’s character more closely or at least ensures that each invented name refers to the character’s profession.

- Listen. —Okay, we already have Joey The Lips Fagan, righ’. Now —James, you’ll be James The Soul Surgeon Clifford. [...]
- The Soul Surgeon performs transplants on the old piano, he said.
- That’s it, said Jimmy. —That’s the type o’ thing. Everyone in the group becomes a personality. (C 41-42)

James’ new stage name considers his profession in the real world of his private life. For the purpose of “the image” (C 43), Jimmy combines James’ job with his function in the band. Similarly, Derek, who works as a butcher, becomes “Derek The Meatman Scully” (C 42), and Jimmy, in his position of the band manager, adopts an imaginative name by being forced to add his second name:

- Brothers, Sister, said Joey The Lips. —Would you please put your hands together to show your appreciation to Brother James Anthony Rabbitte. They clapped, all of them. (C 45)

A further aspect that contributes to the band's soul identity concerns The Commitments' music. Although the lyrics presented in the novel are the original lyrics of soul music, some verses are altered so that suddenly new words appear that better agree with the sensibilities of Dubliners (C. White 50). Doyle wanted to add "a bit o' local flavor" (C 50) by weaving Dublin words into the lyrics of soul. The message of the songs becomes more relevant to both, the Irish audience and, of course, the band members' own lives. Another reason for altering the song lyrics is that working-class style is met more closely and in this way appears more authentic for their Irish audiences (Taylor 294). Doyle explained that he wanted to evoke humorous effects by presenting the Dublin accent in soul music. Most of the alterations are welcomed by the audience with cheers and applause (C. White 50). In *The Chain Gang*, Deco starts his first attempt to improvise by diverging from the original lyrics "All day long they [the chain gang workers] work so hard" (Oldielyrics) referring to himself as a member of "The Hardest Workin' Band in the World" (C 15), the way Jimmy announces them at their first gig.

THAT'S THE SOUND O' THE MEN
WORKIN' ON THE —
CHAIN GANG —
Deco closed his eyes a lot for this one.
— ALL DAY THEY'RE SAYIN' —
MY MY MY MY MY MY MY
MY WORK IS SO HARD —
GIVE ME GUINNESS —
I'M THIRSTY —
MY — Y — Y —
MY WORK IS SO HARD
OH OH MY MY MY —
SWEET JAYSIS — (C 51)

Freestyle, a number of improvisations and the specialty of the Afrocentric rhythm are unique elements of soul. Jimmy therefore keeps to old traditions of black music in his managerial decisions. Substituting words and, in particular, replacing locations by Dublin places allows feelings of national pride in the people's minds which again refers to the ultimate goal of developing a sense of brotherhood (C. White 50-51). "[T]he expectations of change, of improvisation, surprise and participation are deeply embedded" (Rose 123) in the Afrocentric beat. An example of how the alteration of lyrics can successfully make the audience feel proud of their nation and their home is best illustrated in "Jimmy Forrest's 'Night Train' [which] makes stops it never did before, starting in Dublin's Connolly Station" (Taylor 295). The audience can relate to

the places mentioned in the song, and so they do not mind that most of the text performed by The Commitments is actually made up. While in the original text the night train travels from Miami to Washington D.C. to New York and New Orleans, the home of blues (Lyrics Mode), the night train that is navigated by The Commitments has a number of other stops on its way.

Dublin soul was about to be born. [...]
 Deco growled: —STARTIN' OFF IN CONNOLLY — The train in the hall
 stopped as they waited to hear what was going to follow that.
 Deco was travelling north, by DART.
 —MOVIN' ON OU' TO KILLESTER —
 They laughed. This was great. They pushed up to the stage.
 —HARMONOSTOWN RAHENY —
 They cheered.
 —AN' DON'T FORGET KILBARRACK — THE HOME O' THE BLUES
 Dublin soul had been delivered.
 —HOWTH JUNCTION BAYSIDE —
 THEN ON OU' TO SUTTON WHERE THE RICH FOLKS LIVE (C 92)

With reference to Ireland's migratory movement, which marks an important aspect in Irish history as many Irish citizens were forced to emigrate to Great Britain, America and Australia in order to find work, the mention of the DART in the song *Night Train* is of particular importance as it serves as a symbol for the division of classes in Dublin (Piroux 53). "The DART line [i.e. Dublin's rail system] stretches from Howth to Bray and crosses through both the richest and poorest enclaves of Dublin" (53). Dublin had been divided into two parts, the southern and the northern part. The South, located on the other side of the river Liffey, had been known as the home of the liberals who were rich and powerful in contrast to the Northsiders (Lisa McGonigle 166). The general dislike of the South becomes apparent in the advertisement Jimmy posts in the *Hot Press*:

Have you got Soul? If yes, The World's Hardest Working Band is looking for you. Contact J. Rabbitte, 118, Chestnut Ave., Dublin 21. Rednecks and southsiders need not apply. (C 15)

The fact that not every Dubliner is accepted and that rednecks and Southsiders should not consider the idea of applying for Jimmy's band illustrates the class division of Dublin's North and South. The advertisement excludes people from the wealthier parts of Dublin, i.e. the South, and the countryside and therefore helps to maintain this separation of social classes (Onkey 179-180). Turning to the DART line again, in reality, the rail line does not represent a bridge between the two classes, as might be

suggested, since the DART users from the Southside hardly get as far as the working-class areas of Kilbarrack. These areas are in fact a long way off the wealthy areas. Nevertheless, Deco starts an attempt to take the train from the poor areas through the more wealthy parts of Dublin, which Piroux sees as “an emancipatory musical journey that transgresses class boundaries” (53).

Leaving aside the importance of soul lyrics in *The Commitments*, Caramine White describes “another element of cultural immersion” (49) on the non-verbal level when she elaborates on how Jimmy made his band fully immerse into the culture of soul. Following African traditions in which food is the ultimate essence that feeds the artists’ creative drive, nutrition and spirit are said to interrelate (49). Nourishment is to be regarded as “the feeding of spiritual and cerebral as well as the corporeal self” (Rose 86) and therefore generates the potential of the artist to express not only truth but base his creativity on truth (86).

Deco was on a strict soul diet: James Brown, Otis Redding, Smokey Robinson, and Marvin Gaye. James for the growls, Otis for the moans, Smokey for the whines and Marvin for the whole lot put together, Jimmy said. (C 31)

The immersion into the world of soul should not only be realised through the medium of music. Jimmy does also emphasise the level of non-verbal presentation as in the case of Deco, who has to work on his nonverbal sounds in order to appear more authentic as a soul singer (C. White 49). Moreover, *The Commitments*’ rehearsals are accompanied by so-called “soul food” (C 29).

—A good start, said Joey The Lips. —I have Jaffa Cakes here, Brother. Soul food. (C 29)

In reality, there is no food specifically known as soul food. In the case of *The Commitments*, the nourishment that channels their constructiveness is only made up of Irish tea and plain Irish cookies. Besides, tea and cookies, Guinness is also consistent with soul (C. White 49).

—[...] Drugs aren’t soul.

—Wha’ about’ drinkin’?

—That’s different, said Jimmy. —That’s okay, the workin’ class have always had their few scoops.

—Guinness is soul food, said Joey The Lips. (C 66)

As a marker of Irish culture, Guinness is known all over the world. By including it into the song, the working-class audience can relate to their national drink while the

characters in Doyle's writing appear more accessible to his non-Irish readership (C. White 41-42).

5.5. The Commitments' Songs

First of all, the music in *The Commitments* has the function of illustrating the experiences that the Irish have in common with African Americans. Besides, the songs are also a means of drawing conclusions from what happens to the characters and foreshadowing the action of the novel. Outspan and Derek's dream is to form a band that considers sex and politics. Caramine White sees the treatment of sex and politics through music as a way of giving their empty lives more sense. In one way or another, the songs they listen to at the beginning of the novel, encourage the wannabe musicians to follow their dream that gives them voice (54).

—GET ON UP——
 —STAY ON THE SCENE, sang James
 —GET ON UP——
 [...]
 —LIKE A SEX MACINE AH——
 —GET ON UP——
 [...]
 —YOU GOT TO HAVE THE FEELING——
 SURE AS YOU'RE BORN AH——
 GET IT TOGETHER—— (C 21)

It has been already mentioned that the band changes the lyrics of certain songs. In the case of *Night Train*, The Commitments' signature song, the lives of the people who live in the suburbs of Kilbarrack are described in more detail in the song (C. White 50-51).

LOADS O'SECURITY GUARDS—
 NIGH' TRAIN—
 LAYIN' INTO YOUR MOT AT THE BACK—
 NIGH' TRAIN—
 GETTIN' SLAGGED BY YOUR MATES—
 NIGH' TRAIN—
 GETTING' CHIPS FROM THE CHINESE CHIPPER—
 OH NIGH' TRAIN—
 CARRIES ME HOME— (C 93)

Each member of The Commitments has his or her function in the band. Jimmy's job is band management, Joey The Lips Fagan is the band's soul prophet and Deco, the vocalist, is the one whom his band mates detest for his egocentric personality. In

addition, there is Imelda, one of the three Commitmentettes, who has an essential function in the novel.

Now that Jimmy thought of it, Imelda might have been holding The Commitments together. Derek fancied her, and Outspan fancied her. Deco fancied her. He was sure James fancied her. Now Dean fancied her too. He fancied her himself. Imelda had soul. (C 124)

Jimmy would argue that The Commitments are a men's band, but in relation to Imelda's function in the band which comprises certainly more than just being one of the background singers, she is the one who keeps The Commitments united. *It's a Man's World* exemplifies that even in a man's world a woman plays an indispensable part, which is even more expressly underlined by the performance of the songs *All You Need Is Love* and *When a Man Loves a Woman* (C. White 55-56).

IT'S A MAN'S— MAN'S WORLD—
BUT IT WOULD BE NOTHIN'—
NOTHIN'—
FUCK ALL—
WITHOU' A WOMAN OR A GURREL—— (C 117)

Finally, the last two examples of how soul lyrics mirror the story line in *The Commitments* refer to the break-up of The Commitments. *What Becomes of the Broken Hearted* foreshadows the broken hearts of those who remain kind of lost without The Commitments such as Outspan and Derek, who are the founders of the idea of forming a band, but also Jimmy, who believes in completing a political mission, or Imelda, who later mentions that she would still love to be in a musical band (C. White 55-56).

—WHA' BECOMES O'THE BROKE —
EN HEARTED —
WHO —
HAVE LOVES THA' ARE NOW DE-
PAR —TED ——
I KNO I'VE GOT TO FIN —
SOME KIND O'PEACE O'MIND ——
BAY —
BEEE — (C 48)

By contrast, *I'll Feel Like a Whole Lot Better* particularly describes Jimmy's emotions after the disputes of his former band were almost forgiven. He desists from managing a band with a political mission and enjoys being free from the stress and worries compared with his times as a band manager (C. White 56).

—BABY FOR A LONG TIME —
 [...] —
 —YOU HAD ME BELIEVE—
 —THAT YOU LOVE WAS ALL MI — I — I — INE —
 [...] —
 —AFTER WHAT YOU DID —
 —I CAN'T STAY ON — OH — ON —
 [...] —
 —AND I'LL PROBABLY —
 FEEL A WHOLE LOT BETTER —
 WHEN YOU'RE GOH — ON — (C 137)

This, in fact, should be the music for the next band he wants to form with Outspan and Derek, and all the other band members except for Deco, because of his egocentric attitude, and Joey, who left for America, where there is soul. “The novel ends with Jimmy vowing to give up his political goals and planning to start an apolitical country music band” (C. White 43).

5.6. “Maybe soul isn’t right for Ireland”

In assimilating the culture of soul, The Commitments develop their Irish form of soul music alongside their personal development which is marked by the improvement of self-awareness (C. White 45). Paul Hewson stated: “I suppose that’s what all art is—a search for identity” (qtd. in C. White 46). The band functions as a family which gives each individual band member a sense of belonging and therefore plays a fundamental part in forming their identity, not only as a band but also with regard to their individual self, as Caramine White explains: “The band becomes a surrogate family for its members, with all the usual family dynamics” (61). Joey and Jimmy take on the role of the parents. While Joey represents the experienced parent, referring to his experiences in making soul music, Jimmy’s part is that of the problem solver. He tries to settle disputes and problems that normally occur among siblings in a family. The other band members, of course, represent the siblings with their individual roles, while Imelda is undoubtedly the one who binds the family together (61). “For once in their lives, they are doing something worthwhile and belonging to something sustaining, and they realize it” (61). Nevertheless, “Jimmy’s political mission seems as fleeting as the band itself” (Taylor 296), and the adoration of Imelda by all The Commitments leads to their break-up. Although everybody knows that their splitting up is simply a question of time, there is some sense of sadness at the end of the novel.

—Come ‘ere, said Imelda. — ‘If you’re startin’ another group let us be in, will yeh? It was brilliant crack.
 —I won’t be, said Jimmy. (C 136)

However, not more than a week later, Jimmy, Derek and Outspan have a new idea and plan a new musical journey.

—This is The Byrds, righ’, said Jimmy. —I’ll Feel a Whole Lot Better.
 He let the needle down and sat on the back of the legs between the two speakers.
 [...] Thirty seconds into the song the lads wanted to be The Byrds. (C 136-137)

By the end of the novel, Jimmy and the band distance themselves from what they have in common with African-Americans. Irrespective of their efforts to develop a soul identity, they now “start turning the music into an aesthetic object, but still something local and unique as they had done with soul: Dublin country” (Taylor 296), while they are positive that politics should not be their mission this time.

—No fuckin’ politics this time either. ———But, yeh know, Joey said when he left tha’ he didn’t think soul is righ’ for Ireland. This stuff is though. You’ve got to remember tha’ half the country is fuckin’ farmers. This is the type o’stuff they all listen to. ———Only they listen to it at the wrong speed.
 —We’ll out them righ’ though, wha’. (C 139)

At first sight it seems as if the newly formed *Brassers* completely turn their backs on what they had done until then but since their contract for a single with a record label came to nothing, they have a try at a country-punk version of *Night Train*.

The attempt to construct an identity that is cultural, political and certainly Irish in equal measures, is located “at the juncture of Irishness and Blackness” (Piroux 52). The concept of Irishness in *The Commitments* has to be understood as a becoming. It is a constant transformation that individual characters have to undertake, while at the same time, identity is something that finds new contexts over and over again so that individual components are lost and equally found. The Commitments’ identity is therefore to be seen as unstable (54-55). In borrowing elements of social and cultural belonging, The Commitments create their own history of origin on the one hand, and, on the other hand, try to completely accommodate their behaviour to another nation’s ethnicity. Although they incidentally try to keep a certain connection to their Irish background, this focus is only subsidiary compared to their primary agenda of emancipating and accepting their subordinate social status. Above all, the identity that manifests itself through the formation of The Commitments strongly involves the Irish working class which is portrayed through the band’s development as a soul band. In the

scene in which Jimmy and Joey The Lips illustrate the striking differences between soul and jazz, it becomes clear that the working class is synonymous with the proletariat characterised by emotionality and simplicity. The ordinary people are the hard-working part of society, but due to their aversive attitude towards the intellectual and the abstract, they represent a community collectively struggling against social oppression while, at the same time, establishing a notion of self-confidence and belonging. From a broader perspective, the social class in which *The Commitments* find themselves can also be seen as a family which they belong to and where they develop their selves. Therefore, in the case of *The Commitments*, the band can identify themselves as a private family in which every individual member has his or her function contributing to everyone's personal development, but the band belongs to an even greater family characterised as the Dublin working-class. Their belonging forms a bond between all those who are like-minded in Dublin, if not all over the country (C. White 45-61). Caramine White's interpretation of *The Commitments*' mission as an attempt to establish "a sense of brotherhood" (45) summarises how the issue of identity can be depicted in *The Commitments*.

George Bornstein mentions the issue of multiculturalism in relation to *The Commitments*, in contrast to other scholars. He argues that although most of the band members turn their backs on multiculturalism by quitting their band-membership, the story features this issue more extensively, "not just in its semantic content but in its speech rhythms, the novel exists in a liminal zone between two races, two ethnicities, two linguistic communities" (171). It is therefore not only a story that tells of the encounter of the Irish and Black American culture but rather represents this particular encounter; an "encounter which calls into question the adequacy both of any alleged single culture and of a binary model that produces both that monoculture and its inevitable Other" (172). Along these lines, Lauren Onkey claims that the novel does indeed "participate in the representation of black as carrying an essential power that the Irish can tap into; that comes out in the joy of the specific music that *The Commitments* play, their ability to play it, and the way that their audience responds to it" (180).

6. ‘Can blacks be Irish or Irish be black?’ – The Question of Belonging in “Home to Harlem”

In order to elaborate on the issue of multiculturalism in Ireland and the fact that identity is closely connected to Otherness, as discussed in Chapter 4, Roddy Doyle’s collection of short stories, *The Deportees*, should be seen as exemplifying the theories of identity and Otherness.

These stories promote a shift from “‘multiculturalism’ (disconnected and passive coexistence with ethnic minorities) to ‘interculturalism’ (active exchange between different cultures and ethnicities). This [...] is an example of what I term ‘identity migration’: the diaspora of the mind or inner voyage from one’s state of origin into another that affiliates one to another culture, race, gender or ideology with which one feels a connection. [...] As a result, these identity migrants construct for themselves a grafted or hybrid identity, which encompasses at least two worlds: the world of origin and the adopted world. (Eva White 96)

In the following chapters, seven out of eight short stories are analysed in terms of how strangers to the country develop a sense of belonging to the Irish nation. The stories are set in the city of Dublin, except for one which takes place in New York. They primarily focus on individual characters and their struggle to develop a type of identity that is acceptable for them in an environment they were not born in. These characters are not only perceived as *the Other* but, in some sense, also regard themselves as the Other because of the way locals respond to their appearance. Eva White regards the stories as directly addressing “the reality of several types of immigrants. Most of the stories relate the successful acculturation and identity migration of their characters with racial harmony and positive immigrant experiences triumphing over racism and xenophobia.” (97) Maureen Reddy claims that the stories “look at the ways in which various people who do not fit into mainstream definitions of Irishness (white, settled, and Christian, preferably Catholic) have enriched the country culturally” (379). They offer a picture of migration in the sense that immigrants are indeed categorised as ethnic minority in the country. Nonetheless, this very categorisation makes them appear “united by one vital factor: the majority want to contribute to the development of Ireland, the country they now regard as their new home, and they want a free hand to do so” (377).

Mark Maguire and Fiona Murphy carried out an interview with a former activist and political prisoner. The activist claimed that being “‘Irish’ is no longer good enough: one must also be indigenous – identity as a right of blood, identity as a people, population or

‘race’” (Maguire and Murphy 8). With regard to the present day, this statement might have particular relevance. In terms of being indigenous, national belonging necessarily has to be taken into consideration when discussing the issue of identity. Since historical events have always played a major role in defining Irishness, it turns out that being Irish became more and more a question of being truly Irish (8). The penultimate story of the collection “The Deportees” here serves both, as the opening story for discussing multiculturalism in Ireland, and the most exemplary story for what it means to belong to two nations.

“Home to Harlem” is the story of a young Irish student in New York who is in the process of discovering his roots in order to develop a sense of self and a feeling of belonging. Jan Cronin argues that Doyle has reconstructed the similarities between Irishness and Blackness by depicting the similarities between black American and black Irish. The protagonist’s idea of being Irish undermines his sense of belonging since, even from his perspective, Irishness and Blackness are inconsistent. Declan O’Connor is the main character in the story, an Irish visiting student in New York (Cronin 188). This makes this story the only one in Doyle’s collection that concentrates not primarily on the “immigrant in Ireland, and which does not, therefore, stage a multicultural encounter within Ireland. This is, first and foremost, a story about the nature of Irishness” (190).

Declan has two ambitions during his stay in New York. First, there is his research paper which deals with the “Harlem Renaissance and its influence on Irish literature” (D 180)³ and second, there is his search for identity insofar as he wants to find black American relatives in New York due to his “maternal grandmother’s affair with an American soldier during the Second World War.” (Zamorano Llena 96). The Harlem Renaissance is known as the “first widespread movement in African-American literary history” (Gallagher 157), in which black writers, painters and musicians tried to discover whether there can be an exceptional art from and for Negroes that, in larger terms, articulates Black American identity. Harlem was the so-called cultural capital not only for the movement but for Black Americans in general who immigrated to the United States. The Harlem Renaissance can be also understood as a cultural revolution of Black

³ All quotations abbreviated as D (*The Deportees*) are taken from Roddy DOYLE, *The Deportees* (London: Vintage, 2007).

Americans. Brian Gallagher points out that there had been a number of writers who indeed wanted to see a connection between the Harlem Renaissance and Irish Renaissance. However, “[w]hile it would be too much to claim that modern Irish writers had a strong influence on the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, it can be said that the paradigm of an oppressed people rising to literary greatness [...] did serve as a continuing inspiration and occasional guide for the African-American writer in the 1920s” (157). An aspect that Black Americans and Irish similarly declared as a marker of their native culture and identity is the very issue of language. The main function of language in both historical movements can be understood as a means that helped marginalised people in their struggle to survive, both personally and artistically (158-160). In *The Book of American Negro Poetry* James W. Johnson wrote:

[T]he colored poet in the United States needs [...] to find a form that will express the racial spirit by symbols from within rather than by symbols from without, such as the mere mutilation of English spelling and pronunciation. He needs a form that is freer and larger than dialect, but which will still hold the racial flavor, a form of expressing the imagery, the idioms, the peculiar turns of thought, and the distinctive humor and pathos, too [...]. (qtd. in Gallagher 159).

While it can be claimed that Irish writers might have had an influence on black American writers in one way or another, Declan wants to prove a reverse influence, i.e. the impact of the Harlem Renaissance on the Irish movement. This aspect might suggest that Declan feels more connected to his Blackness rather than his Irishness and that he regards the black movement as a major source for inspiration for the Irish.

Carmen Zamorano Llena argues that Doyle “reverses the customary journey to Ireland of the protagonists of the Irish Diaspora in search of origins performed by so many Americans by sending Declan ‘home to Harlem’, ‘the land of his ancestors’” (96). Although Declan is sceptical about the outcome of his paper because he might not find any proof that Harlem influences indeed encouraged Irish writing, he does not really care since his research project made him obtain the visa and therefore offered him the chance to conduct genealogy (Reddy 386). Even though Declan has problems with his “biraciality” (386), he believes that “these two quests will give him a more solid identity, a home even” (386).

In the opening scene of the story, Declan finds himself in a dilemma thinking about his identity, because he is both Irish and black, which in fact is a twofold problem in his

view. As a visiting student, Declan has to fill in a registration form for the university in which he faces the problem of Otherness outside Ireland for the first time after his arrival, since he cannot identify to any nationality up for selection. In addition, he does not only have problems finding his nationality on the registration form. Throughout the story, one gets the impression that Declan is even challenged in “finding himself at all” (Reddy 386).

He can't find himself on the registration form.

—Excuse me?

—Honey?

—There's nowhere for me to tick. [...]

She takes the form from him. She looks at the categories – White, Non-Hispanic; African-American; Hispanic, the rest – and she looks at him.

—Well, she says. —What are you—?

—Irish, he says. [...]

She's friendly; she's nice. She writes OTHER beside Hispanic. And a little box.

—That's yours, honey. (D 179-180)

Declan's Irish nationality combined with being black, turns out to be categorised as Otherness. “The premise of the story”, Jan Cronin implies, “is that Declan's blackness disrupts his Irishness” (188), which raises the assumption that Irishness and Blackness are inconsistent if they meet within one person. Besides, the opening scene of the story demonstrates that Irishness can be regarded as flexible and adaptable (188), “not by blandly rewriting otherness as Irishness (e.g. Irishness is all this and more) but by identifying exteriority (i.e. the condition of being outside) as, paradoxically, integral to Irishness” (188). When Declan first meets his supervising professor, she is not interested in Declan's research topic in the first place. Declan is “the first Irishman of colour” (C 183) in her office who, on the one hand, is an Irishman *of colour* and, on the other hand, the first who assumes that there might be any links between Harlem and Irish literature. His typically Irish way of responding to the professor's lack of interest at least allows Declan to explain the underlying motivation to elaborate on this topic as deriving from personal reasons, which, in fact, makes him a winner.

He starts with his granny and his granddad. He tells her about Ireland and about being black and Irish. He tells her about first reading *The Souls of Black Folk*, about the question repeated in the first paragraph of the first chapter: ‘How does it feel to be a problem?’

—The problem is but, he says. —I'm black and Irish, and that's two fuckin' problems.

She laughs. (D 185)

The idea of Otherness portrayed in the story is based on the belief that Otherness in terms of being black is a problem. Declan tries to illustrate that it is a problem to be black, but being black and Irish at the same time does not cast a positive light on the matter either. The research he undertakes, i.e. reading books such as James W. Johnson's *Autobiography of an ex-Coloured Man*, which is the story of a black guy who passes for white, turns out to be simply a waste of time. Although all the books he reads are useless for his academic objectives, they are essential for his personal achievement of developing a sense of pride about being both black and Irish.

He lies back on the bed and gets dug into Langston Hughes. [...] *America never was America to me*. He's not sure why. Take out *America*, put in *Ireland*. That's how Declan sometimes feels, how he's felt all his life. A great little country, all that shite, but not his. Not really. [...]

What about America? Will it be home? He's not sure. (D 191)

Maureen Reedy reasons that Declan sees similarities between black Irish and black Americans since he identifies with the statement from one of Langston Hughes' poems (386). Declan favours the way Hughes is both interior and exterior.

—I like the way he can be inside and outside. In Harlem, outside the rest of America.

She nods.

—It's like being Irish, says Declan.

—And it's like being black and Irish. (D 192-193)

Walking through the streets of New York, Declan looks at all the black women and men who are passing by. However, although he tries to assimilate to the blacks in America, he still feels like an outsider.

All the black people here are neat. Not just on Sundays. Their jeans, Jesus. [...] Even the homeless lads. He feels scruffy walking past them. (D 186)

Various studies on multiculturalism have proved that "it is possible to successfully hold multiple cultural identities and truly feel at home in more than one culture" (Andrea Moore and Gina Barker 554) if home culture and host culture are intermingled. However, this requires a "move between cultures" (554), which is unique for so called Third Culture Individuals, but this move mostly takes place "before they have had the opportunity to complete the critical task of personal and cultural identity development" (554). Nevertheless, this development is accompanied by a number of difficulties in establishing a sense of belonging which cannot be neglected when it comes to forming personal identity (553-555). In the case of Declan, this would mean that he could belong to the Irish nation although he is black and would therefore be able to unify both

affiliations. However, this sense of belonging has not yet been developed in Declan since he is still on the move to find any relatives he can identify with. Declan does not feel at home in being black, nor in being Irish. This suggests that Declan has not yet found where he personally belongs and therefore, he does not feel inclusive to a nation or culture.

Declan more and more abandons his academic research for his search for personal and cultural identity throughout the story. Nevertheless, he seems lost at some stages, while the professor seems to fulfil the function of a mediator whose aim is to show Declan the right direction on his way to self-discovery. She suggests to Declan that it is best to look for himself and Declan starts the search for possible relatives in New York.

—Go deeper, Mister O'Connor, the Professor had said.

—What d'you mean?

—Look for yourself, she'd said.

For fuck sake. *Look for yourself*. [...]

—He's feeling better. Look you're yourself, Mr. O'Connor. (D 188)

Declan checks all the Powells, his granddad's surname, in New York city in a phonebook, calls them and asks for their skin colour or whether they have any relatives who served in World War II. The seventh call is a hit and Declan talks to his maybe-uncle Franklin J. Powell. It is the third situation in the story in which Declan's Irish nationality is put to the test since neither his maybe-uncle, who has not yet met Declan in person, nor the women at the registration office or the professor believe in the consistency of an Irish guy having black skin.

“Declan's initial mission in ‘Home to Harlem’ involves consolidating his cultural identity via the inscription of blackness within Irishness” (Cronin 189). However, as the story progresses and Declan reflects on his black Irish nationality, he moves away from his original research topic about the American impact on Irish literature towards the parallels between Irishness and Blackness. He decides to work on himself as an individual in which Irishness and Blackness collide. Declan believes that being Irish is always some kind of “passing for something else – the Paddy, the European, the peasant, the rocker, the leprechaun. It's sometimes dangerous and damaging. And then there's being black and Irish” (D 201). He has found something that is worth being done, compared to reading books which do not get him any further. His decision to

focus on analogies and the upcoming meeting with his maybe-uncle make Declan become more hopeful to accomplish an end although it is still not in sight.

—You're not black, she [Declan's mother] told him, once – more than once; he was only nine or ten. —I'm black but you don't have to be.
He can't do it. There's no way he can tell her about meeting her maybe half-brother. When she grew up, back then in Ireland, you were Irish or you weren't, one thing or the other. You couldn't be both; you couldn't be black. Has it changed? (D 203)

After his meeting with Franklin Powell, Declan is still disappointed. He has dreamt of a family waiting for him but his grandfather had already died, and besides, he is not sure whether Franklin Powell's father really was his granddad. However, they like each other and Declan's mood changes. He decides to take the ferry to Ellis Island after the meeting and looks back at Harlem, a place of which not even Declan knows whether it will ever be his home.

He feels fresh, and kind of new. It's good, it's grand. [...] He walks off the ferry.
He joins the crowd. He takes the Ireland cap off.
But he changes his mind.
He puts it back on. He feels Irish today. (D 210)

Declan moves through all the rooms in the exhibition at Ellis Island, bathing in sentimentality, looking at photographs from people of different nationalities, including Irish faces too. This scene suggests that Declan feels more at home in being black including his American roots rather than in belonging to the Irish nation.

He knew that he was right: If I was Irish I'd be crying by now. He wasn't crying.
And that was grand; he didn't feel left out. (D 211)

Regarding the story as a whole, it can be argued that Declan moves between two conflicting sides. On the one hand there is his Irishness which he actually negates since he does not develop a feeling of belonging when looking at the fate his nation had to suffer in history. On the other hand, however, Declan does not feel left out. Jan Cronin argues that Doyle expands "Ireland's platform for engagement with other cultures; but something else is intimated here, something that relates specifically to Declan's experience on Ellis Island" (189). This aspect has to be seen in relation to the penultimate scene of the story, the meeting with the professor, in which Declan evaluates his progress in developing a new research topic. It takes him the whole afternoon since he elaborates on the difference between being Irish and being American. There is in fact no difference in being African-American, a bad American or a

“whatever-the-fuck American” (D 212) because, as an American, one is always American and never less.

—But not in Ireland. You *can* be less Irish. I am, at least, I used to be.

—Explain.

—I’m black.

—And?

—That’s not Irish. Or Irish enough. And my dad used to say there was a Dublin thing too. Dublin wasn’t really Ireland. And there’s the language. The fuckin’ *cúpla focail*. You’re not fully Irish if you can’t fart in Irish. [...] You know, like, we used to be miserable, but no we’re fuckin’ great. (D 211-212)

Declan tells the professor that he “never felt Irish enough” (D 211) and therefore developed the idea of “trying to get at the Irish” (D 211) more closely. Maureen Reddy points to the fact that whiteness still “remains the *sine qua non* of Americanness, far more important than nation of birth or first language or religion or any other variable. Whether whiteness is a necessary prerequisite to Irishness is in fact a more open question than is its relation to Americanness” (386). The majority of American citizens indeed believe in true Americanness as reserved for whites. It is not clear where this misunderstanding derives from, whether it is Declan’s thoughts revealed in the story or even Doyle’s own misinterpretation (386). Nonetheless, as regards Declan’s academic orientation, he is no longer interested in finding similarities between the blacks of two nations but concentrates on the *we*, posing the question “Who the Fuck Are We?” (D 214).

—I’m going to study the writing that questions the *we* in *we’re fuckin’ great*. [...] The Harlem Renaissance questioned the same kind of *we*, I’ll compare the two. [...] They’re both in me.” (D 213)

This new research title voices “the question many hyphenated Irish are still trying to answer today” (E. White 98). Declan might not be the only Irish whose blackness precludes him from being Irish. He especially admires “the ease with which Americans seem to accept racial hyphenated identities” (98) in their country, unlike Irish society.

The title “Home to Harlem” suggests that Declan returns home to where he finds his origins although the story ends before the readers learn whether or not he really goes home to Ireland. While Declan thinks of going back to Ireland, he also considers staying in New York. At the end of the story, Declan is uncertain about where to find his home since he still cannot answer the question whether blacks can be Irish or Irish can be black. Up to a point, Reddy is right in assuming that the answer would be *yes*. There are

several encounters which suggest that Harlem is indeed not a home for Declan. He misses his mother, is proud of being recognised by his command of the Irish language, which he plays off when impressing American girls, and basically starts from the premise that he is looking for evidence that Irish can be black instead of the reverse. However, Declan's change of perspective, from feeling not enough Irish as a black to a feeling of national identity since he is part of the *we*, can only be vaguely understood through the context of the story.

Jan Cronin suggests that, for Declan, being Irish means to be never Irish enough.

[T]he basic condition of Irishness involves a sense [...] of being on the outside, estranged from [...] a version of your supposed self. Multiple versions of Irishness (the rocker, the peasant, the European, the Irish language speaker) afford multiple experiences of shortfall or positions of exteriority [...] which would explain why Declan experiences his sense of distance or disconnect as not feeling 'left out' on Ellis Island. [...] Declan's Irishness is consolidated by his recognition of one particular narrative of Irishness and his sense of exteriority in relation to it. (189)

Cronin refers to Julia Kristeva's account of the paradoxical community that is constituted by "foreigners who are reconciled with themselves to the extent that they recognize themselves as foreigners" (qtd. in Cronin 189). In the same way as Mary L. Gomez and Edie White argue that there is no other without regarding the dimension of the self (1016), Kristeva locates foreigners within the self so that every person is a foreigner. "If I am a foreigner," she argues, "there are no foreigners" (qtd. in Cronin 189). The consciousness of the Other in ourselves is followed by what Freud called the "discovery of our intrinsic difference; [which] let us know ourselves as unconscious, altered, other in order to better approach the universal otherness of the strangers that we are—for only strangeness is universal" (Kristeva 21).

Leaving aside this issue, Jan Cronin also concentrates on the latent subject matters of Declan's thesis. He interprets the representations of Irishness mentioned, i.e. models such as "the Paddy, the European, the peasant, the rocker, the leprechaun" (D 201), as modalities that suggest exteriority. First of all, there are those versions of Irishness that are particularly significant for Irish culture in so far as Declan regards them as authentic and means of portending Irishness, such as the idea of the leprechaun or the Irish language as such. Declan regards these aspects as basically hindering him from being truly black and therefore point to his exteriority. However, these representations

have less relevance when it comes to national belonging. In fact, speaking the language does not make him Irish enough and therefore not inclusive. On the other hand, there are those signifiers of Irish culture that Declan can easily affiliate with. These include the manner of speaking Irish (Cronin 189-190).

—Hi, says Declan. —Howyeh.
 He'll give her the whole Irish bit, get in a few grands. They love it.
 —How's it goin'?
 [...] She smiles. [...] He picks up his pint.
 —Sláinte, he says.
 God, he fuckin' hates himself.
 —Cool, she says. (D 195)

Although Declan consciously presents an Irish version of himself, simultaneously he rejects his Irish manners. "His linguistic repertoire complies with his American romantic interest's conception of Irishness" (Cronin 190), which conversely makes him develop a feeling of exteriority. In the concluding scene, Declan clears up the mystery and tells Kim, his would-be girlfriend, the title of his new research paper.

—Come up with a title yet?
 —Yeah, says Declan.
 He sits down.
 —Who the Fuck Are We? What d'you think?
 —Love it, she says. —It's so Irish.
 —Ah, bollix, says Declan. —I give up.
 She laughs.
 He smiles. (D 214)

"Recognizing the constructedness of national identity", Carmen Zamorano Llana argues, "allows Declan to gain the necessary distance so as to realize that the time is ripe for him and for post-Celtic Tiger Ireland to question the inherited 'we' from the advantageous liminality with which his hybrid identity provides him" (96). Besides, the narrative of exteriority is again approved by the profanity of Irish slang in this scene which has been already detected by the professor during her first meeting with Declan. Cronin describes it as a "comedic reinscription of the inevitability and indefatigability of this system of representation and exteriority. The version of Irishness [...] is conscripted to form another narrative that will induce exteriority in some other Irish-identifying subject if not, ultimately, in Declan himself" (191). An open entry policy, Cronin elaborates, would constitute a version of Irishness totally diverse if it was based on unrestricted inclusivity. The notion of Irishness depicted in "Home to Harlem" is strongly linked to the very fact that it is ultimately shaped by exteriority which means

that we are not concerned with a permanent definition of Irishness. Up to a point, Irishness is presented both, as a process and as a network simultaneously, and the story “comprises not only a series of Irish-designated or Irish-identifying narratives but, crucially, the experience of exteriority in relation to (at least some of) them” (191). It therefore appears insufficient to hold a personal understanding of Irishness. Alongside, we have to recognise alternative versions of Irishness in the first place and, likewise, we have to tolerate these narratives in order to have access to the group. Consequently, the experience of exteriority that is so closely linked to the idea of Irishness is the result of a number of opposing concepts “engendered by high-stakes colonial and postcolonial environments” (191). It cannot be regarded as a mere national qualification but rather “as a matter of aggressively displayed credentials” (Roy Foster; qtd. in Cronin 191). Another aspect highlighted by Cronin is the very fact that in the same way as “being black and Irish was, for Declan, an intensification of the problem of being Irish, this model of Irishness encourages us to conceptualise Irishness both within and without Ireland’s borders” (Cronin 191). Even those who are born in Dublin, Cork or Limerick might experience the same feelings of exteriority as those born to Irish emigrants outside the country (191-192). The notion of Irishness portrayed in “Home to Harlem” has to be understood as a process “comprising the recognition of Irish narratives and the experience of exteriority in relation to them” (192).

7. The Stereotypical Shaping of the Other in “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner” & “Black Hoodie”

In 2005, Reddy emphasised that there are two common theories about racism in Ireland. Firstly, racism as such cannot be found at all in Ireland, and secondly, if there is such a phenomenon as racism, it has to be ascribed to the wave of African immigration to Ireland during the 1990s. The Irish Minister of Justice, John O’Donoghue, confirmed these beliefs in 2001, claiming that the country will deal with the issue of racism as soon as it comes. These popular assumptions found their way into the media so that racial issues were then presented in a completely inaccurate manner, provoking an anxious attitude towards difference in the white Irish population. In this sense, as Reddy details further, the issue racism is strongly dependent on is the “presence of people of colour” (374) although it is not reduced to people of colour hypothetically (374-379).

Basis for any manifestation of racism is often closely related to a fixed “set of beliefs and disbeliefs” (qtd. in Susan Condor 230) about individual people or groups, which is better known under the term stereotypes. As simple generalisation for the purpose of categorisation, the main reason why stereotypes exist and have always played an essential role in identifying other people is their mere function of systematizing and simplifying the “complexity of the information” (qtd. in Condor 230) of the social world that we are constantly exposed to. Basically, stereotypes help to shape the social world and to categorise the social beings that live in this world. However, it is not the case that stereotypes are simply developed or constructed by every individual social being in order to make sense of its opponents. Stereotypes are learned through the processes of socialisation, while their construction can be ascribed to our culture. Lippmann claims that in “the great booming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us” (qtd. in Condor 234). As social beliefs, stereotypes are shared by a number of people within a community and further diffused through social contact. However, the theoretical assumptions suggest that stereotyping can be easily described as a means of categorisation in interpersonal encounters (Condor 230-247). “[S]tereotypes”, Condor claims, “are likely to have certain consequences in the world” (244) and, besides, “serve to reproduce various forms of social inequality” (244). In 1922, Walter Lippmann claimed that stereotypes are predefined by culture, about sixty years later, Walter G. Stephan and David

Rosenfield described the primary function of stereotyping as “attaching labels to different racial and ethnic groups [...] to impose order on a chaotic social environment” (qtd. in Condor 247).

7.1. “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner”

Larry Linnane, father of four grown-up daughters and a teenage son, feels that he is typically “modern, successful, Irish” (D 3). The story’s opening offers an idyllic representation of Irish family life: a loving father, proud of his children enjoying every minute of his peaceful life, until “Stephanie brought home the black fella” (D 3). Stephanie, one of Larry’s daughters, tells her family about her friend Ben, who is of Nigerian origin, blaming the Irish government for not granting Ben asylum in the country. All of a sudden Larry’s perfect idyll has to make way for reality. The mere thought that his daughter “met him [the asylum-seeker, the black, the Nigerian] and danced with him and God-knows-what-else with him” (D 5) could not make Larry “more surprised, and angry, and hurt, and confused” (D 5). Surprised by his aggressive reaction when Stephanie suggests inviting Ben for dinner, Larry cannot avoid welcoming the black guy in his house which initiates a phase of self-reflection in Larry whether or not he is a racist.

—Is it because he’s black? said Mona. (...) Phil Lynott was black, love, Mona reminded him.

Phil Lynott had been singing ‘Whiskey in the Jar’ when Larry and Mona had stopped dancing and kissed for the first time. (...)

—Phil Lynott was Irish! he said, —He was from Crumlin. He was fuckin’ civilized. (D 6)

Self-doubt superseded by the conviction that he is everything but not a racist give Larry a week of sleepless nights which is getting to a point where Larry is even dreading the dinner, since he cannot forecast that he will like the guy and will not react in a way that would offend either Ben or his family. Simply put, he cannot stand the idea that a black man will be sitting at his table.

When he watched a footballer, for example, he didn’t see skin; he saw skill. Paul McGrath, black and brilliant. Gary Breen, white and shite. And it was the same with music. Phil Lynott, absolutely brilliant. Neil Diamond, absolutely shite. And politics. Mandela, a hero. Ahern, a cancer. [...] But, why then? Why didn’t he want a refugee in the family?” (D 8)

There is civil war in Africa, savagery and starvation. Larry has heard all about it and he has seen pictures of children dying or having their faces circled by flies, and in

particular, there is the problem that most Africans are infected with AIDS. Larry's reasons why he, as a responsible father, does not want his daughter to be intimidated by somebody who comes from an uncivilised nation are based on a stereotyped picture of a group of people. Larry constructs the idea of Ben, the asylum seeker and new boyfriend of his daughter, through pictures of welfare programmes which portray the simple lives of less civilised people in contrast to Irish standards in order to make people donate money. Eva White points out that "Larry's ignorance of Nigeria adds to his confusion and his fear of the Other. This fear is an abstract one, based on the 'Idea of the Other' rather than on the concrete human experience of a face-to-face-intercultural encounter" (E. White 98). However, Larry does not want to offend Ben. Therefore, the first part of the story features Larry's personal struggle in which he tries to prove that he does not show racist nor any other form of stereotyped behaviour towards Africans and asylum seekers in general. He wants to like the black guy and simple reasons such as his adoration for black artists like Bob Marley and Phil Lynott must be proof enough that Larry is not a racist. The story lists a number of stereotypes and ways of communicating which indicate that Larry tries hard to abandon his pre-shaped image of Africans in another country. Larry even tries to prepare for the handshake with Ben. "He'd like the lad – Ben – he'd shake his hand, and hold it long enough to prove that it wasn't about the skin" (D 9).

The story covers the issue of racism through the representation of prejudice. Maureen Reddy compares Larry's racism to a weed: "likely to spread if not eradicated but easily uprooted and disposed of" (381). The basis for this evaluation derives from the Larry's change of perspective. Running through a hard time preparing for the meeting, Larry carefully selects his clothes for the dinner in order to "impose his authority – the older man, the citizen, the firm but fair father" (D 10). In the situation in which he sees Ben the first time, Larry's stereotyped picture of the young man has to make room for reality:

[...] there he was.

The best, most elegant suit Larry had ever been close to. A small lad – very, very black – and completely at home in a suit. [...] He was on the verge of saying, 'Welcome to Ireland', when he remembered what had to be done – and he looked properly at the lad for the first time and tried to see the religious fanatic, the AIDS carrier, the crook, the bigamist.

But all he could see was a small, handsome, intelligent man looking straight back at him. Not a scar or a squint; [...]. (D 11-12)

Nevertheless, Larry does not allow himself to be distracted by the young man's elegance, and his cologne which, by the way, the ladies in the house obviously admire.

Larry felt a sudden, roaring need to impress him [...]. But the smell saved him. [...] He was wearing that men's stuff. Men's perfume.

Jesus. [...]

A man with a smell was hiding something. That was what Larry believed.

And what was this guy hiding? Larry got ready to stare him out of it, to let him know that he knew. The suit hadn't fooled him. (D 12)

Larry's intention to expose the black man's secret is also reflected in the headings of two chapters, "A Black Man on the Kitchen Table" and "The Naked Chef". These episodes revolve around the decision to invite Ben and the situation in which Larry is about to throw Ben out of his house because Ben rejects the profane way the Linnanes communicate with each other. Ben is clearly the one who is watched and put into the pillory, so to say *on* the kitchen table, simply because of the way Larry initially wants to see Ben, i.e. in the light of starvation, war, AIDS, Live Aid and so on. With regard to Larry's feeling of superiority before having met Ben, the story reveals how Ben is put in his place, since he cannot be the boyfriend of the Irish girl. Larry even feels authoritative enough to apologise on behalf of the Irish people for being frightened and therefore responding to black people and asylum seekers in a rather reserved way. As regards "*The Naked Chef*", both, Larry and Ben are brought back from their personal odysseys, back down to earth by Mona who does not accept their arrogant, ignorant attitudes.

Mona stretched her legs, pushed her chair, so he was sitting right in front of Ben.

—Stay where you are, Ben, she said.

—But, said Ben, —it appears that I am not welcome.

—Three things, Ben, said Mona. —One. You are welcome. Two. I spend all day making the dessert; I got it off *The Naked Chef*—[...] And three. Get down off your high horse, so we can have a nice chat with the coffee. Okay?

Ben looked down at Mona.

—What is the dessert? he said.

—Chocolate pudding.

—With cream?

—Yep.

—Then I will stay. (D 16)

The tense atmosphere calms down and a certain sympathy towards Ben develops in Larry when listening to Ben's story about his family. He tells the Linnanes about his sister Jumi, who disappeared after she spoke her mind, and explains that he wants to stay in Ireland so that, one day, his children will have a comfortable and peaceful life,

which evokes a total turnaround in Larry, who suddenly feels that he likes Ben and that he wants to be Ben's father-in-law.

He wasn't a racist. There was a black man sitting across from him and he wanted to be his father-in-law. He wasn't sure why, but that didn't matter. Larry was happy with himself. (D 25)

The sympathy he has for Ben proves Larry's anti-racist personality. Unfortunately, it turns out that Stephanie and Ben are not a couple but only friends. Larry is disappointed and does not have a clue what this dinner, which started so disastrously, has been for, if his daughter was not even going out with the black lad. So far, Larry was sure that Ben is hiding something. However, at the end of the story, Larry abandons his authoritative position and asks Ben where to buy the perfume (Reddy 381).

And now they stood at the gate, just the pair of them.
—So— said Larry. —That went well, I thought.
—Yes, said Ben. [...]
—Tell us, said Larry. [...]
—That stuff you have on you [...] —The scent, said Larry. The perfume; whatever the fuck. [...] —Where would I get a bottle. he said.
—There are several shops on Parnell Street.
—Of course, yeah. That sell all the African stuff. Would I be welcome in one of them places?
—Yes, of course. (D 26)

“Indeed, Ben and Larry connect most convincingly not as fellow citizens or as potential father-in-law/son-in-law, but as fellow consumers, as Ben knows where to shop [...]. The object of exchange between the men shifts from a woman to a (far safer) cologne” (Reddy 381). Reddy regards the story as reassuring insofar as it conveys the assumption that African asylum seekers have the intention to live a peaceful life in Ireland rather than marrying into an Irish family. In terms of racism, the story does not deal with social or political racism but basically covers personal racism within one's own four walls. The story allows insights into Doyle's opinion about racism and the way it can be overcome. He firmly believes that contact is the key to success and by writing a number of humorous and optimistic stories he believes that he can contribute to an antiracist approach in Ireland (381-382).

Lauren Onkey regards the story in relation to Doyle's first novel *The Commitments* and suggests that “Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner” reveals “how detached the characters in *The Commitments* were from interracial contact, but most importantly, it offers a critique of the idea that ignorance, or worse yet, fandom for black music or

black athletes excuses white people from the responsibilities and implications of white supremacy” (Onkey 186). He predicts that Larry’s grandchildren will grow up in a mixed Ireland in which they “will need more renewed ideas of blackness and race than those offered by American popular culture” (188).

7.2. “Black Hoodie”

The story titled “Black Hoodie” is a further example of how stereotypes have been manifest in society and the way individual persons respond to interpersonal encounters through their pre-shaped understandings of who qualifies to be interior. In the story three teenagers carry out an experiment for their Transition Year project. They have to form a mini-company and they know that they do not want to “do the usual stuff” (D 132). They want to do something extravagant. The three friends are the narrator of the story, a Nigerian girl, and another boy whose brother is in a wheelchair. The wheelchair comes into play when the teenager uses his brother’s wheelchair and pretends that he is the one who is handicapped.

In the opening scene, we learn that the narrator is in love with the Nigerian girl but he cannot tell her name.

I’m not telling you her name. And that means I can’t use my own name either. Because, how many Nigerian girls is the average Irish teenager going to be hanging around with, even here in a multicultural, we-love-the-fuckin’-foreigners Dublin? If I give my name, I might as well give hers. So, no. (D 131)

At first sight, it appears that if he does not mention the girl’s name, he cannot reveal his own name simply because of reasons of equity. Nevertheless, reflecting deeper on the reason why he actually does not want to be named implies that he does not want to be identified. Considering the fact that the stories were first published in a newspaper, Doyle may have written this story in particular from the perspective of the narrator who knows that his story will be published in public. Although the narrator regards Ireland as indeed multicultural, in the sense that all foreigners are welcome, he wants to prevent himself from being accused of hanging around with theses foreigners. Not revealing his name therefore suggests that he is far better off staying anonymous.

The friends come up with the idea of forming *Black Hoodie Solutions* for the project, a company whose objective is to prove that Irish businesses react in a stereotypical manner towards teenagers and blacks as regards shoplifting.

Well, says Name Omitted, —myself and my colleagues here – and she points at me and the other fella —are going to establish a consultancy firm, to advise retail outlets on stereotyping of young people, and best practice towards its elimination. (D 135)

The name of their firm is constituted by the *hoodie* that the narrator wears, *black* for the Nigerian girls' skin colour and *solutions* does not have a specific meaning, it “just sounds cool” (D 136). The friends want to demonstrate that everybody is stereotyped because of their appearance.

—We are all labelled and stereotyped, she says. —Automatically: We don't have to say or do anything. [...]

—For example. I walk into a shop and the security staff immediately decide that I am there to shoplift.

—Because you're black?

—Because I'm young, says Ms Nigeria. —And, yes, because I'm black. (D 134-135)

The friends start their project and are immediately successful in stealing from shops around Dublin and afterwards bringing back the stolen goods and discussing the issue that the security staff are stereotyped towards blacks and teenagers wearing hoodies. The good thing about their experiment is the negotiable consultancy fee. The narrator explains their strategy as follows:

And his brother has his wheelchair. He's in the same shop as us – that's me and the Nigerian bird. And while the Feds follow me because (a) I'm with a black person, and (b) I'm wearing a hoodie, he's robbing everything he can stretch to, because (a) he's in the wheelchair, and (b) he's wearing glasses. And no one follows him. In fact, everyone wants to help him. (D 131-132)

It works perfectly well until the friends decide that they have to get to a higher level, i.e. the larger stores of the city. The first shop in which they carry out their experiment is a sweets shop, the only shop where they do not bring back the stolen goods but eat them all up. The second shop is a department store. They steal, leave the shop, re-enter it and wait for the manager. However, this time, negotiations about their fees are cancelled because the three friends are stopped by the Guards, the very moment in which the story about prejudice actually starts. The friends are taken to the station because they cannot convince them that they actually did not steal anything because they were still in the shop and, because shoplifting is part of the experiment for their project. However, the

friends do not feel guilty. At the station they are individually examined and their parents are informed. When the parents arrive it is not mentioned whether the shoplifting experiment carries a penalty or how the story finally ends for the friends. However, at the very end of the story, when the narrator and his father are about to leave, the narrator decides to take the chance to impress the Nigerian girl, with whom he is actually deeply in love though he has not yet been brave enough to ask her if she wants to go out with him. It is his now or never and the only way to stand his ground and to support her.

—Excuse me, I say. —Excuse ME.

He stops. He turns. [...]

—What? he says.

—What's your name? [...]

—Why? he says.

—Cos I'm going to report you.

I can nearly see the words, going in an arc through the air, from my mouth to the space between his eyes, where his eyebrows join together. [...] The room is frozen, everyone in it. [...]

—Report me for what? [...]

—For using racist language intended to inflict on a member of an ethnic minority, I say. [...]

—You're threatening me? says the Fed.

—No, he's not, says Ms Nigeria.

—No, I'm not, I agree. (D 148-150)

The preceding events that culminate in the final situation cover the time of interrogation at the Guards' station and are based on the Guards' behaviour towards the black Nigerian girl and the hoodie-wearing Irish narrator. While the boy whose brother has a wheelchair is being interrogated, the Nigerian girl and the narrator are facing the Guards' racist attitude towards teenagers. This time, it is mostly the Nigerian girl who is the victim of the insults.

—Right, lads, he says. —Names, addresses, the parents' mobile numbers.

He stands in front of Ms Nigeria.

—The jungle drums in your case, love. [...] —And don't worry, he says. —We don't torture people in this country. Amn't I right, lads? (D 141-142)

The teenagers still feel that they are not guilty and that they can successfully contribute to a less stereotypical attitude and behaviour in Dublin's streets. The narrator wants to remind the Guard of his inappropriate response to the Nigerian girl by particularly gazing at him. However, the Guard is still in a superior position and will not be intimidated by the narrator's gaze.

I look back at him for as long as I can. Then I look away.

—Good man.

I have the shakes, bad. Like, my handcuffs are rattling against the back of the chair. But – this is weird – I’m happy. Just for a bit. Ms Nigeria isn’t doing any more protesting and your man telling me to wipe the look off my face – I’ve kind of caught up with her. I’m feeling a bit brave. (D 143)

Next, the narrator is to be interviewed about the shoplifting. He is led into a separate room in which he finds a table, two chairs and a camera. In order to appear polite, the narrator puts down his hoodie which he has been wearing all the time. This is the very moment in which the story shortly abandons the case of discrimination towards black African people in Dublin and focuses on the stereotyped way in which Irish people respond to teenagers.

I take the hoodie off my head.

—Put it back, he says.

—Why? I say

He stares.

My hands are shaking, sore. I put the hood back up.

—That’s the ticket, he says. —Any tattoos?

—Me?

—Yeah.

—No.

—Ah well, he says. —You still look the part. (D 144)

This scene ultimately justifies the friends’ initial assumptions. First of all, teenagers are more likely to be taken for shoplifters than might be the case with adults, for instance. Secondly, the narrator is accused of committing crimes because of the way he dresses, wearing a hoodie and ideally even tattoos. Thirdly, criminal behaviour is attributed to people like him because he is in the company of a black person. The Guard wants to put a wrong complexion on the teenager who is accused of shoplifting by relying on the apparently obvious aspects which make teenagers criminals, i.e. their appearance.

He turns the camera on. He sits.

—Thursday, 14th of November, he says. —Name?

—Age?

I tell him.

—Would you take the hood down please? he says. [...]

I lift my hand. I pull the hood back off my head. There’s nothing else I can do. I’m only copping on, why he made me put it up in the first place. It’s on the video, like – the proof. I’m wearing a hoodie. I must be guilty. (D 144)

A second aspect is worth noting in this scene. Through the implicit accusation that he is indeed a criminal, the narrator is made to believe that he certainly must be guilty. The

narrator tells the story about the school project and their objective that they wanted the shop owners to recognise that they are “losing money because of their prejudices” (D 147).

That’s the project, like. It’s about stereotyping. [...] —Me and - Name Omitted - walked around the shop because of the way we look —
I hold the hoodie and shake it a bit.
—The hoodie and her skin and that, the security guards followed us all over the place. And the fella in the wheelchair took the stuff in the bag [...]. He took the stuff and no one watched him because he doesn’t look the type and they left him alone. (D 146)

Still, the Guards do not believe the story and keep regarding the case as mere shoplifting. The interrogation is interrupted by another Guard who announces the arrival of the teenagers’ parents. Here, we return to the situation in which the narrator informs the Guard that he is going to report him because of his racist attitude towards the Nigerian girl, basically because he has proved his bravery. The situation stays open-ended after the narrator’s and Ms. Nigeria’s father intervene by pointing to the very fact that the project was indeed a “legitimate business venture” (152) conducted at school. Here, the narrator stops reporting on the discussion between the Guard and the parents and focuses on his reflection of how he might win Ms. Nigeria’s heart. Turning back to the end of story, the two families leave the police station and walk past Liberty Hall. “[T]he teenagers are holding hands after crossing a literal and metaphorical cultural bridge” (97).

Both stories in this chapter perfectly illustrate how society offers pre-determined images about nations and cultural and social groups and proposes the characteristics of what is normal. In addition, the presentation of how self-assured people accept these images as form of orientation in their lives demonstrates how we have reached an impasse in encounters with the Other:

Culture is to society what memory is to the person. It specifies designs for living that have proven effective in the past, ways of dealing with social situations, and ways to think about the self and social behavior that have been reinforced in the past. It includes [...] rules of the game of life that have been shown to ‘work’ in the past.” (Harry C. Triandis; qtd. in Simon 16-17)

8. “The Deportees” – Multicultural is the Way to Success

While so far manifestations of the Other have been classified as indeed problematic in social encounters, Doyle presents the aspect of multiculturalism quite differently in the collection’s second story. It suggests that the Other does no longer have to hide, avoiding social encounters with locals, but promotes the power of music that unites native Irish and non-natives. “The Deportees” is another story about Jimmy Rabbitte. Even though he thinks that he has already given up band management, he has the idea of forming another band although he is not sure what kind of band. On the day when an Italian courier collides with Jimmy and an African woman offers to help him, Jimmy has his band. Everyone is welcome in his band except for white Irish and lovers of the band The Corrs.

Anyway, he was on Parnell Street, walking past one of the African shops, when [...] someone walked straight into him, sent him flying.

—E’cuse me!

A Romanian, a young fella, Jimmy could see, as his head hit the edge of the path and an Italian bike courier rode over his hand – an Italian who’d been in Dublin for a while.

—You theek fockeeng eeee-jit, he roared as he dashed across to Marlborough Street.

Jimmy’s head was hopping as he stood up, helped by the Romanian kid and a big African woman. His hand was in a bad way too, fuckin’ killing him. But he was grinning.

Jimmy had his group. (D 35)

The places around the African Shops in Parnell Street are familiar to Irish readers as the “target of racist attacks and antiracist counter-demonstrations” (Maureen Reddy 382). Parnell Street already appeared in the previous story “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner”, as the very place “where Larry Linnane will purchase the cologne he admires on Ben” (382). The scene that follows the accident, the moment of epiphany, reveals Jimmy’s attitudes towards foreigners. Admittedly, any behaviour based on stereotypical assumptions about people’s appearances cannot be generalised from a short encounter in a short story. However, the very scene properly reflects how people are categorised at first glance.

He’d explained it all [to his wife Aoife] when he’d got home that night – about the wigs and the Romanian kid and the Italian prick on the bike.

—How did you know he was Romanian? said Aoife.

—His jumper, said Jimmy. (D 36)

Jimmy has set himself the goal of forming “The World’s Hardest-Working Band” (D 36), and its members should only be representatives of minorities in Ireland. The band would be a “multiracial band” (Reddy 383).

Brothers and Sisters, Welcome to Ireland. Do you want the Celtic Tiger to dance to your music? If yes, The World’s Hardest-Working Band is looking for you. Contact J. Rabbitte at 089-22524242 or rabbittej@banjo.ie. White Irish need not apply.

Could he write that? [...] But he deleted the last sentence. (D 36)

In only a short time and with little effort, Jimmy has eleven band members including King Robert, a drummer from Moscow, a New York guitar player, a Nigerian drummer, a singer from Spain, a Romanian accordion player and his son playing the trumpet, a guitarist and an old punk on the bass, both Irish though, a traveller and, last but not least, a sixty-year old born-again Christian.

—D’yeah like The Corrs? he asked her.

—No, I do not.

—You’re in, said Jimmy.

—That it?

—Yeah, said Jimmy. —As long as you’re on the level about not being white.

—I have got to say, she said. —this is not a conversation I have had before.

—Welcome to Ireland, love, said Jimmy. (D 41)

Most chapters of the story cover the formation of the band. Numerous people who have seen Jimmy’s advertisement in the newspaper contact him, and Jimmy immediately decides during the call whether or not these people seem well-suited for his band. Unlike the artists in *The Commitments*, the band members do already play instruments and do not have to struggle to become musicians, to develop their identities as musicians. An aspect which has been discussed by Carmen Zamorano Llana deals with the very aspect that it is skin colour rather than musical talent that counts. Despite Jimmy’s initial intention of going without any white Irish band member (Zamorano Llana 94), he later thinks that “a couple of old fashioned Irish rockers would look good onstage with the rest.” (D 36)

At their first meeting, there is no energy, no belief, no band at all until Jimmy plays *Vigilante Man* for them, originally by Woody Guthrie, but Jimmy plays another version.

—HAVE YOU SEEN THAT VIGILANTE MAN?

They listened. And Jimmy watched them loosen and fall in love. [...]

—That’s the kind of thing yis’ll be playin’, said Jimmy.

—Alright? [...]

And that was it. The nine people in Jimmy’s kitchen were all together.

—So, said Kerry. —Who are we?
 —The Deportees, said Jimmy.
 —Fuckin’ ace, boy, said Kenny. (D 52)

Lauren Onkey explains that the band’s name is closely connected to the Guthrie’s songs that the band performs. Jimmy chooses a song, *Plane Wreck at Los Gatos (Deportee)*, which tells of the deportation of a group of immigrants from Mexico: “Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye Rosalita/ [...] You won’t have a name when you ride the big airplane/all they will call you will be deportee” (190). Besides, the band’s name refers to a later scene in the story when Jimmy and Gilbert discuss their next gig and Gilbert tells Jimmy that it has to be before the coming Friday since he will be deported by then. Jimmy’s solution to the problem, keeping in mind that he has to ensure his band’s existence, is to hide Gilbert in his attic because he thinks that if the immigration agency cannot find Gilbert, he will not be deported. More specifically, the name of the band refers to the very fact that the band members belong to the very group of people in Ireland who are likely to be deported since they are not legally residing in Ireland. Similarly to what has been addressed briefly in “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner” and will be raised in “New Boy” and “I Understand”, it can be assumed that Ireland symbolises security, hope and peaceful living for many immigrants. Nonetheless, these people are constantly faced with insecurity and terror since their residence in Ireland is not granted.

—No, said Aoife when Jimmy asked her if Gilbert could stay with them for a while.
 —He’s nice, said Jimmy.
 —No.
 —You’ll like him.
 —No.
 —His family was wiped out in the civil war, said Jimmy.
 —There’s no civil war in Nigeria. You should be ashamed of yourself, Jimmy Rabbitte.
 —Okay, okay, said Jimmy. —I’ll tell him.
 He got out of the bed.
 —Jesus, Jimmy. Can it not wait till the morning?
 —Not really, said Jimmy. —He’s up in the attic. (D 62-63)

Jimmy organises the official gig, which, unfortunately, falls through, but only a short time after the first disappointment, the band plays at a twenty-first birthday party blowing aunts and oldies out of the party tent. Everything the band plays becomes theirs. Unlike The Commitments which want to represent a form of identity that is actually borrowed from former activists in the attempt to achieve equality for blacks,

The Deportees do not only represent the oppressed but are the ones who are still being marginalised by society. It is not only about borrowing music but adding their own identities, and thus, the music becomes theirs.

—Hello-o? Kerri said to the mic.

—Hello, said every man in the tent, except Jimmy and maybe ten others.

Young Dan led off his time – DOO DEH DEH – and they all went after him. [...] It was great, brilliant, better than Jimmy could ever have expected. [...] That was the thing about the gang. They'd play anything and make it theirs. A nursery rhyme, a rebel song, a good song, or any old syrup served up by Westlife or Mariah Carey, they'd give it the slaps and turn it into three or four good minutes of jumping, swaying, hard-rocking loveliness. (D 75)

“Like the Commitments the group is terrific, but apparently doomed by the band members’ many idiosyncrasies; as in the first novel, Doyle is expert at [...] evoking the ineffable, haunting quality of certain pop songs” (Reddy 383). Nevertheless, the identity as a band depends on their gigs. Jimmy almost gives up the idea of The Deportees, but at the twenty-first birthday party Jimmy knows that “they were The Deportees again” (D 64).

Anything played by this band was dance music. They were that good. Jimmy looked at them. They were happy, sexy; they were cooking, and Irish. (D 69)

Analogous to the formation of the band there is a second plot, the birth of Jimmy’s fourth child, which makes him feel satisfied and pleased with his life. This secondary story-line is closely connected to the anonymous phone calls that occur after Jimmy has put up posters for his band all around the city. The caller only whispers “nigger lover” (D 42) and hangs up again. The first call occurs at night.

It must have been two or three in the morning.

—Hello? said Jimmy.

—Nothing.

Hello?

Nigger lover.

Who is it? said Aoife.

Nothing else. No more words. Just the horrible space at the other end of the line, and someone waiting there.

Jimmy turned it off. (D 42)

The call gives Jimmy sleepless nights. When he moves home from the hospital, after his wife Aoife gave birth to their son Brian, Jimmy is literally dashed to the ground when he gets another anonymous call.

It was four in the morning. AND ONCE MORE THE DAWNING JUST WOKE UP THE WANTIN’ IN ME-EE, Jimmy sang it to himself as he walked out onto

Parnell Square. [...] His phone rang in his pocket. That would be his da. He flipped it open.

—A boy, he said.

He recognised the absence of voice, remembered it too late.

—Nigger lover.

And Jimmy dropped, he actually fell to the path, and cried. He couldn't stop. [...] "That evil out there, on a night like this." (D 48)

The last call occurs during the gig at the birthday party. More specifically, the anonymous person calls when King Robert sings *Too Many Rivers to Cross* (Reddy 383). Originally, the song was produced by Jimmy Cliff, a musician who played a major role in establishing Reggae music during the 20th century (All Music). The original lyrics are not about an African-American struggling to emancipate himself in the western world, as might be the case for King Robert. Nevertheless, the title refers to the very fact that there are still too many rivers that need to be crossed in order to reach a time when black are fully accepted without anyone questioning their equality. By forming a band that primarily consists of people whose nationality is other than Irish, Jimmy puts his head above the parapet, not sparing a single thought about the fact that his band might not be received without a sense of prejudice. While Jimmy is shocked after the calls but does not show any attempt to react to these calls in any way, he responds to the last call with laughter. Jimmy's laughter serves as a synonym for racism. Jimmy is able to deprive the power of the "evil out there" (D 48), which is proved by the band's success. A band consisting of marginalised personalities has catapulted itself into the centre of attention and by doing so they resolutely make a statement against racism (Reddy 383). Reddy put it this way: "the anonymous caller is put in his place, so to speak, by the music that brings a hugely diverse group together, and that place is out on the margins" (383).

The end of the story is characterised by future visions or Jimmy's imagining what will become of the band.

Some of them will leave, the band or the country; others will join, and some will come back. [...] Gilbert won't be deported. He'll out-sprint the Guards on Grand Canal Street, outside the Registry Office. It'll be a close thing. The Guards will have the tail of Gilbert's jacket in their fingers when they'll be stopped; flying weight of his future daddy-in-law will deck the pair of them. (D 76)

King Robert, by the way, is presented as an integral part of Irish society or, more precisely, in Dublin's political affairs since he "will join Fianna Fáil – the Republican Party. He'll be the city's first black alderman, and the first mayor to sing 'Let's Stay

Together' on Bloomsday" (D 76). Besides, the band will record their first hit called "You Might Well Beat the Irish But We Won't Give a Shite" (D 76). The title of the song assumes that Jimmy has the intention of speaking out against discrimination through the band's song and fighting for the acceptance of immigrant people in Ireland. Insofar as he believes in the success of his multiracial band, it can be further assumed that he is on a personal collision course proving to the Irish that he will succeed by featuring the Other. However, it is not clear whether Jimmy wants to prove to himself that he is still doing well in forming a band or whether his struggle is truly based on his belief of equality, offering the Other a chance to profit.

Lauren Onkey highlights that the story of *The Deportees* takes readers back to the narrative of *The Commitments* but points to the very fact that the acceptance of refugees in Ireland does not represent the actual status quo (190).

Jimmy has gone from a nigger to a nigger lover – he was no threat when he wanted to claim black status and play black music in a culture with few black people, but giving a voice to black people in Ireland (not to mention travelers) via Woody Guthrie songs that protest racism and the excesses of capitalism challenges a Celtic Tiger Irishness invested in amnesia. (190)

9. Finding Oneself in a Different World – “New Boy” & “I Understand”

“Others remain Other but are asked to sympathize with those to whom they are Other and to make allowances for them as they develop a more progressive racial consciousness” (Maureen Reddy 385).

9.1. “New Boy”

Joseph is the new boy in the class. He was born in Nigeria and had to move to Ireland after his father had been assassinated. Although Joseph has problems understanding every conversation, he exactly knows what is going on. Immediately at the beginning of the story it is clear that the new boy is hated by two of his classmates. It takes some time until Joseph understands what the words “You are dead!” mean, but he knows that everything he does will provoke the others. So he puts up with everything in order to survive his first day at the new school. After a little dispute in the schoolyard, the boys are no longer enemies but become the three musketeers. “New Boy” is the story of a 9-year old immigrant boy who starts his first day as an outsider and becomes an insider after the first break.

The story covers Joseph’s first day at school. A major problem Joseph has to face is his restricted knowledge of the language. Although he seems to be a clever boy who recognises every detail in a social encounter and knows how he has to respond in certain situations, keeping in mind that he is the new one who is watched all the time, there are situations in which Joseph’s experience does not help him any further. Besides, he cannot follow every conversation during class. In the opening scene, when the teacher asks the pupils to take out their Maths books and one pupil responds that Seth Quinn has thrown it out of the window, Joseph does not see a sense behind such an action.

Nevertheless, Joseph learns quickly. When the teacher shouts “Hands in the air” (D 78) in order to achieve silence in the classroom, he does the same. On the other hand, he does not have a clue what the teacher means when she asks God to give her strength, so the story is full of comical elements which arise out of a boy’s naivety not understanding sarcasm in a language other than his mother tongue. Joseph learns from the context and assumes, for instance, that “Pull up your socks” (D 90) cannot have any

other meaning than working harder. In addition, he rapidly identifies the dangerous boy Christian Kelly, who first baffles Joseph by his statement: “You’re dead” (D 81).

This boy has just told Joseph that he is dead. Joseph must understand this statement, very quickly. [...] What did Christian Kelly mean? *You are dead*. Joseph thinks about these words and this too is not difficult. It is very clear that Joseph is not dead. So, Christian Kelly’s words must refer to the future. *You will be dead*. [...] Christian Kelly’s words are clearly intended as a threat, or promise. *I will kill you*. (D 82)

Joseph is clever enough to discover the meaning behind the statement since he knows that Christian Kelly cannot truly kill him, but hurt him. In addition, Joseph knows that he has to protect himself and be prepared although he has not yet seen Christian Kelly but only felt his finger prodding into his back.

The class is not aware of where Joseph comes from or why he has moved to Ireland. Primarily on the basis of his black skin, Joseph is classified as a recipient of help from Live Aid programmes although he is not the only black boy in the classroom.

—Hey, Live-Aid.

Joseph does not turn.

The so-what boy whispers.

—Live-Aid. Hey, Live-Aid. Do they know it’s Christmas?

It is Monday, the 10th day of January. It is sixteen days after Christmas. This is a very stupid boy.

But Joseph knows that this is not to do with Christmas or the correct date. He knows he must be careful. (D 80)

There is another black boy and a black girl in Joseph’s class, which makes Joseph consider what Irish children might look like since he is not sure whether the black girl is Irish or not. In contrast to the other stories in the collection, the main character in “New Boy” does not struggle to become Irish and develop a sense of belonging. His struggle is rather concerned with making sense of the social situations in which he finds himself. Compared with other characters, Joseph does not even want to develop a sense of belonging but focuses on the more important aspect, i.e. surviving.

Joseph cannot avoid being involved in a conflict with Christian Kelly.

—You have to apologise to Christian, she says.

Joseph speaks.

—Why?

She looks surprised. She inhales, slowly.

—Because you hurt him.

This is fair, Joseph thinks.

—I apologise, says Joseph.

—He didn’t mean to hurt you, says Miss.

Joseph speaks.

—That is not correct, he says.

—Oh now, says Miss.

Many voices whisper.

—What did he say? [...]

—We'll have to see about this.

Her meaning is not clear. [...]

— I'm not finished with you yet, says Miss. —Stay here at little break.

What is this little break? Joseph does not know. The other boys in the hostel did not tell him about a little break. (D 87-89)

The teacher's personality can be analysed with regard to two dimensions. On the one hand, she is a strict teacher who tries to control her class by commanding them to stretch their arms in the air. She seems to be almost unable to cope with the bright children, calling on God for help: "God give me strength" (D 86). On the other, hand she values Joseph because he is a clever and polite boy but she feels pity for him and for what he has experienced so far in his life. Her behaviour raises the assumption that she wants to apologise to Joseph on behalf of the Irish people for the dismissive attitude he has to face in Ireland. Nevertheless, it seems as if Joseph is not able to figure out his teacher.

The other pupils in the classroom regard Joseph as the Other who is new and not part of their community. In contrast, there is Joseph, fully aware that he is different and that he has to be careful about his actions and responses since any sort of wrong action will provoke his schoolmates. Seth Quinn is a small Irish boy; his shaved head and red nose make him appear angry to Joseph. Christian Kelly, a rowdy Irish boy, considers himself superior to Joseph and feels constrained to intimidate Joseph simply by his presence. In reality, Joseph has the edge over these two boys who want to see him dead through his clever mind and ability to apprehend the rules of social interactions such as in the situation during the little break, when Joseph becomes the centre of attention.

All the children in the school, it seems, are watching. They stand behind Joseph, pressing. They are also beside him, left and right, and in front, behind Christian Kelly. Joseph knows: something must happen, even if the bell rings and announces the conclusion of this thing called little break. The bell will not bring rescue. (D 93)

Analogous to the story in the classroom and the school yard, we learn why Joseph has moved to Ireland. Both stories, the actual situation and the situation in his home country, which is revealed through Joseph's thoughts, are set at school. In Ireland,

Joseph is tyrannised by other children. At home, Joseph and the local community were oppressed by soldiers. While Joseph has to protect himself from physical aggression by the other boys, soldiers killed numerous people including his father.

Joseph remembers the soldier.

The soldier walked out of the schoolhouse. He held the bell up high in the air. It was the bell that called them to school, every morning. [...] Joseph's father was the teacher.

[...] He found his father behind the schoolhouse. He knew it was his father, although he did not see the face. (D 94-95)

There is no single occasion on which Joseph loses his strength because of what he has experienced in life so far. In the opening section, the reader learns that Joseph feels that he is five years late compared to the other pupils since they all know each other already. However, Joseph does not reflect any further on the state of not being part of the community nor raising his belonging to question. Ideas like these simply do not develop in Joseph's mind. It is rather a question of responding to others in a way they would accept and do not have the feeling of being offended. Therefore, Joseph has to learn established rules of society in order to correspond to the social code of behaviour. This also includes the knowledge of how to behave as the Other.

Christian Kelly must do something. He must hit Joseph. Joseph understands this. [...] He knows. This is not what Christian Kelly wants. Christian Kelly is frightened. [...] He knows: he [Joseph] cannot release the finger. It will be weakness. Seth Quinn stands behind Christian Kelly. He stares at Joseph.

The school bell rings. (D 94-95)

By grabbing Christian Kelly's finger again, Joseph reacts against being pushed. The teacher finds them in the yard confronting the three boys. However, none of the boys, not even Joseph who was the object of aggression, insults the other boys.

Miss says nothing, for three seconds. These seconds, Joseph thinks, are important. Because, in that time, the three boys become united. This is what Joseph thinks. They are united in their silence. They do not like one another but this does not matter. They stand there together, against Miss.

She looks at the three boys.

—You're great lads, she says. (D 97)

The closing scene of the story proves that Joseph does indeed have the wish to belong to the same nation as his class mates. The following quotation demonstrates that, in the end, Joseph becomes a fighter for justice:

He thinks suddenly of his father; a great weight drops through his chest. He cries now as he laughs. He feels the weight, the sadness, fall right through him. He

wipes his eyes. He continues to laugh. Many times, Joseph made his father laugh. He remembers the sound of his father's laughter; he sees his father's face. He laughs. [...]
 Miss stands in front of Joseph.
 He stops laughing. He waits.
 He is surprised. She does not seem angry. She looks at Joseph for some long time.
 —The three musketeers, she says. (D 99)

The story reveals that stereotyping spares no-one, not even children. They are born into the permanent process of socialisation in which culture provides the most important information in the form of categorisations that allow one to position oneself and the Other in social encounters. The boys, however, overcome their stereotypes and, finally, they are able to bond with each other because Joseph refuses to “denounce them to his teacher [...]”. The result is the bond of schoolboys united against their teacher, thus transcending racial and cultural differences” (E. White 97).

9.2. “I Understand”

“I Understand” is the story of the African asylum-seeker Tom, who came to Dublin three months before. He has an illegal overnight job as a dishwasher in a restaurant in the Temple Bar district, which he regards as the cultural centre of both, Dublin and Ireland. Besides, he has a second job as a cleaner in a department store during the day. Tom slowly adapts to the Irish environment through his friend and colleague Kevin but has to face stereotypical violence against foreigners by Irish locals.

The title of the story suggests two aspects. Firstly, Tom understands what is going on around him. He understands the way people respond to him as the Other when they meet him in the streets. Secondly, the title refers to the understanding of what it means to be Irish in terms of typical markers of Irishness like linguistic conventions such as “grand” or “fuck that”. Tom knows that words like these are used by insiders and is aware of the underlying rules when to use such expressions.

In the opening scene of the story, three aspects of belonging are revealed through Tom's narration: first of all, that language and accent are markers of Irishness, secondly, that only those who master the language can truly belong to the Irish nation, and thirdly, representing the Other means acquiring an external position.

I begin to understand the accent. I already know the language. [...] I have brought my schoolroom English with me. [...] I know what to say when the next bus goes past without stopping.

—Fuck that.

People smile. One man nods at me.

—Good man, bud, he says. —Making the effort.

I smile.

I understand. This word, Bud. It is a friendly word. But I cannot say Bud to this man. I cannot call him Bud. A man like me can never call an Irish man Bud. But I can say, Fuck that. The expletive is for the bus, the rain, the economy, life. [...]

I understand. My children will learn to call other children Bud. They will be Irish. They will have the accent. (D 215)

The narrator highlights the importance of knowing the language of the community. It can be assumed that he had problems understanding locals at the beginning. He is well aware of the very fact that he is the Other and therefore exterior and knows that he has to adhere to rules. Although he might be a bud to Irish locals, the odds to call an Irishman a bud one day are long. He believes the Irish accent and manner of speech are the essential aspects that make people interior and so he tries to integrate slowly into the community by copying expletives and adopting the Irish slang, though he cannot shed his Otherness.

Tom sets himself the objective to stop running away. The central issue of the story, however, is that he has to deal with gangsters who want to force him to transport packages around Ireland. They threaten him and use violence in order to make Tom comply (Reddy 385). Tom realises that his arrival in Dublin was a new starting point. “Here, I am a baby. I am only three months old. My life started when I arrived” (D 218). In the same way as a baby is not supposed to follow its own faculty of reason, Tom has a minor status in the society.

He [the gangster] told me my name, he told me my address, he told me that I had no right to work here and that I would be deported. I turned. He was not a policeman. [...] I understand. I cannot fight this man. I cannot defend myself. (D 220)

Although Tom refuses to accept being controlled by the boss of the gangster group, he does not truly believe that his destiny will ever change. Tom is firmly convinced that he will resist, but continuously falls back into patterns of uncertainty.

I will not run. I decided that I would not run again when I came to Ireland, and I will not change my mind. I ran away from my home and my country. I ran away from London. Now, I will not run. (D 223)

However, the very aspect that raises hope is the fact that the gangster never had a close look at Tom. Maureen Reddy argues that the gangster has not seen Tom “who says he has many names, but can be called Tom – in all his individuality, but has seen only a generic type of his own imagination, an African asylum-seeker” (Reddy 385). The same is true for Tom’s supervisor who wants to help him get out of the dilemma when she recognises that the gangster continuously appears in Tom’s life. Nevertheless, when she meets Tom for the first time, she is representative for the people who do not see Tom as a person; what she sees are images such as the “famine, flies, drought, huge, starving bellies” (D 225) and so on. The scene in which Kevin takes Tom to a late-night club after work marks a change when Tom adopts a different attitude realising that the gangster is a fool because he has not bothered to look at him. Still afraid of being killed, he knows that the gangsters basically want to make him believe that he has no choice by intimidating him, and so Tom decides not to conform to what they expect. This night, Tom meets Ailbhe and feels attracted to her. The climax of the story takes place the next morning when Tom arrives at work still in fear that the gangster might have followed him to Ailbhe’s apartment. Tom leaves for work, and in front of the department store the gangster boss appears again. He confronts Tom with an offer he is expected to accept. Accidentally, his supervisor is also on the scene intending to help. However, Tom rather feels ashamed that a woman stands between him and his intimidator since he has decided not to hide like a child anymore, and much less behind a woman. He no longer wants to be weak and recognises that he has accepted a subordinate role for too long by continuously responding to others by saying “please” and apologising even for his name as in the scene in which he meets Ailbhe.

—What’s your name? she asks. [...]
 —Tom, I say.
 I have many names.
 —Oh, she says. —I was expecting something a bit more exotic.
 —I apologise, I say.
 I smile. She smiles.
 —Is Thomas more exotic? I ask. (D 231)

Returning to the climax of the story, Tom tells his supervisor to leave him alone which implies that Tom does not only fight against oppression of the Other in general but that he also follows a personal struggle towards more self-awareness in order to prove his masculinity.

He is a fool because he has not seen me. He has not bothered to look. He sees a man he can frighten and exploit, and he is certain that he can do this. The men who made me fight when I was a boy, they too saw fear and vulnerability. They made me do what they wanted me to do; they made me destroy and kill, for ten years. I am no longer a boy. This man frightens me but I, too, am a man. I know what a hard man is in the language of this city. Tough, ruthless, respected, feared. This man looks at me and sees none of these qualities. He sees nothing. He is a fool. (D 238)

In Tom's view, he does not confirm to the masculine behaviour a man is supposed to show in order to be regarded as truly manlike. So far, his life was characterised by fleeing, but this should come to a close now.

She steps aside. He doesn't move. She walks behind me. He doesn't move. She walks away. He doesn't move. [...]
 —So, he says, again. [...] —You are a bit of a messer, he says. —Aren't you?
 —No, I say. —I am not.
 He looks at me.
 Carefully. For the first time.
 Too late.
 —Right, he says. [...]
 He must take control.
 But I will not be controlled.
 I walk away.
 I walk. [...] I know that I am smiling. It is strange. I did not know that I was going to. It is good. To find the smile, to feel it. (D 239-240)

Tom keeps walking through the city passing a man whose body and clothes are all coloured in blue and only moving when somebody puts money into his bucket. According to Reddy's analysis, Tom knows that the man becomes invisible through the colour on his face and body and momentarily thinks of doing the same in order to become invisible but he keeps walking, reaching Ailbhe's apartment (385). This closing scene reveals that Tom decides against invisibility and therefore chooses "life, freedom, happiness, sex, love. It is a 'yes' to Ireland and to life, a 'no' to marginalization and fear" (Reddy 385).

Both stories suggest that language plays an essential role in belonging to a group. In "New Boy", the protagonist Joseph clearly recognises that he has to get used to the language and manner of expressing oneself as quickly as possible in order to understand Irish sarcasm. "I Understand", whose title already points to the fact that comprehension is the key to develop a feeling of inclusivity, exemplifies a similar phenomenon; being part of a speech community means being one of them. Yasir Suleiman claims language to be an essential element in the formation of identity. Linguistic identity is a necessary

component of personal identity since it is an issue that points to both the interior and the exterior domain of personal and national identity (52). In terms of national identity, language is a means of exchanging information and thus a means of sharing cultural and social knowledge, which is indispensable in belonging to a social group. As regards personal identity, on the other hand, identity is likewise a means of communication through which individuals convey what they are, besides their appearance and behaviour.

10. Ways of Measuring Irishness in “57% Irish”

Ray Brady has been offered a research grant for his study, which deals with the question of how nationality can be measured. Football, he thinks, is the instrument to measure the love of one's native country insofar as he claims that “responses to Robbie Keane's 2002 World Cup goal are indicative of degrees of Irishness [...] and that football is the road to Irishness” (Maureen Reddy 383). On the occasion of a goal in the 2002 World Cup soccer match Ireland-Germany, Ray was hugged by a number of people in the pub including a Polish man. This Polish soccer fan, who is sure that Germany will never beat the Irish, makes Ray reflect on the man's reasons for his enthusiasm and his motifs to regard himself as part of the Irish, in other words, his motifs for feeling interior.

And he'd wondered. Why is this guy hugging Ray. Kissing his forehead. [...] Why?

Because his own team was shite? (Poland had been beaten the day before, by South Korea.) Because he'd been in Ireland a while and felt that he was one of the gang? Because he wanted to feel that way?

Why? (D 101)

Ray wants to find out how nationality can be measured in order to find an explanation for the reaction of the Polish man. Later, this interest becomes the focus of his research paper and eventually gets him his first job in the Department of Arts and Ethnicity for which he is asked to develop a test that makes it harder to become an Irish citizen.

Ray had shown the Keane goal to hundreds of people, and monitored their reactions – both parents Irish, male; both parents Irish, female; one parent Irish, both genders; neither parents Irish, European; neither parents Irish, non-European. And, as he measured their glee or indifference, in the first months of his study, he became excited himself every time he watched them watch the goal. He wanted them all in, all Irish, all more than welcome. (D 102)

Slowly Ray loses his interest in monitoring people's reaction because he lacks a promising conclusion when one day the Minister of Arts and Ethnicity offers him the job “to make it look easier” (D 106) to become Irish.

—Go easy on the racial, the Minister had said. —We can't be showing anyone the door because of their skin. But the rest is up to you. [...]

So far, he'd written five words. History, Geography, Religion, Food and Football. He took up his biro and crossed out Geography and Food. He stared at the sheet of paper and its three surviving words. Then he dropped it into the bin. How did you measure Irishness? (D 107)

The protagonist quickly recognises that quizzes are too easy since everyone can become an expert, even his ex-girlfriend Stalin. Although Ray misses the times he spent with

her, he is now sure that he can create “a test that could send the ropy bitch back to Russia” (D 109). He comes up with the idea of the *Fáilte Score* – a programme in which the reactions to pictures showing personalities or situations relevant for an Irish sense of nationality are tested. In addition, Carmen Zamorano Llena argues, the name of the programme “evokes the positive image of Ireland as the country of the thousand welcomes, a popular phrase originating in the expression *céad mille* [sic] *fáilte*, or hundred thousand welcomes, which has medieval origins, and has profitably been exploited by the tourist industry developed in recent years” (93). Eva White claims that becoming a true Irish necessarily involves the knowledge of Irishness; and this is what causes Ray difficulties at the beginning. “It does not take Ray long to realize the difficulty and near impossibility of answering these questions because of the constructed nature of nationality and, by extension, Irishness” (E. White 100) Ray’s job is to find the markers of nationality in order to define what is actually being tested (100). It takes him some time to find these markers, but finally he manages. The video which will be shown to the test takers is constituted by “images of what, according to Ray, characterises the current shared imagery of Ireland in popular culture, namely Riverdance” (Zamorano Llena 93), the Celtic Tenors, the Pope’s visit to Galway, a cookbook, productions from the porn industry, *The Commitments*, and other sources.

And Ray’s brother became the first Irishman to have the length and breadth of his Irishness measured by Ray’s new testing procedures. And he failed.

What, you mean I’m not Irish?

Sorry, said Ray. —But you only got 19 per cent. Strictly speaking, you’re clinically dead. You didn’t even react to the porno bits.

They went by too fast.

That’s what they all say, said Ray.

But, Ray decided, his brother was right. (D 111)

Ray changes the programme and makes the length of the presentation longer so that his mother reaches a score of 38 per cent, but also his mother’s comments that apart from the lady’s bottom, it all appeared like an advertisement, make Ray change the programme even further.

He studied the results. A longer gawk at Shamrock’s arse would have pulled his brother’s score over the 40 per cent, and no gawk at all would have kept his mother’s score well over the same mark. Different strokes for different folks. A different test each time, hidden inside the one official test [...]. The *Fáilte Score*. Success and failure pre-ordained. Come into the parlour, or piss off. And no one would know. Except Ray and the Minister. (D 112)

As can be assumed from the title of the story, “57% Irish”, the average score a test taker has to achieve in order to be granted Irish citizenship is 57 per cent. This score is taken from the test results of the Minister of Art and Ethnicity, who passes the test after Ray’s final adaption.

—Your response to one image or sound can send you to a series of images or sounds that will bring your score up, or down.

—Grand.

—Depending on whether we want to bring it up, or down. [...]

—Good man. And what is the average mark?

Ray shrugged.

—57 per cent.

—My mark, said the Minister. —So that would make me the average Irishman? [...] Average has always been good enough for me. (D 115)

However, Ray’s programme has its shortcomings which arise even within the first week of application. A man from Ghana “crossed his legs during the test, and that action [...] sent his score soaring to 97 per cent” (D 124), which made the Ghanaian even complain about his high degree of Irishness; a fact that suggests that citizenship is not necessarily connected to a feeling of belonging to the nation and culture of the host country. As a result, the man from Ghana is now “the most Irish man in the country” (D 123). Julia Kristeva pointed out that the actual idea behind migration results from a desire of social security and acceptance in the first place, without having to abandon any personal or cultural properties (8), which might suggest the reason for detesting the test results in the case of the Ghanaian man. Seeking asylum in a foreign country, in this case, does not include abandoning one’s own cultural and native values and beliefs.

Alongside the storyline about the Fáilte Score, there is Ray’s private life. He is a father but so far he has not paid much attention to his son nor to the boy’s mother Darya, a Russian woman, waiting to be granted asylum in Ireland, who firstly appears under the name of Stalin. A number of coincidences brings Ray and Darya together again, and one day it is Darya’s name which Ray finds on the list of asylum seekers to be tested.

Ray looked at Stalin’s name on the Fáilte list.

—There’s a woman here, he said. —And she has a kid born in this country.

—We ironed out that difficulty some years ago, Raymond, said the Minister. —The child’s nationality does not entitle his mother or father —

I’m his fuckin’ father, thought Ray.

—to citizenship or residency rights. The child is welcome to stay [...].

—What if the father’s Irish? said Ray.

—Does it say that there?

—No.

—Well then, said the Minister. —Don't let it come between you and your sleep.
(D 126)

As expected, the present issue does indeed bother him. Although Ray follows a more liberal path at the very beginning of his research when he wants “them all in, all Irish” (D 102), he becomes more and more cynical as the story progresses (Reddy 384). Ray takes advantage of his position as the examiner and grants Darya citizenship by adapting the test elements.

And, if he was honest, he wouldn't have messed with the Fáilte Score if it hadn't been for the sex that night. Although maybe he would have; he wasn't sure – he was rarely honest.

Anyway, true or not, he told Stalin.

—That ride just changed the course of Irish history. (D 127)

Darya passes the test and scores 83 per cent. She is not the only one out of a few asylum seekers who are pushed through the test.

By the time he was discovered, after the Board of Works knocked down a wall, Ray had granted Irish citizenship to over 800,000 Africans and East Europeans. He had four kids, a grandchild and, [...] was a happy man. (D 128)

Ray knows for sure that he is responsible that so many people became Irish citizens, and that he and his Fáilte Score are responsible for a distorted image of Irishness. “[T]he acceptance of Ireland as a new hybrid country” (E. White 105) is not only revealed through the fact that Ray changes his attitude towards immigrants but also through Darya's visit to Ray's mother in order to introduce her Russian-Irish son Vladimir (105).

Carmen Zamorano Llena points to the fact that Doyle particularly focuses on “the malleability of the construct of Irishness and different forms of institutionalised discrimination against immigrants” (94-95) in this story. In doing so, he firmly refers to the Irish Citizenship Referendum of 2004, after which the law was changed so that children born in the country are now allowed to stay in the country for three years if born to non-Irish parents, with the exception of asylum seekers. After three years of residence, the children have the opportunity to apply for citizenship. According to the preceding Citizenship Act in 2001, every child born in Ireland was granted Irish citizenship, independent from its parents' origins (Asava, *Introduction* 2-3). The claim that Ireland is “not just a country of a thousand welcomes, but a country of a thousand equal opportunities” (3) describes what the story about the Fáilte Score specifically

wants to suggests. However, by virtue of a testing programme in this fictitious Ireland which implies that everybody has equal opportunities for a good living, it is indeed the famous “common sense of normalcy” (Reddy 375) that eventually decides whether one is interior or still marginalised, deported or granted citizenship. Behaviour in particular makes individual people, such as the Ghanaian, even more Irish than they personally intended to be.

The closing scene of the story suggests that the true Irishmen disappeared after the programme was first put into action. Now that Ray has retired the number of non-native Irish decreases and natives appear in the streets again:

It was his fiftieth birthday and he'd retired that afternoon.

—Look, said his brother.

—What?

—An Irishman.

Ray looked.

—Where?

—There, look; at the lights. Scratching his arse.

—Ah, yeah.

—Haven't seen one like him in years. What happened, Ray?

—Haven't a clue, said Ray.

—He picked up his pint.

—Cheers.

—Ah yeah, cheers. (D 129)

The question of what has happened to the country stays open. “Ray's brother seems to be surprised by the new demographic landscape in Ireland [...]. The fact that he refers to the man ‘scratching his arse’ as the one recognisable characteristic of a native points to the atavistic quality of such a specimen in such a new multicultural landscape” (E. White 106). In addition, Eva White points out that Doyle does not define who is Irish but “leaves it to the readers to create their own definition of Irishness, thus making the ‘57% Irish’ story his particular version of the Fáilte Test” (106).

11. Masquerading as the Other in *The Guts*

Due to the “Celtic Tiger brief economic boom, Ireland has experienced a significant increase in inward migration” and therefore Eva White regards it a necessity to ask the question “‘Who is Irish?’” when discussing the issue of Irishness in the 21st century (95). Through the stories in *The Deportees*, Roddy Doyle already relates to this “change in the traditional relationship Ireland has had with the experience of immigration” (E. White 95). As revealed in the stories, today, Ireland has to be seen as a host country for a large number of immigrants which has necessarily caused a change in how natives respond to new-comers in their country (95). From 1986, the year in which *The Commitments* was published, to the publication of *The Deportees* (2000–2004), the way Irish people dealt with the issue of multiculturalism and xenophobia had particularly changed. In *The Guts*, Doyle once again takes his readers into Dublin’s pubs where the Other has become an integral part of society that is welcome in the country. By recalling a scene from “The Deportees”, it becomes clear that the situation has indeed changed: when Jimmy enters a pub to meet a future band member, the pub is described through a portrayal of the multicultural customers and staff. Various scenes in *The Guts*, however, suggest that the Other has entered the current state of normalcy in the country so that the separating line between native Irish and non-native Irish has become more and more blurred.

The barman was looking at the golf on the telly over the door to the toilets. Jimmy waited. He counted the tellys. There were seven of them. All on, sound down. Golf, news, golf, singing, rugby league, ads and golf. The barman looked away.

—When you’re ready.

—Yeah?

He looked foreign, Polish or Latvian or that part of the world. But he wasn’t foreign.

—Could yeh give us a glass of water, please?

The barman sighed and turned away.

That proved it, Jimmy decided. The cunt was a Dub.

The barman came back with a pint glass or water. Jimmy took it.

—Thanks.

Nothing from the barman. The ignorant prick. (G 15)⁴

⁴ All quotations abbreviated as G (*The Guts*) are taken from Roddy DOYLE, *The Guts* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2013).

This scene reveals that Irish people must have undergone a process of accepting the Other as part of their cultural identity. Indeed, people still recognise who is a native and who is not, but essentially the very moment Dubliners enter a pub and recognise that they are surrounded by foreigners has become a moment of accepting that being Irish does also include mixed races these days.

He looked around. Everything else was normal. The Brazilian young one behind the counter still looked nice, but not as nice as she should have looked, being from Brazil. But she was the same young one – that was the point. Everything was the same. (G 137)

The Jimmy who turns up in these scenes is Jimmy Rabbitte who is already known from *The Commitments* and the short story “The Deportees”. In Doyle’s latest novel, he reappears and takes the role of the protagonist who is still a music fanatic but has given up band management. Jimmy has founded his own business and now tries to find “old bands, and [...] the people who’d loved them” (G 49) in order to make money by republishing their old songs. One day, Jimmy finds out that he has bowel cancer. Going through a hard time including surgery and chemotherapy, Jimmy is basically all at sea and not able to recognise what is going on around him. Although he tries to be positive about his future, Jimmy believes that he will die. His life goes up and down, he commits adultery with Imelda Quirk, one of the Commitmentettes, meets his lost brother Leslie, who had developed the same type of cancer as Jimmy, revives his friendship with Outspan, a former member of The Commitments, who had also been diagnosed as suffering from cancer, takes trumpet lessons, cares for his children and his wife, and feels as if he loses the day. However, the tide is turning and Jimmy does not die of cancer after all. Music becomes his great escape as was the case for so many Irish musicians under British rule. Jimmy decides to start his own Irish project, writing a song with his sons Marvin and Jimmy Jr., and suddenly the cancer is not that prominent in his life any more. Marvin’s band performs his self-composed song and Jimmy is back in life.

One may question how the plotline in *The Guts* is representative of an elaboration of a changing conception of Irish identity. Indeed, the main storyline of the novel that addresses Jimmy’s battle with cancer shall not be further approached in this thesis. A minor plot of the story that deals with the band of Jimmy’s eldest son Marvin is more compelling in the light of the present thesis, as the band pretends to be Bulgarian. In

order to discuss why three young Irish boys masquerade as a Bulgarian band, it is essential to start at the beginning of the project that Jimmy bears in mind.

Marvin recognises his talent as a guitarist, and Jimmy comes up with an idea for a new project. Due to the Eucharistic Congress soon to take place in Dublin, Jimmy remembers the Congress of 1932 when there was a great hype about the pope's visit. Jimmy wants to find songs from 1932 and produce a compilation album which eventually turns out to be challenging since there are only few musicians, who recorded a song around this time and are still alive. There is no progress in their work, so Jimmy invents the figure of Kevin Tankard, who allegedly recorded the blues song *I'm Goin' to Hell* in 1932, and Marvin's band *Moanin' At Midnight* re-records the hit. Jimmy pretends to have found the recording in the music collection of his father's cousin and, suddenly, Kevin Tankard becomes famous.

They had a Wikipedia page ready, himself and young Jimmy.
Kevin Aloysius Tankard (1905-unknown) was an Irish musician and singer. He is thought to have been born and lived in the Liberties area of Dublin, although little is known of his early life.
It looked good, the real thing.
There is only one recording known to exist, the recently rediscovered *I'm Goin' To Hell* (1932). (G 255)

In contrast to the stories in *The Deportees*, in which the protagonists try to assimilate to Irishness in order to regard themselves as Irish, and the band in *The Commitments*, who try to change Dublin's society for the better by borrowing a certain identity, the band that is presented in *The Guts* follow a fairly different approach in their search for identity. Marvin and his band remain themselves, but cover a song of a personality that is, in fact, invented. While the boys celebrate their graduation in Bulgaria, the song becomes a hit in Ireland.

—He sounds very like —
[...] – the guy who'd recorded the song in 1932. [...]
—He sounds exactly – *exactly* – like Kevin Tankard.
—Unbelievable, said Jimmy. [...]
—It's so great, said Noeleen. —So – just exciting. You found this song and a few months later there are kids in Bulgaria playing it. And more kids all over the world watching them. Millions of them. (G 239)

Initially, Jimmy wants to make a hit with a hoax and sell a new album. It turns out, however, that the mere re-recording of the song is not the essential element that makes him and his son's band winners. Pretending that the boys are Bulgarian, makes them

appear more exotic and mysterious compared to mere Irishness, and therefore, the music they make becomes even more compelling and fascinating.

—This is where we're making money, said Noeleen. —Just look at this.

She moved, and sat beside him [Jimmy].

—Can you see?

—Yep.

It was on YouTube – hard to make out. A low-roofed room, a lot of crowd noise, a whoop. The camera was all over the place; it never settled. [...] She pointed to the views. 5,237,016. [...] Marvin stood sideways to the microphone stand, and sang.

—I WANT HER ARMS —

I'M GOING TO HELL — [...]

—I PROWL THE STREETS —

I'M GOING TO HELL — [...]

He wanted to cry.

—Who's that? he asked.

—A Bulgarian band, said Noeleen.

—Bulgarian?

—Yep, she said. —It's the bomb. Isn't it?

—Fuckin' amazin'.

—That's a club in Stara Zagora, she said.

—That's in Bulgaria, is it?

—According to Google. (G 238)

Due to the simple fact that the band *Moanin' At Midnight* have a gig in a Bulgarian club, they become famous as a Bulgarian band when their performance is taped with a mobile phone and uploaded to YouTube. Jimmy plays the game. He informs his son that the whole country believes his band to be Bulgarian and tells them to keep their secret and stay mysterious for their Irish fan community.

—D'you want us to pretend we're really Bulgarian?

—No, said Jimmy. —Yeah. But no. Listen. Be a bit mysterious. Don't say anythin' between songs. Don't say anythin' at all. It'll be more convincing than puttin' on an accent.

—Okay.

—You're Bulgarian, said Jimmy. —But you're mysterious Bulgarians. You're like guerrillas. You strike, an' disappear.

Jimmy remembered Joey the Lips Fagan, the Commitments' trumpet player, saying the same thing, back in the days when Jimmy was Jimmy.

—We hit an' then sink back into the night. (G 249)

This very scene reminds one of *The Commitments*, whose trumpet player Joey The Lips actually forecasts the break-down of the band after having made a hit. Joey is not the only one of the former Commitments who appears in the novel. Jimmy also meets Imelda and Outspan. The former friends revive their old friendship and so the story

features a trip down memory lane. In addition, various aspects of Irish history are mentioned when Jimmy starts looking for songs from 1932:

—[...] My parents talked about it all the time. I think it was kind o' like 1990, for their generation.

—Wha' d'yeh mean?

—Well, 1990 was unbelievable – remember?

—I do, yeah.

—It was just the football to start with. But then, when it took off. The penalty shoot-out an' tha'. The country was never the same again. It was the beginnin' of the boom. [...] An' it was a bit of a disaster, that'. But I was never unemployed again – after Italia '90. I wouldn't let myself be. [...] Because – an' this is true. We felt great about ourselves. For years after. An' tha' only changed a few years back. [...]

—An' 1932 was like that', was it?

—Yeah, said Jimmy's da. —A bit. The country was only ten years old, remember. An' dirt poor. (G 143-144)

The scene refers to a time of turmoil and redefinition in Irish history. 1932 can be assumed as a time of change. Although many people lived in poverty, there was also hope to find work and people were proud of their independent nation.

It was simple, heartbreaking, the song of an emigrant who knew she'd never escape. [...] It had none of the Paddy, none of the dishonesty at the core of every Irish song Jimmy had ever heard, except 'Teenage Kicks' and maybe 'The Boys Are Back In Town'.

—OH—I'M TRAIPSIN' THE WORLD —

WITH THE HOUSE ON MY BACK —

—An Irish woman sings traipsing in 1932, she means, I guess, moving along slowly with a bundle on her back. An African-American woman sings it in 1932 [...]. Ireland in 1932 was a miserable place. That's my guess, and I bet I'm right. Kids with no shoes, hunger, bad housin', the Church supervisin' everythin'. But the official picture was different. Happy peasants, glad to be rid of the Brits. (G 160-161)

In addition, music is praised as the great escape out of social misery and to get rid of the feeling of not belonging to one's nation, as in the case of *The Commitments*. Eventually, Jimmy releases the compilation album named “1932: *More Songs about Sex and Emigration*” (G 221), which was meant to refer to the last eighty years of emancipation and redefinition:

—So anyway. One of the few escapes, beside real escape – emigration, like – was music. It's always been like tha'. Music is the great escape. In the words and the rhythm. You could do things an' say things that weren't allowed. And not just sex now. Although everythin' is sex. [...]

—But anyway. The music. Happy when times were bad. Or laments when they were bein' told that things were lookin' up. They could tell the priests an' the

politicians that' they'd do whatever seemed natural an' they wouldn't be askin' for permission. Inside in the song. In Ireland, in 1932. (G 162-163)

At the end of the story, Marvin's band have a gig at the Electric Picnic, a music festival, which Jimmy has to attend too because his company has a number of bands under contract that play at the festival. Together with Outspan, his newly found brother Leslie, and another friend, Jimmy makes the festival a revival trip. He eventually comes up with the idea of forming a band. This time it would have to be a band pretending to be Romanian – *The Irregulars*. The Commitments fought for social emancipation and acceptance and music served as an instrument to escape social oppression and insecurity. The multicultural Deportees mirrored Ireland's shift towards a more multicultural nation due to immense immigration. The bands in *The Guts* eventually reveal a picture of Irish society that has already accepted the fact that Irishness is no longer reserved for those born in the country and that the Other has become part of the interior domain of the Irish nation. Adopting the identity of the Other, as portrayed in *The Guts*, does not really challenge young Irish boys.

—Hi. [...] —I saw you, like, on YouTube.

—What – is – Oo-toob?

Marvin was overdoing it but Jimmy left him at it. (G 319)

Marvin tries to adopt a foreign accent in order to appear more authentic and to keep his mysterious identity hidden.

—EVERYTHING —

EVERYTHING —

Marvin pronounced the Gs. He was still a Bulgarian, aping the black man's English.

—EVERYTHING GO'NE TO BE ALRIGHT THIS MORNING— (G 321)

Besides, *The Guts* implies that adopting another nation's identity does not in the slightest compete with the boys' native identity and their Irishness is not undermined by their short-dated masquerading on stage. As a matter of fact, the boys do not fully adopt another nation's identity, but merely borrow an accent that makes them Bulgarian for their fans. Besides, it is highlighted that language is an essential marker of national belonging. The Other, which manifests itself as a Bulgarian band in this story, does not occupy a marginalised position but is welcome in the country.

12. Conclusion: New Perspectives of Irishness in Roddy Doyle

William Mulligan makes explicit what countless scholars merely implied, namely, that every attempt to define what it means to be Irish turns out to be challenging. In his research, he discovered that there are not only different shades of Irishness but that the word itself has a number of meanings. Although the Irish are scattered across the globe, *Irish* likewise identifies people from “many countries of the Irish Diaspora who have very varied life experiences, religious and other beliefs, and most interestingly very different relationships to Ireland” (231). However, every individual Irishman and Irishwoman has a fairly different view of what it means to be Irish, while being Irish is not reserved for those who are born on the island (231-232). “There are people who identify themselves as Irish in a number of countries. Their direct relationship to Ireland varies greatly and their experience and that of their ancestors is equally diverse. Yet, they see themselves as Irish and are seen as Irish by others” (231).

In 2010, Jody Allen-Randolph addressed the issue of Irishness and questioned whether “the shift [can] be made from considering Ireland as a nation that now *includes* Others to recognizing Ireland as a nation *of* Others?” (qtd. in E. White 95). For Allen-Randolph the underlying question is how Ireland regards itself. The very shift towards a nation of Others means “a transformation of Ireland’s idea of itself during the boom years” (E. White 95), which reveals an idea of cultural identity as an unstable phenomenon. Stuart Hall defined cultural identities as “unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*” (Hall, *Diaspora* 226). In an interview with Allen-Randolph, Roddy Doyle referred to this new positioning as closely connected to hybridisation. The results of a re-definition will be seen in “hyphenated identities, that is, identities that encompass more than one nationality, ethnicity or culture” (qtd. in E. White 95). In the foreword to *The Deportees*, Doyle points to the very fact that Ireland has indeed undergone considerable change in terms of mixed-raced citizens. Besides, although Ireland still represents the geographical margin of Europe, Ireland as a nation is no longer “Europe’s bottom rung” (Lauren Onkey 189).

In 1986, I wrote *The Commitments*. In that book, the main character, a young man called Jimmy Rabbitte, delivers a line that became quite famous: —The Irish are the niggers of Europe. Twenty years on, there are thousands of Africans living in Ireland and, if I was writing that book today, I wouldn’t use that line. It

wouldn't actually occur to me, because Ireland has become one of the wealthiest countries in Europe and the line would make no sense. (Doyle, "Foreword", *Deportees*, xii)

Turning to the texts of Roddy Doyle in terms of how Irish identity is portrayed in his stories, Carmen Zamorano Llana highlights that Doyle critically deals with the issue of racism and offers a number of xenophobic views as they might be encountered in the Dublin of the 2000s (94). In doing so, she argues, Doyle allows "a more complete view of multiculturalism in Ireland, which exposes the weaknesses of the present and the fallacies of the past" (Zamorano Llana 99). However, the ways in which Doyle addresses these issues are rather idealised versions of that matter. He is, in fact, not the only writer of the new generation of Irish writers who present a more romantic narrative and develop a rather idealised version of multiculturalism by applying "metaphors of miscegenation and interracial romance [... which] evoke feelings of cross-cultural affection to symbolise Ireland's embrace of diversity, an affecting Irishness that equates the conciliation of cultural difference" (Jason King 160). Almost all of Doyle's texts analysed in this thesis concentrate on the individual self that finds itself in a process of self-discovery by comparing and reflecting on the manifestations of the Other (159-160): Declan, who is Irish by birthright but unfortunately cannot assimilate to be fully Irish due to his black skin; Larry, who welcomes an asylum-seeker in his house and eventually adores the black lad's perfume; a teenager in transition year, who is stereotyped because of his fashion style; or Tom, who forces his opponents to have a close look at him in order to recognise his personality. King illustrates that what these people have in common is their struggle to discover what they share "with the figure of the Other" (King 160), while their starting positions as either Irish, non-Irish, immigrant, white or black are indeed as diverse as they could be. King points out that Doyle portrays "an ideal of Irish openness to other cultures through the metaphor of interracial romance" (167). In the stories "I Understand", "The Deportees" and "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner", the Nigerian protagonists make friends with Irish women, who, eventually, overcome cultural differences and accept the asylum seekers as part of their society. King further suggests Doyle's stories "to call into question whether Irish intercultural encounters should be imagined as reciprocal or inequitable forms of exchange, and whether Ireland itself is an open and receptive or closed and racialised society for the immigrants who live there" (160). He points out that the stories are full of cultural conflicts whose fulfilment appears fairly romantic, which suggests

the general openness of Irish people towards the “acceptance of immigrants whose presence constitutes no underlying threat to the nation’s normative self-image” (King 167). Both, the Dublin working class and the immigrants in the city, find themselves in a process of learning to understand and indentify with each other while their “mutual identification is registered through the medium of popular culture” (167-168). As a nation of warm and friendly people who contributed to Live-Aid programmes for Africa, as stated by Larry Linnane in “Guess Who’s Coming for the Dinner”, the protagonist tries to cast a positive light on himself on behalf of the Irish, although a fairly different reality opposed to this self-imagery is portrayed in the story (King 160-167). With reference to the complete collection of *The Deportees*, King argues that Doyle’s stories “develop an interracial romantic plotline as a symbolic shorthand for the resolution of cultural conflict, but their achievement of romantic fulfilment is based less [...] on the accommodation rather than the elision of cultural differences that they purport to reconcile” (King 160). The elision of such differences is exemplified in the stories’ settings, especially the bar in which Jimmy meets King Robert in “The Deportees”. They serve as “modern settings” (168), which represent today’s “multicultural spaces” (168), where, on the one hand, cultural differences are indeed recognised by the characters, but, on the other hand, these differences do not have any importance for individual characters. Cultural differences are simply tolerated without any attempt to adapt to them (160-168). Nonetheless, Jimmy Rabbitte’s famous phrase “the Irish are the niggers of Europe” (C 13) is this very statement, King suggests, that exemplifies the “wider imaginative bonds of sympathy the Irish feel for other disempowered and impoverished groups” (168). Immigrants do not only become fellow citizens but become Northside Dubliners (168-169). “Thus, it is through the medium of interracial romance and popular culture – soul music, Live Aid, the multicultural medley of styles performed by the rock band The Deportees – that the Irish express their affinity with other peoples and, more importantly, that immigrants become integrated into Irish society” (King 168).

Obviously, the issue of multiculturalism in Ireland has already entered the domain of literature, as the works of Roddy Doyle illustrate. Jason King refers to the editorial in *The Irish Times*, which was published on St. Patrick’s Day 2007: “we are all the speckled people today. Confident, wealthy, forward-looking, internationalist, we can afford to define our identity in terms that celebrate our overlapping multiplicity of

allegiances and diversity” (qtd. in King 174). King highlights the inclusivity of the Irish that is communicated in the article. More specifically, the article reveals an “inclusive attitude to cultural diversity” (174) as particularly representative of the “redefinition of Irish national identity in the era of the Celtic Tiger: one that is often symbolised in Irish multicultural fiction by the resolution of the interracial romantic plotline as a metaphor for cultural reconciliation” (174). The Irish are primarily defined as a welcoming and open nation, while other contemporary Irish authors offer a more negative tone, displaying a radicalised and closed society (174). However, “Doyle has begun the necessary work of decentralizing white consciousness. Now that African Irish people are [...] telling us what Ireland looks like in the imaginations of Ireland’s Others, the competition between official discourse and antiracist discourse should become livelier” (Maureen Reddy 387).

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14. Index

- "57% Irish".....80, 82
- A**
- aestheticisation33
- African culture24
- African-Americans24, 28, 29, 30, 42
- Afrocentric rhythm.....36
- Ailbhe.....77, 78
- Alcoff, Linda.....15
- alienation17, 26, 30
- All You Need Is Love*40
- Allen-Randolph, Jody91
- America2, 10, 24, 27, 28, 30, 35, 41, 48
- American ethnicity29
- Americanness51
- Aoife.....65, 67, 68
- Asava, Zélie.....2, 83
- asylum seekers ...2, 4, 57, 58, 59, 82, 83, 92
- Autobiography of an ex-Coloured Man, The*
.....48
- B**
- Barker, Gina48
- Barrytown.....10, 11, 24, 30
- Barrytown Trilogy, The*6
- Beckett, Samuel.....11
- Ben56, 57, 58, 59, 65
- Bhabha, Homi14, 16, 17, 21, 22
- biraciality.....46
- black Americans.....43, 45, 46, 48
- "Black Hoodie"55, 60
- Black Hoodie Solutions*61
- black Irish.....45, 48, 49
- Black soul*25
- Blackness25, 26, 29, 30, 33, 42, 45, 46,
47, 49, 51, 60
- Block, David14
- blues30, 37, 87
- Bob Marley.....57
- Boesch, Ernst.....17
- Booker Prize.....5, 6, 8
- Bornstein, George43, 95
- Bradshaw, Nick.....10
- Brassers, The*.....42
- British rule.....86
- Brown, James27, 28, 35, 38
- Brownbread*.....6
- Bulgarian band87, 88, 90
- Bullfighting*.....7
- Byrds, The*42
- Byrne, James2
- C**
- cancer56, 86
- Catholic.....7, 44
- céad míle fáilte.....81
- Celtic.....2, 53, 66, 70, 81, 94
- Celtic Tenors.....81
- Celtic Tiger2, 53, 66, 70, 94
- Chain Gang, The*.....36
- Chilton, Martin7
- Christian Kelly.....72, 73, 74
- Christon, Lawrence.....11, 13
- citizenship82, 83
- Citizenship Act83
- Cliff, Jimmy.....69
- colonial discourse17, 30
- colonialism.....17
- Commitmentettes.....40, 86
- Commitments, The* ...3, 6, 7, 23, 26, 31, 39,
42, 43, 59, 66, 81, 85, 86, 87, 89, 91
- Condor, Susan.....55, 56
- Cork54, 101
- Corrs, The*65, 66
- Cronin, Jan.....45, 47, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54
- cultural difference.....92
- cultural identity3, 14, 16, 18, 48, 49, 86
- cultures of hybridity.....2
- D**
- DART37
- Darya82, 83
- Deadly Films*.....7
- Dean.....32, 33, 35
- Declan 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 92
- Deleuze, Gilles.....30
- Deportees, The*.....3, 7, 44, 85, 87, 91, 93
- "Deportees, The".....45, 65, 85, 86, 92, 93
- Derek23, 34, 35, 39, 40, 41, 42
- detritorialization.....30
- discrimination63, 83
- disenfranchisement28
- Donoghue, Dennis10, 11
- Dublin ...5, 6, 10, 11, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30,
32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 42, 43, 44, 51, 54, 60,
61, 62, 63, 65, 69, 75, 85, 87, 92
- DuBois, W.E.B.25
- E**
- Eliot, T.S.....10
- Ellis Island50, 52
- embourgeoisement.....33
- equality67, 69, 70
- Eriksen, Thomas15, 16
- Eucharistic Congress87
- Europe.....10, 27, 28, 29, 91, 93
- exteriority.....47, 52, 53

- F**
- Facebook7, 12
 Fáilte Score.....81, 82, 83
Family7
 Fanon, Frantz.....16, 22
 Fianna Fáil.....69
 Forrest, Jimmy.....36
 Franklin J. Powell.....49, 50
 freedom78
 Freud, Sigmund52
- G**
- Gaelic11
 Gallagher, Brian45, 46
 Galway81
 Gaye, Marvin.....38
 Ghana82
 Gilbert67, 69
 globalisation1, 2, 19
 Gomez, Mary.....14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 52
 Greendale11
 Guattari, Félix30
 "Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner" ...55, 56, 59, 65, 67, 92
 Guinness.....38
Guts, The3, 4, 7, 85, 86, 87, 90
- H**
- habitus*34
 Hall, Stuart2, 16, 17, 64, 91
 Hardest Workin' Band in the World36
 Harlem.....45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 52
 Harlem Renaissance28, 45, 46, 51
 Harrison, Graham.....4
 hatred.....20
 heterogeneity17
 Hewson, Paul.....24, 41
 "Home to Harlem"44, 45, 51, 53
 Hughes, Langston.....48
 hybridity17
 hyphenated identities.....51
- I**
- "I Understand"67, 71, 75, 78, 92
I'll Feel Like a Whole Lot Better.....40
I'm Goin' to Hell87
 identification17, 21, 26, 28, 93
identity repertoire.....15
 Imelda.....40, 41, 42, 86, 88
 immigration3, 55, 67
 inclusivity53, 94
 inequality.....55
 Ireland2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 23, 24, 28, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 66, 67, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 80, 82, 83, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93
 Irigaray, Luce18, 19
- Irish Diaspora46, 91
 Irish language52
 Irish literature45, 47, 49
 Irish Renaissance28, 46
Irish Times, The93
 Irishman47, 76, 81, 82, 84
 Irishness...3, 4, 10, 23, 29, 30, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 70, 75, 80, 81, 82, 83, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92
Irregulars, The.....90
It's a Man's World.....40
- J**
- James27, 35, 39, 40
 jazz.....32, 33, 43
 Jimmy Jr.86
 Jimmy Rabbitte.....23, 67, 86, 91
 Jimmy Sr.....13
 Joey The Lips Fagan.....29, 32, 35, 39, 88
 Johnson, James W.....46, 48
 Joseph71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 78
 Joyce, James11
 Jumi58
- K**
- Kevin75, 77
 Kevin Tankard87
 Kilbarrack5, 10, 11, 30, 38
King Faroul6
 King Robert66, 69, 93
 King, Jason92, 93
 Kirwan, Pádraig.....2
 Kristeva, Julia20, 52, 82
- L**
- Lacan, Jacques22
 Lane, Anthony10
 Larry56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 65, 92
 leprechaun.....49, 52
 Leslie86, 90
 Let's Stay Together on Bloomsday70
 Liffey37
 Limerick.....54
 Linguistic identity.....78
 Lippmann, Walter55
 Live-Aid.....72, 93
Location of Culture, The.....21
 Lynott, Phil56, 57
- M**
- Maalouf, Amin.....15
 Maguire, Mark44
 Marvin86, 87, 88, 90
 masculinity.....77
 McCarthy, Dermot.....10
 McGonigle, Lisa37
Metro Eireann.....7
 Miami.....37

middle class.....5, 28
 migration17, 24, 44, 82, 90
 Mikowski, Sylvie10, 11
Moanin' At Midnight.....87
 modernisation1
 Mona56, 58
 Moore, Andrea48
More Songs about Sex and Emigration....89
 Moscow66
 Mulkerns, Helena8
 Mulligan, William3, 91
 multicultural band4
 multiculturalism .3, 4, 19, 43, 45, 48, 92, 93
 Murphy, Fiona.....44
 musketeers.....71, 75

N

national belonging.....45, 53, 90
 national identity.....3, 14, 29, 52, 53, 79, 94
 nationality.....1, 47, 49, 69, 80, 81, 82
 Negro.....35
 "New Boy"67, 71, 72, 78
 New Orleans.....37
 New York.....37, 44, 45, 48, 49, 51, 66
 Nigeria.....61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 71
 nigger lover68, 70
 niggers27, 28, 29, 91, 93
 Night Train.....36, 37, 39, 42
 Noeleen87, 88

O

O'Casey, Sean6, 13
 O'Donoghue, John55
 Omoniyi, Tope14
 Onkey, Lauren 26, 33, 37, 43, 59, 67, 70, 91
 Other16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 43, 44, 52, 55,
 57, 64, 65, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 85,
 86, 90, 91, 92
 Otherness....4, 14, 17, 21, 44, 47, 48, 52, 76
 Outspan24, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42, 86, 88, 90

P

Paddy.....6, 8, 49, 52, 89
Paddy Clark Ha Ha Ha.....6
 Parker, Charlie.....33
 Parnell Street59, 65
 Paschel, Ulrike10, 11
 personal identity14, 15, 21, 48, 79
 Piroux, Lorraine ..23, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34,
 37, 38, 42
 political mission4, 27, 28, 40, 41
 profanity11
 pub.....7, 10, 80, 85, 86

R

racism2, 17, 55, 57, 59, 69, 70, 92
 Ray80, 81, 82, 83, 84
 Redding, Otis.....38

Reddy, Maureen....7, 44, 46, 47, 51, 55, 57,
 59, 65, 66, 68, 69, 71, 76, 77, 78, 80, 83,
 84, 94
 redefinition.....2, 21, 89, 94
 Reggae69
 Riedel, Johannes24, 25, 26
 Riverdance81
 Robbie Keane80
 Robinson, Smokey38
 Rose, Cynthia.....25, 27, 35, 36, 38
 Rosenfield, David56
 Russia.....81

S

Sbrockey, Karen6, 8, 13
 self-consciousness.....19, 77
 Seth Quinn71, 74
 Shakespeare15
 Simon, Bernd.....1, 2, 64
 slavery.....17
 Smith, Anthony D.....3
Snapper, The6
 social class28, 43
 social identity.....14, 16
 social interactions1, 14, 18, 73
 socialization55, 75
 Soul... 16, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32,
 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 93
 soul band.....4, 23, 34, 42
 soul brother26
 soul culture29, 34
 soul food38
 soul identity36, 42
 soul language26
 St. Patrick's Day93
 stage names.....35
 Stalin.....80, 82, 83
 starvation56, 58
 Stephan, Walter55
 Stephanie56, 59
 stereotypes26, 55, 57, 60, 75
 subjectivity.....18, 19
 suburbs.....10, 39
 Suleiman, Yasir3, 15, 78
 Sutton.....5

T

Taylor, Timothy..28, 29, 32, 33, 35, 36, 41,
 42
 Temple Bar75
 Third Culture Individuals48
 Tom.....75, 76, 77, 78, 92
Too Many Rivers to Cross69
 tortoise metaphor15
 transformation.....2, 16, 21, 42
 Triandis, Harry.....64

Two Pints.....7, 13

U

U2.....24

Ulysess.....11

uncertainty.....22, 76

United States24, 45, 46

V

Van, The6, 7

vernacular10, 12, 31

Vlach, Michael25

W

War6, 49

Washington D.C.37

welfare.....26, 57

What Becomes of the Broken Hearted.....40

When a Man Loves a Woman.....40

Whiskey.....56

White, Caramine ...5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13,
24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43

White, Eva Roa 3, 44, 51, 57, 75, 81, 83,
84, 91

White, Goodith 14

Wikipedia..... 87

Woody Guthrie 66, 67, 70

working class.. 5, 10, 24, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33,
42, 93

World Cup 80

World War 45

World's Hardest Working Band 37, 66

Y

Yeats, William B. 11

Your Granny Is a Hunger Striker 6

YouTube 88, 90

Z

Zamorano Llena, Carmen...2, 45, 46, 53,
66, 81, 83, 92

APPENDIX

Abstract

New Perspectives of Irishness in Roddy Doyle deals with concepts of Irishness as revealed in selected works by the contemporary Irish author Roddy Doyle, i.e. *The Commitments*, *The Deportees* and *The Guts*. The characters in the stories are faced with changing concepts of Irishness that challenge their personal struggle to establish a sense of belonging. The thesis does not only highlight that identity has to be seen from the background of an ongoing process of transformation and redefinition without ever coming to an end, but illustrates that Irish identity is similarly subjected to redefinition. Due to the long period of British rule, a time which is characterised by social and political oppression, the Irish have tried to establish a homogenous national identity eliminating any aspect that indicates its dependence on the British. However, the existence of ethnic minorities, such as African-Americans, cannot be ignored when defining Irishness. The stories of Roddy Doyle show that the Irish nation is faced with changing concepts of Irishness that necessarily have to regard the multicultural dimension as inclusive.

Abstract in German (Deutsche Zusammenfassung)

Die vorliegende Arbeit mit dem Titel *New Perspectives of Irishness in Roddy Doyle* hinterfragt das Konzept *Identität* und stellt die Auseinandersetzung mit irischer Identität in den Mittelpunkt. Die Arbeit beschäftigt sich damit, was es bedeutet, Irisch zu sein und bezieht sich dabei auf die folgenden drei Werke des irischen Autors Roddy Doyle: *The Commitments*, *The Deportees* und *The Guts*. Die Charaktere in diesen Geschichten begeben sich auf die Suche nach nationaler Zugehörigkeit und müssen sich dabei mit einem wandelnden Konzept des *Irishseins* auseinandersetzen. Die Arbeit untersucht nicht nur das Konzept *Identität* als Prozess, sondern hebt auch hervor, dass irische Identität gleichermaßen unvollendet bleibt und ständiger Veränderung unterworfen ist. Nachdem die irische Nation aufgrund ihrer besonderen Beziehung zu Großbritannien lange Zeit Unterdrückung und Unabhängigkeit erfahren musste, versuchten die Iren ein homogenes Konzept ihrer Nation zu etablieren, das nicht länger auf ihre Abhängigkeit von Großbritannien hinweisen sollte. Dabei wurde jedoch außer Acht gelassen, dass ethnische Minoritäten, wie etwa schwarze Amerikaner und Amerikanerinnen, immer schon irische Identität mitbestimmt haben. Die Romane und Kurzgeschichten von Roddy Doyle zeigen, dass die irische Nation akzeptieren muss, dass ihr Selbstbewusstsein einem ständigem Wandel unterworfen ist und Multikulturalität notwendigerweise einen bedeutenden Teil ihrer Identität ausmacht.

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