Violence and the Contemporary Irish Novel
Dr Stephen O’Neill
oneillsb@tcd.ie

Module Overview

‘With the possible exception of greenness’, wrote David Lloyd in 1992, ‘no quality has more frequently and repetitiously been attributed to Ireland than violence’. This module explores the representation of violence in Irish fiction written in the past three decades. Students will be asked to analyse a range of texts, engaging with the key historical and literary contexts behind each writer’s approach to violence. Focusing initially on ‘political’ violence and its legacies in contemporary Ireland, the module expands to include representations of other forms of violence – domestic, structural, epistemic – and examines their intersections with race, class, gender, and religion. It will also critically engage with theorizations of violence, ‘terrorism’, and the body, as well as literary responses to these phenomena. Dealing with subgenres such as crime fiction and the bildungsroman, the module will assess how realist and other fiction approaches ‘violence’ in contrast or collusion with legal and journalistic registers.

Assessment Details: 5-6000 word essay, 100%

Schedule and Primary Texts

Week Two: Robert McLiam Wilson, Eureka Street (1995)
Week Three: Deirdre Madden, One By One in the Darkness (1996)
Week Four: Glenn Patterson, The International (1999)
Week Five: John McGahern, That They May Face The Rising Sun (2002)
Week Seven: READING WEEK
Week Nine: Eimear McBride, A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing (2013)
Week Eleven: Anna Burns, Milkman (2018)
Week Twelve: Conclusions

Suggested Secondary Reading


Claire Lynch, “‘Everything not saved will be lost’: Videogames, Violence, and Memory in Contemporary Irish Fiction’, *Irish University Review* 47.1 (2017), 126-142.


