

# Contemporary Irish Novels

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Edna O'Brien, *Wild Decembers*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999; 247pp., £ 16.99, ISBN 0-297-64576-5.

Roddy Doyle, *A Star Called Henry*. London: Cape, 1999; 344pp.; £ 16.99; ISBN 224-06019-8.

*Wild Decembers* concludes what is apparently intended as the author's latter-day Ireland trilogy, the series also including the preceding two novels, *House of Splendid Isolation* and *Down by the River*, and representing a rather idiosyncratic stock-taking of the state of affairs in O'Brien's native country during the second half of the twentieth century. We are in Cloontha, "a locality within the bending of an arm", where fields "mean more than fields, more than life and more than death too" (p. 2). It is difficult to place the events in a particular time, for the author takes no trouble to authenticate the period. Girls wear platform shoes and talk of hot pants, and one character owns a mobile phone. Most anachronistic of all, everyone in Cloontha is obsessed with sex. The women talk openly about it and speculate about the romantic entanglements of their friends and acquaintances. Two sisters, called Reena and Reeta, run a kind of brothel from their tiny cottage. O'Brien may deliberately have obscured time in this love-hate story, which - according to the blurb - "explores the depth and darkness at the root of all possession", in order to imbue her narrative "with the permanence of myth".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the averred mythical quality of the incidents in *Wild Decembers* remains contestable and, this apart, the atmosphere in the novel is that of the mid-Sixties, middle Ireland mid-Sixties: cattle markets, dinner dances in the local town, and life on the land.

Joseph Brennan has a smallholding on the side of a mountain and a beautiful, shy, passionate twenty-two-year-old sister, Breege, who cooks for him, keeps the house and feeds the chickens. Enter upon the scene tall, dark and handsome Michael Bugler, returned from life on an Australian sheep station to claim his inheritance of the land adjoining the Brennans'. With him comes "the first tractor on the mountain and its arrival would be remembered and related; the day, the hour of evening and the way crows circled above it, blackening the sky, fringed, soundless, auguring" (p. 3). Joseph and Michael get on reasonably well at first, but before too long old family feuds are reignited:

The families, though distantly related, had feuds that went back hundreds of years and by now had hardened into a dour sullenness. The wrong Joseph most liked to relate was of a Bugler ancestor, a Henry, trying to grab a corner of a field which abutted onto theirs and their uncle Paddy impaling him on a road and putting a gun to his head. (p. 4)

Bugler is engaged to be married to one Rosemary, who is still in Australia waiting for the moment when he finishes their house. After Rosemary's arrival in Cloontha, Breege, who is in love with Bugler and has spent one passionate night with him ("For one night I

knew I had found happiness” (p. 216), she later confesses to someone), is momentarily unbalanced and has to spend some time in a mental home. But Breege’s situation notwithstanding, a fierce legal tangle ensues between her brother and Bugler. Letters are sent flying back and forth between the lawyers of the two parties. A bona fide right to go up and down a corridor of the mountain held by one of Bugler’s ancestors, a certain D’Arby Bugler, who had lost the right to that part of the mountain to Joseph’s grandfather, is declared null and void. Finally, Joseph becomes a man possessed by irrationality and with a craziness in his eyes, as one acquaintance puts it (p. 220). And so he shoots Bugler dead, winding up in Mountjoy Prison. Breege, bearing Bugler’s child, can see the lights in the windows of Bugler’s house each evening, and she knows that Rosemary is within, and she finds herself wondering “if the old wars are brewing again and will they, as women, be called on to fight the insatiate fight in the name of honour and land and kindred and blood” and hoping that there “is communion between living and dead, between those, who even in their most stranded selves are on the side of life and harbingers of love” (p. 244).

There is some experimenting with point-of-view: whereas most chapters are rendered from an objective, quasi-omniscient angle, some feature a first-person stance offering Breege’s voice, presumably in an effort to invest the narrative with a personal note of some emotional depth expressive of love and devotion, a note that is pitted against the all-prevailing hatred and resentment which trigger off the behaviour of Bugler and, in particular, Joseph Brennan. Nothing, it seems, has changed in Cloontha in the course of hundreds of years. This is made apparent for instance through the alternate use of the past tense and the present tense: “the wrongs of years and the recent wrongs all lumped together” (p. 66). Feuds over land are still fought; deadly hatred still quenches all love; the meek are still those who suffer the most. Yet, if *Wild Decembers* is really meant as a state-of-the-nation novel, then the account lacks some credibility on account of some of its characters, for example the spiteful Crock and the two sisters, Reena and Reeta, who could be straight out of a Somerville&Ross story involving an Irish R.M. and are damagingly reminiscent of stage-Irishry.

The title of the novel is taken from the third stanza of Emily Jane Brontë’s poem “Remembrance”, the appropriate part of which O’Brien quotes at the outset - incorrectly as some commas and a colon are missing. The stanza reads:

Cold in the earth - and fifteen wild Decembers,  
From those brown hills, have melted into spring:  
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers  
After such years of change and suffering!<sup>2</sup>

The poem has some bearing on the narrative, in particular on Breege’s predicament. In it, the lyrical ‘I’ bemoans her “only Love”, who has been cold in the earth for fifteen wild Decembers, asking herself whether she has “forgot [...] to love thee, /Severed at last by Time’s all-severing wave”. She goes on to plead:

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,  
While the world’s tide is bearing me along;  
Other desires and other hopes beset me,  
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!  
After all, she admits that

No later light has lightened up my heaven,  
No second morn has ever shone for me;  
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,  
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

It was only when "Despair was powerless to destroy" that she learned "how existence could be cherished, / Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy", and she resolved to "check the tears of useless passion" and to wean her "young soul from yearning after thine". For she became aware that she could never "seek the empty world again" if she dared to let her young soul languish and "indulge in memory's rapturous pain". The lines do indeed fittingly sum up Breege's situation at the close of *Wild Decembers*.

The cover design of Roddy Doyle's latest novel to date, *A Star Called Henry*, may serve to deconstruct the marketing design that the publisher has thought fit to deploy presumably on account of Doyle's enormous sales figures. The author's name is printed on the dust-jacket in bold red letters over one inch high, whereas the book's title is given in slim white letters barely a quarter of an inch tall. This must be taken to mean that a potential buyer is intended to go for the book not because it is by Roddy Doyle and a new narrative offering, in which case the title should have been represented in a manner more akin to that of the author's name, but first and foremost because it is by Roddy Doyle and never mind its contents. Perhaps this is as it should be, for *A Star Called Henry* is, in the final analysis, an execrably bad novel. In his review for *The Irish Times*,<sup>3</sup> Carlo Gébler opined: "this really is a masterpiece" - a silly hype, no more, which above everything else appears to suggest that Gébler would not know a masterpiece if one stood up and hit him in the face.

What is Doyle up to in *A Star Called Henry*? He has written an historical novel about the Irish Republic's first twenty-two years in the twentieth century, reviewing, in particular, the politico-historical events during the Easter Rising, the War of Independence and the founding of the Free State and pointing out, for instance, that the Volunteers in the G.P.O. were a bunch of rosary-clutching gobshites:

Some of the Volunteers had their beads out and were down on their knees, humming the rosary. [...] Like a come-all-ye, the prayer was taken up by other men [...], down on their socialist knees. I took my eyes from the street for a few seconds and watched Connolly across the hall, grinding his teeth; I could almost hear them crumbling above the rosary drone. Pearse was in a corner, on a high stool, his head in a notebook; he was mumbling as well. Collins, to be fair to him, looked ready to go in among them and kick them back to earth.<sup>4</sup>

The leaders, such as Pearse (with "arms [that] had no more muscle than his poetry", p. 124), Collins ("[Collins] loved his horseplay. As long as he was the horse.", p. 198), de Valera and others were no more than Catholic capitalists ("- Catholic and capitalist, Henry. It's an appalling combination", p. 116). In short, the Irish Fight for Freedom only replaced one exploitative government with another that turned out to be no less exploitative without any interest whatsoever in the poor and socially underprivileged, who before and after the Big Historical Change got it equally squarely in the neck himself. Thus Doyle has, bravely enough, written a chapter of revisionist Irish history, for which act he has got it, and will continue to get it, in the neck. This is of course deplorably unfair, but must be expected if someone debunks the political and historical holy of holies of any given country as a mere myth. In all fairness, though, Doyle should not be excoriated for having a snipe at the hallowed founding-fathers of the Irish Republic, but rather for the manner in which he has

gone about the business. *A Star Called Henry* is a bad novel principally because Doyle's iconoclastic act of revisionism in the end fails to work and that is due to the flawed manner in which its protagonist, Henry Smart (*nomen est omen*), and by extension Doyle himself, has rendered his story.

But first, what of that story? The novel is divided into four parts. Part I deals with Henry Smart's childhood. Born into the Dublin slums of 1901, Henry is the son of a one-legged bouncer-cum-jobbing-hitman, who worked at Dolly Oblong's brothel and also settled scores for her partner, the mysterious Alfie Gandon, obligingly bumping off Gandon's enemies, preferably with a clout from his wooden leg, and getting rid of the bodies piece by piece in the rivers, streams and canals of Dublin environs. His mother, Melody, married at sixteen, after having walked into her future husband, causing him, being utterly stocious with drink and holding himself up on a number seven shovel because he was missing his wooden leg, to fall to the ground. She helped him get up and hobble along, and soon enough the two of them wound up before a priest to be married. Melody succumbed to consumption and alcoholism by her early twenties. When Henry was five, she became too sick to look after her children, and Henry took to the streets together with his eighteen-month-old brother Victor, shouting "Fuck off" at King Edward V when he was parading the city in July 1907. For three years, the two boys lived under boxes, in hallways and on wasteland:

I had Victor, my father's leg and nothing else. I was bright but illiterate, strapping but always sick. I was handsome and filthy and bursting out of my rags. And I was surviving. (p. 70)

Henry eked out a living by turning his hand to everything from ordinary thieving to rat-catching and mutilating cattle to order. On the day of George V's coronation, little Victor died, and Doyle has him expire in a way worthy of a Victorian weepie.

Cut to Easter 1916 and Part II, which focuses on certain events during the Rising. Henry is now fourteen and wearing the uniform of the Irish Citizen Army. The incidents highlighted confirm the view that much, if not all, that happened was of the Keystone Cops variety, such as when Henry remarks:

We marched out across Sackville Street [now of course O'Connell Street]. Behind me, the horses pulled two lorries, full of our pickaxes, crowbars, sledges - weapons for the working men's war: Connolly's idea of urban warfare was tunnelling, knocking down walls, advance and retreat without having to go out into the rain - our few extra rifles and pistols, boxes of cartridges, bayonets, hatchets, cleavers. We marched straight across the wide street and felt the power as we stopped the trams and cars and people gaped and wondered. There were British officers outside the Metropole Hotel. They were used to marching Paddies. They laughed and one or two of them waved. (p. 94)

What is actually told of the occurrences during the Easter Rising amounts to pretty little if assessed within the context of an historical novel: the confusion inside the G.P.O. and the mayhem on the street outside (looting, real fireworks set off by kids who had broken into Lawrence's toy and sports bazaar, the shawlies' attack, Lewis and Vickers and Maxim guns that kept going at the G.P.O., the eventual escape from the G.P.O. into Henry Street via a building backing onto it, the unconditional surrender, the killing of a few rebels, Henry's get-away through a manhole and some waterways under Dublin, and, not to be forgotten, Henry's copulating with his former teacher Miss O'Shea, whom he subsequently married and whose first name he — and the reader — never learns:

I was falling onto my back when it happened. I'd been pushed on top of a high bed made of blocks of stamps, sheets and sheets of the things, columns of them, sticky side up.

I was stuck there with my britches nuzzling my ankles as miss O'Shea grabbed my knees and climbed on top of me. (p. 119)

Generally speaking, the description of the events inside and outside the G.P.O. is somewhat chaotic, lacking a discernible *raison d'être*. At best, it might be said that, yes, this is exactly what they were - chaotic. And yet, one must be forgiven for suspecting that Doyle has it not in him to offer more. One side-effect of this kind of narrative procedure is that a strain is put on the reader in his efforts to concretise what is told in his imagination.

Henry finds himself in the General Post Office along with a collection of largely middle-class revolutionaries. He is convinced he is fighting to avenge the wrongs suffered by his family and his class and to create a glorious new world. But he is forced to realise that the Volunteers and most of the revolutionaries are Catholic, Anglophobic, stupid and petite bourgeois ("We were fighting a class war. We weren't in the same battle at all as the rest of the rebels", p. 107). They abhor the looters out on Sackville Street and they detest the shawlies who beat a path to the G.P.O. door in search of the pensions of their men folk, who are on the Western front. The Volunteers ("the poets and farmboys, the fuckin' shopkeepers", p. 103), who cannot understand how poverty determines behaviour, see these women and their men as pro-British traitors:<sup>5</sup>

The women weren't giving up. I could see some of them, climbing over their friends to get at the door. A bunch of shawlies they were, all shapes and ages under their black hoods; they'd come down from Summerhill and I knew why. They were here to collect their allowances. Their men were over in France, or dead under the muck. And the shawlies wanted their money. (p. 101)

In Part III, Henry goes underground and comes to live with Piano Annie, who was one of the shawlies. He becomes a docker, working under a fat dwarf as stevedore who is in the habit of fornicating with the wives of all the men he presides over. Henry is made to shovel coal and phosphorite. His Granny, who miraculously acquired the ability to read at Henry's birth, has meanwhile progressed to *Don Quixote* and *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (p. 162). One of Henry's overriding interests is to find out who Alfie Gandon is, for whom Henry's father killed off a number of men. One day Henry bumps into Jack Dalton, who will later become an influential member of the government of the Free State. Dalton tells him of the revolutionary plans for the New Ireland. But Henry senses that from his own point of view there is a good deal amiss about these plans:

[...] it struck me even then [...] that his Ireland was a very small place. Vast chunks of it didn't fit his bill; he had grudges stored up against the inhabitants of most of the counties. His republic was going to be a few blameless pockets, connected to the capital by vast bridges of his own design. (p. 171)

Still, Henry finds himself ready to die for Ireland again, but now it is a version of Ireland "that [has] little or nothing to do with the Ireland I'd gone out to die for the last time" (p. 171). He becomes a Volunteer, joining the First Battalion, F Company. It is the time of Michael Collins, and before he can bat an eyelid Henry is sworn into the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, and he goes to stay in the Irish Midlands, training IRA volunteers in Rusc, in the course of which activity he meets Miss O'Shea and in September 1919 they marry, and together they conduct a kind of Bonnie-and-Clyde terror campaign, setting the Midlands ablaze in the name of Irish freedom. He is next made one of Collins's Twelve Apostles and stiffs dozens of spies for his boss (none of them real spies, it turns out, just men with minds of their own whom the Republican Movement could not tolerate.)<sup>6</sup>

In Part IV, Henry is in Kilmainham Gaol. But he manages to escape with the help of

Miss O'Shea. It is now the period of "executions and counter-executions, reprisals and counter-reprisals" (p. 310), and for much of the time Henry and his wife are on the run. One day, he encounters a rebel leader called Ivan, whom Henry himself had trained in the Midlands. Ivan is quite an influential man now, and he, without so much as by your leave, tells Henry to call off his wife, who through her campaigns is ruining his business by "interfering with free trade" (p. 316):

Nobody works without the nod from Ivan. A sweet doesn't get sucked without a good coating of the profit ending up on Ivan's tongue. I'm a roaring success, boy. (p. 315)

And when Ivan remarks: "I'll be ready to lead my people into a new Ireland", Henry counters: "- And it'll be very like the old one" (p. 315). A short while later, Henry is shown his very own death warrant by another of his former revolutionary cronies, and after crossing "Ireland in the groundwater" (p. 328) for months and after having been able to see his daughter, somewhat oddly named Freedom ("Saoirse"), Henry, now aged twenty, flees to Liverpool.

The picture that emerges of the Irish Fight for Freedom during the first two decades of the twentieth century, as of the Free State, is none to complimentary, to say the least. The members of the R.I.C. and the G-Division as well as the soldiers, the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries were not the monsters of Republican lore. They were just hard-nosed men who did a job and they did their job well. The founding fathers of the Republic had no vision and no genuine commitment to improving the lot of the Irish people. The glorious uprising, with its hundreds of dead people, achieved nothing more than the transfer of power to a questionable group of men who founded parties with Gaelic names that have milked the common men ever since.<sup>7</sup> Henry Smart takes part in some of the key events in Irish national history, but being a member of the underprivileged class he comes to the awareness that he has never been a true part of that history. In Doyle's hands, the grand patriotic narrative is tainted with a sharp sense of human frailty. Smart's sympathies lie unequivocally with his own social class. He is a disciple of James Connolly and a soldier in the socialist revolutionary Irish Citizen Army. In the end, though, he is compelled to admit that Irish socialism was interred with Connolly's bones and that the subsequent leaders had not the faintest interest in social justice or people like him. Under the cloak of Irish national liberation, the main concern of most of the influential revolutionaries did not extend much beyond merely changing the personnel in Dublin Castle, beyond painting the pillar boxes green and ensuring the continued sanctity of private property rights. The Irish revolution, as depicted here, is far too true to be good. It is shown riven with petty jealousies, murderous passions, anti-Semitic prejudice and ruthless self-advancement. 1916 was ultimately a bourgeois affair, since very little changed for those who had very little in the first place. Towards the end, a former rebel leader and erstwhile friend of Henry's presents Henry with his death warrant:

— Why? [asks Henry.]

— Well, he said, if you're not with us you're against us. That's the thinking. And there are those who reckon that you're always going to be against us. And they're probably right. You've no stake in the country, man. Never had, never will. We needed trouble-makers and very soon now we'll have to be rid of them. And that, Henry, is all you are and ever were. A trouble-maker. The best in the business,

mind. But - (pp. 326f.)

Post-revolutionary Ireland is run by men like Alfie Gandon, who now spells his surname O'Gandúin. During the War of Independence, he was Mister Gandon, a businessman, a Home Ruler and a Catholic. Later someone says of him:

He's a giant in this city [...]. Property, transport, banking, Corpo. He's in on them all. He's a powerful man, Henry. And a good fellow. There's more widows and orphans living off that fella's generosity than the nuns could ever handle. And he doesn't like to boast about it either. Chamber of Commerce, Gaelic League and a great sodality man. (p. 189)

When Dáil Éireann is formed in 1919, Alfie Gandon or Mr O'Gandúin becomes Minister of Commercial Affairs and the Sea (p. 209). During the Great War, he is said to have very quickly "become respectable, the party of the parish priests and those middle-class men cute enough to know when the wind was changing. It was the party of money and faith" (p. 207). When the Free State is born, he is holding down two ministries (p. 328), "a national politician, of a nation eager to prove itself to the world" (p. 336). But Henry Smart realises that while he was training country boys for the IRA, his fellow revolutionaries were adding letters to their names: Michael Collins M.P., Denis Acher M.P., Alfred Gandon M.P., Jack Dalton M.P. He may have been bang in the middle of what was going to become big, big history, and he may have been "one of Collins's anointed" (p. 208), but actually he was excluded from everything. None of the men of the slums and hovels ever made it onto the list. "We were nameless and expendable, every bit as dead as the squaddies in France. (...) We were decoys and patsies. We followed orders and murdered" (p. 208)

All this naturally amounts to a powerful debunking of the shibboleths of the 1916 Rebellion, the War of Independence and the Civil War. The pity, though, is that Doyle should have elected to cloak his devastating critique as he did. It is a manner that, for various reasons, beggars credulity. To begin with, it is not a good idea to have a radical exposé of the shibboleths of a most crucial period in Ireland's history - and one that is intended to be taken seriously - presented by a foul-mouthed narrator who is inevitably bound to discredit whatever he is offering through the utterly unreliable way of his telling. Doyle presumably chose such a narratorial voice because, as his previous novels show, he is good at it. Yet the problem is that too much Doyle codology is thereby permitted to enter into the account for it to be convincing. Moreover, the character of Henry Smart is, in many ways, too good to be true. Here are a few examples of how he presents himself:

I was a broth of an infant, the wonder of Summerhill and beyond. I was the big news, a local legend within hours of landing on the newspaper. (p. 22)

I had charm and invention. Women saw the future Henry under my crust and they melted; they saw a future they wanted now and badly and knew they'd never get. They wanted to touch me but couldn't, so they patted little Victor instead. (p. 65)

I was six foot, two inches tall and had the shoulders of a boy built to carry the weight of the world. I was probably the best-looking man in the G.P.O. [...] My eyes were astonishing, blue daggers that warned the world to keep its distance. (p. 89)

My eyes were blue and fascinating whirlpools, they could suck in women while warning them to stay well away, a fighting combination that had them running at me. (p. 108)

Why should this be so? Dashing, intelligent, irresistibly handsome (curiously the terrible privations of his early life had no adverse effect on his development), he is physically almost perfect. This contestable state of affairs is mitigated only by Henry's very patchy moral sense, though we are led to believe that he will come good in the end. Also why should his birth be surrounded by preternatural events? The midwife who delivers him finds that her hands mysteriously tingle ever afterwards. Additional miracles occur. His illiterate crone of a grandmother strangely acquires the ability to read: "Granny Nash [...] picked up the *Freeman's Journal* and discovered that she could read" (p. 22). Finally, baby Henry's "shite" is collected every evening and transported to Lady Gregory's rose-bushes at Coole Park (p. 23).

Why, to continue, has Doyle seen fit to people his novel with so many grotesques, like Piano Annie, with whom Henry shacks up after the Rising, or the priapic dwarf? Henry's female counterpart, Miss O'Shea, becomes another legendary figure, battling valiantly for personal and political liberty by pedalling around on a bicycle with a machine-gun fixed to its handlebars. Gifted with supra-human fortitude, she carries the wounded Henry to safety when her arm is riddled with bullets. Black and Tans and Sinn Feiners alike detest her unwomanly presumptions. Only Henry approves of her demands for sexual parity. There is, to give a final instance, book-perusing Granny Nash, at one time seen reading two books at one and the same time (p. 117).

The entire business with Henry's father's wooden leg is simply too risible. For example, during the Anglo-Irish war Henry wields his only legacy, the said wooden leg, to tremendous effect, and murders merrily in the name of Kathleen Ni Houlihan. Henry's childhood is so grim that its poverty makes the world of Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* look like sheer blooming luxury. The fetid details of slum life in Dublin and torture and barbarity in the city's prisons are supplied in great profusion, but squalor and savagery keep being smothered under facetiousness. It is rather whimsical to have Henry's father and then Henry after him make their escapes from the rozzers and soldiers "be the water", meaning via the subterranean waterways of Dublin, Harry-Lime fashion. The sex-scene in the G.P.O. during the Easter Rising is a laugh, and it puts a completely new complexion on the meaning of the term Easter, erm, Rising. The death of little Victor puts one in mind of Oscar Wilde's remark that one must have a heart of stone not to laugh at the death of Little Nell in Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Certain aspects of Doyle's revisionist account, although mildly amusing, are out of place in an attempt of this sort that wants to be taken in earnest. Thus Henry claims:

I'd played *The Last Post* at the grave of O'Donovan Rossa the year before. The history books will tell you that it was William Oman, but don't believe them: he was tucked up at home with the flu. (p. 90)

Or take his contention that when the famous photograph was taken of de Valera after the surrender, he, Henry, had been standing next to the great man:

The photographer was a bollocks called Hanratty. [...] The first time I saw the photo my elbow was in it, but even that went in later versions. No room for Henry's elbow. [...] If Hanratty had moved his camera, just a bit to the right, just a fraction of a bit. I'd have been in. (pp. 138f.)

The idea may be designed to underscore Henry's conviction according to which there was no real place for the poor in the Irish Fight for Freedom, and yet the same point



could have been made in a less flippant manner. Lastly, why should only the poor and underprivileged have been decent during the time and events in question?

It could probably be argued that Doyle has peppered his narrative with all those imbecilities in order to forestall critical reactions against his reading of Irish history. After all, he may point out, this is not really his own interpretation of the events during those crucial twenty-odd years in the twentieth century, but that of his foul-mouthed protagonist who alone is responsible for the shortcomings and inconsistencies singled out here. But such an argument simply will not wash. *A Star Called Henry* is the first novel in a projected series of three entitled *The Last Roundup*. Quite conceivably, there are any number of readers who cannot wait for the next two books to appear. But I definitely can.

## Works Cited

1. Cf. the publisher's blurb to the novel.
2. Emily Jane Brontë, "Remembrance", in: Christopher Ricks (ed.), *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. Oxford: OUP, 1999, p. 446.
3. *The Irish Times*, August 21, 1999.
4. Roddy Doyle, *A Star Called Henry*. London: Cape, 1999, p. 111.
5. Cf. C. Gébler's review.
6. Cf. C. Gébler's review.
7. Cf. C. Gébler's review.