

Erased identities: Marita Conlon's *The Magdalen* (1999)

Abstract

Following postmodernist and trauma studies discourses our aim here is to analyse Marita Conlon's novel in which she gives voice to a fictional character, Esther, as representative of those Irish women who were sent to a Magdalene Asylum after being displaced and rejected by their own society on the grounds of a doubted moral behaviour. Like Esther, thousands of women underwent physical and psychological abuses under the custody of members of the Church, a traumatic experience to which they responded in a repressed way keeping silence and even abandoning their home country. Consequently, as a result of the repression and violence they were subjected to, their identity became erased being psychologically wounded for their whole lives finding difficulties to adapt to normal life after their liberation even rejecting the male figure who may try to impose power over them.

Keywords: identity, trauma, Catholicism, Magdalen asylums