



Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha

Roddy Doyle

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"Sometimes when nothing happened it was really getting ready to happen." Irish Paddy rampages through Barrytown streets with like-minded hooligans, playing cowboys, etching names in wet concrete, setting fires. The gang are not bad boys, just restless. When his parents argue, Paddy stays up all night to keep them safe. Change always comes, not always for the better.

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha Details

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Greta says

La risata del titolo è una risata forzata, costruita, innaturale, quella di un bambino che ama inventare le cose perché arrivare in fondo alla bugia senza contraddizioni è vincere una sfida con sé stessi, un bambino che in mezzo alla sua cricca d'amici deve ridere più forte degli altri, ed accertarsi che gli altri lo stiano guardando, si stiano accorgendo della sua voce, stiano riconoscendo il suo sforzo di farsi notare. La risata del titolo è solo una forma, una posa, una maschera. Qualcosa che Paddy insegue per tutto il romanzo in maniera spasmodica, una ricerca struggente e disperata, il commovente tentativo di un bimbo di nascondere le ingenuità tipiche della sua età per mostrare uno spettacolo, una facciata smagliante e radiosa.

"Paddy Clarke ah ah ah!" ha una risata nel titolo, ma è tutt'altro che divertente, è un libro che fa parlare un bambino in maniera talmente verosimile e rispettosa da risultare doloroso.

Patrick Clarke ha dieci anni e una cricca d'amici in mezzo ai quali cerca di interpretare al meglio il ruolo di teppistello di strada che le circostanze gli hanno affidato: ruba, appicca incendi, maltratta il fratellino, prende parte alle risse di quartiere, fa a gara a suonare quanti più campanelli possibili per poi scappare senza farsi prendere. E Roddy Doyle si immerge nei pensieri di Paddy, e lo fa con una maestria sconvolgente: non credo di aver mai letto qualcuno scrivere così bene nei panni di un ragazzino di dieci anni, sovrapponendo un linguaggio schietto ed episodi banali e slegati fra di loro a significati profondi e perfettamente coerenti e finalizzati a formare un disegno più ampio.

Eppure tre quarti di questo libro, nonostante la scrittura magistrale di Roddy Doyle, mi hanno annoiata: forse perché sono stata una bambina molto più fortunata di Paddy e i suoi amici, forse perché non ho mai giocato in strada, e a dieci anni non avevo bisogno di avere qualcuno in comune da odiare per sentirmi vicina a qualcun altro, forse perché a dieci anni lividi e denti rotti e colpi di mazza sulla schiena e accendini gettati in faccia non mi sarebbero mai sembrati normali giochi da ragazzini, ma veri e propri atti di bullismo. Leggevo, apprezzavo la scrittura di Doyle, non provavo interesse a proseguire e sentivo una morsa gelida allo stomaco, perché in mezzo a tutti questi giochi e alle botte e alle prese in giro sul conto delle disgrazie familiari di ogni membro della cricca sentivo una totale mancanza di comprensione nei confronti di questi bambini. Non mancanza d'attenzione, quello no, ma una completa, avvolgente, totalizzante mancanza di comprensione. In questo deserto affettivo non c'è da stupirsi per la cattiveria e i comportamenti tanto cinici in bambini così piccoli.

E poi, quando ormai pensavo che questo libro si sarebbe concluso come un'opera ben scritta ma non di mio interesse, ecco quelle ultime ottanta pagine. Ecco la fragilità di Paddy, le sue notti insonni, i suoi disperati e, agli occhi di un adulto, struggenti tentativi di poter fare qualcosa per la sua famiglia. Per quella mamma così carina e quel papà così simpatico, per quelle due figure impegnate a ballare un tango sempre più frenetico e pericoloso. Ecco la rigidità di un fratellino che si finge di voler proteggere solo per potervisi aggrappare, e le pagine dei libri di testo copiate e ricopiate al tavolo della cucina. Ottanta pagine per cui vale la pena di passare attraverso stivaletti malesi e topi morti e furti di segatura.

Fabian says

I hate to be facetious about this, but it's true. I love to read good books as much as I love to discover which ones are actual impostors—that is, which ones are overrated past the norm, books like "On the Road," "Catcher in the Rye," or anything by Ayn Rand. Yuck. Well, this one won the Booker, which I can only guess is a HUGE deal. But I guess the year this book was published there were a few other, if any,

contenders for the top prize.

It's certainly not awful. It's actually entertaining, readable, sometimes funny. There is true mastery of the language here, an even flow. The tone is more tolerable than say, Emma Donoghue's "Room" which is also about a child growing up. But, although I am not at all a fan of the almighty "Huck Finn", I must say that this one does not possess that wackiness—there is some unconscious logic to Twain's tale, at the very least. This is a chapter-less novel; a pretty ordinary account of a pretty ordinary boy. What is the main motor that keeps the prose congruent, that makes the entire novel work? The fact that Patrick's parents fight. That's all. They keep it private, they try to keep the kids out of it, yet this still registers within Paddy... he's human alright, just not a remarkable one.

Indeed Bookers are bestowed upon (like the Pulitzers here in the U.S.) to novels that exemplify the experience of being European (American for a Pulitzer). This hits several targets to become a well-loved book, but it still remains a coming-of-age story of an Irish imp—a precocious, slightly evil ten year old boy. Who do we side with in this account of playground cruelty & cute impressions? With the bully? The victim? In this case, I would say... neither.

Apathy is the worst type of feeling a book can give its reader.

Colleen says

This book won the 1993 Booker Prize. I tend to love Irish authors and books like this one, in which I can hear the brogue in the dialog. This book did a wonderful job of putting the reader in the reality of boys ages 8 to 10 and their relationships. The reader is fully immersed in their neighborhood and given a strong sense of place throughout the novel. The reader gets insight into the bullying (even toward beloved pals and siblings), petty crimes, and other stunts pulled by the main characters -- even when those characters lack insight themselves. The highpoint of the book was its consistency in portraying the world through the eyes of a young boy, complete with the faulty perspective that such a child would have in certain situations.

The reason I did not adore this book and give it more stars was because it didn't DO enough with the marvelous characters and place. Once the scene was established, the story didn't go far enough. The main characters certainly experienced some life changes, but I was left feeling like the journey had just begun after a long time spent getting the engine to start. I felt that the real discoveries and consequences of what took place in the book had yet to take place. I wanted to hear about where the characters were five or ten years down the line. It left me somewhat unsatisfied. I would still consider reading other books by Doyle, though, because his characters are so well developed and his dialog is filled with humor and an enjoyable pace (even in the midst of some dark and disturbing subject matter).

Julie says

I've read a lot of books, and I can tell you, there isn't one out there that captures a childhood, or the perspective from a 10-year-old child, better than this one.

Not just any childhood, and certainly not any in 2014 in a middle-class or affluent neighborhood, where the children can now be found indoors, and in silence, save the hum of their tv or computer.

This is a childhood set in Ireland, but these are the childhoods that many of us (before, say 1985) experienced in our own lower and middle class neighborhoods. The childhoods where the parents had little involvement, the kids were a grubby, rude bunch, and trouble could be drummed up on a dime.

This was before schools banned teachers and administrators from hitting you on the hands and heads and promoted any such thing as an anti-bullying policy.

And, even if, in many ways, you can argue we've become too soft, or our children are over-monitored, this book is a great argument as to why things changed. Needed to change.

But author Roddy Doyle isn't preaching about social change, he's just telling a story. Ten-year-old Paddy Clarke's story. It's a meaningful read, despite many stops and starts and a middle that sagged, and if you need quotation marks to distinguish dialogue, you won't find any here.

Doyle nails it, though, he nails our meanness. The meanness that trickles down from our parents, teachers, administrators and adult neighbors, to our kids, who then become mean to their siblings, friends, and neighborhood dogs.

My stomach hurt through many of these stream of consciousness passages of bullying and taunting and I was sure an innocent animal would die at the hands of these brats at some point.

Doyle does a brilliant job of maintaining Voice and staying true to Paddy Clarke's world.

James Barker says

A few weeks ago I was infuriated by 'Hideous Kinky,' a novel purporting to be narrated by a five year old girl. Linguistically all wrong, the story fell down due to these discrepancies. Happily, 'Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha,' told from the POV of a ten year old boy, is a masterclass of perception and imaginative writing. This is a boy's voice speaking about the things within his frame of reference, staccato musings that centre on family and its comforts and agonies, the hierarchy of friends and school, and the world that is the village he calls home, a world that shrinks as the book goes on, with play fields disappearing and poor houses springing up. This concoction is laced with an unceasing list of salient facts, all repeated in the boy's voice with the curious wonder of youth. Structurally, the loose chronology is often eschewed by the meandering connections of memory in Paddy's head, although the increasing preoccupation with the health of his parents' marriage cuts through the tales of boyish banter and scrapes, revealing beyond the laughter and joys of childhood a sadness at the core.

Very often fathers are sidelined in a family, although regularly they sideline themselves. Working all hours God sends to provide for their family, they can be a silent presence at the end of the working day, exhausted and unfulfilled by their lot. This is captured so well in the book; the mother is the centre of family life, she is responsible for all the positive routine for her two boys. The father, meanwhile, is inconstant. His moods are changeable, his routines tending to cultivate the opposite of peace of mind in his children. His brooding silence is challenged, mostly by his wife but also by his eldest son, Paddy, who feels he has the power to stop his parents' fights- but also, by this implication, that he is responsible for them. The nightly vigil the ten year old boy is reduced to, his increasing insecurity and slump into tearful exhaustion, are quietly tragic. The slow disintegration of a family, Ha Ha Ha, Paddy Clarke, spells the death knell of a child's innocence. As a reader your heart breaks between the lines of humour.

Ola Cader says

This is one of the very few books I've read twice, and the only one I liked even more when reading it for the second time.

When I was reading Paula Spencer I was thinking that Roddy Doyle must have spent hours talking to women, or rather listening to them. Reading Paddy Clarke... made me think he must have spent hours listening to children. I really appreciate books where child characters seem so real, because few people are willing to listen to what kids really have to say.

I love Roddy Doyle for the same reason I love John Irving or Kurt Vonnegut - he can write about important, serious and difficult things without boring you. Most things that happen to Paddy and his family and friends are not 'ha ha ha' at all, but this book is one of the most entertaining ones I've read. I think Paddy Clarke is one of the best characters ever and if you don't agree you're a spa and I'll give you a dead leg!

Sandra says

Se qualcuno, come me, pensasse che "Paddy Clarke ah ah ah" sia un libro divertente, grazie al quale sorridere e svagarsi dai problemi che ci rincorrono, come volevo fare io leggendolo, si sbaglia. "Paddy Clarke ah ah ah" è un libro molto triste, che rilascia sofferenza, una sofferenza che per noi adulti è la peggiore, quella dei bambini a causa del comportamento degli adulti.

Il libro racconta le avventure di una banda di ragazzini dublinesi negli anni '60, raccontata in prima persona da Paddy Clarke, primogenito di una famiglia piccolo borghese irlandese cattolica. La particolarità che mi ha immediatamente colpita è stato il fatto che la storia è narrata in prima persona dal piccolo Paddy, ma al tempo passato, come se ricordasse episodi della sua infanzia da adulto; invece il linguaggio usato è quello dei bambini, semplice, immediato, che segue una logica soltanto infantile, per cui i pensieri gli si allacciano l'uno con l'altro senza continuità, prendendo spunto dal ricordo di un nome o di un gioco, così a caso.

Pertanto tu che leggi pensi ad un adulto rimasto bambino, che non può essere, non è credibile; oppure ad un Paddy ancora sulla soglia dell'infanzia che ricorda gli anni passati come se fossero un'altra vita, e questo è più credibile.

Il quadro che emerge è quello di un'infanzia giocosa ma non gioiosa, di una banda di bambini in cui è evidente il bullismo di uno sugli altri, la sottomissione del gruppo nei confronti del più forte e manesco, la crudeltà che i bambini hanno verso i deboli o gli estranei al gruppo, che sfocia in giochi e scherzi spesso spietati. In questo quadro Paddy desta tenerezza, per la sua bontà ed anche per la debolezza, per la lucidità infantile con cui si guarda intorno ed osserva i suoi coetanei e gli adulti. Proprio in quest'ultimo punto si trova il cuore del romanzo, nella sofferenza del bambino che guarda i genitori tanto amati farsi la guerra, arrivando dagli urli alle botte, di notte, in salotto, con le porte chiuse e con le grida soffocate, che non sfuggono però all'orecchio del figlio maggiore. Lui guarda e non capisce i comportamenti adulti, sa soltanto che quei due adulti, quel padre un po' burbero e distratto, sempre preso dal giornale o dalla tv, e quella madre dolcissima ma anche severa nell'educazione, sono gli esseri che lui ama di più al mondo, dai quali subisce i danni più grandi che si possano fare a un bambino.

Come si fa a trovare divertente questo libro?

Roberta says

How much the point of view changes with age! I read the Italian translation the year it was published, and I loved it. Moreover, it was a present from a friend of mine and I also loved the time and effort she put into looking for a book that could meet my taste.

23 years later (oh my god!) I really want to give Paddy and his gang a good spanking. I don't think it is just me, though: a lot of things he could have got away with in 1993 fall today under the category of bullying. But when you realized there's something wrong in Paddy's life the stream of consciousness has already involved you in half the book. IMHO the style of writing is simply perfect, exactly as you expect an healthy and vivacious young boy to talk and think. And if you notice, such a jolly spirit dries out as fast as the problems grow within the household. The last page looks more like a "normal book", then the free mind of Patrick.

Roddy Doyle will write again about domestic abuse in *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*. Is this type of violence frequent in Ireland, or is it a topic dear to Mr Doyle? I don't know, but I know he's quite good in writing about it.

Richard Derus says

Rating: An irritable 3* of five

Ugh.

Books written in the voice of a child had best use that technique for a reason...the child's perspective becomes wearing unless there is some very, very compelling narrative reason to make us follow a kid around without wanting to scream blue murder after a while.

I don't find any such compelling reason in this book. I don't find anything compelling at all in this book, as a matter of fact.

Ireland sounds damned good and dreary, and I am rethinking my desire to visit. I hate priests, nuns, and the Catholic Church with a vibrating Day-Glo orange passion. I'm beginning to hate all the fools and cruel who dare to become parents in Ireland, too. All the cheery Irish that exist appear to have moved here and taken up writing about the badness of Irish childhoods.

Blech. I don't want to talk about this book anymore. Read it at your peril. Why did I give it three stars? Because the writing, the descriptions, the sheer visual acuity of it makes anything less a dishonest rating, one based on my growing dislike of the country it's about, not a judgment of the book's merits.

Steve says

I hate to think that I'm susceptible to some merchandiser's power of suggestion, but as soon as hearts and Cupids give way to shamrocks and leprechauns (typically Feb. 15), my thoughts often turn towards the Emerald Isle. Of course, when the lovely lass I married accompanied me there last year to celebrate a round-number anniversary, I can be forgiven for thinking about it even more, right? Beyond the history, scenery,

culture, silver-tongued locals and tasty libations, there's the draw of their proud literary tradition. Roddy Doyle has done his part to continue this. Many here know him from his book *The Commitments*, the first in the Barrytown Trilogy and the basis for a *fookin' brilliant* film. Well, *PCHHH* is no slouch either. It won a Booker in 1993.

Both Doyle and his protagonist are exactly my age. It was interesting to me to see the similarities and differences that a ten year old Dublin lad would experience in 1968. I could relate to the joys of transistor radios and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, for instance, and more generally to that emerging awareness of a complicated world. The horseplay among boys that age was another commonality. (When or where has that *not* been the case?). Even so, the extremes to which Paddy and his mates took it would have been ruled out of bounds most places. For instance, I'm pretty sure I never tried to set my brother's lips on fire with lighter fluid, or hobble anyone from the wrong side of the tracks. The overall feel of it was like Ralphie from *A Christmas Story* had he been speaking about his miserable Irish childhood (a la *Angela's Ashes*, though perhaps slightly drier) with the Marquis de Sade as technical advisor.

One aspect of the book that was both similar *and* different was the emphasis on sports. While stateside the obsessions involved baseball, football (the oblong, American kind) and basketball, over there it was just football (the round, rest-of-the-world kind). George Best was the flashy Irish superstar at Manchester United who was Joe Namath, Mickey Mantle and Dr. J all wrapped into one. In their play-acting matches there was fierce competition for who got to be him. Paddy's little brother Francis (a.k.a. Sinbad) opted out of that role, preferring to be one of the less celebrated players. I figured it said a lot about the brother relationship that Paddy always worked every advantage to appear the dominant star whereas Sinbad was happy to play an ancillary role, creatively feeding the ball to the scorers, ending up more responsible for the results even if less recognized. The fact that Paddy acknowledged Sinbad's sacrifice and cleverness was meaningful since we saw only the antagonism prior to that point. George Best also featured in another story when Paddy's da bought him a cherished copy of Best's book, autographed by the man himself. Or was it?

Paddy's vignettes did not constitute a plot, *per se*. They were closer to stream-of-consciousness, though a post-Joycean variety where obfuscation was less of a goal. Plus, they built towards something of a climax -- an affecting realization. The convergence of Paddy's growing maturity and empathy levels with his mum's tears and his da's sullen demeanor made him view Sinbad and his parents in a new way, but, *begorra*, I shan't say more.

Sláinte, Paddy! Sláinte, Sinbad! Your creator made me care. That's something worthy of a toast in a St. Patrick's Day tribute, isn't it?

Faith says

I'm very glad I found Roddy Doyle. (Thanx Nick Hornby and Speaking to the Angels.) Cause Paddy Clarke HaHaHa is just like I like a book. It reminds me a lot of Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, one of my favorite books. One of the books I truly love. They've got more in common than the comic style. They're both about Irish childhoods. Frankie McCourt's in the late 30s and early 40s. Paddy Clarke's in the late 60s. "It is 1968. Paddy Clarke is 10 years old, breathless with discovery." Writes Irish Times.

I love Paddy Clarke. He is so sympathetic. For me that says everything. He just makes me love him. Want to hug him almost. (Expect he wouldn't want me to do it (even if we would exist in the same world). Cause life

is so hard. Even for a 10-year-old boy. The boys that play together in the Irish suburbs of the 60s are so hard on each other. But kids are, whether they're boys or girls, whenever and wherever they live. Good I haven't had to endure that. The kids cruelty. Not much at least. You can't get to me, not really. "Paddy Clarke, Paddy Clarke, has no da, ha ha ha!" Paddy Clarke discovering the world. That's what it's about. Everything in the book.

Honestly. Roddy Doyle is brilliant. The book is brilliant. So sympathetic and funny. It really gets to me. Really. To my heart. Paddy. And especially his relationship with his younger brother Sinbad. I love them. This was the kind of book, after which it's hard to start on an other one, cause u know it's not gonna be half as good, won't give u the same feeling.

And I did forget to mention the word cute. That should certainly be mentioned. It's all so cute, and it's about children. Wonderful. [And I know this might sound flat.:]

And I just have to add that this is the kind of book that I think ought to be true, a true story, even thou this isn't. The way the book is told makes it seam so true, like someone's memories.

Maciek says

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha reminded me of another famous Irish novel, Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*. Both are narrated by a young boys who grow up in Ireland during the 1960's, and both make use of vernacular and local folklore. *The Butcher Boy* was shortlisted for the Booker in 1992, and *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* won it in 1993.

But don't be dissuaded from reading *Paddy Clarke...* by thinking that it's more of the same - both books are novels of childhood in the same country at roughly the same time, but achieve different results. Young Francie of *The Butcher Boy* was a sad, abused derelict who never had a chance to experience childhood and grow up; he retracted into his own, small bubble where the world resembles comic books and films with John Wayne. In comparison, Paddy Clarke is an ordinary young lad who grows up in much better conditions - he has a group of friends with whom he runs around town and does various pranks, has various adventures with various ends.

Francie is a character largely oblivious to things happening around him, and can be genuinely mean and abusive towards others; he observes the world around him largely through the lens of his imagination, which he uses to justify his actions with sometimes truly bizarre logic. Paddy is an observant boy, who sees how the world is changing: he runs around the neighborhood and performs pranks with a group of fellow boys, but also notices how urban development is slowly encroaching the areas they used to play in; he picks on kids but does so largely to remain in the pack, with which it commits mischief in the neighborhood. Still, he begins to notice a creeping disruption into his antics-filled life, as his parents begin to argue. Paddy dedicates himself into improving the mood at home and erase the tension between his parents, in a series of touching scenes: he stays up in the kitchen for a long time, pretending to study, so that he can be between them and make them laugh; he listens to the news and then tries to discuss them with his father in hope with forming a better bond with him. He turns to his younger brother, Sindbad, on whom he used to previously pick up in hope of finding comfort and support. Paddy doesn't quickly mature and grow up; rather he is uprooted from the prank-filled world of childhood. He realizes that there might be no way to stop things that he doesn't understand, and can only hope that somehow - somehow - he will be able to cope and go on.

This is a book worth reading for those who enjoy novels with child narrators; Roddy Doyle captures Paddy's voice very well. While the book might not pull all readers into its world with a disjointed, fractured story, I believe that it would be a mistake to introduce calculated plotting and sequenced events. It's much more effective to read through the eyes of a young boy, who experiences everything vividly. The text flows from one scene to the next like a stream as Paddy's thoughts and emotions mix and change like summer weather, with warm sun but also cold and biting rain.

Suzy says

Doyle, one of my favorite authors, nails the stream-of-consciousness of a young boy, Paddy Clarke of the title. While not exactly spelled out, I think Paddy, our narrator, is about 8 when the book starts and 10 when it finishes. He and his mate Kevin are the defacto leaders of a band of boys who rove a developing subdivision in late 1960's Ireland, wreaking havoc on themselves and anyone who might be in their way. I kept picturing the antics of my two younger brothers in our developing subdivision in Central Illinois. My guy told me of the antics of his pals in a developing subdivision west of Ft Worth and we laughed until we cried! Young boy antics are universal and, believe me, Paddy and his friends were inventive!

I laughed out loud many times, especially at the workings of Paddy's mind, where while going about his school, play and home life, he simultaneously imagined himself as Geronimo, their bikes as horses, himself as George Best the Manchester United super-star, etc. I also got teary at times because, this being Roddy Doyle, we see life in all its complexity. Paddy's ma and da aren't getting along and we see the burden this represents for Paddy and the responsibility he takes on for making things ok for them.

This book has a beginning and an end, lots in-between to keep us engaged, but not much of a "plot" in the traditional sense. In Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha, we get to spend a bit of time in Paddy's world and for me that was worth the ride.

El says

Patrick "Paddy" Clarke is a 10-year-old boy growing up in 1960s Ireland who has good and bad times with his friends, loves and hates his little brother (and has no use for his baby sisters because they don't do anything worthwhile yet), tells lies to his friends and his teachers in order to gain their appreciation and respect, and who wants nothing more than to understand (and fix) the problems that begin to erupt between his parents. As an oldest child he feels it his position to protect his younger brother, Francis (aka 'Sinbad'), and his mother; he believes that if he sits up at night listening to his parents fight he can somehow protect them all.

The story is a touching and heartbreaking coming-of-age tale. Roddy Doyle manages to capture a 10-year-old boy's perspective on life perfectly. Paddy is precocious and shows his smarts as often as possible, thinking if he can just impress his parents they won't fight with each other. The narrative is written in an inner dialogue manner, as an adult looking back with clarity. In retrospect actions are more important than they ever ultimately could be and things, such as a favorite hot water bottle, are more vivid as an adult than anything else.

This is my first Roddy Doyle book and I am excited to read more. I hear the Barrytown Trilogy is good; since this was my first experience with Barrytown I look forward to what other stories take place there and who else has their names written in cement throughout the town along with Paddy and his friends.

Rebecca McNutt says

A strikingly powerful portrait of a dysfunctional family and the boy acting as the glue holding it together, *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* is a nostalgic Irish novel with many profound themes hidden beneath childish innocence.

Lisa says

It took me much longer than it should have to finish this slight, inconsequential novel. It won the Booker in 1993, but it's a bit of a mystery why that was so. I would have given the prize to *Remembering Babylon* by David Malouf, a much better and more significant book in every way.

Paddy Clark Ha Ha Ha is written in the voice of Paddy, nine years old in the 1960s, watching *The Man From UNCLE* on TV and observing his parents' marriage break up. It's impressionistic, with (paraphrasing Jung here, talking about childhood memories) 'little islands of memories floating round in the vagueness of ocean'. These scraps of memory are not quite in sequence though there is a sense of dawning awareness that grows as the novel moves to its conclusion.

There's no plot as such, which is ok, but I'm not sure what its theme is either. In fact I'm not at all sure what Doyle is on about, except to depict the chaotic order of life in small boy gangs and the violence they impose on each other. Paddy is awfully cruel to his little brother, setting his lips alight with lighter fuel and delivering 'dead legs' and 'Chinese burns' as a matter of routine. The gang sets traps to delineate territory in their growing housing estate, and the 'Corporation' children set one of wire, causing one boy to almost lose his foot. All this is presented as the norm. It's rather disquieting.

The opening lines are an allusion to *Portrait of a Young Man* by James Joyce, but if there are other allusions as well, I failed to find them. If any such invisible allusions are what made it worthy of the Booker, then the judges have made a wrong assumption that readers will recognise it. Much too subtle for me, and I've read *Portrait* twice.

My overwhelming impression is one of distaste for the depiction of a savage little way of life.
I finished reading this book and journalled it on 6.8.03.
Cross posted at The Complete Booker

Brad says

This review was written in the late nineties (just for myself), and it was buried in amongst my things until today, when I uncovered the journal it was written in. I have transcribed it verbatim (although square brackets indicate some additional information for readability) from all those years ago. It is one of my lost reviews.

When I tell others about this novel I talk about Roddy Doyle's voice and how he captures the thought patterns of children so well; I mention certain tales Patrick tells, like the burning of Sinbad's mouth, or the Grand National, but I never mention the connection the novel has with my own life.

Brian [my Dad] never left Chris [my Mom], but my experiences of abuse and my own violent childhood and my need for isolation are all captured in the voice of Paddy. I understand his futile fight with Charlo and his alienating defeat of Kevin. The violence and inner pain have been mine and still make teh occassional appearance. However, the most powerful part of the book his Paddy's confusion concerning his Da. He loves the man, wants to be the man, and fears the man, eventually hating him. I've been there myself. Doyle expresses my experience best.

Christina says

Irish writers will break your heart. Not in a sweet, tender or bitter way. The effect is much more brutal for its ordinariness and inevitability. (I am also thinking of Colm Toibin's 'Brooklyn' here, I guess). They lure you in with the quick and often hilarious wit of their protagonists, and Roddy Doyle's Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha is delivered with a lilting melody of local terms and accents that pick you up and carry you along at a cracking and often rhythmic pace. And then, when you least expect it, even though you knew full-well that it had been coming all along, Doyle tears out your heart leaving it to ebb away on the floor while you are left in gales of tears. A little melodramatic? Young Paddy Clarke lives his life with his emotions constantly on the edge, a pent up ball of bravado and explosive impulses of love and loyalty. You can't help but live it right there with him, every fighting, breathless step of the way.

Linda Lipko says

If anyone can answer my question, I'd love to know the answer. Why is it that books written by Irish authors or told about the Irish seem to consistently focus on a) drinking b) abuse c) poverty d) dysfunction???? Is there joy in Ireland?

While reviews are primarily positive about this book, for many reasons, I simply reacted to the fact that it was yet another angst filled tale of an Irish child witnessing cruelty, and acting out with cruelty, harming those around him, including his younger sibling.

It is 1968 and Paddy is ten years old, his father is drinking heavily, his mother is abused, his brother is a royal pain.

He and his band of friends roam the small town setting fires at building sites, entering forbidden areas while performing various and sundry cruel beatings and taunts to each other.

Written in a hard to follow stream of consciousness style, I had a difficult time absorbing the story line.

Simply stated, I didn't like this book and cannot recommend it.

piperitapitta says

«Ma il tango è un ballo che si balla in due.»

Alla fine con quest'affermazione Patrick Clarke, anni dieci, Paddy per gli amici, Roddy Doyle per i lettori, mi è venuto in aiuto e mi ha fatto sentire meno in colpa.

Sarà che io non sono mai stata un bambino, piuttosto una "piccola donna".

Sarà che i giochi di strada non li ho mai fatti.

Sarà che di Irlanda, alla fine, in questo romanzo ce n'è pochissima.

Sarà che io sono una seguace entusiasta di Agnes Browne e della dolce *melanconironia* di Brendan O'Carroll. http://www.anobii.com/books/Agnes_Bro...

Sarà perché alla fine tutte queste "fotografie dall'infanzia" non sono riuscita a riunirle in nessun album?

Sarà quel che sarà ma io mi sono annoiata parecchio nel leggerlo.

Sarà però che alla fine riesco a trovare sempre, o quasi, qualcosa di buono in quello che leggo, ma alle parti in cui il piccolo Patrick racconta i litigi di mamma e papà avrei assegnato cinque stelle periodiche.

Sarà perché quelle sono sempre le stesse per i bambini e le bambine di ogni latitudine?

Che dici Roddy, ci riproviamo ancora a ballare insieme con The Commitments?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9Gjd_...

[edit]

Dimenticavo!

Che qualcuno mi spieghi nel dettaglio cos'è lo **stivalotto malese**!

ma quante volte ho scritto "alla fine"? Mah, alla fine che importa? :-)
