

***Smile*, by Roddy Doyle: The ‘Magic’ of Art**

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Abstract: Roddy Doyle is a writer who is interested in expanding the horizons of novelistic discourse and in confronting the social issues that define contemporary Ireland: dysfunction, domestic abuse, marital breakdown, damaged children. *Smile* (2017) is Doyle’s darkest work since *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* (1996). This essay explores the similarities between both novels as well as the deep differences that make *Smile* such a unique novel. With *Smile* Doyle goes far beyond what he has done before as a writer: this is a novel inside a novel, which clearly reveals the metafictional character of the text. Moreover, Doyle’s greatest achievement in *Smile* is that self-consciousness does not minimize the narrator’s plight, but forces the reader to confront the brutality of child abuse and its devastating and terrible consequences. I will also analyse how Doyle’s concern with experimentation in subject matter and novelistic conventions confirms the Bakhtinian character of *Smile*.

Keywords: Roddy Doyle, Bakhtin, metafiction, abuse, reflection