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PATRICIA DE AQUINO PRUDENTE

The Contemporary Irish Short Story: Identities in Transformation
(Exemplar corrigido)

São Paulo

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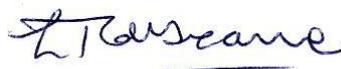
The Contemporary Irish Short Story: Identities in Transformation

(Exemplar corrigido)

Tese de doutorado apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Linguísticos e Literários em Inglês, do Departamento de Letras Modernas da Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo, para obtenção do título de doutora em Letras.

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São Paulo

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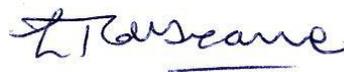
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To my ancestors

*“But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.”*

(He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven,
William Butler Yeats, 1899)

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RESUMO

O Conto Irlandês Contemporâneo: Identidades em Transformação

Desde muito cedo na história, o povo irlandês tem mostrado interesse em narrar a si mesmo e a sua terra. Esse interesse aumenta quando a questão da identidade nacional se fortalece na Europa após a Revolução Francesa. No contexto irlandês, houve, desde então, e especialmente no início do século XX, um grande investimento de escritores e movimentos literários em contribuir para a criação de uma identidade nacional irlandesa. A pesquisa realizada para esta tese de doutorado evidencia que a relação entre a literatura e a identidade nacional na Irlanda ainda persiste no início do século XXI. A pesquisa também avalia como a atual literatura irlandesa (re)constrói as características da identidade nacional, dialoga com as tradições e propõe novas possibilidades para o futuro da questão. Oito contos entre o final do século XX e o início do século XXI foram analisados à luz das teorias de Stuart Hall e Mikhail Bakhtin para revelar o processo de formação das relações identitárias através dos processos de (não) identificações do texto literário com os variados discursos da nação irlandesa.

Palavras-chave: identidade, nação, Irlanda, século XXI, conto irlandês

ABSTRACT

The Contemporary Irish Short Story: Identities in Transformation

Since very early in history the people from Ireland have shown interest in narrating themselves and their land. This interest increased when the question of national identity grew stronger in Europe after the French Revolution. In the Irish context, there has been since then, and especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, a great investment from writers and literary movements in contributing to the creation of an Irish national identity. The research for this doctoral thesis evidences that the relationship between literature and national identity in Ireland still persists in the beginning of the twenty-first century. This thesis evaluates how current Irish literature (re)constructs the characteristics of national identity, dialogues with traditions, and proposes new possibilities for the future of national identity question. Eight short stories were chosen from the period of the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, and were analysed in the light of Stuart Hall and Mikhail Bakhtin's theories to reveal the formative process of identity relations through (non)identifications between the literary text and the varied discourses on the Irish nation.

Key-words: identity, nation, Ireland, 21st century, Irish short story

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	12
2. Part I - Goddess Ireland and the New Century	28
2.1 The Mural Painter – Ireland Trapped in Colonial Divisions	30
2.2 Liverpool/Lampedusa – Ireland in Transit and Global	41
2.3 The Stolen Child – Ireland Abroad	48
2.4 A Visit to Newgrange – an Instant of Encounters	59
3. Part II - The New Irelanders	72
3.1 57% Irish – How Much Irish?	73
3.2 How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps – The Language Barrier	82
3.3 Under the Awning – African Irish Self-assertion	92
3.4 Birds of June – The Wheel of Solidarity	103
4. Conclusion	112
5. References	122
6. Attachments	136

1. Introduction

Maybe your country is only a place you make up in your own mind. Something you dream about and sing about. Maybe it's not a place on the map at all, but just a story full of books and films you've been to (Hamilton, 2003, p. 295).

The Irish contemporary writer, Hugo Hamilton, suggests in his acclaimed memoir, *The Speckled People* (2003), that the definition of a country is found in the realm of stories. Even the physical existence of a country depends directly upon the way in which it is narrated in dreams, songs, books and films¹.

According to Ó Corráin (1989), since very early in history the people from Ireland have shown interest in narrating themselves and their land. Probably one of the first of such narratives is registered in the sixth-century book *An Lebor Gabála*² (*The Book of the Talking of Ireland*) which describes "a powerful and all-persuasive myth [of] language, race, land and landscape as the basis of a national unity" (p. 26).

From medieval Ireland to the end of the seventeenth century, the bardic tradition was responsible for telling stories about Ireland and its people. Kiberd (1989) explains that bards had the power to create and change reality. They predicted the fate of the land and told spectacular stories about their tribal kings' triumphs and warriors' demise. In addition, they sang the land of Ireland as a woman to be "adored, courted and conquered, if necessary, with death" (p. 235).

It was, however, when the question of national identity emerged in Europe after the French Revolution that Irish identity became deliberately discussed in the fields of politics and culture (Killeen, 2003). At that moment, the narration of Ireland and its people became a major theme for writers in the process of inventing a modern Irish national identity and conquering the country's political independence from England.

One of the earliest documents relevant to this discussion emerges as part of the 1798 revolutionary movement for independence led by The United Irishmen. Theobald Wolfe Tone (1791), the group leader, professes in his manifesto, *An*

¹This doctoral thesis is the result of twelve years of a continuous research on the Irish national identity that started with an undergraduate project analysing nationalism in the letters and newspaper articles of an Irish immigrant writer in Argentina, William Bulfin, moved on to another undergraduate project on an Irish Canadian writer's identity in his newspaper editorials in the diaspora in Canada (Daniel Tracey in the *Irish Vindicator*), to the analysis of national identity in Hugo Hamilton's memoir in the M.A. dissertation, *Em Busca da Inocência – O Percorso Identitário de Hugo Hamilton em suas Memórias The Speckled People e The Sailor in the Wardrobe*.

² Considered one of the main sources of legendary Irish history. It is a medieval chronicle "which traces the history of Ireland from Creation to the twelfth century" (Goodby, 2003, p. 134). In the narratives contained in the book, Ireland narrated as a goodness of sovereignty is a theme to be explored throughout the thesis and more specifically in Part I.

Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland, the need for a unified Irish national identity, regardless of religious distinction, but in opposition to everything English. Therefore, the formative project of an Irish identity begins with an attempt to unify and identify with everything national, by exclusion and opposition to everything foreign, especially the English.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Ireland was struck by a great famine. According to Póirtéir (1995), this event caused the death of about one million people and forced the emigration of another two million. The famine changed profoundly the structures of Irish society and created the necessary conditions for nationalist narratives to gain momentum. Most of the lower class population were decimated and, together with it, the Irish language too. Before the famine, in 1845, there were over three million Irish speakers. By 1851, in less than six years, the number had declined to below two million (Coohill, 2000). However, those who survived the famine were able to see some improvements in their quality of life. The Catholic middle class gradually rose as a significant political and social force, becoming more participatory and interfering in society on many levels. In addition, there was an increase in urbanisation that allowed schooling and Anglicisation to grow. All these factors were central to the development of an Irish literature concerned with narrating the nation and recovering the cultural heritage exterminated with the famine.

Consequently, in the early twentieth century, the identity project of the cultural and political independence movements was still based on an Irish national identity marked by opposition to the English. In one of the most significant documents of such movements, *The Necessity for De-anglicising Ireland*, Douglas Hyde (1892), the founder of the Gaelic League, an institution created to promote the Irish language and cultural nationalism, insists that the solution to this identity problem was to deanglicise Ireland. The Irish of the period were abandoning their own language to speak the English language, translating their names into English names, reading books in English without even knowing the literature in the Irish language, and yet they were protesting against England saying that they despised them. Hyde maintains that the solution to this identity problem was for the Irish to deanglicise themselves in order to remember their true identity which resided in the past and in its Celtic ancestry. The author claims that the marks of this ancestral civilization dwell in the Irish language, in the names of people and places, in the O' and Macs of surnames, in music, which has the harp as a symbol, in Gaelic literature, and in sports typically Celtic, like hurling.

Altogether with the Gaelic League, the Irish Literary Renaissance, represented mainly by the figure of W.B. Yeats, equally aimed to define an Irish identity through a national literature (Goodby, 2003). For Richard Fallis (1977), the Irish literature of the early twentieth century would have to reflect a national imagination in order to prepare the country spiritually for its political liberation. The Irish Literary Renaissance was represented by the founding of some institutions like The Irish Literary Society (1892), The National Literary Society (1892), and The Irish Literary Theatre (1897), all of them founded by Yeats. The Irish Literary Theatre, also known as the Abbey Theatre, was inaugurated with the purpose to create a distinctively national theatre. The stepping stone was marked by Lady Gregory's manifesto (1913) called *Our Irish Theatre* in which she claims that their objective was to stage Celtic and Irish plays to show that Ireland was "the cradle of ancestral idealism" (p.378). The main themes of the Literary Renaissance were drawn from folklore and history.

The poet William Butler Yeats (1899), explains in his essay *The Literary Movement in Ireland* that the national literary movement of the period had the function to bring into life Ireland's glorious past and prepare the spirit of the nation for a magnificent political and cultural future. The immemorial Ireland evoked by the poets of the period was the one found in legends about gods, heroes and saints. The typical Irish culture had to remember its past of poverty and weakness, represented in stories, music, and characterized by the rural setting. The figure of the peasant from the west of Ireland became the epitome of the ideal Irish person, whose life and culture were least affected by the coloniser.

These characteristics that defined Irish identity at the turn of the twentieth century, however, began to be questioned in the period after the Irish independence in 1922³. According to Luke Gibbons (1991) cultural critics and historians, especially from the 1940s onwards, revisited the essentialist and excluding notion of Irish identity based on Celtic and Gaelic aspects. This perspective defined as "revisionist" aimed to come to terms with the ones that did not fit in the essentialist conceptions of Irish

³ The Irish Free State officially became a completely independent country in December 1922. Ireland's independence process was quite long and took place in several episodes and agreements with the British Government. Among them, the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 divided the Irish territory in two, separating the six northern counties that had the majority of Protestant population. This way, Northern Ireland and The Irish Free State were created, with two different parliaments in the two territories. Northern Ireland, not wanting to be part of the Free State, continued as part of the United Kingdom (Killeen, 2003).

identity, for instance, the protestant colonial minority that remained in the independent Republic.

Besides, the invented notion of an Irish identity in opposition to the English, although it had fulfilled its purpose prior to independence, was losing strength in the postcolonial period. According to Fintan O'Toole (1999), Ireland especially after the 1960s was then facing new challenges that were posed not by its former coloniser but by its insertion in the world economic market.

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, at the peak of the Celtic Tiger⁴ era, Irish identity, according to Jodi Allen Randolph (2010), started to be defined by goods that were consumed and did not recall past memories. However, at the end of 2008, the world economic crisis has called Irish identity into question again. The country fell into a severe recession and, with the weakening of the capitalist identity, being Irish resumed to be an issue.

In the literary field, Fintan O'Toole (2009) explains that Irish literature since the beginning of the twentieth century has experienced thematic and aesthetic transformations that can be defined in four axes. The first of these, which marked the period from the beginning of the last century to the 1960s, is represented by the statement of James Joyce, in his book *Portrait of the Artist as Young Man* (1916) that the national artistic consciousness resides in silence, cunning and exile. Silence, manifested not only in the artistic form but also in the public and social forms, represents the artist's refusal to give voice to the issues concerning the political movements of the time. To O'Toole, silence came to characterise the Irish literature of the period because of the imposed condition of censorship⁵. In order to bend the official censorship of the country, artists would have to use their cunning in their work.

⁴ Celtic Tiger is the name given to Ireland's unprecedented economic growth period that began in the 1990s. During this period Irish GDP growth averaged 9.4% per year until 2001 and 15% after this year, compared to average of 2.6% per year for the European Union and surpassing that of England in 1997. The unemployment rate in the period was less than 4% in Ireland, compared to an average of 8% in the EU. Ireland has moved from being a primarily agricultural economy country to achieving its development in industry and services. It became the third largest exporter in the world (Goodby, 2003). Since the world crisis of 2008, the Celtic Tiger ceases to exist and a recession took over the country. In the last years, economy has been recovering. More on the Celtic Tiger will be explored in the second part of the thesis and in the analysis of the story 57% Irish.

⁵ Censorship in Ireland was officially instituted in 1923 with the Censorship of Films Act and in 1929 with the Censorship of Publications Act. The censorship commission sought to ban values contrary to Catholic principles or any artistic production that supported the Irish territorial division. Despite the protests of many writers and artists of the period, such as W.B. Yeats or Bernard Shaw, almost all modern Irish fiction was banned and almost all writers considered it a matter of honour to have at least one of their books banned. Censorship began to decline in 1967, but it still exists today (Goodby, 2003). There are about ten books still banned in Ireland, all related to the theme of abortion or sexuality (Bohan, 2012).

Finally, exile, both in its physical and spiritual manifestations, captured most writers of the time.

The second axis presented by O'Toole directly confronts the Joycean triad. This new axis is inspired by the work of the writer and intellectual Daniel Corkery of the 1930s who, in his book *Synge and The Anglo-Irish Literature* (1931), defines three characteristics for the national artist: land, religion and nationality. The first characteristic has to do with the relationship with the land and with the fact that the majority of the Irish population was rural. Religion appears as a representation of Catholicism and its relationship with the Irish nationality.

For O'Toole, a new thematic axis comes into existence in the 1980s. New writers are no longer so interested in the first two axes. Instead, they are now focusing on urban cultures and the conjunction of literature with new artistic forms in Ireland, such as cinema. Dermot Bolger and Roddy Doyle, to name a few, portray suburban cultures and are influenced in their work by film, rock 'n' roll and the arrival of sex as a cultural element in Ireland. This way, O'Toole calls the new thematic axis as "sex, drugs and rock 'n roll" (p.103). It is an artistic axis that begins to dialogue with the process of globalisation.

Finally, the most recent thematic axis of Irish literature stems from the hyper-globalisation⁶ that the country has experienced since the 1990s. With the Celtic Tiger, the Irish economy was thriving and generated a new triad: migration, prosperity and conflict. The history of Ireland and its literature have always been marked by the presence of exile, diaspora, emigration, and now it has been reflecting those new elements. However, in this new period, emigration ceases and immigration escalates for the first time in the country's history, causing a major turnaround in culture. Conflict, as the last feature of this triad, gains visibility. Related to this, the political differences between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland justify the issue. The 1998 peace agreement puts an official end to the *Troubles*⁷, yet still leaves many ambiguities to be resolved.

⁶ Term used by O'Toole in his essay.

⁷ Troubles is the name given to the period of about thirty years of armed conflict in Northern Ireland. Begun in 1968, the conflicts left 3,376 dead and 42,000 wounded (Goodby, p. 243). The reasons that led to the conflicts refer to the colonial past, to the English settlers' territorial occupation of agricultural settlements mainly in the north, and to the division of the Irish territory in 1922, with the independence and creation of the Republic with only 26 of its 32 counties. The main reason for the conflict in the late 1960s was the struggle for equality of civil rights on the part of the Catholic community, a minority of the remnants of the territorial division of independence, against the Protestants, a numerical majority resident in the region, descendants of the English colonial elite. The conflict came to an end after the

In this context, Declan Kiberd (1996) suggests that the challenges of contemporary Irish literature are to translate the recent past, the glories and failures of the Literary Renaissance, into the new century. Kiberd claims that contemporary writers are more alert to the danger of suppressing differences of class, region or language in the name of maintaining a national literary consciousness. To better explain this transformation in national literature, the author suggests in a metaphor that the present-day artists, instead of wrapping the seamless green flag around Yeats's Cathleen ní Houlihan, should, in turn, give way "to a quilt of many patches and colours, all beautiful, all different, yet all connected" (p. 653). Kiberd argues that in the present Irish cultural experience no element can be subordinated or assimilated by the other: Irish or English, rural or urban, Gaelic or Anglo.

Similarly, Terence Brown (2004) concludes in his book *Ireland - the Social and Cultural History* that one of the main topics of the current cultural scene in Ireland is dealing with differences. The intellectual life of the Republic from the 1990s on has been committed to approaching Irish identity in a more inclusive way, with a renewed perspective after Ireland's opening to the international community. With economic growth, some questions were posed: how can one relate and celebrate one's past? What is the role of women in national history? How to deal with the Irish language and traditions in a period of multiculturalism? At this point, Irish identity could no longer blame the English colonial past and would have to seek new paths.

When commenting on some of the main works of contemporary Irish literature, Liam Harte (2009) stresses that there is in Ireland an emergent postnational identity whose most remarkable characteristics are dissonance and hybridity. In addition, Harte explains that contemporary Irish writers' literary production is affected by "the emergence of a post-historical Irish consciousness which is largely indifferent to the national past and its received meanings" (p. 212).

Therefore, in the twenty-first century, Irish identity is challenged by two main trends. One of them refers to the cultural legacy inherited from the formation of the nation state, which will commemorate its one hundredth anniversary in 2022, manifested in the Celtic, Gaelic, Catholic and rural aspects of Irish identity, and in the reminiscent colonial territorial division between the Republic of Ireland and Northern

signature of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 which, among many measures, decommissioned the paramilitary groups, and allowed a period of peace process.

Ireland⁸. The other refers to the advance of world capitalism and the consequences of globalisation, such as immigration and multiculturalism.

These two trends mirror the global identity and geopolitical challenges of our time. On the one hand, according to Zygmunt Bauman (1999), national sovereignty is being confronted by fluid capital as nation states are not in total control of their economies. Consequently, Bauman suggests that "weak states" are created in order to facilitate the free movement of capital in a world without economic barriers. Similarly, Jürgen Habermas (1998) argues that globalisation forces the nation state to open up to a plurality of cultural forms, makes territorial and political barriers weaker and more permeable, and encourages the formation of federal states, such as the European Union. This is what characterises the post-national condition for him. In a similar fashion, to Richard Kearney (1997), the post-national period points to "a decentralising and disseminating of sovereignty" which "signals the possibility of new configurations of federal-regional governments (p. 61). Finally, Habermas emphasises that if postnational, or federal, states fail to create a sense of collective identity beyond the nation they will not last. Thus, the philosopher places the question of identity at the centre of the debate about the nation and globalisation today.

On the other hand, as a reaction to the weakening of national states in the global era, there has been a return of the national question. For some communities, the national question is yet a right to be conquered, as it can be observed in the recent struggles in the region of Cataluña⁹ in Spain where referendums for independence have been called in 2015, 16 and 17. Also, Scotland's referendum¹⁰ for independence

⁸ Upon the occasion of the independence in 1922, the 32 counties of Ireland were consulted whether they wanted to be independent or to continue being part of the United Kingdom. The six counties in the North, where colonial settlement for plantations had been larger, decided to remain in the Kingdom because they identified mostly as British and it would be more beneficial for them. Thus, the division of the Irish territory was established for the first time in history.

⁹ In recent years, the autonomous region of Catalonia in Spain has tried to gain its political independence. In 2014, an informal popular consultation was held with a result of 80.72% for the formation of an independent Catalan state (BBC, Nov. 2014). In addition, in this consultation, only 10.07% of the population was in favour of the formation of a Catalan state in association with the Spanish state, forming a kind of international or federative block (Pérez, Nov. 2014). This popular consultation ignited the theme of independence in the region. In 2015, the independentists won parliamentary majority and voted for the independence of the region (Ríos, 2015). The text was disapproved by the Spanish Constitutional Court (Rincón, 2015). In October 2017, the official referendum for independence was held and the result was favourable for 92,01%. In the aftermath of the referendum, Madrid did not accept the result, imposed direct rule, as the region of Catalonia has been autonomous since 1978, dissolved the parliament and exiled and arrested the independence campaign leaders. (BBC, 2019)

¹⁰ The voting result in the Scottish Independence Referendum was 55.3% versus 44.7% (Arnett, The Guardian: September, 2014).

in 2014, the frequent attempts to call for border poll to reunite the two Irelands (The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland), and Brexit have confirmed the tendency for regional dissolution and the strengthening of national projects in the British Isles. In recent years, the various economic, financial and immigration crises have strengthened nationalist positions and weakened the European Union. One final example points to the new wave of American nationalism. In 2017, the United States have adopted measures to close its borders for the free movement of people such as the tightening of immigration laws and the construction of a wall at the border with Mexico. Moreover, ultranationalist movements in the U.S. have been suggesting the expulsion of Jews, African Americans and immigrants, as it was seen in Charlottesville rally¹¹ in August 2017. Finally, the last two years have witnessed the escalation of detentions in migrant camps¹² at the border of U.S. and Mexico.

Taking the current scenario into consideration, how are national identities reconfigured in twenty-first-century Ireland? How does literature play its part in the reconstruction and transformation of such identities?

In order to answer the questions above, this thesis analyses eight¹³ contemporary Irish short stories in the light of a theorisation constructed through the approximation of Stuart Hall's identity theory and Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophy of language.

The short story as a literary genre was chosen for this analysis for various reasons. Kevin Barry (2013) in his collection, *Town and Country*, notes that the short story has been revived. The most recent theoretical publication on the subject, *The Irish Short Story - Traditions and Trends* by Elke D'hoker and Stephanie Eggermont (2015), confirms Barry's remark that the twenty-first century has been beneficial to the Irish short story. To the authors, the number of award-winning Irish publications and writers is considerable and critical interest has returned to the genre after decades of neglect in the twentieth century.

¹¹ A rally called "Unite the Right", organised by far-right white nationalist groups, that took place on August 12 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia. The rally led to confrontation between the group supporting and opposing it. One person was killed and 19 were injured when a member of the far-right group hit and ran over the crowd. For more info: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/internacional-40910927>.

¹² Camps where migrants considered illegal are kept before their legal future is resolved. For more info: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_detention_in_the_United_States.

¹³ All in all, the collected corpus of this research is comprised of 13 collections of short stories by several authors published between 1989 and 2016 and 30 collections of short stories published by single authors between 1991 and 2018. From these books, 45 stories were selected in a first screening, which resulted in 15 short stories analysed in different stages of the research, as in the mid-term exam, publications in periodicals, participation in academic events and the final thesis.

According to Heather Ingman (2009) in her book *A History of the Irish Short Story*, this phenomenon occurs because the genre has an inherent characteristic to capture a greater number of moments what has proved efficient to reflect the period of the two last decades in which changes in Ireland have been accelerated and unprecedented. Moreover, this has granted the short story a privileged condition to portray varied contemporary themes, such as the effects of the Celtic Tiger, immigration, the decline of the Catholic and rural tradition, among others.

In addition, Ingman further notices that the success of the short story in the twenty-first century can also be attributed to the fact that the genre features a suitable tension between tradition and modernity. According to Frank O'Connor (1962), the storytelling tradition and the novel are intertwined in the origins of the short story. Like the novel, the short story is a private, highly complex and technical art. However, the short story since its origin has always distinguished itself from the novel. To O'Connor, this difference lies in the characters and type of society the story portrays. The novel can only function in a structured society, whereas the short story speaks of those in the margins of society. O'Connor suggests that this connection with the submerged people is associated with the oral tradition of storytelling and fables. Thus, the genre seems suitable to evaluate the recurrent presence of past traditions and the advances of the new century in literature.

Besides, to Irish writers, the short story is marked by some kind of Irish character. To Anne Enright (2011), the short story stands for Irish society as the novel for the English. To William Trevor (2015), the Irish short story originated in a context of profound and eloquent oral tradition that continues to play a strong role in Irish life and in the contemporary form. Trevor analyses that in England the short story comes from the novel, but in Ireland, the very opposite occurs. Stories, according to Trevor, far more than the novel, have the power to cast spells, and spells have been cultivated in Ireland for a long time. Joseph O'Connor (2011) argues that Ireland is still a country in which empathies involving the sharing of a story are valued for their possibility of hope and healing. Finally, according to Ní Bhrolcháin (2011), in the Irish tradition, stories are not only about events, but also about place. Stories and place are intrinsically linked and the Irish landscape becomes a character in the stories.

Therefore, the short story is a literary genre that seems to encompass many facets of the Irish cultural and historical experience. The work with the genre makes possible a plural collection of stories that mirror diverse aspects of the new century. In

addition, the genre combines the past and the present, a complex technique of modern writing with narrative elements, characters, and scenarios of the oral Irish tradition. Lastly, there seems to be an identification of the short story with the Irish character. As the novel was a literary genre of origin and strong English manifestation, with England being the Irish coloniser, the short story becomes, by contrast, the literary genre in prose of the colonised, of the marginalised people, of the Irish.

To analyse the question of national identity in these stories, we have firstly approached Stuart Hall's identity theory. Stuart Hall (1996), in the introduction of his book *Questions in Cultural Identity*, discusses the prevalent relevance of identity at the end of the twentieth century. According to him, the concept of identity has been extensively studied and criticised in the period, but in spite of that, there is still a need for it. For Hall, the concept is yet necessary because its essentialist perspective has to be deconstructed and replaced with an unstable and non-totalizing one. In addition, in the absence of a better and completely new concept that can supersede identity, "there is nothing better to do but to continue to think with" it (p.15).

In order to explain his concept of identity, Hall presents us with some key elements which he uses to construct his definition. According to the sociologist, identity emerges to articulate the relationship between subjects and discourses. This articulation takes the form of identification, the process in which subjects take positions or are positioned in discourses.

I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpelate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us (p.19).

Hall argues that it has never been enough to know how subjects are summoned into place by discourses, but it is also required to know how subjects are constituted.

The question which remains is whether we also require to, as it were, close the gap between the two: that is to say, a theory of what the mechanisms are by which individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the 'positions' to which they are summoned (p.27);

In other words, the study of discourses and the social forces alone is not enough, it is also necessary to know how individuals position themselves and interact with discourses. The mediation between the two – subjects and discourses – is identity. Hall suggests in his book that this mediation occurs mostly through

identification, but he also points out to the possibility of non-identification. Therefore, we conclude that identity is a relation of (non)identification that individuals have positioned in discourses.

From Hall's conception of identity, we propose in this doctoral thesis that the national identity is a relation, given not only by identification, but also by non-identification of the individual with the discourses that represent the nation. Moreover, we also propose that national identity relations are not only one single binary pair, but also a more complex set of relations that create a network of possibilities of new (non) identifications.

Hall's theory was chosen because it presents us with a clear definition for what identity is and the elements that compose it, that is to say, subjects and discourses, so they can be (re)worked upon for identity analysis. However, Hall does not clarify how identity performs in discourses. Nor does he explore what discourses are and how literature plays its part among them. To fill in this gap, we approached some aspects of Bakhtin's philosophy of language, such as utterance and dialogism.

According to Bakhtin (2003), language is linked to all fields of human activity and is manifested in unique, individual and concrete uses, defined as utterances. They are the least reducible form of language use. Every field of human activity elaborates its relatively stable types of utterances, which are called speech genres. Bakhtin explains that genres can be simple, like speech acts produced in conversation, or more complex, usually found in the written form, such as novels, plays, scientific thesis, etc. Speech genres diversity and richness are as endless as the possibilities of human activities. In addition, Bakhtin argues that speech genres undeniably reflect historical changes. "Utterances and their types, that is to say, speech genres, are transmission chains between history and society" (p. 268).

What delimitates utterances is their alternation in dialogue.

Any utterance - from a short (single-word) rejoinder in everyday dialogue to the large novel or scientific treatise, (...) is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others (or, although it may be silent, others' active responsive understanding, or, finally, a responsive action based on this understanding). The speaker ends his utterance in order to relinquish the floor to the other or to make room for the other's active responsive understanding. (...) Dialogue is a classic form of speech communication (p. 71-2).

Consequently, for Bakhtin, utterances carry an intrinsic characteristic that is a responsive attitude. Therefore, literary texts are, according to Bakhtin's theory, a type

of utterance that performs in the speech chain in a dialogic manner with previous discourses and evoke future responses.

Serving this part of Bakhtin's theory to our purpose, we learn that short stories are utterances and as such, they are in dialogue with other previous and contemporary discourses. Moreover, they reflect the society and history they belong in and position themselves with a responsive attitude, common to any utterance, in those discourses.

Taking advantage of Bakhtin's theory and overlapping it with Hall's identity scheme, we conclude that instead of analysing identity as a mediation between discourse and subjects, which we do not have access to and we cannot measure the process of identification and non-identification, we are, in fact, as we seek to understand identity in literature, studying the identity relation between discourses, not between subjects and discourse.

The literary text is not an individual, but according to Bakhtin's utterance theory, it has an attitude, it is responsive, dialogic, and these characteristics allow us to verify the identity relation, that is, the process of identification and non-identification the text has, as a position it takes, not as a person, but as an utterance in a dialogic chain.

Thus, from the approximation of Stuart Hall and Bakhtin's theories, we present our own procedure for the analysis of the identity in literature. We suggest the analysis of multiple points of identification and non-identification of the utterance analysed, in this case, the short story, in dialogue with other diachronic and synchronic discourses related to the text, such as historical, literary, mythological, folkloric, cultural, and others. We also recognise the possibility that, within the literary text, the characters present identifications and non-identifications with each other and/or discourses, which would be more similar to Hall's identity scheme, and when this occurs, we also analyse identity in this way. Thus, we propose in the research of this thesis two ways of analysing identity in literature: 1) the identity relation between the literary text and discourses; 2) the identity relation of the characters with other characters and the discourses within the literary text.

Finally, we do not rule out the possibility of subject versus discourse analysis as Hall proposes, but for this, in regard to literature, a study of the reception of literary texts by readers would have to be done; we would need to know how the reader, as a subject, positions himself in the face of the literary text. For this, we would need to define a group of readers, interview them, do a research that differs and falls outside

the scope of this one. Therefore, we do not discard the possibility of this study, but it is not what this research proposes.

As we are investigating the identity relations established between the utterance, that is the short story, and other discourses, we seek to find in the text what triggers the identity relation. That is, how do we know that a text is dialoguing with other texts about an identity position? From this, we noticed in the analysis of literary texts that there is always a trigger element in the dialogue between texts in which the identity relation of identification and non-identification is generated.

Therefore, what we suggest in this thesis is that there are elements characteristic of this genre of discourse, such as space, time, characters, narrative action, etc., that trigger the dialogue of the analyzed text with other discourses that generates the identity relation, that is, the identification and non-identification positions in the studied utterance. Through this scheme we have been able to prove that the contemporary Irish short story still constructs the national identity and how it does this.

As a consequence of this theorization, this thesis will be structured in two parts, according to the type of trigger of the identity relation. In the first part, we have grouped four stories whose identity trigger referred to the representation of Ireland as a goddess of sovereignty¹⁴.

The first story analysed was Rosemary Jenkinson¹⁵'s "The Mural Painter", published in 2016 in *the Glass Shore*, a collection of short stories by women writers from Northern Ireland organised by the celebrated writer and critic Sinead Gleeson, whose similar collection in the Republic, *the Long Gaze Back*, was chosen by UNESCO as Dublin One City One Book for 2018.

In Jenkinson's story, the identity relation is triggered by an *aisling*¹⁶ that a mural painter from a protestant community in Belfast has while painting a commissioned mural to commemorate the Battle of the Somme on Armistice Day. We analyse how the story identifies with colonial discourses and does not identify with the

¹⁴ The goddess of sovereignty is a concept in which a land or a nation is represented in a female figure. More on the concept is presented on page 26-7.

¹⁵ The Belfast born writer has published a collection of short stories, *Contemporary Problems Nos. 53 & 54* in 2004, and a play, *The Bonfire*, in 2006. Her stories have appeared in many anthologies including *The Fish Anthology*, *Let's Be Alone Together: An Anthology of New Short Stories* and *The Stinging Fly*, and have been shortlisted for the Hennessy Award, The Brian Moore Short Story Awards and won The Black Hill Books Short Story Competition.

¹⁶ The word *aisling* in the Irish language means vision. The word has been used to describe a literary tradition in Irish literature in which the Irish goddess of sovereignty appears to a poet or a hero and summon them to fight for her. More on the concept is explained in the introduction of Part I on page 26-7.

contemporary period of Peace Process. In addition, we problematize Brexit's part in this (non)identification process. Finally, we address the persistence of fixity in a colonial type of identity relation and its unsustainability in the present.

The second story studied in the first part is "Liverpool/Lampedusa by Elizabeth McManus¹⁷ published in 2015 in an anthology called *Lost Between- Writings on Displacement* organised by Catherine Dunne and Federica Sgaggio where twenty one pieces that mix poems, short stories, and extracts from novels written and translated into English are found.

In this story, the identity relation is also set off by an aisling that overlaps the Irish famine and the twenty-first century migrant crisis to Europe. The main character is an Irish emigrant fleeing the famine who at the eve of his journey to America has a vision of a woman in his dreams. The result is a process of identification between the events, with migration as a whole, which aims to generate solity.

The third story is Colum McCann¹⁸'s "The Stolen Child" published in *Fishing in the Slow Black River* (1994), his first ever book and collection of short stories. In our analysis, the identity relation is triggered by Dana, the protagonist that incorporates the figure of the goddess of sovereignty for Ireland, divided between identifying with Padraic or Will, two characters that perform as the king of the land. As a result, Dana ends up identifying with Will and marrying him, which symbolises the marriage between Ireland and the U.S. The identity relation is then found in exile and seeks for fixity in a foreign land.

The last story of the first part is "A Visit to Newgrange" by Éilís Ní Dhuibhne¹⁹ published in the collection *Midwife to the Fairies* (2003). In this story, differently from

¹⁷ Liz McManus is a former Irish Canadian Labour Party politician who served as Deputy from 1992 to 2011, a Leader of the Party from 2002 to 2007 and Minister of State at the Department of the Environment from 1994 to 1997. Born in 1947, McManus has published two novels, 23 years apart from each other. Her first, *Acts of Subversion*, came out in 1992 and is set in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. *A Shadow in the Yard* is the title of her second novel published in 2015 recipient of Listowel and Irish PEN awards along with a Hennessy Award for New Irish Writing. The novel once again returns to the Troubles and is narrated in two different time frames and perspectives: in the late 1960s, when a Dublin architect, Roseleen McAvidy, moves to work in Derry and gets trapped in the civil rights movement; and in 1998, when her daughter Aoife looks for her mother's past.

¹⁸ The Dublin born and raised Irish writer, winner of several prizes such as the National Book Award (2009), has published six novels and three collections of short stories and was translated into over 40 languages. McCann now lives in New York and teaches at the Writing Centre at Hunter College. He also runs a non-profitable global organisation called Narrative4 that "promotes the exchange of stories as a way to engage more profoundly with one another" (McCann, 2018).

¹⁹ Novelist, playwright, poet and scholar, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne has won several awards, among them the Irish Pen Award in 2015 for the outstanding contribution of her work to Irish literature, has published extensively both fiction and academic criticism and is a member of the Irish Association of Artists (Aosdána). She writes both in English and Irish and her literary work comprises of over twenty-five

the previous one, the trigger is not Ireland represented in the form of the goddess of sovereignty or its apparition, the *aisling*, but the land of Ireland itself. The identity relation is established by (non)identification of the views of Ireland shared by the two protagonists, Mutti and Eileen, and their moment of total identification at Newgrange²⁰. This story introduces a turn in the movement of the identity relation

In the second part of the thesis, we will discuss how identity relation is established through the explicit discussion in the stories' triggers of Irish nationality and its outcasts.

The first story of the second part is Roddy Doyle²¹'s "57% Irish" published in the author's first collection of short stories, *The Deportees*, in 2007. In this story, the identity relation is triggered by the main plot theme that is an official governmental quiz to define who can be granted the Irish citizenship. From this, a series of discourses on historical aspects of the Irish nationality are evoked. Also, the story is set in the context of the 2004 Referendum that changed the rules for Irish nationality.

The second story is Roisín O'Donnell²²'s "How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps" from the *The Wild Quiet* (2016). In this story, the identity relation is triggered by the proof of Irish language proficiency that the Brazilian character has to take in order to become a primary school teacher in Ireland. This brings about again the discussion of how to prove nationality and considers national discourses related to languages. The character has multiple points of (non) identification with the three languages and

books. Her first book was a collection of short stories, *Blood and Water*, released in 1989, and her most recent publication, *Twelve Thousand Days: a Memoir of Love and Loss* (2018), tells the story of her thirty-year-old relationship with her deceased husband, the internationally renowned folklorist Bo Almquist.

²⁰ An ancient archaeological site located around 50km away from Dublin. More on the location is discussed on page 64-5. For the picture of the site, see attachment 2.

²¹ Roddy Doyle is a Dublin born Irish writer who has written 11 novels, 8 books for children, 7 plays and screenplays, and several short stories collected in books and published in several newspapers. He won the Booker Prize in 1993 for his novel *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*. His work is set among Dublin's working class.

²² O'Donnell was born in 1983 in Sheffield, England, to parents of mixed communities from Derry, Northern Ireland, and currently lives in County Meath, Republic of Ireland. Her stories have been published internationally in magazines and papers such as *The Stinging Fly* and *The Irish Times* and included in celebrated anthologies such as the *Young Irelanders* (2015), *The Long Gaze Back* (2015) and *The Glass Shore* (2016), both of which won the Best Irish-Published Book of the Year at the Irish Book Awards, *Female Lines: New Writing by Women from Northern Ireland* (2017), *The Broken Spiral* (2017), and *Reading the Future: New Writing from Ireland Celebrating 250 Years of Hodges Figgis* (2018). Her debut short story collection, *Wild Quiet* (2016) was listed as one of *The Irish Times'* Favourite Books of 2016. O'Donnell was the winner of the An Post Irish Book Award for Short Story of the Year 2018 with her story "How to Build a Space Rocket" and has been shortlisted and received honorary mentions in many awards, including the Hennessy New Irish Writing Award. In 2015, she was granted a prestigious literature bursary from the Arts Council of Ireland (O'Donnell, 2018).

the two nations (Ireland and Brazil). As a result, she cannot find fixity in Ireland, as she is never considered Irish enough.

The next story in the second part is Melatu Uche Okorie²³'s "Under the Awning" published in *This Hostel Life* in 2018. In this story, the identity relation trigger is the explicit plot discussion of the life of an African immigrant girl living in Ireland, the racist experiences she lives and the attempts to be integrated in the Irish society.

The closing story of the chapter, "Birds of June" by John Connell²⁴, was published in *Granta – The Magazine of New Writing – New Irish Writing* in 2016. In this last story, the identity relation is triggered by the unwelcome registration of a traveller boy into a hospital at the eve of Ireland's World Cup football match in 1992. The sense of displacement the traveller boy and his family feel sets off discourses about race, racism, and belonging in Irish society.

The analysis of the stories along this work start from the identity trigger, the element in the story that sets off a web of correlated different discourses about Irish national identity. As soon as the various discourses in dialogue with the identity trigger are shown, points of identification and/or non-identification become visible in the construction of the narrative and the characters analysed. Thus, the identity relations created in the stories and how they stand in relation to the identity discourses of the Irish nation in the twenty-first century reveal the contemporary tensions that result from the presence of the foreign and the fear of losing the certainty of a fixed traditional centre.

²³ Born in Enugu, the Nigerian writer moved to Ireland in 2006 and lived for eight and a half years as an asylum seeker in the direct provision system²³ when she began to write. Okorie is the first Irish author to emerge from the system to publish a book. In 2009, she won the Metro Éireann Writing Award for her story 'Gathering Thoughts' about female circumcision. Melatu is currently studying for a PhD in Education at TCD. Alongside her studies at Trinity, she has been working on a novel while volunteering at the creative writing centre Fighting Words every week. In 2018, she was nominated for the An Post Irish Book Award.

²⁴ John Connell is an award winning investigative journalist, playwright and producer. Born in Longford, Ireland, in 1986, he is a returned Irish emigrant after living in Canada and Australia. His return occurred because of mental health problems which he addresses in his work and gives lectures to raise awareness about it. He has published two books, a novel, *The Ghost Estate* (2015), and a memoir, *The Cow Book – a Story of Life on a Family Farm* (2018). His short stories have been published in collections in Australia and Ireland (MacMillan).

Part I – Goddess Ireland and the New Century

In the first part of this thesis, we are going to analyse four short stories whose identity relation is triggered by Ireland represented as a woman. This representation comes in the figure of the goddess of sovereignty, the *aisling* and Ireland as the land itself.

According to Miranda Green (1995), the goddess of sovereignty is a divine female figure that personifies the land. She is the goddess of the land, its very essence and spirit. Lysaght (1996) highlights that the idea of sovereignty personified as a woman is an ancient and persistent notion in Irish culture. Moreover, Koch (2006) remembers that the same notion does not only occur in the Irish tradition, but it is found extensively in Greek, Mesopotamian and medieval traditions. “Sovereignty goddesses are depicted in literature as having a range of functions in relations to the rulers and inhabitants of their lands” (p. 190).

As Lysach puts it, Ireland has been represented as a woman since the eighth century in the figure of the *bean sí*, a fairy woman, a woman of the otherworld. Similarly, Koch contends the *bean sí* was a patron goddess who had a variety of attributes, but along with time came to be known as a death goddess only, in English, the banshee. Both Lysach and Koch defend the persistence and continuation of this motif – Ireland represented as a woman – up to the present day. Richard Kearney (1984), on the other hand, argues this motif was created and has become popular after the rise of nationalism in the eighteenth century. To Innes (1993), this female figure has taken many names and has been a character to many stories. She is Hibernia, Eire, Mother Ireland, the Poor Old Woman, the Schan Van Vocht, Cathleen Ní Houalihan, the Dark Rosaleen²⁵. The goddess is usually depicted as a beautiful young lady or an old woman with white hair (Ní Bhrolcháin, 2011; Koch, 2006).

²⁵ All of these are names of female figures who perform as an Irish goddess of sovereignty. Hibernia is a Latin name given to Ireland frequently used for female personifications of the land in 18th and 19th century press. Schan Van Vocht is an alternative anglicised spelling for the Irish *Sean Bhean Bhocht* phrase which means the little old woman and comes from an Irish revolutionary song from 1798 (Oxford Reference). The Dark Rosaleen is a reference to James Clarence Mangan’s poem and Cathleen Ní Houalihan to a Yeats’s play mentioned on page 31.

In this gendered relationship with the land, the goddess of sovereignty is supposed to marry, in the traditional plot, the rightful king and confer him the right over the land. In turn, he would rescue and save her from varied evils such as hunger, death, loss of youth, beauty or the land. He should bear virtuous characteristics and the appropriate marriage ensures the well-being of the land (Ní Bhrolcháin, 2011). She could reject weak rulers in favour of another who would be better for Ireland's fortunate future (Green, 1995). This marriage is not permanent, "if the king no longer acted to the benefit of the land or was too old or too disfigured, the goddess could leave the marriage and anoint a more suitable leader" (Woodfield, 2011, p. 199).

In the traditional Irish culture, the appearance of a woman in a vision is called *aisling*. The word *aisling* in its origin in the Irish language means vision and dream. According to Koch, *aisling* is, originally, a type of poem in the Irish language of the eighteenth century in which the visit of a woman from another world to the narrator or author of the poem occurs. This woman performs three different types of apparition: 1) as a vision of love, in which the woman represents the real love of the narrator or poet; 2) as a prophecy, in which the narrator or poet dreams of the future; 3) as an allegory of Ireland in which the woman represents the nation and visits the poet to comfort him. In addition, the *aisling* story type usually follows a similar pattern: 1) the action of the poem takes place in a room or near a river; 2) there is a formal description of the woman; 3) there is a request for the identification of the woman who usually presents herself as one of the beautiful ancestral women; 4) a response from the woman denying her identification with Irish women from the past; 5) a message of hope and deliverance from Ireland.

In the first two stories analysed, "The Mural Painter" and "Liverpool/Lampedusa", the *aisling* figure falls into the third type of apparition as an allegory of Ireland described by Koch and introduces the goddess of sovereignty. In the third story, "The Stolen Child", the goddess of sovereignty comes in the character who is associated with Dana, the founder goddess of Ireland. Finally, in the last story, "A Visit to Newgrange" introduces the land of Ireland itself. In all the stories, the identity relation – the process of identification and non-identification – is set off by this trigger.

2.1 The Mural Painter – Ireland trapped in colonial divisions

According to Dawn Miranda Sheratt-Bado (2018), Rosemary Jenkinson, author of “The Mural Painter” (2016), writes about the period after the Good Friday Agreement that established the grounds for disarmament and peace in Northern Ireland in 1998. For the critic, Jenkinson problematises the idea of a post-conflict period and illustrates the “residual sectarianism and societal unrest” (p. 205). The writer sheds light in the disconnection between progressivist peace discourses of the Agreement and strained identitarian relations at the turn of the twenty-first century when “the complexities of Northern Irish identities become globally entangled” (p. 204). In spite of the global atmosphere, her characters are portrayed as alienated from the world, as if Belfast was “a place apart”. The critic observes Jenkinson “registers a politics of non-resolution, of the awareness of being in the process, a period of suspension” (p. 218).

Similarly, Fiona Coleman Coffey (2016) evaluates that Jenkinson’s work addresses working-class protestant culture and struggles “to adapt from an entrenched wartime mentality to a peacetime” (p. 180). Her fiction is seen to play an important role, according to the critic, in examining identities under dispute and reshaping historical understandings of the Troubles. Coffey deems Jenkinson’s view of the peace process in Northern Ireland as pessimistic. For her, the storyteller “posits that the current peace is a temporary respite in a society locked in an endless cycle of conflict” (p. 217). “Jenkinson identifies Northern Ireland’s desperate desire to move on from the troubles at the expense of proper self-reflection and healing” (p. 217). For Coffey, the obsession with moving forward has created a “stunted society” that repeats cycles without self-reflection.

The critics abovementioned emphasise Jenkinson’s interest in Northern Ireland Peace Process and the residual colonial dispute manifested in the still ongoing sectarian violence between the two communities, Protestants and Catholics²⁶. Our analysis will approach these topics but as a result of processes of (non)identifications.

²⁶ There are some general terms used to refer to the two major communities of Northern Ireland. Protestants can be called unionists, loyalists, and Anglo or English Irish. Catholics can be called

In “The Mural Painter”, the identity relation is established in the encounter with the sovereignty goddess that occurs through the *aisling*, that is the vision that the mural painter from a protestant community has. Davey Black was painting a mural on the Battle of Somme commissioned by a UVF²⁷ group meant to be ready for the commemoration of Armistice Day²⁸. “It was on 2 November that Davey Black first saw the woman appear on the other side of Carlingford Street, look up at the mural and make the sign of the cross” (p. 305). The vision of this woman lured him. He came down the scaffolding to look for her and chanced upon Johnny Weir, the owner of the pub whose wall he was painting. Davey asked Johnny whether he had seen the woman. He denied and doubted a woman would dare crossing herself in that area because if she did so she would “be up in smoke quicker than Joan of Arc” (p. 305).

Davey went back home after his day of work. His mother told him newspapers were full of complaints about the murals. “Sure, what do they want, murals of hearts and flowers? What does that mean to people? We want to commemorate our dead, don’t we?” (p. 306). Then Davey told his mother he would have to write the names of the dead in the Somme and some of the gone volunteers in the mural too. She encouraged him to do as required because the UVF is “calling the shots” and they are paying for it (p. 306). When he went to bed, he thought about the woman he had seen. “She’d looked foreign, perhaps Eastern European, though he didn’t know why. She’d just seemed ‘other’ to him” (p.307). He kept thinking about why she had crossed herself and concluded she did so because she was either paying respect to the dead of her own country or “out of fear of the paramilitaries” (p. 307).

During the disclosing ceremony of the mural, Davey was “in his black funeral suit, which was the only suit he had” listening to Hughie McKee, the local minister, “dedicate this glorious new mural to the proud men of 1916” when he

republicans or nationalists. We are not going to delve in discriminating the terms. They will be used interchangeably as common names to refer to one or the other community.

²⁷ The Ulster Volunteer Force is a paramilitary and armed group formed in 1913 to resist the incorporation of the north province of Ireland, Ulster, into a United Ireland.

²⁸ Armistice Day is commemorated on November 11 in the remembrance of the same date in 1918 when the First World War came to a cease-fire though an agreement signed between the German and the allies. For more info: <https://www.history.com/news/world-war-i-armistice-germany-allies>.

saw the woman (p. 308). Davey ran after her. When he could finally talk to her, his first question was where she came from. "She reached out and touched his cheek with her fingers. You know you can do better, she said in broken English. You will be brave when the right time comes" (p.309). She left him while he listened to the minister praise the Battle of the Boyne in his speech at the background. Davey was announced when the mural was shown to the public but he was not there. A while later, he was back home, met his mother and she asked him where he had been. He said he was with the woman. "Who is this woman? Would I know her? She is from Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe? Some bloody Polish slut, I'll bet" (p. 310). On the following days, the story spread. "He told me about this Easter European woman he is after. Probably knocking off some Roma fucking beggar right now. I'd burn the bitch out if I found her", said the owner of the pub (p. 310).

Three months later, Davey was requested another "men with guns" mural (p. 312). He did not want to paint it because "he had sworn to the woman's image he would never work for the paramilitaries again", but his mother pleaded with him to do it, for she was afraid of UVF's retaliation. One morning, Johnny Weir noticed a small crowd outside his pub where the new mural was being painted. He walked out of the bar and was infuriated by Davey's work. "Overlooking the gunmen was the image of a woman with a beatific smile, her hands closed votively. (...) The woman looked decidedly like some saint who belonged to the Catholic Church, but what maddened them more was when they heard one of the women say, 'I like her. It's about time we had a woman on the walls instead of just fellas all the time'" (p. 314). The men saw Davey coming to the bar. They ran after him and beat him up "like bombs detonating beneath him" (p. 315). At that moment, he saw the woman for the last time and heard her recite, "at the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them..." (p. 315). Her voice faded. Before he went unconscious, she had gone and there was only his mother sobbing over him.

In this story, the identity relation is triggered by the *aisling*. At the very beginning, in the first paragraph, we learn that the mural painter has a vision of the woman for the first time. It is November 2, All Souls' Day, the day to commemorate, remember and pray for the beloved deceased ones. In the Irish

tradition, this vision can be interpreted as the apparition of the goddess of sovereignty. Therefore, from this interpretation, we know the story is possibly addressing Ireland as a woman and the discourses about the nation are evoked established in dialogue with the identity trigger.

As stated by Innes (1993), Ireland has been represented as a woman by both British imperialists and Irish nationalists. Along with this representation came the idea that Ireland needed men to save and govern Her. “The greatest difference between English and Irish portrayals come, of course, in their perception of the nature of their enemy and would-be rescuers” (p. 15). For the English, Irish salvation lied in the symbolical marriage with the English “benevolent and patriarchal” ruler so Ireland could remain “feminine and childlike” (p.15; 9). For the Irish, Ireland needed Irish heroes, warriors and poets to liberate her from the claws of the English male oppressors. From this representation of Ireland as a woman, there are two different positions and narratives being created: the English and the Irish, also referred to the Protestant and the Catholic, respectively.

On the Irish side, some of the most famous narratives were produced in the period of the 1900s. Some of the most famous female representations of Ireland were written in the period. Yeats’s *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, published in 1903, was set against the 1798 revolution in which the United Irishmen rose against the English for independence. In the play, the goddess of sovereignty visits a house and lures a young man to fight to recover her land. She tells him many men have died for the love of her. When she is offered food, drinks and money for consolation, she claims those were unsatisfactory for what she really wanted was sacrifice for her lands. At the time, this Yeats’s play worked as an inspiration and justification for men to die for Ireland in battle in 1916 as their ancestors did in 1798 and before, like Brian Boru²⁹, also mentioned in the text.

Another example, Lady Gregory’s play *The Rising of the Moon* (1907), entitled after a traditional revolutionary song³⁰, tells the story of a wanted

²⁹ One of the most successful early kings of Ireland, considered to be the last high kind. He ruled from 976 to 1014 when he died in the Battle of Clontarf. He is celebrated in folklore and literature as a hero (Goodby, 2003).

³⁰ "The Rising of the Moon" is an [Irish ballad](#) recounting a battle between the [United Irishmen](#) and the [British Army](#) during the [Irish Rebellion of 1798](#). The ballad has been in circulation since mid-

revolutionary who pretends to be a ballad singer in order to convince the gaol sergeant to let him free and follow him in the fight for Irish freedom. The man sings songs about Granuaile, “shan van vocht”, the “green on the cape”, all sovereignty goddess figures related to Ireland. In these songs, the goddess is sick, weak, poor, being enslaved, and crying for help. At the end, the sergeant is moved by the tale of the sovereignty goddess in need, releases the revolutionary and supports Ireland’s cause.

One last example is the poem *I am Ireland* by Patrick Pearse (1914) found transcribed in the walls of the Brian Boru Heritage Centre in Cashel where the last high king of Ireland, Brian Ború, ruled and lived and where today lies a museum to preserve his memory and that of the period. The poem conveys Pearse’s view of Ireland as an old woman, a spiritual ancestral entity, an abandoned mother of heroes and a lonely victim of her enemies. According to Kiberd (1996), Pearse embodied the figure of the poet and the hero that sacrifices himself for Ireland. He was one of the leaders of the Easter Rising and was executed in 1916 for Ireland’s freedom.

Overall, Kiberd defends that texts like the ones abovementioned were used as the stage background of the Easter Rising. The insurgents who died were martyrs to these texts when acting out the Rising on the streets. Pearse was the “revolutionary ascetic who renounces love, family and all sensual gratification” to liberate Ireland by dying (p. 210). The subsequent response to the martyr texts after the Rising on was the feeling of remorse, which Yeats himself well expresses in his poem 1916.

On the protestant side, however, the sacrifice for the sovereignty goddess of Ireland does not function in the same way. The protestant community allegiance is more devoted to masculine figures than the feminine. As stated by Innes above, this community saw their origins in the English colonisers and as such they saw themselves as male conquerors and protectors of Ireland and its unruléd feminine nature. Therefore, according to feminist theorists from Northern Ireland, such as Meyer (2000), who have gone as far as to describe the country as an “armed patriarchy”, protestants have an opposite version of the story, one

1800. The song remains popular and has been covered by a wide variety of musicians, including the famous The Dubliners and The Clancy Brothers.

in which male heroes are defending the land from the invading female (p.123). In one of the founding myths of the community, the story of the famous epic *The Tain*³¹ is used to show how Cuchulain defended the Northern Province of Ulster from Queen Mebd of Connacht's invasion. In narratives like such, feminine figures are seen as domineering and as a threat. Females must be conquered and controlled for better governance. As a consequence, the protestant community is seen by Meyer as "starkly male and militaristic" where there is "no space for women" (p.136).

Therefore, "The Mural Painter" dialogues with this tradition. When Davey sees the woman, he is lured by her. As the story progresses, we testify he identifies with her and, by doing so, he re-enacts the tradition. Along with the poets and heroes of the past mentioned above, he sacrifices for Ireland. Davey identifies with the Catholic side of the narrative and this generates a response from the men in the Protestant community that well embodies the discourses and the history of the British coloniser and its descendants. The story repeats itself. The characters are still stuck in a colonial dispute, one community against the other, the British versus the Irish, Protestants versus Catholics.

The problem with this tradition is that it has been used to justify countless casualties and is anachronistic with the period of the Peace Process. April 2018 commemorated twenty years of the Good Friday Agreement signature. Newspapers covered the event with a revisionist and, in many ways, a pessimist tone. Ben Kelly (2018), claimed that Northern Ireland is still polarised and stressed the growing agenda for a united Ireland. While Kelly celebrated the unimaginable establishment of a power-shared government by Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley in 2008, ten years later the talks to restore a mutual government dissolved in Jan 2017 is still unresolved³². According to Kelly "the

³¹ *Tain Bó Cuailnge*, which translates as The Cattle Raid of Cooley, is a "central heroic tale in the Ulster Cycle, a series of mythological works which recount the conflict" between the ancient people from Ulster and Connacht. It is an Irish epic that narrates the dynastic disputes in Ireland (Goodby, 2003).

³² In January 2017 the Parliament of Northern Ireland, also known as the Assembly of Northern Ireland or Stormont, has been dissolved after an unresolved political dispute between the two largest parties that represent the Protestant community (the DUP) and the Catholic community (Sinn Féin). Since then, there has been no government in Northern Ireland and the country has been governed by civil servants. If an agreement is not reached between the representatives of the two communities, Northern Ireland will be governed by direct rule from Westminster, in London, as it was during the Troubles (Kelly, 2019).

fundamental problem is that while the war is over, unionists and republicans remain locked in a psychological battle for the very soul of Northern Ireland” (n.p.).

In a poll carried out by Sky News in 2018, 51% said that most of the close friends of the people in Northern Ireland are from the same community as them. The same number stated that Brexit has made community divisions even worse. We could say the good news is that 61% feel safer now than during the Troubles³³.

Nonetheless, in spite of the improvement in violence rates, the Report on Hate and Sectarian Motivated Crimes issued by the Police Service of Northern Ireland in 2017 is not celebratory. It presented 10 years of statistics, from 2007 to 2017, which accounted for the period of ten to twenty years after the Agreement was signed. The average number of sectarian crimes committed per year range from 800 to 1000 incidents. Among these, some 241 in average involve injuries and 30 represent attempted murder. The report does not make clear the number of casualties motivated by sectarian hate. Another important information offered by the report is the age of the victims, being 20 to 30 years old the largest group³⁴. As we can see, most of these people have been born or grown up after the Good Friday Agreement and they are still perpetuating hatred and sectarian violence against one another.

In this context of a still recurrent sectarianism, walls become an issue. The Northern Irish writer, Glenn Patterson (2006), explains that “a war-within-a-war” is fought on the walls (p.53). Protestant murals feature threatening images with masked men with guns, insignias of paramilitary groups, and flags. History is reduced to three main dates: 1690 (The Battle of the Boyne³⁵), 1912 (the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force in opposition to Home Rule) and 1916 (the Battle of Somme, when thousands of Ulster Volunteers died fighting for the British). On the catholic side, there are more martyrs, hunger strikers, and 1916 Rising leaders. For Patterson, Protestants and Catholics may have stopped

³³ In: <https://news.sky.com/story/northern-ireland-is-still-split-11318983>

³⁴ In: <https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/>

³⁵ The most famous battle of the Williamite War that occurred on July 1 1690 between Williamites and Jacobites and became famous in the Protestant folklore as a Protestant superiority over Catholics.

killing each other for the most part, “but that is not to say they are ready to be living side by side” (p. 62). He states further: “this was never (...) an integrated city, but it is a more profoundly divided one now” (p.63).

In 2016, the government of Northern Ireland committed to remove all peace walls by 2023. According to figures by the Department of Justice, there were still 50 barriers remaining – 39 walls and 11 gates. In September 2017, the peace wall that separated Springfield Road from Springhill Avenue in west Belfast was removed. According to Seamus Corr, a representative of the local community, this act “shows that communities are willing, with support, to work towards positive change” (n.p.). It is not “a starting point or an end point, but a significant milestone on the journey towards a positive future”³⁶. The complication, however, is that Stormont was dissolved and now upon the official beginning of Brexit, tensions over a hard border with the republic are haunting both people north and south.

Central to the debate on borders and walls, Brexit was due to start in March 2019 and is now postponed to October 2019. It has been three years of preparations and negotiations since Jun 23 2016 when the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union by a majority of 51%. Most of the discussion has been about trade, about how to regulate the passage from a free trade area common in the European Union today to a controlled and checked area as the new separate United Kingdom will have different standards, regulations and quality control for imports and exports. There is, however, another concern that comes along with free trade that is the free movement of people. By having to control the economic flow, Brexit will create a barrier to control the movement of people. To do so, a new border of 500km that separates Northern Ireland and Ireland, the EU and the UK, would have to be created with more than 300 hundred checkpoints (O’Toole, 2018). According to the critics, this represents today two times the number of checkpoints between the whole European Union and the border with all Eastern countries outside the EU. It would be the only land border

³⁶From Campbell, Brett. West Belfast peace wall removal 'a major milestone', Belfast Telegraph, September 21 2017. In: <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/west-belfast-peace-wall-removal-a-major-milestone-36153130.html>.

between the EU and the UK. The conflict over the border, however, is not new and does not only involve free trade or movement of people. It is known as Britain's oldest problem and Brexit's main obstacle. It has been an issue on the island of Ireland since its introduction in the 1920s. It was seen as a solution for the War of Independence, but its acceptance caused the Civil War³⁷.

In the 1970s, during the Troubles, roads would be patrolled by armed soldiers, police and customs officers, military checkpoints, in some cases, there were even watchtowers, which made the border the most militarised zone in Europe. It was a target point during this time for paramilitary groups. "The general fear is that the return of customs officials or border inspectors would be so unacceptable to people (...) that it would lead to anger and violence" (Carnswell, 2018, n.p.).

As Fintan O'Toole (2018) puts it, the issue with the border is a practical and a conceptual one. The practical has to do with the regulations abovementioned, but the conceptual goes far beyond.

the conceptual problem is that this is also a border which has, of course, a historic meaning to it and that meaning is tied up with the broader conflict in Ireland – the sectarian conflict between Protestants and Catholics; the colonial conflict between Britain and Ireland (n.p.).

Therefore, the fear of a border, soft or hard, is to stir community division feelings. The Good Friday Agreement made the border invisible. It allowed people to cross from the north to the south of Ireland without almost any noticeable difference, except for the change of currency. O'Toole argues that the solution to the border problem was not to pose questions such "am I British or am I Irish?", "Am I in Northern Ireland or in the Republic?" that required people to constantly define who they are or how they identify (n.p.). "If you re-impose a physical border, you stop all of them". (...) So, you say you must now declare yourself. The Belfast treaty has allowed people to ignore for the part these questions" (n.p.). According to O'Toole, it has allowed people to do something unprecedented: it gave people the chance to choose. "So it says, to try to solve the problem: anybody born in Northern Ireland has the right to be Irish or British

³⁷ All the information from this paragraphs was taken from the article "Brexit: the Facts" in the Irish Times, whose author and date are not informed. It can be found here: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/brexit/brexit-the-facts>. Also, from an extensive reportage done by the Irish Times, found here: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/brexit/borderlands>.

or both as they may so choose. So it says that national identity is multiple; it is chosen, and therefore it is contingent.” (n.p.). What Brexit will end, or at least challenge, is this possibility of choice, of a fluid identity, which, in a context of still recurrent animosity, can bring about armed conflict again.

Therefore, the story is presenting an identity relation in which characters are still identifying with these colonial discourses and divisions. It is what Ben Kelly called “a psychological battle between unionists and republicans for the very soul of Northern Ireland” (n.p.). In this battle, there is not enough progress being made. Despite the romantic lure the woman casts upon the mural painter, he was imprisoned and had no choice to identify with whom he wanted. Neither sides offered him freedom and both ruined his life. The story tackles the duality between the two communities as the problem itself.

In spite of the overall pessimism, the story shows the identification with the goddess presents a take on gender and multiculturalism that breaks with the traditional identifications from both communities and moves a step forward into novelty and the future.

“The Mural Painter” shows how male dominated and oriented the whole narrative over memory and remembrance of the Troubles is. The story says the owner of the bar and the other men in the community were more maddened by the fact there was a woman in the mural, one that brought identification and commotion from the part of other women, than by the supposed nationalist and republican figure. This reveals that the persistent sectarian violence in Northern Ireland is also caused by masculinity.

This aspect of memory representation in Northern Ireland was pointed out by Eli Davies (2018) in a paper written for the event #Agreement20 and published in *The Irish times* in the same year in which she argues that “the focus on two traditions in Northern Ireland forgets the role of women and domestic space. (...) The continued emphasis on the two communities, as well as, obscuring the role of the British State, can work to exclude identities that do not fit neatly into catholic and protestant, nationalist and unionist dualities” (n.p.). She finishes off by saying: “when we insert experiences into conversations about the history of the conflict in Northern Ireland it gives access to different ways of thinking” (n.p.).

In similar terms, Rosemary Jenkinson when commenting on this story, and as a protestant herself, says Protestant men have a sense of territorial behaviour, much more confined, strict and masculine. She wished she were Catholic sometimes because their imagery seems more romantic, feminine, with the mother figure of Mary, and more positive.

Therefore, this different and new way of thinking through the perspective and contribution of women, not the idealised goddess of sovereignty either calling men for battle or waiting to be saved, but real women, seem to be the most innovative aspect presented by the story and a real issue in the possible advances for a more peaceful and just society in Northern Ireland. Instead of renegotiating the traditional opposing identities, the role of gender working through them could shed light over a new path.

The second progressive aspect is the identification of women and Davey with the new inhabitants of Belfast, the immigrants, through the figure of the goddess of sovereignty. Jenkinson says the story is set in her community, around Carlingford Street, a very traditional Protestant area, where nowadays there are Catholic Polish immigrants living side by side with the Protestants. Nevertheless, according to her, the two groups do not mix. "Davey's making them mix by putting that woman's image on the wall, and I think that's the element that upsets Johnny and the boys" (Sherratt-Bado, 2016, n.p.).

By adding immigrant features to the woman, Jenkinson not only wanted to emphasise the machismo and hatred Protestant men have against women and the Catholic community, but also wanted to tackle racism. While the identity focus in Northern Ireland is still the peace and integration between the two communities, twenty-first century globalisation has brought in another issue that is the identity integration with immigrants. The protestant community in the story expresses racism against the Polish and Roma.

Overall, the identity relation in this story is established by identification with the traditional colonial dispute between the English and the Irish for the land of Ireland symbolised in the figure of the goddess of sovereignty and by non-identification with progressive discourses of the Peace Process. The effect is an identity relation that is still stuck in the past, but attempting to escape this centre and moving forwards by its take on gender and multiculturalism.

2.2 Liverpool/Lampedusa – Ireland in transit and global

Liz McManus's "Liverpool/Lampedusa" published in *Lost Between* (2015) was the result of the Italo-Irish Literature Exchange (IILE) that occurred from 2011 to 2014 when Irish and Italian writers met to share and promote the literatures of their countries. Valerie Bistany, director of the Irish Writer's Centre and one of the producers of the project, explains in the book's preface that place, identity, migration, and the role of writers responding to political and economic crisis set the background for the project. In *Lost Between*, we can read 21 pieces that mix poems, short stories, and extracts from novels written and translated into English.

The story takes place in the summer of 1850. Father Hore invites a group to emigrate to the United States during the mass because of the hunger and poverty plaguing Ireland. In the priest's speech, there is a promise of free land and freedom of creed, since Catholics could not practice their faith before the English colonial law. The protagonist and narrator ponders the speech of the priest, reports that the hunger still prevailed and that a year before he had lost his wife in birth of his son. According to him, there was no choice, he would have to emigrate. His destination was the state of Iowa and to travel there he would have to go to Liverpool first. In October, the protagonist and his little son left with Hore's group. Arriving in Liverpool, the character is astonished at the violent reality of the city, full of bandits wanting to rob them. They stay at a priest's friend pension. At night, during dinner, an Italian sailor arrived at the inn's lounge and began to tell stories of treasures, sea monsters and mermaids. At the request of guests on the eve of immigration, the sailor also told stories of emigrants who lost their lives in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea and boats that sank in the storms around the island of Lampedusa. Then, sleeping that night, the protagonist has a vision in his dream. There was a multitude of emigrants who were dead and his wife was one of them. The boat, in the midst of a storm, spun, crashed into the rocks and sank. The protagonist heard the screams of men and women and among them, his wife and son were drowning. At the time of his wife's death, he sees her face and the woman was no longer his wife.

In the moment before drowning, the woman turned her face towards me and I realised that I was mistaken. She was not my wife. She was a stranger and unlike any woman that I had ever seen before: her skin was as black as coal, her cheeks pocked and scarred, her eyes were fathomless pools and a cloud of wild hair sprang around her head. As the waves closed in, the sound of her voice ruptured the night air. One word she cried out: Lampedusa (McManus, *Liverpool/Lampedusa*, p. 66).

The protagonist awoke from his sleep with his son crying. He took the child in his arms and nursed him to sleep again. His only thought was to say a prayer for that woman who was not his wife, but who could be any of them. He says, "Let us all be one, I pray, whether we perish on our voyage or live to tell the tale" (p. 67).

In this story, the goddess of sovereignty appears in the climax, when the *aisling* occurs. The apparition meets some of the traditional requirements that characterise the folk motif: the vision of the woman occurs in a dream, when the narrator is near the sea, there is a description of the woman and a final message of hope and deliverance.

The first aspect of the identity relation established in this story occurs when Ireland as a goddess in the *aisling* does not identify with the traditional description of an idealised, powerful and romantic damsel. Conversely, she is identified as and with a starving, sick and black migrant dying in the sea with her child. As a result, this non-identification with the Irish traditional description of a goddess generates an identification with this migrant woman. Ireland, then, becomes more comprehensive and incorporates foreigners and migrants.

This identification allows us to interpret that the goddess appearing in the vision seeking help, as it is common to the *aisling* tradition, is, in fact, asking for a different kind of help from the past. Ireland is not calling her men to fight against the English coloniser, but she is asking her people to remember who they were in the past and help others that are in need now.

Moreover, the *aisling* creates an identification between the goddess-migrant figure with the banshee, a folk and mythological entity that brings upon death. This can be noticed because of the physical description of the woman who has a scarred face, looks ill, and eventually dies in the shipwreck in the vision. By identifying the goddess figure with the banshee, the story is evoking an Ireland that died of famine and emigration in the 1840s. By identifying goddess-migrant

with the banshee, a death omen is cast upon the story, as if the story stressed that people will die.

The *aisling* brings about and connects two main stories that are foretold by the title of the short story. One that is the narrator's family emigration in 1850 escaping the famine. The other is the black immigrants of Lampedusa. The identity relation is established in the mediation of these two stories, in the *aisling* itself, in a vision that represents a message of hope and deliverance for the future of Ireland.

The first story is that of the Irish emigration in the famine period. The short story is based upon a real story described in the book *Farewell to Famine* by Jim Rees (2014) in which Father Thomas Hore coordinates in 1850 the emigration of a group of about one thousand people from Wicklow and Wexford in Ireland to the United States with the objective to form a colony in Arkansas.

Edward Laxton (1998) in his *The Famine Ships: The Irish Exodus to America* studies the stories of Irish owned ships that performed the trip escaping the famine in Ireland to the U.S. One of those vessels was Hore's. According to the researcher, ships had two main routes to America: one was to leave straight from Ireland and the other was from Liverpool. The ships that left from Ireland were smaller and could transport fewer people. Liverpool was a bigger and a slaver's port that could accommodate longer units and organise more populated journeys to America. Many Irish would have travelled in former slave ships and in the same conditions.

All through the years of famine, farewells and funerals were a regular happening in community life in Ireland. It was in these ceremonies, as well as the mass, that Father Hore set out to convince his parishioners to accompany him to America. His endeavour is recorded in the Royal Irish Constabulary archives. A policeman named David Lynch, infiltrated as a spy, reported one of his meetings held on June 3 1850 in fear of upheaval against the British Empire. Lynch described Father Hore's enthusiasm with the climate, comfort and prosperity in America. He mentions examples of individuals with whom he was acquainted and had been successful in the new country. The Father stressed there was free land, without taxes or rent, and that everyone was free to worship the God they wanted.

Hore intended to leave in September and the trip fare was five pounds, which accounted for about six months wage of an ordinary Irish peasant (Laxton, 1998).

The context in which the short story is set is the final years of the worst famine in Irish history that occurred between 1845-1850. According to Cathal Póirtéir (1995), a fungus reached the potato crop causing a pest and the loss of the harvest for five consecutive years. As potato was the basis of the feeding of a third of the Irish population, especially of the class of farm labourers and land tenants, it is estimated that about one million people died and another 2 million emigrated from Ireland. Those who had resources left the country, those who were extremely poor, starved to death or died of diseases caused by malnutrition.

The second story refers to the migrant crisis in Europe and one of its main gateways, Lampedusa³⁸. According to Proglia & Odasso (2018), the Italian isle located near the region of Sicily is a symbol of happiness, leisure and wealth for tourists, but also an emblem of fear and death for immigrants fleeing North Africa and the Middle East. It is a liminal space, the first border between Europe and Africa. Thousands of migrants have been hitting the isle since 1992. Their migration is closely linked to a context of great economic and political instability in their countries of origin. Nationalist, racist and xenophobic discourses have circulated in the media coverage of migrants' arrival in Europe. The marking of difference between us versus them, the fear of the other – black, African, Muslim, Arab – stealing Italians and Europeans' land, women and future is what Proglia & Odasso call a colonial residue that still inhabits the Europeans' mindset.

Lampedusa is one of the gateways together with Spain, Italy, Malta, Greece and Cyprus which migrants use to enter Europe. It has been one of the stages of a migrant crisis that has been acted out in Europe since the early 2000. The last report on the theme issued by the United Nations³⁹ in 2019 reveals the dimension of migrations and some of its reasons. In 2019, more than forty-three thousand people have risked their lives reaching Europe, being more than thirty four thousand by sea. Only this year, an estimate number of about seven hundred people have died migrating to Europe. Most of the migrants come from

³⁸ Lampedusa is an Italian island of 20 km² located in the Mediterranean Sea 200 km south Sicily. It is the southernmost point of Italy and Europe.

³⁹ See attachment 1

Afghanistan and Syria, accounting for more than 25%. Others come from certain Arabic and African countries such as the Republic of Congo and Iraq. The peak of migration was reached in 2015, when over one million people arrived in Europe. The reasons for migration, as against mediatic discourses might claim, is mostly due to wars in the migrants' country of origin.

These two stories, with their particular social and historical contexts, overlap in the *aisling*. The woman is both the dead wife of an Irish emigrant of the 1850s escaping the famine, and the black immigrant arriving in Europe looking for a new life in the 2000s. While one is leaving Europe to find better living conditions outside the continent in the past, the other is coming into Europe in need of those very same living conditions. This overlapping creates identification. It identifies past and present, the Irish famine diaspora with the immigrant crisis.

Besides creating the identification in the *asiling* and the overlapping of stories, the protagonist, the man who is emigrating with his son, also identifies the woman in the *aisling*, with his possible wife, and the woman who is experiencing the same kind of journey he is. At the end of the story, when he says "let us all be one", he is confirming this identification. Furthermore, this same excerpt summons the reader to be part of this identification process, for us all to be one with the migrants, with the ones in need.

A central idea to the identity relation established in this story is solidarity. According to Pensky (2008), solidarity is an act of inclusion of a person into "a group or institution structured discursively" (p.xi). To Pensky, we are bound to one another, even in the smallest acts, such as in the discursive production. In each utterance, when we say something, we say it because we include someone who will hear it. Inclusion, however, implies in exclusion. Inclusion is not, *a priori*, limitless. It has its boundaries. Inclusion and exclusion should be understood, to him, as moments in the process of the "construction and transformation of solidarities that are dynamic and ongoing" (p.xii).

Pensky fundamentals his theory upon Habermas's solidarity and social thought. In the case of nations, sovereign state ascribe legal norms that set membership, thus the inclusion in the state and those excluded from it. These norms, in turn, are formulated in the public discourse. Therefore, whenever a group of people is excluded, the national state has to provide a justification for it.

This justification includes the excluded group from the state in the debate. By doing so, it brings visibility to exclusion and creates a tension that may generate a transformation in solidarity.

Habermas purposes a cosmopolitan solidarity in which individuals share a sense of inclusion beyond national borders. Based on that, Pensky believes in a limitless solidarity, which will only emerge when the ends of solidarity are stretched, that is, when the limit between inclusion and exclusion is pushed. Contrary to the common belief, Pensky suggests that inclusion is not originated in a fellow feeling, but in a transformation of the ends of solidarity, of its limits. Therefore, for Habermas and Pensky, “new solidarities are generated from within the interplay of inclusions and exclusions; at the “force field” where inclusion and exclusion (...) become unstable and creative” (p.xii)

Similarly, Lawrence Wilde (2013) remarks that Habermas in his *Postnational Constellation*, “places great importance on the emergence of the European Union (EU) in overcoming national enmities and establishing solidarity in a post-national arena” (p. 85). To Wilde, Habermas evaluates the creation of the federal state as a progress in relation to civic solidarity which was previously limited to the nation state.

The real question ought to be whether we can realistically conceive of the conditions whereby citizens are able to extend their civic solidarities beyond national borders with a goal of achieving mutual inclusion (Wilde, 2013, p.85).

As Wilde puts it, citizens in the nation state many times sacrifice their own interests in order to strengthen their societies and have the benefit of a shared solidarity within the state. Thinking of extending solidarity beyond the nation state is to ask citizens to compromise their sacrifices without any guarantee of receiving benefits in return.

Bearing this discussion of solidarity in mind, what the *aisling* does by identifying the Irish goddess of sovereignty with the migrant woman is to extend the limits of Irish and European solidarity. This identity relation established in the story aims to include those excluded from the European Union, the migrants and refugees. It does so by including, at least in the literary text, in the utterance as Pensky posed, the story of the excluded other. It evokes a sense of equality. The same way the Irish needed to emigrate in 1840s and were accepted and included

in other countries; they should retribute such solidarity to others, the migrants of Lampedusa today.

The setting chosen for this purpose seems to be appropriate as Lampedusa is seen, according to Giuliani (*apud* Proglia; Odasso, 2018), as site of redefinition of the European imagined community. She argues it is a borderline between Europe, Africa and Middle East; the local, national and international; those who deserve to live and those who deserve to die. This borderline marks the difference between those included in the solidarity, the civilised, white and rightful ones, and those excluded, the “terrorist”, black, non-Christian ones.

Although Habermas and other social theorists, as Richard Kearney, mentioned in the Introduction, considered the creation of the European Union a progress in relation to solidarity and the nation state, the migratory crisis of the recent years have shown such shared allegiance is not extended to those outside the border of the federal state.

The book in which “Liverpool/Lampedusa” was published, *Lost Between*, resulted from a cooperation between Italy and Ireland. It was only made possible because of a project of solidarity between the two countries, named Italo-Irish Literature Exchange, and the cooperation of governmental institution such as Arts Council of Ireland, Culture Ireland and the Instituto Italiano di Cultura-Dublino. Valerie Bistany, director of the Irish Writer’s Centre and one of the producers of the project, explains in the book’s preface that place, identity, migration and the role of writers responding to political and economic crisis set the background for the project. According to Catherine Dunne, cultural values shared between Ireland and Italy were discussed. The theme of displacement sounded familiar to both countries, as they both have a long history of emigration. According to the author, the sense of disconnection that human beings feel for themselves and for others is explored in the stories (Dunne & Sgaggio, 2015, p.7). What the story does, instead, is to break with disconnection. It is to create identification between the Irish, the Italian and others. It is to extend the limits of solidarity beyond the European Union borders.

The identity relation in the story not only tries to create a sense of fellow feeling described by Habermas and Pensky, but it also reveals the ends of solidarity. To Pensky (2008), this is the “force field” where new solidarities are

created and there is nothing better than identification to play as a force in this field. When identification is established, the two parts identified are similar or equal. When the protagonist of the story identifies with the migrant woman through the *aisling*, they identify as both humans, as entitled to migrate, to have a new land, and to have decent living conditions for both of their families. When the Irish goddess of sovereignty is identified with the migrant woman, a whole nation is summoned to identify with her as human and as worthy of the same rights. When the protagonist of the story uses the second person narration to invite the reader to participate in the identity relation and the process of identification, everyone is invited to identify with the migrant woman as a human being.

Therefore, the identity relation established in the story through the *aisling*, which represents a vision of Ireland in the form of the goddess of sovereignty, is one of solidarity among peoples, an understanding of human migration and a rupture of national barriers. The vision of Ireland identified in the story is of a migrant nation, which takes her contours in the nation migrants take with them and the one new migrants create; a nation that is formed in movement.

2.3 The Stolen Child – Ireland abroad

Colum McCann is seen by critics as one of the writers that transform Irish culture and identity. Eóin Flannery (2011) in his *Colum McCann and the Aesthetics of Redemption* approaches the writer's work as one that "expands and challenges the geographical borders of Irish writing" (p.4). For Flannery, McCann is a writer that cannot be held within the limits of a single place. He breaks the barriers of space and time and flows between Ireland and the world, the past and the contemporary. Flannery argues that McCann's fiction produces artistic dialogues with marginal cultures. In a similar fashion, Susan Cahill (2011) stresses how transformative McCann's view of Irishness is. She views his work as transgressing the traditional boundaries of the nation. His characters are nomads and transnational.

For Flannery, McCann's work is well located in a global perspective. However, it is not celebratory of globalisation; on the contrary, it draws attention

to traumas, dislocations and disparities. Correspondingly, Fogarty (2014) argues that in McCann's work the immigrant serves as a space where otherness is projected in the form of fear and fascination. Likewise, Ingman (2009) tackles racism in McCann's work and shows how it plays a part in the encounter with the immigrant, who is always feared and never recognised for their contribution to society.

John Cusatis (2011) in *Understanding Colum McCann* argues that McCann's biographical experience with travelling and immigration affected his writings. The writer's stories are about leaving home and finding a way back. They are always in between, as the writer himself defines it: "it seems that wherever we are is wherever we were" (n.p.). Although McCann has travelled the world and now lives in the U.S., like Joyce, he "claims to hear the voice of Ireland in almost everything" (n.p.). The experience of exile is explored in his literature, according to Cusatis, in two forms: emotional and geographical. Marie Mianowski (2017) shares a similar view with Cusatis when discussing exile in McCann's works. For her, exile is a condition between two countries, territories, cultures and languages and McCann's characters are always in this in-between. In this kind of space, the focus is not on the destination, but on the character's journey, on the constant search.

Finally, critics agree that McCann's literary project is established upon the notion of redemption. For Cusatis (2011), redemption balances loss in his work. His exiles seek "the road home, a spiritual reconciliation that brings them a renewed sense of identity, and belongingness and restores their rage to live" (n.p.). Equally, Flannery stresses that empathy complements redemption.

McCann encourages us to empathise with his abjected protagonists, and, furthermore, he cleaves to the utopian notion that even in these lives and stories there is the prospect of redemption (Flannery, 2011, p. 15).

In his own words, McCann explains it: "I don't believe the world's a particularly beautiful place, (...) but I do believe in redemption. There are those moments when the world comes together and we go home" (Cusatis, 2011, n.p.).

Within this context, *Fishing in the Sloe Black River* came out in 1994 and won the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature in the same year. For Flannery (2011), the book is "a literary meditation on travel and displacement" and features "unique

life stories of displacement” (p. 24 - 5). Although the stories oscillate between typical rural Irish villages and global scenarios, the critic evaluates that this geographical and cultural oscillation does not privilege one space over the other. Comparably, Mara & Bach (2012) maintain that while the collection features international settings, it keeps connected with Ireland. The stories, however, offer an unusual hope if compared to the traditional treatment of the subject.

In “The Stolen Child⁴⁰”, the identity relation is triggered by the encounter between the character Dana, who represents the Irish sovereignty goddess, with two other characters, Padraic, representing Saint Patrick, and Will, an American Vietnam war veteran, both performing the position of the king of the land.

Padraic Keegan is an Irishman from Leinster who moved to Brooklyn in New York to work as a social worker at a shelter of abandoned children when he meets Dana, a sixteen-year-old blind and black girl. The moment he was introduced as the new social worker she ran to him. Padraic checked her files in his first week of work. She had attempted suicide many times. He minded seven boys and three girls in the shelter, but Dana took up most of his time. Padraic told her she had the name of an Irish goddess.

He told her about Dana, the Irish goddess who believed to have come from North Africa in ancient times. Dana was in charge of a tribe of druids, the Thuatha de Dannan, who landed on a fair May morning and conquered the country by ousting the Firbolgs, the men with paunchy stomachs. She had magic that could control the sea, the mist, the sun and the very sounds and shapes of the morning (p.99).

Dana wanted to know more about the goddess and whether she shared more similarities with her. She asked him many questions: “how old was she? How did she die? Was she black? Was she blind? Did she wear coloured clothes?” (p.100).

Dana met Will in the park close to her home. He is disabled, wears a long beard to his stomach, and is more than twice her age. When he was eighteen, he was sent to the Vietnam War where he lost his legs. The veteran lives like a beggar, asking for money in the streets and sleeping in a hovel down the road from the children’s home with other refugees and veterans. Dana told Padraic she loved Will, that she was going to marry him and invited Padraic to give her

⁴⁰ The story is entitled after one of W.B. Yeats’s most famous poems, “The Stolen Child”, published in the poet’s first book, *Crossways*, in 1889.

away at the church. On the wedding day, Padraic is reluctant about going to the wedding. Later on, Dana arrives at the church and Padraic guides her through the aisle. He tells her there is always time to change her mind. The sermon is brief. The priest makes a comparison with a wedding at Canaan. Padraic wants to leave the ceremony. When the ceremony is over, Dana wheels Will down the ramp and he guides her. They both help and complement each other. Dana cannot see, so Will tells her the directions; he cannot walk, so she is his legs. Padraic watches the couple go away and feels embarrassed.

In this story, the identity relation is established in three moments of identification. First, Dana is identified with Danu and the tradition of the goddess of sovereignty. Secondly, all characters are identified with exile. Third, Dana's identification and marriage with Will and her eventual non-identification with Padraic.

Firstly, the character Dana is identified with the founder goddess of Ireland. When Padraic meets Dana, he asks her if she knew what her name meant and tells her that she bore the same name as an Irish goddess. By doing so, he identifies the girl with the Irish goddess and the tradition of the goddess of sovereignty.

Probably the first ever embodiment of a sovereignty goddess in Ireland is found in the goddess Danu. To Ó hÓgain (2006), this goddess archetype might have been worshiped in many parts of Europe, as there are several rivers, most notably the Danube, named after her. Another suggested proof to this is that she may have been the Irish equivalent to the Indo-European river-goddess Dehanu, depicted in Sanskrit literature, and the mystical Greek princess Danaides, who discovered a river that never dried up. In the Irish context, according to Miranda Green (1995), Anu or Danu was the mother-goddess after whom the mystical Tuatha de Dannan tribe were named.

Among the peoples who feature in the Irish sagas, the Tuatha of Danaan are the ones who appear the most in the original narratives. The name of this people has different spellings, such as Tuatha of Danaan, Dannan, or Dé Danand. The word *tuatha* in Gaelic means tribe and the variations of Danaan refer to the original goddess of the people, Danu. In some stories, the Tuatha of Danaan are humans with superpowers, in others they are gods that interact with

humans, and still appear in more historical sagas. According to Nora Chadwick (1970), the Tuatha of Danaan were not worshiped gods or served by sacrifices, but they were the spirits of the people of the past, a human race, trained in spells, which sometimes intervened in human designs and before the invasion of Ireland possessed Ireland. According to Yeats's reading of one of the main medieval books, the Book of Armagh, the Tuatha of Danaan were the gods of the Irish land (Yeats, 1918).

Danu is the mother of the gods of Ireland, the founder goddess, the mother of Eriú, the goddess whose name was given to the land – Eireland. According to Patricia Monaghan (2004), in one version for the origin of the name of Ireland, Ériu was one of Dana's three daughters who were wandering by the coast and were found by Milesian invaders⁴¹. The sisters, Fódla, Banba and Ériu demanded the invaders to call the land after each one of them and promised prizes in return. Their leader, Armairgin⁴², considered Ériu's promise better and decided to call the land after her. One of his subordinates defied her and she drowned him in the sea. She is described as a massive woman, related to roundness and rings, sometimes represented as a crow. She created the Beltaine festival (spring festival) on May 1.

In the story, the character Dana does not identify with the admiring aspects of any of the above goddesses of sovereignty. She is a 16-year-old girl, blind, black and abandoned. Dana does not live in any noble condition nor does she have any attractive or powerful description. Rather, she lives in a shelter and was described on the day she was rescued by the authorities as “locked in a cupboard, rake-thing, blind as the mice that scuttled in nursery rhymes” (p.98).

When Padraic identifies Dana with Danu, he highlights that the goddess “was believed to have come from North Africa” (p.99). This means the goddess would probably be black and would share with Dana the same racial origin, as well as the skin colour. In this aspect, McCann's story causes a rupture in the

⁴¹ The Milesians were a mythological race reported in the Book of Invasions (Lebor Galaha, mentioned in the introduction) who descended from Míl Despaine or the “soldiers of Spain”. They were the final mythological invaders and settlers of Ireland who subordinated the previous ruling people, the Tuatha de Dannan (Monaghan, 2004).

⁴² The he first Milesian invader to set foot in Ireland. A poet, judge, shape-shifter and seer (Monaghan, 2004).

Irish tradition that portrays Irish goddesses as white and forces us to rethink the myths of race that created the Irish nation.

According to Fanning (2002), nineteenth century Irish nationalists invented the myth of the Irish race and Irish racial homogeneity. To name but a few of the Irish nationalists' ideas, Charles Gavan Duffy (1894) defines the Irish race as a mixture of Celts and Normans who shared noble features such as generosity and joy, lived in their homeland peacefully, and went in exile "to become benefactor of mankind" (p.71). Douglas Hyde (1892) when exalting the Irish race in *The Necessity of Deaglicizing Ireland* asserts that the Irish race was originated in the peoples who dominated Europe and the enlightened people of the seventh century who schooled Europe.

Dana, as the Irish goddess of sovereignty does not fulfil this idealised description. She is not white, nor is she associated with a Nordic or homogeneous ideal of race. On the contrary, Padraic identifies her with a version of the goddess of sovereignty that is African, opposing much of this idea of white Irish and North European superiority.

Goddesses of sovereignty are considered to be the manifestation of the land itself. They are seen as local or national to one site or culture. However, Dana, similarly to the myth of her ancestral Danu, is not originally from Ireland. Both their origins are unknown and the two of them are foreign to the land they came to represent. This qualifies as a second rupture in the tradition of the goddess of sovereignty because the woman who embodies the land is not in or from the physical territory of the land.

Moreover, as previously discussed in the analysis of "The Mural Painter", the goddess of sovereignty traditionally took part in a symbolical colonial dispute between Ireland and England. In this dispute, the goddess is presented as very attached to the territory and demands her heroes to protect her or to free her from undesired invaders, as Cathleen ni Houlihan did when she asked her hero to free the four fields of Ireland. In the context of the present story, Dana is identified with Ireland, but she is an Ireland away from the territory, settled in another country outside. She does not fulfil the idealisations required in this dispute. She is not asking any hero to fight for her territory. In addition, taking the foreign aspect into consideration, even the founder goddess of Ireland, Danu, breaks with this

symbolical dispute for the territory. The goddess, who is the land itself, has never been even there.

This leads us to think of a second moment of identification, one when all characters are identified with exile, with the loss of territory and home. In many moments in the story, the characters are taken or going away. First, Padraic leaves Ireland to work in New York and in the beginning of the story, when he is smoking a cigarette, he wishes to be carried away. Then, Dana is taken away forcibly by the police to the shelter. Will is taken away to the Vietnam War. Finally, Padraic gives Dana away in marriage to Will at the altar. All the characters are forced to leave their homes, either because of moving out from their countries, or not having appropriate living conditions or going to war.

In this regard, Padraic shares some similarities with the saint's story. The Irish patron saint was an exile, an immigrant and a foreigner. He was kidnapped, lived in exile in Ireland for six years, and then returned voluntarily to carry out his conversion project. Whether Padraic is an exile like the saint is debatable. According to Edward Said (2012) exile is "a condition of terminal loss" (p.173). The author distinguishes exile from other similar terms such as expatriates and émigrés who choose to emigrate to a new country, whereas exiles are banished from their homelands. John Cusatis (2011), however, uses a more loose definition to approach exile in Colum McCann's work. For Cusatis, the geographical exile is "a forced or voluntary emigration from one's homeland" (n.p.). He also argues that "McCann's protagonists are usually voluntary exiles, however, like the author himself, they inevitably feel a simultaneous aversion to and a longing for their native land" (n.p.). Finally, the critic points out to another possibility of exile in McCann's work that is the emotional or spiritual exile in which characters have a feeling of lament, nostalgia and deep loss.

Hence, on Edward Said's terms, Padraic is not an exile, but based on a more flexible definition, he and the saint share a similar experience. Padraic fits as one of these Irish skilled workers and Irish émigrés of the 1980s. He is a social worker who moved to New York to work in a shelter for children. He and the saint are divided between two lands: the saint between Ireland and Britain, Padraic between Ireland and the U.S. In exile, the saint becomes a central figure in his adopted land and, eventually, its patron saint. Padraic does not play a central role

neither in Ireland nor in the U.S., but he well represents the Irish migrant of his time, an anonymous in constant search, whose sense of space and belonging is lost.

One of the first people Padraic meets as soon as he starts his new job is Dana, a girl that carries the name of the founding goddess of Ireland. He automatically makes this association and disclaims it to the girl. Padraic had left Ireland and in his new migratory space he meets Ireland again in the form of an abandoned girl. This can be noticed by his wish to connect with Dana, as if he wanted to reconnect with his homeland or piece have a piece of it abroad with him. When the girl decides to marry, he feels disrupted.

“‘I really don’t want to go,’ he whispers again. [To Dana’s wedding]
 (...) ‘Listen, love’, says Orla. ‘I graduate in six months. We can leave then. Go back to Ireland. Or you can get that job in Oregon.’
 (...) ‘I’m really tired of it, hon’ (McCann, 1994, p.103)”

Padraic is the emigrant in constant search, disappointed by his loss of Ireland, both physical and symbolical, as Dana will get married.

Apart from Padraic, Dana and Will experience a sense of exile more similar to Cusatis’s description of the emotional or spiritual exile. Dana lost her family and her roots. They both lost a part of their bodies or ability. Will lost a war, and together with it, a better condition for his future after it. They are both abandoned, Dana in the shelter and Will on the streets. They are emotionally and spiritually broken.

As a consequence of exile comes the attempt for fixation and stability. This introduces the third and last moment of identification in the story: when Dana marries Will. As it is expected in the tradition, the goddess of sovereignty marries the king of the land.

Central to the Irish sovereignty-myth was the sacred marriage, the ritual union of the goddess of the land, spirit of Ireland itself, with the mortal king. (...) The idea is that the king entered into a sacred partnership with his kingdom, and that the union both legitimized his rule and gave him sovereignty, and caused the land to prosper. The goddess would only enter this union if the king-elect were suitable an, even after marriage, she could reject a weak ruler in favour of another who would be better for Ireland’s well-being (Green, 1995, p.74).

Her marriage, however, is not realised with the king of Ireland, but with a former Vietnam soldier, a veteran. By reading Dana as a sovereignty goddess, her husband consequently plays the role of the king of the land. The man who

performs this role is a shattered former military. Metaphorically, their marriage represents the union between Ireland and the United States. Ireland, as Dana, cannot see properly her reality or future. It is a nation of separate families and of abandoned children. Will, in turn, represents a disabled and obsolete United States, a country that has lost its legs, its ability to move forward at war. Furthermore, he represents a country that abandons its past, does not honour its warriors, as opposed to the glorious narratives of the heroic ancient kings of Ireland. Will fought the Vietnam War and is now forgotten, living poorly in a shelter and begging for money in the streets. As a result, the marriage of the two characters, in dialogue with the sovereignty tradition, is one of losses, of broken countries that depend on each other to overcome their difficulties and move forward. An impaired Ireland, that needs assistance, and solves her problem by marrying the U.S. This marriage fixes the deficiency of both countries. The U.S. cannot walk. Ireland cannot see. The U.S. gives Ireland view, and Ireland gives the U.S. movement.

It is also crucial to mention Padraic's attitude towards the marriage. Although he is not supposed to marry Dana, as he is already married to Orla, Padraic takes part in the dispute over her and her wedding. He opposes it. He wished Dana to have a different future, to study and enjoy her life freely. He thinks she is too young to marry. We can read this as a wish that Ireland did not "marry" the U.S., that maybe the Irish would not have to emigrate there, that Ireland looked for its future alone. When Padraic sees them married, however, he seems resigned. He has a different final attitude, as someone who understands and accepts the union.

Dana identifies with Will and ends up not identifying with Padraic. It is the marriage of two broken countries, Ireland and the U.S., which more or less resembles the real life context of the period. On the one hand, Dana mirrors the image of Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s, prior to the date of publication of the short story (1994). Flannery (2011) remarks that Terence Brown in his *Ireland – A Social and Cultural History* named the chapter on the period "The Uncertain 1980s".

According to Flannery,

'Uncertainty' reflects, on the one hand, the perilous economic condition of the country, as well as the intermittent political turbulence that destabilized government administrations. But equally, in the context of McCann's early emigrant fictions, 'uncertainty' raises questions about the roots of modern Irish identity in the light of referred mass flight from the country (Flannery, 2011, p. 23)

The uncertainty referred to by Brown was originated in a severe economic crisis. In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, unemployment rate rose to 16.4%, being with one third of the unemployed population under twenty-five years of age. Foreign debts soared and political instability spread (Brown, 1981). Ireland had been a creditor nation before, but during the period, foreign debts escalated year after year. Joining the European Union in 1973 and the European monetary System in 1978 aggravated the economic situation. The population also grew dramatically by over half a million, from 2.8 to 3.4 million people (Coohill, 2000).

One of the consequences of such a crisis was emigration. In the years of the 1980s, emigration from Ireland outnumbered immigration by 200,000 people. Among those who left the country, most were unskilled workers, but for the first time in Irish history, there were university graduates like doctors and teachers looking for jobs abroad (O'Brien, 2014). One of the chosen destinations of Irish emigrants was the United States that received a new wave of Irish immigration in the period. Although Irish immigration had been massive in the nineteenth century, throughout the twentieth century the numbers were not significant until the 1980s (Lobo & Salvo, 1998).

The United States in the 1980s and early 1990s, on the other hand, is well represented in the figure of Will. The defeat in Vietnam would still be felt till the end of the twentieth century. The years that succeeded the war saw economic crisis, a low national self-esteem, and a strong political division. The war was expensive and the country continued to spend huge sums of money battling communism in other fronts during the Cold War. Oil shortages, high inflation, unemployment on the rise and the value of the dollar falling marked the beginning of the 1980s (Brogan, 1985; Brill, 2010).

One of the symbols of this post-war crisis were the Vietnam War veterans. Promoting a proper appreciation of American war veterans has been a

controversial issue since the independence. Although a bill⁴³ was passed after the end of WWII in order to guarantee some benefits to veterans, prior to the Vietnam War, President Eisenhower reviewed it and some benefits were discontinued. With the end of conscription in 1973 and the introduction of an all-volunteer operation, the general belief was that citizens should perform military service for patriotism and expect no compensation in return for it. Someone serving the military would be learning new skills and earning an average wage which qualified as enough experience for the time serving (Boulton, 2014). According to Korb, Duggan, Juul & Bermann (2009), Politicians who were spending extravagant quantities of money to send soldiers to battle argued that providing benefits to those who fought would constitute a fiscal burden to the treasury.

Proper appreciation of veterans must involve more than welcome home parades or bumper stickers on cars, it must also involve treating the physical wounds, mental problems, as well as help them make a successful transition to civilian life (Korb, Duggan, Juul & Bermann, 2009, p.1).

In addition to the poor treatment veterans received, there was a negative attitude towards the war. WWII was a legitimate and heroic war, one in which the U.S. left triumphant, whereas the Vietnam was a shameful war. It was the longest war in America and the country's major defeat (Wright, 1989). "For the first time in recent history, the U.S. had failed as a world power" (Brill, 2010). Veterans received negative reactions from both the public opinion who supported the war – for losing the war –, and from those who did not support it – for killing innocents (Ciampaglia, 2018).

The lure of military service proved to have been a false promise to many. (...) Despite the campaigns, veterans continued to struggle with post military unemployment, mental and physical disability, without adequate assistance from the government" (Wright, 1989, p.64).

⁴³ The G.I. Bill is a law that provided a range of benefits for returning from [World War II](#) . It was passed in 1944 and expired in 1956. Benefits included low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start a business, one year of [unemployment compensation](#), and dedicated payments of tuition and living expenses to attend high school or college. These benefits were available to all veterans who had been on active duty during the war years for at least 90 days and had not been dishonorably discharged.

One of the consequences of this abandonment was homelessness. Without being able to find a job, as unemployment rate for veterans was high, many veterans became homeless, drunk and addicted (Wright, 1989).

In this context, one aspect that connects Will, Patrick and the performance of the king of the land is heroism, or the lack of it. The king of the land in the traditional narrative is sacred and expected to be virtuous, honourable and skilful. The king ensured his people would have riches and peace, abundance of fruit and cattle and to pass good judgment (Ní Bhrolcháin, 2011). The two characters in the story that perform in the position of the king of the land do not identify with this discourse. Although Saint Patrick is deemed and a national hero portrayed in Irish literature as paying resemblance with Irish gods and heroes and is described as strong, wise, mighty (Mauss, Hubert, & Hertz, 2009); Padraic is an ordinary immigrant, and exile searching for belonging, a weak character. Will, in turn, is not a virtuous warrior either. He is a soldier who returned disabled from a lost war, who was abandoned by the state, became a beggar and barely a homeless. There is no identification with any noble discourses surrounding the king of the land in the story.

In conclusion, the identity relation generated in the story, triggered by Dana and her encounter with Padraic and Will is one that does not identify with romantic and idealised aspects of the construction of Irish identity, such as an idealised nation with a racial homogeneity and superiority. Instead, it identifies Ireland with exile and fragmentation in a pursuit for settlement, belonging and fixity counting on mutual cooperation with other countries, such as the United States. It features nations as international, in dislocation, mixing with the other, leaving its own territory.

2.4 A Visit to Newgrange – an instant of encounters

According to Giovana Tallone (2008), Éilís Ní Dhuibhne is “a writing wanderer, a textual roamer” (p. 167). Tallone (2004) describes her prose as one that “interlaces different genres, narrative strategies, (...) past and present, tradition and modernity” (p. 203). For the critic, her characters are usually in movement, travelling and exploring unknown places. Multiple times and spaces

are juxtaposed in layers, which Tallone deems to reflect the writer's preoccupation with otherness and difference. Moreover, in the view of Heather Ingman (2009), Ní Dhuibhne's prose fluctuates between fantasy and reality. Her stories concern "social change, cultural differences between Ireland and America, and colonisation of nature and women" (p. 250). Elke D'Hoker (2015) places her fiction, among other contemporary Irish writers, at the border between monocultural and cosmopolitan views, locality and globalism, movement and fixity.

Critics have also stressed the importance of Eilis Ní Dhuibhne's work to translate globalised and contemporary Ireland. Ingman explains that Ní Dhuibhne's fiction illustrates the inequalities of the Celtic Tiger period, laying special emphasis to the role of women. Villar-Argaíz (2014) evaluates that aspects of multiethnicity and nationhood are privileged in her fiction. Pérez (2010) adds that "most of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's works revolve around the issues of Irishness inflicted not as a singular identity but as an ambiguous and plural notion which needs to be permanently readdressed and reworked" (p. 40). Lastly, to Susan Cahill's opinion (2011), Ní Dhuibhne is writing about the rapid changes that affect Irish Culture and the mechanisms with which the past is made and the silences it carries.

The story analysed in this section is part of author's fifth collection of short stories, *Midwife to the Faeries*, published in 2003. The book collects 12 stories that, in the view of D'Hoker (2015), make use of folklore material to appeal to modern imagination. The story that gives its name to the book, for Moloney (2007), portrays female conflict and agency against patriarchy. For Fogarty, the book addresses the problematic aspects of the contemporary female experience by depicting women's internal tensions, gender taboos, and conflicting social roles. Some of the stories, in form, juxtapose folk tales and oral narratives to create an intertextual dialogue that renovates both the form itself and the themes. Moreover, the fantastic also becomes a metaphorical door to psychoanalytical and social interpretations of contemporary reality. The female protagonists are struggling against the limits of their bodies, marriage, motherhood, and family in order to create their own sense of independence and selfhood.

In the final part of this chapter, Ireland is represented through the land itself, through a traditional and ancient location of the Irish territory, Newgrange. The identity relation is triggered by a visit the two main characters of the story pay to the location and how their colliding visions of the country identify for a moment.

“A Visit to Newgrange” narrates the story of Eileen, a young Irish woman from Dublin, and her boyfriend, Erich, a German immigrant living and studying in Ireland, who are receiving the visit of “Mutti”, his mother Friederika, for holidays. Eileen, the first person narrator from whose perspective we follow the story, was uncomfortable with her coming because Erich had warned her his mother was “a little domineering”. On May 13, Eileen met Mutti and arranged to go on a tour on the following day to Newgrange. Mutti was excited with the expedition. Mutti had prepared a travel plan with the places she wanted to see. She pictured Ireland like a bucolic setting she had seen in a poster scene from Connemara, in the West of Ireland: a donkey by a lake surrounded by hills. A month before her coming to Ireland, she had borrowed a guidebook by Heinrich Muller entitled *Ein kleines irisches reisebuch*⁴⁴ and she wished to sightsee wherever the guide’s author had been.

They started the tour at Dublin city centre and before reaching their final destination, they passed by some famous tourist spots in the city. They started off from O’Connell street, and then went to Powerscourt Centre, Book of Kells, Phoenix Park, the Grand Canal, and Kilmainham Jail. Mutti’s impressions of the places were all formed upon what she had read in the guide. On O’Connell Street, she remarked it was “the widest street in Ireland” (p. 66). The Book of Kells exhibition struck her, but at the Treasures of Ireland Exhibition that followed, she was disappointed and asked her son the meaning of the word ‘treasure’. Eileen wanted to call her attention to the Phoenix Park by saying “the President lives there. It’s the biggest park in Europe” (p.66). Mutti, instead, criticised the fact the park accepted cars and compared it to Germany where parks are car-free green areas. She also “ignored the Pope’s Cross, the lovely woods, the flocks of deer gamboling in the lovely woods, the American Embassy, the troops of travelers’s

⁴⁴ This translates as “A little Irish travel book”.

ponies bouncing off the bonnet, the polo grounds and the Áras an Uachtaráin⁴⁵” (p. 68). Eileen tried again to provide her with some local tips about Dublin when they passed by the Grand Canal by mentioning that poems had been written about it, such as Kavanagh’s, but Mutti did not seem to express any interest. At Kilmainham Gaol, Eileen expected Mutti to fall “victim to the romantic nostalgia for things Irish, historical, and bloody” as the Easter Rising leaders were assassinated there in their “Struggle for Freedom” fighting for Ireland’s independence (p. 67). Instead, what struck Mutti’s attention was a fake medieval portico of a boys’ school nearby which she compared to German castles.

When the tour in Dublin was over, they headed to Newgrange. On the way to the attraction, they stopped for lunch. Mutti chose a restaurant in the “olde worlde hotel” (p. 68). She expected to be served high standard cuisine. When they entered, there was a sign warning lunch would be served at the bar. Mutti did not drink alcohol, but chose Harp, a light beer, because she took it for juice. After a long waited lunch, they finally reached Newgrange. Mutti was for the first time pleased with what she saw: “The iccold room at the centre of the hill enchanted her soul, and she oohed and ahed so convincingly” (p.70). This atmosphere prepares the ground for the instant of encounter they are going to be experiencing at Newgrange.

After the tour, Mutti and I lingered in the burial chamber. (...) I noticed for the first time, a curious intimacy, the character of a kitchen, a space at the centre of the home where people gather to sustain themselves. To survive. And, although it is as chill as a tomb... it is a tomb, after all... this room has a hearth, a focus: the guide had explained that once a year the sun would pour through the opening in the outer wall, stream along the entrance passage, and flood the chamber, with light. Illumination for the immortal dead.

Imagine how nice it is here on December twenty-one. So very nice!

Her eyes glowed with a candour they had not held before, and for the first time since our meeting we looked at each other full in the face. We laughed. Mutti moved towards me slowly, because of the hip, and I had an impulse to run and embrace her, to kiss her.

(...) Erich crept into the chamber. Mutti hobbled over to him and clasped his hand.

⁴⁵ The official residence and workplace of the President of Ireland. It is located in the Phoenix Park in Dublin.

'It's time to go,' he said. 'Haven't you had enough of this creepy old mausoleum?'

So brief are our moments of salvation. So sudden. So easily lost (Ní Dhuibhne, 2003, p. 70-1).

The identity relation is established in the two visions of Ireland being conveyed by the characters. One is the vision of the local and the other of the tourist.

We learn from the very beginning of the story that Mutti's expectation of Ireland was to find a place like the one she saw in a poster:

A poster in the village travel agency depicted a scene in Connemara: a lake and hills and a donkey. The hills were so very green, she could hardly wait to climb them. And the sky was so very blue. And the donkey, so very friendly (Ní Dhuibhne, 2003, p. 63).

This passage provides us with some key information that will define Mutti's view of Ireland. Firstly, her major interest in Ireland is in natural and rural landscape. Second, the perception of Irish nature is bucolic and romanticised. She does not seem to see Ireland as a twenty-first century country.

When she arrives in Ireland, they decide to start the tour at O'Connell Street. Her comment on the location – "Oh, the widest street in Ireland" – stresses her view of Ireland is not urbanised. It is as if the country has one large street and that was it. When they moved on and visited the Powerscourt Centre, the narrator said it "had failed to arouse the mildest commendation" (p. 66). Although it is considered the third most important piece of Georgian architecture in Dublin⁴⁶, Mutti could not see the value of the building and did not praise it or show any awe. This attitude reinforces how she values the rural and nineteenth century view of Ireland as against urban Ireland.

As follows, next stop was the Book of Kells, which "had won her freshest laurels". (p. 66). The Book of Kells is "Ireland's greatest cultural treasure and the world's most famous medieval manuscript. The ninth century book is a richly decorated copy of the four Gospels of the life of Jesus Christ"⁴⁷. We can infer that

⁴⁶ According to the building's official website, it is a fine example of Dublin's Georgian architecture that marked the period of royal modernization of the city the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In: <http://www.powerscourtcentre.ie/>.

⁴⁷ Official website. In: <https://www.tcd.ie/visitors/book-of-kells/>.

the character appreciated the medieval and Christian exhibition, which highlights the romantic view of Ireland

Hence, the narrator mentions Mutti's real interest that was to go to Spiddal, where Herr Muller, the author of the tourist guide she read, spent most of his time and gave a more thorough account in the guide. Spiddal is a small Irish speaking coastal village in Galway Bay, in the west of Ireland. Again, romantic Ireland is stressed. Traditionally, if one wants to see real Ireland or experience the ancient way, romantics recommended going west.

Finally, on the way to Newgrange, they stop for lunch at the "olde worlde hotel" where Mutti expected high standard cuisine, but instead, was served at the bar and drank a harp. The wish for whatever was medieval is reinforced in this passage. Also, an idealised and ancient view of Ireland.

On the way to the Phoenix Park, Eileen, the narrator, made her first guiding comment. This introduces Eileen's view of Ireland, the second view presented in the story. Her comment meant to call attention to the park, and did so by saying "the President lives there. It's the biggest park in Europe" (p.66). On the way to the park, Eileen also comments on the canals, saying they were famous because of the poets, like Patrick Kavanagh⁴⁸, who wrote about them.

Eileen wanted to give emphasis to Irish writers and how much their literature created the narratives that shaped how Dubliners see their city. Mutti did not seem to be interested. The narrator makes an ironic comment saying that "Kavanagh had the misfortune to be post-Muller" (p.67). Eileen expresses her wish that the city was seen more from the perspective of an Irish person, from Irish literature, not from a foreign and touristic one.

Still on the way to the park, they passed by another historic site, the Kilmainham Gaol, which we can notice was held esteemed by the narrator. The struggles for Irish independence was a topic Eileen expected tourist guides to explore and tourists to value. She confesses that she hoped both natives and tourists fell "victim to the romantic nostalgia for Irish, historical, and bloody" (p.67).

⁴⁸ Irish poet, novelist and journalist most famous for his novel *The Great Hunger*. He lived by the Grand Canal in the 1950s after recovering from a surgery and wrote a series of poems inspired by the location. Today, there is a statue commemorating him by the canal's shore.

When they were passing the jail, Mutti, instead, got interested in the portico of a boys' school that looked like a medieval castle similar to the German ones. The narrator tells us the façade was fake, but that did not matter for the tourist. The narrator tried to emphasise the 1916 leaders imprisoned and shot dead without any success.

Eileen's comments offer a perspective of what she considered important in her view of Ireland. Her first guiding comment was about the president's dwellings. Later, when she caught sight of the gaol, she says it flooded her spirit with enthusiasm. Eileen seems to share in the feeling of the revolutionary leaders of the Rising. Eileen stresses the "struggle for freedom", that is the fight for Irish independence from England. Finally, she reveals her expectation that Mutti fell "victim to the romantic nostalgia for things Irish, historical, and bloody". Finally, along their trip through Dublin, Eileen expresses her admiration for the literature that is imprinted in the city. All of this represent how Eileen sees her country: revolutionary and republican, romantic and literary.

Therefore, in this story we are presented with two views of Ireland mediated by the places Mutti and Eileen visit. One is Mutti's, a medieval, rural and nineteenth century, touristic view of Ireland; the other is Eileen's, an urban, nationalist, twentieth century gaze at Ireland. Both views are romantic. Mutti identifies with the idealistic nineteenth century one that nationalist poets constructed of the countryside of Ireland, valuing the landscape and traditions. Eileen, in turn, also has a romantic view, but rather, urban. The characters do not identify with each other in their views of the country. They think they diverge whilst they do not seem to realise that they both share romantic views of two different nationalist constructions, one that is nineteenth century and the other that is twentieth century; one rural and another urban. The text also shows that tourists go to Ireland searching for the medieval view of the country, whereas Dubliners think of their pride more connected with urban Ireland.

There is no identification between the tourist and the local views of the country. The local, Eileen, many times expresses her superiority over Mutti's view as if she was the only one who was entitled with the right opinion about Ireland. Eileen thinks Mutti's view is outdated, but she does not realise how her own is not a twenty-first century view either.

Although in dispute, both views serve the romantic propaganda that tourist institutions want to make of Ireland. According to McCarthy (2002), touristic Ireland is romantic and little acknowledges social and economic changes of contemporary Ireland. For the author, the Ireland represented is based mostly on heritage and is “rural, traditional and underdeveloped” (p.35). In addition, brochures often portray a rather homogeneous version of the country’s culture. To Zuelow (2009), natural scenery is imagined in a unique manner so it can symbolise the specificity of the Irish folk. In addition, touristic facts reveal tourists preference for rural and heritage Ireland as the west and south west of the country are the most visited locations. Finally, Patterson (2009) argues that Irish touristic identity was created out of the struggle to be different from England. Therefore, if the former coloniser invests in modernity, Ireland, in opposition, ought to focus on nature and past.

McCarthy contends, however, that the struggle for Irish independence and the historic sites associated with it have also been targets of the Irish tourism industry. Sites like the Kilmahigan Gaol, Pearse Museum and the GPO, that were the locations of 1916 related events, have been prepared to receive more tourists in the dates that commemorate the Easter Rising, such as the centenary in 2016. These actions targeted diaspora tourists mostly, but also tourists looking for “personal fulfilment”, “unique experiences”, “authenticity”, and “emotional involvement” (p. 423).

These two views of Ireland presented by the characters also recall the traditional opposition between rural and urban Ireland. Rural Ireland has been seen, especially from the nineteenth century onwards, as the true Ireland. Such belief, according to Brown (2004), was constructed by literary portraits that conveyed an untouched traditional culture. Irish rural life retained the aspects of the ancient civilisation as folk tales, agricultural rites, fairy and magic belief. It is the setting of wilderness and pagan exuberance. To Brown, “rural life constituted an essential element of an unchanging Irish identity” (p.73). Central to this was the idea that the further west one goes, the more in contact with real Ireland one is. Seen from the metropolitan centres, rural Ireland is the reservoir of Europe’s exotic and dying cultures (Gibbons, 1991).

This view of Ireland opposes urbanisation. Gibbons (1991) points out that the emphasis in rural life was another way to collide with Britishness and the ideology of the empire that resided in cities. This was a common view shared by many writers of the early twentieth century. One example is Corkery (1924) who suggests that real Ireland is hidden and in order to find it one must leave cities or even the small towns.

At a broader perspective, this preference for rural life described by the authors above and stressed in Mutti's view of Ireland reflects a general consensus of the romantic period. Auerbach (1987) reminds us that Romanticism, which starts in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and takes over Europe throughout the nineteenth century, is marked by a profound despise for urbanism and rationalism. The movement preached the cult of nature and folk traditions. In Ireland, romantics like Yeats in his early essays glorified the image of the peasant from the countryside and the west of Ireland.

The peasant remembers such songs and legends, all the more, it may be, because he has thought of little but cows and sheep and the like in his own marriage, for his dream has never been entangled by reality. (...) But the Irish peasant believes that the utmost he can dream was once or still is a reality by his own door. He will point to some mountain and tell you that some famous hero or beauty lived and sorrowed there (Yeats, 1899, p. 40-1).

These discourses are evoked by Mutti's idealised and romantic view of Ireland. However, in spite of the strong opposition to urbanisation, it was in Dublin that the main historical event that led to the independence of the country occurred (The Easter Rising). It was also in Dublin that writers like Yeats and Lady Gregory, who praised the rural view of Ireland, set their plays and literary societies as part of the project to create a national literature based on the rural culture. From the romantic, idealised and nostalgic perspective, urban and rural Ireland identify.

The only moment of complete identification, when the characters identify with the place, their discourses and with each other, occurs at Newgrange, a setting that is older than medieval, romantic rural and urbanised Ireland.

Newgrange⁴⁹ is a megalithic tomb located in the River Boyne Valley, 50 km north of Dublin. According to O'Kelly (1982), Newgrange tomb consists of a megalithic passage grave made up of a mound and circled by standing stones.

⁴⁹ See attachment 2

For Stout & Stout (2008), during the Neolithic, a group of people settled in the Boyne Valley united by religious belief. Their spiritual identity was expressed in the mortuary ritual epitomised by the tomb's architecture, its adorned art and the goods deposited with the burials. The first, most famous and foremost of these tombs is Newgrange. O'Kelly (1982) signals that the first excavation in 1699 revealed the deposit of bone fragments, Roman coins and objects of glass and metal of a Roman and British period. The tomb's original name in the Irish language is Brú na Bóinne. Brú in old Irish means "abode, hall, mansions or castle" (p. 45). The author claims that this gives rise to two interpretations: "the Brú as the abode of the mythological or supernatural beings known as the Tuatha Dé Danann and as the burial place of the pagan kings of Tara" (p. 45). Yet, Stout (2002) remembers there is a dispute over the place where Saint Patrick gave his first sermon and started his mission in Ireland, being Newgrange one of the possibilities. In Irish mythology, the place was associated with Dagda, called the good god, the god that gives; his wife Boann, whose name was given to the river Boyne, and their son, Oengus, all of them Tuatha Dé Danann gods.

In spite of the common belief that Newgrange is a tomb or cemetery, some new researchers such as Moane (1997) suggest that the site is more likely to be centred around the veneration and celebration of a goddess-creator figure as in other European cultures of the Neolithic. The symbols drawn at Newgrange, such as the main chamber's spirals, are associated with cyclical nature of life and death and the feminine. The Irish name for the place Brú na Bóinne translates as the mansion or palace of the goddess Boinne, who also lent her name to the River Boyne. Therefore, to Moane, "there can be little doubt that Newgrange represents the earth's womb" and that "it was built by a woman centred and goddess centred culture" (p. 9).

Despite Newgrange's archeological and historical importance, the moment of identification that occurs between Mutti and Eileen does not have to do with these aspects, but with a feminine association to it.

At the burial chamber, they felt intimate with each other. This intimacy is explained in the story because they felt as if they were in the kitchen, "a space at the centre of the home where people gather to sustain themselves. To survive" (p. 70). At this point, both characters leave behind their opposing views of Ireland,

which had been set in the public space and constructed by men, be them the men who wrote the touristic guide, Herr Muller; the poets who wrote about Dublin, like Kavanagh; or the revolutionary leaders of 1916. At the centre of this home, in this metaphorical kitchen, there were no men, only women, in a space of intimacy and nourishment. In this space, that seemed familiar to them, for the first time, they looked fully at each other, laughed, and felt like embracing and kissing each other. This moment of identification, of nourishment and pleasure is interrupted and finished by the arrival of a man, Erich. For him, that place was a “creepy old mausoleum” (p. 71).

However, the narration of their identification does not have to do with the archaeological reasons mentioned above, but with the fact that they are women. When the moment of complete identification comes it is not about archaeology or history, mythology or folklore, but when they think of the chamber as a kitchen, a place of nourishment, which both women would identify as cosy.

The feminine aspect of identification resembles what Ingman (2007) analyses in Julia Kristeva’s theory on the feminine and the nation. According to Ingman, Ireland in the beginning of the twenty-first century is moving away from a closed nationalist society and is gradually becoming a more heterogeneous and multicultural nation. One of the possibilities attributed to this change is the increase in social participation of marginal groups, such as women, in the nation. The increasing participation of women, who have been frequently positioned as outsiders and excluded from the main narrative of the nation, particularly in Eamon De Valera’s constitution of 1937 that positioned women merely “as bearers of children and keepers of home”, has contributed to the new, more inclusive, Ireland (p. 6). To Ingman, this aligns with Kristeva’s thought in *Nations without Nationalism* (1993) that sees women in the position to fight nationalism and totalitarianism because they are strangers and exiles within the public life. Kristeva describes the nations of the future as polyphonic, flexible and heterogeneous. This will be achieved by embracing the other, which Ingman read in Kristeva as an intrinsic feminine capacity. To Ingman, Kristeva creates the *herethics*, “an ethic of loving attentiveness to the other” (p. 29). Therefore, women are particularly equipped to negotiate the passage between self and the other, between the known and strange, because of their marginal position. “from their

position in the margins, women make raids in the notion of a homogeneous nation” (p. 49). To Ingman, from the position in the margins, women have the opportunity to use their voices to subvert entrenched Irish nationalism and open it up to a more fluid identity” (p. 49).

The identification experienced by the two characters at Newgrange seems appropriate and in alignment with the idea of feminine transformation of the nation suggested by Kristeva and Ingman. The first reason the two women identified is because they entered a space that is marginal to the public sphere, that is prior to civilisation and to the discourses that created conflicting and opposing views of Ireland. They entered a space they associated with something women are traditionally familiar that is home and the kitchen.

The marginality of this space is confirmed by Ingman’s reminder of De Valera’s constitution in which women were placed as “bearers of children and keepers of home” (p. 6). Kristeva and Ingman argue that it precisely from this place, from home and the kitchen, that women create a resisting force that transforms society. This force, according to the theorists, is based on an “intrinsic feminine capacity”, an “ethics of loving attentiveness to the other” (p. 29). This is precisely what happens when Mutti and Eileen realise they are at this space. They create a moment of affection with each other that approximates them and overcomes their differences: their two countries of origins, their two nationalities, their two views of Ireland, their positions as tourist and native. They do as Kristeva and Ingman suggest, they negotiate, by being in contact with this feminine content, the passage between the self and the other, the known and the strange. Again, “from the margins of society, women make raids in the notion of a homogenous nation” (p. 49).

In conclusion, the identity relation established in the story is one of two different views of Ireland - one rural, the other urban, one of the outsider and the other of the insider – that do not identify until they share a moment of identification based on the feminine at Newgrange.

At the centre of the chamber where there is “a hearth” and a “focus”, where light comes in, is where death and (re)birth, where the two interpretations of Newgrange, as a tomb and a womb, comes the transformation of the nation. Unlike the women in the previous stories that were metaphorically identified as

the goddess of Ireland, these women are real and are transforming the nation by overcoming their differences through a real feminine capacity that is the one of inclusiveness, of moving from the margin to the centre and from the centre to the margin back again.

As Moane (1997) points out, one of the symbols drawn at the main chamber's wall is the triple spiral, also known as the *triskle*. The identity relation established by these two women is one that migrates and flows through the spirals of the *triskle*, meeting at the centre, like the hearth of the chamber, and expanding to the borders. This identity, as Kristeva suggests, is more open and fluid, it contracts and expands, it returns and leaves, it goes back in time and projects to the future, it moves from the centre to the margin.

Finally, this moment of identification, or salvation, as the narrator calls it, is brief. This means this process is not constant, but it is ephemeral. Complete identification, the bridge over the space that separates difference in the discourses that define Ireland in the story happens once, creates something new, until it happens again.

Part II – The New Irelanders

In the second part of this thesis, the identity trigger is an explicit discussion of Irish nationality as the main theme of the plot of the stories. The four stories analysed discuss the identity changes in the period of the Celtic Tiger and in a context of unprecedented immigration into Ireland.

The metaphor for the Celtic Tiger first came out in 1994. It was used to refer to the phenomenon of one of Europe's poorest countries with mass unemployment and net emigration to become the fastest growing with a real GP growth of 7.8% in that year. The dramatic economic change occurred throughout the 1990s and was caused by a series of factors. From the 1970s on, when Ireland joined the European Union, the Irish economic agenda was set to openness and capital flow. It was a process of Europeanisation of the Irish economy. Altogether came a favourable tax regime of less than 12.5% that encouraged multinational companies from key sectors such as technology, telecommunications and chemicals to move their quarters to Ireland. Added to that, Ireland had a qualified, English-speaking and computer literate labour and was fully integrated with the European market and monetary system. These were some of the reasons that led to Ireland's unprecedented economic success (Donovan & Murphy, 2013).

The Tiger's success attracted immigration. "Since the 1990s, Ireland has become for the first time in modern history a country of net immigration" (Crowley, Gilmartin & Kitchin, 2008, p.141). From 1995 to 2004, almost half a million people immigrated to Ireland as against barely as half that left the country, resulting in net immigration. In addition, after 2004, Ireland has reached a population of 4 million people for the first time since the nineteenth century. Immigration contributed for the populational growth and raised a series of suspicions such as a "black invasion" of Ireland or the abuse of Irish citizenship regulations and welfare system (Crowley, Gilmartin & Kitchin, 2008). Also, to Loyal (2003) immigrants were disrupting "the countours of a unitary and homogeneous society" (p. 75). "The imagined community which emerged during the early years of the Republic embodied a highly restricted notion of citizenship and ethnicity which (...) have remained essentially exclusionary" (p. 89).

In this part, we are going to analyse four short stories that are set in the context of the Celtic Tiger and that establishes a dialogue with the controversial consequences of the Tiger presented above. “57% Irish” dialogues with the peak of the Tiger and Ireland’s most serious measure to stop immigration to the country, the 2004 Irish Citizenship Referendum. “How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps” presents an unusual barrier for immigrants in the process of becoming full Irish citizens that is the proficiency in the Irish language. “Under the Awning” and “Birds of June” discuss the issue of race and integration in the country that claims to be the land of “one thousand welcomes”⁵⁰.

3.1 57% Irish – How much Irish?

“57% Irish” is a story in Roddy Doyle’s *The Deportees* (2008). The book encompasses some of the themes most of his critics have evaluated that are common to his work. According to White (2014), Doyle portrays in this collection the cultural intersections and tensions that demonstrate the experience that results from the contact between native Irish and new immigrants in the twenty-first century. According to the critic, these stories promote a shift from multiculturalism, that is, a disconnected coexistence of ethnic minorities, to interculturalism, “an active exchange between cultures and ethnicities” (p.96).

White contends Roddy Doyle stretches the concept of Irishness into hyphenated identities. In other words, defining what being Irish is in his work does not have a single answer. It is always half one thing and half another. To her, “Doyle promotes the acceptance of Ireland as a new hybrid country” (p.105).

Similarly, Jeffers (2009) affirms that Doyle confronts the Irish racial homogeneity and welcomes the voices of the new Irish who are going to create new stories and versions for the nation. In *The Deportees*, the critic believes Doyle has been devoted to advocate for racial diversity against racism. To her, the writer opposed the dominant narrative for an Irish national identity centred around the “white, Catholic, Irish, male” (p.260). Doyle brings visibility and locates the subjects of multicultural Ireland. He tells the stories of people in the

⁵⁰ An expression from the Irish language *céad míle fáilte* frequently used in the propaganda for tourists in Ireland.

supermarket and the public transportation. To Reddy (2007), “Doyle is the only well-known Irish writer trying to reach a broad audience with fiction that focuses on the changing Irish racial context” (p. 25).

All the stories in *The Deportees* had been previously published in the newspaper Metro Éireann. According to the official website of the paper, Metro Éireann is Ireland's first and only weekly multicultural newspaper set up by two Nigerian journalists, Chinedu Onyejelem and Abel Ugba in April 2000. It is said to be the primary source of news and information for the immigrant and ethnic communities living in Ireland. What is more, it serves as a forum for intercultural communication (Metro Éireann, 2019). Doyle says he aimed to provide a counter narrative distinct from the ones he listened in the news and in daily life about immigrants in Ireland (Moynihan, 2013).

“57% Irish” is a story in which the protagonist, Ray Brady, discusses explicitly what characteristics define the Irish identity and who is entitled to have the Irish citizenship. It begins with Ray Brady watching an Irish football match against Germany in the 2003 World Cup. Ray is at a pub in Dublin and there is a massive party with people from all over the world. He is surprised that the crowd was supporting Ireland. He hears a Polish man singing, “you will never beat the eye-rish” and asks himself why he was so supportive of Ireland. Was it because the Polish team was bad at football? Or because he had been living in Ireland for a while and felt he belonged in the country? This is the first moment Ray ponders: “how did you measure nationality?” (p. 101). A month after the Cup was over, Ray discovers his Russian girlfriend, whom he call Stalin, was pregnant. He thinks: “Russian ma, Irish da – what would that make the baby? German, said his brother” (p. 101). Ray decided to study as a graduate student the theme of nationality and receives a research grant. The title of his research is “Olé, Olé, Olé – Football and the Road to Irishness” (p. 101). His objective was to measure “love of a country via football”. Three years later, after he graduated, the Minister for Arts and Ethnicity looked for him and offered him a job to create a nationality quiz for new applicants for Irish citizenship. The objective was: “we want to make it harder to become Irish. (...) But, said the Minister, - You have to make it look easier.” (p. 106). Ray began to think about how to measure Irishness. He thought about history, geography, religion, food, football. The minister told him to “go easy

on the racial. (...) We can't be showing anyone the door because of their skin" (p. 107). Ray thought about including in the quiz questions on The Battle of the Boyne, the Irish coddle⁵¹, Roy Keane⁵², Brian Boru, U2, James Joyce, Dart⁵³, The Edge, Irish tenors, Riverdance, GAA, The Commitments⁵⁴, The pope's visit, even porn films. Ray asked some people in the pub he was working at and they answered questions easily and he concluded everybody was an expert in Ireland. He decided to make a quiz with questions on Irish music sports, food, films, and religion. The story is ironic to show that he even included ones on Irish porn films. When the quiz was finished, his brother and mother were the first to take it, and their marks were 19 and 28 percent respectively. His brother asked him whether he was not Irish because of his low mark. The Minister then took the test and his result was 57%. "What? A fucking C minus? (...) What is the average mark?" the minister asked. "Ray shrugged. 57 per cent. My mark, said the Minister. – So that would make me the average Irishman?" (p. 115). Then Ray decided to leave home and moved to a tenement house administrated by the Minister's family. It was in the past a house where the most powerful man in the country lived and now Ray shared a bedroom with a Nigerian man and his Russian girlfriend and his child lived next door. Then it is Stalin's turn to take the test for citizenship. Ray is worried she won't pass so he asks the Minister should she not have the nationality granted to her because she has an Irish child. The Minister says the child does not entitle the mother with a nationality and that they "ironed out that difficulty some years ago" (p. 126). Ray said he was the father, but as he did not register the child, the Minister advised him not to let it come between him and his sleep. Stalin successfully passed with 83%. Some time later, the Minister said something that offended a Mexican ambassador and the Department of Arts and Ethnicity was merged with the Department of Marine and Ray kept working for the "Fáilte Score". At the end, he "had granted Irish citizenship to over 800.00 Africans and East Europeans". The story ends with Ray drinking at a pub with his brother on his fiftieth birthday and mocking he has not seen an Irishman in years.

⁵¹ An Irish dish usually made of leftovers that include potato, pork sausages and rashers.

⁵² Considered the most successful Irish football player and team manager.

⁵³ Name given to the Irish Rail System.

⁵⁴ Roddy Doyle's self-reference about his first successful novel published in 1987 and adapted to the screen in 1991.

In this story, the identity relation is set off by the idea of measuring nationality epitomised in the nationality quiz. Since the very beginning of the story, the protagonist when faced with cultural diversity and immigrants supporting Ireland during a football match at the pub, asks himself what made those people who were not born there, who were either visitors from all over the world or immigrant residents, identify with the country.

One of the supporters that stand out to him is a Polish man. One of the largest groups of people that immigrated to Ireland in the early 2000, years of the Celtic Tiger boom, were the Polish and east European. Although Ray might have had the answer for his question that the Polish might have been living in Ireland, was that enough to identify with the country?

The character's interest in the matter is reflected in his graduate study that started after the Cup. He wanted to measure the love for a country through the support of football, which ironically is an English sport that historically has been opposed by movements such as Hyde's Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)⁵⁵ as a non-national, alien, practice.

Finally, three years after he concluded his graduate study, he is asked to create a quiz for the granting of the Irish nationality. The quiz would be used by the Department of Arts and Ethnicity in order to define whether someone could become a new citizen in Ireland. The minister of the department makes it clear that the objective is to stop people from entering the country. This, however, ends up working otherwise.

Therefore, the process of identification and non-identification with the Irish nationality is then mediated by this quiz. The questions created cover topics such as history, geography, religion, culture, food, sports, which since the elaboration of the questions to the results, foreigners seemed to know the answers better than the Irish themselves. The only Irish people we are informed who took the quiz, Ray's brother, mother and the minister got low to average marks as opposed to the first applicant, a Ghanaian man, who got 97% and his own girlfriend, a

⁵⁵ The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in 1884 by a teacher disappointed with the spread of English games in Ireland. The institution was committed to reviving Irish traditional sports, like hurling. The Association "was seen as part of the nationalist ethos of late nineteenth century" and is still popular to this day in Ireland (Goodby, 2003, p. 91)

Russian woman, with 83%. These results seem to reverberate Ray's initial question: how do you measure nationality? Why is it that foreigners identify more with Ireland to the point of knowing more about the country than the natives? Don't the Irish identify with their own country? Is it possible, and necessary, to measure nationality?

This story is set against the context of two very influential social aspects: the Celtic Tiger boom and the 2004 referendum for Irish nationality. Ireland was going through a period of mass immigration, which was happening for the first time in its history. This raised issues of racism, xenophobia and cultural loss. The country wanted to prevent new immigrants from entering afraid of losing their identity to the newcomers. The discourses and policies spread out in the period were meant to reply to this demand.

As a response to these suspicions, the government of Ireland introduced laws to segregate immigrants. The 1996 Refugee Act and the Immigration Bill of 1999, aimed to define who the refugees were, the application process and the consequences when they fail to satisfy the status. After these, there were still many subsequent immigration related acts concerned with prohibitions and restrictions for migrant related offenses. The acts also changed the term to refer to immigrants. Since 1935, immigrants were referred to as aliens, and after the 1990s as non-nationals (Gilmartin, 2015).

Among those acts, "the most striking political response to immigration and the response with the most fundamental and lasting impact on Irish identity was the 2004 citizenship referendum" (Crowley, Gilmartin & Kitchin, 2008, p. 149). In this referendum, the Irish electorate voted for a change in the definition of Irish citizenship. Prior to it, any child born in the island of Ireland had an automatic right to citizenship. In addition, Irish born children of non-Irish parents would grant residence to their direct ancestor. After that, the right was removed and Irish citizenship became primarily defined by descent, in other words, only children born of one Irish parents were entitled to Irish citizenship.

A central issue to the Referendum debate was the so called "citizenship tourism". The government presented data of 60 thousand births to non-national women in 2003, which according to the campaign against the referendum was an unreliable number. The objective of such data was to create a discourse that

women were coming to Ireland to have babies and to acquire the right to citizenship, benefiting from the *uis solis* right. Also, that this influx of non-national women were busying Irish maternity system. Garner (2015) argues that this reveals a gendered argument towards nationality and citizenship in which “only some kinds of bodies can reproduce authentic Irishness” (p. 83). In spite of the social, cultural and historical features acquired by someone born and raised in the Irish soil, this law authorises certain bodies and not others to pass on citizenship.

The new law strengthened the appeal for a national shared culture, blood ties, Irish upbringing, and a connection with the diaspora. Anyone outside this would not be desired as Irish. “This essentialist notion of Irishness, therefore, worked to create an exclusive, universal, rational category, difficult to challenge” (Crowley, Gilmartin & Kitchin, 2008, p.150). According to Garner, when blood lineage becomes the criterion for inclusion or exclusion, the state is transforming itself into a racialised one. This contradicts any interpretation of a neutral state. On the contrary, it produces membership, enforces legislation and “encourages particular versions of national identifications” (Garner, p. 75). The author stresses how this characteristic of the Irish state is in fact a norm for national states. By quoting Voegelin and Foucault, Garner maintains that race is key to defining national states and the organization of who belongs and who does not. Therefore, the Referendum was the Irish State’s defence against aliens and intruders.

These laws meant to create a framework that allowed the Irish state to create different categories of immigrants with different sets of rights with hierarchical acceptability, from returning Irish nationals that were encouraged immigrants to asylum seekers, understood as black migrants in general, who were the least desirable. To Gilmartin (2015), “the Irish state uses laws in both instrumental and symbolic ways to construct differences between citizen and non-citizen, and between non-citizens” (n.p.).

According to Brian Fanning (2002), popular debates on prejudice and intolerance towards refugees and immigrants imply these are natural responses of a homogeneous society that knows no better. The meaning of the word xenophobia translates as fear of the stranger. These assumptions deny how such fears of the stranger is often rooted in reading of cultural differences that were

hierarchically imposed upon beliefs of biological differences of race. Part of the problem, to Fanning, is an idea that emerged in the nineteenth century nationalism of an Irish race that emphasised Irish superiority over the non-Irish. Also, dominant constructions of Irishness cast indigenous minorities aside and presumed a monocultural nature of the Irish identity.

There is a fundamental contradiction in the Celtic Tiger period when the free trade was encouraged but not the free movement of people. Loyal (2003) explains that the unprecedented economic boom represented an endorsement of liberal values such as “cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, tourist friendliness, hospitality and openness” (p. 89). The underlying reality remained essentially different. To Fanning, nation states are racial states and function upon the theory of homogeneity “constructed as heterogeneity in denial while appropriating differences through celebrations of multiculturalism” (p. 54).

According to Garner (2015), another contradiction posed by the Referendum is that it took place in a country with a set of legal instruments that oppose racism and classifies racist behaviour as a crime. Thus, the state racialises immigration and justice but condemns racist practices.

The negative media coverage also contributed to the racialisation of immigration with their focus on asylum seekers and an amalgamation of various different statuses like asylum-seekers, work permits, students, into an undifferentiated mass. Discourses defamed asylum seekers and immigrants by portraying them as “sponges and economic parasites”, creating doubt over their right to claim for Irish citizenship and residence permit.

The idea of the referendum is central to the story. It is mentioned officially in the text when Stalin is applying for the quiz. It represents a change in the definition of Irish nationality. It was a response of Irish society to avoid migrants to change what it meant to be Irish. Ironically, it was the Irish themselves in fear of change who changed the meanings of their sense of Irishness. In one way or the other, the message that remains is that change is inevitable.

With the 2004 Referendum and all the laws passed in the period, Irish society created means to avoid migrants to become new residents in the country. However, could all these measures effectively hinder migrants to identify with

Ireland and to consider themselves Irish? Is it possible to stop a person from identifying with one nationality and claiming to be it?

There is an identity relation established in the story in which the prerogatives that define the Irish nationality are given by the quiz and migrants identify with them more than the natives themselves. The most relevant question posed by the quiz is if migrants can identify with Irish culture and become Irish, who is truly Irish? The one who identify with the nationality or the ones born with it?

The story tackles on something of significant importance in the discussion of any identity that is a subjective aspect of it, a feeling of identification, something that laws cannot measure or control. Although laws can discriminate people from achieving certain status and having certain social rights, they cannot stop identification, and identification can eventually, as in the story, be decisive in granting and defining someone's nationality. The migrant candidates that applied for the quiz were successful and were granted citizenship because they identified with Irish culture, otherwise, they would not know so much about the country and would not pass the quiz. Identification is certainly not enough in order to acquire legal entitlement to a nationality, as the context of twenty-first century Ireland reveals, but in the story, on the contrary, it plays an important part and might eventually be relevant. Finally, whenever subjectivity is at stake, the difference between nationality and citizenship should be highlighted. The state controls legal apparatus that defines whoever belongs in it or not, which is the right to citizenship, but it cannot control whoever feels identified with it or not, that is nationality. In the identity debate, the feeling of identification is very much decisive in the definition of identity, especially in cases of private identifications such as gender and sexuality. In the case of national identities, many times, personal feelings and attitudes towards an identity they were not born with are not usually taken into consideration and as part of the debate. The story gives a grasp of it, it touches on a general sense that a person not born in a country can be identified with it.

Another aspect central to the story is the incapacity to conceive hyphenated identities. The discussion about nationality implies a notion of monoculturalism and homogeneity, as suggested by Fanning. A person has

either one nationality or the other. This creates an idea of separation, of either us versus them, as if nationality were two monolithical blocks in opposition. The story, however, shows us that nationality does not work this way. The fact that the Polish migrant is supporting Ireland during the football match does not mean he does not support his birth country too. Or that the Russian mother with an Irish child applying for Irish citizenship, once it is granted to her, she is not Russian anymore. Or that the Nigerian man Ray shared the room with who sang Irish nationalist songs such as Danny Boy does not identify with his culture of origin anymore. This is what White (2014) points out when Ray thinks of his own child: Russian ma, Irish da – what would that make the baby? German? He has difficulty to “think of a new category of identity that requires a hyphen, a proof that the child does not belong to either one of his parents’ nationalities” (p. 101). Alternatively, that the child is a mixture of two nationalities, a third possibility, a Russian-Irish.

One final aspect to the story and its relation with the referendum is motherhood and the citizenship tourism mentioned by Garner. The idea of the referendum is that thousands of migrant women were coming to Ireland to have babies so they would be eligible to Irish citizenship. This implies a strong assumption that women would disconsider all the hardships and responsibilities of having a child just in order to have a citizenship. This prioritises nationality over gender, over personal choices, over everything that involves motherhood. It reaffirms a social gendered belief of women who take advantage, in this case not of men, but of the state.

The story, however, offers us a different perspective. Ray met Stalin during the Cup, he impregnated her and left her. He was the one who did not take any care and did not have any responsibility in the act of conceiving the child and when the child was born he did not register his son. It is not women who are taking advantages of men, but men who abandon women and leave them without rights and social support. This reveals an aspect of what is behind the referendum that criminalises migrant women but does not look at the responsibility and abuse the Irish men may have in conceiving this new Irish child.

Furthermore, bearing in mind the discussion over motherhood, female figures and nationality presented in the first part of this thesis, when the Irish State passes the laws that resulted from the referendum, it still sees women as the

bearers of children of De Valera's constitution of 1937. It places women at the centre of the discussion of nationality giving birth to the future of the state. Women, again, are representing the Irish land, and migrant women were not generated in the right soil. The seed coming out of it, the child, is not appropriate because it was not sown in the right territory.

Yet, the referendum puts at stake the dispute over women. This time, it is not the colonial dispute, English versus Irish men fighting for Ireland as a women. Now, it is the state, performing as men, deciding which women are suitable to bear the Irish nationality. Somehow, when compared to the tradition of the goddess of sovereignty, now it is the "king of the land" deciding which goddess is the land for him. It is not the goddess who decides anymore.

Nevertheless, borrowing Ingman and Kristeva's perspective from the end of part one, women have the capacity to transform nationality into a more inclusive concept. What the state is doing by not allowing migrant women to use this capacity is to perform like men, the same as the man in the Newgrange story did, is interrupting women in the process of transforming society.

As a result and in conclusion, in spite of the state control, the masculine interference and the fear of cultural loss, in the story, migrants seem to identify with Ireland more than the natives themselves. If the objective of the quiz was to stop a process of identification and of granting citizenship, it eventually failed. In the story, the identity relation established ends up creating an influx of people and a new form of hybrid, hyphenated, subjective, nationality.

3.2 How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps – the Language Barrier

In an interview to *Storgy*, a literary magazine for short stories, Roisín O'Donnell, the writer of "How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps" published in *Wild Quiet* (2016) has explained how her work reflects her own life story.

Well, the thing is that I'm as much a 'foreigner' as any of my characters. Don't be deceived by the red hair and freckles! As I mentioned earlier, I was born in England with Irish parents, who were from different communities in Northern Ireland. To add another twist, my parents then moved to live near Dublin when I was eighteen, and I came over here with them. So when people ask me 'where are you from?' I really get quite flummoxed. There is no easy answer. So many different influences have converged to forge my identity, I don't feel a single

allegiance to any one place. I have the classic dilemma of being Irish in England, but English in Ireland. I will never quite fit into either world (Storgy, 2017, n.p.).

Her emphasis on displacement and her struggle for Irishness have been setting the background of her work. In an essay written to *The Irish Times*, O'Donnell declares that her "uneasiness" with her own Irishness has led her to write about characters from elsewhere. O'Donnell states she did not set out to write stories about diversity. For her, it happened as a consequence of her living in a multicultural environment. It perplexed her when her first collection came out that critical attention was driven to this aspect. By then she realised that featuring immigrant, refugee, non-white Irish characters was something still new (Storgy, 2017).

O'Donnell (2016) reflects upon the conflicting issues of contemporary Irish identity. When growing up in Sheffield, her Irishness was insisted upon her. Since very early, her parents abandoned her English first name and started calling her Roisín. Her lullabies and prayers were in Irish. When she was 18, her father got a job in Dublin and the family returned to Ireland. Upon arrival, most people asked her where she was from and grew up in England. Her accent betrayed her. It was never Irish enough. She tried to argue that her birthplace did not determine her nationality but that idea was received with hostility. Incidents with her accent made people correct her about her "un-Irishness".

O'Donnell ponders that as an adult she could handle the confusion. However, she worries about the generation of young people born in Ireland who feel like outsiders, like "welcomed guests, but unwelcome locals", who are "allowed to participate in Irish culture up to a point but discouraged from considering themselves Irish". She inquires: "how can we hope to create an integrated society if Irishness remains a closed club – members only – and if generations of children are growing up feeling excluded from their country of birth?" (O'Donnell, 2016, n.p).

This article has provoked several responses that were published in the newspaper as a follow-up. A Zimbabwe immigrant declared the "members only" attitude still exists around the idea of Irishness. Although little critical material has been written about Roisín O'Donnell's work, it has been highlighted that her

approach to Irish contemporary cultural diversity is done through magical realism. Sherratt-Bado (2018), argues that her “body of work features a cross-cultural mix of realistic and magical realist stories (...) set across the globe” (n.p.).

Roisín O’Donnell’s magic realist approach to multicultural identities is reflected in her debut collection *Wild Quiet* (2016). Anne Cunningham (2016) claims that a recurrent theme in the collection is the meaning of Irishness “in this multi-ethnic, frequently hostile little country of ours” (n.p.). Ruth Gilligan (2016) revisits Pilar Villar-Argáiz’s *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland* in which the critic points out that Irish prose was failing to engage the ‘new Irish’, having a small number of texts attempting to “push beyond the historical whiteness of Irish literature”, with a few exceptions, such as Roddy Doyle (n.p.). Gilligan places *Wild Quiet* among the few exceptions and renders it as an important contribution to the literature of a country that “is struggling to feel comfortable in its own, changing skin” (n.p.).

The book is comprised of twelve stories in which most protagonists are foreigners and from elsewhere. The book features stories whose protagonists are truly from all over the world. They are migrants, refugees and travellers caught in the entangled web of cultural encounters. Most of the characters are children and women. Folklore, mythology, religion and languages from several cultures intertwine in the narrative with the Irish tradition. Roisín O’Donnell composes a narrative fabric that is multicultural in its plot and in the form it is written. She mixes in her writing, words, tales, settings, from different places with English and Irish. Most of her stories are written with magical realism, but others are realist.

The story chosen for the analysis is “How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps”. According to the writer, the story marked the start of her serious career as a writer. It was her first major publication, commissioned and published for the first time by Dave Lordan (2015) in the *Young Irelanders*, a collection of new talents in the Irish short story and that was later on published in her own first collection of short stories, *The Wild Quiet* (2016).

In the preface of the *Young Irelanders*, Dave Lordan explains that

There are, have been, and will be innumerable Irelands.
(...) what this anthology celebrates and highlights is the emergence in Ireland in recent years of a young and versatile literature open to multiple experiences and points of view, to techniques, experiences,

and accents previously little heard of or long repressed and excluded (Lordan, 2015, p. 1).

Lordan further states that now is the moment that cosmopolitan and international Ireland is at its summit where writers' fictions come from a wider range of places and perspectives with more "ways of saying than before" (p.1).

The story is about a female Brazilian immigrant established in Ireland after marrying an Irish man having to learn the Irish language in order to be allowed to work as a primary school teacher. The story is organised in seventeen steps and written in the second person and in the imperative form, as the instructive language one would find in guidebooks. In the first step, the protagonist, Luana Paula da Silva, receives a letter from the Irish Teaching Council stating she needs an Irish language certificate in order to get the license to become a teacher in Ireland. She starts telling the story of how her relationship started with her husband Séan. For the first two years, they moved from Ireland to Caraguatatuba, a coastal city in the state of Sao Paulo, Brazil, where they both worked as English teachers. She describes their life living by the beach, how the sun changed his appearance, the Brazilian food they ate and how she tried to teach him Portuguese without success as he only learned *obrigada* and *cerveja por favor*. In the second step, they came back to Ireland and she enrolled to take the exam in the Irish language in ten months' time. Third step is about receiving her Irish citizenship.

'Naturalisation' will sound like a process involving dairy products. Buy a red body-wrap dress for the Irish Citizenship Ceremony (the dress will be slightly too clingy, so you will spend much of the day holding your breath). After two hours of sitting and standing, dozens of sweaty handshakes, an oath of fidelity to the nation and a flimsy certificate in a plastic sleeve, you should drink five pints of Guinness in the Quays and ask your father-in-law to teach you Irish. He will rub his speckled head and say, 'Oh, geez Luana... I wouldn't be a great Irish speaker now, sorry'. (O'Donnell, 2016, p.22)

Luana asks all her husband's relatives if they could teach her how to speak Irish but they evade from a proper answer. After saying a few words in Irish, her husband says "That's all I'd remember. Fuck, it'd be nearly impossible for a... for someone from a... How do you say 'foreigner' in Irish?" (p.23).

Luana then meets a Brazilian friend Gabriela and accompanies her in her visa interview because she does not speak English well enough yet.

‘Gabi, how am I meant to learn Irish when hardly any Irish people can even speak it?’

Gabriela will exhale cigarette smoke, her nose-ring glittering. ‘Languages are weird, Luana. You know Irish is partly derived from Sanskrit?’ Gabriela studied linguistics in Rio de Janeiro, but here in Dublin she shovels French Fries into cardboard boxes for minimum wage. You know your friend too well to ask her how this happened (*op. cit.* p. 23).

In step four, she receives a letter from Scoil Mhuire National School asking her to be a substitute teacher. She now has a job and only seven months left to learn Irish. She then enrolls for an Irish language course at Scoil Ghaeilge. She introduces herself to a class of mostly Irish retirees by saying that she has a master’s degree from the University of Sao Paulo, but she needs Irish in order to teach a much lower level, primary school, in Ireland.

In Step 5, she receives her first evaluative task that is to teach a full class in Irish. Step 6 and 7 show some crisis between the couple. She then receives a letter from the Irish language office saying that the next step in her evaluation process is to complete a residential period in an Irish speaking area, *Gaeltacht*⁵⁶. She then books to spend a week in February in a school in Connemara taking a specific course for primary school teachers.

From step 8 to 12, Luana attends her course in the *Gaeltacht*. On her way to the school, she describes the hardship of driving in the bad weather of the west coast which reminds her of what she had left behind, her family and her comfortable life. She then meets her host who asks her why she wants to learn Irish and she answers she doesn’t know why she wants to “learn this stupid language” (p.30). She has a feeling of having the real Irish experience away from the city. She pays 1200 euros to her host and thinks where she got money to afford the luxury of studying Irish.

When she returns to Dublin and meets her husband, he tells her he wants to catch a break because his band is going on a tour. In the middle of their argument, she says “How do you say ‘stop talking in Irish’? There are no words

⁵⁶ Name given to Irish language-speaking areas in Ireland. Most areas are found in the west and south of the country (Goodby, 2003).

you could possibly say to Séan, in English, in Irish or in Portuguese” (p. 34). In step 13, she keeps on teaching her kids. She uses words of Irish in her lessons but her supervisor thinks she is teaching them in Portuguese.

In step 15, she takes the final exam. In the exam room, she hears two Irish girls saying it is very easy. She thinks to herself “IT’S VERY BLOODY FUCKING EASY IF YOU WERE BORN AND BRED IN IRELAND” (p. 38). Luana then decides to leave Ireland and return to Brazil. In step 16, she spends Irish summer, Brazilian winter, at home in São Paulo. She watches “the shifting geometry of the São Paulo skyline” and wonders why her “birth city no longer feels like home” (p. 40). Her life in Ireland feels like a dream to her. “How do you say ‘I’m lost in Irish? How do you say ‘I’m confused’ in Irish? How do you say how do you feel in any language?” (p. 41). In step 17, the story finishes with Luana receiving a letter stating she was approved in her Irish proficiency certificate.

In this story, the identity relation is triggered by language, both in its written form and as a topic. The first use of language that strikes attention is the narrative language of the text. It is narrated in the imperative form and in the second person. It uses instructional language, such as the ones in guidebooks, in order to teach how one should learn Irish, and as a consequence, live and become a citizen of Ireland. It is written in a way that is meant to establish a conversation. It addresses and expects a response from the audience, very much like what Bakhtin in his philosophy of language does as explained in the introduction. Although we cannot trace what is set off in the reader when reading the text, and it is not the object of this study, the text is clearly meant to communicate with the reader.

Regarding the identity relation, this narrative form engages the readers to place themselves in the character’s shoes, to feel and live together with the character her experiences. Narrating a text in the second person, especially, and the imperative form generates an identification with the character and the events in the story. The reader is a participant. There is a possibility that the reader does not identify with whatever the character is going through, but the reader is invited to identify and to follow the narrative together. It is as if the reader was living in the story.

Hence, the reader is invited to identify with Luana's identity relation that emerges from her having to prove her proficiency in the Irish language so she could fully exercise her rights as a citizen in the country. The Irish language becomes the mediator between being completely Irish or not. Therefore, language becomes the centre of the story's action, as well as of the protagonist's career and adaptation in the new country.

The scene that epitomises this is when she attends the ceremony of naturalisation. She remarks this name "sounds like a process involving dairy products" (p. 22). Her oddness with the name implies that in order to become Irish she should be natural from that place, related to the nature of that land. After swearing an oath to the nation and receiving her certificate, she goes to the pub with her husband's family. After her request to be taught the Irish language was denied what is understood is that Luana is a foreigner because she does not know the Irish language, but the Irish do not know their ancestral language either. They all communicate in English, yet they are native, and she is foreign.

When she leaves the ceremony, she meets the Brazilian friend, Gabriela. In this context, she acts like the local who is helping her friend because she does not know how to speak the language of the country, English, in this case. In this moment, we learn how Gabriela lives. She does not know English, she does not have the Irish citizenship, and because of that, although she is well educated in Brazil, holding a B.A. in linguistics from Brazil, she has a minimum wage job frying French Fries at a burger joint.

In the process of learning Irish, the narrator comments that the language for the locals is nothing but a hobby, that not even her supervisor at school can tell the difference whether she was teaching in Portuguese or in Irish. In addition, she describes an insufficient method of learning, one in which she learns spare words that are decontextualised. At last, when she is evaluated in the class she teaches in Irish, there is a punishment if she uses any word in English. The language is imposed by punishment.

In this story, languages act like the filter that prevent immigrants from becoming citizens and from having equal rights in Ireland. Similarly to what has been discussed throughout the thesis until now, there seems to be a protection

over Irish nationality. The state creates mechanisms to hinder immigrants from being entirely integrated in this society.

This poses to be a residue of the nationalist construction of the Irish nation and state. Douglas Hyde (1982), as stated in the introduction, founded one of the main institutions that gave rise to the formation of the Irish state, the Gaelic League. The aim of this institution was to revive the Irish⁵⁷ language to fight back Anglicisation. Nationalists like Thomas Davis (1846), whose Young Irelanders movement inspired Hyde, contented about the importance of the Irish language in order to define Irish nationality.

The language, which grows up with a people, is conformed to their organs, descriptive of their climate, constitution, and manners, mingled inseparably with their history, and their soil, fitted beyond any language to express their prevalent thoughts in the most natural and efficient way (Davis, 1846, p. 46)

As we can notice, Davis evokes a linguistic experience that amalgamates language, the human body and land. This resonates with Luana's remark about naturalisation, as process of becoming closer or one with the nature of the

⁵⁷ The history of the Irish language dates back to antiquity. Irish is the native language of the island of Ireland. According to Mac Giolla Chríost (2005), it belongs to the Celtic family of languages and its first records are found in sources such as coins, inscriptions and place names in the first century DC. In written form, Doyle explains that Irish was first recorded by monks who adapted the Latin alphabet for the purpose of writing their native tongue. This happened between 600-900 D.C. and scholars have named the predecessor Old Irish. These were short texts with brief explanations and translations such as glosses and margins of manuscripts. In a later period, more complex texts were written in Irish, such as poems, sagas, tales from the otherworld, legal texts and saints' lives. These incorporated influences of invader Viking languages. 900-1200 D.C. was called Middle Irish. From 1200 D.C. on, the Irish language became slowly being dominated by the English language. In the period from 1200-1500 D.C. Doyle states the English colonisers concentrated in certain areas such as Dublin and many settler families became Gaelicised. After the 1500, however, English was more forcibly imposed in the Irish population. The Tudor era and the Cromwellian invasions exterminated thousands of Irish speakers for the purpose of establishing English settlements and plantations, which decreased considerably the speaking community. According to Goodby, the effects of Cromwellian policies and the Penal Laws in the 1700 onwards eliminated the Irish speaking aristocracy and learned classes. By the 1800, Irish was almost solely the language of the disposed. It was estimated that in the period, the population of Ireland was of about 6 million people and only one third spoke Irish exclusively. Furthermore, the famine that hit Ireland in 1845 had a devastating effect and the Irish speaking population was reduced by half. As a response, the late nineteenth century saw a movement of revival of the language through nationalist organisations, such as the Gaelic League, that claimed Irish political independence altogether. As a result, after the Irish independence, Irish was designated the first official national language of the Free State, it was made compulsory and an integral part of the public educational system and with proficiency ensured for many public-service jobs.

country. To Davis, the native language, the Irish, is the way in which a person can become inseparable with the land.

Both Davis and Hyde's conceptions, as representatives of other nationalists of the beginning of the twentieth century, are reverberated in the Irish constitution of the 1937, which determines that Irish is the national and first official language of the country, as opposed to English that is the second language of the Ireland.

In spite of all the official value and status attributed to the Irish language as a defining factor of nationality, nowadays, according to the most recent national census in 2016, only 39, 8% of the Irish population claim to know how to speak Irish, but only 4,2% speaks it on a daily basis. For Walsh (2011), not all those who claim to speak Irish have a high level of competence. Most are non-native speakers and do not use the language outside the educational or professional environment. Walsh argues that in essence the census is more like an opinion poll on the Irish language than an accurate figure of the speech community. This is confirmed by Luana's husband's family, who are Irish but do not know how to speak the language. According to Watson (2008), the Irish language is not necessary for communication for most people in Ireland. The main and foremost reason why it is supported and promoted is due to a sense of identity.

Although, the revival and imposition of the Irish language in the beginning of the twentieth century by nationalists served the purpose to fight hundreds of years of English colonisation and deprivation of the native Irish culture and language, today this imposition is dislocated and many times works like a punishment for those who want to be new Irish.

Therefore, through this language discussion, the story presents us with three language-nations. One is the Brazilian-Portuguese language nation that is Luana's native. In general, Luana shows identification with Brazil and the Portuguese language. She missed Brazilian food, weather, natural landscape and the comfort of her life, as she seems to have come from a middle to upper class family. She also uses Portuguese words to express important feelings, such as to wish herself luck in which she uses the word *sorte*, or *Santa Maria Mãe de Deus*, a prayer's introduction she uses when she is in need. Luana's husband

seemed to show identification with Brazil too in the two years he lived in the country, but he did not make the same effort as she did to learn the Portuguese language. When Luana returns to Brazil at the end of the story, her attitude towards the country is not the same as in the beginning. She feels a little dislocated, as if Brazil was not her home anymore. She acquires a hyphenated experience with her nationality. She is not completely Brazilian, nor is she completely Irish.

The second language-nation is the English-Ireland, represented by contemporary and urban Ireland. The third, is the Gaelic-Ireland, represented by rural, ancient, and Irish language Ireland. This division of Ireland reminds us of the same discourses discussed in the analysis of the "Visit to Newgrange". Ireland is still divided between these two views of the country and in order to complete the task of becoming fully Irish, one has to master the characteristics of both nations. The English-Ireland in Luana's case is not so much like Eileen's revolutionary Ireland of the early twentieth century. It is a contemporary English-Ireland, a multicultural urban space, where Brazilians are coming to study and work, where she goes to the pub with her Brazilian friend and Irish boyfriend and listens to rock music. However, the Gaelic-Ireland is the one that resists transformation and is still stuck in the past. Gaelic Ireland is a construction, an imagined nation that survives in the twenty-first century. It is still the myth of rural, peasant, white, Catholic, Irish speaking society that not even the contemporary Irish natives can relate anymore, but that somehow still determines the laws established by society and the state. It is the imagined nation of the state, but the actual nation for maybe most living in it.

In the mediation of these discourses, the identity relation established in the character is mixed and partial. Sometimes she identifies with each one of these nations separately and sometimes with neither. Her cultural encounter with the Irish-Ireland is the one that shocks her the most. Her non-identification with it is not total either, because she deliberately chooses to approach the Irish Ireland and learn the language that not even the Irish care to study. There is one time the identification with the three language-nations is none, such as in the moment her husband's band goes on a tour, he wants to take a break in their relationship and Luana says "there are no words you could possibly say to Séan in English,

Irish or Portuguese” (p. 34). In another time, in her dreams before her final exam, “Portuguese, Irish and English should now be merging into one language” (p. 37).

The text is written in three languages: English, Irish and Portuguese. This causes two effects. One is the amalgamation of the form creating a linguistic fabric in which languages merge and create a new one. All these language-nations manifest themselves in the character’s life separately or together, producing a mixing up effect. The general result is a movement in which the character tries to settle for one identity but is pushed into change and to another language-nation. Finally, the reader is invited to participate in this process and to understand Luana’s hyphenated identity.

3.3 Under the Awning – African Irish self-assertion

Melatu Okorie’s “Under the Awning” is part of *This Hostel Life*, her first book, published in 2018 by Skein Press, a recently formed publisher that offers a platform for writers from ethnic minorities living in Ireland. The book has three short stories and a final essay by Liam Thornton (UCD School of Law) explaining the Irish legal position in relation to asylum seekers and direct provision.

The book opens with a note from Okorie writing about the living conditions in the hostel she was staying in, one that is acknowledged as the best maintained in Ireland. She says the rules were Machiavellian.

You never know what you’re going to wake up to every morning. It’s either that the management has given the order that the quantity of washing powder for each resident will be reduced to half of the white plastic cup or an essential provision has been withdrawn.

I, like other residents, have learnt to live under these almost tyrannical conditions. (...) Apart from the arbitrary changes to our daily routine, the security men also try to intimidate residents like myself who they know will complain about food options. I would usually find two of them standing directly behind me whenever I’m in the queue for food. It became obvious to me that it was a way of breaking my spirit more than anything else. There are tons of cameras in *****, but I would find these security men trailing after me, sometimes as I walk to my room. (...) I tried hiding away in my room and buying my own food just to avoid them, but with a child and €28,70 as weekly money, I could not sustain that (Okorie, 2018, p. viii and ix).

After narrating her living in the hostel, Okorie introduces her writing. She claims the book was written upon her personal experiences: her life in Nigeria, her upbringing and moving to Ireland. This scenario influenced Okorie to write the

opening story of the book “This hostel life”. Told from the perspective of a Congolese woman, the story narrates the dispute over provisions in the daily routine of the hostel. For this story, Okorie also created the protagonist’s own language with a mixture of Nigerian Pidgin English, American slangs and Irish accent. This idea originated in her observation of the many nationalities that struggled to communicate in English in the asylum. The “Egg Broke”, the final story in the book, was inspired in her longing for home and a tale her mother used to tell as a child in Nigeria. It is about a woman whose twin kids are killed by a traditional superstitious practice in a small Nigerian village.

“Under The Awning” is the story chosen for analysis. It is set outside the system. It is about an African immigrant girl who is taking a creative writing course. In this story, Okorie says she aimed to discuss the everyday racism black immigrants living in Ireland are exposed to. In an interview to *The Irish Times*, the author explained this story was the easiest to write because it was inspired in the shared experiences of many migrants she knows.

Finally, Dr. Liam Thornton closes the book by arguing in his article “Ireland: Asylum Seekers and Refugees” that far from being the “land of one hundred thousand welcomes”, Irish society condemns and segregates difference, as Okorie’s fiction highlights.

For renowned Irish writers such as Roddy Doyle, Okorie’s work is important because she has much to say and does in a beautifully crafty language. For Lia Mills, her stories are devastating and take readers to places they might not want to go and to unexplored worlds in Irish writing (Skein Press, 2019). Flynn (2018) evaluates the book as crucial because it addresses Irish society from the perspective of a black refugee woman and shows how “hateful and exclusionary” this society can be. It also claims that people like Okorie are silenced and ignored, but with these books they must be listened.

Irish society has still not reckoned with how it has treated its most vulnerable in the past; the legacy of church child abuse, mother and baby homes, symphysiotomy⁵⁸, the persecution of the Traveller community, the neglect of the elderly, the homeless, the working classes – the majority of this continues to be ignored. When it reappears, we hold it at arm’s length, phrasing it in facts and figures, instead of people, lives and voices. This Hostel Life makes clear the

⁵⁸ Symphysiotomy is a surgical procedure in which the [cartilage](#) of the [pubic symphysis](#) is divided to widen the [pelvis](#) allowing [childbirth](#). It is also known as pelviotomy (Wikipedia).

radical power of letting the subject control the narrative (Flynn, 2018, n.p.).

“Under the Awning” is a story within a story. One is about a girl who is taking a creative writing course and is due to present a story she wrote. The other is the story of the character in the piece she wrote. The narrator of the main story feels hesitant and uncomfortable with reading out her piece to the class. Her story is about an African immigrant girl adapting to the new country after having recently moved to Ireland because of the family re-unification that had been granted to her mother. It is narrated in the second person. We follow the girl’s return from school. She is waiting for the bus under the awning to escape the rain and describes her attempt to mimic every attitude locals have so she hopes she will be more like them. She expresses her concern not to be spotted and stand out, although she knows she is different. She contrasts her attitude towards rain that differed from the ones the Irish have. She remembers her life in Africa and calls it home. She says that “back home, rainfall meant other things to you rather than discomfort” (p. 27). She describes how street vendors would still be on the streets selling their products under the rain, how people would be speaking the variety of languages there are in her country such as English, Igbo⁵⁹, Hausa⁶⁰ and Yoruba⁶¹; how it would bring refreshment and water to the flat she lived with her aunt, uncle and three cousins.

The character explicitly describes how racism happens in her daily life. She takes the bus and gets off in the stop where little children shouted “blackie” at her. The neighbours’ kids run inside when her family is outside. Her mother discusses with her aunt that the same people who take pride in being a relative of the American black president, Barak Obama⁶², are the very same who do not

⁵⁹ Igbo is a language spoken in Nigeria by about 20-25 million people, igbo, especially in the southeastern region, formerly known as Biafra and parts of south-southeastern Nigeria (Wikipedia).

⁶⁰ Spoken as a first language by some 44 million people, and as a second language by another 20 million. It is the ancestral language of the Hausa people, one of the largest ethnic groups in Central Africa, mostly spoken throughout southern Niger and northern Nigeria (Wikipedia).

⁶¹ Yoruba is a language spoken in [West Africa](#). The number of speakers approaches 80 million. It is spoken principally in [Nigeria](#), [Benin](#), Sierra Leone and Liberia.

⁶² Some of Barak Obama’s ancestors were the Irish family Kearney who fled the famine in the 1850s.

want a black girl to be the Rose of Tralee⁶³. They also discuss it is the same country where black kids are not accepted as Irish and do not hold the same passport as the Irish children. Then, her aunt says that in her daughter's school there was an activity in which all children with non-national parents were labelled and had the countries of origin of their parents put up over their names as if they were not Irish. When she goes to college, the girls in class hold their bags and check their wallets whenever she is close. She also mentions how she hurries with her shopping because she knows security men are following her or how she greets a man on the bus and he offers 100 euros if she sleeps with him or how she gets weird looks at the cinema.

The issue of integration is also addressed by the characters in the story. Her aunt works for a charity and feels integrated but whenever the Irish are together they ignore her. She receives the visit of an Irish friend from the charity, Dermot, who organised a football competition for integration in which the Irish competed against the immigrants' team. The narrator's mother says that if Irish people really wanted to integrate, they already have enough opportunities through churches, schools, shops and playgrounds. Her aunt once said: "The people in the Western world liked Africans the way you enjoyed animals in a zoo; you could visit them, feed them, play with them, but they must not be allowed outside their environment".

Another aspect covered in the story is how Africa and Europe are represented. The girl remembers how she thought people in Europe would be before she came to live in Ireland. She had imaged them as the friendly pen-pal friends she used to have. She thought she would live in a big house and have a big car. When she came to Ireland she realized she would not and that her mother, who used to be manager at a telecommunication company back in her country, now stacked shelves at the supermarket. Africa, on the other hand, was represented in the news as a backward continent. Because of this negative representation, her little sister born in Ireland did not want to visit it because

⁶³ Rose of Tralee is a traditional cultural festival celebrated annually in Tralee, Ireland. Every year a young woman is crowned the most representative of the traditional ballad with the same name. The contest is similar to a miss pageant, but there is a more traditional element added to it. The woman who wins represents the national female beauty as well as the country. In 2018, the first ever Irish-African Rose of Tralee, Kirsten Maté Maher, won the edition.

“Africans were poor and African children shown on the television had no shoes” (p. 32).

The girl wishes she could tell Dermot everything she went through but ended up silencing herself. The story finishes with her buying a journal to write what she feels.

When the narrator’s reading of the story is over, she receives criticism from her peers. They did not like the fact that she wrote it in the second person. To that, the narrator responded that she did not want to personalize it by using the first person. They also said her story was “all bleak and negative” and that she should have added a bit of “light and shade to it” (p.37). They thought the character was paranoid and that her story lacked a narrative thread. The comment irritated the narrator who asked herself: “does every story have to have the traditional plot trajectory?” (p. 38). After the class, she pondered over the story and made some changes. The parts in which she had mentioned racist attitudes towards the character, she wrote excuses to the acts.

“Your classmates who asked their friends to mind their bags were actually not doing anything wrong; the bus driver who dropped you two stops away from your bus stop could have done so be due to road works; the man in the supermarket who asked your mother for a BJ is just sick; and the children who called out ‘Blackie’ at you whenever they saw you passing could just be what they were, children (Okorie, 2018, p. 40)”

After her corrections, she sent the text again to her teacher and classmates. Some of them changed their minds and liked the second person narration. Others still insisted on the lack of narrative thread and suggested it to be rewritten around one major event and in chronological order. One student didn’t even reply.

The identity relation is triggered in the story by the African-born character’s new life in Ireland. The writing itself occurs as a process of identity mediation. By creating and narrating the story of the African character, the narrator of the story tries to elaborate and mediate the discourses and experiences about the life of an African refugee in Ireland.

The refugee status is not explicitly revealed in the story. However, the character gives us a subtle hint when saying that she went to Ireland when her mother was granted the right to a family reunification. According to the Family

Reunification - International Protection Act⁶⁴ (2015), only refugees, outside EEU members, are eligible to family reunification. Therefore, the character most likely is the daughter of a refugee mother in the story within the story. As for the narrator of the main story, her origins are unknown. She mentions she did not want to narrate the story in the first person to make it personal. By this comment, it is possible to infer she might probably be an African migrant or refugee with a similar story of her character.

Therefore, Melatu Okorie's short story is written against the context of adaptation and integration of African immigrants and refugees in the twenty-first century Ireland. Although statistics are confusing and unclear in relation to the exact number of people of African descent living in Ireland, 2016 census showed that an estimate of over 40,000 people of African background live in Ireland. In the census, there are three categories to classify the group: 1) non-nationals living in Ireland; 2) persons with dual-nationalities; 3) persons with African background born in Ireland. The two last categories sometimes overlap, as persons with dual nationality can or cannot be born in Ireland. What can be stated, though, is that there are surely over ten thousand non-national African individuals living in Ireland, being most of them from Nigeria (6084 persons), South Africa (3208 persons) and Congo (1276 persons). Furthermore, the census states that there are 22,331 people of African origin born in Ireland and 10,100 Africans with dual nationalities. It is not certain that the two later groups do not overlap the other, but considering they don't, there are about forty thousand African or people of African descent in Ireland. This represents around 1% of the Irish population, which in the most recent count numbers 4,860 million⁶⁵.

The origin of the African presence in contemporary Ireland is related to the Celtic Tiger immigration boom. Prior to that, as Fanning (2002) points out, there were few black immigrants in the 1980s and early 1990s. To White (2012), documents and newspaper entries reveal that there was a small community of

64

In: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/IPA%20FRU%20process%20information%20notice.pdf/Files/IPA%20FRU%20process%20information%20notice.pdf>

⁶⁵ These statistics were taken from various reports published in the official websites of the Irish Refugee Council and the Central Statistics Office found in the link in the bibliographical references.

African people in Dublin in the eighteenth century of around three thousand people maximum. Most of these were enslaved or free servants. In spite of this presence, there aren't many records of a clear continuity of this community accounting as a significant immigrant community until the new recent wave.

According to Crowley, Gilmartin & Kitchin (2008), contemporary African immigration to Ireland is implicitly associated with asylum seeking and the refugee status. Most immigrants with working visas and permits come predominantly from countries with a white population and some shared cultural values with Ireland such as Catholicism. In addition, most white immigrants come from European Union or countries with a historical affiliation with Ireland, such as the U.S. and the U.K. This favoured public discourses to associate black people with asylum seekers and asylum seekers with immigration. The government also had its take on this reinforcement with its reluctance to distinguish the two categories. In spite of this association, "between 1995 and 2000, asylum seekers constituted less than 10 % of all immigrants who entered Ireland" (Loyal, 2008, p.76).

According to the 1996 Refugee Act⁶⁶, a refugee is "a person who, owing a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of particular social group and political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or unwilling (...) to return to it". The person who applies for the refugee status and waits until it is granted is called asylum seeker. Once the refugee status is granted, refugees have similar social and economic rights to Irish citizens (Fraser & Harvey, 2003).

In this way, asylum seekers – implicitly understood as black, became increasingly problematised. The growing numbers of asylum seekers was portrayed as a crisis. In the early 1990s, many Irish people were unfamiliar with the concept of asylum seeking. Some had an idea of a refugee as a desperate and hungry mass of people (Fraser & Harvey, *op.cit.*). The media created a panic that Ireland was being invaded and swamped by black people. There was also public concern with the formation of ghettos which were associated with danger and transgression (Fanning, 2002). Likewise, politicians reaffirmed the negative

⁶⁶ In: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1996/act/17/enacted/en/print#sec2>

view of asylum seekers as illegal immigrants, abuser of Irish citizenship legislation and exploiters of the Irish welfare system (Crowley, Gilmartin & Kitchin, 2008).

As a response to these claims, the government introduced a range of measures, including the immigration Bill of 1999, and the amendment of the Refugee Act in 2000, which together served to make it more difficult to successfully claim asylum in Ireland and to increase deportation rates. In April 2000, the government introduced the direct provision system. It was first seen as a temporary measure in which applicants would remain until their refugee status was conferred or denied for a short time while their case was analysed. However, after almost twenty years, the system is still functioning. In Direct Provision, asylum seekers are placed in specific living places, like hostels, on a full-board basis. These centres are scattered in the countryside and somewhat isolated away from towns. Asylum Seekers receive a weekly allowance of 38.80 Euros per adult and 29.80 Euros per children, though they are not allowed to work or access third level education for free.

According to Ruiz (2018), Direct Provision can be seen through Giorgio Agamben's notion of camp, "in which the sovereign power (the Irish state) locates certain people (asylum seekers) in a permanent state of exception (p. 264). "The Irish government's measures regarding asylum seekers promote an attitude of surveillance towards them, not only inside their accommodation centres, but also out of them" (p. 275). The system with its segregation of people in specific locations, its prohibition on work, its limited income and imposed poverty, physical and metaphorical, demarcates "asylum seekers as outsiders who do not belong in the country" (p. 276).

In spite of asylum seekers' lack of sovereign decision-making power, Ruiz (2018) argues that political agency comes from marginal resistance. Asylum seekers have been organised in grass-root groups such as the Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI) that promotes visibility and fights against the end of Direct Provision. Protests and hunger strikes have also taken place in the centres in 2014 and 2015. Another way in which asylum seekers have been denouncing their conditions is through various manifestations of politically engaged art. One of such examples is Melatu Okorie's literature. According to

Ruiz, reading texts in which asylum seekers and refugees speak for themselves instead of being spoken for generates political resistance in the very writing of their stories. The only literary texts up to now by writers who are or have been in Direct Provision were published in small and immigrant-focused media. In interviews conducted by Ruiz, both Melatu Okorie and Ifedinma Dimbo “contend that no being Irish born has been detrimental to the publication of their writing” (p. 265).

In this process of mediation through writing, the second-person narration generates an effect, in the creative writing classroom and the reader accompanying the story, of a process of identification. Reporting the experiences of the character in the second person, as “the little children always shouted blackie at you” or “how you hurried with your shopping because the security men followed you around”, allow the listener or reader to place themselves in the character’s shoes and feel as if they were she. The form of political resistance the texts attempt to do through writing, as suggested by Ruiz, is one of identification.

Therefore, with what experiences does the narrator intend to generate identification? Firstly, with the racism faced by the character, who is discriminated against by her skin colour, when she hears explicitly pejorative comments about her, in public spaces such as shops, buses and movies. It is demarcated not only that she does not belong, but that her presence is unwanted. Moreover, there is a presumption of mistrust because she is black, as if the discursive construction of racism that precedes her said that being African is something associated with bad things like being a thief. Finally, one of the most specific forms of racism the character suffers from is the assumption that for being a black woman she is a prostitute, which occurs when the man offers her 100 Euros for sexual intercourse.

According to Fanning (2002), racism in Ireland is characterised by some of the following features. The first is the idea of xenophobia, as a natural response in the presumption of a relatively homogeneous Irish society to the new and stranger. Fanning describes a certain reluctance towards the use of the racism, whereas xenophobia is preferred in popular debate. In addition, there is a conception inherited from the colonial period in which races are hierarchically

divided in ways that certain biological and cultural characteristics are better than others. The idea of an Irish race, to the author, was also a product of this colonial racism and it was invented upon claiming the superiority of anything Irish above all else. Given that, Irish racism finds a way to justify itself. The Irish are not responsible for it, but their geographical isolation and their colonial experience with England are to blame. To White (2012), this also becomes anachronistic in a period of globalization and modernity.

Against the argument of xenophobia, Fanning explains that attitudes towards black people in Ireland do not derive from real encounters with this group, but from a “broader history and culture of racism” (p. 23). The kind of racist attacks and offenses registered towards the new immigrants of the twenty-first century prove that an appropriation of previous racist discourses occurred.

The names black people were called, the ways in which they were stereotyped, the ways in which they were blamed for the problems experienced by indigenous disempowered people all drew upon a bank of ‘knowledge’ of black people that preceded their presence (Fanning, p, 25).

In a similar fashion, the Nobel Prize winner, Toni Morrison (2017), in her book *The Origins of Others*, discusses racism through the perspective of xenophobia. For her, racism is only possible and only justified by creating a separation between us and the other. Within us lies belonging, familiarity and humanisation. In others, there is difference, exclusion, and dehumanisation. Once the other is separated from us, they are narrated as inferior and in need of control and assistance. Therefore, racism, as a set of assumptions about the other, precedes race.

The second way in which the narrator wants to generate identification is through the theme of integration. The second person narration itself is an attempt to integrate the audience with the character. In addition, the audience seeks integration into the story and feels the attempt for integration along with the character.

You went with your mother and your nine-year-old sister to watch your eleven-year-old brother play on the migrants’ team. There were little groups formed around the pitch; the black group, two white couples that spoke to each other in a foreign language and a large Irish group. Each group mostly ignored the other. When he came around later, he wanted to know if you thought the event was successful, but you dodged the question. You are yet to feel comfortable telling someone something was grand when you didn’t think it was (p.35).

In this excerpt, the character goes to the integration event held by Dermot and the audience feels along with the character the experience of the brother playing in the team of immigrants, the separation between the Irish and the black, the discomfort of having to explain that integration does not was working, that both groups were in the same environment but separate.

A similar kind of experience is described by Charlotte Mclvor (2016) when analysing the festival Africa Day, the largest African Irish event. Africa Day is organized by Irish Aid and takes place in several cities in Ireland such as Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford, and Limerick, and attracts thousands of people every year. Mclvor describes conflicting interests in the organization of the festival. On the one hand, Irish Aid, the organizer, aims to collect funds for Africa, and on the other, African communities aim to promote visibility and integrate. The problem with Irish Aid's interest, according to Mclvor, is that it perpetuates the continuous image of a dependent and in crisis Africa, in constant need for help. It is an assistential and paternalising discourse. Also, it places emphasis on an Africa that is outside Ireland and is far from daily reality, which damages the interest of integration and participation that the actual immigrant community has. Finally, Irish Aid prohibits the use of language that makes reference to racism, asylum seeking or de 2004 Referendum. Mclvor evaluates that despite "the feeling that groups were on display for the benefit of white attendees" and the fetishism of African traditional culture that serve as an attraction for photographs but remains other to the Irish, the festival occupies public space and should not be "discounted" (p. 221, 227).

After attempting to create identification through her writing, the narrator notices at the end of her reading that her peers were not so moved by her story. Instead of identifying with the character, they disapproved the use of the second person narration and, might as well, the attempt for identification. Contrary to feeling like the character, they refused the invitation and somehow created a block from it. The way she constructed her narrative was also criticised under the allegation of lacking a narrative thread. This criticism reveals that there is something her peer do not understand. Her writing does not have a lack narrative thread without a purpose. It does so because it is as broken as the life of the

character narrated in the story, a refugee, whom as mentioned previously, leaves their homeland, comes to a foreign country separated from their families, encounter a legal system that criminalises them for not being native and erases their agency over their lives. The life of a refugee has gaps between the moments they can be fully human and the moments they are not. The lack of narrative thread exemplifies it.

The hardship and solitude of being a refugee is revealed in the writing, in the very process of trying to express what their experience is. The narrator not only received criticism for her narrative choice, but also for her character being “bleak” and “paranoid”. Her attempt to create identification through her writing fails. In addition, all the racism she portrayed moved one or two peers, but not all of them. At the end of the story, the reader is invited to join the narrator and the character in believing that it seems almost impossible to cross the bridge that separates difference, for someone who is not a refugee, to understand what it feels like to be one. The narrator even mentions a previous moment when “you wanted to tell him all these things but you didn’t. You cried for a long time on your bed after he left, confused at how alone you felt” (p.36-7). The character gives up telling people how she feels because they will not understand it and her peers reaction confirm it. The story ends with the character buying a journal, as a sign of loneliness, that she is the only one who can write, read and understand her own story.

Lastly, the identity relation established in the story is one in which the process of writing is the identity relation itself. It tries to mediate social discourses and approach unidentified groups and stories – the African and the Irish. The process looks for a centre of fixity in identification, but it fails to find it. Although the narrator and the character are legal citizens living in Ireland, although some of their family members are born in Ireland, they remain unidentified in the country as a group, separate, and their identities are expelled to the margins of society.

3. 4 Birds of June – the wheel of solidarity

“Birds of June” is a story published in *Granta – the Magazine of New Writing – New Irish* (2016) Writing by John Connell, a young writer who has

published only two books, a novel and memoir, and has little criticism on them. Kilraine (2018) has noted that he brings back a bygone rural Ireland to the national experience of twenty-first century. He approaches farm life from the Celtic Tiger Perspective. According to the critic, the writer addresses traditional themes such as the connection with the land, Celtic myths, and nature's cycles. His most recent publication, *The Cow Book* (2018), is set in a timeless landscape. His first novel, *The Ghost Estate* (2015), according to the book's preface, is about rural Ireland and countryside villages being swept up by the Celtic Tiger.

In "Bird of June", the narrative is told from the standpoint of Frances Riordan, a nurse at a geriatric hospital in Mount Bridget at the far end of an unknown town close to Mullingar, Westmeath. Frances visits the intern patients every day. The first one, Mrs. Mulcahy, asks her about new casualties and Francis told her the night before there was a tinker boy who came in with a bad chest but the doctor sent him home. Sister Loyola, the matron of the hospital, complains that there aren't enough ambulances and staff to cover the night shift and that she hoped the Health Board saw to it. On the following day, when Frances was driving to the hospital, she observes the town was "littered with tricolours in ready excitement for the next World Cup match" (p. 110). When she gets to the hospital and goes over the day's patients, she remembers something the matron had said: "they were the forgotten people, (...). Forgotten people yes, but they refused to forget themselves" (p.113). On the eve of the Cup's match, the casualty alarmed flashed. It was the tinker family from the night before. The boy, John Paul, has pneumonia. The doctor recommended he stayed in the night but there were not casualty beds available. Frances, then, suggested the boy stayed in the geriatric hospital. The boy's mother and Frances went to the geriatric sector to make the admittance procedure. Maeve, the attendant, was shocked when she learned the boy was a traveller.

She called Frances to one side. 'You'll bring no tinkers here'.
 'What?'
 'I said you'll bring no tinkers here'.
 'I will bring whoever I see fit', said Frances.

'I'll call the matron', retorted Maeve, 'I don't care what time it is, I'll call her and bring her up here to see this, this clot'.
 (...) 'I'll serve no tinker, I'll nor carry even water to them', insisted Maeve. (Connell, 2016, p.117).

Frances accommodated the boy and his family in a room and medicated him. The Stokes invited her for a prayer, which she joined. They prayed in Shelta, the Irish language spoken by travellers. Frances thought to herself: "Tinker of not, he was a child in need" (p.119). During the night, she spent taking care of the boy and waiting for his recovery, Frances realized she was not so different from the traveller mother. "Would she herself not spend the night awake by her sick child's bed? Would she not pray furious prayers to see them through safely?" (p. 121). Mrs. Stokes thanked Frances. "I don't know what we would have done without you this evening. It was God's hand. I am a mother too', Frances said simply." (p. 121). As soon as they saw the boy's improvement, the Stokes decided to leave in the morning. Frances insisted they should stay. Mrs. Stokes refused.

The morning will come and there will be too many questions. We don't want to make trouble'.
 'But it is no trouble, no trouble at all. The matron is a good woman, a good sister, she won't say anything'.
 'Maybe she won't but there are other who wouldn't like us here, replied Mrs Stokes" (Connell, 2016, p. 122)

As Frances watches them leave and says goodbye to them, a strong sun shines on the horizon and illuminates the hill, the city and the railway line. In the streets: "the tricolours and bunting flapped lazily in the breeze, blowing for all they were worth, for everything and nothing" (p.123).

The identity relation in the story is triggered by the setting and the traveller boy. The story takes place on the eve of 1992 World Cup match in a countryside town around Westmeath in a geriatric hospital at the fringes of the town. A World Cup match is a moment to celebrate one's nationality, to get together in the community and experience and share a collective national experience. Nonetheless, this celebratory moment occurs in opposition to the ones who are in the geriatric hospital. There is a physical separation between the town and the hospital. The town is the centre, where people are celebrating their Irish nationality with flags preparing for the match. The hospital is the place of the "forgotten people", Frances reminds us (p. 113). In the hospital, it is not

World Cup time. Patients are not celebrating their Irishness. On the contrary, the matron complains about the hospital's lack of resources such as casualty ambulances, beds and night shift staff. Also, patients are not in festive moods, they are fighting for their lives and struggling to live.

Therefore, it is in this context of opposition between the two spaces – the town and the hospital, and the two moments, the match and the struggle to live, that the traveller boy is admitted in the hospital. Since the very beginning, it is made clear that his family and he do not belong in there. Difference is marked and they are the odd ones out. Therefore, as soon as difference is established, the identity relation, or the process of identification and non-identification is started.

The hospital attendant, Maeve, feels revolted by having a traveller boy admitted to the hospital. It is interesting to point out that the hospital is public and should supposedly be for the service of anybody in the community. The issue of belonging is brought to question. According to Maeve's reaction, they are not as Irish as the others and should not be part and share the same space. Maeve also feels diminished by the possibility of serving the boy and his family which expresses a hierarchy between the settled Irish and the travellers, being the former superior to the latter. Finally, Maeve refers to the boy as a clot, as if the travellers were a stain, a defecation of society. Maeve is the spokesperson for some of the Irish people who do not identify with travellers and do not see themselves as part of the same community. The travellers in the story, on the other hand, also do not identify with the settled Irish. If not, they recognize the non-identification of the others towards them and validate this difference, mostly because they are afraid of retaliation. Therefore, when the Stokes decide to leave the hospital at dawn, they want to avoid problems and bad talking about them. They are aware they do not belong.

The issues raised by Maeve's attitudes towards travellers in the story are central to social and historical debate around travellers. The first important aspect of this debate is whether travellers are Irish or not, whether they belong in the Irish society, whether they are part. In order to discuss these issues, discourses turn to the possible explanations for the origins of the Irish travellers. According to traveller researchers and scholars, the most common

and widespread discourse is that travellers were once settled Irish people who lost their lands and became vagrants after the Irish famine (Hayes, 2006; McDonagh, 2000; Helleiner, 2000). Although this has been believed for a long time, it is no longer acceptable and documents have proved it is a mistaken assumption. Firstly, McDonagh (2000) argues that the idea that travellers were once a settled people implicates in the attribution to resettle them and in concepts such as “rehabilitation and re-assimilation” (p.22). McDonagh also argues against the idea that travellers “came to exist as a result of some disaster in Irish history” stigmatises them, as a disease, as a right people that went wrong, as the clot that Maeve compares them to (p. 23). As consequence, this discourse of origin of a settled people before the famine creates the notion that travellers were once part of the centre of society but went sideways, were forced to the margins but could corrected and made to return to the centre. This is a problem in itself because it denies the possibility of multiple centres where traveller would not be the malfunctioning of the settled society, but the well functioning of their own.

According to documents studied by the scholars, traveller origins date back to long before the Irish famine. McDonagh states that the Poor Law Commission 1834 reports around three million people on the road. Other laws, statutes and surveys from the sixteenth century prove that travellers already existed. McDonagh points to an English law passed by Queen Elizabeth I in 1562 in which it was illegal to be an Egyptian, term which later designated the gypsies, under the penalty of death in England and deportation in Ireland.

Those in the company or fellowship of vagabonds, commonly called or calling themselves Egyptians, and also counterfeiting, transforming, or disguising themselves as such by their apparel, speech, or other behaviour, shall do so under the pain of death.
(p.23)

McDonagh further explains that there is a note in the law that referred to a group of people who had similar attire, work practice and marriage pattern to the Egyptians. This group was described as Travellers. This signals there were travellers in England and Ireland in the sixteenth century. In addition, it brings to surface another important discussion: are travellers Irish or gypsies?

Gypsy is a collective name associated with more than one ethnic group such as Shinti⁶⁷, Rom⁶⁸, Calderash⁶⁹ (McDonagh, 2000). Although it is largely accepted they migrated to Europe from India, Helleiner (2000) shows there are distinct theories on when they first arrived in Europe presented in the first issue of the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society. One hypothesis is that gypsies entered Europe in 1417 coming straight from India; another is that they have been in Europe since 430 A.D. after leaving Persia; finally that they have been in Europe for two thousand years as metal workers.

Therefore, Helleiner believes there are three possibilities for the origins of Irish and Scottish travellers: 1) that they were gypsies; 2) that they are an indigenous nomadic group; 3) that they were the mixture of indigenous nomads and gypsies. McDonagh (2000) also believes that gypsies may have intermarried with Irish travellers.

Nonetheless, both McDonagh and Helleiner, explain that the linguistic origin refutes the possibility that travellers were gypsies. The traveller language, known as Shelta, Gammon, Cant, Mincertoiree, is of Celtic origin and is not similar to Romany, the language of the gypsies. It is argued that the closest cousin language to the travellers' is old Irish and that contemporary vocabulary evolved from modern Gaelic. Some Celticists say Shelta is a language of Irish origin and prior to the eleventh century. "Though now confined to tinkers, its knowledge was once possessed by Irish poets and scholars who, probably, were its original framers" (Helleiner, 2000, p.38).

The word tinker, as explained by Hayes (2006), although it has a pejorative meaning today, describes the practice of tinsmithing, which was an economic craft for nomadic people. An eventual connection with Gaelic culture relates to the Irish word for tinker which is *tinceard*, metal craftsman.

The question of origin, whether nowadays travellers are descendants of Irish settled people and the Irish Gaelic of old times, or whether they come from

⁶⁷ The Sinti are a [Romani people](#) of [Central Europe](#) (Wikipedia).

⁶⁸ The Romani colloquially known as [Gypsies](#), Roma, and Rom, are an [Indo-Aryan](#) ethnic group, traditionally [itinerant](#), living mostly [in Europe](#) and the Americas and originating from the northern [Indian subcontinent](#), from the [Rajasthan](#), [Haryana](#), and [Punjab](#) regions of modern-day [India](#) (Wikipedia).

⁶⁹ The Kalderash are a subgroup of the Romani people found in Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, Ukraine and Russia (Wikipedia).

a different ethnic group, the gypsies, is relevant to the extent of belonging and identification. If travellers are Irish, then it should be easier for them to be accepted in society, but if they aren't, should they be banned? Who are they then, foreigners? Immigrants? If travellers are as Irish as the settled Irish, they would challenge the boundaries of Irish nationality.

This is the argument defended by Hayes (2006) in the chapter of his book called *An Irish 'Other*. He argues that upon travellers are cast prejudices and misconceptions that the Irish carried upon themselves during the colonial period. Travellers are associated with poverty, exclusion, disorder, laziness, dishonesty, and backwardness, all negative stereotypes the English had for the Irish as a whole. To Hayes, the perception the settled community has in relation to travellers is a form of projection, a "mirror-image of the phenomenon that was once colonial-era anti-Irish "Othering"" (n.p.). This assumption confirms Maeve's use of the word "clot", as a stain and malfunction of the Irish own identity, something that used to be despised, a colonial discourse that was interiorised. For Hayes, the self-definition of Irishness that followed independence was unitary, monolithic, and homogenous "leaving as outsider an entire list of Irish people, such as: "illegitimate children, deserted wives, single parents, homeless, mentally ill people and drug addicts" (n.p.). This is confirmed in the story by the way the travellers are presented in a geriatric hospital, together with other ill people, elderly, the "forgotten people that refuse to be forgotten", as Frances say (p. 113).

In the story, there is also someone like Frances, who does not discriminate nor necessarily identifies with travellers. She is open to approaching the other and getting to know them. After spending some time with the traveller mother, Mrs Stokes, Frances identifies with her through motherhood. She thinks she would be as desperate as her to save her child and would be praying furiously like her. Another point of identification is that Irish travellers are Catholic as other Irish. Frances recognised the Lord's prayer when the travellers were praying in their language. The result is that by being in contact with a people that is not close to her, Frances realises they are not so different. Moreover, the identification through motherhood, through the feminine, as discussed in previous stories, seems to be a tendency in the

contemporary short story. The identification between women overcome differences and generates a more diverse and inclusive social interaction. Also, the identification through motherhood lived by the characters resonates with a retelling of mother Ireland, renegotiating its boundaries through other mothers, expanding and accepting other children, so traveller and Irish would accept each other.

A character like Frances would be part of a recent interest on travellers by settled people that came into being with multiculturalism in a globalised Ireland. Unlike the story, this interest does not have to do with motherhood and female identification, but with the increase in awareness of the traveller question raised and spread by new activist traveller groups such as the Pavee Point and the Irish Traveller Movement. On the one hand, there has been some significant legal developments such as the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) and the recognition of Irish traveller ethnicity. According to Hayes (2006), the Report was the first official document to accept the validity of traveller culture and its tenets, nomadism and their language included. This was an important step to discredit the idea that travellers are failed settled people and that they should be re-settled by the state. Aligned with that, the state has compromised to build more halting sites, although from the 2200 promised in the Housing Act of 1998, only 129 have been built (Hayes, 2006). The most recent step further was the recognition of Irish traveller ethnicity in 2017. Enda Kenny, the Irish prime minister at the time, offered an official apology on behalf of the State to the Travellers and recognised them as an ethnic minority who have been “an integral part of our society for over a millennium, with their own distinct identity - a people within our people” (O'Halloran & O'Regan, 2017). Mr Kenny restated that the group enjoys “all of the human rights and responsibilities afforded under the Constitution” (*op. cit.*). In spite of this important step, Kenny also admits there still is a great deal of marginalization and discrimination towards the community.

Finally, the effect of this identity relation is one of expanding movement. Although travellers are Irish people and have long been part of Irish culture, they cannot find fixity and belonging in this society. Therefore they move. It is

naturally part of the traveller identity to keep on moving and this is somehow a good metaphor for the conclusion of our study. Identity relations tend to identification, to fixity, to find a centre. However, tensions, differences, incompleteness end up pulling the wheel forward, dissipating the centre, moving away from fixity. As in a wagon wheel, identity relations take a turn within their own spiral, but they do not return to the same point as they were, and this way, they transform themselves. Although the travellers did not stay in the hospital or feel included in society in the story, the contact with the other Irish, like the one with Frances, transformed definitions and generated new possibilities of (non)identifications between the settled and travelling Irish.

4. Conclusion

Throughout my academic career, some ideas held on to my mind: how do we analyse identity in literature? How is Irish identity constructed from literature today? What is the relevance, after all, of national identity in a globalised and post-national era?

When this PhD research started in 2015, the return of nationalisms was not so evident as it is now. There were at the time residues of counter colonial nationalisms, like the Catalan and Scottish cases, but not explicitly the kind of imperial nationalism that retrocedes prior to the postcolonial and globalised era like the present day American and British nationalisms. In the context of today, 2019, the question of national identity is even more at stake and in dispute than before. Aiming to reply the first question that is how we analyse identity in literature, I approximated Stuart Hall and Bakhtin's theories in order to create a procedure for analysis. Throughout the years studying national identity, had I never really come across a methodological theory for the analysis of identity in literature, especially the national identity. Most times, theorists analyse identity in general terms, more likely discussing the aspects of it in relation to social approaches.

The first problem in analysing identity is defining what it is. Most analysts do not define what identity is for them or do not define the term with which they are going to perform their analysis in the literary text. What I thought throughout the process is that without defining the term, without a clear definition for identity, any approach to it comes as vague and overgeneralising.

Therefore, Stuart Hall (1996), one of the main thinkers of the subject, although seen by many as outdated, offered me a clear definition for what identity is: an articulation between subjects and discourses given in the form of (non) identifications, as discussed in the introduction.

As a result, analysing identity has to be a project of studying processes of identification and non-identification, whether subjects position themselves as identified or not identified with a web of correlated discourses in a synchronic and diachronic perspective.

One important aspect of understanding identification is that it does not always occur in the positive form. Identity is many times understood or seen from the perspective of positive identifications, that is, the subject positions him or herself in resemblance to certain discourses, agreeing with, mirroring, a set of given discourses. However, identification comes about in the negative form as well, as a subject position of denial, of disagreement, of departure from discourses. Therefore, we tend to think of identity always as a process of identification, but never as a process of non-identification. Hall mentions the possibility of non-identifications in his theory, but he does not explore it further. We aimed to give a modest contribution in our analysis of how non-identifications happen.

Hence, because of this negative aspect of identification, we have decided to refer to identity as an identity relation. The term identity is most times understood in its positive form, that is, when there is a process of identification of a subject with a discourse. This term does not usually comprehend the negative identification that is when the subject does not identify with discourses. In other words, when we ask someone's identity, we are usually thinking about what they identify with, but not what they don't. Ergo, it seems more appropriate to call the processes of identification and non-identification an identity relation.

The second problem of analysing identity is when our object of analysis is literature. How do we define the subject in literature? Who is the subject: the writer? The narrator? The lyrical voice? The characters in the story? Or the reader? There are many possible people and voices involved, but the analyst can have very little access to them.

Thus, the only people the identity critic can be sure to have access to are the people within the literary text, that is, the narrator and the characters in the text analysed. Their position in the text, how they are written about, and the choices they make reveal what they identify with or not.

Nevertheless, identity analysis in the literary text is not about the people in the text, but also about the text itself, as a living organism that takes an attitude, that has a positioning among other texts.

This is when Bakhtin's theory assists us. His philosophy of language is devoted to the study of speech. It is about seeing language as a conversation, as a dialogue, on principle, not as a result.

Bakhtin (2003), then, introduces us to the concepts of utterance and dialogism. Utterance is a linguistic expression with a beginning and an end that can take the form of a literary text, such as a novel, a poem, a play, a short story, or etc. Every utterance takes part in a dialogic chain; it responds to the previous discourses and projects future ones. It gives the literary text a very human-like characteristic that is attitude.

By approximating Hall and Bakhtin, we solved the problem of not being able to study identity without having access to subject positions. In the analysis of identity in the literary text, we still do not have access to subjects, to how they do or do not identify with discourses, but we can sure know the literary text's positions towards discourses, how it stands in identification or non-identification with discourses.

Therefore, as a result of this approximation, when we analyse identity in literature, we analyse the identification and non-identification processes that the literary text, and the characters in it, have among discourses.

After solving the problem of defining identity and how to analyse identity in the literary text, there was still one problem left. Can we analyse identity in any text? Are all texts suitable for the identity analysis? In the case of our research object, can we analyse national identity in any text? How do we know texts are discussing identity or are appropriate for identity analysis?

From this, we have created a notion that the literary text has to offer an element - related to any properties of the literary text, such as time, space, setting, characters, plot, motifs - that initiates, triggers, gives rise to the identity relation, to the processes of identification and non-identification. We have called this element trigger, which in the first part of the thesis was the goddess of sovereignty motif and, in the second part, the plot explicit discussion of national identity. The importance of the trigger is that it avoids enforcing into a text an identity analysis that is not in the text. The literary text has to offer something that sets off the identity debate. If the trigger is not present, the identity analysis tends to be generalised.

After having established our procedure for analysis, we approached the short story as the literary genre chosen for this endeavour. The intriguing resurgence of the genre in the twenty first century as pointed out by Barry (2013), Dhoker and Eggermont (2015) presented to us a fortunate opportunity. What is there in the genre that is causing its boom in the contemporary period? As Ingman puts it, the short story has had a privileged condition because it captures a great number of experiences in a world of unprecedented and accelerated changes in Ireland.

The second reason that raised our interest in the short story was its capacity to connect tradition and modernity. As the stories analysed have proved, the variety of themes and times reached was extensive. The stories analysed connected literary motifs and figures found in texts of the sixth century on, such as the goddess of sovereignty and the *bean sí* tradition, first mentioned in books like *An Lebor Gabála*. Indeed, the first part of the thesis was a journey through time, through hundreds of years in which Ireland has been discussing its definitions and been represented in the figure of the goddess of sovereignty.

Having settled what led us to begin our study and the grounds for it, let us consider our conclusions. The first part of the conclusions refer to our procedure of identity analysis in itself.

Identity relations, as we prefer to call identity, established in the stories are composed of multiple points and processes of identification and non-identification. It is usually correct to affirm that every position of identification implies in a non-identification within the discursive chain. Every point of identification identifies with one set of similar discourses and excludes other sets outside the field of identification.

This can be observed in almost all the stories analysed. In the “Stolen Child”, for example, the character Dana is identified with the goddess of sovereignty, Danu, by Padraic. However, she does not identify with the traditional features presented in the discourses of previous goddesses of sovereignty. After, when Dana marries Will, she identifies with the destiny of the goddess and marries “the king of the land”, who, in turn, represents the U.S. This exemplifies that the identity relation resulted from the story is a series of processes of (non)identifications between discourses and characters.

Secondly, identity relations are not necessarily binary, as it is many times believed in social studies. The story “How to learn Irish in 17 steps” is a good example of this. The character identifies and does not identify in a fluid process with three language-nations, rural and urban Ireland, and Brazil. The temporary identifications with one does not exclude the identification with the other.

Identity relations can also present hierarchical characteristics, as in the case of “The Mural Painter”. When Davey paints the woman on the mural, the women from the protestant community identify with her, in spite of the fact that the painting is identified with the imaginary of the Catholic community. This happens because at the hierarchy of identifications and non-identifications, the identification with gender was stronger than the protestant community’s non-identification with the Catholic. Therefore, there was a hierarchy of (non)identification positions. The women in the protestant community did not give up their religious identity affiliation, but in the identification act, the image of the woman weighed more favourably to identification than the protestant non-identification with Catholicism. In certain moments, one identification point is more relevant than others are.

Consequently, what we call identity, in general terms, is a simplistic view of a complex process of identification and non-identification positions that are multiple, many times, non-binary and hierarchical.

Concerning the identity relation with the Irish nation, we realised with “The Mural Painter” the persistence of identifications with models of colonial dispute that still establish the English x the Irish, Protestant x Catholics, Unionists x Republicans. This condition is particular to Northern Ireland but it is now at the centre of the Brexit debate, which represents one of the main political changes in the first half of the twenty-first century. Brexit hasn’t only happened until now and won’t happen in the short future if these identity questions in Northern Ireland are not settled in relation to the border. The identity relation established in this story shows us that the problem is beyond identifying with one or the other side, the colonial or nationalist discourses. Identifying with the whole dispute is the problem in itself.

Another persisting aspect in the discussion of Irish identity is that of Ireland represented as a woman that has been found more or less since the beginning

of written narratives in Ireland. This aspect of our analyses connected ancestry and modernity. The result shows us that identity relations in Ireland still identify the country as a woman, but this woman is completely different from the idealised, romantic and exalting discourses of the ancient goddesses and queens. Ireland, in the figure of the goddess of sovereignty, is today a nation identified with, in the texts analysed, social minorities. It is the Ireland of the black, the foreign, the exiles, the immigrants, the travellers. It is an Ireland identified and searching identification in itself and the others with solidarity among peoples and cultures.

These results do not mean that they correspond to reality or that they convey all the possible identity relations of contemporary Ireland. They configure a web of identity relations established in the analysed texts that are evoking and projecting responses from the ones who will read them.

This connects to another result of our analyses in relation to identity. At least in three texts, there was the use of the second person narration inviting the reader to participate in the identity relations established. So, in "Liverpool/Lampedusa", the use of the second person narration at the end of the story is meant to evoke identification and solidarity with the refugees. In "How to Learn Irish in 17 Steps", the second person identifies the reader with the process of trying to become a full citizen with all the proper rights and permissions a born citizen has in Ireland. Finally, in the "Under the Awning", the second person narrative attempts to identify the reader with the racism and the difficulty of integration an African migrant and a refugee experiences in Ireland. The result of this identification process is out of our assessment. Yet, the narrator in "Under the Awning" offers us a disappointing preview. The peers in her creative writing class are listening to the story at the same time we readers are reading it. The result is one of non-identification and failed solidarity.

On Ireland and women, the stories present us with identity relations strongly mediated by the presence of the feminine, not Ireland as a goddess, but real women, as agents of social transformation. In "The Mural Painter", the feminine identification seems to be more powerful than historical and community identification. The woman in the painting attracts the women from the Protestant community and Davey because she offers a feeling of inclusion and representation. In "Liverpool/Lampedusa", the same happens. When the

protagonist identifies with the *asiling*, it is in the condition of a mother holding a baby that resembles both his dead wife in the famine and the dying refugee. The result of this identification is one of inclusion and solidarity. In “57% Irish”, what makes Ray open his mind about immigration and citizenship is when he identifies with his girlfriend Stalin’s situation applying for citizenship being the mother of his child. In “Birds of June”, Francis allows the treatment of the traveller boy and identifies with the traveller mother, Mrs. Stokes, because she too is a mother. Consequently, solidarity, inclusion and the overcoming of differences happen through motherhood, not as an imagined abstract concept, but as a real shared experience between women that eventually led to the social transformation of the place. Finally, in “A Visit to Newgrange”, the role of the feminine and motherhood becomes clearer. Real women, with opposing views of Ireland, with differences in terms of belonging to the country, one being a tourist, the other a local, unite in a single moment of identification with themselves and the land, in a place considered the womb and tomb of Ireland, that builds a bridge over their differences and connects them.

A final significant conclusion we reached from the identity relations analysed is the strong presence of migration and movement. In all the stories, there is an aspect of identification with migration. Even in “The Mural Painter”, the image of the woman Davey paints that generates the processes of (non)identifications is described as a migrant from Eastern Europe. In the other stories, movement is pivotal. “Liverpool/Lampedusa” presents us with an Ireland, in the figure of the goddess of sovereignty and the *bean sí*, identified with migrants in the sea, in the process of migration, not knowing and not having where to settle. “The Stolen Child” reveals an Ireland identified with the possibility of (re)settlement abroad, indicating that movement aims at fixation, as two dynamic forces that complement each other. “A Visit to Newgrange” introduces us to the reverse movement. If the previous stories were about leaving the Irish territory, as an outflow, this story presents us for the first time with an influx, represented in the figure of the tourist’s view of Ireland. In the second part, all the stories were about an influx to Ireland, a tentative experience of migrant settlement, of becoming a full citizen in the country and having the same rights. From the identity relations presented in this part, we conclude that mechanisms

of non-identification are created either by the government or by discriminatory discourses in the Irish society. Ergo, in “57% Irish” and “How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps”, governmental measures, such as the nationality quiz and the Irish language proficiency test, create a barrier of non-identification between born citizens and migrants. In “Birds of June”, racial discriminations and movement in itself, as a primary defining characteristic of non-settled people, are the reasons why travellers are not identified as fully Irish. Finally, in “Under the Awning”, both governmental and racial discriminatory discourses generate non-identification and exclusion of African migrants and refugees in Ireland.

After analysing the identity relations in the story, we realise an attempt to refrain movement and impede the transformation of Irish identity. However, movement proves to be inevitable and in every encounter of identification and non-identification there is an undeniable transformation produced. This relates to what Pensky (2008) thinks based upon Habermas’s (1998) theory of solidarity. At the ends of solidarity, at the frontiers between what is included and excluded, a “force field” is generated that expands the limits of solidarity. In the terms of this thesis, even the processes of non-identification might generate future identifications because many times non-identifications are presenting the excluded and, by doing so, are including them in the discourses.

The conclusions of our analyses of identity relations in the stories provide us with conditions to think of the role of national identity in contemporaneity and, therefore, answer the last of the questions that motivated this research. The identity relations presented reveal a transformation of the Irish identity that comes from movement and the margins of society. As opposed to the strengthening of nationalism today, it seems that Irish identity is still working through and struggling with a globalised perspective, in which free flow of capital is desired but not the free movement of people. It holds residues of colonial and postcolonial nationalisms, and operates with mechanisms to refrain external transformation, but movement seems to be more powerful than confinement. Irish identity in the beginning of the twenty-first century projects itself to opening, inclusion and solidarity, at least in the literary texts chosen. Although it still holds past residues, it does not seem to retrocede. By including the discussion of minority groups such

as African and Brazilian migrants in Ireland and travellers, the narratives are giving visibility to the excluded and voicing them as part of the national dialogue.

Finally, the most remarkable features that bring the conclusions together, the feminine, the marginal and the migratory characteristics that resulted from the identity relations analysed in the stories, encounter in the metaphor of the *triskle*. The ancient symbol found on the wall at the central chamber of Newgrange is made up of three spirals interconnected in an endless movement. All the stories show us a tentative experience of moving out of Ireland or moving in. In the first part, from the first to the last story, there is a centrifugal movement being made. The identity relation is stuck in the fixed centre of colonial and nationalist experiences in “The Mural Painter”, moves out in “Liverpool/Lampedusa in migratory experience in course, then finds a tentative fixation, an Ireland identified with the new land abroad. The last story of the first part introduces the counter movement, tourists coming into Ireland. The second part describes the opposite movement, the centripetal, one where migrants are trying to find fixity and belonging in Ireland, but are constantly being rejected in their attempts and expelled to the margins of Irish identity and society.

The description of this continual centrifugal and centripetal movement describes the symbolical metaphor that closes our analysis. The image of the *triskle* illustrates that identity relations are complex and dynamic points of (non)identifications that tends to agglutinate at a centre and from the very same centre expand. It reveals that identity relations with Ireland are fluid and represent a nation that can be settled or migrant, in the Irish territory or abroad.

The *triskle* metaphor also includes the feminine aspect. As suggested by Moane (1997), the spirals drawn at the central chamber of Newgrange are associated with a feminine cyclical nature of transformation that well resembles what Ingman (2007) and Kristeva (1993) contend about the intrinsic feminine capacity to transform society from the margins to the centre generating inclusion to the outsiders of society.

Overall, this symbolical image summarises the identity relations analysed in the stories of this thesis. It represents an Ireland of the twenty-first century that connects and creates tension between the past and present, the centre and the

margins, the included and the excluded, in a dynamic dialogical process of transformation.

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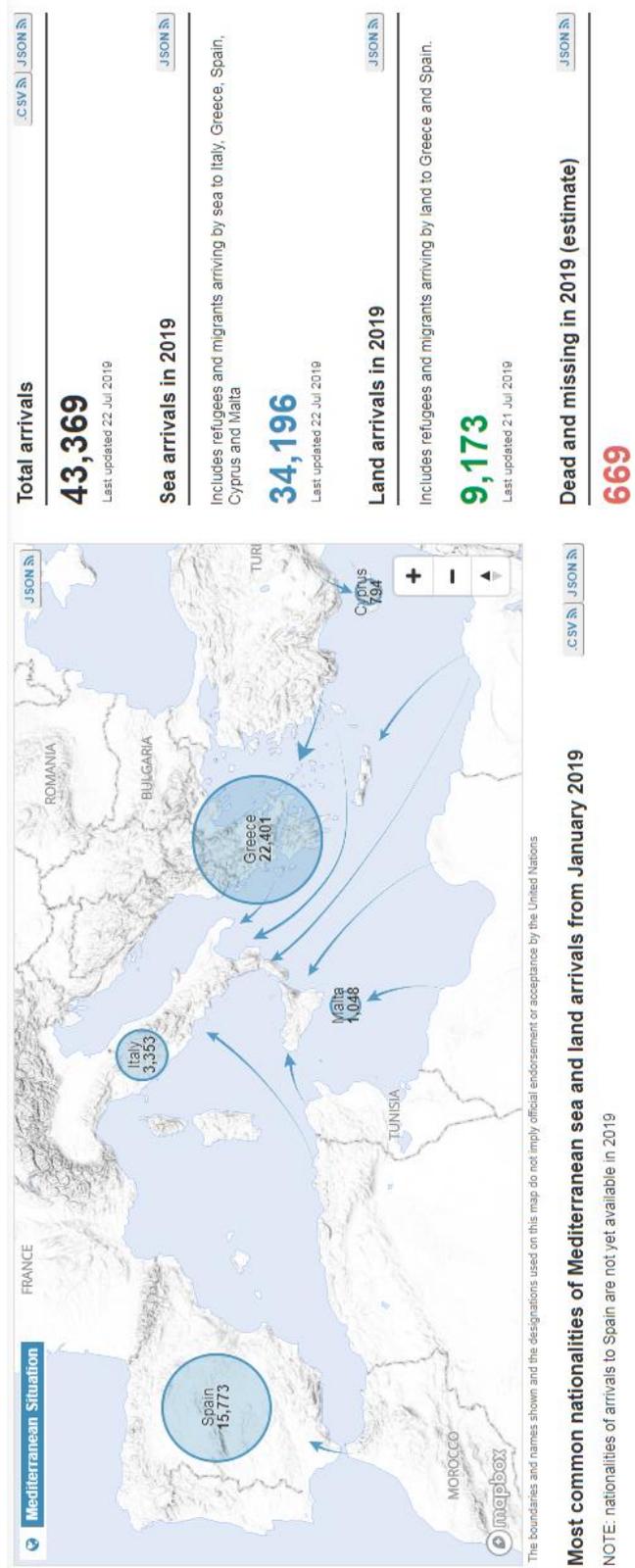
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6. Attachments

Attachment 1



Most common nationalities of Mediterranean sea and land arrivals from January 2019

NOTE: nationalities of arrivals to Spain are not yet available in 2019

Country of origin	Source	Data date	Population
Afghanistan		30 Jun 2019	16.5% 4,524
Others		30 Jun 2019	12.0% 3,295
Syrian Arab Rep.		30 Jun 2019	11.1% 3,039
Morocco		30 Jun 2019	10.4% 2,855
Iraq		30 Jun 2019	5.8% 1,603
Dem. Rep. of the Congo		30 Jun 2019	5.7% 1,566
Guinea		30 Jun 2019	5.7% 1,561
Mali		30 Jun 2019	5.3% 1,467
State of Palestine		30 Jun 2019	5.3% 1,465
Côte d'Ivoire		30 Jun 2019	4.3% 1,173

Sea and land arrivals monthly



Dead and missing in 2019 (estimate)

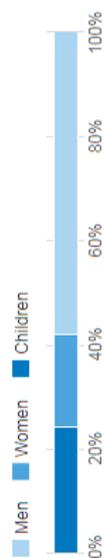
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Last updated 24 Jul 2019

Previous years	Arrivals *	Dead and missing
2018	141,472	2,277
2017	185,139	3,139
2016	373,652	5,096
2015	1,032,408	3,771
2014	225,455	3,538

* Arrivals include sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus and Malta and both sea and land arrivals to Greece and Spain

Demography of Mediterranean sea arrivals from January 2019

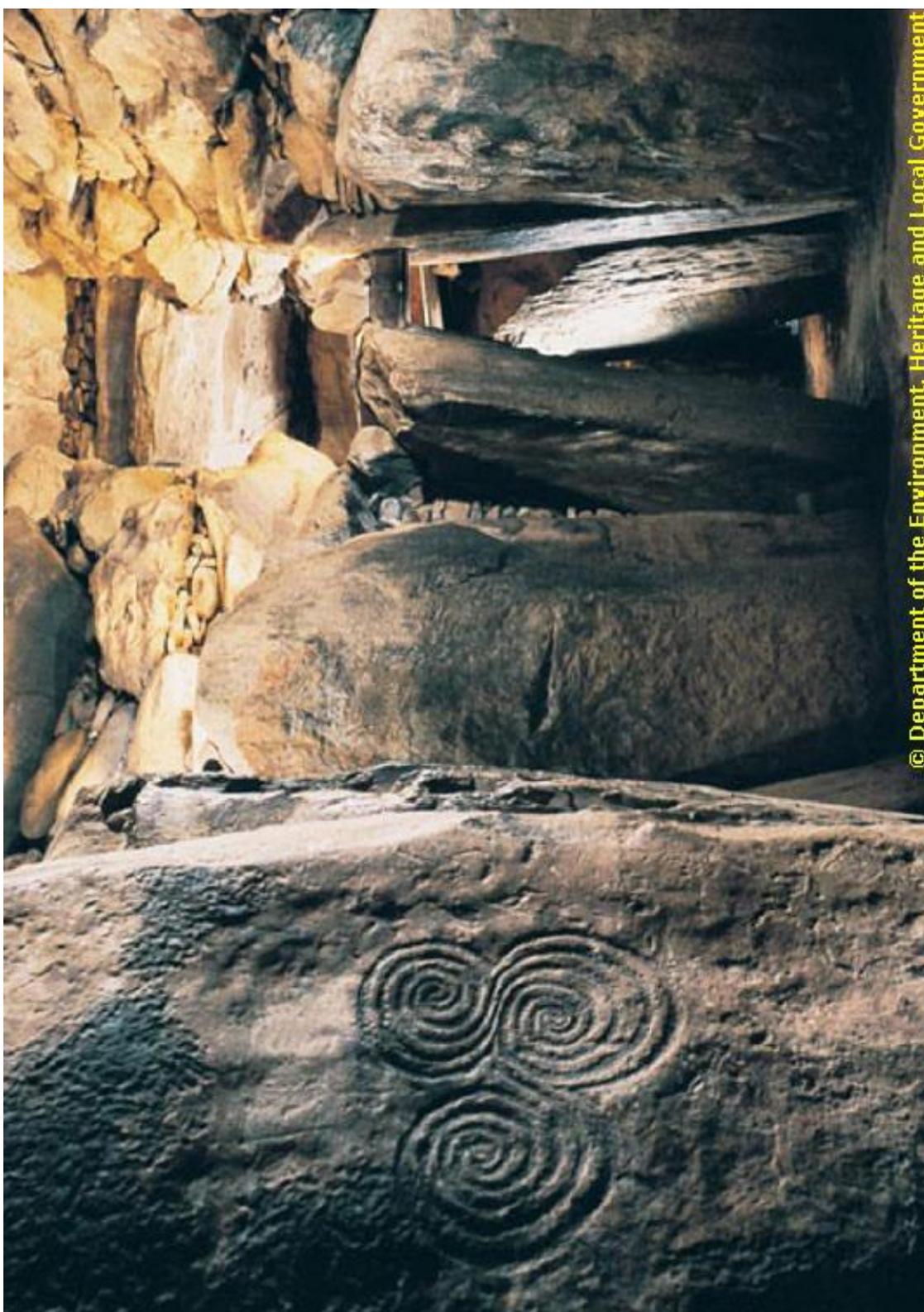


(Source: The United Nations Refugee Agency)

Attachment 2



(Source: Irish Central)



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(Source: Newgrange.com)