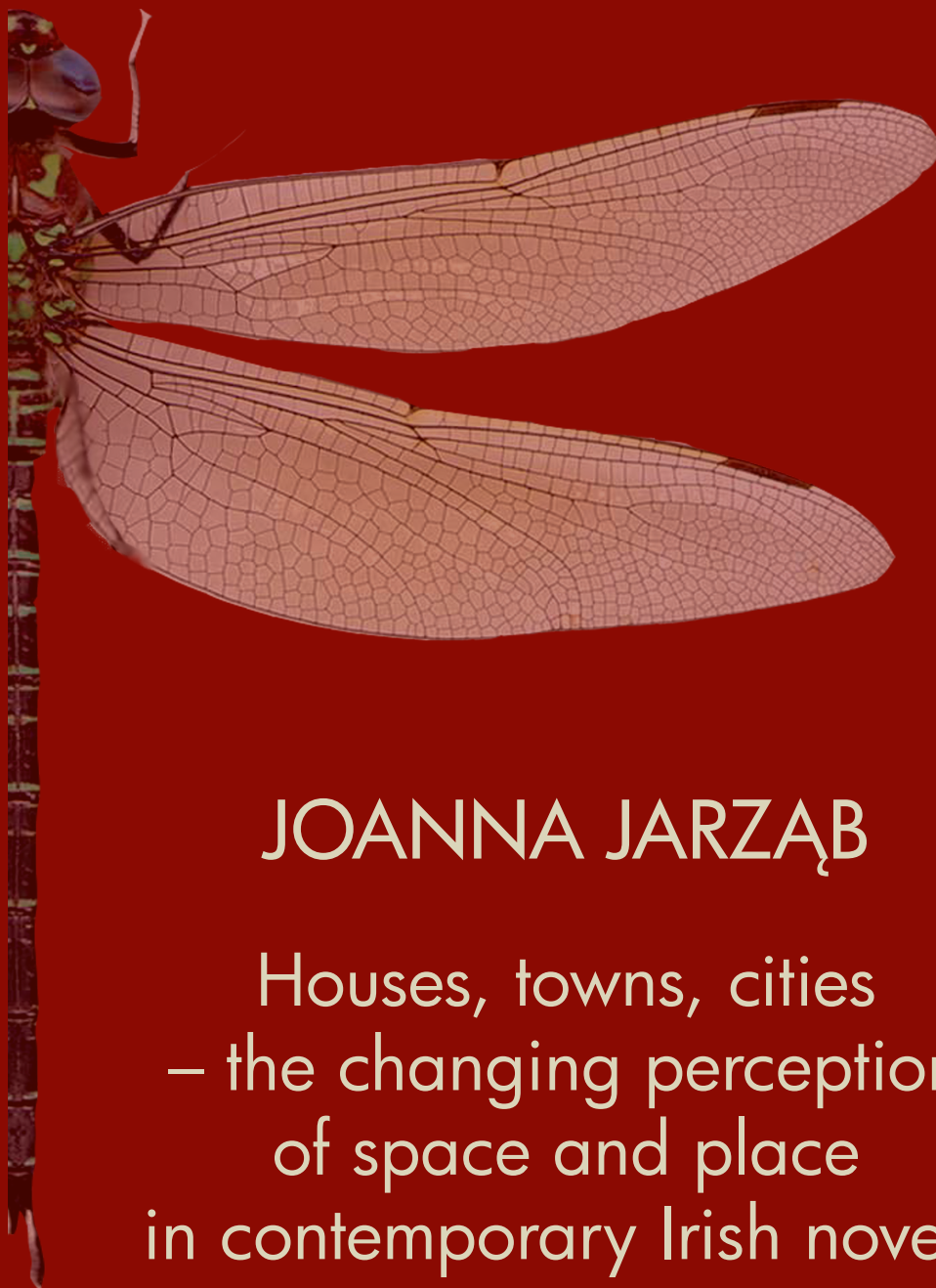


Outstanding **WA D** Dissertations

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JOANNA JARZĄB

Houses, towns, cities  
– the changing perception  
of space and place  
in contemporary Irish novels

WYDAWNICTWO NAUKOWE UAM

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of space and place  
in contemporary Irish novels



FACULTY OF ENGLISH  
ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ

**Outstanding WA Dissertations**  
**OWAD 3**

Joanna Jarzab

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the changing perception  
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Poznań 2016

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The book treats on the change in the representation of the concepts of space and place in contemporary Irish novels. The thesis examines the interrelation between place and identity, underlying its prevalence in contemporary Irish culture. Therefore, the analysis of the novels aims to present how the alterations in the perception of given places influence the development of personal and collective consciousness in contemporary Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The work argues for the simultaneity of these two processes, allowing for the treatment of place as a mirror for social changes observable in Ireland.

KEY WORDS: place, home, countryside, city, Irish contemporary novel, Ireland

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## Introduction

When mentioning Ireland it seems impossible to escape the impression that despite the increasing internationalization of the two states that form the island together with a number of differences between them, still both nations remain heavily dependent on the same attachment to place as the most important indicator of their individual and communal identity. Irish people, due to the geographical location of their homeland on the island, have always approached Ireland as naturally isolated from other countries, taking its sovereignty for granted. It was much easier for them to justify their separateness from Britain than for Wales and Scotland, which had to share the island with the English kingdom. Therefore, Ireland has never accepted British domination. Since the first invasion in 1169 till 1922 the Irish did what they could to sustain the autonomy of their kingdom and after the Union in 1800 found no other option but to fight for independence. Being totally convinced about the rightness of their cause, the Irish nationalists glorified the idea of Ireland as a unified country. Thus, despite the visible regional division of the island traceable back to the old Irish period when its land was subdivided into several kingdoms, Irish people have for a very long time believed in the homogeneity of Ireland as a country and as a society. Thus, the act of partition in 1922 met with negative responses from nationalistic movements. Almost the whole of the twentieth century was marked by the repercussions of this political decision, with the peace process still not having been brought to a final end. In the case of Ireland, the direct link between space and national identity is easily observable and thus may work as a firm ground for the analysis of the changes which occur in the contemporary Irish society.

Their unique attachment to the island as one of the most significant determinants of the Irish identity is clearly visible in literature, especially the novel. This genre, being the last one to emerge, for quite a long time had to “[fight] for its own hegemony” (Bakhtin 1981: 4). Ireland is not the least different, since poetry and drama had for a long time played a central role in the country’s cultural consciousness. Although the Irish novel emerged in the nineteenth century, not until the beginning of the twentieth century did it receive much attention in comparison to the dominating influence of poetry and drama. However, this relatively small island has produced an extraordinary number of famous prose writers such as George Moore, Elizabeth Bo-

wen, James Joyce, Patrick Kavanagh, Sean O’Faolain, Brendan Behan, Edna O’Brien, Brian Moore or Bernard MacLaverty, just to name a few. The astounding number of renowned twentieth-century novelists proves that the Irish novel has gained an important place in literature, not only the national one but also worldwide. Contrary to other genres, the novel appears to be the only one still in the process of constant development, thus “it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding” (Bakhtin 1981: 7). The fact that the novel is all the time taking new forms justifies its adaptability to the changes which occur in society. For Brennan, this flexibility is expressed not only in the form of new genres and subgenres created by writers, but also in the form understood as a “a jumble of poetry, drama, newspaper, report, memoir, and speech; a mixture of the jargons of race and ethnicity” (1990: 51). By bringing high and low, formal and informal, fact and fiction together, the novel becomes a complex composition, whose heterogeneous framework well reflects the structure of the nation. This adaptability is clearly visible in the case of Ireland, since Irish novelists have been the first to respond to the social difficulties resulting from the Troubles by introducing a new type of genre – the “Troubles thriller” (Flannery 2009: 33). The number of novels created on this topic together with the quick pace with which they appeared suggests that the novel to a certain extent reflects how and which way does the society change.

The popularity of the novel is also ascribed to the fact that it is the first literary form aimed at being read individually, not performed as it was usually the case with drama or poetry (Parrinder 2006: 9). Walter Benjamin was one of the first to note that with the rise of the novel the era of storytelling has finished (1969: 87). For Benedict Anderson, Benjamin’s observations served a purpose to introduce his idea of the novel’s role in the creation of an “imagined community”, namely, a national consciousness (1991: 44). As Anderson notes, the novel, apart from having the potential to combine personal experience with the communal one, provides a direct link between the individual self and national identity in yet another way as its birth coincides with the origin of national consciousness. This was possible because people by reading the same text and associating themselves with it, had the feeling of a temporal unity with all other readers who were doing exactly the same thing at that particular moment (1991: 25). Although the act of reading is in itself an individual experience, the scale of the phenomenon, facilitated by the multiplicity of copies of the same text, turns this singular case into a mass event, in this way evoking a feeling of solidarity among the readers. One may go as far as to claim that the act of narration has created nation and nationalism if one looks at these two concepts as theoretical constructs based on powerful images such as national heroes (Parrinder 2006: 14). At first sight, it seems that all kinds of narratives may act as national stories. The fact that legends and folktales

are now credited as belonging to the canon of national heritage is because with hindsight countries ascribe national quality to the texts which were written not to describe the nation but a tribe or a local community. Historically, the novel is the form to accompany the rise of nations “by objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation” (Brennan 1990: 49). When talking about “one, but many”, Brennan has in mind the idea of a national character which stands for the whole nation. Having its origin in the concept of a hero, such a national character carries an immediate reference to the novel as the literary form, whose constituent elements of fiction and biography are predominantly associated with the portrayal of the character (Parrinder 2006: 21).

The early novelistic genre which best combines the motif of an individual hero as a synecdoche for the whole nation is a national tale. This term comes from one of the first Irish novel's titles *The wild Irish girl: a national tale* (1806). The subtitle of the novel has been adopted to provide a name for this particular kind of a novel popular in the nineteenth century in Ireland, whose predominant concern revolves around the definition and the description of the country as well as the society understood as a nation (Burgess 2006: 42). This new type of a narrative served as an example for Walter Scott, who further developed this genre by providing it with a historical background (Parrinder 2006: 26). The first Irish novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800) by Maria Edgeworth<sup>1</sup> (Foster 2006: 2) is historically well contextualised since the date of its publication coincides with the Act of Union, which makes the origin of the Irish novelistic tradition symbolically linked with the birth of the nationalistic consciousness, as the Union with Britain results directly from the failed uprising organized by the first national movement of United Irishmen (Hoppen 1999: 11-12). This symbolic correlation has also its depiction in reality since the national tales were not only written to show Ireland as a distinct country, but also as a response to the current social and political events. By this token, marriages presented in such works as Maria Edgeworth's *Absentee* (1812) and Sydney Owenson's *The wild Irish girl* (1806) are read by critics as an allegory for the Act of Union (Miller 2000: 13).

These and other examples prove that the Irish novel from the very beginning has been focused on defining Ireland and Irishness and on depicting the social and political reality of the country. Gibbons, when analyzing Irish national identity, arrives at a tentative conclusion that if identity is not limited to pure consciousness but involves a multitude of representations, then

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that the works of earlier writers such as Jonathan Swift are not described as Irish is justified by Parrinder who claims that it is impossible “to rely on an author's nationality, descent, or domicile” when deciding whether the text may be ascribed to a particular national canon. Similarly with English literature, the Irish one has to take on “the autonomy of imagination” (2006: 3-4).

cultural identity does not presuppose these representations but the other way round. Consequently, representation is the condition for identity as it generates and transforms the communal consciousness, not vice versa (1996: 10). The interdependence of literary representation and identity creation is also acknowledged by Parrinder, who points to the relationship between the state of literature and the condition of the nation. Although it may not always be the case, there are many instances in Irish history which validate this association. Parrinder provides the example of James Joyce, whose writing career coincided with the political and cultural revival in Ireland (2006: 2). But he is just one of several instances of writers from that time, whose extraordinariness may be ascribed to the dynamic political and cultural changes occurring in Ireland at the turn of the century. Among them is George Moore, whose style and choice of topics in his novels provoked great controversy. His literary career falls on the verge of the nineteenth and twentieth century, which marks a time of great transformations in Ireland as well as throughout the whole of Europe. It is George Moore who introduced many aspects of modernist writing into Irish literature, despite the fame going to James Joyce, the author of *Ulysses* (Frazier 2006: 125). The diachronic view on Moore's literary output well illustrates the process of change from Victorian realism to modernism.

The controversy of George Moore, likewise in the case of James Joyce, does not concern only his writing, but also his life. Despite being a son of a Catholic landowner, George Moore never felt attached to his family background. Dissociating himself from Catholicism as well, Moore preferred the artistic life of Paris, where he could attend meetings of the Impressionist circle, Symbolist poets and read Zola (Powell 2004: 59). He did not manage to finish art school, but his time spent in Paris was not wasted, as Moore drew inspiration for his artistic experience here as well as from the works of the French naturalists. In Paris he underwent a journey typical for a modernist author. His first novels appear to be a mixture of Victorian reality intermingling with already naturalistic descriptions such as *The mummer's wife* (1885)<sup>2</sup> or *A drama in muslin* (1886) (Frazier 2006: 115). The former presents a typical, for Victorian morality, fall of a woman: the protagonist, once she commits the major sin of leaving her husband, continues all her life to make more and more mistakes, finally ending up as an alcoholic. The latter also includes the aspect of a fallen woman, but this time it is not the central character of Alice Barton who falls, but her friend, May, who does not learn her lesson. After getting pregnant to Fred she bears a child in the convent in Dub-

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<sup>2</sup> While working on this novel, Moore's aesthetic approach towards naturalism made him browse the police records, spend some time in Hanley, and even become acquainted with some members of the touring company (Cronin 1982: 69).

lin. The child dies after ten days and May goes back to her former behaviour as if nothing has happened. According to Regan, Moore's later novel *Esther Waters* (1894), though it follows the technique of Zola, already questions the concept of social determinism still present in the two previous works. *Esther Waters* appears to fall into the intermediary stage in Moore's fiction, since Esther no longer ascribes to the pattern of a fallen woman, yet neither does she deserve to be called a new woman (2012: xiv). As it can be seen, Moore's early novels present an intermediary period in his writing career, when the traditional nineteenth-century style of writing becomes gradually superseded by the new influences.

Moore's stay in Ireland, where he participated in the Irish Literary Revival movement, was crucial in the development of his writing career. The initiative in the earliest stage was devoted to translating the fiction of Irish writers into their mother tongue. For this purpose Moore was supposed to write a collection of short stories in English so that they could appear both in English and in Irish. As teachers and students of Irish lacked the material to work on, the project was supposed to facilitate the process of learning the Irish language by providing the readers with texts they could compare with the English version (Powell 2004: 60). This resulted in *The untitled field* (1903) being published. In the end, the whole collection was not translated into Irish but just several of the stories, still the text plays an important part in Moore's literary output, more often than not compared with James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914). Naming Moore as "the self-made modern", Cronin openly states that such works as *The lake* (1905) or *Hail and farewell* (1911-1914) may be already ascribed to modernist fiction not only due to the impressionistic images of fleeting moments but also because of his interest in the aspect of his aesthetic self-realisation as a writer (1982: 69-72). A similar observation is made by Seamus Deane, who whenever he discusses the style of Joyce also refers to Moore as the writer in whose fiction one may find parallel examples of modernist writing (1997: 158).

Moore's later works more explicitly show a change in their form, influenced by impressionism, for example *The lake* tends to play with fact and fiction, just as in *Hail and farewell*. Some impressionistic aspects may be already found in *Esther Waters*, especially in the descriptions of the city of London:

The lamps were beginning in the light, and the tall houses towered above the sunset. Esther watched the spectral city, and some sensation of poetry of the hour must have stolen into her heart, for she turned to the Park, choosing to walk there. upon the dim green grey the scattered crowds were like strips of black tape. Here and there by the railings the tape had been wound up in a black ball, and the peg was some democratic orator, promising poor human nature unconditional deliv-

erance from evil. Further on were heard sounds from a harmonium, and hymns were being sung, and in each doubting face there was something of the perplexing, haunting look which the city wore. (Moore 2012: 99)

This and other instances show how influential was Moore's earlier interest in art, since the descriptions in their form resemble more an impressionistic painting rather than a naturalistic account of events. The play of colours and light, evident in the example above, draw Moore closer to modernistic representations, whose mature stage is present in his later novel *The lake* (1905). In this work, the very first pages dislodge a picturesque view on the lake, around which revolves the whole action of the plot: "The lake lay like a mirror that somebody had breathed upon, the brown islands showing through the mist faintly, with gray shadows falling into the water, blurred at the edges" (Moore 1980: 1). Here the reader finds a realm of fleeting images, which make the novel poetic in form. In *The lake* Moore devotes a lot of attention to the loose mental associations his protagonist becomes "sunk" in, which was a new form of fiction at that time, bearing a lot of resemblance to "the stream of consciousness" technique that Joyce brought to perfection in *Ulysses* (Frazier 2006: 125). As Powell rightly observes, the bulk of the action (if one may talk about action in a strict sense of the word when it comes to this novel) takes place in Father Gogarty's mind. As a result, the technique allows for the naturalistic accuracy being combined with the symbolic nature of the descriptive passages (2004: 62). The symbolism may be found in the final scene of the novel, when the protagonist stages his drowning to escape from the Catholic Church (Foster 2008: 252). The purifying feature of the water allows him to symbolically wash away his sins and enter a new life. Interestingly enough, *The lake*, originally written as a short story for *The untilled field*, grew into the size of a novel, likewise Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), which was supposed to be one of the stories of *The Dubliners*. The similarities between the two texts do not end at this stage, because, as Frazier argues, both texts are based on the stream of consciousness technique (2006: 125). Also, these texts are listed by many critics as one of the greatest achievements of their literary outputs (Powell 2004: 62). All the instances presented testify to Moore's role of a modernist precursor in Irish literature, whose literary experiments find their further development in Joyce's fiction.

The novelty visible in the form, is also observable in the topics Moore undertakes in his works. The writer consequently takes advantage of spatial tropes in order to comment on the current situation in Ireland. The most significant themes in his novels remain the house, the countryside and the city. Due to his background as well as at least one of his novels *Drama in muslin*, Moore is associated with the class of the Irish landowners and Big House<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The term stands for a genre popular in the nineteenth-century Irish literature, whose narrative concentrates on the presentation of the life of the Anglo-Irish landed gentry class

writers. The writer's family, albeit not part of the Protestant Anglo-Irish ascendancy, was considered as one of them because of the famous Moore Hall built by his ancestors (Frazier 2000: xii). The house was a constant source of financial problems for the artist until the night when it was burned down by the IRA in 1923 (Noel 1991: 114). However, it remained an important topic in his literary output, not only for his detailed account of the life of the Anglo-Irish landed gentry, but also for the criticism of his own social class: "The Goulds were of an excellent county family. They had for certainly three generations lived in comfortable idleness, watching from their big square house the different collections of hamlets toiling and moiling, and paying their rents every gale day" (Moore 1981: 74). The ironic tone in *A drama in muslin* well illustrates the writer's critical approach towards the class of the landed gentry. The protagonist, raised up in an atmosphere of a constant search for an appropriate match, to a certain extent fits the pattern of a new woman. She not only tries to earn her living through writing, but more importantly rejects to follow the life pattern, which the social environment tries to impose on her by making her marry doctor Reed. By means of the protagonist's disappointment with the life the big house families lead, Moore poses negative remarks upon the current issues concerning Ireland. The Land League, which makes Lord Kilcarney bankrupt, or the inevitability of the upcoming Home Rule, are present in the background of the novel. Although the political matters are presented from the indifferent perspective of a young lady, the novel was still considered too modern and open in its moral and political dimension to be welcomed either in Ireland or in England (Frazier 2006: 116). The contrast between the gallant houses, individualised by the names as well as their status among the local community, and the anonymity of the peasants' cabins, which "came out in crude white spots upon the purple mountains" (Moore 1981: 21), act as a silent comment on the current state of the Irish society of those times (Noel 1991: 117). Consequently, the critical picture of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy as presented in Moore's work seems to lack faith in the possibility of the rebirth of the landed nobility, as it may be found in the texts of other Big House writers.

*A drama in muslin*, apart from numerous depictions of the "house", also entails images of the countryside as part and parcel of the Big House literature. This particular novel is treated by Foster as a call for action, since, for Moore, the ongoing decay of the province demands some response from the nation (2008: 169). This may also justify the writer's initial involvement in the Literary Revival. However, Moore remains rather reserved towards the image of a romanticised western rural Ireland, which is a point he clearly

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as revolving around their estates with the central role of the house, commonly known as a big house.

expresses in his autobiography. The myth of the Gaelic heritage is for the writer an exaggeration, since he rather finds the ideas of searching for one's own Irish legitimacy in one's family's roots so that a "man cannot be considered Irish if his family has lived in Ireland only four hundred years" (Grubgeld 2004: 129). In contrast, the Revivalists' attempts at rebuilding national consciousness as based on the Gaelic language and mythology are overwhelmed with artificiality (Grubgeld 2004: 146). Moore remains a realist and a naturalist to such an extent that he is incapable of describing the countryside as imagined. The motif of the rural destitute continues to reappear in his other texts, such as *The untilled field* or *Hail and farewell*. Both titles may be treated as the writer's comment on the condition of the Irish countryside at the end of the nineteenth as well as at the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The former of the two works was especially uncomfortable for the Revivalists, as it was written to support their cause but it appeared to criticise their praise of the west counties (Foster 2008: 169). This began the conflict between Moore and the members of the movement, which continues in his latter text, where the writer presents the persona of Yeats in a rather ironic way. Conversely, the collection of short stories was not written with the intention to abuse the Revival movement, but rather its mood results from what Moore was when he came back to Ireland after his years of absence. Additionally, inspired by the literary output of Turgenev, whose descriptions of the Russian provinces are overwhelmed by nostalgic overtones, Moore's *The untilled field* entails philosophical remarks on the provincial life (Frazier 2006: 124). The trope of the countryside is also central in *The lake*. However, in this novel Moore seems to abandon his argument with the Revivalists, concentrating more on the aesthetic depiction of the landscape and critical comment on the Catholic Church, which is made responsible for the mental stagnation and destitute of the provincial life of its parishioners (Powell 2004: 61).

The third type of space, which plays a crucial role in Moore's works, are the urban areas. The label of a city writer commonly ascribed to the iconic James Joyce, has yet again a precursor in the person of George Moore. Apart from the modernistic descriptions of London present in *Esther Waters*, the novel still presents a realistic portrayal of the life in the Victorian capital in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The naturalistic descriptions of Esther's hardship, of making ends meet during her pregnancy, as well as after the child is born, the detailed account of her time spent in the hospital, and the truth about the fate of the children who die from negligence while their mothers work for their keep are the aspects which shocked the public when the novel was published (Regan 2012: vii). By introducing the character of Esther, who with time abandons her Protestant morality for the sake of a better life for her child and herself, Moore questions the Victorian idea of social determinism. His characters remain rather static in their behaviour, since it is

the world that changes not the individual people (Grubgeld 2004: 134). Consequently, Esther lacks the determination to alter her life, neither does she have enough strength to care about her reputation. By this token, Moore captures the moment of the changing face of London, as the feeling of initial enchantment overlaps with the alienation the characters experience during their stay in the capital (Regan 2012: xviii). This forces them to prioritize their own sense of safety for the sake of how they are perceived by the society. The growing anonymity of the city facilitates such a change in the mentality of its citizens.

However, Moore does not limit himself to London when it comes to the representation of the city in his works. *A drama in muslin*, though primarily situated in the countryside, moves from time to time to Dublin to comment on the city life there as well. The Irish capital is diminished to the image of Dublin Castle as the symbolic centre of social life for the landed gentry. For nationalists the castle acts as an embodiment of the British rule over Ireland. The dual meaning of the place appears in the novel during the winter social season, when young ladies arrive at the capital in search of an appropriate match. “The marriage market”, as Moynahan points out, is dominated by the presence of the daughters of rural landowners, who more often than not are referred to as “muslin martyrs” (1984: 13). The whole Dublin society as well as the provincial landed gentry appears to be dependant on the existence of Dublin Castle, in a social and in a political way (Noel 1991: 118). In the novel, Dublin is on the one hand a vanity fair, but on the other “an immense police barrack” rising over the ruin of the countryside (Moore in Moynahan 1984: 13). Moore remains critical of Dublin throughout his writing career as even in his autobiography *Hail and farewell* he delivers ironic remarks concerning the capital: “Irish spoken on the stage in Dublin! You are not’ - Interrupting me, Edward began to blurt out that a change had come, that Dublin was no longer a city of barristers, judges and officials pursuing a round of mean interests and trivial amusements, but the capital of the Celtic Renaissance” (Moore 2003: 76). Moore’s disregard for Dublin is twofold. It eventuates from the fact that he had a comparison with other European capitals such as London and Paris, but it also results from his anxiety about the future of the countryside, whose fate for the writer is partially the blame of the ill politics coming from the capital.

Influenced or not by the works of Moore, the pursuit of their personal and communal self leads the majority of Irish novelists to places which remain crucial for the understanding of individual and national identities. Interesting may be the fact that what Joyce is mostly famous for is traceable in Moore’s fiction, which marks him as the precursor of the modernist form as well as the urban topic in Irish literature. However, in Moore’s works what is of paramount importance are not so much his experiments as his ability to

combine the traditional forms and topics with new elements. Thus his fiction well illustrates the process of transition from one literary period to another, which is not a phenomenon frequently observed in the literary output of a single writer. Modern Ireland's "[obsession] with the issues of space" (Smyth 2001: xiv) omnipresent in Moore's fiction continues in the contemporary literature,<sup>4</sup> which is overwhelmed by the achievements in the novel genre (Bolger 1994: xvi). Despite the abundance of contemporary novels treating of the spatial representations of Ireland, there is a void of critical works on this topic. Hardly any scholar has decided to devote enough attention to analysing the perception of space and place in contemporary Irish novels in order to relate them with the ongoing question of the changing Irish identity. The majority of critical texts are limited to one aspect of space, and it is either just the house, or the countryside or only the city. Such research, albeit presenting the issue in a more detailed manner, more often than not lacks a diachronic perspective on this issue or the comparison with other places. Still some of these works deserve attention since they have paved the way for other critics and therefore nowadays they already belong to the canon of critical works on the Irish novel. The order in which the works on the representation of space in Irish literature are going to be presented is analogical, with the division of place tropes into the house, the countryside and the city.

The beginning of the 1990s brought back the interest in the Big House fiction among scholars, who focus on presenting a diachronic picture of the genre's development, this time including contemporary writers. *The big house in Ireland. Reality and representation* (1991) edited by Jacqueline Genet and *Ancestral voices. The big house in Anglo-Irish literature* (1992) edited by Otto Rauchbauer are both collections of essays treating of the history of the big house as presented in novels, starting with Maria Edgeworth and finishing with the early works of William Trevor, Jennifer Johnston and John Banville. Each of the books mentioned above is limited to the topic of the big house, and thus excludes all other representations of the domestic space by the same authors. Interestingly enough, the former work includes a section on poetry, aimed at showing how the aspect of the big house has influenced other modes of literature than just the novel. A more integrated work on this topic comprises Vera Kreilkamp's *The Anglo-Irish novel and the big house* (1998). As a monograph, the book presents a concise history of the big house genre in the Irish novel, concentrating on the line of influence and path of development of

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<sup>4</sup> Bolger, in the introduction to *The Picador book of contemporary Irish fiction*, tries to draw a line which would show when the contemporary Irish literature begins. According to the critic, it is the 1960s that woke up Ireland from the period of the inward stagnation. Together with the increasing pace of political, economic and social changes, the new quality in the Irish writing emerged, which deserves the name of contemporary fiction (1994: vii-ix).

the chosen writers. Similarly to the previous two texts, it includes contemporary depictions of the big house theme. Consequently fitting in with the topic of the whole book, the scholar finishes her inquiry on the literary output on the novels which are classified as big house fiction, disregarding all other texts treating of the space of the house but no longer following the genre's pattern.

The interest in the Irish landscape from a geographical perspective continues throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Such works as *Reading the Irish landscape* (1986) by Frank Mitchell and Michael Ryan, and *The Irish countryside* (1989) by Desmond Gillmor draw back attention to the significance of the Irish rural areas. These works treat the topic from an anthropological and cultural angles. The thriving cultural geography results in many collections of essays treating of the most current aspects of the Irish landscape as undergoing a process of transformation. Just to mention a few, *Tourism in Ireland* (1993) edited by Barbara O'Connor and Michael Cronin, or *In search of Ireland* (1997) edited by Brian Graham are works wholly devoted to images of the Irish landscape and its representation in contemporary society with relation to the growing tourist industry and connected with it the process of internationalization. The scholars provide research on how the landscape is changing in Ireland and what impact does it have on the national consciousness. Interestingly enough, the critics while analysing the places from a geographical angle, establish connections with literary representations, by often referring to Irish literature as the mirror for the ongoing social processes. The intermingling of cultural geography and fiction is well presented in such essays as Duffy's "Writing Ireland: Literature and art in the representation of Irish place" or Catherine Nash's "Embodying the nation: the west of Ireland landscape and Irish identity", which not only show how the real places of Ireland may be depicted in the literary world, but also how the literary representations influence the image of Ireland among foreigners and its inhabitants.

So far one of the most influential critical works wholly devoted to the topic of the literary representations of Irish urban space is a collection of articles under the common title *The Irish writer and the city* (1984) edited by Maurice Harmon. The general aim of the book is to present a diachronic picture of the city theme in Irish literature, beginning with the nineteenth-century fiction and ending with the writers from the 1980s. Some of the papers present a general view on the issue such as "The image of the city in nineteenth century Irish fiction" by Julian Moynahan, or Gerald Dawe's "The permanent city: The younger Irish poets". Others are more specific either limiting themselves to the image of Dublin or to Belfast, as well as singular writers, as is in the case of Britta Olander's "John Hewitt's Belfast" and "Joyce and Dublin" by Donald Torchiana. The structure of the article forces the critics to provide just a cursory glance at the theme undertaken, so more often than not literary texts remain

mere examples of the aspects discussed. The book's limiting structure does not allow for a detailed analysis of the chosen literary works, so the scholars concentrate on supplying the reader with the basic and most significant knowledge about the author's treatment of the theme. Consequently, the collection acts as a good background for those who aim at dealing with urban studies in Irish literature, especially as the articles include prose, poetry and drama. The book, although it presents a diachronic analysis of the theme, nevertheless fails to build a holistic picture of the topic. Neither does it present the process of development of the city's image in any of the three modes of fiction. The fact that it is one of the first works concentrating on the image of the city in Irish literature makes it an important critical work in the studies on space as related to the twentieth-century Irish literature.

Other critical works, which take the issue of space as the dominant one, try to present the concept in a broader perspective. For instance, *Ireland. Towards a sense of place* (1985) edited by Joseph Lee treats of the concept of a sense of place in the Irish consciousness. The articles present the topic from various perspectives since each of them concentrates on a different aspect of the Irish life of the twentieth century: geography, literature, ethics, law, economy and politics. The texts try to face the traditional representations of space with the Irish identity in the respective areas of interest. This collection lays the foundations for the revisionist approach towards the old system of values, which for a long time has determined the sense of belonging among Irish people. The notion of rural Ireland, the ethics of the Catholic Church, and the notion of homogeneity are the aspects which are partially rendered as obsolete. However, the vestiges of the traditional values still lingering in the mentality of Ireland are to act as an integral part of the national consciousness rather than as the evidence of the society's backwardness. All the authors notice the importance of the 1960s, the time when the changes in the areas of their inquiry occur simultaneously. Taking this fact into consideration, the scholars come to a tentative conclusion that the sixties may be symbolically treated as the marking point for the beginning of contemporary Ireland.

One of the most significant critical works concerning the concept of space in Irish literature remains *After Yeats and Joyce. Reading modern Irish literature* (1997). Neil Corcoran is the critic who entails in his scholarly work all three aspects of Irish space: the house, the countryside and the city. All the motifs analysed in the work stem from the literary output of Yeats and Joyce, and thus the main focus of the scholar's attentions remains the further development of the issues introduced to Irish literature by these two writers. Another criterion for the choice of themes constitutes their persistency in Irish literature via the constant recurrence of the same or similar motives in the works of one writer. Corcoran well illustrates how spaces overlap in the Irish literature so that it appears impossible to talk about the big house novel without any relation to the countryside. The

core of his analysis revolves around poetry, still he reserves some attention for the novel as well. As the title of the work suggests, the scholar concentrates on modern Irish literature, namely, dating from the 1920s. Therefore, his analysis is dominated by the literary works of those Irish writers who may be treated as direct followers or critics of Yeats and Joyce, whereas the contemporary literature acts as a justification for how far reaching is the influence of these two artists. Northern Ireland is formulated as a separate aspect, so the previous chapters on the big house and the countryside concentrate on the literary works treating of the Free State or The Republic of Ireland, whereas the chapter on the city is limited to the presentation of Dublin. The Northern Irish perspective is predominantly instigated by the Troubles, so the critic's research concentrates on the literature's response to this period of the Irish history.

A fresh perspective on the studies of space in Irish literature provides Gerry Smyth with his *Space and the Irish cultural imagination* (2001). His theoretical chapter starts with a cursory glance at the most influential works in the twentieth-century space studies, including Henri Lefebvre, as well as his work shows the current trends in literature concerning the topic of the title. He also draws attention to the importance space has always played and still does in Irish literature. Smyth devotes a lot of attention to the contemporary situation of Ireland and connected with it the process of European integration and globalization. Smyth analyses the new problems arising from the tourist industry in Ireland, and the effect it has on the cities together with the countryside. The latter part of his work is devoted to single instances of literary representation of places. Interestingly enough, Smyth provides a practical application of space theory when talking about a place he used to occupy for some time. His critical engagement in the aspect of locality is to show the turn towards the individual experience and its impact on the local community observable in Irish society at the close of the twentieth century. Crucial for the literary studies appears his chapter on Seamus Deane's *Reading in the dark*, which he devotes to the analysis of places present in the novel: Derry<sup>5</sup>, Aileach, the meaning of borders and bridges, and finally the house. His meticulous analysis well illustrates how one literary text can be approached from different perspectives when it comes to the aspect of space. Smyth's work appears to be the first study on Irish literature which provides a direct link between space and the question of identity in the contemporary novel.

Apart from works wholly devoted to the theme of Irish space, there is a number of single chapters or sections treating of this topic. Such critical texts are usually limited to one particular aspect of the landscape or to a single writer and either his or her one literary work. This is the case with Luke

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<sup>5</sup> The fact the the author uses the name Derry signifies his republican approach towards the issue of the Troubles.

Gibbons's famous essay on Dublin "Montage, modernism and the city" (1996) or "'Sacred spaces': writing home in recent Irish memoirs and autobiographies" (2009) by Stephen Regan. *Ireland in proximity. History, gender, space* (1999) edited by Scott Brewster, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Becket and David Alderson as the title suggests, devote some attention to the issue of space as the background for gender and feminist studies. Ray Ryan limits his analysis of the Irish capital to Dermot Bolger's fiction as one of the sections in *Ireland and Scotland. Literature and culture, state and nation, 1966-2000* (2002). These examples may be followed by a number of single articles<sup>6</sup> on the topic of the representation of space in Irish literature, which usually just remark upon the issue or present it in a narrow context. Thus, these articles do not exhaust the topic, but signify the ongoing interest and a necessity for critical works on the concept of space in the contemporary Irish literature and culture. The majority of recent academic books and journals have at least one article disseminating the importance of place in Irish literature and national identity.

With hindsight, it transpires that there is a considerable void of academic works wholly dedicated to the topic of the perception and representation of space in the contemporary Irish novel, whereas the multiplicity of single papers on this issue prove the prevailing need for such a study. Therefore, the thesis of this work is devoted to the novelistic representations of domestic, rural and urban space present in the Irish literature of the last decades of the twentieth century as well as the beginning of the new millennium. For the purpose of the variety of topics related to the perception and representation of places, different theories of space are going to be applied with Henri Lefebvre's theory of space production as the dominating theoretical background for the whole thesis. The literary output of the chosen writers is going to be

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<sup>6</sup> See also: Richard Kirkland *Literature and Culture in Northern Ireland since 1965. Moments of danger* (1996) and his chapter on the country and the city; *Irish Studies Review* 6,2 for: "The space of the nation: History, culture and conflict in modern Ireland" (1998) by Mark Maguire; *Contemporary Irish fiction: Themes, tropes, theories* (2000) by Liam Harte and Michael Parker (eds.); *The end of Irish history? Critical reflection on the Celtic Tiger* (2003) edited by Colin Coulter and Steve Coleman, especially the articles "Globalised Ireland, or, contemporary transformations of national identity?" by G. Honor Fagan and "Fear and loathing in lost ages: journeys through postmodern Dublin" by David Slattery; *Irish Studies Review* 16,1 for: "Deviations from the known route: writing and walking in Ciaran Carson's Belfast" (2008) by Neal Alexander; *The Irish Review* 40-41 for "Ballygawley, Ballylynn, Belfast: Writing about modernity and settlement in Northern Ireland" (2009) by Richard Kirkland; "Beyond local Ireland in *The wig my father wore*" by Heidi Hansson; or "'Dreaming of upholstered breasts', or, How to find your way back home: Dislocation in *What are you like?*" by Susan Cahill in *Anne Enright* (2011) Claire Bracken's and Susan Cahill's (eds.); *Irish University Review* 42,2 for "Brian Friel's short fiction: Place, community, and memory" (2012).

represented with two novels each. The first novel usually belongs to the last decades of the former century or has action set in this period, whereas the second one is to provide a fresh view on the same topic from the perspective of the twenty-first century. In most cases the gap of about twenty years between the two texts is to show the writer's individual development concerning the analyzed theme. This serves the purpose of giving a clear illustration of the way in which the perception of the researched places change according to the author's point of view. Apart from the individual path of development, the thesis is to dislodge a more general process of transformation in the perception and representation of Irish places in literature. In order to achieve this aim, the discussion on each type of space trope is to be based on the literary works of two novelists, more often than not supplemented with additional comments on the publications of other Irish authors treating of the same topic. The thesis focuses on novels written by male and female writers in order to present a wider picture on current trends dominating the literary world and tries to answer the question of the tendencies' putative effect on the national discourse. The fact that each analytic chapter is divided into the exploration of one male and one female novelist should not imply any additional scrutiny on gender studies, since this is not the purpose of this thesis. Even so, in the course of the discussion the appearance of some general differences between female and male writers concerning the representation of space and its relation to identity are rather unavoidable. Still it is presumed that the voice of both gender groups will facilitate the study so that it will be possible to reach the essence of the role space plays in the life of Irish people with its direct influence on their personal as well as national self-consciousness.

The first chapter provides a theoretical background concerning the line of development of the studies of spatial perception and representation in the twentieth century as well as the idea of nation and nationalism. The origin of the thought on spaces and places is traced back to classical thinkers such as Democritus, Descartes and Kant to conceive the essence of the studies on space in trying to answer the question about which aspects make it a modern branch of knowledge. The research on the line of the theory's advancement aims at dislodging the source of influence for twentieth-century scholars, and at presenting certain theories as universal and applicable to the contemporary reality. The emphasis is placed on the statements of different theoreticians and philosophers dealing with studies of space, who justify the idea of a direct link between space and the notion of identity, especially the concept of a nation and nationalism. At this point the theoretical discussion goes on to present a variety of approaches towards the origin of nation and nationalism. The complexity of the problem is to be compared with the historical development of this aspect in Ireland. The analysis provides an insight into the clear division into two disparate approaches towards the idea of the Irish nation and

nationalism. Such aspects as the influence of revisionism on the perception of history, the myths of Irish legitimacy and homogeneity, and the controversy around Ireland as a post-colonial country are discussed. By this token, the attempted juxtaposition of the nationalistic theories with the Irish case is to provide a ground for the further analysis of particular examples from the realm of literature.

The second chapter uses the trope of the Big House as a starting point for the discussion on the domestic space in the Irish imagination and reality. For this purpose two Irish writers: William Trevor and Jennifer Johnston are chosen<sup>7</sup>, since both of them started their literary career within the genre of the Big House novel. Beginning the analysis with *The silence in the garden* (1989) and *Fool's sanctuary* (1987) respectively is aimed at providing a contemporary glance at the nineteenth-century genre. Also, the Big House ethos acts as a literary and social background for the analysis of the further development of domestic issues in the writing careers of the two novelists. The works of William Trevor are to illustrate that, despite the times, some Irish writers remain attached to the theme of the big house, which even if no longer physically present as part of the Irish landscape, stays in the memory of the local people. Such an approach is to justify the statement that the Big House motif is part and parcel of the Irish national heritage on the literary and social level, as indicates Trevor's latest novel *Love and summer* (2009). Jennifer Johnston's latter novel is to testify to the ongoing interest in the domestic theme but located in a different landscape. The movement from the countryside to the city in *Foolish mortals* (2007) reveals the author's efforts to keep up with the times and to write about the environment with which a great number of Irishmen may associate. The change in the place of living is supposed to depict the general tendency in the Irish society to move from the rural to urban areas. The path of the writer's development in the representation of places works against a common misconception about the domestic fiction as solely ascribed to the countryside. Despite the disparity in the directions the two writers undertake in their presentation of the domestic space, both touch upon the important issue of the Protestant minority in the Irish Republic. The voice of Anglo-Irish Protestants present in the works of both authors ponders on the issue of their sense of belonging in the country dominated by Catholics. Drawing attention to the heterogeneous nature of the Irish nation, the authors pose a question of Irish identity and the place of Irish Protestants in it.

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<sup>7</sup> The choice of novels is based on several aspects, which are crucial for the discussion of the topic. The basic aspects constitute: the presence of the chosen motif (house, countryside, city) in the literary work of a given writer, the visible relation between places and the question of identity, as well as a noticeable process of development of the writer's approach towards the two former aspects.

The third chapter moves on to an exploration of the Irish rural landscape through the example of novels by John McGahern and Deirdre Madden. The earlier works of the writers *Amongst women* (1990) and *Nothing is black* (1995) respectively, treat of the ongoing binary opposition between the city and the countryside. The former novel deals with the problem of tradition and family bonds embedded in the countryside, whereas the latter juxtaposes the myth of the West of Ireland with the anti-myth of countryside as a destitute province. These two novels written in the last decade of the twentieth century add a voice to the discussion on whether one may approach such images in terms of erroneous stereotypes, or if it prevails to be part and parcel of rural life at the turn of the centuries. The analysis of McGahern's earlier novel is followed by *That they may face the rising sun* (2002), which presents the writer's return to his homeland. The cherished regionalisation of Ireland in the text poses a question of the society's growing identification with the exact place of origin in the times of an increasing internationalisation of Ireland. The scrutiny of the novel is to show the gradual demythologization of the Irish countryside, since the author's last image of the provincial life is neither an idealised nor a negative picture. In contrast, Madden's later novel *Molly Fox's birthday* (2008) deals with the notion of a province, but in more global terms. The text, though situated in the suburbs of Dublin, tries to challenge the traditional image of Ireland as a British province, which nowadays seems to have escaped marginalisation by the British just to become a peripheral region of the European Union.

The theme of the city comes to the fore in the last chapter, where the topic of urban space is presented from two perspectives: of the Northern Irish and the Republic of Ireland's capitals. The exploration of the city space seen from the angles of Glenn Patterson and Anne Enright, as the writers ascribed to the third generation of Irish contemporary novelists, is to designate a fresh perspective on the cities which, similarly to the countryside, struggle with obsolete images of urban space as the centre of violence and sectarianism in the case of Belfast, and as a corrupted and destitute place in the case of Dublin. Therefore, the novels *Fat lad* (1992) and *The gathering* (2007) present cities in their intermediary period, when still their future is uncertain. However, the analysis is supposed to testify to the times presented in the texts as already envisaging the beginning of the new period in the cities' development. The advent of changes observable in the earlier narratives become more visible in later novels *The third party* (2007) by Patterson and *The forgotten waltz* (2011) by Enright. Both novels present how the cities have developed into postmodern urban centres with a new class of affluent businessmen inhabiting them. In the case of Enright, the discussion on the economic development and decline also touches the problem of individuals who paradoxically regain their personal sense of belonging in the times of the crisis. Patter-

son's novel also poses a question of the sense of belonging, since his work shows how the experience of a foreign country may help to comprehend one's own national heritage. A seemingly cosmopolitan Belfast from the perspective of Hiroshima becomes once again a provincial city, but changed since the atrocities of the Japanese city overwhelm those experienced by the novel's main character during the Troubles. Therefore, the Belfast of the twenty-first century is depicted as a peaceful place, which in contrast to other metropolises has not lost its local character yet. But this latter feature, formerly defined as negative, now is acknowledged as an advantage. Enright catches the moment of the end of the Celtic Tiger and the onset of the economic crisis. Her Dublin depicts the first symptoms of the decline visible in the spatial organization of the novel, with the former feeling of displacement being superseded by the retrieved sense of place. These two novels illustrate that not only the Irish space changes, but more importantly the perception of its inhabitants alters as well.

## Chapter One

# The meaning of one's own place: Some conceptual remarks on space and nationalism

“Balance, measure, and patience are just what the Celt has never had”  
Matthew Arnold<sup>1</sup>

“Ireland is a First World country, but with a Third World memory”  
Luke Gibbons<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, when talking about their place of living, people hardly ever have just in mind their geographical location. To have one's own place in the world, to regain one's sense of place, to feel displaced – all these issues so common in contemporary life delineate that the topic of place is insolubly linked with the issue of identity. This connection is also well visible in the etymological meaning of the word nation. Richard English in his study on Irish nationalism refers to the Latin verb *nascor*, which carries the meaning: to be born, to descend from (2006: 11). The understanding of the word has for the critic clear references to territorial origin, communal descent and culture as the three basic notions indicating one's own social affiliations. The first nations are said to have been heavily dependent on these three factors as defining their collective identity. Timothy Brennan limits his analysis of the term nation to the ancient word *natio* – standing for “a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging”, which he contrasts with the modern understanding of the word as the nation-state (1990: 45). For him, no matter which of the two meanings is taken into consideration, in each case the connection between

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<sup>1</sup> From Matthew Arnold, 2008. *On the study of Celtic language*, Sioux Falls SD USA: NuVision Publications, 54.

<sup>2</sup> From Luke Gibbons. 1996. *Transformations in Irish culture*. Cork: Cork University Press, 3.

place and identity remains equally important. Following William Raymond's line of thought that "Nation' as a term is radically connected with 'native'. We are born into relationships which are typically settled in a place" (Raymonds in Brennan 1990: 45), it seems understandable that the notion of place takes an active part in the process of the creation of self-awareness, both as an individual and as a group. The question remains how it is possible that such a way of defining one's own consciousness as dependant on one's place of origin or place of living has survived till contemporary times, dominated as they are by mass migration, constant travelling and a growing number of diasporas. At first glance it may seem that this traditional definition of national identity has lost its validity. However, a sociological analysis indicates the ongoing need among people to identify with a particular place, which marks nationalism as still the most territorial of all political ideologies today (Agnew 2004: 223).

On the one hand, the growing speed of travelling together with an easy access to distant places via television and the internet, which further facilitates the exchange of information with hardly any physical movement involved, result in time and space ceasing to be bound by a geographical place. This being the case, one should expect a decline in the importance of geographical locations, the border divisions between states and a growth in the merging of cultures. On the other hand, the growing internationalization of states together with the global economy have resulted in an increase in the interest of the notion of place as the location of culture<sup>3</sup> (Bauman 2011: 12). This is also partly connected with what Kristeva understands as the crisis of individual identity observable in the last decade of the twentieth century. For her, the fragmentation of individuals has led to the regressive phenomenon of returning to the old denominators of collective identity such as national origin or faith as an attempt at preserving the remains of one's own personality (1993: 2). Not all critics are so pessimistic about the reasons for the rebirth of national consciousness as embedded in place. Sutherland believes that globalization reinforces the need to manifest one's own collective identity, especially during travels, which provide an opportunity to meet people from all over the world (2012: 60). Once people are introduced to each other, the most probable question they ask is: "Where are you from?" The place of origin not only sparks the interest of people but more importantly it helps to situate them within the spatial organization of the world, which still remains dominated by the division of human beings into nations and states.

The Irish are not in the least any different. Ireland as an island has always defined its inhabitants and even today they remain very much attached to their homeland in its geographical sense. Gerry Smyth in his work *Space and the Irish cultural imagination* states that "modern Ireland is in fact ob-

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<sup>3</sup> This phrase refers to Homi Bhabha's *The location of culture*.

sessed with issues of space, and that this obsession may be understood to function at a number of interrelated levels” (2001: xiv). Starting with geopolitical aspects of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, going back to the cultural heritage epitomised by the myth of the West of Ireland, or the practice of *dinnseanchas* as early Irish literature, (the word itself meaning now topography, in the past, lore of places), Irish history is heavily marked by a need for spatial understanding of the surrounding reality. This remains visible in the way Irish people identify themselves with respect to others. Whenever they meet someone new, especially when abroad, they start from asking about the country of origin. If they come across another Irishman, they continue inquiring about the region, the town, or even the village if they happen to be from the same county (Inglis and Donnelly 2011: 135). Contrary to what one may expect, in the case of the Irish, the identification with the exact spot of one's origin is not a reactionary response towards the growing globalization of Europe, including the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is rather a trace of their traditional perception of the island as consisting of counties, which despite the flow of time remain different in the culture and mentality of their local communities. To fully grasp how the Irish people perceive and represent places, one cannot be limited to applying the general knowledge of spatial theories to research particular cases in isolation. The detailed analysis requires also an understanding of the current cultural factors determining a specific spatial perception and representation as well as the diachronic perspective on this issue. Therefore, my intention is to show in the theoretical part of this study why the twentieth century has become dominated by the discussion on space, with an emphasis placed on two most influential approaches: one stemming from Heideggerian phenomenology and the other having its origin in Marx's idea of socialism. Then I will go on to discuss the issue of the changing attitude of scholars towards the concept of nationalism, from a negative perspective embedded in the nationalistic movements of the first half of the twentieth century, to a more positive perspective residing in the rise of the phenomenon of globalism and, related to it, other aspects of contemporary life such as economic internationalization and unification. Finally, the debate on the connection between place and identity finishes with a closer look at the Irish context as an example of two countries which have to share one island, both still connecting their collective identities with Ireland's geographical location and landscape. Thus the general theory of space and nationalism are to help to tackle the question of contemporary Irish identity.

## 1.1. Representations of space in twentieth-century theories<sup>4</sup>

The beginning of the twentieth century marks an alteration in the interest of theoreticians and philosophers, whose fascination with the idea of time seems to have waned in favour of a new interest in the concept of space. The transposition of the academic attention from time to place resides partially in the birth of new branches of science, especially sociology and anthropology as the two which have provided the humanities with a novel approach towards the questions of the perception and representation of places. The first purely anthropological research on the perception of space belongs to Edward T. Hall who decided to focus predominantly on people's behaviour with reference to the way in which personal space is defined in a given culture. The theory of proxemics introduced in *The hidden dimension* (1966) provides academics with a typical for anthropology comparison between the behaviour of animals and human beings concerning the distribution of space within a group in order to draw attention to crucial differences between them. This being the case, the scholar shows that when it comes to human beings the perception of space is determined rather by culture than biological instincts. To delineate the difference, Hall first concentrates on all the senses used by people to experience space. He presents a disparity in the process of spatial perception depending on the sense used. However, certain general approaches of human beings towards space are observable, among them the needs of proxemics which divide space into several types of distances starting with intimate, personal and finishing with the public one. Further analysis illustrates several countries that represent disparate cultures and as a result the contrastive proxemic needs generated by them. It turns out that the term personal or public space, albeit present in all the cultures described, refers to different spatial representations. Therefore, Hall delivers a convincing argument that the perception of personal as well as social space has to be analyzed with regard to the culture from which a given individual or society stems. On the basis of this theory one may safely state that if culture determines the perception of space, then all observable changes in the approach towards space indicate alternations in the studied society and culture. Apart from the theory of proxemics, what the scholar of literature may find valuable in Hall's approach towards space is his reference to literature as a possible tool for decoding and

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<sup>4</sup> This part of the chapter includes theories from the English-speaking world as well as the most crucial representants of German and French academic societies, whose works are recognised world-wide. To provide a broader view on the trope of space, I have analyzed not only theoretical and philosophical approaches but also I refer to sociological and anthropological studies, since their works have significantly influenced the development of thought on the perception and representation of space.

encoding spatial perception. According to the anthropologist, a literary text becomes a valuable source of knowledge about culture and society when studied “self-consciously in order to identify the crucial components of the message” and “uses of distance as a significant cultural factor in interpersonal relations”(1966: 94) communicated by the author of a given text. By this token, he justifies a statement that literature is a verifiable source for a research on the perception of space and its relation to culture.

The majority of twentieth-century theories of space, no matter how divergent from the conceptual propositions of their predecessors, still rely on the classical ideas that have paved the way for the further development of spatial studies. The beginnings of scholarly works concerning space go back as far as to antiquity, when the basis for further learning about space provided atomists with Democritus as the leading figure (Tatarkiewicz 1978: 49). His statement that atoms and empty space are the only two things the existence of which one may be sure, was further developed in the Renaissance<sup>5</sup>. The teaching of Democritus has fallen into oblivion due to such fundamental figures as Plato and Aristotle, but Galileo is one of those scholars who brought the theory of the Greek philosopher back to light. He agreed with Democritus's subjective quality of the senses, claiming that experience may help in investigating the phenomena; however, without rules governing them one cannot understand the reality. This theoretical idea was put into practice by Newton, who together with Descartes are the thinkers considered to be responsible for reinforcing “the traditional philosophical conception of space” treating it similarly to places which carry meaning (Smyth 2001: 2). However, what is significant in Descartes's theory on space is his refutation of Democritus's vacuum, as for the Italian philosopher “there's no real difference between space and corporeal substance” (in Sorell 1987: 90). Empty space gains substance, therefore it stops being just the place where objects are located.

Discussing the concept of space, almost every theoretician at some point refers to Immanuel Kant, who in his critical philosophy has managed to combine the two formerly contradictory theories of rationalists and empiricists. His novel treatment of space as an ideal a priori intuition breaks up with Leibnitz's idea of space as a concept as well as with Hume's approach towards space as belonging to the real world (Scruton 2001: 41). Kant uses the terminology of Aristotle to show that space together with time are forms imposed on the sensations. Being the constituent parts of the intuitions, space and

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<sup>5</sup> The changing world has been explained by atomists as the constant movement of atoms, which themselves remain unchangeable and indestructible. As the atoms are distinguished only on the basis of their quantity value, all the quality ascribed to the objects is subjective. This argument for the first time has underlined the personal character of the perception process, its relativism suggesting that the perceived objects are merely states of mind, not the objective depictions of reality (Tatarkiewicz 1978: 48-50).

time take part in the process of experience, but alone do not belong to the outside world. Kant agrees with Leibnitz that space as a component of the intellect allows for experience to be eligible for the mind. However, Kant believes that space as a form remains the integral part of the intuition, having no connection with the physical world. By this token, space as well as time are subjective since they are directly linked with the individual human being. Intuitions are bound to differ among people, and no unified picture of spatial reality would be possible but for the universal concepts of the mind, which participate in the process of understanding the intuition. Concepts are an element shared by human beings, thus the mind when combining the intuitions to construct a unified picture of an object verifies the intuitions so that they do not stand in opposition to their concepts (Scruton 2001: 35). By this token, Kant traverses the uncharted ground by questioning the idea of space as objective and real. His approach towards space as a constituent part of the perception process allows to look at spatial representations as having common elements enforced by concepts, but still likely to differ due to their subjectivity.

The influence of Kant's theory on space is traceable in the majority of twentieth-century theories dealing with this concept. Interestingly, Kant gave rise to two most prominent theoretical schools of studies on spaces and places, namely, the phenomenological and sociological one. Having the same theoretical roots, the two groups started to develop divergent approaches towards the concept of space, which with time stand in stark contrast with each other. The phenomenological theory on space has been introduced by Martin Heidegger. He draws a connection between Being and the World, which for Heidegger are not distinct but complementary entities. The World is described in spatial terms because the heideggerian *Dasein* is spatial as well (Inwood 1997: 37-39). In *Being and time* (1927) the philosopher devotes some attention to the relation between the human being and place. He distinguishes between human being's horizontal and vertical involvement in place. The former concerns the surface level of human beings as it is determined by different social relationships, whereas the latter "hid[es] the uniqueness of being, but at the same time it is the place of Being" (Kluback and Wilde 1956: 19). By locating the uniqueness of man in the vertical dimension, Heidegger shows that the essence of human beings remains untouched, unchanged. What is prone to the process of alteration are the aspects of the horizontal dimension, all the adjectival qualifications, each of which describes just one aspect of one's entity. Thus, the vertical dimension is the place from which the meaning and structure arise to create the horizontal dimension. While these two dimensions are separated, they remain in unity. On the basis of this Heidegger comes to a conclusion that place is "the unique dwelling of being" (1956: 19), where the dwelling stands for consciousness. Therefore, life, liber-

ty and the pursuit of happiness constitute the essence of being, whilst to have place is to be free. Heidegger's relation between place and human being, albeit phenomenological in nature, has also practical implications as it makes place the essence of human identity.

These two core theses on space are continued in more detail in his later works, among them his essay "Building, dwelling, thinking" (1951)<sup>6</sup>. The core of his analysis revolves around the term *dwelling*, whose primordial meaning is "to stay in a place" (1971: 147). For Heidegger, building has also a function of preserving, and thus can be described in terms of dwelling. An important differentiation between a building and a thing is made to show that things do not include dwelling, and therefore cannot be ascribed to the category of building. Things may have a relation to building when they are locations, since only then can they allow for spaces. At this point Heidegger provides his definition of space, which, according to the scholar, is "something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary" (1971: 154). By a boundary the philosopher means the Greek understanding of the word, indicating something that begins its presence. Therefore, space, for Heidegger, is not limited but rather distinguished by its boundary, which signifies the presence of space, especially as the essence of space is determined by its location. Heidegger is the person who laid the foundation for the studies on spatial perception due to his statement that: "we always go through spaces in such a way that we already experience them by staying constantly with near and remote locations and things" (1971: 157). The physical encounter of space described by Heidegger is the moment of the direct relation between a human being and space, the connection which happens thanks to the act of dwelling. And only if people are capable of dwelling can they produce new spaces by the process of building.

The phenomenological reading of space has become the dominant method in *The poetics of space* (1958) by Gaston Bachelard, who is one of the followers of Heidegger's philosophy. Bachelard's work provides an elaborate depiction of literature's usefulness in the enquiry on the perception of space with a focus on the act of experiencing intimate places. Referring to Heidegger's idea of "dwelling", Bachelard makes his analysis a phenomenological one, trying to grasp the ontology of the house's intimate places. His analysis of the domestic area remains the most exhaustive and popular research for academics dealing with the themes of the house and intimate places. This is predominantly thanks to Bachelard's treatment of the house "as the corner of the universe" (1994: 4)<sup>7</sup>. By looking at the domestic space as the microcosm of the community, Bachelard provides a link between the interior

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<sup>6</sup> The text was first published in 1951; however, citations come from the 1971 edition.

<sup>7</sup> The text was first published in 1958, the citations come from the 1994 edition.

domestic space and the exterior space of the whole country. Not only does this allow for contrasting these two spaces but more importantly for treating the house and its inhabitants as a synecdoche of the state and the society. By this token, the study acquires a more universal and general tone, going beyond the walls of the place that is analyzed. For Bachelard, domestic space has also another pivotal function of storing memories. This quality turns the experience of the space into an oneric one, therefore eligible for psychoanalytic reading. The way in which particular places store individual memories provides us with a good insight into the psyche of the householder. This being the case, Bachelard makes a valuable link between space and human beings, namely, that people have a tendency to ascribe meaning and function to the spaces they inhabit, turning it into places. For the scholar, each place no matter whether it is a window, a drawer or a corner, not only has a general function typical for this place, but at the same time carries an intimate meaning known just to its inhabitants. Therefore, Bachelard stresses the superiority of the individual's spatial perception to the communal one. The significance of intimate space in everyday life draws attention to the question of its maintenance in the contemporary world, where the balance in the dialectics between the inside and the outside has been disrupted. This, according to Bachelard, happens predominantly in the cities, where the lack of natural landscape leads to the diminishing role of the domestic interior as an intimate place. Only in the presence of the countryside's immensity can the dialectics of the inside and the outside be sustained. This appears to be a crucial point in the discussion on the cultural phenomenon of the Irish countryside as the embodiment of the real Ireland and its community.

The eighties bring another wave of Heidegger's advocates who yet again draw attention to the holistic nature of the concept of space, with Michael Foucault as one of them. Many of his works are analyzed through the perspective of a Heideggerian putative influence, with his *Order of things* (1966) being treated as to a great extent analogous with *Being and time* (Sluga 2005: 218). Known predominantly for his practical usage of spatial theory in the idea of panopticon, Foucault is rarely associated with *Of other spaces* (1984). Conversely to what is usually presumed, Foucault's studies on space have their origin in discourse rather than practice. His approach towards this concept moves along a line beginning with spatial discourse (discourse explained through spatial metaphor) to discursive space (an area where discourse comes into interaction with physical space) (West-Pavlov 2009: 112-113). This is well visible in his article on space, in which he revolves around the theoretical treatment of space. He begins with a firm argument that contrary to the previous century, dominated by history, the twentieth century is an epoch of simultaneity. As the new pace of life forces many things to happen at the same time, the only concept viable to represent reality is

space (1984: 22). However, he draws attention to the fact that the usage of space for emplacement is not a new approach, but goes back to Galileo's times. With reference to Bachelard's exhaustive work on intimate spaces, Foucault turns to external space. Respectively to what his predecessor claims, outer space is never void but filled with a variety of relations. Space is also filled with places, among which the scholar differentiates heterotopias. These places act as mirrors since they reflect counter positions to the ones occupied. Their function is to make people realize their absence in the place they inhabit as they see themselves in the heterotopian space. This makes the physical space on the one hand real since one may see it via the reflection, but on the other hand unreal, as just thanks to the heterotopia can one become aware of the actual place he or she occupies.

To delineate the meaning of heterotopia more clearly, Foucault enumerates principles which determine the concept. First of all, hardly any culture fails to produce heterotopias. Society with time may alter the primordial function of heterotopias treating them in a novel way. Therefore, one heterotopia may juxtapose in a single place many spaces, or many meanings. As the function tends to change, heterotopias are open to temporal time. Their changing function means that they have an opening and closing stage, which may isolate them as well as allow for the penetration of space. Finally, heterotopias fluctuate between the two extremes. Either they form an illusionary space that exposes the real space, or they create a space that is other to the real one, the space of compensation. Foucault's heterotopias appears to be yet another way of conceptualizing the process of spatial perception and representation, crucial in the spatial studies on literature.

The second theoretician of the time, who openly bases his concept of space on the phenomenological philosophy is Michel de Certeau. He distinguishes in his work between two ways of experiencing space – as a voyeur and as a walker<sup>8</sup>. The former looks at space from a distance, being able to grasp the holistic picture. The latter, being the practitioner of space, participates in the process of writing the space. The network of movements creates a story of a place, which has neither the author nor the reader. The motion in space leads the scholar to the notion of travelling incarceration. By this term he attempts to explain the traveller's state of captivity while going by train. In his analysis of space, de Certeau turns also to the discourse of poetics by adjusting the figure of

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<sup>8</sup> Being mostly interested in the space of the city, de Certeau puts forward a definition of the city based on three operations used in urban discourse. The first is the production of its own space, free from the repressing forces of physical, mental or political control; the substitution of the synchronic system, to escape the resistance to changes evoked by traditions; and the creation of a universal subject, namely, the city itself (1984: 94). The ideal described by the critic is hardly ever practiced, as the result of which the effect of spatial production is contrary to the original aim.

synecdoche and asyndeton to describe two contrastive spatial representations. The former expands the spatial element so that it is not just limited to the place described but also stands for a more general idea of space. Conversely, the latter creates gaps in the spatial continuum and therefore epitomizes fragmented places, of which a holistic picture cannot be formed (1984: 101). In the second instance walking becomes an act of filling the void of space, an attempt at rebuilding a link between the isolated fragments. De Certeau links his earlier statement of writing the city through walking with a more general argument that each place has its own story. They constitute the invisible entities of the visible objects. However, the story may not only be a product of space but also produce new representations of spaces: “every story is a travel story – a spatial practice” (1984: 115). By spatial practice he means a constant process of transforming places into spaces and spaces into places. To explain this transformation, he first states the difference between place and space. A place for the scholar is determined by the order according to which elements are distributed being in a relationship of coexistence. This does not allow for two things to have the same location. In contrast, space is characterized by its direction, velocities and time variables. Being mobile, space may be situated and temporalized, working in a polyvalent interaction with other spaces. This makes space prone to modifications or total transformations, which brings de Certeau to a conclusion that “space is a practiced place” (1984: 117). The action of reading is for the scholar a good example of a space produced through the practice of a place – a written text. This being the case, de Certeau distinguishes between two kinds of narratives about space: a map and a tour, the former of the two being colonizing in nature as it imposes a location on the place. A narrative of space takes over its typical features, and thus may also be polyvalent with other narratives. It may become displaced when moved from its original location to a new one, as it happens in the case of rewriting a text by placing it in a new context. All these detailed accounts on the concept of space and place clearly indicate the crucial role of a literary text in studies on space (1984: 123-125).

The sociological approach towards the concept of space has been initiated by Karl Marx and his idea of internationalism and cosmopolitanism as the future of social relations found in *Capital: The critique of political economy* (1867). Marx, though he did not produce any theory directly linked with the perception of space, has provided his followers with substantial grounds by introducing the concept of production. Referring to Fauerbach, who claims that human beings differ from animals since they are the only species conscious of themselves, Marx uses this statement to claim that only through production does the consciousness of human beings come to full light. Crucial also appears to be his adoption of the hegelian dialectical development of the mind to talk about the materialist advancement of the capital cities (Singer 1980: 17, 35). One of the first sociologists who further develops Marx’s understanding of international economy by linking it

with studies on the concept of space is Georg Simmel, according to whom the perception of space is predominantly determined by the sense of sight. The personal gaze at the surrounding space becomes a significant aspect in the social relations within the place one occupies as well as the spatial orientation. Whilst the walker learns the place where they are thanks to their observation of the architecture, he also does the same by watching the crowd's behaviour. Simmel's influence on the development of studies on space is designated by the strand on spatial perception as well as his work on the relationship between place and personal consciousness. The essence of the individual entity is based on the constant struggle for independence from "the sovereign powers of society (...) the weight of historical heritage and the external culture" (1903: 11). This phenomenon, as Simmel notes, is most visible in the twentieth-century cities, which contrary to the urban centres of previous epochs, have replaced value accumulation with value exchange. The money oriented societies have reduced the life of individuals to the quantitative level. This results in a new group of citizens emerging characterized by a blasé approach towards life defined as: "indifference toward the distinction between things" (1903: 14). Their ability to perceive reality is reduced to money as the sole denominator of all values. Space exists just as the totality of effect, losing its boundaries. Place has no limits, its inhabitants constantly exceed its horizontal dimension as it constantly spreads swallowing up other spaces. Simmel's observations give foundation for the development of sociology, especially the urban aspect which becomes popular during the twentieth century.

The eighties and nineties are also the time when the Marxist thought is continued in novel forms and its adherents refer to new aspects of the postmodern reality. Among them is Doreen Massey who concentrates on the process of globalization with reference to the perception of time and space. Adopting Marx's point of view on the modern era, which according to the philosopher will bring "the annihilation of space by time", Massey develops her conception of "time-space compression" (1984: 232). According to her, the presence of such geographical phenomena as a global village, overcoming of spatial barriers or the disruption of horizons indicate the growing annihilation of space through the disruption of time perception. She tries to answer the question whether in postmodern times the sense of a stipulation of place is possible if the term time-space compression "refers to movement and communication across space, to the geographical stretching-out of social relations, and to our experience of all this" (1984: 233). Although one may be tempted to name these changes as internationalization, for the scholar the latter term is insufficient to be able to explain all the aftermaths of time-space compression. The insecurity ascribed to this new phenomenon is refuted by Massey who does not see anything wrong with the fact that young generations do no longer have any attachment to one particular place. The negative responses are ascribed predominantly to social groups heavily influenced by "reactionary nationalism, to competitive localism,

to introverted obsessions with ‘heritage’” (1984: 236). States or areas which have a single identity based on historical accounts of internalized origins become problematic when faced with the inevitability of internationalization or globalization. The concept of place similarly to other concepts has to be treated in global terms if it is to conform to the changing geography of social relations, which are constantly stretching over a wider and wider area. Therefore, sustaining a direct connection between a place and a community is no longer valid in contemporary times. This leads to the exclusion of the society’s members who do not occupy a given place. To overcome this problem Massey proposes a new way of perceiving place as “a particular constellation of social relations” (1984: 239). By this token, places are not defined by their boundaries but by the movements in networks of these relations. This makes the sense of place extroverted, namely, having a consciousness of the links with the rest of the world, which integrates the community and builds a bridge between the global and local. By accepting the fact that “places are processes too” (1984: 239) one may more easily acknowledge the changes in the perceptions of place that have already occurred and are bound to happen in the foreseeable future.

The effects of postmodernism on the representation of space are also traceable in Edward W. Soja’s work *Postmodern geographies* (1989). Soja adds his voice to the discussion on the relation between the centre and the periphery as usually epitomized by the city and the countryside. Soja moves his argument of the subordinate margins and dominating centres to a more global level by examining the case of the geographically uneven development of some countries. Similarly to what Engels wanted to show through the example of a conflict between classes over the housing problem in big metropolises, with the ruling class wielding power over the space of the city, Soja argues that the economic underdevelopment of some countries may be justified with the same spatial mechanisms. Those states which manage to advance economically become the dominant spaces, taking control over other states and making them dependant on their economy and therefore suppressed with regard to their individual development (1988: 98-110). Soja apart from a strictly sociological approach towards the topic of space, also asks more philosophical questions concerning the ontological conceptualization of space. He draws attention to the need for distancing in the creation of spatial relations. The process of reality’s objectification followed by the production of spatial relations requires the creation of a gap or a distance. The human capacity of detachment allows for locating oneself in space, which according to the scholar is the primordial condition for the individual consciousness. The interplay between distance and the individual’s relation to it preconditions the creation of identity on the personal and collective level. With this statement, Soja becomes another scholar who justifies the importance of space in the process of identity formulation. Finally, he remarks upon space in the context of post-

modern geography, which is based predominantly on the process of spatial restructuring on the ontological, materialist and cultural levels.

The discussion on the role of space in postmodern times commenced by Soja is further developed by David Haverty in *The condition of post-modernity* (1989). He begins his analysis with differentiating between the modern and postmodern treatment of space by planners who used to perceive the city as a finished space, whilst now they tend to acknowledge its incomplete and changing nature (1989: 44). As a coherent representation appears to be impossible, theoreticians drop the attempt to take a global view on its space. Instead, they cultivate the fragmentariness of representation being interested in the palimpsestic structure of the space of the city, its "past forms superimposed upon each other, and a 'collage' of current uses, many of which may be ephemeral" (1989: 66). For Haverty, the delineated condition of the space in the city is predetermined by the process of absorption and accumulation indicative of capitalism. Placing the capital in one place leads to the over-accumulation which further requires the production of new space. Such an excessive spatial production results in the spatial displacement experienced by its inhabitants, who do not manage to conform to the hectic pace of changes in the surrounding reality. This brings the scholar to a conclusion that no objective meaning can be assigned to space if one does not take material processes into account (1989: 204). Even so, Haverty does not underplay the importance of the subjective experiences of space which due to the process of perception, imagination or the creation of fiction produce mental spaces and maps working as a representation of real places.

The identity of a community as "a social entity created in space through time" (1989: 204) is for Haverty predetermined by the concept of space. Therefore, its representation is inherently dependent on the individual's experience and memory. With reference to Heidegger's dwelling-places and the memories stored in them, Haverty acknowledges that time is memorized through experienced places, and thus history becomes subordinate to poetry, time to space and material production to social representation (1989: 218). Conversely to Soja, distance may either be the place of interaction or of a barrier, which causes a friction in social relations (1989: 222). The relativity of the representation of space is well exemplified by the different ways in which societies throughout the ages have tried to take control over the places known as well as unknown in the form of maps. They were the first attempts to provide an abstract, homogenous and universal representation of space. It was followed by art, which for a long time was to obey the rule of mimesis in its depiction of places. The first signs of change in the depiction of space are traceable in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the traditional meaning of space begins to be questioned (1989: 263). For Haverty, this is the moment from when the process of changing spatial perception commences. Crucial for the further development of the

representation of space are Nietzsche's words "there were as many spaces in reality as there were perspectives on it" (in Haverty 1989: 268) which gave grounds for the new theory of perspectivism. This allowed for a modernist suppression of spatial boundaries. Haverty finishes his inquiry about the transformation of spatial perception and representation on the post-modern time-space compression. Its disorienting and disruptive influence makes contemporary space more ephemeral, causing it to come under a threat of complete annihilation. The scarcity of space, which nowadays societies encounter, results in the increasing association of space with the individual and collective identity.

The influence of globalization on places and spaces is also of great interest to John Urry, a sociologist who focuses in his studies on the aspect of tourism as a constituent part of a globalized world in *Consuming places* (1995). The key terms in his analysis entail society, space and locality, the meaning of which he examines in detail. For him, space is best defined by the spatial relations designating its distance, continuity and "betweenness". Neither should space be treated as a totality, nor limited just to the objects that occupy it. By this token, he adopts the stance of Lefebvre; however, he goes against the idea of the determining role of spatial structure in the organization of society. Urry denounces such a line of thinking, arguing convincingly that spatial areas themselves do not interact with one another (1995: 65). It is the social object located within a given area that is to be made answerable for the interaction with other such objects. Therefore, Urry claims that a common misconception in the analysis of spatial relations is when one tries to discuss the influence of the centre on the periphery, or the city on the countryside. With no social relations, spaces cannot make any connections on their own. This being the case, areas are socially produced and reproducing. The interrelation between space and society is further associated with the notion of locality, whose definition depends on the discourse in which it is used. The one Urry applies to his studies is not regionally limited, but bears resemblance to the community at its most basic level of social relations. Here locality stands for a group of people who constitute a micro society directly linked with the area they inhabit.

Taking this aspect into consideration, Urry draws attention to the unresolved problem with rural sociology, which seems to be unable to respond to the issue of the countryside in the same way as it did with the city. While the urban sociology continues to thrive, the rural areas remain underestimated as the potential object of study. For Urry, this is due to the fact that many sociologists are not capable of looking at the countryside in the same terms as the city, namely, as a community consisting of localities. Only when the scholars begin to perceive space through the social relations, may the rural space be treated in a broader perspective than just in opposition to the city. Contemporary urban space may also be analyzed with respect to the concept of locality, understood as

the smallest social unit after a family. The validity of this concept is justified by a statement that metropolitan centres more and more often are subdivided into local communities which have to compete for urban space. Nowadays, one of the locality's challenges concern tourist consumptionism, as many local people feel threatened by the influx of visitors. Urry tries to persuade that tourists are an inseparable part of the local community, having the same right to its space as the inhabitants: "Visitors are as local as the real locals" (1995: 106). This is detectable in the regions which partly or wholly depend on the tourist industry. The visitors who come are attracted by the place itself as well as the place-myths, whose life becomes dependent on the tourists themselves. On the one hand, they transmit the myths by telling stories from their travels, but by becoming part of the story they change the myths as well. Due to the growing visitors' impact on the place they occupy together with the increasing globalization and unification of space, an intensification of the local distinctiveness is observable. This process of time-space compression as one of the aftermaths of globalization, results in a loss of barriers. What some critics perceive as negative, Urry approaches in a positive way. The justification resides in the claim that the annihilation of spatial boundaries does not indicate the decrease of space itself. The novel approach towards the perception of local space and rural areas disseminated by John Urry in his sociological works is one step further in the acknowledgement of the dialectic nature of space. The ongoing change in the approach towards the perception of space on the theoretical level is facilitated by such scholars as Urry, thanks to whom the traditional opposition between the city and the country becomes obsolete in favour of a more unified concept of locality.

Apart from the two contrastive approaches towards the concept of space, there are at least two theoreticians who have managed to go beyond the boundaries of sociological studies and who make an attempt at combining it with the phenomenological view and look at space as a trope. Walter Benjamin, adopting many of the ideas of Heidegger, is one of those twentieth-century thinkers who in his works makes the act of experiencing space his fundamental concept. He clearly delineates his stance with the following words: "Only someone walking along the lane will experience its dominion" (2009: 52). However, as a Marxist, he is very melancholic towards the inevitable end of existence's unity and wholeness. The modern way of life forces society to lead a fragmented existence, and the same happens to the individual's experience. Only such objects as the city may force the mind to "stare itself out" of fragmentary existence and experience space as a whole (Jameson 1971:60-61). Already in *One-way street* (1928)<sup>9</sup>, Benjamin underlines the necessity of a walk in the process of experiencing space. His interest in the

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<sup>9</sup> The text originally published in 1928, the citations come from the edition published in 2009.

space of the city is yet present in his loose reflections from his trip to Germany. Not until the publication of his literary analysis of Baudelaire does he produce a constant association of experiencing the space of the city with strolling, encapsulated in one term – *the flaneur*. Showing his association with the school of Western Marxism, Benjamin refers in his essay to Engel's work *The condition of the working class in England* (1845), where he finds comments on Engel's experience of London. Engel's account presents the city space as endless and overwhelming with its amount of inhabitants. The feeling of alienation and anonymity evoked by the masses, acts as a negative example in defining the concept of *flanerie*. According to Benjamin, a real *flaneur* moves with ease among the crowd, feeling integrity with the rest of the citizens (1969: 166-167). In the following analysis of Baudelaire's poems the philosopher concentrates on the city crowds. Likewise, Benjamin critically refers to the texts by pinpointing the poet's hesitant attitude towards the mobs in Paris, who on the one hand accept his position as a member of the crowd, but on the other force Baudelaire to dissociate himself from the people around him. Benjamin draws attention to Engels's lack of city experience in comparison to Baudelaire who knows the capital. This draws one to a tentative conclusion that in order to freely experience the space of the city one has to learn it.

The most influential scholar of the twentieth century is Henri Lefebvre who as a follower of social theory on the representation of space, was the person who attempted at creating a philosophy of urban space analogical with the phenomenological one. Lefebvre in *The right to the city* (1967)<sup>10</sup> starts from refuting Heidegger's superior treatment of the countryside as the basis for the spatial studies in comparison to the city's space. By this token, Lefebvre looks critically at Heidegger's approach which further strengthens the unnecessary dichotomy between the countryside and the city, opting for a dialectic discourse between the rural and urban spaces (Kofman and Lebas 1996: 13). This being the case, Lefebvre challenges the traditional approach towards the country and the city as binary oppositions and advocates Marx's idea of dialectics in the treatment of this topic. The influence of Marxism on Lefebvre's thought is clearly visible in this work since he grounds it on treating the city as an *oeuvre*, meaning the city's use value, the product of which is the exchange value (1996: 66). As a result, the spatial theory has lost its holistic character, since more and more scholars avoid a purely philosophical approach towards the topic, instead concentrating on one aspect in greater detail. Historians, economists, demographers or sociologists when dealing with space produce fragmentary studies which contribute to the science of the city, but do not provide a unified picture of it (1996: 94-95). The only branch of learning eligible for restoring the holistic study of city space appears to be philosophy. Lefebvre believes that the mistakes of Heidegger and Bachelard

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<sup>10</sup> The work first published in 1967, the references based on the 1996 edition.

may be rectified by planners, constituting the only group of scientists who approach space in a philosophical way, namely, looking at it as a totality<sup>11</sup>. To justify his argument, Lefebvre provides an example of Plato, who as a philosopher was a first city planner. The combination of modern planning and traditional philosophy is the branch of learning amenable to grasp the specificity of the city<sup>12</sup>.

However, the most important contribution remains his other work *The production of space* (1974)<sup>13</sup> which summarizes all Lefebvre's theory concerning the concept of space. In this book Lefebvre continues the line of thinking introduced by Marx, highlighting the influence of capitalism, which turned space into a "social practice" (1991: 12). However, what appears to be innovative in his approach towards space is the implementation of the idea of referentiality. For him, space can no longer be analyzed as an abstract concept. Contrary to phenomenological thinking, space in the twentieth century is a social construct, and therefore has to be analyzed in context. Another important aspect he draws attention to, is the fact that space cannot be treat-

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<sup>11</sup> The emphasis on the holistic treatment of the city space is further justified by Lefebvre with a statement that the transformations of its space always radiate over the whole city. This is also connected with the fact that the city changes when the society as a whole undergoes a process of alternation. The city's transformation is not a passive outcome of what happens to its inhabitants, but rather the result of dialectical interaction with two types of social relations, which Lefebvre names as "near order" and "far order" (1996: 101). The former stands for the relations with individuals, the latter is defined as relations with society represented by the authorities and institutions of power. Therefore, the production of city space as an *oeuvre* is more similar to a work of art than a simple material product, since the production is the outcome of human relations' interactions. The interdependence between the space of the city and its inhabitants is well illustrated with Lefebvre's concluding definition of the city as "a projection of society on the ground" (1996: 109). Therefore, the cry for the right to the city in modern times alludes to the need for bringing the right to its space. As the scholar points out, in antiquity the centre of the city was an open space as it was the place of agora or forum. By locating the place reserved for discussions in the very centre of the city the first planners showed that the essence of the city is its social relations and interactions. The centers of modern cities are reserved for the buildings belonging to the ruling institutions. Even if they are supposed to represent the society, the space remains closed to the public. More often than not the authorities decide on the spatial arrangement of the city, which leads to the feeling of displacement among citizens. The detailed analysis of the city space, both its theoretical and practical side, has an insurmountable impact on the way space may be researched as well as it yields a new approach towards space production and representation.

<sup>12</sup> Such a line of argument may be justified by the fact that Plato when thinking about a city had in mind the set of social relations rather than the architectural construction (Watt 1997: xix). Therefore, a planner, according to Lefebvre, is capable of reconstructing social relations in the spatial organization of the city.

<sup>13</sup> The text first published in 1974, the quotations and references come from the 1991 edition.

ed just as a “passive locus of social relations” since its primordial role is “the existing mode of production” (1991: 11). This turn from a passive to an active role of space in social life is the essential aspect of his studies on space. This is also the notion which differentiates him from previous Marxist thinkers. Lefebvre puts forward his argument by starting with a statement that social space is a social product, which with time may become an uncontrollable autonomy eligible for the production of new spaces on its own. To clearly delineate this process he draws attention to two types of illusion created within a community. The first concerns the illusion of transparency happening when people presume that space is passive, therefore, innocent. All changes happening to the space are ascribed to the actions of people who are held responsible for them. In contrast, the second, realistic illusion refers to “the belief that ‘things’ have more of an existence than the ‘subject’, his thoughts and his desires” (1991: 29). In order to reassure one’s own existence, the subject tends to relate to the places one occupies, in this way producing new spaces, or new meanings to the existing ‘things’.

Depending on whether the space is produced or produces other spaces, Lefebvre divides it into three types: spatial practice, representations of space and representational places (1991: 33). The first type involves all “production and reproduction of particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation” (1991: 33) which in neocapital reality means the architectural construction or reconstruction. Each physical creation is considered to belong to the social practice of space. The second stage involves “the relations of production to the ‘other’, which those relations impose” (1991: 33), namely, the knowledge about and meanings of the places produced. Here the function of place in the society is important as well as its past usage. Also at this stage, the perception of space is important as it is the project which comes before the real production takes place. As this type of space is the most creative one, it has become the most dominant in contemporary societies. Here the physical space may act as a stimuli for a concept, which later may produce new places. Crucial remains also the fact that at this moment space encapsulates the realm of physical and mental representation, entering in this way the world of language. As a result, space moves “towards a system of verbal signs” (1991: 39). The third and most abstract is the representational space, which embodies “complex symbolisms” being defined as “a code of representational spaces” (1991: 33). This is the realm of philosophers, artists and writers as the space is experienced through its images and symbols, thus passively. However, sometimes such abstract space may produce real places, therefore making the full circle back to the spatial practice. This happens when some philosophical concepts or artistic visions are put into practice, as it was in the case of communism.

As far as literature is concerned, the focus of attention should be placed on the second and third type of spatial production as literary texts either try to represent the already existing space or to create one, which has no representation in reality. Important in this matter is the difference Lefebvre pinpoints when dealing with this classification. As he holds, representations of space are already described as abstract, still they remain connected with social and political space, and therefore obey the rules of consistency and cohesiveness. Representational spaces, however, are no longer subordinate to any rules, becoming autonomous entities (1991: 41-42). The salience of these two kinds of space is for the scholar unquestionable, thus one ought to study not only the history of space but also the history of its representation, to be precise: "their interconnections, distortions, displacements, mutual interactions, and their link with the spatial practice of the particular society" (1991: 42). Taking into consideration how multiple are the representations of space in each and every society, Lefebvre comes to a conclusion that they must have a considerable role and influence on how space is further produced in a given society. By this token, the scholar produces an interconnection and interdependence crucial for literary studies between the real space and its representation as well as between the representations of space and further production of new spaces. The validity of literary studies on space is further underlined with the diachronic scrutiny of the representation of space, which, to follow Lefebvre's argument, appears to be valuable for the understanding of the spatial production and the society responsible for this process.

The relation between space and society is clearly delineated by Lefebvre in his chapter on social space. The scholar enunciates that social relations are embedded in space, and thus the production of social space as a process has its own history (1991: 88-110). This being the case, the history of spatial representation correlates with the history of the nation. These two concepts are bound in two crucial points: when creating a hierarchy and exerting influence over the society. The hierarchical order makes some places more important than the rest of the country, with the creation of the capital as the essence of nationhood. The principle of power, or as Lefebvre calls it violence, allows for control and exploitation of space in a variety of ways. Depending on which system governs the state: feudal, bourgeois, imperial, or other, the changes in the perception of space and its usage are defined by either of the following two concepts: dominated and appropriated space. By the former Lefebvre means the space which is transformed by technology or social practice in such a way that the space becomes isolated from nature. On the contrary, associated space remains natural, albeit modified to serve the needs of the community inhabiting it. This binary opposition between the two concepts is to reflect the everlasting conflict between the spatial organization of the city and the countryside. On the basis of these two extreme positions,

Lefebvre distinguishes three moments in the history of social spatial production (1991: 218-219). The first, being the least invasive in nature, happened when people still used space according to its content. Then, space and time were inseparable. The second moment took place when people began to accumulate goods and knowledge, using space as a source of money. This is the time when art begins to be created but still in a realistic way so that it tries to follow the notion of mimesis. Consequently, “space brings time under its sway in the praxis of accumulation” (1991: 218). What happens nowadays, is the third moment when space becomes ungraspable, abstract and unthinkable. Time is “actualized in space” becoming reality only through the spatial practice (1991: 219). The transformation of natural space leads, according to the scholar, to the disturbance in social relations. Thus, states tend to reproduce natural space to restore the broken link between society and space. As one may see, Lefebvre in his study advocates the traditional relation of human beings with space, as it still may be found in the countryside, where the production of social space does not transform the already existing natural places. What is typical for the city, is the destructive transformation of space and a constant production of abstract spaces, which leads to the displacement of the city’s inhabitants.

Apart from those scholars who focus their analyses predominantly on the aspect of spaces and places, there is also a group of theoreticians, whose works, albeit not ascribed to the spatial studies, provide interesting observations on the trope of space. Among them one may find Homi Bhabha’s theory of “the third space”, which is most often used in post-colonial studies, or more a general study of Paul Ricoeur with his three volumes of *Time and narrative* as well as his prominent work *Memory, history, forgetting*. Hannah Arendt in her famous *The human condition* many a time refers to the aspect of interdependence between the place and the individual, whereas Julia Kristeva when scrutinizing the aspect of the Other, provides an interesting reading of space from the foreigner’s perspective. These and other examples illustrate that not only spatial studies are to a great extent interdisciplinary, but more importantly that the analysis of spatial tropes requires a constant reference to many seemingly disparate disciplines starting with philosophy, theory of literature, sociology, cultural studies finishing with anthropology.

The overwhelming majority of the theories presented come to similar conclusions concerning the concept of space. First, they tend to stress the significance of the individual’s experience as the basic constituent of the collective knowledge. The personal quality of the perception results in the relativity of the spatial representation. Thus the unified picture of reality is the outcome of the dialogic interaction between different stances, which underlines the heterogeneous nature of the society’s experience. Secondly, they focus on the possible consequences of the subjective representation on the

spatial perception by the whole of society as well as its further production. The fact that the personal observations happen to vary substantially, means that the overall picture of the space becomes fragmented and unfinished making the process of spatial construction temporal, incomplete and prone to new alterations. Therefore, any changes traceable in spatial perception and representation indicate a shift in the individuals' conscience as an integral part of the society's mentality. These theoretical statements may find some analogy in contemporary societies. Many of them appear to undergo a transformation from a homogenous perception of a society to a more varied perspective, as more and more often minorities and diasporas are able to add their voice to the discussion on the collective identity and its relation to the space they occupy. These alternative narratives bring about the changes in the presentation of space, accepting its fragmentary and inconclusive form. As a result, new spaces are being produced, whereas the spaces already existent gain a new line of representation. Hence, by analyzing the depiction of space one may observe what kind of alterations are happening in the society. Important for the scrutiny of social relations seem to be especially those spatial theories which advocate a new approach towards the traditional opposition between the city and the countryside, proposing to look at it in a dialogic sense, namely, as spaces interdependent and interrelated to one another. Such a treatment of the rural and urban areas may provide a possible solution to the everlasting conflict between the city and the country so well-rooted in the Irish conscience.

## 1.2. From a political ideology to a cultural self-awareness – the changing approach towards the concept of nationalism in the twentieth century and beyond

The discussion on the notion of nationalism has for the last century become dominated by the analysis of the negative consequences this ideology brought about at the beginning of the twentieth century. This rather controversial character of nationalism, whose weakness resides in the easiness with which it can enter the political discourse, has resulted in this concept being treated analogously with racism or fascism (Guibernau 1996: 85). The responsibility placed on nationalism as the ideology answerable for all the atrocities of two world wars as well as the repercussions caused by the Treaty of Versailles and Woodrow Wilson's idea of making Europe a continent neatly divided into states, each of which was supposed to be inhabited by a separate ethnically and linguistically homogenous nation, is highly noticeable. This being a *reduction ad absurdum* gave rise to the abysmal phenomena of the mass expulsion or even genocide of

different minorities (Hobsbawm 1992: 132-133)<sup>14</sup>. The direct link between nationalism and ethnic prejudice has resulted in this notion gaining negative connotations in the post-war period, which has become also visible in a total lack of interest of the academic world in this subject.

The long period of scholarly stagnation of interest from the 1940s till the 1980s in the issue of nationalism, apart from those focused on the independence movements predominantly connected with the collapse of the British Empire and the emergence of post-colonial reality, is one of the clear indicator's of nationalism's temporal decline as an academic topic (Agnew 2004: 224). The marked return of academic interest in the concept of nationalism since the 1980s may best illustrate a substantial number of new critical works on this topic at that time. John Armstrong's *Nations before nationalism* (1982), Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities* (1983), Ernest Gellner's *Nations and nationalism* (1983), and Anthony Smith's *Theories of nationalism* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1983) were published almost at the same time, which shows the remarkable scale of attention refocused back on the question of nationalism. The justification for this is presented by Hobsbawm in the form of three main factors. Firstly, the term nation and nationalism has changed its meaning throughout the twentieth century, thus scholars have found it necessary to try redefining the concept. Secondly, many new phenomena connected with the issue of nationalism have happened, deserving the scholarly attention. Fundamental for this period are such events as the fall of USSR and Yugoslavia, as well as the Falklands war, which mark the last mass outburst of nationalism in the twentieth century. This desperate attempt to keep the last colony has not only cost many lives, but more importantly has resulted in a severe criticism from the post-colonial world targeted at the political discourse of Thatcherism. The intervention on the Falkland Islands was read as an act of nationalism and imperial nostalgia, revealing the post-imperial crisis in the English nation (Hall in Gikandi 1996: 21). This political discourse has an Irish context as well, since the beginning of the 1980s were marked by the hunger strikes of IRA members, whom Thatcher would not give the status of political prisoners. Finally, many theoreticians have begun to forecast the decline<sup>15</sup> of nationalism as a form of

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<sup>14</sup> Hobsbawm as a Marxist historian and theoretician may sometimes be considered obsolete in his theories; however, his fundamental work *Nations and nationalism since 1780* remains a good source of information about the process of development of the concept of nationalism.

<sup>15</sup> Zygmunt Bauman is one of those sociologists who is against this statement, since for him the concept of ethnic nationalism is still prevalent in contemporary societies, though it is less direct. To justify his approach, Bauman refers to the idea of cleanness as a constituent part of the ethnic ideology, which today is supposed to be expressed by the idea of keeping the country unified and in order. This attitude may take different forms among them the idea of following the newest trends and fashion (2000: 20-26).

identification with the rise of the global market accompanied by new phenomena such as internationalisation and mass migration (1992: 8-12). Critics decide to confront all these novel aspects of nationalism to show that nationalism as a concept has undergone a gradual process of transformation not only in its meaning but also in its image from a negative to a more positive one.

Whenever nationalism is methodologised, the majority of critics start with referring to all existing theories on this phenomenon (Gellner 1983; Guibernau 1996; Smith 2010; Sutherland 2012). Such an analysis leads many of the scholars, like Smith, to the most important distinction between 'ethnic' and 'civic' understanding of nationalism (2010: 42). These two contrastive theories are supposed to represent the two disparate treatments of nationalism, with the ethnic approach having its peak of popularity at the beginning of the twentieth century and the civic one as the one to which contemporary societies seem to have returned. The ethnocentric nationalism is claimed to have its roots in the German Romantic convictions, with the idea of *Volk* as the essential part of this ideology (During 1990: 139), which facilitated the unification of Germany in the nineteenth century as well as the infamous ideology of Hitler. The theory's key factor in uniting people is a common ancestry understood in terms of ethnicity. In this way it follows the primordial and perennial approach towards the nation as nature-given and having a pre-existent essence, and thus a superior right for self-realization. The primordial approach acknowledges the modern aspect of nationalism but refutes the late origins of a nation, because for them it is as old as the first races. This theory, popular in the first half of the twentieth century, has sustained among some historians but remains a marginal one. The perennial approach is ascribed to social scientists who, adopting the strand of Rousseau's naturalistic approach, claim that nations are part and parcel of the natural order and their existence is primordial to any other social development (Smith 2010: 53-55).

What Smith sees as two distinct approaches, for other critics remains to be one perennial view further contrasted with ethno-symbolism as a theory on nationalism, which seeks traces of modern nations "in ethnically inherited symbols, attachments, traditions, memories myths and practices" (English 2006: 489). As a result, contemporary nations have been built around the *ethnie* understood as a named population of people with common ancestry, historical memories and associations with a homeland as a place (Sutherland 2012: 28). The ethno-symbolism introduced by Hutchinson has found an advocate in Smith, who supports this line of thought, trying to break away from the negative meaning of the word 'ethnic'. Smith attempts at convincing that ethno-symbolism differs from the traditional theory of ethno-nationalism, whose main idea revolved around a common ethnicity. In contrast, the ethnic-symbolism places common ancestry understood as cultural heritage as the primordial unifying factor. For Smith, only this approach is

able to fully grasp the complexity of the concept, since it does not focus solely on the diachronic development of a collective cultural identity, but also draws attention to a number of external circumstances that also have an influence on the emergence and transformation of this particular national consciousness (2010: 90).

Another difficulty encountered in the case of ethnic nationalism is the idea that the descent of a nation resides solely in the myth of origin (Bennington 1990: 121). If one takes this option into account, the concept of nation becomes the creation of the society, as its origin is based on the myth of origin, and thus origin itself becomes a myth as well. By deciding on one particular historical event or one figure which initiated the national thought within the community, the society begins to narrate itself as a nation. This brings the idea of nationalism to the level of a pure invention, having no grounds in the ethnographic or sociological sciences. Gellner, being an advocate of modern theory, appears to be one of those scholars who acknowledges such an alternative way of treating the problem of nationalism. His words well illustrate that: "Nationalism is not what it seems, and above all not what it seems in itself ... The cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical invention" (in Bhabha 1990: 294). Gellner in his other work makes a claim that nationalism, perceived as an inherent and natural or God-given way of distinguishing one community from another is a myth, whereas real are those nations which when invented borrow their form from the pre-existing cultures (1983: 49). Sutherland in his discussion on nationalism as a myth relates to the stance of Brown that nationalism is an ideology, which presents a distorted picture of reality benefiting from selective generalizations and elements of myth (2012: 38). The opponents of the ethnic nationalism constantly go back to the erroneous consequences of this concept, as history has already shown how the idea of mythologizing one's own origin has turned into a political ideology (Guibernau 1996: 92). Another difficulty resides in the fact that ethnic nationalism in its very definition disregards minorities and diasporas, which have become part and parcel of contemporary societies. Thus, the argument against this concept lies predominantly in its loss of validity, since it cannot fully represent the structure of today's nations except by excluding their hybrid and heterogeneous nature and in this way facilitating further ethnic based conflicts (Sutherland 2012: 106).

This rather radical approach is contrasted with a civic nationalism, commonly known as modern nationalism, whose existence resides in the ideas of the French Revolution and its philosophical predecessors. The followers of the civic approach, adopt the views of Rousseau and Locke as the elementary rights of every citizen (Kearney 1997: 57-59). Such academics as Ernest Renan, demonstrates the rightness of civic nationalism by starting from refuting the three main arguments standing behind the ethnic concept, namely,

geography, kinship or culture in the form of a common language, as invalid in the process of the nation's creation and its survival (1990: 9-18). To justify his statement, the scholar draws attention to the fact that in history frequently one state comprised several nations, whereas some nationalities such as Jews have survived despite a constant lack of geographical location for their community. This shows that the importance paid to place as one of the most significant elements of the construction of a nation in the ethnic concept appears to be irrelevant in modern nationalism. More interesting seems to be the case of communal descent, as in the majority of the cases of European nations the kinship relations were mixed by the contracted marriages between royal families. Thus, the rulers who were the first to unite groups of people into a single community were of foreign descent, for example the Tudors' monarchy. Another important aspect in this matter is that nations hardly ever have consisted of one ethnic group. In the majority of cases, the process of unification entailed many provincial kingdoms differing ethnically. Culture appears to present a similar situation. According to Renan, primitive groups, which are now classified by historians as races, were created before the emergence of culture, thus they managed to live side by side without sharing one cultural background (1990: 15). For the scholar likewise language may be a uniting factor but is not compulsory for the emergence of a national consciousness. This does not refer just to the instances of countries whose communities speak different languages, but also the same language being spoken in several different states does not indicate that those people comprise one nation, for instance the English or Spanish languages. Interesting here is Gellner's analysis of the correlation between the number of languages and nations. According to his research, the amount of languages exceeds the quantity of nations to such an extent that for every ten potential nations there is only one language actually existing. Therefore, it is a foregone conclusion to link the presence of a distinct language with the emergence of national consciousness (1983: 44-45). All these points bring Renan to a conclusion that a nation is "a spiritual principle" which resides in "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" and "the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form"<sup>16</sup> (1990: 19).

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<sup>16</sup> This very vague definition of a nation shows how problematic the idea is no matter if the past or present conditions are taken into consideration. All the factors mentioned by different scholars help to determine which elements facilitate the nation's creation rather than to decide whether a given community qualifies to be a nation or not. The ambivalence of the nation's figure is also indicated by Bhabha, who claims that the essence of the problem lies in "its transitional history, its conceptual indeterminacy, its wavering between vocabularies" having an influence on the narratives and discourses that try to catch the sense of nationality (1990: 2).

Those who advocate the idea of civic nationalism, draw also attention to the fact that this was the first type of nationalism to emerge. Traditionally speaking, nationalism is a term which emerged in the eighteenth century, formally expressed for the first time during the French Revolution, when the monarchy was replaced by the people representing the political authority (Dingley 2008: 46). This goes in accordance with Anderson who in *Imagined communities* (1983) distinguishes three main factors responsible for the emergence of nationalistic thoughts. Apart from the disillusionment with monarchy as the authority answerable for uniting and ruling the community, the scholar lists also the disenchantment with religion, or to be more precise the emergence of secularism during the Enlightenment period which questioned God as the unifying factor as well as the divine nature of monarchs. The third point revolves around the fact that Latin lost its divine feature. The growing importance of vernacular languages acted as the element dividing communities into separate entities, but which on the other hand, acted as a unifying force between the people who could communicate in a given language (1991: 36). The processes described by Anderson go back to the sixteenth century, when they began to emerge and develop further under the influence of John Locke's idea of a civil society, which should be governed by the people themselves as the monarchy was "inconsistent with" his idea of a state (Locke [1690] 1823: 143). Locke's line of thought, followed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The social contract* (1762)<sup>17</sup>, further enhanced the idea of a state as a social pact based on the principles of liberty and the strength of separate men, which when united may help to preserve themselves as a group (1983: 59-60). The autonomy of the state proposed by Rousseau implies that other nations may become dependent on it and therefore struggle to gain the same status of independence (Bennington 1990: 130).

However, it is not until the French Revolution that the idea of freedom being eligible for all people as well as the social construct are implemented in real life. As Smith argues: "The French Revolution inaugurated not just a new ideology, but a new form of human community, a new kind of collective identity, a new type of polity and, in the end, a new kind of inter-state order" (2010: 51). This approach advocates the idea that nationalism and nation are new constructs, since it is not until the time of modernity that the notion of freedom and social equality were introduced (English 2006: 19). Among modern theoreticians are also those for whom the development of nationalism resides partially in the industrial revolution and the process of urbanization as the two phenomena which have further facilitated the development of civic nationalism. Contrary to the agrarian society, whose life revolves around

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<sup>17</sup> This is the original date of the publication. The edition used in the dissertation comes from 1983.

the local communities without any need for further unification, urban centres attract the attention of people from different regions and social classes. Those who arrive in the city integrate in a new social environment more easily, and thus the idea of internal homogeneity and cultural standardization caters for the needs of the majority (Dingley 2008: 60). The uneven regional development results in the feeling of dislocation of those people who had to move from their homes and live in unfamiliar urban surroundings. This provides a good ground for the development of nationalistic ideology, which is supposed to recreate the sense of belonging among citizens (Sutherland 2012: 27). The direct link between civic nationalism and urban space is supposed to act as an argument for the validity of this type of nationalism in contemporary times as linked with a new type of place.

However, Kearney postulates that all concepts of the nation are plausible, thus the division of national theories into the time spans in which they were applicable seems for the scholar irrelevant. The applicability of one or the other theory depends on which country is being analyzed. Some nations have originated as a consequence of a revolutionary movement, others have emerged from the proto-national monarchic structure or have ethnic grounds. Kearney tries to convince that in deciding which type of nation, according to the theories, is applicable to the specific case studied, one may draw conclusions about the type of nationalism present in a given society. For this purpose Kearney distinguishes between several understandings of a nation as: a state, a territory, ethnicity, migrant nation or extended family<sup>18</sup>, and as a culture (1997: 2-5). On the basis of this extended division, the scholar distinguishes the ethnocentric, state and civic type of nationalism as the three main types practised till today. Sutherland also acknowledges the fact that all the discussed concepts of nationalism are prevalent in today's world. He also points out that each of the existing types have their drawbacks, especially when one takes into consideration the new challenges ascribed to contemporary times. Globalization, regionalization, transnationalism, migration and diaspora are common issues which nations have to face in trying to assimilate their traditional nationalism to new aspects in order not to exclude any of its members. None of the discussed types of nationalism has managed to respond to the growing problem of diasporas, which more often than not are forgotten since they no longer live within the boundaries of the territory defined as the state. This shows that all the aforementioned concepts of nationalism are related to the idea of a state, and thus find place as one of its factors.

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<sup>18</sup> By the term the critic understands a model of a nation which remains partially ethnic; however, it takes into consideration those expatriates who live abroad, in this way acknowledging diasporas as a constituent part of the nation (Kearney 1997: 5). Interesting as this approach may seem, it does not have an equivalent in the concepts of nationalism mentioned by the scholar.

The question of immigrants seems to be easier since according to the ideology of civic nationalism all citizens ought to be treated equally as the members of a community. The practice often shows the opposite, since many countries classified as following the pattern of civic nationalism still encounter problems with providing newcomers with rights similar to those of the native inhabitants, which appears to be the case in Ireland. To this refers Derrida in his essay on cosmopolitanism, in which he discusses the issue of hospitality as the precondition of a country's equal treatment of guests, including foreigners (2001: 19). The lack of a new national ideology that would be able to confront all the transformations occurring in the society brings Kearney to the enunciation that countries are entering the phase of post-nationalism. By this term he means the nations' preservation of valuable aspects of their cultures, at the same time allowing for the intensification of international relations. Consequently, the postmodern approach towards nationalism puts the concept of nation-state in doubt, while aiming at the "decentralizing and disseminating of sovereignty, which, in the European context at least, signals the possibility of new configurations of federal-regional government" (Kearney 1997: 61). Smith agrees that there is a growing tendency among nations towards disillusionment with traditional nationalist ideologies; however, he does not see why the appearance of cosmopolitan and global culture should threaten the existence of national cultures and identities (2010: 141).

For Kearney post-nationalism is primarily to affect the way of thinking of European countries with a growing decline of nation-state ideology. Still, the nations themselves may undergo the same process of change as their state systems, but not necessarily (1997: 180). With hindsight, it transpires that what Kearney believed to happen in the nearby future has not taken place yet. Considering the economic crisis in the Euro zone one may safely presume that the initial enchantment with the increasing internationalization of the economy symbolized by a common currency is over, whereas more and more European Union members strive to preserve not only their cultural but also economic and political sovereignty. Thus, the theme of nationalism seems to have come back to the foreground as there is a recurring need for a constant development of nationalistic thought to "be ready to adapt its articulation of the link between the individual and the collective" necessities imposed by contemporary times (Sutherland 2012: 35). Some critics such as Smith claim that in many countries the process of globalization has not repressed but rather reinforced nationalism (2010: 146). This is mainly justified by the fact that the growing internationalization of urban areas followed by the increased mobility of people exerts a feeling of displacement and anonymity within contemporary metropolitan centres. This creates a greater feeling of attachment to the homeland and a need to reassess one's own individual self on the basis of the national identity as related to place. Therefore, this topic deserves a

more detailed scrutiny, especially in the case of Ireland, which is the place where two countries seem to have abandoned the idea of one Irish nation, opting instead for building their collective identities in more heterogenous terms.

### 1.3. Ethnic vs. civic nationalism – the Irish context

Making Ireland contextualized, frequently the term which is supposed to best describe the specificity of Irish nationalism is cultural. Raymond Williams draws attention to the fact that culture is one of the most complicated words in English, because it is used in a number of concepts, many of which transpire to be incompatible with one another. The range of primordial meanings ascribed to the Latin *cultura* include: “inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour with worship” (2002: 36). The variety of meanings in the early stage of the word have resulted in the term culture developing in divergent directions. There appears to be a similar situation with the understanding of cultural nationalism. Gellner makes a differentiation between two meanings of the term cultural in connection with nationalism. The term culture may be approached from an anthropological and a normative perspective. The former treats culture as “a distinctive style of conduct and communication of a given community” (Gellner 1963: 92). This means that by cultural nationalism one takes a pattern of behaviour or a set of norms imposed by the concept of nationalism on the community. In contrast, the latter refers to the understanding of culture as a matter of tradition and art. Thus, behind the term cultural nationalism are hidden two divergent approaches towards cultural heritage, and thus two distinctive types of nationalism. Such is the case of Ireland which seems to have become dominated by an ongoing argument about Irish nationalism as seen from two opposite perspectives: the proponents of civic and ethnic nationalism.

Those critics who advocate the idea that the two states of Ireland should follow the pattern of civic nationalism draw attention to the fact that from the earliest history of Ireland, the island was inhabited by many different peoples, who gradually were inhabiting the land so that they formed a multilayered population. As Richard English rightly observes, the concepts of a homogenous community or an ethnic purity have hardly any grounds in the Irish context. Thus, “recognition of this hybridity is important if we are to assess later claims regarding true and authentic or pure Irishness” (English 2006: 26). He refutes the existence of a single Gaelic or Irish race. The term Celt to describe the inhabitants was not used until the eighteenth century, whilst the notion of a Celtic heritage appeared much later (2006: 27). In this way he seems to adopt the standpoint of such historians as Ford, who openly

states that at the dawn of modern Ireland, it was still a place inhabited by “varieties of people, defining their ‘Irishness’ differently, many of whom denied the legitimacy of the official state apparatus and lived indifferently outside its writ” (1989: 3). English’s line of argument may be further supported by the statements of such scholars as Garvin who draws attention to the fact that the Irish state descends directly from the British state, or more precisely from the Irish medieval kingdom. It does not have any Gaelic origins, which goes against the official myth legitimatizing the Irish ascendancy as based on the Gaelic polity in the pre-conquest period (1981: 3). A similar approach is expressed by William J. Smyth, who points to the decentralized character of the Gaelic and Norse-Irish populations. Ireland remained plural and regionalized by kingdoms which more often than not fought for dominion over the land. This had an enormous influence on sustaining the diversity of localities, each having their own respective experiences, orientations and mentalities (1997: 19-20). This directly links with another crucial aspect of Irish history – invasions. When it comes to the Vikings, the situation remains rather clear as the majority of historians agree with a statement that the attacks typical for this group were provisional assaults on the coasts of the island. However, what not many draw attention to is the fact that some Irish leaders tended to take the opportunity of utilising the invasions by joining the Vikings in the fight against other Irish kingdoms with which they were in a conflict (English 2006: 34-35).

Until the time of the Reformation in England, the Irish kingdom was of little interest to the Tudors. The failure of the Reformation in Ireland posed a great threat to Henry VIII, since the state was officially Protestant whereas the people remained Catholic<sup>19</sup> (English 2006: 50-52). Since that time the Irish began to be identified with Catholicism, which for them was the first form of collective differentiation from the rest of the Protestant Britain. The growing fear of Catholicism culminated with the Irish support for the Counter-Reformation, which made the English introduce the idea of plantation on the Irish land. Foster takes two possibilities into consideration, claiming that plantation served generally the policy of Anglicization<sup>20</sup>, whereas the policy of

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<sup>19</sup> This is justified by the fact that the English did not manage to get support from the Irish elites. Instead, they tried to impose their religion on the local people by means of the plantation policy, which did just the opposite, namely, it made Protestantism alien and hostile to the Irish communities. Conversely, Welsh people accepted Reformation as the local people supported the actions of the king as descending from Wales (English 2006: 52).

<sup>20</sup> Willy Maley in his article on the limits of Anglo-Irishness, draws attention to the fact that a majority of critics who put Ireland in post-colonial discourse, omit the issue of Scotland as an important factor in the process of Ireland’s plantation. Scots who arrived on the island in several waves of immigration, are more often than not given the badge of

colonization was conducted in the counties of Ulster (1989: 59-60). When the political stability in Ireland was secured, London did not take much more interest in the Irish community. As the British Constitution was sectarian, only the Protestant elites in Ireland could participate in the political life, whereas Catholics became politically and socially marginalized (Garvin 1981: 13). However, the first national movement in Ireland was rather free of sectarianism<sup>21</sup> as the United Irishmen comprised Presbyterians, Protestants and Catholics to fight a common cause (Hoppen 1989: 12). It is important to note that the first alleged national hero of Ireland, Wolfe Tone, was himself a Protestant but he took an active role as the political agent of the Catholic Committee in their struggle for Catholic Relief Acts, which were to facilitate the emancipation of Catholics in Ireland (Cronin 1980: 55). In the beginning the United Irishmen were thinking just about implementing reforms not about fighting for autonomy (Garvin 1981: 33). The Penal Laws which were supposed to limit Catholics' political activity, in practice touched Protestant planters as well<sup>22</sup> (Dingley 2008: 197). With time their action took a revolutionary path with Protestants opting for autonomy and Catholics hoping for Union<sup>23</sup>. This disagreement deepened after the failure of the subsequent rising, and the Act of Union having been signed.

However, at some point the United Irishmen failed to erase sectarianism in Ireland, and thus at that time Protestants were associated with liberty while Catholics with tyranny, because they treated their own needs as superior to the rightness of the cause (English 2006: 94). The United Irishmen were a movement heavily influenced by the French Revolution, the works of John Locke and Tom Paine, and thus they advocated the idea of the reformed parliament with a view to allow people to decide about the laws. For Gellner, the emergence of a revolutionary movement such as the United Irishmen justifies that fact that the first Irish concept of nationalism was a civic one. Since nationalism as a principle may take the form of a movement if the feeling of anger is aroused in the society caused by the violation of the principle (1963:

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England or Britain. By this token, "Scotland gets lost in the hyphen of 'Anglo-Irish' history" (1997: 24).

<sup>21</sup> With time Protestants became radical towards Catholics, especially in the Belfast Club, whose members did not approve of the emancipation for which Catholics were striving as the key point of their participation in the uprising (Foster 1989: 265).

<sup>22</sup> As Hugh Kearney points out, the Penal Laws aimed at Catholics, in the 1770s were relaxed by the British government, which had its negative effect on the Protestant ascendancy (1997: 5).

<sup>23</sup> Since Catholics could not be part of the Irish parliament, they hoped that the Union with Britain would lead them to emancipation and allow them to have representatives in the British government. The scale of the support is well illustrated by the fact that a considerable group of Catholic bishops in Ireland backed the idea of the Union, since they were horrified by the possible outcome of the revolution (Garvin 1981: 36).

1), the penal laws must have infringed on the concept of eighteenth-century Irish nationalism to such an extent that the United Irishmen were formed. Hugh Kearney argues that this was a crucial moment for the further development of the Irish nationalism because two distinctive types of national consciousness: ethnic and civic came to light at that time. The former, represented by the ascendancy, who opposed the reforms in the Irish parliament, had to face the emergence of the latter, embodied by the United Irishmen (1997: 6). By this token, the United Irishmen represented the first republican thought in Ireland (English 2006: 98-99) with their republican leader Wolfe Tone (Kiberd 1995: 20). To this position later aspired the pro-treaty members of Sinn Fein. However, the end of the Civil War followed by the partition brought an end to republicanism in Ireland (Garvin 1981: 146-147). The term stayed and was used to mean nationalism until the 1970s when the pressure was placed on Irish parties to replace the word republican with national (Kearney 1997: 26).

The civic nationalism still had the possibility of existence during the emancipation campaign led by Daniel O'Connell, who, contrary to what is commonly believed, did not opt for a sectarian Ireland but just worked for the equality of rights between Catholics and Protestants, representing the civic approach towards nationalism (Kearney 1997: 15). This may be justified by the fact that he aspired to obtain support for his cause from Protestants in Ulster, thus he tried what he could to remain nonsectarian in his actions. Still due to O'Connell's policy, Irish nationalism became irrefutably linked with Catholicism (English 2006: 137). Dingley is among the scholars who blame O'Connell for introducing the Catholic ethos into Irish politics, by basing his organization on the parochial structure. No matter how practical it might have seemed for him at that time, the consequences were far reaching (2008: 200). For Richard English, this also marks the moment when the ethnic nationalism based on the idea of a Celtic origin comes to light and remains the dominant nationalistic ideology almost till the middle of the twentieth century (2006: 138). After the Great Famine, Ireland turned towards an ethnic collective identity, which after the partition gained also its cultural dimension. Thomas Davis, a born Protestant, was already an early representative of a romantic, cultural nationalism celebrating the idea of the Celtic heritage. Later he was followed by the Gaelic League whose main aim was to cultivate the Irish language and traditions. Its first President, Douglas Hyde, being Protestant himself, made an attempt at sustaining a non-political status of the organization, in this way acting as a "bridge between Catholics and Protestants" (Garvin 1981: 113). His work titled *The necessity of de-anglicising Ireland* (1892), albeit written "not as a protest against imitating what is best in the English people (...) but rather to show the folly of neglecting what is Irish" (Hyde 1987: 137) was rather misunderstood as another sign for the recreation of the Irish ethnic nationalism. For Hobsbawm, this stage of a

nation's development is nothing unusual, since the majority of proto-nations in Europe took a vernacular language as the primordial determinant of the collective identity of the *Volk*. The development of ethnic nationalism from the second half of the nineteenth century reaches its peak at the beginning of the new century, when "ethnicity and language become the central, increasingly the decisive or even the only criteria of potential nationhood" (1992: 102). Thus Richard English rightly observes that the heroic Easter Rising had also negative consequences, since it brought the old nationalism "founded on the principles of compromise, trust, toleration, and opposition to political violence" to a definite end (2006: 278). Consequently, in the Irish Free State and later the Republic of Ireland a further development of cultural and ethnic nationalism is observed (Jones 1997: 52). In contrast, in Northern Ireland the issue of identity revolves around the legitimacy of the state as well as the problem of its plurality expressed by nationalists and unionists (Douglas 1997: 156).

What Dingley observes is a seemingly clear division of the two countries as triggered by different types of nationalism. For him, The Free State, being predominantly still in an agrarian state, ought to have followed a cultural pattern, whilst industrial Northern Ireland should have built its new identity on the ethnic grounds (2008: 58, 65). At first sight, this may seem a plausible explanation, since the independent state has created its own cultural nationalism and the Northern Irish Troubles may be read as the aftermath of a growing ethnic consciousness of its community. However, the previous discussion has already shown that ethnic-oriented nationalism has found its advocates in the authorities of the Free State; whereas the United Irishmen as the only nationalistic movement which met with understanding in the region of Ulster opted for the civic pattern of nationalism. However, the civic pattern did not survive the period of the fight for independence and the Troubles in the 1920s. Edna Longley, who uses the term Irish Nationalism to define the concept of national identity practiced in the Free State (later the Republic of Ireland) and Ulster Nationalism to describe the type of collective identity present in Northern Ireland after the partition, comes to a different conclusion. For her, Irish Nationalism is based on Celtic ethnicity and Catholic morality, whereas the Ulster Nationalism has become affected by Unionism, namely, the first ethnically based prejudice of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, who were against the actions of the United Irishmen. Thus Longley argues that both types of national ideology have problems with ethnic prejudice, but the Northern Irish authorities have made a futile attempt to compromise the plurality of the nation, whereas the Free State has failed to understand the complexity of Ulster Nationalism and simply rejected it (1994: 174).

The ongoing misunderstanding between the two states is visible on the level of the concept of Irish identity. There continues to be a clear division in the political as well as academic societies between the proponents of ethnic

and civic nationalism. This dichotomy is especially discernible when touching upon two divisive issues: whether Ireland should be treated as a colony, and how to read Irish revisionism. The problem of the Irish colonial past resides partially in the historical account, which at some point proves that part of Ireland was colonized; but on the other hand, there are aspects which exclude this country as a typical colony. A large group of scholars advocates the idea of Ireland as the first English colony (Smyth 1997: 26; Connolly 1997: 45; Mitchell and Ryan 1997: 304) referring to the first invasion in 1169. What other scholars name as the beginning of colonization, for Richard English is the result of a lengthy interaction between the two neighbouring islands. The Anglo-Norman invasion was not the beginning of English colonization as the Anglo-Normans were an international<sup>24</sup> group of people who had managed to invade England first. Essential also remains a fact that the arrival of the Anglo-Normans was not due to the English king's own ambition, but rather came from inside of the Irish land. It was Dermot Mac Murrugh, the king of Leinster, who, after having been deposed of his kingdom, was the person who wanted to use the force of the Anglo-Normans as allies in his attempt at regaining the kingdom (English 2006: 37-39). The memorable arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1169 is the symbolic beginning of the colonization of Ireland, since once they came there they did not retreat after fulfilling their obligation, but started to invade the island as a whole.

The historical fact of the invasion does not provide scholars with an explicit answer whether Ireland can be treated as a British colony or not. This is a pivotal aspect of Irish history since around this issue the whole idea of the nation and nationalism has been built. If such is the case with Ireland, then the concept of anti-colonial nationalism is most applicable to explain how and in what way has the Irish collective consciousness formed and been maintained. In anti-colonial nationalism the essence comprises the idea of freedom and sovereignty from an imperial oppressor. It is usually preceded by different movements striving for gaining equality with the colonizers. Once the independence is achieved, all efforts are made to maintain this situation at all costs. The decolonized countries are supposed to be reactionary to the process of globalization and regionalization since this poses a threat to their newly-gained independence (Sutherland 2012: 40). The line of Irish political development together with a number of anti-British movements<sup>25</sup> are the convincing evidence for Garvin to claim that Ireland is a

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<sup>24</sup> By the term international the critic understands the group of Anglo-Normans as the mixture of Welsh, French, English and Flemish origin (2006: 38).

<sup>25</sup> The astounding number of national movements and organizations in Ireland shows how complex and democratic was the evolution of nationalistic thought. The United Irishmen, who are considered to be the first fully nationalistic movement, were not a unified group. The most active among them were the two organizations revolving around the two big cities: Dublin and Belfast. The Dublin United Irish society and the Belfast Club with

classic example of an anti-colonial nationalism which developed in a conquered country (1981: vii). This line of thought is accepted by Kiberd, for whom the process of colonization took various forms in Ireland. First, it was governed from London via a quasi government situated in Dublin Castle. Second, the land was expropriated by planters from Britain, which goes in accordance with how Kiberd defines colonialism as “the planting of settlers in the land thus seized, for the purpose of expropriating its wealth and for the promotion of the occupiers’ trade and culture” (Kiberd 1995: 5)<sup>26</sup>. This was further reinforced with an ideology to make the Irish dependent economically and culturally by evoking in them the lack of self-esteem and imposing the English language on the Irish-speaking communities. MacSiomóin reads the propagation of the Irish negative image as a common colonial practice (1997: 45).

However, such a description well illustrates the situation in Ireland just during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries starting with the Cromwellian times and finishing with the Act of Union in 1800<sup>27</sup>. Since that time, the Irish

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time developed along different lines, varying in their visions of possible reforms (Hoppen 1989: 14). The opponents of the United Irishmen’s actions assembled predominantly in the northern provinces around two new movements: Defenderism (supported by the Catholic Ulstermen who were the proponents of monarchy and opted for the Union with Britain) and Peep-o-Day Boys (a Protestant equivalent of Defenderism) (Foster 1989: 271-272). Interestingly enough, the Orange Order found in 1795 (from which Orangeism descends) helped to unite the Defenders with the United Irishmen before the rising in 1798 (Hoppen 1989: 13). These first organizations were followed by many others, which usually superseded the ones that were coming to an end. By this token, Defenderism gave grounds to Ribbonism, which later turned into the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Young Ireland, the movement of Daniel O’Connell, is associated with the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, commonly known as the Fenians. When this movement came to an end, it acted as an influence for the creation of the Land League, whereas the Gaelic Athletic Association, famous for promoting an Irish equivalent of football – hurling – has become a parent for the Irish Republican Army (Garvin 1981: 71). The multitude of movements in the pre-independent stage of Ireland proves that the country did not have a unified national politics until the time of the first Free State government.

<sup>26</sup> Kiberd in his analysis of the Irish colonial past relies heavily on the works of Frantz Fanon, who is rather critical about the national consciousness of the colonized countries. He starts his chapter “The pitfalls of national consciousness” with a statement that “the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism” (1963: 119). This is further developed by the argument that what many people take as the rise of nationalism in colonial countries which regained their independence is not “the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people” but rather “an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been” (1963: 119). This line of thinking shows that Ireland with its strong and rather organized national movement does not fit in with the usual path, which the majority of post-colonial countries follow.

<sup>27</sup> However, such scholars as Richard English doubt whether Ireland may be treated as a colony even in the eighteenth century, since the nature of interrelations between the Anglo-Irish ascendancy and Irish people resembles more a typical feudal interdependency between the landed gentry and tenants popular in pre-industrial Europe (2006: 78).

government has ceased to exist and the Irish people began to have their representatives in the British parliament, which is unusual to happen for a colony. Moreover, the implementation of the health care and the public education in Ireland during the nineteenth century, though treated by Kiberd as experimenting on the Irish society (1995: 24), provided the community with an opportunity to develop; let alone the fact that it was the most colonized counties of Ulster which benefited from the Union due to the industrial advancement in this region. Belfast, from a provincial town, transformed into the second biggest industrial city after London with the third largest port on the islands of the United Kingdom and a leading shipping industry in the British Empire (Bardon 1982: 142-143). Bruce Stewart criticizes Kiberd's presentation of colonial Ireland in *Inventing Ireland* by treating it as a biased, one-side view on the history of the country. For him, Kiberd too often blames the English for the wrongs of history, which touched Ireland, and reverses the common facts about historical events<sup>28</sup>. He draws attention to the nineteenth century as the time when Ireland, unlike the colonies, had an opportunity to develop and actively participate in the political life of Britain. Thus, the prevailing polarity between the Irish and English, for Stewart, comes more from the inside than the outside (1998: 5-8). A rather reserved view on this topic is shared by David Lloyd, who draws attention to the fact that if Ireland has been a colony, then one ought to have denied the legitimacy of the Irish government before the Act of Union, as well as the legitimacy of the British government with Irish representatives, before the partition. This also refers to the present legitimacy of Stormont, if Northern Ireland is believed to remain a colony till today (1999: 3). In contrast, Boyce openly challenges the idea of the Irish colonial past by stating that Ireland since the seventeenth century ceased to be just a colony by becoming a sister-kingdom, and after the Act of Union "an integral part of British polity" (1995: 388). Thus the closeness of the relations stands in stark contrast with other British colonies, whose relations within the Empire were characterized by the remoteness of their dependency. The controversy around treating Ireland as a colony mainly revolves around an argument that all the measures taken by the British authorities such as the repossessing of the land from the Irish tenants and handing it to British people or forcing the Irish to speak English did not have in mind the idea of building on the island plantations to exploit the land or the civilizing of Irish savages, but rather to secularize the Catholic society. The controversy around the course of history which on the one hand admits and on the other denies Irish colonialism for some critics does not play such an importance, as a seem-

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<sup>28</sup> Kiberd provides an example of the criticism of the Easter Rising, whose leaders are usually accused of being "impractical romantics". What Kiberd does with this common statement is to reverse it by claiming that the Irish were "the modernizers" whereas the English were "the reactionaries" (in Stewart 1998: 8).

ingly First World country may be exploited in a similar way as a Third World one, and thus share the colonial mentality (Jameson 1990: 49-50). By this token, the contrapuntal reading of history and literature of a given country has been amplified to include those countries which historically do not fit the pattern of a former colony<sup>29</sup>(Buchholtz and Konecniak 2009: 49).

Apart from the case of the Irish colonial past, the issue of revisionism<sup>30</sup> also appears to be controversial. The advocates of Irish Nationalism heavily criticize this new approach of reading Irish history, treating it as erroneous. Among them is Daltun O Ceallaigh who claims that what revisionists did with Irish history was “a denial of Irish nationality, exculpation of imperialism, oppression from within, suffering which is unexceptional, the ulterior motive of the individual, guilt by association, the contingency of resistance, and unfulfilled national dominance” (1994: 11). All the aspects of this critique on revisionism remarked upon undermine the traditional treatment of Irish nationalism as anti-colonial, Catholic and homogenous. The reasons why the revisionists are supposed to have failed in communicating their message is ascribed to choosing an unsuitable methodology. As a result, they failed to convey their experience since their evidence voids the traumatic content. The history presented lacks heroes, heroic moments and movements essential for generating nationalistic thoughts. Instead of contributing to the development of the nation's conscience, the revisionists have been accused of depriving the society of their heritage and insulting them by enforcing an anti-myth on them (Bradshaw 1994: 35-41). Those academics who claim that Ireland was the first English colony are disappointed with revisionism, which denies or at least underplays the significance of the county's colonial past (Kiberd 1994: 96).

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<sup>29</sup> However, for Konecniak, the case of Ireland should not be so controversial since it shares its experience with the so called Second World countries, namely, those like Australia or Canada which experienced an extensive settlement of Europeans, who nowadays constitute a large part of their societies (2009: 95). Also the critic draws attention to the idea of internal colonialism, proposed by Michael Hechter in *Internal colonialism. The Celtic fringe in British national development 1536-1966* as a separate term defining the specificity of Irish colonialism (Konecniak 2009: 96).

<sup>30</sup> The term revisionism is most often associated with nineteenth-century Marxism and the effort of Eduard Bernstein to revise Marxist doctrine. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* after the Bolshevik Revolution, the term revisionism came to be used by Communists as a label for certain types of deviation from established Marxist views (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2015). This might be the reason why this term is used by some Irish scholars as a derogatory way of commenting on the changing approach towards writing Irish history by such historians as R. M. Foster. As a result, in historical and literary Irish studies the term revisionism began to stand for an anti-nationalist approach, which questions the rightfulness of certain historical events or demythologises historical figures and prominent writers, providing an alternative reading.

The argument is most visible in the case of two critics: Edna Longley, who is an advocate of civic nationalism and revisionism, and Seamus Deane who constantly defends the rightness of Irish Nationalism. In her influential essay *From Cathleen to anorexia* (1990), Longley openly states that revisionism's role is to break down the monolithic concept of the Irish past proposed by Irish Nationalism. She insists on the need of going back to the pre-revolutionary times to look at the events from an empirical point of view, leaving emotions behind (1994: 184). She also refers to Colm Tóibín who criticized the Field Day group led by Seamus Deane for behaving as if nothing had ever changed in Ireland since the time of the partition (1994: 183). Longley's essay acts as a call for change in the collective mentality of the Irish people, since for her "Irish Nationalism so often reads like bad poetry and Ulster Unionism like bad prose", in this way signifying that both ideologies have lost their relevance in contemporary Ireland (1994: 175). Deane has not left this comment without an appropriate answer, since to criticize revisionism he uses the colonial discourse: "The rhetoric of revisionism obviously derives from the rhetoric of colonialism and imperialism. It defines its nationalist opponent always in terms of an irrationality for which it is the saving alternative. It has to deprive nationalism of agency, of self-consciousness, envisaging it as a mystification" (1997: 193). Apart from the extreme examples of criticism, some scholars acknowledge the importance of the revisionists' voice in the discussion on Irish history and nationalism, as thanks to them all scholars have become revisionists in the sense that to answer this new approach to history they have had to rethink their stances (Murphy 1994: 74). For Murphy, even if the analysis has been done in an inappropriate way, still the revisionists have shown that it is hardly possible to undermine the validity of the IRA's actions by not questioning the whole idea of Irish nationalism (1994: 78). Thanks to revisionism, many contemporary scholars, even if disagreeing with the statements proposed by the revisionists, when discussing the idea of Irish nationalism take into consideration their point of view more often than not trying to find a reconciliation between the two extreme positions to present a balanced perspective on this contentious topic.

The two contrastive approaches towards Irish nationalism are no longer the only two, since a new attitude towards the question of Irishness seems to be emerging, namely, a theory of two nations. The advocates of the plurality of Irish nationalism claim that the successful colonization in the province of Ulster marks the beginning of the ongoing process of the division of Ireland into north and south, with their final transformation into two states visible at the beginning of the twentieth century (Garvin 1981: 10). Thus, with the division of Ireland into two separate states a new concept of nationalism was introduced in the Republic of Ireland as well as Northern Ireland. From

this time on, the concept of Irish national identity has to be analyzed from two distinct perspectives since these two countries have had to face disparate problems concerning their collective identities (English 2006: 147, 163). This argument may be justified by Levi-Strauss's salient point that each instance of nationalism has to be approached as a separate case. No matter how similar two concepts of nationalism may seem, they will always differ because: "one does not stem from the other; rather, each of them is the product of a system of representations" (1963: 4).

The focus on an independent Ireland turned into retaining its status quo as well as the reasserting of its validity. In this way, the new cultural nationalism was a concept which used the term culture in a normative sense, namely, to signify the set of norms exemplified by the Catholic church. This division may help to explain why de Valera's government was predominantly preoccupied with strengthening Ireland's state image for the outside world, especially for Britain, rather than for its inhabitants (Garvin 1981: 204). In this way, freedom could be treated collectively, ignoring the rights of individuals. The cultural nationalism in the anthropological sense well justifies the introduction of censure in 1929 to have control over the voices which could question the version of nationalism imposed by the new state<sup>31</sup>. Smith when analyzing the concept of cultural nationalism follows Hutchinson's example of Irish nationalism and Gaelic revival. For Smith, the aim of Irish cultural nationalism was precisely to regenerate community morally, by this token bringing back a social harmony (2010: 81). Thus, the whole idea of a national consciousness has been directed at cherishing the Gaelic heritage and ignoring all modern influences, especially from the outside. In contrast, the Catholic morality has been adopted to act as the set of norms common for the whole nation. As a result, Irish nationalism has become institutionalized by the Catholic Church and the Constitution, which formally enforced a new approach towards the concept of the Irish nation and of the state on the society (During 1990: 146; English 2006: 329).

The new cultural vision of Ireland, which advocated speaking Irish as of paramount importance for the education of the populace still controlled by the clergy, placed the academic level of teaching into question since Irish science was undergoing a crisis after the partition. As Jones points out, Catholicism denied Darwinism as a science, so Irish scholars had difficulties with keeping the academic level similar to other European universities since the connections with foreign academia were limited (1997: 50-53). Such scholars as Dingley denounce the education system in the Free State, by pointing at

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<sup>31</sup> Kelleher draws attention to the fact that due to the Censorship Act: "about 1500 books have been proscribed, including just about every Irish novel worth reading" (Kelleher in English 2006: 347).

the irrelevance of placing all effort on teaching Gaelic in a state which could not communicate in this language. Neither did it help the country to develop economically, which ought to have been of paramount importance if they intended to separate economically from Britain (2008: 206). Still, for quite a long time the Republic of Ireland maintained its dual nationalistic traditions focusing on the one hand on the romantic resistance to foreign oppression and influences, and on the other on developing the state legitimacy of the country via the governmental institutions (Garvin 1981: 197). De Valera's protectionist politics had led to: the state economy being driven to the ground, the decline in the standard of living and the growing emigration of young generations to England and America (Mays 2005: 7); whereas the myth of homogeneity<sup>32</sup> based on the Gaelic and Catholic rhetoric excluded all other minorities as legitimate Irishmen (Graham 1997: 198). The myth of homogeneity invented by de Valera's polity was supposed to be prevalent in the twentieth century as well as for the future. The role of the myth in the new state was to: "keep alive the narratives of group and personal identity which bind members of those group together and both enable and sanction 'othering'" (Crawford 2010: 14). This statement brings one to a tentative conclusion that the myth of homogeneity has been created not only as an important component of the whole concept of Gaelicism, but also to provide a sense of unity in a society, which despite the partition has not eliminated the problem of its Protestant inhabitants. The introduction of the homogenous identity was supposed to reinforce the image of an Irish man as a Catholic with a Protestant as the other.

The situation in the north was more complex when it comes to the Catholic minority, as even after the partition the group remained substantial and thus dangerous for the majority of Unionists (Hoppen 1989: 206). As the border dividing the island into two separate states did not fully represent the

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<sup>32</sup> Contrary to Gellner's claim of homogeneity as the imperative objective for the emergence of nationalism (1983: 39), in the Irish Republic it appears to be just the opposite. The issue of the Protestant minority has been of little concern to the authorities, since many of them decided to leave the Free State for the fear of persecution. Those who stayed were marginalized by the denominational state (Crawford 2010: 203). Still many Protestants have remained in the country, which does make some scholars acknowledge the problem. Among them is Garvin, who unchangeably declares that: "the country is one of the most ethnically homogenous nation-states in the world, regardless of whether language, race or religion is taken as the appropriate ethnic marker" (1981: 227). The prevailing sense of homogeneity in the Irish society may be explained by Levi Strauss and his treatment of myth. According to the anthropologist, a myth, albeit it refers to the past events, in reality is to explain the past, the present and the future. In this way, a myth is timeless and omnipresent even in contemporary societies, which allegedly do no longer need myths to explain reality since they have a well-developed science. But the scholar convinces that nowadays myths operate via the political discourse (1963: 207-209).

previous divisions, the creation of Northern Ireland failed to eradicate the coexistence of two opposed communities of Irish nationalists and Unionists. Thus, the new state needed a novel concept of nationalism which would meet the needs of the two dominant groups than Unionist Nationalism. Unionists' concern revolved around the economy, culture and power as elements reassuring the legitimacy of the newly created state. Northern nationalists found themselves in a difficult situation too, not knowing how to respond to the consequences of their actions, which resulted in an uncomfortable for them political solution (McNulty 2009: 127). The creation of a border has shattered their imagined community, and thus Irish nationalists concentrated on negating the validity of Northern Ireland as a separate state, believing in the possibility of reuniting the island (English 2006: 363). The inability to create a new national consciousness capable of compromising the denominational dichotomy resulted in the outbreak of the Troubles in the 1970s. As Foster points out: "Unlike Unionism, nationalism (...) is not connected with autonomous principles of the modern state but with the absolute justice of claims made on the basis of an ethnic community"<sup>33</sup>. For Stewart the words of Foster mean that contrary to the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland due to the Troubles in the 1970s has begun to participate in the tradition practised by other European countries aimed at withdrawing from ethnicity as a criterion for citizenship (1998: 11).

However, before this happened, Northern Ireland, instead of developing further economically, had to struggle with the conflict between the two groups who exemplified the opposite meanings of national and cultural identity (Kearney 1997: 70). As its legitimacy was constantly questioned by nationalists, it took a long time for Northern Ireland to find its place irrespective of what the Irish Republic and Britain expected from it. To achieve it, Northern Ireland had to find a "third space" – a place which is in-between the two contradictory cultures. According to Bhabha, this is the place where the hybrid identity may find a sense of place (1994: 54-55). Northern Irish people, who in the Republic are treated as too English and in England as too Irish, had to come to terms with their hybrid identity. The process of the legitimization of the Northern Irish state was not so difficult as might seem, since still in the 1960s there was much optimism connected with the civil rights movement (English 2006: 365-366). However, the ill-performed reforms by Stormont gave rise to another wave of nationalistic uproar, which resulted in another outbreak of violence. The failure of Northern Ireland's first forty years of self-governance is also attributed to the lack of mental preparation of the society for such a change. According to John Wilson Foster, the creation of the Free State was superseded by over forty years of cultural activity aimed at

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<sup>33</sup> John Wilson Foster (ed.) 1995. *The idea of the union*, cited in Bruce Stewart, 11.

convincing the community of the rightness of their actions and providing them with a new vision of an independent country. Conversely, Northern Ireland had no such preparation at all, since the partition was an unplanned aftermath of the nationalist fight for freedom (Foster in Kirkland 1996: 101). Therefore, what the academics strived for in the 1980s was to create an autonomous Northern Irish criticism. They believed that the failure of the Northern Irish society is the failure of their criticism, which has not managed to make the community aware of the aspects essential in building a plural society (Kirkland 1996: 99).

Nowadays, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic have to face new problems concerning the erroneous stereotypes predominantly connected with the twentieth-century images of Ireland. The Republic since the 1950s has started to change its policy, coming to terms with the fact that the ongoing isolationism prevents the country from developing economically and academically. Especially important for the rapid advancement of the state has become admittance to the European Community in 1973. From this time on, the Republic for the first time in its history could eradicate its inferiority complex with regard to Britain. This also allowed for Ireland to become economically independent, which worked as a boost for the national self-confidence (Mays 2005: 7). Many expatriates have decided to return, attracted by the new opportunities the Republic had in store. The speedy economic development facilitated the spreading of urbanism, changing the agrarian countryside into suburban areas (Bolger 1988: 7). As a European Community member, the Irish Republic has witnessed the development of the tourist industry as one of the key branches of the European economic growth (O'Connor 1993: 68). What the Irish have found extremely difficult is to find a reconciliation between the stereotypical images of Ireland as rural and Gaelic, with how the contemporary state looks like. The traditional image of Ireland created by nationalists has become a product for sale, from which the tourist sector benefits most. However, many Irish people feel the need to dissociate themselves from the romantic image of Ireland as behind the times. Lee is one of the revisionist historians who in his work remarks upon this problem by referring to O'Connor's controversial words, in which he states that the society does not have: "the need to prove we're Irish by waving the three-leaved shamrock of race, language and Catholicism which were the imposition of the nineteenth-century nationalists" (O'Connor in Lee 1989: 658). This instance is touched upon by Mays as well, who draws attention to the problem of authenticity ascribed by foreigners only to the small villages and towns of Ireland, disregarding such places as Dublin, which is the essence of how Irish life is nowadays (2005: 4). By this token, Irish people have become the victims of the image which they themselves invented and propagated many years before. In order to appeal to the international public, they have to sustain the obso-

lete image. This makes the alteration of national identity difficult, since as a great Irish philosopher, George Berkeley once said *esse est percipi* – to be is to be perceived [1710] (2002: 28).

The difficulties connected with the changing concept of Irish nationalism are not limited only to the problems with out-of-date images of the country, but also with the new challenges caused by the growing internationalization in the European Union as well as the general process of globalization. The country has for a long period of time been familiar with the issue of emigration and diasporas, since many Irish people have moved to England and America. Still, Irish nationalism has not managed to respond to the needs of the expatriates, as the romantic concept of Irish identity has been coterminous with the geographical territory of the island. Hence, Irishness has always excluded people who were not the inhabitants of the state. This seems strange, since according to Gibbons the community, which has undergone the shock of modernity long before the term globalization was introduced, ought to have no problems with redefining their national consciousness so that it includes the diasporas as well (1996: 6). However, the affluence of the Celtic Tiger has brought with it many new problems the Irish society has found difficult to accept. Among them the most noticeable are “traffic congestion, the soaring housing prices, clerical scandal, and, most remarkable of all, an immigration crisis that has inspired an outpouring of racist vitriol” (Mays 2005: 5). The community’s tolerance for tourists, who started to come to explore every nook and cranny of the country, seems to have finished with the overwhelming influx of foreigners, who have spotted the job opportunities in the Irish Republic. Kiberd, albeit believes that the Irish society is open to multiculturalism, comes to a similar conclusion and observes the appearance of racism as a reaction against the uncontrolled inflow of foreigners. The scholar tries to justify this negative phenomenon with the prevailing idea of homogeneity among Irish people. Content as they are about their country becoming the centre of attention, they still remain reserved or rather afraid of hybridity, which could threaten their national consciousness (2001: 51-52). In the case of Ireland, the modern world of movement and migration may pose a challenge if not a threat to the collective consciousness (Richards 1997: 37). Therefore, the country, which based their identity on the opposition to the English, now has to accept the growing heterogeneity of the European Union, and of their state as well.

Northern Ireland, likewise, the Irish Republic, still has to fight the old stereotypes, which make it difficult for the society to alter the erroneous image of the Northern Irish as a rebellious and violent nation. The events of the 1970s have not only placed Northern Ireland in the centre of the British attention, but more importantly have irrevocably given the country a label of the Troubles—some place. Although the state has managed to bring the conflict

officially to an end in the 1990s, the negative image of Northern Ireland has sustained in the form of the Troubles thriller. This genre of the novel has turned the tragic historical events into a product and Northern Ireland into a tourist attraction for those who want to see the exact spot where the riots were (Pelaschiar 2009: 55-57). The genre has quickly received a derogatory term “Troubles trash”<sup>34</sup>, which has been adopted by many critics to show their disrespect for the genre as it offers “a stereotypical and reductive vision of a society divided into two monolithic identities” (Morales-Ladron 2006: 59). This being the case, the thriller novels depicting the Troubles have reinforced the obsolete image of the Northern Irish society as divided and living in a constant conflict. What Smyth draws attention to is another aftermath of these books, namely, the simplistic division of the Irish people into terrorists and victims (1997: 114). These flat characters not only do harm to the way Irish fiction is being perceived as stuck in the 1970s, repetitive and of a low level, but more importantly it provides the readers with a distorted image of an Irishman, no longer just a romantic rebel, but rather a terrorist (Bell in Pelaschiar 2009: 57). The perpetration of the negative images of the Northern Irish society does not facilitate a change in the perception of the Irish from the outside since such novels the country a bad press. Neither does it help to redeem the situation from the inside, as such texts provoke the release of violent emotions and old grudges.

The claim that Northern Ireland is in the middle of the peace process, which started in the 1990s, is supported by Kirkland, for whom the country tries to follow the path of plurality. What appears to be difficult is to respond to the period between the partition and the Belfast Agreement in 1998. This is well visible in the museum of Northern Ireland, which the scholar praises for its hybrid form when presenting the times before the creation of the Free State, namely, the history of Ulster region. What is lacking there is a respective display for the historical events of the twentieth century. Thus, for the critic, the name of the museum does not correspond to what people may find there (1996: 1). This example may be treated more metaphorically to justify the intermediary stage of Northern Ireland in the process of cultural change. Certain institutions have already been created, the authorities do their best to alter the image of the country, but people still need time to be able to find a proper representation for their collective identity. The intermediary stage is expressed by Kirkland with a term “interregnum” – a situation between two systems and identities which are in a state of disinterested consciousness. The term implies that the two entities are aware and at the same time ignorant of each other trying to live side by side. The presence of this stage indicates that the old concept of national identity has

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<sup>34</sup> This term was introduced by Bowyer Bell in his article “Troubles is trash” (1978) (Bell in Pelaschiar 2009: 57).

already been rejected, but still a new one has not been constructed yet (1996: 9-10). Therefore, the state seems to have managed to secure its legitimacy and has to work on the concept of a Northern Irish identity, which would include two mainstream cultures.

Mary McAleese<sup>35</sup> is more optimistic in her approach towards the situation in Northern Ireland, since she believes that the societies of both Irelands are learning how to ingest the ideas of change and diversity (2001: viii). A similar attitude is expressed by people who constitute the Cultural Tradition Group, who as a funding body in Northern Ireland try to combine tradition with contemporary culture. These people are aware that "there has been such a degree of interaction between the various elements of the culture that there is unlikely to be a pure-bred or pedigree version of anything", thus they opt for "a multi-cultural society with pluralist values" (in Finlayson 1997: 80). Finlayson, who is afraid that the reference to tradition carries a risk of getting involved in concepts which by nature are not negotiable, sees the potential in such organizations. They may help to build a new collective identity, which will accommodate the influences of democracy, whose aim is to keep the competition between different identities so that neither of them is able to become a dominant one (1997: 84). The fluidity of the national identity in a democratic country such as Northern Ireland is a complex issue, since to follow Bhabha's words, "people are neither the beginning or the end of the national identity" but rather in-between the state and individual people (1990: 297). Thus, the aim of Northern Irishness is to negotiate between what has to be done to secure the stability of the country and the needs of individuals. By this token the scholar believes that the space of the nation "is internally marked by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations" (1990: 299). Still, by looking at the voice of the people one may see if the reconciliation between the goals of the authorities and the needs of individuals has been reached or not, and if the concept of nation and nationalism introduced by the state is the one the community associates with, or whether there is a necessity to negotiate it further so that it agrees with personal experience.

The twentieth-century path of development in the area of studies on the representation of space dislodges the prevalence of a direct link between place and identity. Space defined by social relations no longer remains a passive setting but actively takes part in the creation of the individual and collective consciousness. Despite the emergence of social new phenomena such as internationalisation and globalisation, still it is places that appear to play a

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<sup>35</sup> She was the President of Ireland from 1997 till 2011. Interestingly, is the first president of the Republic who comes originally from Northern Ireland (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2013).

significant role in communities. Mass migration and globalisation have altered, if not annihilated the relation between space and time, but the interdependence between identity and place has managed to maintain its status quo. The analysis of the concept of nationalism well illustrates that no matter which national pattern is taken into consideration, all to a certain extent rely on the notion of place, either as an actual territory or the location of culture. However, there is an observable change in the approach towards the notion of nationalism, from a negative one, connoting racism and other prejudices, to a more positive one, having a potential to provide cosmopolitan citizens with a sense of belonging. The increase in the academic interest concerning the issue of nationalism signifies the need for redefining the concept, as its traditional understanding seems to have lost part of its validity. A similar situation exists in the case of Ireland, whose two national ideologies, serving their purpose well in the first half of the twentieth century, seem to have entered a crisis during the last decades of the century. Thus, there are audible more and more voices which advocate the idea of deconstructing the obsolete ideologies in order to provide a new definition of Irishness, one capable of reflecting the contemporary Irish society, which has undergone a tremendous change since the time of the creation of the Free State.

## Chapter Two

# National and individual identity within the domestic space on the example of William Trevor's and Jennifer Johnston's novels

“I came on a great house in the middle of the night,  
Its open lighted doorway and its windows alight,  
And all my friends were there and made me welcome too,  
But I woke in an old ruin that the wind howled through”  
W.B. Yeats<sup>1</sup>

“Places do not die as people do,  
but they often change so fundamentally  
that little is left of what once they were”  
William Trevor<sup>2</sup>

The first traces of what is now defined as the big house<sup>3</sup> in Ireland go back to the middle of the twelfth century<sup>4</sup>. So old appears to be the tradition of creating

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<sup>1</sup> From “The curse of Cromwell”, in: W.B. Yeats 1994. *The collected poems of W.B. Yeats*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 260.

<sup>2</sup> From William Trevor. 1993. *Excursions in the real world*. London: Hutchinson, 3.

<sup>3</sup> When talking about the genre and the ethos connected with the term, Big House is usually written with capital letters, whereas the real presence of so called big houses as the buildings in which the landed gentry lived is marked with the same term being written with small letters.

<sup>4</sup> The Norman invasion led by Richard of Clare, commonly known as Strongbow, may be treated as the symbolic beginning of the big house architecture in Ireland, since he is the person answerable for the invention and implementation of this design as an assertion of Norman dominance over the newly conquered land (Genet 1991: ix). By this token, the big house has become part and parcel of the Irish history and architecture at least till the end of the eighteenth century, marked as the time of its social degradation and physical decay. But before this happened, the big houses, initially built as strategic points of defence, had turned into the landmarks of English dominance over the Irish land. The first big houses, though not having much in common with glamorous English mansions, still contrasted

such buildings in Ireland; however, the historical perspective does not go in accordance with the literary heritage. As Elizabeth Bowen notes in her essay “The big house”, the very term defining this kind of place and tradition is rather irrelevant, since: “The paradox of the big houses is that often they are not big at all (...) the houses that I know best, and write of, would be only called ‘big’ in Ireland – in England they would be ‘country houses’” [1940] (1999: 26). Thus, the term of the big house in the very word ‘big’ carries already an idiosyncratic meaning applicable only to the Irish context. Strange as it may seem, the Big House genre did not become a part of the literary tradition until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the real big houses were gradually turning into ruins. As the character Tom Hoffnung in Brian Friel’s dramatic work *Aristocrats* (1980) summarises: “when we talk about the big house in this country, we usually mean the Protestant big house with its Anglo-Irish tradition and culture; and the distinction is properly made between that tradition and culture and what we might call the native Irish tradition and culture which is Roman Catholic” (1980: 39). Interestingly enough, this very professor researches the Catholic owners of such big houses, who could be treated as the Irish aristocracy. What Friel tries to show by the means of this character is that the definition of the Big House ethos to a great extent fails to represent the whole tradition of the big house, since it excludes a substantial group of Irish Catholic aristocrats who also belonged to the landed gentry, adding to the negative image of the Big House culture, which Friel’s play well dislodges. Still, the Big House genre in Irish literature stands predominantly for the second group of the landed gentry, who are Anglo-Irish descendants. From the times of Cromwell they have owned the majority of big houses with their surrounding lands<sup>5</sup>. In this way, these

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distinctly with the rest of the landscape, scarcely populated by native tenants. Interestingly enough, at this time these houses did not evoke such negative feelings among native inhabitants, since its owners very quickly intermingled and intermarried with the representatives of the old Gaelic order (Rudd 1991: 32).

<sup>5</sup> At the time of the second invasion under the leadership of Cromwell, many of the big houses were owned by Irish descendants who were supporters of the native culture and language. Feeling more secure, the newcomers decided to build new houses in the Georgian style, or rebuild the old one so that they suited the new taste. These big houses represent a finer architecture than their predecessors, as the aim of building them had changed. However, the splendour of the exterior and the interior of the house did not always go along with the cultural value of its inhabitants, since many Cromwellian descendants were not educated people (MacAodha 1991: 24-25). The new ascendancy preferred to spend their free time on hunting, shooting or gambling, from which the image of their idle and careless life springs. The penal laws introduced at the end of the seventeenth century not only strengthened the negative image of the landlord, but more importantly originated the isolation of this social group from the rest of the Irish society (Felhmann 1991:16). In contrast, the potato famine commenced the gradual process of the big house decline as the substantial group of landowners began to struggle with financial problems.

places have become treated as an epitome of the Protestant identity and their feudal domination over the Catholic tenants.

Therefore, curious seems to be the fact that *Castle Rackrent* (1800) by Maria Edgeworth is considered to be the first Irish novel as well as the precursor of the Big House theme, albeit in many aspects it differs from the typical features of the genre. Bernard le Gros points out that the family presented in the novel is Irish, thus under no circumstances does their life represent the fate of Anglo-Irish ascendancy (1991:62). Still, Maria Edgeworth is considered as the initiator of the genre, whose final shape has been achieved thanks to several other writers, each of whom has added some new features to the ones already present in earlier works<sup>6</sup>. This tradition had to wait as long as till the second half of the twentieth century to be acknowledged as part of the Irish literary tradition (Felhmann 1991: 17). As a result, the Big House novel has become a separate genre revolving around the life of the Protestant landholders. The majority of the literary texts are focused on the discrepancy between the past and present state of this class, observing its slow process of social and economic degradation. Thus, the nostalgia for the lost past is frequently underlined as the predominating atmosphere, which goes back to W.B. Yeats's image of the Big House as the cultural centre of the Irish Literary Renaissance. His acquaintance with Lady Gregory allowed him to spend some time in her estate, which made him associate with the Anglo-Irish aristocratic tradition for the rest of his life (Genet 1991: 256-259). The atmosphere of his poems "Upon a house shaken by the land agitation" in *The green helmet* (1910), "Ancestral Houses" in *The tower* (1928), or "Coole park, 1929" and "Coole and Ballylee 1931" in *The winding stair* (1933)<sup>7</sup> all glorifying the existence of the big houses and their role in Irish society, does not reappear in the works of the majority of Anglo-Irish writers, who idealize neither the past nor the ascendancy. The works of such writers as Edith Somerville and Violet Ross, George Moore or Molly Keane, attempt at dislodging the causes for the physical and moral decay of the big house, more often than not being critical of their own class.

The core of the genre is the preoccupation with a gradual decline of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, which is frequently accompanied by the physical

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<sup>6</sup> Vera Kreilkamp in *The Anglo-Irish novel and the big house* draws attention to the new elements being introduced such as: the criticism of "the Enlightenment program of patriarchal moral and economic improvement" (74) ascribed to Charles Lever, guilt for the past deeds of former generations, gothicised by Sheridan Le Fanu and Charles Maturin, moral degradation connected with the decay of the house, presented by Edith Somerville and Marin Ross, as well as nostalgia for the times when the house was a symbol of social security and stability, typical for Elizabeth Bowen (Kreilkamp 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Neil Corcoran also mentions the importance of Yeats's play *Purgatory* (1939) (1997: 33). The action of the drama revolves around the motif of the big house with a contrast between the past, when the house was bursting with life, and present with the ruins as the only trace left.

decay of the house as a building as well as the centre of the family and social life. Therefore, places become the predominant trope in the Big House novel – with a spatial differentiation made between the inside and the outside (Powell 2004: 115). The central role in the novel is usually played by the landlord, who is usually the person to blame for the negligence of the property together with the tenants working for him. Another typical character appears to be a Catholic man, who for different reasons usurps control over the house during too often an absence of the landlord (Kreilkamp 1998: 23-24). Consequently, the genre, apart from the condition of the Protestant ascendancy<sup>8</sup>, with time has implemented a motif of an ongoing conflict between the landed gentry and their tenants, which later has reached a level of a struggle between Protestants and Catholics<sup>9</sup>.

Although with time the Anglo-Irish big houses ceased to be part of actual reality after Ireland had gained its independence, the topic remained vibrant and often used in twentieth-century novels. At first sight the house seems to express nostalgia for the past grandeur lost by an absentee landlord, but it also begins to be presented as a neglected domestic space, which fails to sustain its children<sup>10</sup>. Thus, instead of evoking the feelings of homesickness, it becomes an epitome of the past violence and female oppression (Powell 2004: 117). The twentieth century brings many other changes to the genre, some of them claimed to result from historical revisionism<sup>11</sup>. By encouraging the re-

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<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Canny devotes a lot of attention to the issue of the aristocracy in Ireland, differentiating between the first wave of the colonizers, whom he calls the Old English, and the second one, named as the New English. Canny focuses on the political propaganda during the reign of Elizabeth I, during which a campaign against the Old English aristocracy was introduced to justify the necessity for another colonization. Old English were accused of becoming “barbarious” by intermingling with the natives, supporting their cause, and even sustaining Catholic. Thus, the new group of settlers was supposed to guarantee that the Irish would finally convert and become civilized (1987: 180).

<sup>9</sup>Therefore, big houses started to be associated with the English, especially for Catholics, who during the time of the Troubles treated these places as the symbol of their land dispossession as well as a further oppression caused by the Cromwellian parliament (Rauchbauer 1992: 2). All these historical events led to the old mansions becoming the main target of attack by Catholic tenants following Douglas Hyde’s idea of “de-anglicising Ireland” (Hyde 1987 [1892]: 137-147), thus, part and parcel of Irish history.

<sup>10</sup> This motif is typical for Molly Keane, who in her works depicts children overwhelmed by an overprotective mother, whose behaviour makes them escape the emotional claustrophobia as in *Time after time* or revenge on the oppressor in adult life, as does the protagonist in *Good behaviour* (Kreilkamp 1998: 185).

<sup>11</sup> Brian P. Murphy in his essay on Roy Foster’s *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, draws attention to some of the aspects of contemporary historical revisionism represented by such people as Foster, who at all costs tried to distance themselves from the republican perspective. According to the scholar, their presentation of historical facts aimed at discrediting the IRA’s mandate, and thus the fight for freedom more often than not portrayed Catholic revolutionaries negatively (1994: 77-78).

examination of the relations between Ireland and England, this trend has started to challenge old narratives, drawing attention to the new perspectives of the well-known past events. Although this approach towards history has met with a fierce criticism, still it “has remapped the historical landscape that provides a context for Irish literature” (Kreilkamp 1998: 195). Examples of such an approach towards history and the literary trope of the Big House are the works of William Trevor and Jennifer Johnston. Their revisionism<sup>12</sup> of the genre well works against the words of Seamus Deane that the persistence of the Big House theme in the twentieth-century Irish literature implies “the comparative poverty in the Irish novelistic tradition” (1985: 31). Both authors have managed to use the well-known motif not only to provide a more contemporary comment on the past events, but more importantly as a point of reference for the current changes in society they aim at showing in their novels.

Neither William Trevor nor Jennifer Johnston belong to the group of the Anglo-Irish writers as descendants of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. Therefore, by naming them Big House novelists, Kreilkamp underlines their Protestant middle-class upbringing as well as the fact that these writers draw a line between Big House writers such as Elizabeth Bowen<sup>13</sup> and themselves (1998: 198). The lack of autobiographical pressure to write about the past enables either of the authors, on the one hand, to present the theme of the Big House from a more broad and objective perspective, and on the other, to alter the nineteenth-century convention to comment on new aspects which have not been presented by other Big House writers. Several of their texts have the country house as a setting for more contemporary topics, for instance Jennifer Johnston’s *The illusionist* or William Trevor’s *Death in the summer*. Still some of their novels transform and subvert the nineteenth-century genre to add their voice to the ongoing discussion about the Irish past and identity, more often than not presenting sympathy for the Protestant Anglo-Irish minority, whose discrimination in the Free State has been underplayed for a long period of time (Crawford 2010: 8). Previous novelists, such as George Moore or Elizabeth Bowen<sup>14</sup>, by

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<sup>12</sup> Edna Longley in her critical work *The living stream. Literature and revisionism in Ireland* defines the term revisionism as a “quasi-abusive term for historical studies held to be at odds with the founding ideology of the Irish Free State (The Republic of Ireland since 1948)” (1994: 10). Her negative approach towards the reactionary responses to the new wave of criticism show the desperation of those people who cannot accept the inevitable. Therefore, she translates the term revisionism from the grounds of history into the literature in order to introduce a new reading of the texts or literary motifs which have been heavily dependent on the nationalistic discourse.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Bowen is considered to be the last member of the Anglo-Irish ancestry who was at the same time a writer touching upon the problem of her own class (Cronin 1991: 143).

<sup>14</sup> Declan Kiberd notes that Bowen’s characters “are constantly isolated from the wider society around them by the great walls encircling their demenses”, thus they often appear

writing from the perspective of the inside of the big house, more often than not provide a critical picture of their Anglo-Irish class. Trevor as well as Johnston have been able to present the topic from two perspectives: inside and outside the house, namely, from the Protestant and the Catholic perspectives. So their works apart from breaking with the existing conventions and ideological divisions, look at the Big House theme from a new angle. Their novels' complexity resides in the multiplicity of voices representing different social groups, whose accounts more often than not differ substantially. Still, the objectified picture in their narratives is reached due to the fact that the writers do not give privilege to any of the groups presented, but just show the issue from as many perspectives as possible.

William Trevor's *The silence in the garden* (1989) and Jennifer Johnston's *Fool's sanctuary* (1987) are novels which are still heavily imbedded in the tradition of the Big House but their fiction with time proves that the writers' approach towards the domestic space and Irish identity have been under a constant change. One of the most recent novels *Love and summer* (2009) by Trevor and *Foolish mortals* (2007) by Johnston justify the thesis that the twentieth century brings a final end to the Big House as a place belonging to the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. Trevor seems to treat the motif of the ascendancy's end more literally, since his latest novel depicts the ruins of what used to be a big house. In the case of Johnston, the image of the country manor is replaced with modern houses situated on the outskirts of Dublin and inhabited by contemporary Irish Protestants, whose problems reflect the times they live in. Also, these two examples underline the statement that the dichotomy between Protestants and Catholics ceases to be a focal point of the discussion on the individual and national identity, since more and more people realise that "Irishness is a category of constantly changing content" (Crawford 2010: 3).

## 2.1. The big house as the last epitome of Protestants' Irishness in William Trevor's *The silence in the garden*

"In Ireland you can escape neither politics nor history, for when you travel through the country today the long conflict its landscape has known does not

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unaware of the political situation of the country they live in (1995: 364). According to Kiberd, such a presentation of the landed gentry has many autobiographical overtones, since Bowen was raised up in such a splendid isolation from political events in Ireland. She spent the majority of her teenage years at school in England. But when at home, her family preferred to sustain the atmosphere of complete ignorance in the house as well (Kiberd 1995: 365-366). This approach is maintained by Bowen herself, who in an essay "The big house" states that: "each house seems to live under its own spell, and that is the spell that falls on the visitor from the moment he passes in at the gates" [1940] (1999: 25).

as readily belong in the faraway past as Hastings or Stamford Bridge does for the English” are the words with which Trevor opens his chapter on the Anglo-Irish relations in *A writer's Ireland. Landscape and literature* (1984: 51). These very lines aptly illustrate his novelistic ethos. No matter if one deals with Trevor's earlier novels of the 1960s and 1970s or concentrates on his later works from the 1990s as well as from the first decade of the twenty-first century, all the same, the political and historical issues prevail in the majority of them<sup>15</sup>. The writer does not intend to avoid the uneasy parts of Irish history, but returns to them time and again, yet from different perspectives. As Trevor himself suggests: “all fiction has its autobiographical roots in the sense that as a person you are your characters' litmus paper, their single link with reality” (1993: xii). Therefore, his works provide the reader with a traceable path of transition in the writer's approach towards certain motives. Also, they dislodge the way Irish literature as well as Ireland have been changing throughout time. Some of the critics have a long time ago labelled Trevor as a writer following the tradition of realism<sup>16</sup> remaining negligent to the elements which make the writer's novels innovative. For instance, Trevor is one of few writers who repeatedly goes back to the neglected topic of the fate of Irish Protestants, trying to give voice to the hitherto forgotten side of the conflict. Although the number of novels treating of this topic is not remarkable<sup>17</sup>, if one is aware of the total literary output of the writer, still the constant reappearance of the theme is substantial enough to make critics approach Trevor as a Big House novelist<sup>18</sup>. Those critics who do not limit themselves only to the Big

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<sup>15</sup> Interestingly enough, William Trevor, known as one of the best Irish short-story writers, has always claimed to be “a short story writer who also writes the occasional novel, not the other way round” (Tusa 2007). However, he began his writing career in 1958 with his first novel *The standard of behaviour*, and since then has written sixteen novels. The number excludes *Nights at the Alexandra* and *Two lives*, which sometimes are treated as novellas. They appear to constitute more than just ‘an occasional’ part of his literary output. Since the scope of time between his first and last novel is over fifty years, Trevor's writing comprises a bridge linking at least two generations of Irish novelists, those accustomed to the nineteenth-century writing tradition and those who belong to the so called “New Irish fiction” (Smyth 1997: 7).

<sup>16</sup> Trevor is frequently compared to Chekhov or Dickens, drawing attention to the form of his novels and short stories, but also he is presented as a follower of nineteenth-century Irish novelistic tradition when it comes to the topics he uses (Powell 2004: 89-90).

<sup>17</sup> The Big House ethos appears in *Fools of fortune* (1983), followed by *The silence in the garden* (1989), *The story of Lucy Gault* (2002), and his latest *Love and summer* (2009).

<sup>18</sup> *Fools of Fortune*, being Trevor's first Big House novel presents the theme of the life of Anglo-Irish ascendancy in the 1920s in a more traditional way, namely, by including more politics into the main plot concerning the murder of the Quintons' family together with the burning of the house during the times of the Troubles. In contrast, *The story of Lucy Gault* deals with the tragedy of an Anglo-Irish family, also taking place in the 1920s,

House novels are well aware of the fact that Trevor has never been so much interested in political matters, as in more general issues concerning people and the places they occupy (MacKenna 1999: 107). Therefore, the Big House narrative in their setting well conform to his central interest, which was and still is the Irish landscape. This is well visible in his non-fictional work on the Irish landscape, which he begins with an interesting comparison of Ireland's geographical shape as being similar to an infant (1984: 7). This analogy may be treated just as a trace of Trevor's previous interest in art, or as a metaphor for the country, which is still undergoing a process of development. Such a reading of his words shows the irrefutable link between space and the society the writer remarks upon in his novels.

This goes in accordance with Larsen's statement that Trevor's presentation of places as the setting of his fictional worlds from the very beginning owes a lot to his spatial awareness as a former sculptor (Larsen 1992: 257). No matter whether it is a hotel, a boarding-house or, in his later works, a manor house, each of them acquires a specific symbolic meaning. Therefore, the lives of the people in his novels more often than not are presented through the prism of the space of the house, which plays a central role in the plot. The symbolic meaning of the house in Trevor's works stands in accordance with Lefebvre's statement that social reactions are frequently contained by the space in the form of a building. Therefore the philosopher divides the concept of space into three levels of: spatial practice, representations of space and representational space. The first describes the actual production and location of a given space, the second refers to the relations which combine similar spaces into one type of space, and the third deals with the symbolic representation of a given type of space in literature and art (1991: 33). Trevor's usage of the Big House motif to a certain extent corresponds to these three levels of spatial perception. First of all, the novels carry some autobiographical overtones, since the setting are the actual places closely connected with the author's life<sup>19</sup>. Secondly, in his novels there are present several houses whose

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who under the influence of rumours decide to leave the house to avoid being ostracised by the Catholic revolutionaries. The alleged burning of the house never happens; however, the Gaults' leave Ireland believing in the death of their daughter, who is supposed to have drowned in the sea. The girl's silly escape from the house costs her the loss of her family, since she has to wait over twenty years for her father to return to the house. In this novel, Trevor shows how people happen to bring tragedy upon themselves, allowing fear to rule their lives.

<sup>19</sup> Trevor's novels include some bits and pieces from the life of his family as well as his own. In *The silence in the garden* the Anglo-Irish family is said to be based on the Lloyd family, for whom Trevor's ancestors used to work. The Cox family being originally Catholic, converted to Protestantism to be more prosperous tenants. The Lloyds, likewise the Rollestons, came to Ireland in Cromwellian times, gaining respect among local people due to their help during the Famine (MacKenna 1999: 12-13). The descriptions of the Catholic

similarity in their construction and the social function connected with them constitute a representation of the Anglo-Irish house. The place apart from representing an Anglo-Irish house, gains also a symbolic meaning of the Irish Big House, an abstract concept which is only present in literature – carrying social, political and cultural connotations. This refers especially to the treatment of the big house interior as a metaphor for the Protestant identity, which at a certain point in history could be manifested just within the realm of the house (Cronin 1991: 146).

The house as a material object carries many complex meanings, among which the most crucial seem to be: sociologically, the provision of shelter and the illustration of social divisions, culturally, the expression of identity, whereas politically, an arena for conflict (Alcobia-Murphy after King 2006: 106). Houses in Trevor's fiction embody all these features, since due to the social and cultural associations of big houses in Ireland with their Anglo-Irish landlords, the buildings constantly remind of the prevailing polarisation of society, and therefore, for its inhabitants, they become not only a place of refuge, but also a tangible proof of their Irish legitimacy. What appears to the most crucial aspect in Trevor's fiction is the insoluble link between the place and its inhabitant, thus contrary to what Trevor states in his *Excursions in the real world* that: "places do not die as people do" (Trevor 1993: xi) still his novel *The silence in the garden* (1989) already shows the writer's changing approach towards the topic, as he seems to realise that the days of big houses in Ireland are numbered since the Anglo-Irish ascendancy is disappearing from the Irish social landscape.

*The silence in the garden* tells a story of the Rolleston's family, who for generations have lived in Carriglas house. Mrs Rolleston comes from Anglo-Irish descendants, thus the house together with the island, on which the estate is situated, belongs to the family. As her son died during the First World War, she lives with her three grandchildren: Villana, Lionel and John James. The novel begins with the arrival of Sarah Pollexfen, a poor relative of the Rolleston's, who after many years comes back to the house to stay with the family. In the past she used to work there as a governess taking care of the children, but now Mrs Rolleston invites her to live with them, since, after her father's death, Sarah has no other place to live. During her life, Sarah keeps a diary thanks to which certain past events are revealed. One of them is why Villana, who used to be engaged to Sarah's brother, Hugh, has broken the engagement and later accepts the proposal from Fynamore Balt, a forty-year-old solicitor. John James, a former soldier, now stays at home and meets Mrs Moledy every Monday, a middle-class widow who owns a boarding house in

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school in *Love and summer* well correspond to Trevor's own experience, for example the fact that he had to stay in a cloakroom during Religious Education classes (MacKenna 1999: 30).

the nearby town. Lionel is the only person who continues to be concerned with the house and its land, spending his time on farming. Apart from the family, there are still some servants who live in the house: Haverty, Patty and Brigid with her son Tom. The boy is looked down on by the local people as he is an illegitimate child of the Rolleston's former butler, known as Linchy, who was accidentally killed a week before his marriage to Brigid. The butler fell victim to Cornelius Dowley, a Catholic boy, who intended to take revenge on Colonel Rolleston's children for a cruel game they had played on him. Sarah's diary reveals that one summer Villana, Lionel, John James and Hugh, who were children at that time, were hunting with a shotgun after Cornelius Dowley. A seemingly innocuous game had a terrible aftermath in their later life. Cornelius, by using the opportunity of the revolution, planned to kill the former oppressors, but shot Linchy by mistake. As a result, the British army hunted him and shot him, which brought him fame and the label of an Irish revolutionist fighting for freedom. These events cast a shadow on the Rollestons' as well as Tom's future life, who is raised without a father and in a feeling of constant guilt for his parents' sin. After the tragic events, Hugh broke his engagement to Villana since he couldn't be happy with her after what had happened. Even more bitter for the inhabitants of the island becomes the bridge, which is being built to connect the place with the mainland, carrying the name of Cornelius Dowley. Mrs Rolleston feels partially responsible for the fate of Tom, and thus the house is to be inherited by him, when the members of the family die.

In this novel, more meticulously than in other texts, Trevor plays with the trope of space when choosing the exact place for his plot. The island, on which the house is situated, albeit a real place, may be treated as a metaphor for the whole of Ireland. The history of the island can be divided into two periods: before and after the building of the bridge. The times when the island has no physical connection with the rest of the country belong to the past, whereas the present seems to commence with the story of the bridge as the symbolic beginning of the new period in the history of the family, as well as of the whole country. In Heidegger's work on space, a bridge fulfils the role of the land gatherer. A bridge does not just link two banks, but places these two sides in a neighbourhood (1971: 152). Thus, the trope of the island highlights the isolation of the family from the rest of the society as long as there is no bridge. Not only does it show the peripheral and marginalised position of the Anglo-Irish Protestants by the Catholic society, but more importantly the past self-sufficiency of the family as a community. Before the bridge is built, the family associate their social identity with the house as well as with the whole island. Afterwards, the inhabitants of Carrilgas more and more often leave the island together with the house and travel by ferry to the mainland where the town is situated, for example Tom who attends a local Catholic school, or

John James who every Monday pays a visit to Mrs Moledy. However, former generations like Mrs Rolleston are accustomed to the times when: "There was no ferryboat then; when people fell ill on the island they came to the house and the house looked after them" (Trevor 1989: 183). Thus, Mrs Rolleston does not leave the house but rather asks people to come to her, for instance when she sends for a man from Cork to value the family's jewellery. Similarly, the wedding celebrations take place at Carriglas, because: "It's how it was in the past (...) Always at the house" (Trevor 1989: 71). The house is presented not just as the setting but as one of the characters, which has always actively participated in the life of the family. The estate turned out to be very helpful during the times of the famine, as the starving tenants were able to find work within its gates, when they could not live on their crops: "As best they could, they found work for their tenants so that they might be protected from starvation by being paid in kind. The Carriglas gardens were kept up as never before; more stabling was built; a second avenue, long since grown over, was surfaced; the cliff walk round the island was cleared" (Trevor 1989: 42). The house, which was supposed to serve the purpose of protecting its inhabitants started to welcome more and more people. As Elizabeth Bowen notes: "[big houses] were planned for spacious living – for hospitality above all" (1999: 26). Such is Carriglas in Trevor's novel – a house which welcomes everyone.

The house has a rich history going back to the eighteenth century, whereas the family's lineage is as old as the Cromwellian times, which brought them to this place. Although the Rollestons: "arriving in the wake of Oliver Cromwell, had dispossessed the Cantillons of their island and sent them on their way to the stony wilderness of Mayo" (Trevor 1989: 41), they managed to become remembered by the local community as "the Famine Rollestons" (Trevor 1989: 42) for their compassion and help given to all the tenants working for them. The wealth of the family enabled them to build the house famous for its architecture:

He told them how the house had been built on the site of the Cantillons' castle when the first Rollestons grew tired of living in the castle itself, how the stone had been re-cut and dressed by Jeremiah O'Toole of Cork, how an Italian called Martelli, of Dublin, had been commissioned for the plasterwork of the dining-room and the inner hall. Bars had been incorporated in the nursery windows at the wish of the wife of the John Rolleston of that particular time. The architect who'd decided on concave walls and had created so spectacular an effect with the French windows of the southern facade had been a Mr Forbes, he it was who had also designed the Carriglas gardens. (Trevor 1989: 42)

The description of the house not only draws attention to the luxury with which it was built, but more importantly to the image of John Rolleston as a traditional big house landlord, who at that time was still preoccupied with the

estate, so that the place was thriving. John Rolleston seems to be an exception to the rule, since the majority of Big House novels depict landlords either as constantly neglecting their Irish estates, spending the majority of their time in England, or behaving irresponsibly so that the place instead of bringing income ends up in debt (Kreilkamp 1998: 23). The image of an absentee landlord so popular in the Big House genre, cannot be ascribed to John Rolleston, but rather to the oldest son of Mr Rolleston, John James, who is the heir of the estate. However, he does not feel obliged to take care of Carriglas. Thus, gradually the splendour of the house is gone, which does not go without notice for the wedding guests, who comment that: “something’s up with this place (...) they’ve let it go” (Trevor 1989: 119). The symbolic juxtaposition between the glorious past and the state of decay of the present is well depicted with Sarah’s memories of her first visit when contrasted with her arrival for the second time:

The lawns that flank the house are only roughly cut, and the white paintwork of the hall-door and the windows is as marked and dirtied as the gates. In the drawing-room the chandeliers still hang grandly, the family portraits are as they’ve been before. But water, penetrating the wall of the French windows, has left a brown stain on the wallpaper; and the room is dingy. So, with similar discolouration, is the circular hall, and the empty alcoves of the green staircase wall seem less elegant than they were. Paint flakes away from the windowsills. The nursery-schoolroom smells of the sun-scorched butterflies that have accumulated on its boarded floor. (Trevor 1989: 38)

Therefore, in her diary, Sarah constantly goes back to the past grandeur of the house with great nostalgia. She connects the better times of the house with her first stay at Carriglas: “I imagine the drawing-room at Carriglas, and the Rollestons drinking from the rosy china. I imagine the island shore where the house is, and the town you can see on the mainland” (Trevor 1989: 9). For Sarah, the glory of the house is closely connected with the wellbeing of the family, who occupy the place. Thus, what she remembers most is the seemingly carefree period before the summer incident took place. When she goes back to Carriglas twenty three years later, from the very beginning she knows that: “everything was going to be different (...) Villana and her brothers were no longer children; revolution had drifted into civil war since Colonel Rolleston’s death at Passchendaele, though peace seemed generally to prevail now” (Trevor 1989: 24). Sarah’s approach towards the house shows how important is the interdependence between the house and its inhabitants.

The only person who still believes in the possibility of restoring the grandeur of the place is Fynamore Balt. Contrary to his claim that the source of the financial problems and connected with it Carriglas’s decay are the Famine years, Trevor in his novel dislodges the actual reason for the house’s de-

struction by linking it directly with the destruction of the family. The Rollestons, as the descendants of Cromwellian times, belong to those Anglo-Irish landed gentry who did not assimilate with the rest of the society (Rudd 1991: 32). This is well visible in Mrs Rolleston's behaviour. She tries to secure the traditional class division by forcing her grandchildren to familiarise just with people of the same descent as they are. Thus, she disapproves of Villana's choice of a husband or John's meeting with Mrs Moledy. Neither does she approve of such people's presence in the house. However, the grandchildren approach this issue differently. Therefore, central for these matters becomes Villana's infertile marriage with Finnamore, since when accepting his proposal she informs him that: "Marriage would not mean children" (Trevor 1989: 44). Villana decides to break with the convention of a marriage among the landed gentry by introducing a misalliance into her family. However, her determination to remain childless shows that her intention of marriage with a man from the middle class will not change much. She seems wary of the fact that her children with their hybrid identity would find it difficult to live either in England or in Ireland. Without the house, as the only place left where her family could keep their sense of identity intact, Villana does not see any point in having children. Thus, she consciously decides to bring her lineage to an end, which is to symbolise the cease of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy.

Interestingly enough, Villana, as a woman, is the person who decides about the future of the ascendancy. The link between the female characters and the domestic space is so substantial that, according to Corcoran, in the majority of cases one may find the big house being represented as a woman (1997: 37). For Lubbers, due to the constant absence of the landlord, the big house is a typically female space, which ought to provide security, stability being a place for births, nourishment, sleep and death (1992: 261). In *The silence in the garden* after the death of Colonel Rolleston, the decisions are made predominantly by women: either Mrs Rolleston or Villana. Neither Lionel nor John James, though present, take over the role of a landlord, staying passive when it comes to the future of the house. The domestic space remains a feminine domain. The fact that the majority of events crucial to the future life of a woman happen within the walls of the house, may help to answer the question why Villana tries to destroy the family life so well rooted in the domestic interior. One of the justifications lies in the nature of the house itself, which, following the words of Bachelard, constitutes a place that stores all the memories and images of the past events (1969: 17). Villana is wary of the fact that as long as the house exists, the past will continue to haunt her. Thus, following the will of her grandmother, Villana prepares Finnamore and the rest of the family to accept the fact that one day Tom is going to inherit the place: "When the moment was suitable she would gently tell him that it was better to let Carriglas go, that his dream of resurrection was not what anyone wanted" (Trevor 1989: 159). Villana's persistent resistance to Finnamore's plans of restor-

ing the grandeur of the estate remains incomprehensible without the knowledge of the past events linked directly and indirectly with the space of the house. Carriglas not only constantly reminds Villana of the summer incident, but more importantly of her love for Hugh. Since she cannot share the place with the person she loves, Villana decides to leave Carriglas to Tom, which is the symbol of the forthcoming change in the meaning of the big house as no longer epitomising the Anglo-Irish identity.

The second reason behind leaving the house in the state of decay is the past violence which goes back to the family and ends in the self-destruction of the house, so that once taken over by the invaders it can now “come back to its clay” (MacKenna 1999: 131). To adopt the stance of Lefebvre that space is always referential, Carriglas and the island on which it is placed clearly allude to the history of Ireland. Here Trevor tries to free himself from the established pattern of drawing a connection between the space of the house and the Troubles. Rather than repeating the motif of the Big House as the symbolic target of the Republican attack, known from his previous novel *Fools of fortune*, in *The silence in the garden* the writer prefers to explore the human aspect of the conflict and connected with it the issue of human guilt (Larsen 1992: 267). Although Cornelius Dowley kills Linchy during the time of the Troubles, his revenge has personal justification. As Mrs Rolleston indicates: “How convenient revolution is for men like Cornelius Dowley! What balm for the bitter heart!” (Trevor 1989: 186), the Catholic boy once oppressed by the Carriglas’ children, when adult, “found the excuse for his vengeance in the troubles” (Trevor 1989: 198). Villana together with her brothers and Hugh are not so much distressed by the fact that they become the target of violence for their seemingly innocuous game from their childhood. What makes them guilt ridden for the rest of their lives is rather the death of Linchy, who is accidentally killed instead of them. Therefore, as a means of atonement Mrs Rolleston takes care of Linchy’s son, sends him to school, for which she pays, and finally, makes him the inheritor of Carriglas.

A more allegorical meaning may also be ascribed to this story, treating the island on which the house is situated together with the events taking place there as a microcosmic presentation of Irish colonial history (Fitzgerald-Hoyt 2003: 96). In this way the house is not read as a geographical place but rather as “a non-localised space for the exploration of subjectivity and power” (Douglas 2006: 34). The Rollestons’ act of giving the power over the house to a Catholic boy may be treated as a symbolic picture of the Anglo-Irish landlords returning the island to those from whom the Protestant ascendants had taken it centuries ago. As Trevor underlines in his novel, the island used to belong to Catholic tenants and before it: “the whole island was a burial place (...) [with a] ruined abbey at the heart of the island” (Trevor 1989: 17, 203). The graveyard not only is a constant reminder of the Celtic origins of the place, but also symbolizes the

past, which even if buried is still remembered and taken care of by such people as Tom. Villana, however, hopes that: "a day would come, some time in the future, when nobody would know, when the truth would be buried and lie like some forgotten treasure in the ground" (Trevor 1989: 172). For her, the death of the Rolleston's family may bring an end to the Carriglas house but at the same time also to the past events which took place on the island. Thus, the diary of Sarah, who is asked by Mrs Rolleston to describe what truly happened, plays a crucial role here: "She said she wanted it written down. She wanted it in Sarah Pollexfen's diaries, so that the truth could be passed on" (Trevor 1989: 183). Apart from Sarah's diaries, the bridge also stores the memory of the painful incident of Linchy's death as it carries the name of Cornelius Dowley. Trevor refuses to oversimplify the colonial past of Ireland by showing that more often than not history is created accidentally, with accidental heroes, but also predominantly accidental victims. The bridge becomes also a bitter addition to Villana's wedding, the two events resulting from the feral games from her childhood, both bringing an end to the Anglo-Irish ascendancy on the island. The marriage paradoxically finishes the Rolleston's ancestry, whereas the bridge brings a final end to the Anglo-Irish isolationism and eliticism (Larsen 1992: 271). The annexation of the landlord's land to the rest of Ireland symbolises the act of adopting the Anglo-Irish tradition, with the Big House novel, to native Irish culture.

Due to the jointure of the island with the mainland, the Rollestons lose their sense of self, since the space of the house together with the island constitute limits to their Anglo-Irish identity. Since the eighteenth century, the construction of modern Irishness has heavily relied on the attachment of people to land and place. Therefore, in Irish literature the issues of landscape, geographic destinies, and physical exile more often than not overlap with the theme of identity (Smyth 1997: 58). This being the case in Trevor's novel, the Carriglas house becomes the epitome of the Anglo-Irish identity as a community, but also of the Rollestons as individuals. Without the estate they are similar to the middle-class Protestants, who call themselves: "Tenants of a landless empire (...) the Jews of Ireland" (Trevor 1989: 20). Sarah is the example of a poor Protestant, who is dependent on the mercy of her rich relatives. Although Trevor does not devote so much attention to the fate of his class in this particular novel<sup>20</sup>, the presence of such characters as Sarah or the depiction of The Misses Goodbody's School for Protestant Girls, for which she works at some point in the novel, verify his statement: "My memory, also, is of poverty in the back streets that was crueller and more claustrophobic than that which afflicted the

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<sup>20</sup> Trevor has devoted many of his novels to the fate of poor Protestants, which is more noticeable in the narratives treating of small towns such as *The boarding house* (1965) or *Reading Turgieniev* (1991).

Anglo-Irish” (Trevor 1993: xiv). Still his recurring preoccupation with the fate of Anglo-Irish landlords signifies his interest in the problem of the Protestant minority. The big house descendants, when losing their properties, face the same problem as the middle-class Protestants i.e. the question of their national legitimacy. Thus, it is understandable why some of the characters are so preoccupied with the matter of land: Lionel, who spends all his time on farming, and Finnamore who intends to retrieve the four acres which used to belong to Villana’s family. For them, the land is the core of Irish identity, so as long as they own it they have a place of belonging.

Apart from the Rollestons, Tom is also the person who throughout the novel seeks his identity. Although Catholic, he is constantly rejected by his community because of his illegitimate birth. Before he learns the true meaning of the word, he wonders for a long time why: “Mr Coyne had changed his mind about inviting him into his house, and how his grandmother had been going to kiss him and then hadn’t (...) people didn’t object to being in a room with him, that only the Deavy boys moved to the other side of the street” (Trevor 1989: 179). In the Catholic school, even if accepted, he is reminded by the priest that: “you’ve more prayers to say than others” (Trevor 1989: 79), whereas Holy Mullihan, another boy from the school, accuses Tom of committing a serious crime. Being perpetually ostracised by his community, Tom finds himself not so much displaced but rather without any space he could be ascribed to. Therefore, his situation well describe the words of Sarah, who at one point states that: “I feel more than ever I live in a cobweb of other people’s lives and do not understand the cobweb’s nature” (Trevor 1989: 116). Tom, likewise Sarah, during the narrative tries to dismantle the enigma of him having become entangled in the cobweb of the Rollestons’ and Cornelius’ lives, becoming the real victim of the past actions of both sides of the conflict. Hurt directly or indirectly by the Catholics as well as the Protestants, Tom emerges as a representative of a new generation of Irish people, who despite not being personally involved in the Troubles suffer from its aftermaths. Still he is able to forgive and accept his fate. Thus, he differs from the traditional portrayal of a Catholic who usurps the power over the big house to exert satisfaction from dispossessing his former oppressor of his property, which symbolises power and a sense of identity<sup>21</sup>. The Rollestons make a conscious decision when they pass the house down to Tom. For them, it is a form of compensation for Tom’s father’s death, but more importantly, a way of providing him with his sense of belonging to a place and, therefore, his identity.

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<sup>21</sup> The example of such a character appears in Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent*, where the persona of Jason Quirk poses a threat to the Rackrents family’s house. The usurper tries to manipulate the family so that they lose the property, which is to dislodge the landlord’s helplessness and lack of interest as well as the Anglo-Irish community’s unawareness of their fading power over other people (Kreilkamp 1998: 41).

This marks the moment when the new perception on the issue concerning self-consciousness appears in this particular novel, in Trevor's fiction, as well as in this novelistic tradition. What also makes Tom a new type of character in Big House fiction is his attitude toward Carriglas while he is already the owner of it. Instead of taking advantage of his situation and making profit from the estate, Tom decides to leave the house as it is, taking care of it but not changing its function in society. Contrary to the trend presented in the novel, Tom does not become influenced by the ideas of turning the house into a hotel. Neither does he intend to settle down and start a family. He rejects the possibility of reintegrating with the local Catholic community by marrying Esmeralda Coyne, and chooses to: "live here, changing nothing" in this way returning "Carriglas to its clay" (Trevor 1989: 203). Therefore, the history of the island comes back to its starting point of an uninhabited place with a prevailing silence over it. The house, likewise the ruins of an abbey and the stones, becomes the only reminder of the past events which took place there. With this image Trevor places the Anglo-Irish community near the Celtic community, which although it came to an end a long time ago, is still prevalent in Irish culture as its fundamental constituent.

William Trevor in his *The silence in the garden* uses the motif of a Big House to present the complexity behind the process of creating history as well as identity. The story of the Rolleston's family allows him to present the aspect of accidentality in the creation of national history. This is possible due to the fact that Trevor reserves himself from the politics, trying to concentrate on the human interrelations in the context of a conflict between Anglo-Irish descendants and the native Irish people. With his background of a middle-class Protestant, Trevor manages to distance himself from both groups and present a rather objectified picture of the conflict, making both sides equally responsible for the tragedy. The history of the Rolleston's family shows that this class although violent in the past towards the native inhabitants, proved to be compassionate for the local community as well. The family even if making mistakes, is conscious of them and more importantly able to inflict punishment on themselves for their committed bad deed. In Trevor's narrative, the Catholic community is also to blame for their cruel treatment of Tom as well as a creation of false heroes such as Cornelius Dowley. Trevor's insight into the problems of different social communities living in Ireland provides the reader with a multiplicity of voices, which draw attention to the complexity of Irish identity. The novel proves Ireland to be inhabited by a heterogeneous society, which is under a constant process of change, the epitome of this being the character of Tom.

## 2.2. The end of the Big House ethos in William Trevor's *Love and summer*

The continuous presence of the issues concerning the juxtaposition between the past and the present as well as the influence of the past on the construction of the individual and communal identity may also be exemplified by Trevor's latest novel *Love and summer* (2009). The author once again gives much reconsideration to the same topics by presenting them from yet a different angle. Similarly to the previous novels, the space of the house is built into the very structure of the novel. This time, however, the world of the Big House is moved from the focal point to merely marking its "ruined and ghostly presence" in the novel (Rio 2010: 173), still playing an important role in the story itself. This is not the only change in Trevor's presentation of provincial Ireland, for as Sebastian Barry points out, "the old Trevorian music of sadness" is replaced with his characters achieving, at least to a certain extent, the state of happiness and personal freedom (2009). What the reviewers of the novel have spotted immediately are just a few of the changes which characterise Trevor's last narrative. A more detailed analysis of the text shows that behind these seemingly simple and superficial alterations are hidden more complex processes, which prove that in the twenty-first century not only Irish fiction in general continues to reconstruct itself but also that it happens within the area of the fiction of individual writers, William Trevor being a case in point (Smyth 1997: 178).

*Love and summer* presents a story of a small community living in Rathmoye as well as near the town. Although it is stated at the beginning of the novel that not much happens there, the town together with its inhabitants conceal certain secrets from the past and the present. The narrative begins with the funeral of Mrs Connulty, which provides the reader with an immediate insight into the private life of the family. The family is believed to own half of the town, as the late Mr Connulty managed to make a considerable profit from the coal yards. After the mother's death, her daughter, Miss Connulty, without grief takes pleasure in inheriting everything which used to be her mother's, from petty things like her jewellery to the house itself. Joseph, Mrs Connulty's son, pretends not to notice how his sister is happy about their mother's death. Later it is revealed that their mutual hatred stems from a past event, when Miss Connulty fell in love with an English man who left her pregnant. To avoid the scandal, Mr Connulty took his daughter to the chemist in Dublin to terminate the pregnancy. This event resulted in a total break-up of communication between Mrs Connulty and her daughter, who lived together under one roof but did not speak to each other.

Mrs Connulty's funeral is an event in which two main characters of the novel participate, Ellie and Florian. Ellie is a young orphan, who raised up in a

convent, was lucky enough to get a job as a maid in Dillahan's house. Dillahan is a widowed farmer, who suffers from the pangs of conscience caused by him accidentally running over his wife and child with a tractor. Ellie, after several years of working as a maid, gets married to Dillahan, who is much older than she is. Isolated from the town due to the farm's remote location, she spends her time alone in the house. Therefore, when she meets Florian she quickly becomes attracted to him. Florian is an outsider to the local community. The son of two artists, an Italian mother and an Anglo-Irish father, he returns to his family house to sell it and pay back the debts his late parents had accumulated. Just after reaching the decision of selling the house and going abroad, he gets involved in an adulterous affair with Ellie. He treats the meeting with Ellie just as his other affairs, which were to make him forget about his true love, his Italian cousin Isabella. For Ellie, this is an escape from her mundane life on a farm to such an extent that she thinks about going with Florian to Scandinavia. However, Florian does not want to get involved in a relationship and after selling the house leaves Ireland alone. Crucial for the plot is also a seemingly unimportant figure of Orpen Wren, a local madman. He used to be a librarian of the St Johns, an Anglo-Irish family, who left the country many years ago. Mixing the present with the past, he believes that Florian is a grandson of George Freddie St John who has returned to bring back the glory of the Lisquin estate.

All the characters presented in the novel are linked with the theme of the house. The most crucial for the narrative are the two houses situated in the countryside: Florian's Shelhanagh and Lisquin. The former is the exemplification of the further fate of an Anglo-Irish big house after it has been left by the landlord's family. Florian's father, although Anglo-Irish by birth, did not inherit the house, but bought it at the beginning of the twentieth century. The father, who worked in the army, was considered an unsuitable partner for Florian's Italian mother, who belonged to an aristocratic family. The couple got married against the will of the family, so they could not stay in Italy. The father decided to go back to his motherland and buy a country house, so that they could find their sense of place. All his life he tried what he might to restore the beauty of the estate:

Shelhanagh it was called, a country house of little architectural distinction, looking down on its own wide lake, two miles from Greenane Crossroads, five from the town of Castledrummond. It was in a state of some decay, for in the Kilderrys' lifetime there had rarely been money to pay for its structural upkeep; and with the house itself, Florian had inherited a mass of debts and ongoing legal disputes (...) during his last years his father had begun to sell the furniture, as already he had sold Shelhanagh's gorse-laden rocky little fields. But even without much furniture, here and there the house's better days held on. Pictures that had once cheered the walls were no more than a deeper shade of wallpaper now; yet each, for Florian, was perfectly a reminder. (Trevor 2009: 27, 29)

Despite his effort, the house is decaying probably due to the previous owner's irrefutable negligence. Still, even Florian may differentiate between the better days of the house and its current state, meticulously described in the novel. This, yet again, is insolubly linked with the situation of the family. In the past, when the Kilderrys were still together, the house used to be a place of frequent meetings: "When, in the past, there'd been parties – when people had driven down from Dublin – there was always the walk around the lake, whole processions of people and Florian among them, the child of the house" (Trevor 2009: 25). The state of the house started to deteriorate after Florian mother's death. The father seems to have lost any will to maintain the place, therefore all the happy memories from the life in the house are ascribed to the times when the family was together, when Florian's parents were still painting and when life there was thriving thanks to the visits of people connected with the world of the arts.

Florian's father, even if of Anglo-Irish origin, is no longer the representative of the landed gentry, which used to own such places. Consequently, the family embodies a new class of the potential big house inhabitants. The Kilderrys, being exiles themselves, in Shelhanagh found a place of belonging and a sense of identity, especially the father born into the army family of middle-class Protestants who, most probably because of their affiliation, long ago left Ireland and settled in Somerset, England. The couple, married against the will of the bride's aristocratic family, had to leave Italy and search for a new place to live. Therefore, Mr Kilderry decided to come back to Ireland, where his family originally came from. This is also the reason why during their lifetime both Mr and Mrs Kilderry tried to persuade their son to keep the estate at all costs:

A few days before his death, his father had reiterated what so often he had said before: that if desperate measures were called for a few of Shelhanagh's eighteen rooms could be let, and something made of the attractions of the lake and the surrounding tranquillity; that no matter how Florian wished to live, Shelhanagh would always at least be a roof above his head. 'Never betray your gift, beau' his mother, ignoring practicalities, had earlier advised. (Trevor 2009: 30)

For Florian, the memories of the past stored by the house, as well as his parents' will contrasted with the increasing amount of debts, make the decision of selling the place extremely difficult. At this point the juxtaposition between the nostalgic past and the harsh reality of the present state of the house as well as of the family reappears in Trevor's fiction. Florian is aware that giving the house away to other people is "a treachery" (Trevor 2009: 30), but still he has no choice but to pay off the debts from the money earned through the sale, and become, as his parents once were – an exile.

The idea of leaving Ireland is not only determined by the financial problems, as it also becomes an easy way of escaping unwanted memories,

which the house encapsulates. Apart from his parents, the house had been a second home for his Italian cousin Isabella, who is his first love. Thus, the sale of the furniture such as the piano, on which she liked to play, is to act as a way of getting rid of the uneasy memories from the inside of the house: "She lifted loneliness from him, making of the secrets he once had guarded from her curiosity secrets that belonged to both of them" (Trevor 2009: 63). The epitome of their secrets is the book in which they would write a story of their imaginary couple. Believed to have been lost a long time ago, the book is found by Florian during his packing, bringing back all the events which took place eight years ago. Therefore, for him, the affair with Ellie due to the summer time bears much resemblance to his past infatuation. With time he realises that even Ellie cannot help him to forget his only real love – Isabella. Thus, leaving the house is the only possibility of freeing himself from the memories of her once the book has been burnt, along with other belongings: "The pages of *Fieldbook* had served their purpose and he relit his garden fire with them" (Trevor 2009: 200). Florian's father, likewise, had tried to bury the memories of his late wife by putting all her belongings in a wardrobe. Later, Florian does the same with his father's belongings: "He opened the wardrobe that had been shared and considered saying it wasn't as strange as it seemed, their clothes kept for so long" (Trevor 2009: 113). A wardrobe, to adopt Bachelard's point of view, keeps a secret psychological life in itself, and in this way protects the house from uncurbed disorder. This inner space, more often than not serves as a place for storing the most intimate of memories, since it is not accessible for everybody (1969: 78-79). A similar function is played by the wardrobe in Florian's house. All the most intimate recollections from the past, epitomised by the clothes his parents used to wear, find their place in the wardrobe to hide the painful memories and to try to restore the order of everyday life into the rest of the house<sup>22</sup>.

The house, furnished mainly with memories, for Ellie seems just an empty space devoid of any signs that would show that it is still inhabited by Florian: "Shelhanagh House was not as Ellie had imagined it (...) the flagstones in the hall weren't covered, the dining-room contained no furniture, the drawing-room was not a drawing-room" (Trevor 2009: 157). What Ellie finds in Shelhanagh bears no comparison to the way in which the space of the house is imagined and organized for her. As an orphan, she had no occasion to experience a family house. Therefore, her only point of reference is her husband's

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<sup>22</sup> The fact the Florian gets rid of all his parents' belongings, either by handing them over to charity or selling them, as it happens in the case of furniture, dislodges his attempt at leaving the memories and former identity behind. In contrast, Michael Longley's poems depict the act of collecting things and bringing them to the other place as "the phantom replacements of the old world and the spurious warrants of the continuity of one's identity" (Jarniewicz 2005: 268).

farmhouse, filled with old furniture but lacking any emotions. The place has not changed much since the death of the previous wife, but Ellie does not know it since she has no comparison. It is the reader who may observe that the past still lingers on in the domestic interior. The memories connected with the house are kept away from Ellie, since her husband avoids mentioning its past inhabitants: his late mother as well as his first wife who together with their only child died in an accident. What is left for Ellie are the material objects: "When Ellie had come to this kitchen five years ago she hadn't known a kitchen she liked as much, or known the comfort of the sitting-room at the front of the farmhouse, cosily cramped, its two armchairs with antimacassars, its brass fender with fire-irons laid out, its ornaments and photographs, flowered wallpaper with a frieze" (Trevor 2009: 20). It is not until she falls in love with Florian that Ellie realises how empty her house is: "She would open her eyes and see the pink-washed walls as she saw them now, the sacred picture above the empty grate, her clothes on the chair in the window. He would be gone, as the dead are gone, and that would be there all day, in the kitchen and in the yard" (Trevor 2009: 136). Gaining this new experience she finds her life with Dillahan unbearable, whereas the house, which she used to appreciate so much, has lost its meaning.

Apart from Ellie, Miss Conulty is the second character in the novel for whom the house consists only of material objects. When Mrs Eileen Connulty dies, her daughter is happy to inherit all her mother's possessions as well as the house itself: "Alone in the house, as she had not been since the death, Mrs Connulty's daughter fondled the jewellery that now was hers (...) She was in charge, and today she wore the pearls" (Trevor 2009: 8, 105). Miss Connulty has a desperate need to possess the things that belonged to her mother together with her room, into which she moves after the funeral. Such a manifestation of her right to the place is supposed to compensate for the time when she "was nameless in the house" (Trevor 2009: 8) due to her mother's rejection. Therefore, she tries to negotiate her identity through the means of the space of the house and its belongings, especially when it comes to her twin brother who is the only person to know the past event which divided the family forever. Since her identity had been taken away from her by her mother, Miss Conulty, with such symbolic acts as wearing the pearls, manifests her new identity, which she has taken away from her late mother together with all her goods. Taught by her experience, she is also ready to share the place with Ellie, if her husband is informed about the affair or if Ellie gets pregnant by Florian. "Ellie Dillahan will live in this house and hold her head up" (Trevor 2009: 132) are the words Miss Connulty says to her brother to manifest that she will not allow Ellie to suffer the fate Miss Connulty herself had to experience, the loss of the house as a home being the cruellest punishment for her. By introducing such a character as Miss Connulty into his narrative, Trevor shares Bachelard's attitude towards the domestic space as being typically fem-

inine in nature (1969: 101) but also seems to adopt the view that the house is the first and most important place where the struggle for identity begins.

The theme of the Big House appears likewise in the form of an almost forgotten story of the St Johns family and their Lisquin house. Not many people remember who the St Johns were apart from their former librarian Orpen Wren. Thanks to his account, the reader learns that the ruins, near which Florian and Ellie meet, are the only traces of the big house known under the name Lisquin, which used to be part of the St Johns estate. Thus, it turns out that the family belonged to the Anglo-Irish landed gentry class. The strand of the Anglo-Irish ancestry appears accidentally from time to time, but typically for the writer, its scarce presence in the novel does not diminish its role in the plot. Lisquin is the second exemplification in the same text of the fate of the big house, which awaits such places in Ireland. What it was in the past remains just in the memory of the few local inhabitants, since the house itself: “isn’t there any more. Only the back gate-lodge was left” (Trevor 2009: 82). The very first descriptions prove that in comparison to the neglected Shelhanagh, which with its new owners who “will pull it together again” (Trevor 2009: 176) stands a chance of surviving, Lisquin has a long time ago gone into complete ruin: “Nettles thrived within the walls that remained. A clump of brambles spread from a corner, sorrel flourished, dandelions gave colour. A door-frame had mostly rotted away, joists hung crookedly” (Trevor 2009: 118). The only person who still believes in the possibility of restoring the house is a local madman, Orpen Wren<sup>23</sup>. The former librarian who used to work for the St Johns family, is a man who “lived both the present and the past” (Trevor 2009: 42). The sale of the house as well as the departure of the family affected him so deeply that since then he has been wandering the road with a file of papers from the library. Mixing facts and the past with the present, Orpen mistakes Florian for George Anthony’s grandson, and therefore believes that the heir of Lisquin has returned.

Orpen remains under this misconception due to the fact that Florian is a frequent visitor at the Lisquin gate-lodge. The ruins because of their distant location from the town become a place where Florian and Ellie leave messages for each other and later meet. Here is secrecy: “[Lisquin] being lost in uninterrupted peace became their clandestine sanctuary” (Trevor 2009: 124-125). The choice of Lisquin as a meeting point is significant for the affair, showing that the events which took place there in the past may happen again. According to Orpen, the St Johns decided to leave the house after their son, Elador, ran away with the wife of a local farmer. The family unable to face the disgrace, traced Elador, brought the woman back to her husband and sent their

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<sup>23</sup> According to Smyth, madness is a recurring motif in Irish fiction due to the fact that it constitutes one of the predominating topics in post-colonial literature (2001: 49).

son to England. The farmer bearing the grudge against the family attempted to shoot Jack St John, which made the family leave Ireland forever. The past affair bears much resemblance to what happens between Ellie and Florian, but still the end of the novel works against the statement that history tends to repeat itself. Having the knowledge that the alleged St John's grandson is in reality Florian, the reader has no doubt that Orpen's hope for the rebirth of the Anglo-Irish ancestry together with Lisquin house is impossible. His constant lingering between past and present results in him not being capable of communicating his messages even if he comments on the present situations. This happens when he tries to break the news to Dillahan about the affair of his wife. Ellie's husband who, likewise Orpen, cannot distance himself from the past believes that the old man is talking about his late wife, who supposedly was seen with one of the St Johns' sons. Both Orpen and Dillahan, steeped in their past lives, fail to comprehend the reality which surrounds them. With such examples, Trevor provides a critical backdrop to the destructive and misleading function of the past in today's Irish society.

With this novel, the writer seems to add his voice to the ongoing discussion about the role of history in the process of the creating of modern Irish identity (Smyth 2001: 20). Miss Connulty, Ellie, as well as Florian, try to constitute their identity around the space of the house, rejecting time as the determinant of their individual and social consciousness. Miss Connulty rejects her past since it has deprived her of any identity. Ellie has no past in the form of her origin to which she could refer. Whilst Florian, being half Italian half Anglo-Irish, chooses his identity according to the place he used to live in. Yet, although they reject the past as a part of their individual self, all three characters are haunted by it. Miss Connulty remains identified by her family name, Ellie's life becomes determined by her husband's past, and Florian is perceived as a stranger due to his hybrid background. When he sells the house, his passport remains his only indicator of his belonging to this particular geographical location: "Eire, Ireland, Irlande on every page, it declared its importance clearly, requesting that the bearer should be offered access to pass freely and be offered all necessary assistance and protection" (Trevor 2009: 112). A passport, which in contemporary times is the most symbolic signifier of one's own nationality, here in three different languages names the place with a direct indicative of his identity. Significant for Florian during his final departure as well as for the whole novel are the last lines, which once again refer to the geography of Ireland: "the last of Ireland is taken from him, its rocks, its gorse, its little harbours, the distant lighthouse. He watches until there is no land left, only the sunlight dancing over the sea" (Trevor 2009: 211-212). Ending the narrative with such an image, Trevor suggests that space is where memories are stored, which determines identity, both as an individual and as a community.

*Love and summer*, being William Trevor's latest novel, shows the writer's recurring interest in the domestic space as a source of information about people's past and individuality. In comparison to his previous Big House narratives, this text works as a kind of sequel to the theme of the Anglo-Irish ancestry's fate together with the final dilapidation of their estates. Although the house itself ceased to exist a long time ago, the memory of it as well as its last inhabitants still lingers on in the local community. The events connected with the family's departure belong to the dim and distant past, but such individual characters as Orpen symbolize a link between the past and present as he is one of the few people who can still bear witness to previous times. Other characters choose to reject the past as it has become a barrier in their pursuit of identity. Therefore they turn to the space they occupy to mark their place in the community and define themselves as individuals. What for Ellie and Miss Connulty comprises the point of reference in their construction of identity is the house with its space and its belongings. Florian's approach towards the domestic space is different, for, albeit lacking any furniture, Sheldanagh remains for him a house filled with memories of his parents. Having lost even this, the only indicator of his identity is the reference in his passport to a geographical location, namely, Ireland.

The analysis of *The silence in the garden* together with *Love and summer* allows for many remarks concerning the changes that are observable at the level of William Trevor's prose as well as, in more general terms, the Irish novel. What both texts have in common is undoubtedly the central motif of the house, which is built into the very structure of the novels. Trevor consequently incorporates into the plot the theme of the Anglo-Irish ancestry, which in the former narrative plays a central role, whereas in the latter it seems pushed into the periphery. Nonetheless, either of the texts to a certain extent is based on the Big House genre, transforming this nineteenth-century genre to comment on more contemporary issues. The author in both cases consciously plays with the contrast between the past and the present to underline how the changing domestic interior exemplifies what happens with its inhabitants. Interestingly enough, the protagonists from both novels seem to represent Anglo-Irish descendants who consciously try to cut themselves free from the past. This is symbolically illustrated with the act of abandoning the house as the epitome of their heritage. Conversely to traditional Big House writers, Trevor from his earliest novels has been more preoccupied with the human aspect of the fate of the Anglo-Irish as a class. Consequently, the identity of his characters is manifested through the domestic space. The house is presented as the place where the individual as well as collective identity originates. However, the analysis of the spatial representation in his earlier and later works shows a certain change in the way personal and national consciousness are created. In the case of the Big House fiction, it is always the

social aspect which presupposes the individual self. In contrast, the latest novel indicates that the collective sense of belonging starts to depend on the way the characters define themselves as individuals. Even if the individual identity supersedes the national one, still its origin remains rooted in the domestic space.

### 2.3. The question of a heterogeneous identity in Jennifer Johnston's *Fool's sanctuary*

Jennifer Johnston is one of the few twentieth-century female Irish writers whose fiction, according to Nuala O'Foalain, has approached the level of writing represented by Edna O'Brien (after Carr 2002: 1130). Johnston's popularity in Ireland and abroad together with her writing's commercial success have not, perhaps surprisingly, resulted in her works being widely analyzed by critics. Other scholars such as Lubbers also draw attention to the extreme scarcity of research concerning this particular writer despite her successful career as a novelist (1991: 221). Nothing much has changed since, as until now no monograph concerning her literary output has been published. Neither has she been included in *The field day anthology of Irish women's writing* (2002). In the introduction to "Contemporary fiction" section, Ruth Carr justifies her decision of excluding Jennifer Johnston from the anthology by stating that the choice has been dictated by "the seriousness of artistic intent" and the creation of "alternative discourse" to the already existing one (2002: 1130). Taking these criteria into consideration, on one side, it seems understandable why Johnson has not been placed among such writers as Anne Enright or Anne Haverty. Known predominantly for her domestic fiction, Johnson is, nevertheless, associated with being one of the twentieth-century continuators of the Big House genre, with her novels being "mainly populated with female characters" and their struggle with isolation, exclusion as well as male dominance (Powell 2004: 93).

This stereotypical image of the writer is copied by the majority of scholars, who see nothing unconventional in Johnston's way of approaching the themes and the genres ascribed to her. However, the same critics in their analyses do not go beyond Johnston's earlier novels, repeatedly focusing on such texts as *The captains and the kings* (1972), *The gates* (1973), *Shadows on our skin* (1974) or *The railway station man* (1984). The exception to the rule is Rachael Lynch, who in her analysis focuses also on the writer's works from the 1990s<sup>24</sup>. Interestingly enough, Linden Peach when focusing on John-

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<sup>24</sup> Lynch devotes much attention to *The invisible worm* (1991) and *The illusionist* (1995), the latter of the two showing a certain change in Johnston's writing career (2000:

ston's "later novels", as the subtitle of the chapter suggests, includes works from the 1980s<sup>25</sup>, which is quite disappointing for a critical work published in the twenty-first century. What remains significant in this study is the scholar's denunciation of the way in which Johnston's literary output is downplayed by the majority of critics. For him, the misunderstanding of Johnston's novels resides predominantly in her disparate approach towards the representation of space as ideological, not always having much reference to reality. This being the case, Johnston's fiction, likewise to other Irish female writers, is situated beyond the clear division of time into the past and present (Peach 2004: 97-99). This does not change the fact that the vast amount of Johnston's narratives still have not been analysed in detail, especially the novels from the first decade of the twenty-first century. Jennifer Johnston is a prolific writer, who so far has published eighteen novels, *A sixpenny song* (2014) being the newest one. Therefore, it seems necessary to compare her earlier works such as *Fool's sanctuary* (1987) with more recent ones, like *Foolish mortals* (2007), especially taking into consideration the fact that her latest novels vary from what she used to write in the 1970s and 1980s. Such an analysis ought to show that in spite of what is written on her literary output, Johnston is a person who constantly challenges her image of a traditional writer, by choosing new topics or going back to the old ones in order to show them again, yet from a different angle. Even if her area of interest stays the same, namely, the problem of women's and men's construction of one's own identity as contrasted with the requirements imposed by the society, its message remains timeless no matter whether the context taken into consideration is strictly Irish or more a universal one.

In order to understand the scope of change that occurs in Jennifer Johnston's works, it is advisable to start from her initial interest in the Big House genre, which is clearly visible in her earlier novels. She is acknowledged as a contemporary writer of the Big House ethos due to the reappearance of this particular setting in several of her novels, yet with many changes being introduced into the traditional understanding of the genre. The cultural continuation embodied in the domestic space as well as the presence of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy playing the main role in the plots go together with a number of alterations: the positive portrayal of the landlord, the Anglo-Irish as a new minority, and the presentation of the human cost of political conflicts, which altogether show sympathy towards the marginalized group (Corcoran 1997: 42). These elements, for which Johnston is

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250-268). Although set in a house, it is placed in England and focuses on a woman's struggle with her husband's overprotective and psychologically abusive behaviour. Lacking the Anglo-Irish tone, the novel shows Johnston's interest in more general themes, which cannot be described as specifically Irish.

<sup>25</sup> *The Christmas tree* (1981), *The railway station man* (1984) and *Fool's sanctuary* (1987).

accused of being a conventional writer in the twentieth century, make her innovative in comparison to the other twentieth-century Big House novelists, such as Elizabeth Bowen or Molly Keane<sup>26</sup>. This may be justified by the fact that contrary to the two aforementioned female writers, Johnston is not “a daughter of the Big House”, therefore the position from which she approaches the theme already makes her stand out (Mortimer 1991: 209) However, Johnston has not limited herself to the Big House fiction itself, as only seven deal directly with this topic, whereas the rest use a setting of a house to comment on more universal issues concerning the process of finding a sense of self (Lynch 2000: 252). Johnston herself is well aware of this change, which illustrates her reply to the question about her former interest in “The vanished world of the Protestant ascendancy”: “When I started writing, it was what I knew (...) But now I’ve changed, I write about women and urban life” (Haslett 2007: 1). This comment just before the publication of *Foolish mortals* clearly justifies the thesis that, although her novels continuously treat of the life in Ireland presented through the perspective of the domestic space, the changes in the perception of the house and its role in characters’ lives point out to the transformations taking place in Irish society.

Many scholars, when analysing the setting, focus predominantly on the social and political role the house plays in Johnston’s novels (Lubbers 1991; Mortimer 1991; Kreilkamp 1998). Those who notice the importance of the domestic space for the creation of individual consciousness, still fall into the trap of gender divisions, looking at Johnston’s narratives from a feminist point of view (Kirkpatrick 2000: 3-6). Although the majority of the author’s texts are written from a female perspective, male protagonists feature in some works as well. Therefore, such limitations should not be implemented when it comes to Johnston’s prose, since her narrators show that the process of constructing one’s own individual and national identity may be problematic for both men and women equally. Another aspect of Johnston’s depiction of the domestic space, which has not won much attention before, is the direct link between the perception of the house and the memories of individuals. Bachelard is one of the philosophers who has managed to present an insoluble link between the space of the house and the memories it stores. According to him: “memories are motionless, and the more surely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are” (1994: 9). Even if closed in wardrobes, cabinets, or chests, memories are there

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<sup>26</sup> Contrary to Bowen and Keane, Johnston’s characters, though strongly connected with the space of the house, are wary of the reality beyond the walls of the estate. Bowen’s world epitomised by the domestic space remains isolated from the current affairs taking place in Ireland, which serves the purpose of maintaining the sense of safety and stability for the inhabitants of the house. Molly Keane dissociates herself from the nostalgic pursuit for the lost past, but her narratives continue revolving around the issue of the big house’s decay, not paying much attention to any other social changes apart from the ones concerning the Anglo-Irish class (Kreilkamp 1998: 142, 174).

to be rediscovered when the appropriate time comes. Therefore, the spatial analysis appears to have the power of revealing one's own consciousness, and therefore helping to construct an individual identity. Peach reads the places present in Johnston's fiction through Bhabha's theory<sup>27</sup> of the third space, as the place where the characters may experience a timelag (2004: 99). Bhabha, when speaking about "the location of culture in the realm of beyond", has in mind the intermediary stage when the past has not been left behind yet, whereas the new is not on the horizon (1994: 1). By this token, the third space is that in between the past and the present with the possibility of the two time spans to overlap. For Peach, this space is occupied by Johnston's characters with the house, where then and now coexist (2004: 100). This state of interruption in the time continuum causes problems with the self consciousness of Johnston's characters, who more often than not struggle with the re-establishment of their individual identity.

Ricoeur is also one of those scholars who provides a direct link between the domestic space and the issue of personal identity. He devotes some attention to the discussion between phenomenologists and sociologists on the origin of identity. The former underlie the priority of the individual memory as a force, which is the first to participate in the creation of a personal identity, the collective identity being a sum of personal ones; whereas the latter point to the fact that an individual cannot create a national identity on one's own, as to do so he or she will always need at least one person more to whom they can refer, so they need to create a community to be able to establish their identity (2004: 93-130). As Ricoeur explains, these two approaches towards memory do not exclude each other, but rather "occupy different universes of discourse" (2004: 95). The cohesiveness and unity of the national identity that used to be represented by collective memory in the past, now seems to be replaced by a more open but at the same time more fragmented and indefinite vision of social consciousness as a collection of individual experiences. This is also the case with Jennifer Johnston's characters being the major focus of the author's attention, Johnston in her novels tracing individual and Irish identity through the prism of the domestic space her protagonists occupy. Therefore, the space of the house and the issue of identity are the two motifs which are common for her writing, constituting the essence of *Fool's sanctuary*.

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<sup>27</sup> The use of Bhabha's post-colonial theory in the analysis of the Irish novel is justified by Linden Peach in the following way: "The contemporary Irish novel occupies an especially complex cultural and intellectual space where there is a strong sense of both continuity and disruption. It is a space that is similar to that which one of our leading postcolonial critics, Homi Bhabha, identifies" (2004: 1). This goes back to the question whether the postcolonial theory should be applied to the literature of the countries which historically have not been colonized, but display the features of post-colonial consciousness, as discussed for example by Mirosława Buchholtz and Grzegorz Konecniak (2009: 49-50).

The novel, set in 1920, presents the life of the Martin's family on the eve of the civil war in Ireland. Mr Martin, although a descendent of an Anglo-Irish family famous for its loyalty towards the British crown, is himself a Republican, hoping for Ireland gaining its independence soon. Interested in science, Mr Martin has devoted his whole life to the problem of forest revitalisation. Immersed in his plan to revitalise the land and give it to the future Irish government, he neglects his family, especially his wife and his son, Andrew. When his wife dies, he is left with two children, Andrew and Miranda. The son when grown up, joins the British army, whereas the daughter stays with her father in their house called Termon, which in Irish means "sanctuary" (Johnston 1999: 378). Since Andrew does not share his father interests, Mr Martin passes on all his knowledge to Charlie Dillon, the servant's son, whom he sends to college. Charlie, called by his Irish name Cathal, shares his time between Dublin, where he studies, and Termon house, where he not only meets up with Mr Martin and the father, but also with Miranda. This harmonious state is disrupted by Andrew, who pays an unexpected visit to Termon with his army friend Harry. The conflict arises between Andrew and Cathal, who disapproves of him dating his sister. The presence of Andrew brings back an old grudge between the son and the father. Miranda tries to release the tension in the family house and be a hostess to Harry. The British soldier becomes infatuated with his friend's sister; however, Miranda states clearly that she prefers Cathal. The visit is brought to an end by Cathal, who unexpectedly arrives from Dublin to warn Andrew and Harry against a planned murder by the Irish nationalists. As a student, Cathal has been made to join the organization and asked to help in the attack. At first he wants to stay away from it, allowing for the tragedy to happen. Although he is jealous of Harry and angry with Andrew, Cathal finally decides to warn the family for the sake of Miranda's and Mr Martin's safety. The two soldiers manage to escape, but the members of the Irish Republican Army take Cathal, who is later executed for treason. After this tragedy, Miranda stays with her father rejecting any proposal of marriage.

The house constitutes the focal point of the novel's setting. This is the space where personal memories are located and which defines the individual as well as the social identity of its inhabitants. Termon, as the Anglo-Irish ancestry's estate, has a rich history going back to the eighteenth century. However, this is not the first place the family used to occupy, since there is a mention of the ruins of Old Termon: "That was where the house originally stood. A sort of fortified farmhouse. You will have seen the shell, of course. It was built to withstand marauders, but was somewhat vulnerable to winter storms. So my great-great-great-grandfather decided that the time had come for comfortable living and he built this house. Shelter" (Johnston 1999: 378). This description well distinguishes the family's social background among the

landed gentry. As MacAodha explains, the first big houses built during the twelfth century were places fulfilling the role of fortified points to assert the Norman dominance over the area. Not until the eighteenth century were they replaced by more comfortable country houses in the Georgian style (1991: 19-24). It transpires that the lineage of the Martin's family goes back to the first landed gentry's foreign settlers, who are known for having assimilated well with the native inhabitants of the island (Rudd 1991: 32). This being the case, Termon appears to be an almost legendary house, where a lot of memories are stored, constantly reminding its inhabitants of the family's Anglo-Irish heritage. The military paraphernalia placed on the walls dislodge the Martins' loyalty towards the British crown, which used to be handed down from generation to generation. The father is the exception to the rule, as he "was the first Martin for three hundred years not to serve King and country" (Johnston 1999: 342). Therefore, he is not attached to the family's belonging: "I have often had the inclination to remove it all. Start again, fresh empty walls, even some of the portraits might go, but then, I feel ... well you know it's all part of the history of the place. you can't just dispose of the past by hiding things away" (Johnston 1999: 389). Mr Martin's statement shows that despite his lack of understanding for the heritage of his ancestors, he is unable to remove the memory of them from the house even if he hides their belongings. So strong is the link between the space of the house and the memories it stores that the physical removal of their embodiments does not alter the meaning of the place at all. By this token, the house becomes the place of its owner's self-imposed imprisonment, since he neither has enough will to leave it nor does he intend to change its space so as to suit his own taste. At this point his loyalty towards his ancestors is stronger than his need for redefining his own identity within the walls of the house.

A similar situation exists with the memories of Mrs Martin, which are still vividly present in the house thanks to her belongings or the places where she used to spend most of her time. Her husband is the person for whom the space of the house is a constant reminiscence of his late wife: "The yellow fade curtains were faded along the edges with the years of summer sun. She had brought those silk curtains from London, he suddenly remembered, the year after they were married (...) he stood by the window frowning to himself, trying to hide the present in the veils of the past" (Johnston 1999: 427). The fact that despite Mrs Martin's death, her presence in the house is still palpable testifies to the house representing continuity and permanence, as houses "outlive us and will probably have already housed people who are now dead" (Moran 2006: 33). As Moran observes, the memory is so well preserved within the domestic space because it is stored in everyday life objects. Thus, for Mrs Martin's children the most treasured object in the whole house is the piano, which seems to fulfil the role of a monument to the late mother, who

spent a lot of time playing it. Therefore, whenever Miranda plays the piano, the memories of the late wife and mother come back to both Mr Martin and Andrew. The son presents an image of his mother as a typical Anglo-Irish lady, who had to suffer from isolation and loneliness imposed by the husband and the house, or where heroines try to escape the isolationism evoked by the location of the house (Cronin 1991: 146). However, this character is rather an exception to other females that appear in Johnston's fiction, who if they experience separation and alienation, self-impose it on themselves or even seek it to secure their privacy<sup>28</sup> (Lynch 2000: 254).

Andrew believes that what happened to his mother his sister now experiences, albeit Miranda has a different view on her stay in Termon: "I couldn't abandon Termon, throw it out of my life. It's been so many hundreds of years ... Anyway I want to live here.... grow here. I wouldn't know what to do with myself anywhere else. This is my sanctuary" (Johnston 1999: 333). The girl appreciates her life in the house close to her father, believing that anywhere else she would feel displaced. As an Anglo-Irish person, her identity is closely connected with the space of the house. In this way, Miranda shares her father's point of view, who at one point states: "I like to think of this house unlocked, welcoming, truly a sanctuary" (Johnston 1999: 405). Contrary to Andrew, both Marian and Mr Martin treat the house as welcoming for others but at the same time capable of providing them with privacy, whenever they feel they need it. Therefore, the space of the house seems to be divided into the areas where people from the outside may spend their time and more intimate rooms, which are not to be trespassed by any unwanted person. When distressed by Andrew's behaviour, Mr Martin hides in his study, which comprises the most intimate space for him: "He closed the door behind him and walked slowly across the hall towards his study, his books, his safety" (Johnston 1999: 351). By closing the door to his study, Mr Martin manifests his need for solitude, its being one of the constituents of a truly intimate space (Bachelard 1969: 36). Thanks to such places, despite the unstable situation in the state, this Anglo-Irish family still appears to have the comfort of living in a safe house. Likewise, the inhabitants behave in a similar way when threatened with danger. When the IRA members come for Cathal, Miranda intends to hide him upstairs, but Cathal refuses to do so and waits in the living room, which is the place open to guests. By this token, spaces in Johnston's fiction should not be treated as physical places, but rather the

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<sup>28</sup> The best example of such a character may be found in *The railway station man*, where the reader meets with Helen Cuffe, who after the accidental murder of her husband, leaves Belfast and moves to the countryside to spend the rest of her life in a peaceful house far from other people. She is a woman who cherishes her loneliness since it is a source of inspiration for her as a painter, but it also provides her with an undisturbed sense of privacy.

exemplifications of disparate discourses more often than not competing with one another (Peach 2004: 102). The places, where Mr Martin spends his time, namely, his study and the forest, become the landmark of his ideology. Thus, Andrew prefers to dispute with his father in the living room, which appears to be neutral, and therefore a common place for the clash of discourses.

The most significant confrontation of discourses happen at the end of the novel. Mr Martin and Miranda are shocked by the way in which the soldiers enter the house taking Cathal with them. The men are indifferent to the fact that the family has welcomed Cathal to their place, providing a shelter for him. The intruders do not do any physical harm to the inhabitants of the house, neither do they destroy in any way the place itself. Nonetheless, this symbolic violation of their private space by unwelcomed people shatters the safety and intimacy of the house forever. In the narrative, from this moment onwards a slow decline of the estate may be observed. The scene with the IRA members is one of the last in the novel, but the future fate of the house is known to the reader already before the tragedy occurs. The plot is interrupted several times by the recollections of Miranda as an elderly person, which not only destroys the linear order of the story, but more importantly provides the past events with a new meaning to that of Miranda's memories. This does not downplay the value of the account, since more and more historians and cultural theorists acknowledge memory as "a legitimate form of historical understanding" (Johnson 2004: 321). By making the main plot retrospective, Johnston shows that her focus is not on the plot itself as on the way past events may be remembered. As the fate of Cathal is dislodged at the very beginning, the novel does not serve the purpose of presenting just another story of the Troubles, but brings the memory of the experience into the foreground as a viable source of information about the past:

I have wondered from time to time over the last few years, what will become of this house; this white elephant. Thirty years ago it would have been bought by the nuns, but they're selling the convents now. A country house maybe? I suppose it could have a worse fate. If anyone were to ask me I would say that I would rather it were just left to fall down. (Johnston 1999: 316)

The words of Miranda indicate that Termon has shared the fate of other Anglo-Irish houses, although throughout the novel its inhabitants are hoping for the place to survive the unstable times of the civil war. At some point Andrew seems right when he notes that: "in forty years' time there'll be no place for us here" (Johnston 1999: 419). Although his suggestion is immediately negated by Miranda, it proves prophetic of the house's future. This is one of the Big House conventional elements Johnston entails in her novel. The process of the house's decay is presented just at its starting and ending points, since the time between Cathal's death and Miranda's old age is missing from the narrative.

What appears crucial in Miranda's recollections is their role, which can be treated as a bridge between the two time spans. Halbwachs, when elaborating on the nature of the collective memory, differentiates between memory and history as two different types of narrative about the events of the past. According to the scholar, as long as the witnesses of a certain episode live, one may only talk about recollections, which are part and parcel of social memory and tradition. Once all people who shared the experience pass away, the history begins (2007: 139). Halbwachs's line of thought goes in accordance with the structure of the novel. Miranda, though elderly, is still the witness to her family's fate, thus her story is crucial not only for the heritage of her relatives, but for the whole ascendancy. Therefore, the end of the Big House tradition in Ireland is marked not so much by the family's disintegration, as by Miranda's death at the end of the novel. By rejecting the possibility of having a family, Miranda breaks the lineage "Maybe I should have married after all; raised a great brood of children, if only to keep this place alive and kicking safe, save it from the gombeen men; or the nuns, or the country house hotel crowd" (Johnston 1999: 318). Her conscious decision has its consequences, the end of the family's Anglo-Irish ancestry being one of them. Thus, the people who remember the Martins family are dying and so is the memory of them: "In a hundred years from now no one here will remember my name, nor Father's. His trees will have been cut down by then. His reclaimed land will still be farmed, rich fertile land, but no one will remember that once it was sand and bent grass, beautiful desolation" (Johnston 1999: 320). The trees being an embodiment of Mr Martin's ideology by their removal will no longer remind people of his attempts at revitalising the land. The people who will make use of the place are going to benefit from his deeds, this being the only trace of his past existence.

Mr Martin and his plans for the future make him an exceptional example of an Anglo-Irish landlord, who in his plans goes beyond the needs of his own social class, thinking about the whole country. His refusal to follow the family tradition and serve in the army, his devotion to the land, his republican thinking, and his friendship with Mr Dillon, the servant, comprise an idealised image of a landlord, adding to the story a nostalgic tone (Kreilkamp: 213). Calling himself a farmer, Mr Martin believes he and his daughter find the place ideal to live since "We have too much of the peasant in us" (Johnston 1991: 358) to change Ireland for London. Contrary to the traditional image of an absentee landlord, whose negligent approach towards his Irish estate usually turns the place into a ruin, Mr Martin has engrossed himself in his plans for reviving the surrounding area so that he has totally neglected his family instead. The father, "cocooned from the world by his own dreams" (Johnston 1999: 326) also does not notice the fact that Ireland is undergoing a process of change, resulting in the Anglo-Irish inhabitants not being wel-

comed any more. He still has a deep belief that: "This is where I belong, no matter what may happen in the next few years (...) My roots are long and deep into this earth" (Johnston 1999: 346). Despite the transformations taking their course together with the first instances of victimisation of the Anglo-Irish families being recalled, Mr Martin does by no means feel as a stranger in the new state. Mr Martin preserves his identity, insolubly linked to the house and the land, despite the changes occurring around him.

The problems connected with the Anglo-Irish background do not influence Mr Martin's stable sense of self. However, his children suffer from the consequences of their hybrid identity. Each of them chooses a different solution to the problem. Andrew identifies himself solely with his English ancestors, first by serving in the British army, later, by living in London. Miranda chooses the opposite path, identifying with her Irish place of birth. With these characters, Johnston presents two approaches towards identity: historical, determined by time, and geographical, governed by space. This differentiation goes back to Smyth's statement that contemporary Irish fiction is undergoing a change from time to space as the dominating factor in the creation of national identity (2001: 20). However, Johnston's novel does not give one direct answer to the question of which choice is better for her characters. Neither Andrew nor Miranda are happy with their decisions. Andrew, contrary to Miranda, starts a new life in England, but the breaking of all family ties leaves a mark on his conscience: "In spite of his success, his marriage, his charming children who will sell this place when I have finished with it, he was quite lost" (Johnston 1999: 401). Miranda's words confirm the fact that Andrew in spite of a seemingly successful life has always been lacking one thing, which is probably his individual self. He is the person who accuses Marian of being devoid of the courage to protect her identity: "you'll have compromised yourselves out of existence. You and people like you and Father will never have the guts or the energy to stand up and demand your rights" (Johnston 1999: 419). What Andrew believes to be necessary to protect, namely, the family's aristocratic social background, for Mr Martin and Miranda constitutes a barrier they try to eradicate in order to become members of the local community. Miranda lacking the experience of her father, goes to the other extreme by supporting the idea of freedom, for which later Cathal is killed. With hindsight, she understands that the problem of her national identity stems from her inability to develop her individual self: "Perhaps I never became a whole person (...) I have no recollection of any sense of purpose; no search for a pattern. I was of course very young, very immature. Perhaps my problem was that I never reached maturity" (Johnston 1999: 246). Not being capable of creating her personal consciousness, Miranda, likewise to the case of her personal and collective memory, will never reach a stable image of the national identity (Ricoeur 2004: 97).

Taking the three characters into consideration, it appears that Mr Martin presents the most stable and conscious image of the personal as well as the national identity. He is the only one who from the very beginning has accepted his origins by showing respect to his ancestors at the same time following a chosen path. The fact that Mr Martin, throughout his life, managed to compromise between his English upper-class upbringing and the interest in native culture, shows that this particular character cherishes his Anglo-Irish hybrid identity. The house itself also epitomises this heterogeneous consciousness. Having been built by the English, it nonetheless carries an Irish name – Termon. Bearing in mind the words of Smyth that “space is a place when named” (2001: 42), the owners had determined the location of their habitation with Irish rather than English language, which depicts their determination to compromise their existence in the new area, turning from English into Anglo-Irish inhabitants of the island. This being not an exceptional case, as the majority of the ancestry’s estates presented in Jennifer Johnston’s and William Trevor’s novels carry Irish names, shows a certain tendency among this community. Therefore, one may presume that such a practice was to help the newcomers to assimilate with the native society rather than stay in isolation. The example of Mr Martin, indeed, justifies this statement, since he appears to be one of those Anglo-Irish landlords who has managed to become an integral part of the local community.

Jennifer Johnston is one of those contemporary writers who go back the nineteenth-century Big House tradition, as it happens in *Fool’s sanctuary*. The writer, conversely to other Big House novelists, uses an image of an idealised landlord, who instead of neglecting his household, takes no notice of his family and their needs in favour of his devotion to the matters connected with the estate. The landlord, who appreciates his Irish background and claims to bear more resemblance to the peasants than his upper-class ancestors is for sure a novelty when it comes to the traditional treatment of the genre. The house itself, due to the owner’s thriftiness, conversely to other Anglo-Irish houses, is in a good condition. Therefore, the sole reason for its final dilapidation is the family’s gradual disintegration caused by the conflict of loyalties and identities of its individual members. Andrew and Miranda present disparate political viewpoints, which influence the way they approach the family’s heritage and their own sense of place. Miranda’s conscious neglect of the house stems from the tragic events having taken place there rather than any usual financial difficulties accompanying the decay of the house. What stays unchanged is the connection between the space of the house and its inhabitants’ identity. Andrew by leaving the place dissociates himself from his half Irish roots. The identity of the rest of the family is closely connected with the house as a social construct but also as a place for storing memories. The discrepancy among the characters’ approach towards the memories kept

within the walls of the house results in their different perception of the place as well as their construction of identity. On the basis of the status of the place in the local community as well as the reminiscences of the past, the inhabitants construct their personal and national self. The house becomes the indicator of their Anglo-Irish identity, since within its space the clash of discourses represented by the members of the family takes place. The house, as built by the English newcomers, but bearing an Irish name, is itself the epitome of the family's hybrid identity.

## 2.4. Individual identity with(out) memory – *Foolish mortals* by Jennifer Johnston

Noticing the need to express how urban space may influence the construction of the domestic interior, Johnston situates several of her latter novels in the house, whose interior space becomes an integral part of the life in the city. When asked about the reason behind her writing, Johnston often underlines her constant urge to cover the topics which appear close to her at a certain moment. She also tries to avoid the labels that limit her as a novelist. Thus, she states that writing:

has been a reassembling of facts, my facts and an attempt to give those facts a relevance, to make me relevant, to identify myself: not give myself a label, because we are all diminished by labels, but to shout that I am on the side of the nation, with a small n, while recognising that, for all our fine words, we have not yet achieved the Nation with a large one. (1991: 10)

In the early stages of her writing career, the fact she found most crucial for defining nationality was the location of ideological premises represented by different social groups (Peach 2004: 102). Most probably because of the Big House novelist label she gained or of the inner feeling that this area of Irish nationality has been exhaustively covered by her already, Johnston decided to move from the countryside to the city with her later novels. The alteration of the setting may also be ascribed to the change in the facts that comprise her individual identity as well as the nation's contemporary consciousness<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Johnston's change of interest from the historical contextualisation of the collective identity to contemporary problems of the individual consciousness bears some analogy to what is happening in Irish poetry. Heaney's new approach towards his own works dislodges the "shift of metaphor, from digging to stitching" (Jarniewicz and McDonagh 2009: 123). As Jarniewicz and McDonagh explain, the metaphor refers to the poet's former preoccupation with "going down to the deep roots (...) [and] going back in time", whereas nowadays Heaney tries in his poems to "stitch the heterogeneous elements together" (2009: 123). Similarly, Johnston does no longer seem preoccupied with the issues concerning the origin

*Foolish mortals* (2007) is one of those texts which depict the domestic space as a constituent element of the city's space. The plot shifts among three houses situated in different parts of Dublin, with the narrative being presented from two distinct perspectives: of one male and one female character.

In this particular text, the protagonist, Henry, has to face reality after a car accident which resulted in his losing his memory. During his stay in the hospital and after his physical recovery, he struggles with a partial return of his memories as well as many lapses that are never to be filled. With the help of other people, step by step, he learns about his past and present life. His first wife, Stephanie, is the first person to help him, although he left her for another woman five years ago. The tragedy allows for their children, Donough and Ciara, to regain contact with their father. With time, Henry is told about the death of his second wife, Charlotte, who was driving the car they crashed. However, this is not the most shocking news for him, since his late wife's brother, Jeremy, after some time reveals to Henry that he is the person to blame for the accident. From him Henry learns that he is a homosexual, in a clandestine relationship with Jeremy, who on the day of the accident decided to tell his sister the truth. Having broken the news to her, Charlotte left the house furious and presumably attempted at killing herself and Henry in the accident. With all this knowledge Henry has to find reconciliation with the past, which is still partially lost for him. Also, very quickly he has to deal with the everyday life problems, especially his eccentric mother, Tash, who is suffering from dementia, and who dies on Christmas Eve.

The reader does not stay limited to Henry's perspective, since Johnston also gives an insight into the private life of Stephanie, but this time depicted in the third-person narration. The changing narration plays in the novel a crucial role. As Foucault observes, those people who no longer are able to rely on the representations of the external world based on the universal forms, have to turn in upon themselves and create their own forms of representation. To do so, they have to "define for themselves the internal space which, for our representation, is on the exterior" (2002: 259). This internal space allows for creating a new order for the fragments, pieces and shreds of memories or representations, which in the common space of order would remain dislocated. This brings the tentative conclusion that the characters in the novel, when unable to follow the linear order of the narrative, have to create their own set of associations which will organize their dishevelled memories. For Ricoeur a fragmented and inconclusive narrative is nothing new, since the majority of contemporary fiction rejects chronology as a realistic way of presenting events. Neither is any other "substitute principle of con-

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and history as two constituent elements of a collective identity, but feels the need to write about "stitching" the fragmented memory so that it comprises a single identity.

figuration" introduced in such literary works, as the very fragmentariness and incompleteness of the story is to manifest a belief that there are no new forms of temporal organization which could not only replace the old linear order, but also represent reality as such (1985: 25).

Therefore, Stephanie's perspective does not serve the purpose of dislodging the facts forgotten by Henry since they are revealed to him during different conversations. The voice of the former wife helps to re-establish the protagonist's lost identity as well as to show how the accident and other experiences influence her own consciousness. The novel presents the struggle of a mother and a woman who has to accept her son's and her former husband's homosexuality and her daughter's plans of moving to Henry's house. In contrast, the car accident makes her rethink her former marriage, the reasons for the breakup as well as the consequences of her earlier decisions. It appears that George, Henry's brother, who lives in Canada, wanted to be with Stephanie. Now from a wider perspective, she realises that if she had chosen George, her life would have been different. When George comes from Canada to see with his brother, Stephanie feels he is still waiting for her to change her mind, but she now appreciates her freedom and does not want to get involved in another relationship.

The majority of the events described in the novel take place in three houses: Stephanie's house, Tash's house and Henry's flat. Contrary to Johnston's earlier narratives dealing with Anglo-Irish estates, the homes depicted in *Foolish mortals* lack the grandeur and the weight of history. Located in the suburbs of Dublin, the houses are no longer surrounded by vast gardens or astounding landscapes. Therefore, such places are devoid of intimacy and solitude, which the Anglo-Irish estates used to have, being situated in the countryside. However, Arendt locates the blurring of borders between the private and public space in the emergence of the modern world. The scholar tries to contradict the myth of the isolationism caused by the immensity of the landscape, which the city is supposed to lack. She deploys the example of the ancient polis to argue that a clear delineation between the private and public sphere of life was part and parcel of the city life, since the public space comprised just politics, whereas the privacy was embodied by the domestic interior. With the introduction of the social sphere, all has changed. The social space, being neither private nor public exclusively, has started to dominate both areas (1998: 28). It appears then as no surprise that in contemporary times people find it difficult to preserve their intimacy even in their house. Stephanie's house from time to time still provides its inhabitants with the necessary amount of solitude and intimacy: "She was alone in the house. She had always liked that. She liked to breathe the air unbreathed by anyone else. She liked the emptiness, the knowledge that there was no one behind any door, no voice would call her, no footstep disturb the tranquil silence" (Johnston 2007: 28). The desired solitude in the house is

achieved by the absence of other inhabitants, accompanied by the silence. The external surroundings play no importance for Stephanie as the interior space of the house is what determines her state of comfort. The lack of immensity of the landscape is replaced with the silence, because, to follow the words of Henri Bosco:

There is nothing like silence to suggest a sense of unlimited space. Sounds lend colour to space, and confer a sort of sound body upon it. But absence of sound leaves it quite pure and, in the silence, we are seized with the sensation of something vast and deep and boundless. (after Bachelard 1994: 43)

The moments when her children are not at home let Stephanie experience the solitude she cherishes so much. This well corresponds to Johnston's other novels<sup>30</sup>, where the interior space of the house or the flat may be compared to a lair, in which the women hide from the outside world. This space does not bear any negative feelings, which used to be part and parcel of traditional domestic narratives, with women suffering from the isolation within the walls of the house (Powell 2004: 94)<sup>31</sup>. Stephanie is a character who values the moments of solitude in the house not only because she does not have many occasions to experience them, but more importantly because since her divorce with Henry, she has become the master of the house "I've got sublimely used to living without a man constantly around. I love that freedom" (Johnston 2007: 54). Being in charge of the house and her own life, Stephanie is alone but not lonely. This marks the consciousness of her own choice not an enforcement imposed by someone else. Therefore, she is ready to help Henry after the accident but dismisses any possibility of taking him back home. Neither does she want to get involved in a relationship with George for the same reason: she does not want to share the intimacy of the house with anyone apart from her children. Still she appears to have come to terms with what happened to her marriage, because the memories stored in the house do not disrupt her present life in the place: "She went over to the bed; her crepe de Chine scarf had been neatly folded and placed on the locker beside him (...) she had bought it in Venice many years before when they had been happy" (Johnston 2007: 10-11), or "Stephanie was pulling back the curtains in the

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<sup>30</sup> *The Christmas tree* (1981) or *The gingerbread woman* (2000) present women who seek solitude in their houses in order to come to terms with the difficulties they have to face. In the former novel it is the upcoming death of the protagonist, in the latter the consequences of an unfruitful relationship. In these two examples the house resembles a lair in which the two women, wounded physically as well as emotionally, try to hide and isolate themselves from the threatening exterior space of the world.

<sup>31</sup> Powell provides an example of a protagonist from *The illusionist* (1995), who is forced to live isolated in a cottage house in the countryside, with her husband searching for a way for her to escape back to her former life in London.

sitting room (...) they were the colour of crushed strawberries, rich velvet with cream silk linings, and she had had them made the summer before Henry had left” (Johnston 2007: 280-281). This and other examples show that the goods kept in the house are a constant reminder of Stephanie’s past marriage; however, she does not hide them but allows them to remain in their place as an integral part of the house and its space, helping her to accept the changes that happen around her.

A similar approach towards the space of the house is presented by Tash, who in spite of her old age lives alone in the family cottage house. The desire for solitude has always accompanied her life, being an integral part of her work as an artist. Henry reminisces about the times when his mother would lock herself in the studio not to be interrupted by anyone. Her creative process demanded solitude and isolation from the rest of the world, with the studio working as the most intimate space for her. Therefore, even when she suffers from dementia, her family doesn’t dare move her out of this place: “She could not be taken away from her house, that was for sure, or her paraphernalia, her brushes, tubes, boards and canvases; and her memorabilia, bits and pieces from her long life, who knew when she might want to summon up some tiny fraction of the past” (Johnston 2007: 272). The house is full of art objects, which store many memories from her life. As Moran rightly notes, houses are predominantly spaces for everyday, routine activities, and thus most memories are encoded in seemingly simple objects (2006: 38) such as the ones scattered around Tash’s house. Thanks to these objects, some of the memories are revealed to Henry, when he visits his mother: “she pulled him into the studio, warm and smelling of turpentine, and rotting oil paint just as he had always remembered it. Memory flooded and flooded and with her incoherent but loving words the mists were swept away in the flood” (Johnston 2007: 262). Interestingly enough, the sense of smell is the one which brings first the memories back, especially those concerning his life in this house. Only then can he recognize the place as his family home. This is in accord with Annette Kuhn’s statement that the language of memory is not solely limited to the language of images. According to the critic, the “inexplicable feeling of familiarity attaching to many of the less tangible pre-texts of memory (places, sights, sounds, smells)” may act as an unconscious desire to reunite with the mother’s body, in this way to return to a safe place (2002: 160). In the novel, the past events, which Henry could not recollect himself, become accessible to him thanks to his physical presence in the place directly connected with the memories of his childhood. Henry’s recollections about this house show that this particular place bore some resemblance to the nostalgic atmosphere common for the old ancestry houses:

The apple trees, the espaliered pears and the plum trees buzzing with wasps. From the roof of the house, looking north, you could see the line of the sea and beyond it the lump of Howth Head and to the west the Dublin mountains in the distance. I can call back into my mind the sound of my father playing Beethoven on the piano, the notes creeping into my head. (Johnston 2007: 103)

For Henry, who loses most of his memory of the past, the places he used to occupy are of great importance to him, as they together with their belongings provide him at least a partial access to his former life. Some memories come back immediately when he enters a certain space, others emerge belatedly, especially during sleep. Even so, the appearing memories are fragmented and chaotic, which stays in contradiction to the statement that “memory has the orderliness and the teleological drive of narrative” (Frow 2007: 154). Henry’s memory does not form a concise and linear narrative; it is thanks to other characters who put his incomplete account into a coherent whole that the reader is provided with a logical line of events.

As far as the first two places have no secrets to hide, the third one appears empty and meaningless as Henry cannot find any recollection which would link him with his current house: “In my whole life I had only ever had three homes; two of them I could remember with clarity, the third, the most recent, veiled still, like an autumn morning with wispy scraps of mist” (Johnston 2007: 102). The flat he occupies is limited to one floor, which does not grant its inhabitants the same amount of intimacy as a house with its vertical space (1994: 27). However, taking into consideration the fact that “Henry’s house was the top half of a fine Victorian house” (Johnston 2007: 223), and bearing in mind Bachelard’s statement about the top floor and attic as the most intimate spaces in the house, one may conclude that the location of the flat has a great significance for the reading of space. However, such critics as Joe Moran criticise Bachelard’s rejection of townhouses as the objects of his studies. Moran follows the line of thought introduced by Lefebvre who in his work *The right to the city* (1967) denounces the phenomenological approach towards space, which downplays the role of urban areas as vital for understanding the relation between the domestic interior and the exterior of the surrounding landscape (Kofman and Lebas 1996: 13). Moran, likewise, claims that the space of the townhouse ought to be widely analysed since in contemporary times the majority of people live in urban not rural areas (2006: 31). Thus, despite the lack of verticality, Henry’s flat still constitutes a place where he may find solitude and intimacy, helpful in reconciling the past and present.

What causes difficulties is the loss of a connection with the memories which determine the meaning of the space. Consequently, Henry does not recognise the flat, having basic problems, for instance with finding his way to his bedroom. Memory is not only responsible for providing an access to past

events, but also actively participates in the production of meanings (Kuhn 2002: 161). Without memory, the place represents no emotional value to the person. Thus, Henry's first impressions show how crucial for the person is the ability to recognise the place in order to provide it with any meaning: "I didn't recognize the flat. It was nice; big windows, big balconies, view of the sea across rooftops, but it didn't seem to my style at all. Expensive; a lot of velvet and puffed-up cushions, curtains looped back with silk ropes, fitted carpet. I felt uneasy. I felt lost" (Johnston 2007: 149). Even without his memories about the place, he is capable of subconsciously defining the flat as not his, which appears to be right since it used to belong to Charlotte. Moving there after the divorce with Stephanie, he accepted the organization of the space getting used to his wife's flat as his own. However, the loss of memory makes him feel displaced in his own home. As a result his first desire is to go back to the hospital room, which is the only place carrying a meaning and new memories for him: "I wished I were back in my hospital room listening to the corridor noises and the occasional snatches of the nurses' laughter. This seemed like another prison, better upholstered I had to say, but nonetheless a prison" (Johnston 2007: 150). The comparison of the flat to a prison justifies the statement that a place without memory is just a meaningless, empty space. Therefore, he has to ascribe a new meaning to the same places so that the flat regains the intimacy Henry is unable to find in his recollections.

To provide the flat with a new meaning, since the old one seems irretrievably lost to Henry, he starts from the bedroom. Due to his physical state it becomes the place where he spends the majority of time. The bed turns out to be safe enough a place to observe the world from its perspective: "I wondered for a moment how I came to have brocade bedroom curtains" (Johnston 2007: 153). The most interesting for him appears the big window, through which different sounds of the outside world reach him. From this place he may also safely observe the exterior space of the house: "Outside the window the street lights were sparkling in the darkness" (Johnston 2007: 295). The window gives a direct access to the dialectics of the *here* and *there* without the need to cross the border between the inside and the outside of the house (Bachelard 1969: 212). This enables Henry to assimilate with the outside world before he finds enough courage and strength to experience it on his own. But before he manages to do it, he learns reality anew from what he sees through the window.

No matter how much Henry tries, some memories never come back to him. Through this character Johnston adds her voice to the discussion about the superiority of personal memory over the collective one. She does so by showing that the act of sharing the experiences and memories of other characters with Henry does not help him to regain his personal self: "You tell me she owned this flat – gone. You tell me she loved me – gone. All bloody gone, there is a hole in my mind as far as she is concerned. I can see this bedroom, but never her"

(Johnston 2007: 270). Charlotte is the only person Henry has no memories of, therefore her flat together with the accident and their marriage are elements which remain empty in the puzzle of his past. Jeremy tries to help Henry by telling him stories about his sister, how they met and how their relationship looked. However, Jeremy's experiences mean nothing to Henry, who needs his own recollections of Charlotte to reclaim his past. Henry's approach towards his memory is well in accord with the phenomenological stand on the personal memory. As Ricoeur explains, memory is singular as it cannot be transferred to another person because its idiosyncrasy relies on the personal orientation in the passage of time. By linking personal memory with the theory of inwardness, Ricoeur dislodges the individual dimension of the past as a core constituent of one's own memory (2004: 96-97). The significance of one's own recollections may also be ascribed to the accessibility to the lost part of one's life as well as the immediacy with which the past may turn out to be part and parcel of the present (Frow 2007: 150). The fact that Johnston stresses the significance of individual memory also resides in the scope of time treated as the past in this particular novel. Conversely to her *Big House* narratives, the characters when referring to the past events have in mind the most recent past, directly connected with their lives, not the grand, distant past of their ancestors or the past events referring to the prominent moments in Irish history. Therefore, the collective memory, which usually operates in situations equally important for a larger group of people, does not find its usage within the realm of this novel.

Rarely does the writer comment on Ireland and its past, concentrating rather on the contemporary Dublin and showing it as one of many modern European cities, with shopping centres and busy airports, calling it "the new Ireland" (Johnston 2007: 216). Neither does she ponder upon the problem of national identity, limiting the scope of interest rather to the problems her characters have with constituting their individual selves. Johnston's depiction of urban society on a micro scale through the example of the O'Connor family at least partially corresponds to the post-nationalist approach towards the concept of a nation as a "civic" one, including all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion, or even beyond it, as the Irish diaspora is nowadays regarded as a part of the nation (Kearney 1997: 3). Post-nationalism following the idea of postmodernism is supposed to contradict some of the ideas crucial for the modern understanding of the nation. It diminishes the role of national sentiments and openly displays the disillusionment with nationalist ideologies (Smith 2010: 141). The Irish modern nation constructed on the basis of the Catholic morality, ceases to exist in Johnston's narrative. The greatest tension between the tradition-oriented ideology and the emerging secularism in Ireland occurs between the 1960s and 1980s, whereas the first results of the social transformations are visible in the 1990s when two referenda on abortion and divorce take place (Penet 2008: 147-

148). During the last decade of the twentieth century the change in the attitudes towards the family and birth control come to the fore. The instances of single parent families, unmarried motherhood, or homosexual relationships<sup>32</sup> become gradually accepted as new phenomena observable in the Irish society (Ferriter 2004: 666). They also become the dominant themes of contemporary literature, which is also visible in Johnston's fiction. However, her narrative presents the Ireland of the twenty-first century, when those changes are already part and parcel of everyday life, such as evidenced through the presence of homosexual couples or the protagonist's divorce, which in Ireland was legalised in 1995. The family is most probably Protestant, but it does not show at first sight. Neither does one find any Catholic figures, which suggests that Irish people stopped being concerned about the religious denomination of their families and friends. Instead, one finds some representatives of the Irish diaspora living as far away as in Canada.

Henry's attempts at regaining the meaning of the space he occupies together with his past, aim at reconstructing his own identity as a person. The moments when some recollections come back, they allow him to define his existence: "That was the moment that it all came flooding back into my mind again; well, not quite everything, but I became a man with a past, a real person, not just forlorn patient" (Johnston 2007: 57). The past appears to him as an integral part of his identity, no matter if the recollections are positive or negative: "So here I sit in this hospital room broken in pieces and little by little the past is revealing itself to me. Things I want to know and things that might be better left unremembered. The whole person" (Johnston 2007: 111). Even if shocked with what he discovers about his past, Henry is glad to have the memories back since without them he cannot reach the completeness of his personality. Not being able to recollect Charlotte or anything connected with her, Henry hesitates about his future life asking himself all the time: "But how can I continue to live without my past?" (Johnston 2007: 160). As the narrative shows, he manages to find himself back in reality without bits and pieces of his former life. The past, even if of paramount importance for the construction of identity, refers more to the most recent memories linked directly with the current life. Therefore, Johnston does not seem to reject the modernistic interest in time as one of the predominant tropes in the development of individual identity (Soja 1989: 18). However, Henry's reconciliation with the lost past happens thanks to the house, to which he ascribes new meanings following the idea that memory is "just a word" (Johnston 2007: 300). This proves also the significance of space as a constructive force in the

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<sup>32</sup> In 1993 a government bill was passed making homosexual relationships legal (Parker 2009: 8). In 2015 in a referendum the Irish voted for homosexual marriages, which well illustrates the ongoing process of emancipation of the Irish society.

process of the creation of identity. By taking both tropes into account, Johnston shows that each of them is necessary to the same extent because, following the words of Smyth, space is meaningless without time, and time is meaningless without space (2004: 20). Thus, Johnston's novel presents the need for a balance between these two tropes in order to constitute a stable image of oneself.

*Foolish mortals* by Jennifer Johnston is a novel which continues the writer's interest in the space of the house and its connection with personal memory. Although Johnston's depiction of the house differs significantly from her previous narrative, which follows the Big House ethos, the houses in the suburbs of Dublin do not lack the romantic intimacy and nostalgic solitude common for the ancestral estates. Even if the past presented in the novel lacks the grandeur of the Anglo-Irish ancestor's histories, for the character's the most recent events are pivotal for their existence as individuals. The analysis of the text justifies the statement that each person's recollections are idiosyncratic, and therefore cannot be shared by other people nor passed on to them. The memories, stored predominantly in the house, help people in constructing their own identity. When the link between time and space is broken, which is the case in Henry's life, the reconstruction of one's own self appears to be extremely difficult if not impossible in some areas of life. By this token, Johnston underlines the need for a balance between these two tropes in the development of personal identity, dismissing both the modernistic as well as post-modernistic approaches, the former favouring time, the latter space as the dominant indicator of one's own self. Space, albeit to a certain extent interdependent with time, when without the past, may be ascribed a new meaning by its inhabitant, which will not help in reconstructing but in constructing the individual's identity anew. This proves the change in society's approach towards collective identity as well, from accepting one, cohesive version, to a more fragmented and polyphonic experience.

Johnston even if described as a Big House writer (Mortimer 1991, Lubbers 1992, Kreilkamp 1998) tries to challenge this image by introducing new topics and new settings to her narratives. Although more traditional in form, the author of *Fool's sanctuary* from the earliest novels introduces changes to the Big House genre such as the positive presentation of the landlord figure, or women's seeking solitude within the walls of the house or the lack of physical decay of the house, just to name a few. Her latest novels show a change of the author's focus from the politicised history to the more individualised past, from the problems of the collective identity of the Anglo-Irish minority to the problems with constructing personal consciousness. The setting also brings an alteration from focusing on the countryside to the urban landscape. What stays the same is the space of the house, as the focal point of each and every novel. Johnston also more often than not refers to the connection between the space of the house and the memories it stores. Consequently, both the analysed novels, even

if written within the distance of twenty years, share the themes of the changing role of the house together with the insoluble link between space and time, represented in the narratives by the house and the memories stored within its walls. Both *Fool's sanctuary* and *Foolish mortals* introduce to Irish literature an image of women and men who seek solitude in the rooms of their homes, cherishing the moments of isolation and loneliness. Thanks to such moments, the characters are capable of maintaining intimacy in their houses and tightening their relation with the house as the predominant indicator of their personal identity. Therefore, both texts underline the significance of memory as one of the major constituents of one's own consciousness. Johnston in each text depicts geographical space and people's origin as equally important in constituting the individual or national identity.

The changes that are observable in her fiction concern predominantly the shift from problems dealing with the national, collective identity to a personal search for one's own self. This is directly connected with the changing role of the house, which in Big House narratives was an embodiment of the Anglo-Irish identity of its inhabitants, whereas in her latest novels Johnston distances herself from political aspects focusing more on the role which the house plays for its inhabitants as individuals. Consequently, the past depicted in the texts shifts from the dim and distant events of Irish national history to the most recent and direct experiences of everyday life. In these narratives the past lacks grandeur but this does not diminish its importance for the Irish people, who at the beginning of the twenty-first century have become more interested in their private experiences and memories than the collective recollections of the nation with a nationalist ideology hidden behind it. Taking Johnston's fiction into consideration, it appears that Irish society, in the first decade of the new century, undergoes a change of approach towards their own country as well as the matter of national identity, which may be defined as post-nationalist. Putting the Catholic-Protestant or North-South troubles aside, Johnston's characters perceive themselves as inhabitants of a modern state, associating themselves with the rest of Europe, which proves that the process of Irish decolonisation is at its closing stages. In this way Jennifer Johnston, if not through the form but certainly through the topics she raises in her novels, may be ascribed to the group of writers who immediately respond to the changes observable in Irish society.

The analysis of the space of the house through the examples of William Trevor's and Jennifer Johnston's novels reveals the gradual change in the meaning and role of the domestic space in the Irish society. The former novels signify the house's participation in the construction and maintenance of the collective identity. Thus, the space of the house serves the purpose of depicting the conflict between Protestants and Catholics. But also, staying reserved from the political aspects of the Troubles, they try to present the past events from the perspective of individual people. By giving a voice to both

sides as well as allowing for other social groups to add their comment to this discussion, in later novels the space of the house ceases to epitomise the collective identity, as the focus is placed on how personal memories are encoded in the domestic interior as a constituent part of one's own personal consciousness. Trevor does so staying within the convention of the Big House genre, which signifies his latest novel *Love and summer*. Johnston, on the other hand, seems to have left the topic of the Anglo-Irish minority, changing the setting for an urban one. Still, the problem of the link between the space of the house and individual identity stays the same, since the novels of both writers show that individual identity begins to be created within the space of the house as the first place people associate with their existence. The two narratives testify that without the memory a place becomes empty of meaning, as it is the house where the first and most important memories are stored. The earlier as well as later texts illustrate the prevailing necessity for reconstructing the collective Irish identity as a sum of individual experiences. What both writers propose is a turn from a homogenous, denominational nationalism, which used to exclude minorities as well as those Catholics who did not share de Valera's vision of Irish nationalism. This already obsolete concept of identity ought to be replaced by a more complex construct, which gives a voice to all social groups accepting its fragmentariness and inconclusiveness resulting from the fact that Irish identity is still under a constant process of transformation.

## Chapter Three

# The local sense of place – the past vs. the present of the Irish countryside in the works of John McGahern and Deirdre Madden

“Our fenced country  
Is bog that keeps crusting  
Between the sights of the sun”  
Seamus Heaney<sup>1</sup>

“The whole of Irish landscape is a manuscript  
which we have lost the skill to read”  
John Montague<sup>2</sup>

Landscape more than any other type of space gives primacy to sight as the sense capable of capturing the seemingly paradoxical co-existence of simplicity and complexity embodied in one place. Landscape is also the space most prone to metaphorisation, since different readings have always been inscribed into the natural world, which on the one hand epitomises the universality of values, and on the other constantly surprises with its changeability (Cosgrove and Domosh 1993: 31-32). Finally, landscape comprises a discursive ground for a wide range of meanings ascribed to this type of space, many of them standing in stark contrast with one another (Daniels and Cosgrove 1993: 59). The Irish landscape is no exception to the rule, as it remains the most picturesque and imagination triggering type of space. Irish people by “sacralising (...) the territory of Ireland as the site of difference” (Deane 1997: 88) have made the land one of the determinants of their national identity. The course of Irish history has constantly

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<sup>1</sup> From ‘Bogland’ in: Seamus Heaney. 1998. *Opened Ground. Poems 1966-1996*. London: Faber and Faber, 41.

<sup>2</sup> In: Seamus Heaney. 1980. *Preoccupations. Selected prose 1968-1978*. London: Faber and Faber, 132.

reaffirmed this bond. The overwhelming majority of the events crucial for the development of the Irish consciousness: the struggle with the feudal system, the Union with Britain, the famine, the partition, just to name a few, revolve around the issue of land as the primordial value of the nation. However, although the Irish landscape has retained its ability to astound with its beauty, the land has failed to keep its inhabitants, who frequently have had to seek other ways of earning a living in the urban areas.

Nowadays, the Republic of Ireland as well as the Northern Ireland of the twenty first century still belong to those European countries abounding in regions which remain rather scarcely populated. This seems to be unusual, especially for the Irish Republic that has managed to undergo a rapid economic development in the last decades of the twentieth century. Today the Irish societies of the Republic and Northern Ireland may be defined as urban, since the prevailing majority of them live in cities. However, this change has not altered the landscape, still dominated by the countryside. The Irish province has for a long time experienced a constant departure of young people moving to bigger towns and cities, but more often going abroad. This tendency finally started to change in the 1990s when the effects of Ireland's European Commission membership became noticeable. The beginning of the European economic crisis, with Ireland being the first European Union member to suffer from its consequences, has fanned fears that this positive tendency may drop abruptly. Therefore, it seems that nowadays the Irish countryside continues to encounter problems connected with depopulation and a lack of interest, especially among the new generations. What might have been the trend of the last decades of the twentieth century appears no longer applicable at the beginning of the new era. The ongoing Europeisation results in many people becoming lost in the globalised world represented by the metropolitan centres, seeking refuge in those areas which still have not lost their local sense of place. Consequently, the Irish countryside has started to undergo an influx of those people who have already satisfied their need for the cosmopolitan lifestyle. More often than not tired of the overwhelming crowds as well as the hectic pace of life experienced in big European capitals, they decide to go back to the places they remember from their childhood or find such areas as the Irish province astonishing due to the presence of the desired solitude and picturesque landscapes it offers.

What makes newcomers so amazed with the Irish countryside is first and foremost its scenery. The uniqueness of the Irish landscape is frequently related to the richness of different land forms situated on such a rather small island (Gillmor 1989: 9). This facilitates tourism since the visitors may contemplate the sight of diverse geographical structures as well as wildlife and historical heritage, remaining rather unspoilt till today (Mitchell and Ryan 1997: 359). However, during their stays they also make acquaintance with less

attractive parts of the countryside, namely, the local villages and provincial towns. However, those who decide to live there cherish the compromise between the wilderness and the urban centres that the countryside is able to provide (Short 1991: 31). The familiarity with the local area together with the involvement in the social life of the neighbourhood community give the sense of security and belonging. The affinity to nature allows for the safe contemplation of the surrounding landscape. Associating the Irish countryside with tourism and leisure activities is a rather new approach towards the rural areas, which for as long as till the second half of the twentieth century were linked solely with their land use. Throughout the ages, it has provided its inhabitants with work and food, but also connected with it a rather false image of a tamed wilderness in the form of farming and gardening (Gillmor 1991: 187). This devotion to land has survived till today as the aftermath of the feudal system, existing in Ireland till the late nineteenth century. The division of social classes into the landed gentry and tenants has its cultural layer, since the majority of land owners used to be of Anglo-Irish descent, whereas the physical workers comprised native inhabitants of the region – predominantly Irish Catholic (Mitchell and Ryan 1997: 312). The process of Catholic emancipation, started at the beginning of the eighteenth century, had its first results noticeable at the end of the century as the tenants were gradually provided with a right to own land. This change enabled farmers to regain the land lost due to the Cromwellian campaign centuries before (Hoppen 1999: 92-93). The Land League created to assert the rights of tenants against their landlords shows how important the issue of land ownership has become for the political scene (Deane 1985: 13).

The strong attachment to land caused by the restored right to it, has been further strengthened by the growing fascination with the rural imagery, having its beginning in the late eighteenth century, when the Irish searched for their identity in it as opposed to the English industrial urbanisation (Duffy 1997: 69). One of the first Irish novels *The wild Irish girl* (1806) by Sydney Owenson provides a romanticised account of the Irish landscape. The protagonist, who travels to Ireland with a prejudiced approach towards the country, to his own amazement discovers the beauty of the place in the rural areas. The peasantry transpires to embody the ancient oral traditions, which further fascinates the traveller (Burgess 2006: 53). This and other novels from the period have created an insoluble link between this particular type of landscape and the emerging Irish identity. The importance ascribed to the first Celtic Revival as giving birth to Irish national literature, is partially refuted by such critics as Seamus Deane, for whom far more crucial appears the Literary Revival from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For Deane, the popularity of the second movement resides not only in the emancipation process, but more importantly in the Famine (1985: 21). Therefore, its pri-

mordial aim revolved around the project of reviving the Irish language and culture in the regions which mostly suffered from the great hunger, especially the western counties where the forgotten language was still spoken. This provided further inspiration for writers to compose literature heavily influenced by the Gaelic myths, customs and beliefs directly linked with the rural landscape (Nolan 2005: 158-159).

The initial aim to establish literature in English which could still be distinguished as Irish by its content, relied heavily on the rural localities, especially those living in the western part of the island. This has imposed a specific moral and artistic code of behaviour on writers as well as originating the myth of the West of Ireland as the epitome of Irish national identity (Corcoran 1997: 57-58). However, such scholars as Lyons note that with time the initial idea has undergone a process of alteration, with the leading role being created by W.B. Yeats. This poet who originally seemed fascinated with the local communities found the final inspiration in the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. This shift of interest met with a heavy criticism of D. P. Moran, an Irish patriot, who treated Yeats's behaviour as an act of treachery towards the Irish peasantry (1971: 230-233). Deane is among those critics who provides an extensive critique of Yeats's understanding of the Irish landscape with the poets support for the foreign culture of the issue of ascendancy and the pernicious feudal system (1985: 36).

What is left of the Yeatsian vision of the countryside is a nostalgia for the irrecoverable past as well as "the apprehension of the spirit of a place" (Heaney 1971: 136). With the creation of the Free State, the new image of the national identity has been created, partially based on the myth of the West of Ireland and its native inhabitants as the epitome of Irishness. For a long time, this has excluded Irish cities from the map of the national heritage, making the urban experiences foreign and hostile to the country communities (Smyth 1997: 60). The idealised notion of the rural Ireland has been challenged by reality: "one not of 'frugality' but of poverty; not of domesticity but of emigration; not of 'industry' but of unemployment; not of families of happy children but of a celibacy necessitated by economic circumstance; not of 'serenity' but of anxiety" (Corcoran 1997: 60). The stark contrast presented by the critic has found its place in literature as well<sup>3</sup>. In the first half of the twentieth century, the change in the image of the countryside was reinforced by the literary

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<sup>3</sup> Patrick Sheeran when talking about the process of demythologising the Irish countryside, provides an example of James Joyce's ironic review of Lady Gregory's *Poets and dreamers* (1903), in which the writer comments on the Revivalists' infatuation in the rural land "fabulous in its sorrow and senility" (1988: 27). Sheeran acknowledges also the influence of Flann O'Brien's *An béal bocht* (1941) which in a satirical way treats the issue of the countryside (1988: 28).

works of such writers as Patrick Kavanagh<sup>4</sup> or Brinsley MacNamara<sup>5</sup> who, apart from acknowledging the positive aspects of rural Ireland, began to look more critically at the life in the countryside as sometimes being claustrophobic and oppressive for its inhabitants<sup>6</sup>. Kavanagh has to a certain extent demythologised the Irish West, since for him the distinction between the provincial and the parochial became crucial: “The provincial has no mind of his own: he does not trust what he sees until he has heard what the metropolis – towards which his eyes are turned – has to say (...) The parochial mentality, on the other hand, is never in any doubt about the social and artistic validity of his parish” (in Corcoran 1997: 63). Kavanagh and his contemporaries cherished the parochial attitude and criticised the provincial embarrassment of one’s own roots.

The direct link between the landscape and self-consciousness transpires to have always been a good stimulant for Irish writers. The countryside, which constitutes not only a geographical location, but more importantly the cultural heritage, has always functioned as the space representing the nation. This goes in accordance with a poststructuralist theory developed by James and Nancy Duncan, who treat landscape as a text (after Till 2004: 349). A similar approach seems to be represented by those Irish writers who in their novels use landscape as a tool for communicating the past as well as present political, cultural and social values of the Irish society. The prevailing issue of the countryside’s place in today’s Ireland is well expressed in the continuous interest of Irish writers in the theme. Many a time they return to the two images – the pastoral and anti-pastoral– trying to show them from yet another perspective. However, Graham is one of those scholars who notices that the “schism between urban and rural” has not been well researched in comparison to other dichotomies present in the Irish society, such as those between the North and the South, Protestant and Catholic (1997: 2). This negligence does not limit itself just to the realm of literary criticism. The country itself, whose rural life and cultural heritage have been essential for the construction of national identity, appears to be, to quote Aalen, “poorly understood, generally undervalued and persistently abused by private and public activities”

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick Kavanagh (1904-1967) was a poet, novelist and a short-story writer, whose works were constantly set in the Irish countryside. Famous for his realistic depiction of the rural areas, Kavanagh’s *Tarry Flynn* (1948) was even banned in Ireland for a short period of time.

<sup>5</sup> Brinsley MacNamara (1890-1963) was a writer who for a long time worked for the Abbey Theatre. However, he remains mostly known for his first novel *Valley of the squinting windows* (1918).

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Duffy draws attention to Kavanagh’s famous poem *The great hunger* (1942) and MacNamara’s *Valley of the squinting windows* (1918), since these works were rather controversial for their naturalistic depiction of the Irish countryside, which challenged the rural ethos promoted by the former generation of Irish writers (1997: 71).

(1989: 119). The rapid changes which Ireland has been recently undergoing result in a growing need for redefining the identity of the Irish nation. In the times of the ongoing unification of Europe, the local sense of place seems to be again the most stable indicator of one's own identity.

Treating landscape as a text about individual and collective identity allows for the diachronic analysis of the works of those authors who throughout their literary career come back to the topic of the Irish countryside. It appears to be especially crucial in the Irish case, since the landscape as a text may be approached from three different perspectives – as a constituent part of the territory, the land and the soil. The first refers to Ireland's identity as a state, the second occupies the civic space, whereas the third belongs to the nationalist and communal discourse (Deane 1997: 70). Depending on the discourse applied, individual and collective identity are “mapped” differently within the rural space (Peach 2004: 76)<sup>7</sup>. The works of John McGahern and Deirdre Madden seem to touch upon these three understandings of landscape. They are writers whose narratives devote much attention to the theme of the Irish province. This is partially connected with their own life experiences, since both authors have a rural background. McGahern comes from a farming family, who lived near Ballinamore, in County Leitrim, Ireland. He remained in close contact with the Irish countryside, as after many years spent in different places abroad, he decided to go back to his homeland to run the family farm. His literary works abound in autobiographical overtones, each of the six novels using the countryside at least as a partial setting. Deirdre Madden comes originally from the Northern Irish province. Born in Toomebridge, a small village in County Antrim, she has moved to Dublin to study and continues to live there. Her life in the city as well as several travels to Europe have enabled the author to look at her provincial upbringing from a broader perspective. John McGahern's *Amongst women* (1990) and *That they may face the rising sun* (2002) present two different views on the Irish countryside, the first having predominantly Kavanagh's provincial overtones, whereas the latter links the provincial with the parochial. Deirdre Madden in *Nothing is black* (1995) openly contrasts the myth of the Irish West with its urban anti-myth; whilst her latest novel *Molly Fox's birthday* (2008) poses a question of Ireland's provinciality and its place in contemporary Europe.

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<sup>7</sup> Peach in his article, following the line of argumentation proposed by geographers, distinguishes between two terms: tracing and mapping. Both refer to history as encoded and decoded in geographical locations. The difference lies in the fact that tracing aims at finding out the hidden, often unconscious truth about the past, whilst mapping is more open to the constant recreating of the past events, thus having a contact with the real and the present (2004: 76-77).

### 3.1. The local as the universal – two sides of John McGahern’s countryside in *Amongst women*

John McGahern is mostly recognised for his “negative renditions of the rural myth” in such works as *The dark* (1965) or *The leavetaking* (1975), where the reader instead of an idyllic peaceful life finds characters struggling with the bleakness of the place in which they find themselves together with the drudgery of the fieldwork and emotional claustrophobia of the family (Duffy 1997: 71). However, the writer reveals his great attachment to the countryside, especially his Leitrim as an epitome of the Irish local sense of place:

Everything interesting begins with one person in one place, though the places can become many, and many persons in the form of influences will have gone into the making of that single woman or man. No one comes out of nowhere; one room or town or locality can be made into an everywhere. The universal is the local, but with the walls taken away. (McGahern 2009: 11)

These lines are the best to explain the essence of the author’s narratives, which are all situated in a particular place, easily traceable on the map of Ireland. The detailed descriptions of the localities presented in the novels all come from the region he had an occasion to live in. As County Leitrim is one of the two crucial elements in his writing, it never serves as just the means of a background but carries a meaning on its own. The spaces described tell a lot about the characters who occupy them. Although McGahern limited himself to concentrating on one particular character in every novel and repeatedly the same place, namely his county Leitrim, he believed that each and every of his characters as well as the region may be read more universally. The fact that the author always devoted his attention to a single place well corresponds with his belief in the deeply rooted regionalisation of the island. What such academics as Declan Kiberd call an exaggeration, when referring to McGahern’s statement that Ireland is an island which consists of thirty-two separate republics, may be a good starting point in understanding the writer’s narrative *Amongst women* (1990) as well as in trying to grasp the essence of the Irish local identity (1995: 496). Following his line of thought, McGahern seemed to be right in presuming that only through the presentation of the local community may one attempt at grasping the universal, namely, the core of, Irishness.

Apart from providing a direct link between the local and the universal, McGahern’s novels demonstrate how the traditional dichotomy between the rural and urban landscape disappears. As Cawley rightly observes, since the Second World War, in Ireland as well as in other European countries, the boundary between the countryside and cities has become blurred. The spreading of the suburban areas near big urban centres results in the lack of a clear

division of where the city ends and where the countryside begins (1989: 197). What is also specific of Ireland is a certain resistance to these changes. This may be ascribed to what Heaney distinguishes as an unconscious, because illiterate, and conscious, namely literate, knowledge and cherishment of the place. The former means that the place is lived and appreciated as a geographical location and the embodiment of family ties. The latter refers to the understanding of the place's history, its origins and the meaning encoded in its very name. Here the poets reminds of an old Irish tradition of *dinnseanchas*, the knowledge of place names and their etymology from the Irish language. This unique relationship between the geographical landscape and "the country in mind" is the key to grasping the insoluble link between the physical place and its inhabitants, who by providing it with a name introduced it into the culture (1971: 131-132). This unconscious attachment towards place appears in McGahern's novel *Amongst women*, where the children of the Morans family, who with time have to move to Dublin or London in search of work, constantly go back to the farm, which carries the name of the Great Meadow. This intermediary state is exemplified in the behaviour of the young people, who try to follow the rhythm of city life, which they have not mastered yet, while at the same time sentimentalizing the rhythm of the country life, which they still have not abandoned (Kiberd 1995: 485).

The novel tells the story of the Morans, with the father as the dominant figure. He used to serve in the Republican Army during the War of Independence. However, he became disillusioned with the new reality of the Free State. Moran, the father, is a widower and brings up the children on his own following his wife's death. His oldest son, Luke, left the family some time ago and lives in London. This aspect comprises the greatest family secret, which is not mentioned in the presence of the father. Consequently, it is placed on the borderlands of the family's memory, but still the secret, similarly to the absence of the son, seems to haunt the rest of the family (Kuhn 2002: 2). The reason for Luke's abrupt departure is never revealed, but the second son's, Michael's, exacerbating conflict with the father sheds some light on the possible causes of Luke's emigration. Michael as the youngest child suffers mostly from the oppressive overprotectiveness of Moran. Threatened with corporal punishment for disobedience, Michael runs away from home twice. In the first case, the sisters manage to reconcile him with the father, but the second instance marks Michael's permanent departure. Unlike Luke, who does not intend to visit his homeland, Michael frequently travels to the Great Meadow to help his father during the harvest. As a classical victim of child abuse, Michael as well as his sisters develop a pathological attachment to Moran as the oppressor, which they strive to maintain at the cost of their own private lives (Herman 1992: 98).

The three daughters: Maggie, Mona and Sheila fulfil the role of witnesses of the physical abuse Moran exerts on his sons. Later the circle of

women is enlarged with the arrival of Rose, who after some time starts to have meetings with Moran, which ends up in a wedding. The children become close to Rose quickly, since they have missed a mother figure. Moran is a conservative man, who from the very beginning starts to impose his power over his new wife. Rose tries to speak her mind at the beginning but quickly becomes an obedient wife, just as the children are likewise obedient. However, the violent behaviour of the father makes all the children seek refuge in Dublin or London. When the girls finish school, they search for a job outside the Great Meadow. Maggie is accepted to a course for a nurse and goes to London, where Luke lives. The brother helps her to get acquainted with the city. However, he persistently refuses to visit their father. Mona starts to work as a civil servant in Dublin. Sheila has a possibility to study at the university, although her father is against it. Being too afraid to displease Moran, she follows Mona's steps. When the girls leave, Michael feels abandoned and cannot stand the claustrophobic life on the farm any more. Moran finds it difficult to accept the fact that neither of his sons wants to inherit the farm. From this point onwards he starts to neglect his duties to finally abandoning the work on the farm for good. All the children apart from Luke keep visiting the father, since they feel attached to the place as well as to the family they left behind. The novel finishes with the death of Moran, but even the funeral does not make Luke come back to the Great Meadow.

Conversely to McGahern's previous novels, *Amongst women* begins to present a partial change in the presentation of the countryside. The narrative still entails many negative aspects concerning the Irish countryside; however, several positive elements are traceable as well. What remains unchanged is the feeling of the overwhelming isolation caused by the farm as well as the behaviour of the father, Moran. He is the person, who disappointed with the results of the War of Independence, has isolated himself from the rest of the local society: "Though Moran had been a guerrilla fighter from the time he was little more than a boy he had always insisted that the quarrel had never been with Protestants. Now he identified much more with this beleaguered class than his Catholic neighbours" (McGahern 1990: 163). Believing: "all this country seems to be able to do – *gape*" he prefers to live as an outsider in a local community. Despite his political disillusionment with the new state, Moran still represents the family pattern as analogous with the polity promoted by de Valera's government of the Free State. Moran takes advantage of the vision of the family as epitomising three fundamental values: Catholicism, nationalism and patriarchy, to retain his authority in the space of the home, which usually is considered to be the domain of women (Peach 2004: 86). The isolation justified by the political dissatisfaction, resides in Moran's violent behaviour at home. As Herman notes, the family which suffers from child abuse, is usually socially isolated from the surrounding community. The state

of seclusion provides the oppressor with the feeling of secrecy and control over other family members (1992: 100).

Typically, Moran does not only isolate himself but appears to enforce the same thing on his children, who suffer from the lack of contact with other people. This becomes clearly visible when Rose enters the family: "Rose knew many of the people on the platform even though she has spent half her life in Scotland (...) Maggie looked on the isolation [Moran] had built up around them as distinction and strength" (McGahern 1990: 62-63). Rose, unused to living solely within the walls of the house and the area of the farm, from time to time goes to her mother. The children as well cannot get used to the isolationism practised by their father. One after another, they leave the Great Meadow, taking advantage of the lack of jobs in the nearby town. When the girls leave, Michael finds the solitude unbearable: "These visits of his daughters from London and Dublin were to flow like relief through the house. They brought distraction, something to look forward to, something to mull over after they had gone. Above all they brought the bracing breath of the outside, an outside Moran refused to accept unless it came from the family" (McGahern 1990: 93). Without sisters, Michael feels lonely. As his father frowns upon any strangers entering the place, the arrival of the girls is for Michael as well as for Rose a great attraction: "They all went to the fields behind the house to catch a glimpse of the train as it passed" (McGahern 1990: 78). The sound of the train followed by the noise of Moran's car are the most desired indicators of the girls' arrival. This fact that the characters are so attached to these two particular sounds highlights the solitude they encounter on the farm as well as it widens the distance to the nearest town.

Moran as a classical family oppressor goes into extremes. In the past, as an IRA member, Moran used to be devoted to the national cause, which resulted in his constant negligence of family matters. Disappointed with the results of the fight for freedom, he has shifted his focus onto the family. This coincides with his first wife's death. His overprotectiveness towards his children may allude to his sense of guilt for the lack of care his former wife might have experienced. As a farmer, who represents a traditional pattern of a family<sup>8</sup> with a clear cut division of tasks ascribed to males and females, Moran had to face a difficult task of raising children on his own. Used to the female's role of raising up children, Moran is afraid of losing control over his children once he becomes responsible for bringing them up (Holland 2000: 69). Thus, he remains strict despite his growing up children's individual need for freedom: "Amid it all was their constant awareness of Moran's watching presence,

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<sup>8</sup> Regan notes that McGahern's literary works reflect his autobiographical experiences, among them the violent and cruel behaviour of the father, who as a sergeant in the Free State, translated the brutality of the barracks into the domestic space (2009: 235).

sharpening everything they did with the danger of letting something fall and break and bring weight of his disapproval into the small chain" (McGahern 1990: 79). The girls, who treat their lives in the cities as an escape from the omnipresence of their father, subconsciously change their behaviour whenever they come to the farm.

What is common for them appears unnatural for their boyfriends, who during their first visit to the Great Meadow come under the scrutiny of Moran: "From deep within the shadows Moran watched them get off the train. In this quiet place where the dress was conservative, all violence hidden, Mark appeared like a figure out of pantomime" (McGahern 1990: 135). The conservative appearance is the very embodiment of the rules that govern the household. Mark, Maggie's fiancé, notices that Maggie leads two separate lives: one in Dublin and another on her homestead: "Everybody was watchful here. It was like moving about in a war area. What had first impressed him about Maggie was her air of separateness and superiority (...) in this house it disappeared as if it had never existed. She who had never appeared to him less than confident was nervous here, cautious, careful in every word and movement" (McGahern 1990: 135). The confidence the girls gain when living alone, vanishes whenever they arrive at the farm. They seem to be obedient to the rules governing the house, but the more time they spend outside the farm the more inquisitive Moran becomes towards their private lives.

Moran feels that he gradually loses his control over his daughters' lives, so he devotes more attention to those who are still living with him. Consequently, he appears to be stricter to Michael, which results in the boy running away from home twice. Moran's disappointment with the son stems not only from his son's rebelliousness, but more importantly from Moran's plans that are never to be realised: "Though tall and strong for his age he [Michael] had no liking for hard physical work and he was slow to give Moran any help on the land" (McGahern 1990: 64). Moran, who all his life strives to ensure his children with a place to live, is disappointed that none of them decides to stay and continue his work on the farm. What he had expected from Luke became futile, thus he places all his hopes in Michael, the younger of the two sons. Rosa, having no choice, has to adapt to the situation she finds in the house, since Moran becomes also more touchy towards his wife's behaviour: "It was not so much that she took things from the house, though his racial fear of the poorhouse or famine was deep, but that she left the house at all" (McGahern 1990: 68). She also begins to agree with her husband's point of view on every matter, supporting his negative approach towards the life in the city. "He thinks the streets of London are paved with gold and there are girls falling out of houses everywhere" (McGahern 1990: 126) says Rose on hearing that Michael has chosen to follow Luke and live in the city instead of helping

them in the field. Her exaggeration shows that what for the children appears to be an easy life in comparison to the drudgery of farming, for the older generation is the other way round.

The disregard for the city is one of the aspects signifying a traditional portrayal of the countryside as a peaceful and harmonious place – which stands in opposition to the corrupted capital. This as well as other examples prove that the novel may also be read in more universal terms, with Moran as the embodiment of the concept of Irish nationalism. Since Moran is one of the freedom fighters, the ideology introduced after the creation of the Free State has had a great influence on his life. Although he has reached the level of disillusionment with the idea of Republicanism itself, still many of its elements remain traceable in his behaviour. What for the new governing bodies was of most importance was the family as well as Catholicism, through which they wanted to identify the nation as a separate entity (Kearney 1997: 7). Moran, despite his violent treatment of the children, time and again underlines that the family is a priority for him: “I think that families can stay together even though they’re scattered, if there’s a will to do so” (McGahern 1990: 137). The devotion to family, so underlined by the republican government, was imposed on the society by forbidding women to work when married. By closing mothers within the walls of the house and requesting from them to concentrate solely on bringing up children, men became the only breadwinners, more often than not spending all their time outside the house. This appears to be still common in the countryside, where the patriarchal pattern of the Irish farming family is rather strong even nowadays. Consequently, family farming is a social form which allows only men to be in power over the land as well as over the rest of the family (O’Hara 2003: 124). Moran, however, is in a different situation after his wife’s death. He feels obliged to do both: work on the farm and take care of the family. The conservative approach towards the land prevalent in Moran’s behaviour is extended into the domestic sphere, and thus the father takes the rightness of his dominance over other members of the family for granted.

This conviction is demonstrated not only through the means of the land ownership, but also through religion. The moral dimension of the superiority of the rural Ireland over the urban areas results from Catholic morality, which in Ireland heavily relies on the theory of Natural Law. It represents a set of beliefs which all revolve around one essential statement – that “the process of discovering moral obligations” should go through nature (Dolley 1985: 48). This seemingly simple rule was applicable to every area of life, even the approach towards the land as well as the patriarchal family pattern. Whenever Moran feels endangered, he takes advantage of prayer to bring back his self-consciousness and to show other people his superiority over them. “We’d be better if we’d say our prayers” (McGahern 1990: 90) are the words the children

hear every evening, but most importantly especially when they question his patriarchal power. His claiming that: “the family that prays together stays together” (McGahern 1990: 137) is his greatest demonstration of a link between the institution of the family and the institution of the Catholic Church. The words McGahern uses in his novel correspond directly with the line of promotion led by Father Patrick Peyton, who with these words tried to convince Irish people that by restoring the religious rituals within the domestic sphere, they help in enriching and strengthening the Irish nation (Holland 2000: 70). As Holland rightly observes, the Rosary fostered by the Church as a means of regulating the division of power within the family, is implemented in the novel to manifest Moran’s patriarchal authority. The order of saying prayers becomes of paramount importance, as it designates the hierarchy within the family. However, McGahern treats this issue subversively, since Moran’s position amongst women, as the title of the novel suggests, is presented as his futile attempt at overtaking the place commonly ascribed to the figure of the mother, which is emphasised by the very words of the Rosary: “Hail Mary, full of grace, The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou amongst women” (Holland 2000: 71). Interestingly enough, Moran by usurping the place commonly attributed to women actually undermines his patriarchal position in the family.

The patriarchal pattern of a family and the Catholic Church are the symbols of control of the society from which the children try to escape. As Crawford rightly points out, Catholic ethos not only started to dominate in the Free State after the won war, but what is significant is the fact that it permeated to the everyday life of the society through education (2010: 106). The moral teaching of the church has become adopted by the society and by the state, which came to be another powerful tool of control. McGahern, who all his life criticised the decline of the Catholic ethos from the “pre-Famine gaiety into a rule-bound set of practices, scruples and interdictions” (Kiberd 2009: xv) was punished by the authorities with his second novel *The dark* (1965) being banned as well as the loss of his job as a teacher. The precautions taken in the case of McGahern show that de Valera’s protectionism was still prevailing in the mentality of the Catholic Church, which in the 1960s still had an enormous influence on the authorities. However, the writer persistently came back to the topic, showing its negative influence in *Amongst women* as well.

A further aspect of the Republican ideology is the resentment towards the English. Moran feels ashamed of the fact that his children work in London. He, as well as the rest of the family, blame England for what happens to the older son, Luke: “Luke is different. You’d never know what he is thinking. He’s turning himself into a sort of Englishman” (McGahern 1990: 148). This discrepancy is maintained even when the younger son, Michael, marries an English girl. The father tries to welcome the new member of the family, which strikes the rest: “they had been brought up to keep the outside at an iron dis-

tance and now their father was welcoming it into the house” (McGahern 1990: 172). However, deep inside, the approach does not change as “she was the immigrant within the family” (McGahern 1990: 171). The rejection of the girl shows the deeply rooted grudge Moran has against the English, which also prevails in the Irish society. With time, Moran realises that the idea of an independent country was a dream, since Ireland, albeit a separate state, remains deeply dependant on England: “More than half of my family work in England. What was it all for? The whole thing was a cod” (McGahern 1990: 5). The boundaries created to separate the two states become blurred with the young people travelling between Ireland and England for work.

Moran at some points seems to give up his former code of behaviour in the same way he abandoned the dream of the new state. Previously strict and unforgiving, the father loses his hardness when he realises that his patriarchal approach has made all the children leave the Great Meadow. Disillusioned with his sons, he sees no purpose in maintaining the farm: “Now he went from field to field, no longer kept as well as they once were, the hedges ragged, stones fallen from the walls, but he hardly needed the fields any more (...) Instead of using the fields, he sometimes felt as if the fields has used him. Soon they would be using someone else in his place” (McGahern 1990: 130). Having no power over his children any more, Moran feels that his superior position has been violated, changing him from that of a master into a slave to the land. The isolation he cherished so much in the past becomes unbearable for him, so for the first time he feels an urgent need to leave the farm and spend some time outside: “On the next outing they went north across the border to Enniskillen. Increasingly they leaned on these outings to escape the claustrophobia of the interminable day” (McGahern 1990: 174). More and more borders are crossed, those existing on the maps as well as those symbolically separating the countryside from the city and Moran’s farm from the rest of the local area. The vanishing of the boundaries results not only from that fact that the children cross them whenever they visit the Great Meadow, but more importantly because they never fully leave the countryside: “they had never really left Great Meadow, in spite of jobs and marriages and children and houses of their own in Dublin and London” (McGahern 1990: 1). The importance of the family bonds so scrupulously underlined by Moran is never abandoned by the children, who till the death of the father remain bound to the farm. Consequently, they mentally linger in between the two places, the city and the farm, unable to live independently of their homeland.

Not in the least does the constant travelling between the countryside and the city bother the children, since the older they grow the more appreciation they have for the Great Meadow. Despite the hardship experienced during their childhood, they remain devoted to the area they come from:

In London or Dublin the girls would look back to the house for healing. The remembered light on the empty hayfields would grow magical, the green shade of the beeches would give out a delicious coolness as they tasted again the sardines between the slices of bread: when they were away the house would become the summer light and shade above their whole lives. (McGahern 1990: 85)

What may have seemed as a plain and claustrophobic place in their childhood, with time gains a more positive dimension, becoming a place where the daughters long to go. This brings a change to McGahern's presentation of the countryside, which in his previous novels<sup>9</sup> was presented solely in a negative way. This reveals the gradual emergence of optimism in the author's private life, resulting in his later narratives delivering a more positive picture of County Leitrim (O'Donoghue 2009: 1). *Amongst women* is also the first of McGahern's novels in which the children of the farming families return from time to time to their place of origin. Luke, as the oldest of Moran's children, never visits the homeland again. The girls even if not permanently, come to the house at the weekends. Michael, being the youngest, bears the least grudge to the father, remaining most enthusiastic about his time spent in the Great Meadow. During the last years of Moran's life, he is the person who helps mostly on the farm and in the household. The youngest child appears to be the one who is mostly attached to the land. Showing a positive transition in the perception of the countryside in the novel, McGahern comments on the new tendency in Irish society, especially among the young generations – who no longer keep themselves separated from their background.

The writer, though he tends to concentrate on the social aspects of the Irish rural life, does not forget to devote some attention to the pictorial representation of the countryside. The appearance of many descriptions of the rural areas show McGahern's unchanging sensitivity to the beauty of the landscape: "Summer had not yet replaced the wheaten reeds of winter with green along the edges. Out in the lake the gulls wheeled and scolded above their young on the pile reeds ringed with rocks that formed Seagull Island" (McGahern 1990: 75). This and other examples prove the changing perspective of the writer on the Irish countryside, who instead of concentrating exclusively on the negative aspects of it, turns his attention to the elements that make such places as Great Meadow unique. This does not mean that McGahern had not appreciated the landscape as well as other characteristics of the Irish

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<sup>9</sup> The previous novels such as *The barracks* (1963) or *The leavetaking* (1975) concentrate on the poverty of the regions as well as the overwhelming abuse of children by the patriarchal power of the father and the Catholic Church, let alone the famous *The dark* (1965). The first signs of change are noticeable in *The pornographer* (1980) where the protagonist at the end of the novel considers his return to the family house placed in the countryside.

countryside before. The place of his origin was always precious to him. Therefore, when possible he decided to return to County Leitrim. Critics more often than not underline that despite his career as a writer and his profession of a visiting professor to many universities in Ireland but also abroad, deep in his soul he remained a countryman (Wroe 2002: 2). What he praised the Irish countryside for mostly is the local resistance to the process of the centralisation of culture and modernisation of the remote areas. For him, their greatest advantage was their local sense of place and connected with it their unique customs and folklore, which differ from region to region (Kiberd 2009: xvi). The novel follows this line as two important local customs are depicted in the narrative. One of them is St Stephen's Day, during which wren-boys visit houses playing some instrument or singing, for which they receive money (O'Dowd 1989: 147). The appreciation for this tradition is well expressed in Moran's behaviour, who: "liked the traditional music and handed them a larger sum than usual" (McGahern 1990: 100). Another is Monaghan Day: "the traditional day poor farmers sold their winter stock and the rich farmers bought them for fattening" (McGahern 1990: 10). This day directly linked with the farmers' calendar of events bears another important meaning, as it appears at the beginning and the end of the novel. The former enthusiasm expressed by Moran on this day, disappears at the end of his life. These two traditions McGahern links with such people as Moran, who are still part of the Leitrim folklore, so precious for the writer. Therefore, Moran cannot be treated as a purely negative character. For the writer, the generation of people like Moran entail those traditions that are considered as negative, like patriarchal power and Catholic morality, as well as positive ones, among them being the devotion to the land and to the local customs.

*Amongst women*, similarly to his former novels, depicts the mentality of the provincial society on the micro scale using the example of the protagonist, Moran. By belonging to the vanishing generation of farmers, the father is a character who exemplifies all the traditional features typical for the local communities of the 1950s. In contrast, the children represent the first generation of young people who leave the farms and move to urban centres, where the job opportunities are better. This trend changes with time, which is well depicted in the novel in the way each and every child of Moran behaves towards their father as well as towards their provincial background. Luke epitomises the most extreme attitude by rejecting his origins and refusing to reconcile with the father. The rest of the children fluctuate between their private lives in the cities and the farm, keeping in touch with the family. They never fully return to their homestead, neither do they leave the place, staying constantly preoccupied with their ageing father. In this way, McGahern draws attention to the important aspects of the countryside together with the typically Irish attitude towards the land. The writer manages to capture the pro-

cess of change in its intermediary stage, when it is still too early for the new generation to fully appreciate the life in the countryside. Still the alteration is visible, since the once negative portrayal of the bleak and backward province is taken over by a more positive picture of the countryside which, though it still bears some traces of the old conservativeness, cherishes a local sense of place helping providing its inhabitants with their identity.

### 3.2. John McGahern's *That they may face the rising sun* as the writer's reconciliation with the countryside

The alteration in McGahern's literary representation of the Irish countryside surfaces in his last novel titled *That they may face the rising sun* (2002). What may come as a surprise to those readers familiar with the novelist's previous fiction is the fact that the author in this particular text expresses his appreciation for life in the country, which has changed a lot during his absence. As he stated in one of his essays: "When I came back to Ireland to live as a small farmer in the countryside I discovered that most of the people had no belief, and they looked cynically on both Church and State" (2009: 146). So too does the writer in his last narrative since he presents all the drawbacks of the province in a more satirical mood. The former serious and critical tone typical for his previous novels disappears, and a positive glance at the rural life in Ireland tends to dominate the last narrative. The novel seems to bear much resemblance to the author's *Memoir* (2005), whose presentation of small community's intimate life fosters the imagination of people, who look with nostalgia at the lost golden age of the province (Inglis, Donnelly 2011: 131). Although as Hermione Lee observes, the novel may be treated as "an antidote" to the previous dark illustrations of the County Leitrim, it remains far from the rural idyll (2002: 16). With this text McGahern seems to have managed to regain a balance between his attachment to the region of his origin and the past which made him leave the place, especially as he could notice directly in the interim that the countryside is undergoing a positive transition in the mentality of the local society.

Similarly, Seamus Deane comments on the novel by perceiving it as the writer's awakening from a nightmare, bringing a breeze of liberation from the escapism for the Irish people as well for himself (2002: 1). This breeze may come from the lake, which becomes the central point of reference throughout the whole plot. The fact that McGahern's last narrative introduces a new quality into the literary representation of the Irish countryside may be further advocated by Patrick Sheeran's notion of a new paradigm. This critic comes to a tentative conclusion that the traditional aspects may constitute the framework of a new paradigm, namely, the conceptual change from a reductionist to a holistic

and ecological world view (1988: 31-32). In this way, by constantly referring to the traditional treatment of land as being sanctified, but at the same time implementing the more contemporary approach of the ecological lifestyle, McGahern's novel introduces new aspects to his topic. Likewise, the writer brings back to life the notion of a local community, but at the same time rejects the rural ethos, being able to look at the Irish countryside in a more holistic way, namely, pointing both to the simplicity and hardship of the rural life. The coexistence of the traditional and the new mark the overlapping of traditional and contemporary elements within the framework of one narrative.

The book acquaints the reader with one year of the everyday life in the countryside inhabited by a local community scattered around the lake. Joe and Kate Ruttleages are a couple, who, after twenty years spent in London, decide to go back to Ireland and buy a house in the country. They quickly get acquainted with their neighbours who help them to learn how to take care of the farm properly. The couple actively participates in the social life of the local community. The plot does not contain much action. The writer provides his readers with detailed accounts of the everyday life routine without any urgency. Therefore, as Flannery observes, McGahern's works express slowness and cyclicity as the primordial feature's which condition the life in the countryside. The seasonal processes, the repetitive actions, provide the novel with a natural rhythm. The purposeful slowness of his narrative is supposed to express his resistance against "the erotics of speed, against the accelerated convulsions of modernization" (2012: 281-283). The beauty of the landscape which McGahern evokes, revolves around the descriptions of the lake as the central place of the novel<sup>10</sup>. This makes the narrative the most topofocal of all McGahern's literary texts. The trope of the lake is a clear reference to George Moore's novel *The lake* (1905), whose work abounds in impressionistic depictions of the lake. Moore's depiction, following the modernist approach towards space, is symbolically illustrated in the novel, where the protagonist immerses himself in the lake to fake his death, and in this way leave the countryside. McGahern's characters return to the lake. Their journey to and back from London ends in a full circle, which may be treated as Carroll suggests (2008: 43) as the writer's own personal reconciliation with the past and the countryside. The reappearance of the lake as the main trope of the narrative can also imply the finalization of the long journey of the Irish writers of the twentieth century with the modernists superseding rural for urban space and with writers such as McGahern who go back to the countryside to finally appreciate it for what it is.

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<sup>10</sup> The centrality of the lake bears resemblance to Seamus Heaney's motif of *omphalos* (from Greek 'navel') – the symbolic centre, around which the life of the community revolves. As Jerzy Jarniewicz observes, in Heaney's poems the *omphalos* takes different forms, among them of a pond (2011: 89).

The scenery is the aspect, which first attracts the attention of the newcomers and helps them in making a decision about the purchase of the house: "Then the screens of the whitethorn suddenly gave way and they stood high over another lake. The wooded island where the herons bred was far out, and on the other shore the pale sedge and stunted birch trees of Gloria bog ran towards the shrouded mountains" (McGahern 2002: 19-20). Affected by the picturesque area, the Ruttledges bind their new life to the lake, which for them as for other inhabitants is an essential point of reference. "You are all very welcome to this side of the lake" (McGahern 2002: 122) say the neighbours to greet the Ruttledges, indicating that the geographical location of the houses and the ownership of the land is determined by the area of the lake. Not only does it provide the people with the information concerning their whereabouts. The lake is also a good informant of the weather conditions, as its surface well reflects the changes of the seasons: "There were many days of wind and rain. Uneasy gusts ruffled the surface of the lake, sending it running this way and that. Occasionally, a rainbow arched all the way across the lake" (McGahern 2002: 153). The elaborate portrayals of water, in which the shifts of weather are mirrored, may also be read more poetically. To follow the words of Bachelard, the lake "is the very eye of the landscape, the reflection in water the first view that the universe has of itself" (1969: 209). Following the philosopher's line of thought, what is seen in the water appears to multiply the immensity of the surrounding landscape, by producing the mirrored image of it. The lake motif is also of interest to Lefebvre, for whom the surface of the water mirrors the surface of consciousness as the final stage of the process of deciphering the obscure kept in the depths of the unconscious. This rather psychoanalytical reading of the landscape has its practical implementation in the scholar's analysis of the spatial production. The landscape is the place where the distortion of the balance between space and time is most visible. The more it becomes transformed by people, the more social relations become problematic. This being the case, Lefebvre advocates the society's need to restore the primordial unity of nature and human beings, at some point lost in the urban reality (1974: 218-219). The novel seems to serve the example of the people's reunion with the landscape. The characters frequently refer to the lake in a metaphorical way claiming that: "We're no more than a puff of wind out on the lake" (McGahern 2002: 121). This metaphor of life well encapsulates the significance of the lake for the local community, who refer to it in each and every aspect of their lives.

The landscape does not limit itself solely to the lake, since the writer devotes a lot of attention to the other aspects connected with it, especially the work on the farm. By closing the plot of the novel within one year, the author familiarizes the readers with the countrymen's calendar of day-to-day and seasonal duties. Consequently, the narrative illustrates how the protagonists look

after the bee hives, mow and gather hay, and look after the cattle and lambs, which together with the changing seasons, provide the text with a sense of rhythm and continuity. The fact that the novel begins and ends with the summer adds to the circularity of the plot. Not less important for expressing the circularity of nature are the two deaths in the novel: Edmund's at the beginning and Johnny's at the end of the plot. In contrast, the constant preoccupation with the land results in the characters' ability to sense the slight differences in the surrounding landscape: "with the sea of grass gone, the space between the house and the lake suddenly seemed a different land" (McGahern 2002: 111). What may not be noticeable for the foreigners, is easily discernible for the local inhabitants of the area. With time, the Ruttledges restore the link with the nature they appear to have lost during their time spent in London. Their understanding of the rules governing nature in everyday-life situations makes it easier for them to reconcile with the loss of their relatives.

For Joe and Kate their stay in England was essential for yet another reason, as it helped them to realise that travelling: "renews and restores a sense of their own place" (McGahern 2002: 106). Their life on the farm is hard work, but Ruttledge does not regret having abandoned London, where "life is easy and comfortable" in comparison to the countryside. However, he admits that: "it's not my country and I never feel it's quite real or that my life there is real" (McGahern 2002: 20). What he means by referring to the verisimilitude of the life in England is there being no sense of belonging, which has implications in people lacking any responsibility or involvement in the life of the community they are part of. Conversely, the life in a small locality, as the one presented in the novel, does not allow for indifference and isolation from the neighbours. Neither do the Ruttledges want to keep their neighbour's privacy at bay. Their involvement in the problems of the inhabitants shows their appreciation for being an integral part of the locality. The initial "resentment [which] fuelled an innate intolerance of anything strange and foreign" (McGahern 2002: 22) may be justified by O'Connor's treatment of tourism as a prolongation of colonialism. The urban newcomers tend to behave with the same superiority as once the English did towards the Irish. The big discrepancy between the wealthy visitors and poorer provinces, which more often than not have to rely on their income from the tourist industry, reinforces the negative stereotypes (1993: 77). However, when it comes to the Ruttledges, with time the mistrust vanishes, whereas their engagement in the case of Frank Dolan proves their interest in the life of the native inhabitants.

The fading relations with the people from London are well illustrated by the fact that less and less people visit them during summer: "When the Ruttledges first moved to the lake, other visitors had come from London, but over the years they dwindled until Robert Booth was their only serious connection with that busy world to which they had both once belonged, a world

that was growing increasingly distant” (McGahern 2002: 158). Robert, who appears to miss his colleagues offers them a job in London. No matter how lucrative the proposition seem to be at first glance, the Ruttleges remain aware that: “it would only become their same lives again in different circumstances in a different place” (McGahern 2002: 164). Therefore, without much hesitation they reject the possibility, as despite the hardship connected with the work on the farm, they enjoy their life in the country. The increasing distance between their former life in the city and the current one in the province does not bother them. The seclusion caused by the remoteness of the place allows them to stay uninvolved in the difficulties of the outer world, which in the novel is exemplified by the ongoing Northern conflict. The majority of world news does not reach the local community. This does not evoke a feeling of alienation among the inhabitants, but, on the contrary, it transpires to be a desirable state of isolation from the hectic and violent pace of the modern life. The control over the time they finally have when living on the farm brings a new quality to their lives, which used to be determined by the speed of the modern world (Flannery 2012: 280). The news which manages to get there, for the local inhabitants, lacks veracity: “two soldiers were killed here. A bomb was put in a car and pushed downhill. The soldiers saw too late there was no one behind the wheel” (McGahern 2002: 161) explains Ruttledge to Robert during their stay on the border. The informational tone indicates the man’s lack of involvement with the issues, which do not link directly with his own locality. Joe behaves in a similar way during his conversation with Jimmy Joe McKiernan, an Irish activist, who arrives from London for Johnny’s funeral. When asked about the lack of interest in the Irish cause, Ruttledge expresses his disapproval of the violence used by the IRA as well as explains that the place where he lives is free, thus he sees no reason for continuing the conflict. He states at the end: “I don’t think it’s any of our business”, referring to Northern Ireland as the other part of Ireland which is not free. This justifies the statement that Irish people start anew to identify with the regions they inhabit rather than with Ireland as a whole. Consequently, the local communities look inwardly, closing themselves to the outside world.

The Ruttleges are not the only people who left Ireland to work in London. Johnny, Jamesie’s brother is the person who at approximately the same time moved to England. Over twenty years he has been working in a factory. Despite the fact that his financial situation is not changing, for instance he is still renting the same room, he has not enough courage to return back to Ireland. At one point he takes such a possibility into consideration, but Jamesie and Mary discourage him from doing so. Unfit for the work on the farm, the family knows he would not manage to deal with the change in the pace of life. Nonetheless, he visits them every summer, which brings a distraction to the monotonous life of the local community. The preparations Mary makes in consequence rise almost to the level

of a ritual. The cleaning of the house, the getting the room ready, and cooking a favourite meal are the elements which are repeated at the beginning of every summer. Johnny appreciates his time spent in his place of origin. In spite of the time spent in London, he has not managed to find his place there. This he ascribes to the mentality of the society: "England never changes much. They have a set way of doing everything there. It's all more or less alphabetical in England" (McGahern 2002: 83). Contrary to England, Ireland in the twentieth as well as the beginning of the twenty-first century is a place undergoing a constant transition, resulting in dynamic changes in each and every aspect of life. Johnny is one of the representatives of this ongoing transformation, as he belongs to the generation who live in between the two places. The symbolic death of Johnny in the family house signifies his final return to the homeland, as the telling title of the novel indicates. This provides the novel with yet another allegorical journey circle.

Apart from Joe and Kate who come back to Ireland to live there, there are more and more people who visit the countryside for tourist purposes. The gradual emergence of the tourist industry in the remote parts of Ireland signifies the change in the perception of Ireland as a tourist destination, which is especially helpful to the provincial areas. Some Irish people, who developed a successful career in England, treat Ireland as a second home, where they come predominantly for summer holidays. Robert's brother is one of those people who owns a weekend cottage in Donegal. Another place near County Leitrim, which has become a tourist attraction, is the river Shannon. This is illustrated in the scene when Ruttledge goes with Patrick to sell lambs: "As they crossed the Shannon by the narrow bridge in Rooskey, he asked Ruttledge to slow again so that he could feast his eyes on the white pleasure-boats below" (McGahern 2002: 144). As the men notice, the majority of people who rent such boats come from Dublin or overseas. What foreigners find attractive, for the local people is of no interest: "They'd want to go out foreign. To Italy or somewhere. They'd have no taste for this place. They know too much about places like round here" (McGahern 2002: 145) explains Ruttledge about Jim's and Lucy's reluctance to choose such a place as this one for their holiday destination. Those who were brought up in the Irish province prefer to explore foreign lands, whereas for foreigners Ireland appears to be worth visiting. Among the foreigners more often than not are Dublin citizens, who are perceived by the remote regions as Anglicised because of their industrialised and urbanised lifestyle, thus not Irish. On the other hand, the Dubliners are among those who look at the western provinces as an "exotic periphery", fascinating with its landscape but still inferior to the modern, dominant centre (Nash 1993: 87). Therefore, such people as Ruttledge are not attracted to the expensive boats, signifying the financial inequality between the city and the countryside. As a person who has already led a comfortable life in London, such showing off makes no impression on him. The tourism in the novel is

still in its infancy as it appears only in the background in the form of the visitors to the hotel, which is situated in the nearby town together with several cottages for rent belonging to uncle Shah. McGahern, instead of showing County Leitrim being affected by the new form of industry popular in the 1980s and 1990s, described as rural tourism (Byrne, Edmondson, Fahy 1993: 233), prefers to depict it as still behind the times – with farming as the dominating occupation. Therefore, Monaghan Day is still celebrated in the area presented by McGahern since it is directly connected with the mart. There the local farmers, Joe, Jamesie and Patrick among them try to sell their cattle and then celebrate the good prizes they have got in the local pub<sup>11</sup>.

Similarly to *Amongst women*, the work *That they may face the rising sun* presents moments when the hard work on the farm is rewarding for the characters as it restores the people's connection with the land, just as the novel itself restores the connection with the Irish literary heritage. Apart from Monaghan Day which appears in both novels, the theme of the harvest is also described in both of the works. The seemingly mundane season of harvesting is restored to the rural culture by McGahern, which in reality has been superseded by the modern day process of accelerated productivity (Flannery 2012: 289). Other traditional values such as the sanctity of the family, in earlier novels presented by the writer as the justification for the mistreatment of children, in his last narrative is a positive value – which especially can be ascribed to John Quinn. Although he exerts his male power over his wives, the children are well looked after and protected against the maltreatment they experience at school. Still, the writer does not sentimentalize the family ties, as each and every family present in all the texts encounters many problems and anxieties resulting from the difficulties in communication. The Catholic faith is also presented in a satirical way. As Jamesie explains: “I don't believe’, he mimicked. ‘None of us believes and we go. That's no bar’ (...) ‘To look at the girls. To see the whole performance’ (...) ‘We go to see all the other hypocrites’” (McGahern 2002: 2). The very words said by Jamesie are also present in one of McGahern's essays *The church and its spire*, in which the writer cites his conversation with a neighbour (2009: 147). In the essay as well as in the novel the conversation is a comment on the writer's observation about the change in the society's approach towards religion. The blind obedience is gone, whereas the rituals are still practiced and respected, which signifies the community's balanced approach towards Catholicism. Even the local priest's motto: “Live and let live is what I say” (McGahern 2002: 227) shows that the Church has ceased to impose its will on their parishioners, becoming more supportive for those who need help – as

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<sup>11</sup> Kevin Whelan notes that since Irish villages have never been self-contained entities, their inhabitants had to rely on the nearby towns. Thus, small towns have become part of the rural ethos treated as a constituent element of the Irish countryside's landscape (1988: 37).

it is with Bill Evans, a homeboy who, thanks to Father Conroy, receives a room in a care home for elderly people. The novel seems to present the most balanced view on the countryside, which is neither idealised nor rejected. McGahern's contemporary rural life proves that the romanticised image of the Irish West is gone, if it ever really existed. He openly shows that life there is a matter of hard work, the conditions are far from comfortable in comparison to the city, but what counts is the simplicity of life. The primordial relationship with nature appears to be still possible, and for those who have experienced the modern pace of the urban life, they begin to appreciate what the Irish countryside still has in abundance – time.

John McGahern's last novel *That they may face the rising sun* is a narrative which presents the final stage of the author's long process of reconciliation with his personal past experiences as well as the history of the Irish countryside. Therefore, the novel expresses the writer's observations of the changes which took place in the Irish countryside from the time he left his County Leitrim in the 1960s. To the author's as well as readers' surprise, the same place twenty years after appears to be a peaceful and harmonious place, where the slow pace of time is visible in the presence of some local farmers, who still try to make ends meet. John McGahern in both the analyzed novels has concentrated on the current problems of the countryside, with which he was always closely connected. *Amongst women* as well as *That they may face the rising sun* both draw attention to the changes which affect local communities and their traditional values. In the former narrative some alternations are still in their infancy and continue to develop in the latter novel, for example the change in the perception of the countryside among those generations who first felt it many years ago. Those who left the rural areas begin to come back, which opens a new chapter for the Irish countryside as a place worth living as well as a tourist attraction. By this token, *Amongst women* and *That they may face the rising sun* both depict the process of change in the Irish countryside, with the former novel presenting the beginning and the latter the continuation of this ongoing transformation.

### 3.3. A desolate province or a rural paradise?

#### Deirdre Madden's *Nothing is black*

Ireland as a place is frequently defined through its landscape. Its insularity, almost impossible to be limited just to the geographical perspective, has always been analyzed with reference to the political, cultural and economic marginalisation of Ireland, all of this having a tremendous influence on the social relations within this area (Smyth 1997: 20). Therefore, the term "province", which geographically entails predominantly rural areas of the west of the island, with time has become an indicative of Ireland as a country culturally and politically

inferior first to its British neighbour, then to the European Union (Graham 1997: 1). These two approaches towards the province have started to develop independently, drawing attention to two levels of the Irish provinciality: referring to the countryside contrasted with the Irish urban centres of Dublin or Belfast, or to both states compared with the globalised world of Europe or the USA. These two perspectives on the issue of the Irish province find their place in Deirdre Madden's novels *Nothing is black* (1995) and *Molly Fox's birthday* (2008). The former work, placed in the Republic of Ireland, depicts everyday life in one of the western provinces. In this work the writer comes back to the well-known dichotomy between the countryside and the city, as presented through the examples of Donegal and Dublin. The latter novel, though at certain moments it shows some scenes from the provincial life, this time on the north part of the border, deals mainly with the issue of the provinciality of Ireland as represented by Dublin, which is contrasted with such international urban centres as London and New York. Here the writer goes beyond the geography of Ireland to present Ireland's place in a global perspective.

The stereotype of Ireland's provinciality is partially connected with the fact that it remained a predominantly rural island till the second half of the twentieth century. One of the results of the Republic of Ireland's accession to the European Union was the dynamic development of Dublin, but also of smaller towns such as Cork or Limerick. Consequently, many young people decided to replace emigration for migration within the boundaries of the state, to modern urban centres. Nonetheless, even the Irish economic development, known as The Celtic Tiger, has not managed to transform the whole country, since still the prevailing majority of it has stayed rural, with county Donegal<sup>12</sup> as an epitome of the Irish underdeveloped province. This area due to the partition of the island into two states has become separated from its nearest urban centre – Derry, as well as it is isolated from the rest of the Free State, becoming mainly surrounded by the sea and the border with Northern Ireland. The geographical location of Donegal has caused its spatial but also economic and cultural seclusion. Therefore, there is a common belief that Donegal has stayed behind the times, missing all the possible developmental

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<sup>12</sup> As Frederick Aalen notes, Irish place names are one of the prevailing signifiers of the countryside's heritage. The majority of rural areas are of Gaelic origin. However with time the names have become anglicised by those English people who appeared in Ireland in the seventeenth century. The fact that they used the original name shows their respect for the pre-existing territorial divisions as well as the language of the local people (1989: 117). This is also the case with Donegal, which is an anglicanised name for Dún na nGall, meaning the fort of the foreigners or the fort of the strangers. This name has been given to the town, from which the county later got its name. The term foreigners is ambiguous as it may indicate the Vikings or the Scottish mercenaries, who were asked by the Irish to come to fight in local battles. However, some scholars claim that the County of Donegal is Tír Chonaill, meaning Conall's land (Céara Ní Choinn 2005: 1).

opportunities from which the rest of the country has richly benefited. In order to appropriately analyze the meaning of Donegal as a province, one has to take into consideration the cultural and political aspects as well. As William J. Smyth notes, Ireland used to be divided into four regions with Donegal belonging to Ulster. This division, although historically placed before the Anglo-Norman invasion, has been sustained in the society's mentality till today (1997: 19). The exclusion of Donegal from the rest of Ulster after the creation of two separate states, has culturally isolated it from the rest of the region with which it was identified for centuries.

However, the cultural regionalisation of Ireland caused Donegal together with other western provinces to be defined by the term the myth of the West (Johnston 1997: 180). During the eighteenth century, the western parts of Ireland have become known as "the great bastions of Irish language, poetry and music" (Smyth 1997: 35). Since then, the myth of the West of Ireland as an idyllic countryside and as an epitome of Irishness has been created. The image has been reinforced first by the Celtic Revival, and then by *Gaeltacht* resulting from the new policy of a freshly created Free State (Johnston 1997: 174). The government, treating the Irish language as an ultimate indicator of the nation's identity, prepared a programme of financial and educational help for the western provinces, perceived as poor and illiterate in comparison to the rest of the state. The actions of the politicians serves as a good example of what Short defines as a transformation of a myth into ideology. This way of shaping the myth, especially anti-urban ones, for particular purposes, is to help the governing bodies to provide the myth with a time, a place and a purpose, to reinforce its influence on the community. However, this step has not only reassured the western areas of their provinciality but also has created another powerful myth of their backwardness. These two contrastive images of the Irish province of Donegal are presented in Madden's *Nothing is black*, who on the example of Donegal tries to demythologise it and show it in a more balanced and objectified way.

In *Nothing is black* Deirdre Madden shows that the same place may be presented from different points of view. Therefore, it well corresponds with William Kirk's division of the environment into two types: phenomenal and behavioural. The former refers to the actual physical space that may be described by empirical facts, whereas the latter entails all the possible perceptions of the same place (Short after Kirk 1991: xv). The idiosyncrasy of each and every behavioural environment lies not only in the state of mind of the person at the time of perceiving the place, but also on their previous experiences and the scope of the landscape it is possible to see. Therefore, the behavioural environment is more biased as well more selective, limited to the places seen or the attention devoted to the process of perception. The subjectivity of the perception of space may result in some people treating the same place as isolating and

alienating, and others as evoking the feeling of desirable seclusion. This process is well presented in the novel, since the Donegal countryside is shown from three dissimilar perspectives of three different women: Claire, Nuala and Anna. The order, in which the women are presented, is crucial as it presents a kind of continuum. The analysis starts with the most distant and limited perspective of Claire, who is both Irish and a local inhabitant of the area that is presented. Having the closest access to the everyday life in Donegal, Claire at the same time is capable of sustaining the most objectified picture of the Irish province. Nuala is a person who is Irish but at the same time an outsider in Donegal, as she has been brought up in Dublin. Hence, she knows the realities of life in Ireland but still remains unfamiliar with the actual life in the countryside. Claire and Nuala are cousins but are not in close relations with one another, the reason for which resides in their families' attitudes towards the countryside. Consequently, the women, though both are born in Donegal, represent two disparate approaches towards their homeland. In contrast, there is Anna, who as a foreigner comes regularly to Ireland for summer holidays but remains an outsider for the local community.

Claire is a character who represents the most balanced view on the countryside of all the aforementioned characters. Her choice of coming back to the province is a conscious decision, since following her studies in Dublin she had the choice of staying either in Italy or Germany, which she had an occasion to visit. As Kevin well summarises: "there were people like Claire who continued working for years at an art which brought them neither fame nor money, living in Spartan rented rooms, always scrapped for cash, their creative energy and intellectual curiosity as intense as ever. To Kevin it was pure folly. To Claire, it was life, and a good life" (Madden 1995: 112). Nowhere else could she find so many sources of inspiration for her paintings as in Donegal, thus her stay there is crucial for her artistic development. What other people find boring, for her is fascinating: "The view from the window never bored her. It was different every day, and she liked the act of concentration it required to look at it every morning and paint it as though she were seeing it for the first time ever" (Madden 1995: 19). The changing weather together with the rich landscape provide Claire with an abundance of colours, shades and different shapes which are for her very inspiring but also make the whole novel extremely picturesque in an artistic sense of the word. The descriptions of the landscape present in the novel differ according to which of the three women's perspectives is presented by the narrator. When the reader is provided with Claire's perception of the rural areas, one gets an artistic image of the place, with details concerning such aspects as the importance of the light. The fact that the representation of the countryside bears individual differences goes in accordance with the hermeneutic theory of landscape representation, widely acknowledged among cultural geographers. The uniqueness of

this approach resides predominantly in its recognition of interpretation as a dialogue between the individuals' perceptions and the theory of mimesis (Duncan and Ley 1993: 2-3). The continuous struggle for a compromise between the artistic vision and reality constitutes the essence of Claire's representation of the Irish landscape.

Claire's artistic approach towards everything that surrounds her allows her to step outside the inherited concept of a desolate and backward province and to search for beauty in even the most simple images. She is well aware that: "the place where she had chosen to live was bleak (...) [therefore] to appreciate this area properly required a certain way of seeing things" (Madden 1995: 3). Though Claire in this instance may predominantly indicate the general artistic perception of space, Stephen Daniels' analysis of the connection between landscape and art draws attention to the tendency of Irish artists, especially in 1990s, to "revision images of landscape and Irish nationality", including the image of the countryside (2004: 441). Madden seems to adopt this point of view, since her protagonist strips Donegal of its former stereotypes: "it certainly didn't have the lushness and prettiness people often expected to find in the countryside (...) but she thought that it had its own magnificence too" (Madden 1995: 3). The uniqueness of the place lies in: "a few pubs, a merchant chandlers, its window full of yellow oilskins: these and other undistinguished establishments scattered along a straggling main street" (Madden 1995: 2). The nearby town with its provincial shops and inquisitive local people does not limit Claire as an artist. In this way Madden seems to add her voice to the discussion on the image of the Irish province. Her depiction does neither follow the romanticised imagery of such writers as W. B. Yeats or of John Synge who both used the myth of the West of Ireland as an allegory of Irishness (Duffy 1997: 65). Nor does Madden agree with the provincial approach towards the rural areas, but she seems to advocate Patrick Kavanagh's parochial attitude towards the Irish countryside. The image of the 1930s depicted in Kavanagh's novel *Tarry Flynn* (1948), in which the protagonist suffers from an emotional claustrophobia evoked by the place, epitomises the provincial perspective, which the writer himself heavily criticised<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, Kavanagh openly breaks with the Yeatsian vision of the countryside and demythologises its traditional values as being unrealistic (Corcoran 1997: 62). However, Kavanagh does not remain

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<sup>13</sup> Kavanagh's literary output presents the poet's changing approach towards his native countryside. His early poems appear to be pastoral. *The great hunger* marks the beginning of his anti-pastoral period, whereas his late poems exhibit a parochial attitude towards the rural areas. Interestingly, he is one of those writers who criticized his own works, which happened in the case of *The great hunger*. Misinterpreted by the public, the poem instead of being treated ironically was understood seriously. Kavanagh's reaction to the way his poem missed the concept of the anti-pastoral, for Allison, may be read as the poet's first polemic about the pitfalls of the anti-pastoral as a concept (2003: 51-53).

limited to the anti-myth of rural Ireland, but apart from the provincial representation visible in his novel, he introduces into his other works a parochial attitude towards the country. No matter how critical the writer seems, the bond with the countryside about which Kavanagh constantly talks in his literary works appears to be inescapable. Terence Brown exemplifies Kavanagh's internal conflict between how he perceived rural Ireland and how the reality looked, which is embodied in *The great hunger* (1942). For the critic, what transpires mostly in the famous poem is Kavanagh's deep religiousness and admiration for mysticism hidden in the countryside as it has been superseded by Catholicism, which long ago lost its religious value (2010: 126). Likewise, Madden tries to go beyond the two contrastive representations of the Irish province, by proposing a revisionist version of the countryside with a rather objectified picture.

Nuala with her changing approach towards the countryside presents the least balanced view on the rural Ireland. Initially prejudiced, with time she rediscovers the beauty of the Donegal landscape, behaving as a tourist in her own country. In the novel a lot of attention is devoted to Nuala's hidden reasons for visiting her homeland. The woman undergoes a breakdown after her mother's death. Shocked by the suddenness of the loss, just before the birth of her first child Nuala starts to behave irresponsibly. When her husband, Kevin, realises the problem, he sends her to a doctor, who advises her a rest from her life in Dublin and the restaurant they run. Nuala decides to go for a holiday to her cousin, Claire. The West of Ireland, accordingly, is said to well reflect the discrepancy between the insider's and the outsider's views, observable in Nuala's behaviour. The variety of representations of the same landscape indicate the differences in the perception predominantly between the Irish people who live in Ireland compared to those who have decided to leave it or of complete foreigners (Duffy 1997: 68). Nuala fits this pattern as she, although Irish, has little awareness of how life in the countryside looks. Her stereotypical thinking is easily noticeable for Claire, who points out that "Nuala was wearing a dark-green oiled thornproof jacket. Evidently she had dressed for the country, and had thought that this was what everyone in Donegal would be wearing" (Madden 1995: 3). Nuala quickly becomes bored with her cousin's lifestyle. They are not even able to have a walk together as "never in her life had Claire seen as slow a walker as Nuala" (Madden 1995: 31). Unused to the long distances in the country, Nuala finds it difficult to explore the nearby area on her own, let alone going to the town.

Therefore, Nuala visits Anna, since the distance from Claire's house is small. Amazed by Anna's knowledge about Ireland, Nuala realises how ignorant she has been towards her country's cultural heritage throughout her life: "sometimes it embarrasses me, she knows so much more about it than I do" (Madden 1995: 116). She experiences a moment of revelation when she realises that Donegal "it's part of my background, whether I like it or not, so maybe it would be

good for me to get to know it” (Madden 1995: 116). The feeling of loss and displacement, Nuala ascribes to her negligence of her background. Her approach towards the province bears some resemblance to a myth of the countryside as “a combination of nature and culture which best represents the nation-state” (Short 1991:35). Contrasted with the space of the city, which more often than not is accused of losing its national character in favour of cosmopolitanism, the country is the embodiment of the national identity. This approach is justified by the meaning of the word ‘country’ suggesting the nation and a piece of land at the same time (Williams 1973: 1). However, Kevin disagrees with Nuala’s change in the perception of the countryside by saying “don’t get some false idea stuck in your head about what Ireland is; don’t get hung up on some sort of tourist board version of the place. This (..) is Ireland, but so is Dublin” (Madden 1995: 117). The image of the Irish country as the core of national heritage, for Kevin, is just an idealised concept, having no reference to reality. His rejection of a prevailing assumption of the urban space as standing in a constant opposition to the rural areas shows that he does not share the enthusiasm for the myth of the countryside, so well rooted in the Irish conscience. This goes in accordance with Lefebvre’s criticism of Heidegger’s ignorance towards the space of the city as inadequate for the discussion on the relation between human beings and place (Kofman and Lebas 1967: 7).

Nuala’s sudden interest in Donegal transpires to reside in her problems with her irrevocable past and with her feeling of displacement. The loss of her mother has pushed her to the place where her mother was born “to try to connect with her in this way” (Madden 1995: 122). Her mother, though born in the countryside: “had left Donegal as soon as she finished school, moved to Dublin, got married, changed her accent, and tried to convince everyone, not least herself, that she had never lived as she dismissively put it ‘up the country’” (Madden 1995: 15). Therefore, Nuala’s trip with Anna ends up in a failure. To her surprise: “Nuala felt nothing either at the dolmen or the standing stone circle, nothing but wet and cold and disappointed. The stones were too abstract” (Madden 1995: 121)<sup>14</sup>. The specificity of the Irish countryside resides not exclusively in its natural landscape. The human impact plays a paramount importance in how the contemporary regions differ in their cultural and historical legacy (Aalen 1989: 83). Therefore, such elements as ancient tombs, stones and other monuments provide the landscape with a more specific meaning. However, Nuala does not appreciate this heritage. Her mother’s disregard for the countryside results in Nuala’s feeling of displace-

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<sup>14</sup> A similar motif is observable in Derek Mahon’s poem “Brighton Beach”. Mahon there refers to his other poem “Day Trip to Donegal”, but the rural landscape has lost its past atmosphere and now “places as such are dead” (Mahon 1990: 178-179 ). Brown reads Mahon’s sense of alienation from a native place, namely the Donegal landscape, as the condition of modernity (2003: 136-137).

ment in Donegal as well as her dissatisfaction with the result of her stay there: "The Donegal landscape bored Nuala, just as it had bored her mother" (Madden 1995: 122). Such negative experiences justify the statement that the image of the West is predominantly an invented concept working as "a spatial metaphor for the Irish nationhood" (Johnson 1997: 188). Therefore, it should not be treated literally. Despite her effort, Nuala's approach towards the Irish countryside remains unaltered, which does not surprise her husband. He is rather shocked by his wife's choice of the destination for their holidays, since: "How could she be expected to survive without dress shops and department stores, without a bit of activity going on around her?" (Madden 1995: 94). Kevin and Nuala represent a new generation of Irish people who in the 1990s could fully benefit from the economic changes taking place in the state. At the same time, they continued to duplicate cultural stereotypes inherited from former generations, like Nuala from her mother.

The problem of the reinforcement of some stereotypes harmful for the Irish themselves resides deeply in the country's past. Following Soja's argument concerning the concept of geographically uneven development, Ireland, due to its subsidiary position with reference to England, had been pushed into the geographical margins of the Empire, which caused its long-lasting agrarian state (1989: 164). The economic condition is just one layer of the deeply-rooted stereotype of Ireland as an economic but more importantly as a cultural province of the British Empire. The Celtic Revival, which thrived after the creation of the Free State, albeit it brought the theme of the pastoral countryside back to literature, did not manage to change the society's perception on this topic (Kiberd 1995: 287). The majority of especially young people started to subconsciously duplicate the erroneous stereotype created by the English, feeling ashamed of their provincial origins. Nuala's mother did the same when she tried to drop her accent. A similar approach is represented by Kevin, who during his stay in Donegal complains about the food served in a local restaurant: "obviously nouvelle cuisine hasn't got as far as Donegal" (Madden 1995: 96). His sardonic comment unfolds his belief in the prevailing polarised situation between the modern city and the backward countryside. The local people's negative approach towards the newcomers does not help in reconciling the conflict. Nuala and Anna feel excluded by the native inhabitants of the region, which in the case of Anna may be understandable as she is a foreigner. However, Nuala has spent her childhood in the western province so she expects she will be welcomed on her return. This does not happen, as her time of absence has been long enough for the local people to see a Dublin foreigner in her. This adds to her disappointment with her journey to Donegal.

Anna is a person who approaches Ireland from the typical tourist's gaze. According to John Urry's typology, it is a romantic gaze, which contrary to the collective gaze, brings back the tourists' interest in unspoilt, solitary places – seeking a personal relationship with the visited area (1995: 137).

Anna, likewise, does not mind the distance she has to cross to get to Donegal since: "If it had been more easily accessible, then it would have been overrun and spoiled long since, losing the emptiness which was, for her, a special part of its charm" (Madden 1995: 30). What charms Anna, discourages other foreigners, who with time realise that together with the beauty of such places as Donegal comes the hardship of everyday life. A number of inconveniences experienced make the former owners of Anna's house sell it: "The purchase had been a mistake, something they readily admitted, even though they liked Donegal. The problem was that they had simply underestimated the place, particularly its weather and isolation" (Madden 1995: 29). Anna up to some point seems to accustom perfectly to the way life in the Irish countryside looks: "when she came to live in Ireland she regretted that she hadn't lived there earlier, for in Donegal nothing much ever happened before ten in the morning" (Madden 1995: 67). As long as she appreciates the slow pace of life which contrasts with her regular hasty life in Holland, even such an enthusiast as Anna gives up at some point too, since she does not manage to live in Ireland for the whole year: "She came for Christmas one year, but she didn't enjoy it. It was dark and cold; and she felt isolated and lonely there for the first time ever. As she came to know the place better, she lost some of the illusions about it. There was malice and spite too, if you cared to see them" (Madden 1995: 70). The isolation she has been longing for has at some point started to overwhelm her, and the beauty of the landscape she could appreciate in the summer has become inaccessible in the winter. This experience allowed her to see the Irish province in a wider perspective, namely, with the drawbacks she would not notice during her short visits.

Fascinated by the scenery, Anna still comes to Ireland every spring, spending her time on exploring the cultural heritage of Donegal. The house expresses her fascination with the countryside as she equips it with traditional things: "Anna delightedly showed her the antique butter-making equipment she had recently bought: butter pads, stamps, a wooden bowl" (Madden 1995: 29). Her pastoral vision of the countryside does not always coincide with what she experiences: "I cannot understand why the government allows people to build such ugly houses. They would look hideous no matter where they were, but to see them ruining such a magnificent landscape makes me want to weep" (Madden 1995: 29). Her perspective of the province downplays the people who live there being solely interested in the aesthetic image of a rustic landscape. This shows Anna's lack of understanding of the realities of Ireland, at least in Claire's perspective, who justifies the local people's alleged lack of taste since they "grew up in hardship and now when they can have the comfort and luxury, they want it" therefore changing their cottage houses for bungalows (Madden 1995: 29). Claire does not understand Anna's meticulous attention to the way she decorates her domestic interior in order to look rus-

tic. For Claire it seems rather artificial, especially as Anna's fascination with Donegal ends whenever winter comes. Anna's perception of Donegal does not change with time. She seems to be trying to understand the realities of life there by getting acquainted with Irish culture. She learns the Irish language and Celtic mythology but all her attempts are too superficial for the local people to accept her: "By making friends with local people, Anna felt she knew and understood more about the area"; however, with time she realises that "they trusted her because she was an outsider" (Madden 1995: 68). From the very beginning Anna disregards the local community as an integral part of the specificity of the place, looking at Donegal just from the geographical perspective. In this way she misinterprets the concept of the countryside, whose crucial aspect is the human factor (Short 1991: 35). Pastoralism, which Anna exemplifies, according to Smyth, treats the countryside erroneously, since it fails to entail the paradoxical coexistence of the complexity and simplicity of the Irish province. This misconception in spite of such writers as Joyce, who introduced the alternative spaces of the city into Irish literature, has remained the dominant imagination of space as long as till the post-colonial times (1997: 60-61). Even if she is interested in local houses, churches and Celtic monuments, Anna perceives them just from the architectonic point of view. By this token, the writer adds a voice from the outside, which despite treating the landscape predominantly as a tourist attraction, still has the power of sparking interest among the Irish, who like Nuala, during their urban lifestyle seem to have forgotten about the countryside as still a valuable place to live, or at least to visit from time to time.

Deirdre Madden in *Nothing is black* presents a multilayer image of the Irish countryside, by contrasting different perceptions on the same Donegal landscape. Depending on the person, the place is sometimes a desolate province or a rural paradise. However, the writer does not limit herself to these two polarised perceptions, since some of the characters seem to fluctuate between the extremes or live beyond any established divisions. This justifies the statement that the approach towards the Irish province is undergoing (a) constant change. The result, as the author of the novel seems to suggest, is not going to end up with one biased vision, but rather stay as a multilayered form, entailing both its drawbacks as well as positive aspects. Therefore, the perception of the Irish countryside has a direct connection with the concept of the national and individual self. The variety of representations of the rural Ireland present in the novel are not limited just to the idea of the countryside, since the characters by defining themselves with regard to the Irish countryside also add their voice to the discussion on the concept of identity. Finishing the narrative with no single dominating voice, Madden indicates that only a collection of all perceptions is able to provide still the closest picture, though fragmented, of the reality of the Irish countryside and identity as hybrid in nature.

### 3.4. Ireland as a province in Deirdre Madden's *Molly Fox's birthday*

Madden's later novel *Molly Fox's birthday* (2008) follows a similar pattern by presenting the issue of the Irish province from three different perspectives. This time two Irish characters: the unnamed narrator and Andrew both have a provincial upbringing; however, their approach towards their origin differs. In addition, their perceptions on Ireland and their background are contrasted with a view from the outside represented by such characters as Molly or Lucy. What differentiates this text from the previous one, is the presence of a broader comparison between Dublin and London. By going beyond the borders of Ireland, the writer presents a stark contrast not just between the northern provinces and Dublin, but more importantly how the same place for one person seems to be an urban centre whereas for others it is just a provincial city. This juxtaposition presented in a novel dating from 2009 poses a question of Ireland's place in today's globalised world. As Graham argues, both states of Ireland have remained "minor and peripheral locales within a post-industrial globalised economy" not so much dominated by the United Kingdom but by the hegemony of the European Union as well as the United States of America (1997: 1). According to the scholar, the ideas of capitalism and free trade made both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland lose their battle in the economic competition. Therefore, such critics as Peter Shirlow draw attention to the EU's negative influence on its smaller members such as Ireland, which has become marginalised in the same way it used to be by the British Empire (1997: 93-94). Ireland, which tried to come out of the shade of England, stays in a provincial position, which is well presented in Madden's novel.

The narration of *Molly Fox's birthday* takes place in Dublin during one day, but it abounds in retrospections allowing for access to the protagonist's past as well as that of her two best friends: Molly and Andrew. The narrator, whose name remains unknown throughout the story, is a playwright, who lives in London. She decides to spend some time in Dublin, where she used to study at Trinity College. Thus, she is temporarily staying at her friend Molly's place, to whom the house in Dublin belongs. As the narrator suffers from an artistic crisis, she hopes that the change of place will help her to write another play. The exploration of the house brings back many memories connected with Molly, who is a theatre actor. Contrary to the narrator, she has become very successful. As Molly does not like her birthday she has decided to go to New York for a few days on business. The narrator is fascinated with her friend's artistic skills as well as her inborn bashfulness, which has not disappeared despite her professional success. During the day the narrator is visited by Molly's brother, Fergus, who came with a present for his sister. According to Molly, Fergus is a mentally

unstable person, allegedly due to their mother's overprotectiveness. However, the meeting dislodges two sides of the problem, as Fergus does not blame his mother for his personal difficulties. Later in the evening, Andrew appears in the house, also with a present for Molly. The narrator devotes a lot of her attention to her friend from Trinity, who after the graduation succeeded in a TV series about art. Andrew, although having a successful career, has always had family problems, first with his father and brother, then with his son and wife. Billy, his brother, was killed by the IRA, with which his father could not reconcile. Feeling rejected all his life, Andrew does not find consolation in his marriage, which breaks up after several years. He also has communication difficulties with his son, who is inquisitive about Andrew's family's past. During his visit to Molly's house, he tells about the bomb attack he survived in Paris. This event brings him closer to understanding his family's tragedy as well as his son's pursuit of the truth.

*Molly Fox's birthday* conversely to the former Madden text, is a narration conveyed in the first person. This provides the reader with a limited access to events, since the perspective of the female narrator remains the only one. The account of other characters is presented through the perspective of the protagonist, and thus has to be treated as subjective. Contrary to *Nothing is black*, where one place is presented from three different perspectives, the space of *Molly Fox's birthday* is limited to a single representation. The shift in the narration is crucial for the novel, since the focus of the attention is not targeted at the place itself but at the process of the perception of space as well as how certain places and external objects revive memories. Thus, Madden introduces the character of the absent actor as a starting point for the presentation of two other important dramatis personae: the narrator and Andrew. The two friends from Trinity College are both Irish. Their background is similar as they come from the Northern Ireland provinces. However, they differ in their approach towards Ireland and their country of origin. Pauline Hall ascribes this discrepancy to the two models of family represented in the novel, drawing attention to the narrator's "multi-generational bustling Catholic family" and Andrew's "truncated, more reserved Protestant" pattern (2010: 182). The attachment to the land as an epitome of Irish Catholic nationalism (Deane 1997: 152) mirrors in the narrator's positive attitude towards her rural origin; whereas the Protestants' constant preoccupation with legitimatising their Irishness is visible in Andrew's unstable identity, which has always been related rather to urban centres than the countryside (Longley 1994: 175-180). In the novel, the approach towards one's background does not so much manifest itself in the patterns of the families presented, but rather in the characters' relations with their family members. The narrator maintains good relations with her sisters and the brother, although she rejects the way of life they lead:

The all still lived in the remote part of Northern Ireland where we have grown up and where my father worked a small farm. My family lived in scattered bungalows, or in semidetached houses in estates at the edges of small market towns. They worked as teachers and as bank clerks, as nurses and minor civil servants. Two of my sisters stayed at home to look after their babies, and they helped mind the children of the other women in the family who went out to work. They all lived in each other's pockets, helping each other out, going to the pub together and football matches, babysitting for each other, giving each other lifts here and there. At the time all this seemed perfectly normal to me. I was unaware that elsewhere in Western Europe, even in Ireland, the nuclear family was shrinking in on itself. (Madden 2008: 30)

Even in retrospection, the narrator presents a positive picture of her family, which follows a traditional pattern of several generations keeping together and helping each other. Still, when the protagonist moves to Dublin to study, she becomes aware of the fact that her family represents a rather outdated pattern, which for her new friends is extraordinary. Therefore, on hearing that in her relationship with Henry, whom she started to date before she has begun her studies, she is expected to follow the steps of her sisters, who have got married early and devote their lives to their children, the narrator brings the relationship to an end as quickly as possible. Fascinated with her studies and theatre, she does not intend to resign from her plans and go back to the province after her graduation.

The rejection of her sisters' way of life reveals the narrator's superficial level of understanding and communication with them, as she appears to have the closest relationship with her brother Tom, who is a priest. Although sixteen years older, Tom seems to be the only person in the family who spots the artistic potential in the narrator as he is the person who reveals the realm of the theatre to her by taking his sister to watch *Hamlet*. Therefore, for the narrator, Tom becomes "the link between my two worlds" (Madden 2008: 86). She tries to keep her two realities apart as long as possible, since none of her friends is introduced to her family. Neither does any of the theatre's members visit her in Dublin, or later in London. Tom is an exception, since Molly insists on meeting him. At the friend's request, the protagonist agrees to the meeting during Tom's visit to London. The reluctance expressed by the narrator dislodges her ambiguous feelings towards her brother's provinciality, of which she had took no notice before: "he struck me as very much the country priest, the farmer's son, and his accent was stronger and more marked than I'd realised until now" (Madden 2008: 87). What she found common before, in the new context becomes problematic, which goes in accordance with Edna Longley's statement that the greatest impulse for the mental change of society is the context, which allows people to notice new elements, unseen before (2001: 42). In this case, it seems

to be a negative change of approach from one of a total acceptance of Tom's and her own provincial background to the state of embarrassment when people from the outside are taken into consideration. However, the protagonist's reaction signifies also her astonishment with reference to the presence of such almost stereotypical features determining one's provincality, which she seems not to have realised before.

Another justification may lie in what Neville Douglas defines as "a stereotypical depiction of self and the Other" mainly caused by the separation from a given society (1997: 153). The narrator has become isolated from the realities of life in the Northern Irish countryside to such an extent that when her brother comes, he stands in a stark contrast with her current life in the metropolitan centre as well as the friends she has there. Having adapted to the new place, the protagonist has unconsciously lost some of the features which could indicate her provincial origin. This places Tom as the stereotypical "Other" in this situation. However, Madden skilfully avoids easy simplifications, as she does not allow her character to typically reject her country origin in favour of a modern life in the city. The protagonist remains fond of the countryside, where she comes from. This is exemplified in her journey to Tom's parish: "It seemed an irony that I had rarely seen the north looking lovelier than it was today. The light deepened and intensified – a rich gold that lit up the landscape, the fading trees and the hedges with their bright berries; the drenched, flooded fields" (Madden 2008: 114). As the example shows, the narrator's isolation from the place does not bring about just negative feeling towards it, as only by leaving the countryside has she managed to detect the beauty of the landscape she used to ignore while living there. The nostalgia expressed in these lines signifies the woman's personal attachment towards the place, to which a specific meaning is ascribed: "I crested the brow of a hill, and there below me were the mountains of mid-Ulster, low and ancient, with their soft skyline (...) To me these mountains said one thing above all: home" (Madden 2008: 115). The narrator's affection for the landscape shows her sustaining identification with the region of her origin. As much as she cherishes the moments spent in her home area, the place her brother occupies overwhelms her with its seclusion: "It was deep in the countryside, about half a mile from the nearest village (...) The house was grey and forbidding" (Madden 2008: 115-116). This rather traditional portrayal of the Irish countryside seems improbable in contemporary Ireland. But it transpires that even in the twenty-first century such remote places as the one inhabited by Tom still exist. Time in the most western counties appears to have stopped as not much has changed there. The solitude resulting from the location of the parish together with the distance to the nearest houses results in the narrator's self reassurance in her decision about the place she has chosen to live. This agrees with an already formed inference that the protagonist, though she

accepts her county background, refuses to follow the life pattern represented by her family and chooses the alternative one provided by the city.

Due to such a decision, the woman has to fluctuate between the two worlds of the Irish province and London. This does not discourage her, since her life experience in Ireland helps in her professional career, being a constant source of inspiration: "I never again lived in the north, but it remained a constant in my life, a touchstone, the imaginative source of so much of my writing" (Madden 2008: 58). The Irish background provides the woman with a certain kind of stability, a point of reference to which she may return whenever she needs it: "I put it down to my background, my identity as solid as the mountainside on which I grew" (Madden 2008: 58). This is especially important in such an international place as London, where one's individual and national identity seem more difficult to sustain.

The connection, the narrator tries to keep with her provincial past, Andrew appears to have rejected a long time ago. His background being similar to his friend in its geographical location evokes negative feelings in him. The reason behind this is not so much connected with the province itself as with his family living there. Remaining constantly in the shade of his late brother, Andrew despises his unionist background, which cost Billy his life. Since Andrew does not agree on being part of the polarised situation in Northern Ireland, his father openly expresses his disappointment with his younger son, who did not want to follow in his brave brother's footsteps. As Douglas notes, the people who belong to the unionist communities are more often than not struggling with the feelings of insecurity, isolation or defiance (1997: 169). Andrew starts to manifest his rejection of his own roots, when he moves to London. This is the time when he tries to change the accent so that he does not sound Northern Irish. In this way, he becomes influenced by the popular stereotype of a provincial Irishman who is backward and stupid due to his resistance to speak proper English (Short 1991: 63). Therefore, the elocution lessons, his friend suspects him of, are supposed to guarantee him a successful career, but also a new identity of a Londoner.

The narrator scrupulously observes the process of change in Andrew's behaviour and looks throughout the years of their friendship: "the Andrew whom I met in a Victorian pub in London at the end of that year wasn't the Andrew whom I had known at college. He had disappeared, taking with him his trainers, his rank jumpers and his sports bag full of books; and in his place was the dandified scholar who has been my friend ever since (...) The Belfast accent had gone, and the pace of modulation of his voice had also changed" (Madden 2008: 67). The accent "which was one of the most striking things about him" (Madden 2008: 27) has always been the greatest indicator of his northern provincial background, even for the narrator, who also comes from the Northern Irish countryside. Therefore, by eliminating the typical language

features for the region he was brought up in, Andrew manifests his rejection of his own roots. Andrew's individual as well as collective identity are unstable. He is able to reject his background already during his studies in Dublin; however, he does not find a proper replacement for it for as long as till he moves to London.

The narrator, despite accepting the change in her friend, feels nostalgic about Andrew's former self. Not only does it remind her of their time spent together in Trinity College but also of the real self Andrew seems to have lost in London: "I can detect a faint trace of [the accent] only occasionally on certain words or more generally when he's tired or angry. I doubt if anyone else would notice it at all, and I rather like it because it reminds me of the past" (Madden 2008: 27). As the protagonist rightly observes, even in the case of Andrew, there are moments when he can no longer control his language. Such situations prove that it is impossible to fully eradicate certain phonetic features, which are deeply rooted in the person. So is the background, which Andrew tries to hide from his son, but first and foremost, from himself. Not until the accident in Paris has happened does Andrew realise the importance of one's own origin. His brother's murder helps Andrew to come to terms with his survival of the bombing and the other way round: "It was as if I'd been numb for all those years and only then begun to feel pain and his loss. That he'd had such a violent death bore in on me. I remembered the ring my father had given me and I wished I had it with me. I think it might have given me some sort of comfort, some sort of connection amongst all those things in the apartment that meant nothing to me" (Madden 2008: 192). When feeling displaced, Andrew believes that the artefact he got from his father could facilitate a spiritual connection with his family, his origin. At this point the local sense of place becomes invaluable for him, since he realises his solitariness and a lack of belonging to the space he currently occupies. The contrast between the instability of Andrew's identity and the narrator's deeply rooted sense of self point to the theory of the two nations, according to which the two characters stands for the two ethnic groups inhabiting Ireland, each of them constructing their collective identities' differently.

The ambivalent feelings towards the provincial background which both characters express are contrasted in the novel with the attitudes of people from the outside. What the narrator or Andrew find rather common or even embarrassing, other characters, such as Lucy, find absorbing: "My childhood growing up on a farm in Northern Ireland fascinated her in a way I found hard to comprehend. I told her that I was the youngest of seven children (...) that one of my brothers was a Catholic priest astounded her further. I described to her the wild boggy upland that was my home and my ambivalent feelings towards it" (Madden 2008: 17). A similar situation happens with Molly, who is eager to be introduced to Tom. As the protagonist shows, the

image of an Irish family making a living from farming, having many children, one of whom is a priest, appears to be rather extraordinary for people who might have suspected that such a stereotypical depiction has no reference to real life in the Ireland of the twenty first century.

Conversely to the previous novel, the characters from *Molly Fox's birthday* do not stay in Dublin, but have to move to London, as the Irish capital does not allow them to fully develop their professional careers. Andrew, who chose Dublin "to get away from Belfast" (Madden 2008: 27) treating it as a backward, provincial city, with time does the same again, since Dublin in turn cannot compete with the English metropolis. Andrew's approach towards Dublin goes in accordance with Smyth's argument that what is central and peripheral remains relative. These two terms can never become stable locations since they are "merely effects of their relation to other places" (2001: 37). To support his view the critic provides the exact example of Dublin which in reference to other regions in Ireland is central, but in relation to London becomes peripheral. The protagonist, who stays in London due to her job, is however happy to visit Dublin from time to time, reminiscing about her student past: "In remembering all of this I had made my way to the shop, through the labyrinth of little streets of redbrick houses" (Madden 2008: 68). The way she describes the city underlines the smallness of the place as everything seems to be within walking distance, at least for the narrator, who is used to the vastness of London.

On the other hand, the possibility of exploring the place on foot evokes the feelings of familiarity with the city. As the narrator further describes: "I was walking in Molly's footsteps now, taking the particular route into town that she had pointed out to me as being the quickest and the most interesting: the route where there was most to see. She had walked these streets by herself time without number, and I had walked them with her on many occasions" (Madden 2008: 102). The easiness with which both characters move within the space of the city suggests its local character. This is also the reason why Molly chooses Dublin as her permanent place of living, although she is said to enjoy her stays in London as "its vast anonymity suits her temperament" (Madden 2008: 5). It may be presumed that due to its smallness Dublin is the last place to preserve one's own anonymity. However, conversely, Molly finds this anonymity especially there, since the local people do not recognize her as a famous person: "Molly has never been recognised here, not once, she told me proudly. She was just another local who had run out of coffee, sloping in mid-morning in a grey marl tracksuit and no make-up" (Madden 2008: 69). What Molly finds exceptional about Dublin, as well as the whole of Ireland, is its local sense of place. The uniqueness of it lies predominantly in the paradoxical link of its familiarity and anonymity. Therefore, Molly, albeit a foreigner, found it easy to assimilate herself to the new place as well as the peo-

ple, who treat her as a local being and who are at the same time totally unaware of her professional career. This allows her to keep her privacy, which in other places might be difficult to obtain.

The need for a locality, in the novel exemplified by the narrator's voice, is not an exceptional feature in the Irish society. What many a scholar highlights is the complex diversity of regions embedded in the Irish conscience from the earliest times, which has survived in the contemporary Irish society (Smyth 1997: 19). Consequently, the local sense of place has always remained a predominant indicator of one's own personal identity to such an extent that even urban centres have managed to keep their local character. This feature, characteristic for the Irish communities, has made such critics as Graham come to a conclusion that the idea of creating a homogenous society was doomed to failure because of the very nature of the society, which similarly to the Irish landscape, is pluralistic (1997: 198). The questioning of the Irish homogeneity appears to be the best way of coming to terms with the unresolved conflicts within the country as well as between the two Irish states, which may find it easier to build their mutual relations on the basis of regional cooperation. As Kearney rightly underlines, contemporary Ireland is undergoing a transitory process from the idea of a homogenous nationality to the regionalisation of the island. This change goes along with the general tendency in the European Union towards the regional dispensation of the member states (1997: 15). However, the situation in Ireland does not limit itself to the economic changes taking place, but embraces the cultural sphere as well. Since the national ideology has not managed to resolve the problems of Ireland but rather complicated them, such scholars as Kearney believe that the reaffirmation of the local identities may help in reconstructing the Irish identity in post-nationalistic terms (1997: 26).

Deirdre Madden in *Molly Fox's birthday* draws upon the concept of provinciality with reference to the Irish countryside as well as the whole of Ireland. Typically for the writer, there are present several perspectives on the same issue. This time the author concentrates on the way the two Irish characters define their individual as well as national identity with reference to the outside world, here represented by the title character. The absence of Molly in the novel suggests the other two characters' self-criticism and self-imposing of the old stereotypes connected with their background. The fact that the two characters approach their origins differently, draws attention to the reasons behind this disparity. Although they seem to lie predominantly in their family relations, Madden skilfully avoids the simplified forms of division into the Catholic and Protestant models of a family. The ambivalent approach towards one's own background lies in the problems the narrator and Andrew have in defining their individual self. The way they perceive the countryside has also an effect on the manner in which they see Ireland in general. Thus, what An-

drew calls as provinciality when referring to such places as Belfast or Dublin, for the narrator is encompassed within the meaning of a single word: locality. The contrast between Dublin and London dislodges the prevailing local sense of place connected with the Irish spaces, some of which despite their urbanisation do not lose their regional character. The local sense of place does not only appear to be a good answer to the ongoing Europeanisation, but more importantly to the falling myth of Irish nationalism. The experiences of such families as Andrew's shows that the concept of a homogenous society cannot be applied to the Irish community, which instead of fighting should start accepting its cultural and social diversity.

The Irish countryside remains for Deirdre Madden a constant source of inspiration for her novels, which is visible in the appearance of the topic in *Nothing is black* (1995) and later in *Molly Fox's birthday* (2008). Another recurring image is the presence of the new generation of the Irish people who for different reasons decide to move from the countryside to the urban centres such as Dublin or London. This sets a pattern which for Madden seems to be a starting point for a further analysis of the way in which her dramatis persona deal with their change of place and their provincial background. What brings these two narratives together is also a contrast between the inner perspective on the Irish local landscapes with their outer perspective represented by different foreign characters, whose rather romanticised image of Ireland becomes as erroneous as the negative approach towards the provinciality of the country expressed by some of its native inhabitants. These two polarised concepts of the Irish countryside meet with a fresh glance of those characters who have had a chance to leave Ireland in order to be able to present a more objectified picture of the place as well as to appreciate it. The Irish countryside's specificity, as Madden's novels show, lies in the diversity embodied in its physical landscape: midlands, bogs, uplands, rivers, lakes or the coastline. But more importantly this geographical variety is projected too onto the regional differentiation deeply rooted in the Irish conscience.

The direct connection between the landscape and self-identification is the value to which Madden's characters turn, since their life experiences verify the fallacy of the myth concerning Ireland being a homogenous nation. What they discover is the hybrid nature of the community in which they live, which forces them to reconstruct their identity on the basis of their local sense of place. The novels, however, differ in the way the process is presented. *Nothing in black* focuses predominantly on the fight with the traditional dichotomy between the countryside and the city. The perspective remains within the boundaries of the Republic of Ireland, contrasting one of its provinces with the capital. In contrast, in *Molly Fox's birthday* the issue is depicted from a broader angle. Not only does it go beyond the boundaries of the state by presenting the northern provinces, but also it juxtaposes the whole of Ire-

land with the outer world, represented by the metropolitan city of London. This diachronic gaze at the two narratives shows the author's transition of interest from the more local problems concerning the Irish countryside in particular, to the more general focusing on Ireland as a whole. This shift brings about an alteration in the meaning of the word province, which in the former text relates directly to the western areas on the island, but in the latter gains more metaphorical associations – presenting Ireland as a province in reference to the rest of Europe. In this way Madden's works rightly correspond to the actual changes taking place in Ireland. Finally, what this shift of scope shows is that the perception of oneself is carried first on the local level and only then is it assigned the more universal meaning of the word Irishness.

John McGahern and Deirdre Madden use the trope of the countryside to talk about the stereotypical images of the rural Ireland and the traditional values deeply rooted in this space as well as the mentality of its inhabitants. No matter which state is taken into account, both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland share the same romanticised image of the Irish West, which, despite the efforts of many writers to contradict this myth, still seems to prevail in the Irish conscience – let alone the fact that this image has been successfully sold by the tourist industry, which adds to the persistence of this concept in the foreign imagery. Both writers try to bring a reconciliation to the long lasting dichotomy between the countryside and the city. McGahern does so by introducing the motif of a physical and metaphorical journey from the country to the city and back again to underline the cyclicity of human life as in accordance with the seasonal changes observable in nature. Madden, likewise McGahern, attempts at reaching a balanced and objectified view of the countryside that is neither idealised nor prejudiced. By this token, both authors show that the Irish countryside is no longer a myth but a reality, which for some people may serve as an alternative to the modern urban lifestyle.



## Chapter Four

# Glenn Patterson's Belfast vs. Anne Enright's Dublin – Ireland from two perspectives

“The city is a repository of narratives, stories.  
Present tense, past tense or future. The city is a novel”  
Robert McLiam Wilson<sup>1</sup>

“Where sleek cars hurtle through Ballybough  
Towards spacious suburbs a galaxy from here  
Let's walk together by the border of flats,  
Palms crossed with only the silver bus fare”  
Dermot Bolger<sup>2</sup>

Although Ireland has undergone a rapid urban development since the last decades of the twentieth century, the two capitals of Dublin and Belfast still remain rather small cities in comparison to the majority of other European urban centres. The proximity of London, where the Irish tended to flee in search of work, did not help such places as Dublin to thrive. The slow evolution of Irish cities may be ascribed to the fact that Ireland did not undergo the industrial revolution to the same extent as England did. This discrepancy between the two countries has only exacerbated Ireland's economic dependence on the Crown. However, such cities as Belfast benefited from the union with Britain as it became a leading ship building world power in the nineteenth century followed by a further advancement at the beginning of the new century. From the time of the partition, both Dublin and Belfast stood a chance of further development, the former as the capital of the independent state, the latter as the capital of a newly created country within the United Kingdom. The difference in the paths the two cities have undergone relies heavily on the political situations the two countries found themselves in dur-

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<sup>1</sup> From Robert McLiam Wilson. 1996. *Eureka street*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 215.

<sup>2</sup> From “Cross guns”, in: Dermot Bolger (ed.) *Invisible cities. The new Dublin. A journey through unofficial Dublin*. Dublin: Raven Arts Press, 53.

ing the former century. Therefore, the reasons for the present situation of the capitals and the way their citizens approach the cities they inhabit lies chiefly in the twentieth-century changes they encountered.

The city as a social construct from its beginning was the most significant embodiment of a whole community. The ancient world recognised nations through the greatest metropolises of their times, which also usually constituted a whole state. Therefore, it is not surprising that a city is claimed to be the best representative of a collective memory with an abundance of cultural symbols placed within its urban space (Urry 1995: 24). Another important aspect of the city is that it can act as a synecdoche of the social change. The city, being the most modern place of the whole country, best illustrates the current transformations in society as a whole as well as how people approach them. As Short summarizes: “attitudes about the city reflect attitudes about the future” (1991: 41). Having this in mind, one may safely state that the analysis of a city may provide some answers to the question of the future of the whole nation. This seemingly simple conclusion has for a long time been underestimated in Ireland, where the countryside was treated as the most verifiable epitome of the nation and as a repository of its collective memory (Johnson 1997: 180, Graham 1997: 193). The city with its “secularism and its bourgeois compromises on cultural nationalism” was constantly rejected not only by the founders of The Free State, but more importantly by poets such as W.B. Yeats, who remained devoted to the romanticised concept of the West of Ireland as an embodiment of the nation (Duffy 1997: 74). Only when the works of James Joyce drew the attention of the reading public to the space of the city, did the society start to acknowledge the importance of the urban places in the creation of the collective identity. The novelty of this subject in Irish literature is well expressed in the words of the *Dubliners*' (1914) publisher, who draws attention to the lack of the topic in literature, despite the fact that: “[Dublin] has been a capital of Europe for a thousand years [and] is supposed to be the second city of the British Empire” (in Steward 2006: 144). The second fiddle role Dublin had played before the partition, resulted in the city being neglected as an urban centre not only in English literature, but especially by Irish writers, who more often than not placed the action of their plots in the Irish countryside instead.

The discussion of the literary history of the Irish city starts with Dublin, whose first descriptions are traceable back to the beginning of the nineteenth century (Moynahan 1984: 1). After the remarkable depictions of the modernist capital, Dublin had to wait till the rise of contemporary Irish literature for the followers of Joyce or writers who could present the city in yet another way. This is mainly due to the fact that from the very beginning Dublin has been presented in a specific way, highlighting the individual perception of the place, the selectiveness of the images and randomness of their appearance. The novelty of

the depiction introduced by Joyce stands in an even starker contrast with the rigid realism of the English writing tradition rather than with Irish realist writers, for whom realism has always been “a much more open concept” (Peach 2004: 5). Therefore, the post-war writers appear to have been inhibited to write about the Irish city in a traditional, realistic way – treating it as too simple. Neither have they been prepared to challenge the complexity of the Joycean non-realistic image. Not until the emergence of the post-1968 generation of Irish writers have the new urban images began to be displayed (Bolger 1994: xviii-xix). Two writers: Dermot Bolger or Roddy Doyle are presented as the continuators of Joyce, who have made an attempt to depict Dublin as a modern European capital with all the drawbacks resulting from its westernization (Smyth 1997: 78-79). Therefore the images presented in their novels, especially in the case of Bolger, remain rather negative, sustaining the dichotomy between Dublin and the rest of Ireland (Duffy 1997: 77). Bolger's pessimism, so evidently expressed in his works, shows that a lack of change in the urban life indicates that the whole of Ireland stands little chance of any change for the future (Ryan 2002: 166). Such negative images reinforce old stereotypes of Dublin among the new generations of Irish people. Taking the pessimistic image of the capital for granted as being void of education and job opportunities, young Irishmen still choose English or American agglomerations as their study or work destination. The creation of such a powerful concept of the capital does not help to produce in society a positive attitude of an Irish city as a place of new opportunities and developmental prospects. However, Anne Haverty tries to challenge the erroneous stereotype with her novel *The free and easy* (2006), which depicts Dublin as a cosmopolitan centre with opportunities for young people, especially in the realm of art. Anne Enright presents a similar approach in one of her latest novels *The forgotten waltz* (2011) which stands in contrast to her former portrayals of the city. Unlike Haverty, Enright is a writer who continuously sets her narrative in Dublin, trying to portray the current situation of the capital. These two female examples work against the male perspective on the image of the capital being portrayed as unchangeably negative. Therefore, the analysis of the way in which Anne Enright's presentation of the city varies between *The gathering* (2007) and the latter text, may draw attention to the changes which such writers as Bolger leave void in their fiction – involving those that have already taken place in Dublin as well as those which may forecast the future development of the capital and the Irish society as well.

Belfast, likewise to Dublin, is a city which in the twentieth century had to struggle with negative representations in the literary world. Unlike Dublin, the Northern Irish capital has been perceived by the majority of Irish writers as the Irish epitome of the Dickensian London of the nineteenth century. For such poets as John Hewitt industrialisation has left its mark on the city, which in his poems stands in a stark contrast to the Northern countryside

(Olinger 1984: 144). Similarly to Joyce, writers such as John Hewitt, Seamus Heaney, Louis MacNeice, Brian Moore, or Derek Mahon decided to leave the city of their origin and from the perspective of an emigrant pose critical judgements on Belfast. The experience of the city has been divided between the Protestant and Catholic perspectives, the former feeling guilty for the city's lost chance of further development, the latter treating it as a form of entrapment (Longley 1984: 66-69). Regardless of the fault or fate, Belfast has met with misunderstanding from both sides. Still there appears to have emerged a younger generation of writers such as Glenn Patterson who all his writing career has concentrated on deconstructing the erroneous stereotypes and on depicting life on the other side of the border, with Belfast as the centre in a more objectified if not positive light. Born in Belfast, Patterson decided to follow the path of many young people from his generation, likewise to Anne Enright, and go to England for his studies. However, with time both Enright and Patterson decided to come back to their respective Irelands and write about the cities where they were brought up; and Patterson seems to be one of the few writers who consistently focuses his novels on contemporary Belfast.

The city, mostly infamous for the Troubles, together with Londonderry/Derry<sup>3</sup> has found its place in literature with many a narrative treating solely about violence in a tragic and serious tone, e.g. *Cal* (1983) by Bernard MacLaverty, *Hidden symptoms* (1986) by Deirdre Madden, or *Resurrection man* (1994) by Eoin McNamee<sup>4</sup>. The only exception to the rule seems to be Robert McLiam Wilson, who made an attempt to look at Belfast from a broader angle than just the Troubles by presenting Belfast in a comic way in *Eureka street* (1996). Therefore, Glenn Patterson with his narratives treating on the same city from a variety of perspectives is one of the most acknowledged of contemporary Belfast-novel writers. The reason for the scarcity of authors who decide to focus on this topic more than once seems twofold. As Paul Lavery notices: "Belfast is no London or Dublin. It's a provincial city short on attractions. So, you have to ask yourself, what is there about it that's different? Twenty-five years of conflict" (in Patterson 2006: 55)<sup>5</sup>. The size of the city and the period of the Troubles' are the two major sources of Belfast's

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<sup>3</sup> Following the idea of political correctness in Northern Ireland the name of the town is written as Londonderry/Derry in order not to offend any of the sides of the conflict.

<sup>4</sup> MacLaverty in his famous novel *Cal* provides an image of the urban space as oppressive to the protagonist, who as a Catholic tries to hide in a Protestant city for fear of being found and charged as the accomplice of murder committed by the IRA on a police officer. Likewise, Eoin McNamee uses the space of the city as the setting for the ongoing conflict between Protestants and Catholics. In contrast, Deirdre Madden's work focuses on the psychological consequences of the Troubles, due to which her characters find it difficult to face up to living in Belfast which is presented as haunting them with memories.

<sup>5</sup> The quotation comes from Patterson's article "Murals", originally published in *In Dublin* in 1996. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

stagnation in the second half of the twentieth century. The city which in the past used to be the second thriving urban centre on the British Isles, had to wait a long time to develop further. Now it seems to be trying to make up for the lost years and as Patterson himself points out: “the word ‘process’ hold the key to this whole question of what comes next” (2006: 163)<sup>6</sup>. These words written for *The Sunday Times* in 1994, the year of the official IRA ceasefire, find their depiction already in his second novel, *Fat lad* (1992). The text published two years before the official ceasefire, already presents the first symptoms of the changes visible predominantly on the social and cultural level. Similarly to this narrative, Patterson's other novels continue to comment on the current affairs in Belfast, even if the narrative is set somewhere else. *The third party* (2007) is such a novel, as its action takes place in Hiroshima, but still the novel remains referential (in Lefebvre's terms<sup>7</sup>) in tone with respect to Belfast. The comparison of these two novels by Patterson aims at showing the city in a broader perspective, especially focusing on the change the capital has undergone from the time before the ceasefire to the first decade of the twenty-first century and therefore he bears closer scrutiny.

#### 4.1. Belfast as a synecdoche for Northern Ireland in Glenn Patterson's *Fat lad*<sup>8</sup>

Glenn Patterson is said to belong to the generation of Northern Irish writers whose works represent a new mode of expression of the surrounding reality (Kirkland 2000: 213). Other critics label him as a member of Post-Agreement fiction writers, since a substantial part of Patterson's works not only have been written after 1998, but more importantly depict the initial hope and later the disillusionment connected with Friday Agreement (Alexander 2009: 272). The reasons for the change are put down to the development of the new class of people who, as Patterson himself describes: “left here in the 1970s and 1980s hoping to make a life across the water free from crap about Protestant

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<sup>6</sup> The quotation comes from Patterson's article “Never-ending stories”, originally published in *The Sunday Times* in 1994. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> When discussing the nature of space, Lefebvre draws attention to three fields of the theory: physical, mental and social. On this basis, he states that space operates on these three levels, being in this way always referential (1974: 12). Patterson's presentation of the city is likewise referential as it entails past as well as contemporary events, which are linked with concrete spaces in the area of the city.

<sup>8</sup> This part is to be published in the form of an article under the title: “The Trouble(s) with Belfast: Glenn Patterson's *Fat Lad* and *Lapsed Protestant*”, in: Liliana Sikorska, Marta Frątczak, Joanna Jarzab (eds.) *(Non)Belonging: (Re)Reading Identities*, Poznań: Wydział Anglistyki UAM.

and Catholic, Orange and Green, about what school you went to and what street you lived in (...) I'm one of the people who returned eventually" (2006: 9-10)<sup>9</sup>. Tired of the ongoing conflict, he has been more sensitive to the economic changes and the favourable opportunities connected with them. The way the writer defines himself as:

one of the three hundred and twenty million people living in the states of Europe joined in economic and political union. I am one of the sixty million people living on the islands immediately west of the European peninsula; one of the six million people on the smaller of these islands, of the one-point-five million who inhabit the six northern-easternmost counties of the historic nine-county province of Ulster that make up the administrative region of the United Kingdom known as Northern Ireland. (2006: 9)<sup>10</sup>

is significant since, first and foremost, he is a European, then an inhabitant of the island. The fact that he is a Northern Irishman seems to be just an act of pure coincidence due to the existing administrative division, which is beyond his own perception of identity. The growth of consumerism and the gradual globalisation of the national economy are treated as the socio-political forces accountable for the development of a more heterogeneous sense of identity among the young generations of Northern Irishmen (Shirlow 2009: 192). Feeling more integrated with the rest of Europe, writers such as Patterson tend to lack any religious affiliation, which used to be so typical for former generations of writers. Being capable of looking at himself from a fresh perspective, Patterson is likely to shed a new light on the image of the city by showing it from a broader angle. He does so in *Fat lad* (1992), a novel situated in the capital but going beyond the space of the city by contrasting it with other places such as Dublin or London. The wide scope of view is also aided by the diachronic picture of the life in Belfast with scenes from the beginning of the twentieth century as well as the time of the Troubles. Therefore the events taking place in the city act as a synecdoche for the whole of Northern Ireland, whereas the person of the protagonist stands for the whole community (de Certeau 1984: 101). This is clearly visible in the very title of the novel, which is an acronym for the six counties of Northern Ireland: Fermanagh, Antrim, Tyrone, Londonderry, Armagh and Down<sup>11</sup>, though the title may be read in many different ways.

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<sup>9</sup> The quotation comes from Patterson's article "I am one of the people ...", originally published in *Identity Papers* in 2001. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Op cit.

<sup>11</sup> Patterson, when talking about the meaning of the title, draws attention to the usage of Londonderry instead of Derry. He justifies it by the fact that he learnt the acronym in his primary school, which, being Protestant, favoured the British place name (2006: 179).

*Fat lad* stands also for Drew Linden, a young man who lives in England but decides to come back to Belfast and work for the national bookstore. He decides to change his place of living although his friend, Melanie, lives in London. Quickly he develops an affair with Kay, whom he meets in a local bar. However, only when he meets Anna, Kay's step-sister, does he realise his former two relationships did not stand a chance of surviving. With time the policy of the company he works for changes and due to the westernization of the Belfast market, the national bookstore is transformed into an international company. Consequently, Drew is offered a post in France, which he accepts. During his stay in Belfast, he has a chance to experience a city he didn't know, thus finds it difficult to recognize it. Belfast, which he remembers mainly from his childhood, has transfigured into a modern European capital. What is also important for the narrative is the protagonist's relations with the rest of his family. The father, Jack, during his stay in Belfast suffers a stroke and has to stay sometime in the hospital. Drew's sister, Ellen, is angry with him for not taking enough interest in the state of the father. The past is not only limited to Drew's memories since the narrative presents Ellen's perspective on their childhood as well. Moreover, the main plot of the work is intertwined with the images of Belfast before the partition, known to Drew's grandparents, together with the scenes from Jack's childhood.

The picture of three generations living in the same place allows for seeing how the city has changed throughout the century and to what extent the perception of the city differs among the different family members. The universality of the novel does not lie solely in the meaning of the title, but as the writer explains himself, in: "the psychological impacts of political decisions which redefine, however subtly, [the people's] country's meaning" (Patterson 2006: 179)<sup>12</sup>. This is visible in Greta's example, Drew's grandmother, who has spent all her life in one place, but appears to have lived in three different countries. The path Belfast has pursued is marked with three stages: as a city of the British Empire, then, of the Free State, and finally as the capital of Northern Ireland. The phases of development leave their marks on the spatial structure and architecture of the city, turning it into a palimpsest<sup>13</sup> as a

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<sup>12</sup> The quotation comes from Patterson's essay "Homelands", first presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dublin International Writers' Festival in 1993, originally published in *New Writing* in 1995. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> The term Rewers uses to describe the multilayer structure of the city bears some resemblance to Genette's treatment of palimpsest as a hypertext, which entails all previous readings of the original text, usually criticizing by the use of parody or irony (1997: 5). However, the scholar herself refers to Levinas's understanding of the term trace as "bygone, utterly passed absent" (1963: 355). In this instance Patterson's Belfast may be read as a hypertext, which includes previous images of the city as a shipbuilding power or as the centre of the conflict. Although, the writer does not depend on parody in commenting on

configuration of these traces (Rewers 2005: 22). Patterson's Belfast although sparkling with new shopping centres and hotels, nonetheless prides itself on the old City Hall and the Library, which remembers Thomas Russell. From behind the grand buildings lurk red-brick estates with their murals, which constitute yet another layer of the city's transformation.

The stages are symbolised in the novel by the Titanic and the goldfish. The history of the famous liner, which was supposed to become a legend of the British industrial revolution, turned out to be the epitome of its end. The multiplicity of symbolic readings of the Titanic's catastrophe range from the more general such as nature dominating the world controlled by man, to the doom of the Victorian, industrial dream, to those more specifically targeted at Belfast, like the end of the shipyard or the decline of the Ulster Protestant power (Brearton 1997: 98). In the novel, the ship plays an important role in the life of the family as: "Drew's Grandpa Linden, then a boy of sixteen and just started into his time, had worked on the building of the liner and its name was spoken with reverence in the house long after his death" (Patterson 1992: 50). However, Drew's grandfather may stand for the majority of the male citizens of Belfast: "The Belfast Jack grew up in was a city of Titanic men and Special Powers. Mr Butler next door, he soon discovered, was a Titanic Man, so was Mr Cooke across the way and Mr McMurry next door to him again" (Patterson 1992: 90). The great expectations placed on the ship well illustrate the growing potential in the city<sup>14</sup>, which in the same way as the liner are wasted. For Kirkland, the past experiences of Drew's family who were so devoted to the myth of the Titanic but which likewise had to meet with great disappointment, express the Protestants' negative approach towards the idea of Union and Home Rule (2000: 117). The scene of "a Dublin-born schoolteacher delivering the Proclamation of the Republic from the deck of a foundering Belfast-built ship" for the characters in the

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the changes which occur in the capital, some instances have an ironic overtone, as in the example of the murals, which seem to be the only physical traces of the bygone conflict.

<sup>14</sup> Glenn Patterson sets his novel *The mill for grinding old people young* (2012) in the nineteenth century trying to reconstruct the lost glamour of the industrial Belfast. The narrative begins in the Belfast of 1897 with Gilbert Rise, a 85-year-old manufacturer, who reminisces about the times of his youth. This moves the back in time to the 1830s with Gilbert who has just turned sixteen and has began his working career as a clerk at the Ballast Office, whose work comprises the construction of new regulations which could facilitate the city's development. The results of the plans the Ballast Board expects are far-reaching, since their motivation is to "maintain [the river and the quays] for the use of generations yet to come" (Patterson 2012: 137). However, the seriousness of the consequences they eventually have on the future development of Belfast are experienced by such people as Gilbert who lives long enough to see how the town changes into a city with a leading shipbuilding industry of the nineteenth century. The historical novel finishes at the moment when all hopes placed in the construction of the Titanic are still plausible, since the future of the liner is unknown.

book, works as a "vivid emblem of a unified and independent Ireland" (Patterson 1992: 51). However, the hopes placed in the creation of an independent state instead of unifying the island lead to further divisions and the waste of the city's potential. What is left of the past glory of the city are "Titanic souvenirs – key-rings, thimbles, commemorative matchboxes, cup and plates" (Patterson 1992: 50). A telling example of the consequences of the changes is a statement that: "Jack was the first child she had born into peace, though a rare kind of peace it must have looked to anyone who hadn't lived there through the couple of years before it" (Patterson 1992: 168). Jack as a child does not experience the violence caused by the partition. For his parents, who went through these difficult times, peace has a different meaning as for those who did not encounter it.

Another important image is the goldfish, which links directly with Drew's and Ellen's childhood as well as the times of the Troubles. This is the incident that shows the two children's disparate approaches towards the surrounding reality as well as the importance of their childhood memories. As Annette Kuhn notes, the reminiscences of childhood on the surface level may refer to seemingly insignificant events. However, this alleged irrelevance of the memory is the clue to the child's perception, since behind the triviality of the scene lies a hidden meaning (2002: 14). The image of the goldfish presented in the novel acts as a trace leading the reader to the ongoing conflict between the siblings. Ellen as a child despises Belfast, constantly questioning the reality she has to experience. The first exemplification of this is Drew's "Belfast accent, his sister's childhood nightmare. A stigma turned distinction" (Patterson 1992: 1). Ellen contrary to Drew, as a child tries to eradicate the accent in her speech to sound as English as possible. The scene with the fish becomes a telling example of the sibling's contrastive approaches towards the surrounding reality.

The scene is presented from three different perspectives. For Drew it is a symbol of the idiosyncrasy of Northern Ireland, as a place where even a goldfish may be drowned. However, the recurrence of the memory even in Drew's adult life works as a Lacanian response of the unconscious, which from time to time brings the secret to light in the form of repeated flashbacks (Caruth 1996: 91). For Jack, his daughter's action is unthinkable as the goldfish was his mother's pet. Therefore, Ellen's deed, albeit honourable for the girl, meets with misunderstanding from the rest of the family. The animal's ill fortune, evokes pity in Ellen who decides to organize the fish a better place for swimming. She puts it in a bath full of water, believing that: "the bath would seem an Atlantic to it after that. Even with a three-second memory it would surely notice the difference. For the first time in its life, maybe, it would feel like a *real* fish in *real* water" [emphasis original] (Patterson 1992: 283). However, the fish does not seem to notice the change as it "resumed its monotonous circling. Head, middle, tail" (Patterson 1992: 283). Ellen, irritated with the behaviour of the animal,

tries to force the fish to swim straight. As a result, the fish dies. Since the animal's memory span is limited just to three seconds, the repetitive behaviour becomes an automatic, unconscious act. The lack of understanding of the girl for the fact that the fish is unable to swim properly even when given an opportunity to do so, well corresponds with the current situation in the country. The monotonous movement of the fish who is incapable of changing her habits acts as Patterson's ironic comment on the mentality of the Northern Irish society which appears to duplicate the mistakes of former generations. This well corresponds with Kuhn's treatment of memory texts as not being solely limited to personal experience but providing a connection between individual stories and public historical events. Thus, memory texts belong to the cultural discourse, since "personal and collective remembering emerge again and again as continuous with one another" (2002: 5). For young people it appears illogical that the society lives in a vicious circle, unable to learn from the past experience. The "exhausted and circular mode of existence" does not allow for any mental change to happen, and therefore new generations instead of building reality anew, get involved in an old conflict between Catholics and Protestants (Kirkland 2000: 117).

Going in circles may also refer to the lack of development of Belfast caused by the political situation. The artificial division of the city space into Catholic and Protestant areas is one of the reasons for the distraction in the natural development of the city. As Urry holds, the spatial structure of the city ought not to determine the social organization. For the city to thrive, the space should be produced by the society as well it should adapt to the changes taking place in the structure of the community which inhabits it (1995: 65 -66). Therefore, the preservation of old divisions no longer applicable to the current needs of the society restricts the advancement of the city. The division of the districts into Catholic and Protestant still lingers on in the novel. The experience presented is very autobiographical since the author draws attention to this theme in his essay<sup>15</sup>, when talking about his problems with finding a flat in Belfast for him as a Protestant and his wife as a Catholic. A slow improvement appears to be observable in the city centre, which due to its central position has become

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<sup>15</sup> Patterson provides a detailed account of the streets which divide the city into Protestant and Catholic districts. When looking for a place to rent the couple had a problem finding an appropriate one, since the majority of them were: "too Catholic, too Protestant for you or for me. To which Ali eventually and reasonably enough asked, so what about this peace process we're supposed to be having?" (2008: 40-41). The comment of Patterson's wife shows that despite the fact that the ceasefire was announced in 1994, still the society's mentality has not changed overnight. (The quotation comes from Patterson's article "House", originally published in the *Daily Telegraph* in 2003. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006).

the least sectarian of the whole urban area, also due to the fact that it is mainly inhabited by newcomers (Patterson 2006: 64)<sup>16</sup>.

The approach towards the division of counties into two separate states differs among the family's generations. What older people find difficult to accept, for Ellen seems reasonable. The words she hears as a child from Mr Craig, bears much resemblance to the theory of two nations :

-The island of Ireland has never contained a single, unified people, Mr Craig said, any more than the island of Britain has. The 1920 border only reconfirmed what this diagram of sixth-century alliances shows to be true, that there have always been two Irelands.

And that, odd as it might seem at that late stage of 1968, was the first Ellen Linden had given thought to the meaning of Partition. (Patterson 1992: 165)

Ellen seems to take the current situation of the country for granted, as she thoughtlessly repeats the words from an advertisement: "*Ulster 71. Come and join the fun!*" [emphasis original] (Patterson 1992: 130), whose meaning for Drew is rather a bad joke. He appears to be more concerned with the situation in the city. Although "Drew was already familiar with the great timeless holes that opened up in the aftermath of bomb blasts (...) [he] prayed for summer, but summer when it came brought more constraint, not less. Bombs exploded in the city centre" (Patterson 1992: 121, 130). Sensitive to the violence around him, Drew becomes an embodiment of the fat lad six counties and the effects of the violence he has experienced: "[He] blamed himself for his father beating him up (becoming, in effect, the ancestor of his own abuse), blamed himself, moreover, for the deaths of upwards of one thousand people in indiscriminate bombings and random shootings in all corners of the country" (Patterson 1992: 139). The guilt he feels spreads from the domestic to the public sphere of life with violence being the linking element between them (Smyth 1997: 130). The violence remains unexplained to Drew, who neither comprehends the behaviour of his father nor of the society as a whole. Therefore, when adult, living in London, Drew remains reserved towards the father as well as towards the country. Interestingly enough, it is he, not Ellen who so despised the city in her childhood, who decides to leave Belfast. Ellen seems to have got used to the life in Northern Ireland, accepting the reality as it is, whereas Drew, likewise to the writer of the novel, is tired of the divisions and the sustaining violence, and thus uses the opportunity of studying to leave the country.

What makes Drew return is probably both the occasion he encounters and the curiosity he feels to see the city of his childhood back again. However,

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<sup>16</sup> The citation comes from Patterson's article "Kerbstones", originally published in *Index on Censorship* in 2004. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

during his absence the place seems to have changed a lot. As Patterson notes, from today's perspective the Belfast of 1990s "was still a dangerous place; [but] looked at from where we had been in the seventies and eighties (as the characters in the book looked at it), Belfast was bursting with life" (Patterson 2008: 317-318). Drew makes a similar observation:

the Belfast he left, the Belfast the Expats forswore, was a city dying on its feet: cratered sites and hunger strikes; atrophied, self-abased. But the Belfast he had heard reports of this past while, the Belfast he had seen with his own eyes last month, was a city in the process of recasting itself entirely. The army had long since departed from the Grand Central Hotel, on whose levelled remains an even grander shopping complex was now nearing completion. Restaurants, bars, and takeaways proliferated along the lately coined Golden Mile, running south from the refurbished Opera House, and new names had appeared in the shopping streets: Next, Body Shop, Tie Rack, Principles. And his own firm, of course, Bookstore. (Patterson 1992: 4-5)

What one finds as a milestone step forward, for Smyth, is a desperate attempt of the city to re-fashion itself as one of the cosmopolitan cities of Europe. According to the critic, Belfast, as any other city, cannot "step outside its own history", therefore the new facades of the buildings are not capable of hiding the past violence as well as the still prevailing sectarianism of the suburbs (1997: 130).

However, Patterson in his novel does not intend to separate modern Belfast from its past, which may still be a source of glory for the city:

Belfast as a city was a triumph over mud and water, the dream of successive generations of merchants, engineers, and entrepreneurs willed into being. They had had to build the land before they could work it. Dredging, scouring, banking, graving docks, ships, cranes, kilns, silos; industry from their industry, solidity from the morass, leaving an incredible imprint on the unpromising slobland, and their names driven like crew-piles into the city's sense of itself. (Patterson 1992: 225)

Neither does he avoid difficult topics connected with the infamous part of the city's heritage. In the novel, the writer goes back to the most distant past of the city, showing its difficult but at the same time prominent origins. The effort put into the creation of the city contrasts starkly with the easiness with which the work of the generations was destroyed during the Second World War and the Troubles. The novel does not focus on the physical damage done to the city but rather on the individual tragedies of its residents. By introducing the tragic story of Conor Bradley, Patterson lucidly compares this character with the famous Bobby Sands "Conor Bradley and Bobby Sands were born in the same hospital on the same day in 1954" (Patterson 1992: 266). Conor Bradley, who was Anna's husband, was accidentally shot, but the police ques-

tioned the coincidence: "What was Conor Bradley *really* doing out at that time, in a dangerous part of a dangerous city in the most dangerous summer of almost a decade?" (Patterson 1992: 269). Not only is the woman denied compensation, but also she is the only person who visits his grave, which is placed in the same graveyard where the tomb of the well-known political prisoner is situated. In this way, the writer shows how some deaths become inscribed in the history of the community, whereas other remain unknown to the public and can only be passed over by the closest relatives who experienced it. Nonetheless, the lives of these two people appear to be of equal importance to the author. By allowing for the multiplicity of voices to find its place in the novel the author intends to make the narrative: "more populous, more accommodating of other voices" than just those ones widely recognised (Patterson 2008: 317). This approach is recognised by Smyth who comes to a conclusion that Patterson's novels comprise minor stories which build the bigger story of Northern Ireland (1997: 131).

What Patterson tries to do with the history of the Troubles is to show it as an integral part of the Belfast history, having an enormous influence on the spatial organization of the city, and therefore exerting some positive influence on the contemporary image of the city as well. One of the phenomena Patterson draws attention to in the text is the emergence of post-Troubles tourism. Many a person decides to visit the city when the situation has calmed down to see the exact places where incidents took place: "The *this was where* and the *over there* of twenty years of violence" [emphasis original] (Patterson 1992: 224). Even in the nineties, when the political situation in Northern Ireland is still unstable, the visitors are astonished when they see that the real Belfast does not resemble the one presented in the headlines. In the novel, James, the friend of Drew: "commented on the amount of building he'd seen already on his way from the airport. He had expected to see more ... well, more destruction, frankly" (Patterson 1992: 225). The expectations of the tourists who go sightseeing in Belfast are predominantly limited to the areas of the conflict, with their murals as the main attraction. The murals, which used to be a form of protest, have become a tourist destination and consequently an integral part of the city's cultural heritage. As Patterson rightly observes: "The murals of Belfast, once considered statements of radical opposition, had become institutionalised, an accepted, almost official part of city life" (2006: 54)<sup>17</sup>. As it can be seen, tourism has a great influence on the cultural changes of a given society. In this particular case, it has physically altered the meaning of the place. The preservation of the murals, which were supposed to physically signify the conflict and the state of the locality (Urry

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<sup>17</sup>The quotation comes from Patterson's article "Murals", originally published in *In Dublin* in 1996. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

1995: 156), has resulted in the area turning into a tourist attraction, which in the case of Ireland also had an impact on the transformation of the native self-image (O'Connor 1993: 69). De Certeau explains similar phenomena in a different way by ascribing such places as the murals to the realm of popular culture, which devoid of its own spaces takes advantage of the already existing ones. This happens especially in places which to a certain extent have been imposed on the society and by this token "getting around the rules of a constraining space" (1984: 18). In this instance, the space of the walls has been institutionalised twice, in the past as walls dividing the districts and nowadays as a local form of art.

The fact that the newcomers appear to be surprised with the lack of places which could act as prevailing witnesses to the former conflict well corresponds with the astonishment of the author, who in one of his essays states that: "on my recent visits home I had discovered that construction was beginning to outstrip destruction. So much so, in fact, that I was repeatedly having to revise the city I was writing for my characters to live in" (Patterson 2006: 45)<sup>18</sup>. The observation the writer as well as his characters make concerning the amazing speed with which Belfast is rebuilt justify Damian Smyth's statement that there exists a discrepancy between the cultural and political times, namely, that politics is always behind with the changes which occur first in the community's conscience (in Patterson 2006: 162)<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, in the narrative, the architectural, economical and cultural development of the city presupposes the official ceasefire, still coinciding with the reappearing acts of violence in the form of accidental shootings. The presence of the army on the borders is one of the visible examples that the process of transformation is in its intermediary state, thus Drew on his way from England to Northern Ireland is still checked. The coexistence of the old and the new is justified by critics in different ways. For Kirkland, Belfast has for too long remained "an unwritten city", therefore it lacks a continuity in its literary presentation (1996: 34). In this way, the contemporary images of Belfast seem displaced as they present many stages of development all at the same time. To justify his point, Kirkland refers to Pike's concept of the city as spatially oriented and therefore lacking time continuity (in Kirkland 1996: 33-34). Peach adopts Bhabha's point of view, who in his critical work talks about the space for post-colonial culture as being beyond the normative distinction of time into the past and the present (1994: 6). Peach by introducing the term "time-

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<sup>18</sup> The quotation comes from Patterson's article "Accommodation and apartmentality", originally published in *Trees from Germany* in 2003. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> The citation comes from Patterson's article "Never-ending stories", originally published in *The Sunday Times* in 1994. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

lag” to the reading of late-twentieth-century Irish literature, tries to show that writers who have been marginalised before, now “find themselves in a space which is not only new to them but marked by uncertainty – an ‘in-between’ space” (Peach 2004: 1). In contrast, Kelly relies on Gramsci’s concept of there being an interregnum, encapsulated in the statement that: “the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born” (in Kelly 2009: 1). The uneasiness caused by the intermediary stage of the process is not only to justify the Troubles but also its aftermaths, reaching the last decade of the twentieth century.

In accordance with three different justifications for the coexistence of old and new images in the same place, Patterson’s *Belfast* of the nineties also appears to be a city of contrasts. On the one hand it is full of traffic and students who: “sit on coats and jumpers (..) or cluster about the plinths of the statues and monuments which face out on to three of the four sides of Donegall Square” (Patterson 1992: 201). On the other hand, some places remain dangerous to walk in the evening being too Catholic or too Protestant for the passers-by. The novel abounds in descriptions which pinpoint the complexity of the city: “Like a flower? A load of brick and glass and tarmacadam and coloured metal and concrete, slabs of water and oceans of mud, flecked with greenery (and here and there whitery and goldery and, it being the first of July, prodigious amounts of red-white-and-bluary)? Like a flower. Compact and complex” (Patterson 1992: 273). The variety is one time expressed with colours, another with a mixture of different music sounds, which create: “a symphony for any city” (Patterson 1992: 228). Both ways, referring to different senses, well express the vibrant new Belfast. However, the gradual westernization of the city has its negative consequences, for instance the internationalisation of the company Drew works for: “Looking ahead to 1992 we must expand our base if we are to be competitive in the Single Market economy” (Patterson 1992: 275). Drew, as a result, changes Belfast for Paris – symbolically representing the growing number of Irish people who work abroad because the market becomes globalised. This presents a new tendency in Ireland, which has always been associated with migration and diasporas, but in a negative sense, as it is the only alternative for the people who could not find work at home (Fagan 2003: 118).

During his temporal stay in Belfast, Drew tries to compromise the past with the present, which he does through his relationship with Melanie, Kay and Anna. The three women each symbolise the cities they live in: London, Belfast and Dublin and the progress the protagonist makes to finally reconcile with his past (Kirkland 2000: 221). Melanie who is preoccupied with her work, constantly neglects Drew. The lack of communication between them results in Drew’s unfaithfulness. Melanie well expresses the hectic pace of life in the English metropolis as well as the ignorant approach of the British to-

wards the problems of Northern Ireland. This long-lasting relationship eventually no longer works and finally comes to an end. This may allude to the Union, which at the end of the twentieth century has ceased to fulfil its role. Kay, with whom Drew cheats Melanie, is a type of an independent woman who does not want to get too much involved in her affair with Drew. Her dynamic and unpredictable character is an illustration of the new Belfast and the new Irish morality. The feeling of uncertainty, which the meetings with Kay evoke in Drew, indicates that Northern Ireland at this point is not stable enough to become an independent state. Anna with her reserved and sensible approach towards life is the opposite of Kay's temperament. Her calmness attracts Drew's attention and makes of the three relationships the most balanced one. This symbolic union between Belfast and Dublin signifies the need for the reintegration of the two states or at least a more advanced cooperation, which may work as the best solution for the future development of the country. As Patterson states in one of his essays: "Protestants and Catholics may, for the most part, have stopped killing one another, but that is not to say that they are ready to live side by side" (2006: 62)<sup>20</sup>. However, the examples of relationships of people with different denominations or from two sides of the border, as the author's own marriage, show that the people from these two societies may become close to one another. Patterson does not find mixed marriages anything new, since: "You did not have to go very far back in the history of many families, Protestants and Catholics, to find evidence of inter-marriage" (2006: 138)<sup>21</sup>. This being the case, Patterson does not introduce any new idea into his novel but rather dislodges his hope that the situation in Belfast and whole of Northern Ireland will go back to normal. The novel does not show whether the relationship between Anna and Drew survives. However, it does help the protagonist to understand his past and make a step further in defining his Protestant identity.

Drew's problems with identity go beyond his individual self representing the anxiety the six counties have to encounter as one state<sup>22</sup>. By this token, the discussion of displacement and identity enter national discourse. The guilt the protagonist feels does not only result from the domestic violence he experienced

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<sup>20</sup> The quotation comes from Patterson's article "Kerbstones", originally published in *Index on Censorship* in 2004. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> The quotation comes from Patterson's article "Love poetry, the RUC and me", originally published in *Edoc magazine* in 1997. The citation used comes from the collection *Lapsed Protestant*, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> A similar approach towards identity shows Seamus Heaney, whose poetry indicates that the concept of Northern Irish identity carries the quality of being in-between, thus remains open to changes. It is also closely connected with the idea of alienation as a constructive force of Heaney's understanding of identity (Jarniewicz 2011: 13, 257).

as a child, but more importantly from all the incidents of past violence initiated by Protestants and targeted at innocent people. Therefore his displacement is justified by his lapsed denomination, which in some way links him with the Protestant ascendancy (Peach 2004: 23). The constant atmosphere of fault aimed at Protestants resides partially in the trend purported by such critics as Seamus Deane, for whom the history of the six counties is associated with Unionism as a force restricting other voices and presenting a biased version of past events (Kirkland 1996: 41). The new Belfast, which for Kelly is seemingly "an open space beyond ideology" (2009: 9), in Patterson's novel transpires to still struggle with the aftermath of sectarianism. As Bauman observes, many countries, though they are believed to be cosmopolitan societies, determine their multiculturalism on the basis of assimilation. The minorities are supposed to dispose of their cultural differences or leave (2011: 75). Drew, who feels as an outsider in Northern Ireland delineates the problems with a sense of place among contemporary Protestants, who outside are always perceived as Irish, whereas once they leave the country they become foreigners to the local community. As Protestants are a majority in Northern Ireland, Drew appears to be treated as a foreigner because of his absence, not his denomination. Therefore, his case is more in accordance with Kristeva's understanding of cosmopolitans – people who due to the constant change of place become foreigners in their own country, citizens of the world but at the same time people from nowhere (1991: 30). By this token, Patterson seems to envisage the path the new Belfast is going to tread, the one towards the city's gradual globalisation, with a new generation of Irish people constantly on the move from one place of living to another.

*Fat lad* is a novel in which Glenn Patterson makes an attempt to present the city of Belfast from a diachronic perspective, starting with the end of the ninetieth century and finishing with the last decade of the twentieth century. Such a broad outlook allows for distinguishing three main steps of change for the city as well as for the whole country. The industrial growth, the time of the Troubles and the peacemaking process are presented as the main turning points in Belfast's recent history. The transformation the city has gone through justifies the statement that economic, cultural and social development always come first in order for the state to be able to improve politically, since the life in urban areas is usually the first to reflect the newest shifts in the society's conscience. The analysis of Patterson's Belfast not only reveals the capital's palimpsest structure or the contemporary progress, but more importantly it looks into the future providing a potential path for further development of the city. The universal reading of the novel is facilitated by symbols of the Titanic, the goldfish and the three women whom the protagonist meets. Therefore, the narrative through the prism of Drew, who searches for a definition of his individual identity, draws attention to the unresolved question of the national self of the six counties as well as the ongoing problem of

Protestant identity within the Northern Irish society as being too Irish for the English and too English for the Catholic Irish. The fact that Glenn Patterson's collection of essays *Lapsed Protestant* appears to be a good follow-up for the analysis of the novel proves how autobiographical the narrative is. Therefore, the writer poses the questions of identity, which very much concerns his own person as well.

#### 4.2. Belfast vs. Hiroshima – Glenn Patterson's *The third party*

"I have an understanding of what a city is but I don't understand nations (...) Cities seem to entail a mixture, whereas the nation state and the language of nationalism is about purity, exclusion. That's what I fear most" states Glenn Patterson in one of the reviews for *The Irish Times* (in Patten 2008: 1). These words well justify his constant focus on the theme of the city in his literary output. It comes as no surprise that *Fat Lad* is not his only novel revolving around Belfast. Even if some of his works do not directly use the trope of the Northern Irish capital, still they keep referring to it. This is the case of *The third party* (2007), in which Patterson does not limit himself to the perspective of one city, but provides the reader with a comparative picture with Hiroshima in the focal point and Belfast in the background. This novel delineates how the writer's understanding of the city develops. Fifteen years, which divide the two texts, is a considerable time span for this author, especially as the former novel is only his second one, embodying the beginning of his writing career, whereas the latter narrative presents him as already an experienced novelist. This is visible in the topic he chooses in the given works. *The third party* at first sight seems to present the exploration of post-nuclear Hiroshima as a city of the new and the old from the perspective of a foreigner, who arrives there on business. However, a closer look at the text reveals that the focus of the novel is not targeted at the Japanese city, but at Belfast as an epitome of the protagonist's homeland. The geographical distance and the perspective of a foreign culture and experience sheds a new light on the Northern Irish capital of the twenty-first century. Belfast manifests itself as a city with emerging globalism due to its increasing international relations on the level of the economy as well as culture. But when compared with Hiroshima, it transpires that Belfast remains still a "local" place with Irish culture as the dominant one. Interestingly enough, Belfast's violent past, when contrasted with the atrocious war experience of Hiroshima, also calls for the reassessment.

*The third party* provides an account of one day in Hiroshima conveyed by an Irish man who has been delegated there on business. His company is trying to enter the Japanese market with their clingfilm, so his aim is to attend several meetings and promote the product. The narrative is delivered by the protagonist

in such a way that the reader does not learn his name. During his short visit, the narrator spends some time sightseeing, shopping and attending the conference. However, apart from the ordinary aspects usually accompanying a trip to a foreign country, the protagonist encounters several unexpected situations. By accident he finds himself in the A Bomb museum devoted to the tragic events of Hiroshima from 1945. This event comes to the foreground of the novel, since he visits the place three times altogether. However, whether it is the atmosphere of the place or the woman he notices during his first stay that makes him return is rather unclear. Important for the development of the story is also Ike, a writer, whom the narrator meets at the airport and then at the hotel. The novelist turns out to be an Irish expatriate from Belfast who has come to Hiroshima to attend a university conference as its key speaker. The protagonist decides to go there and see Ike's performance. The day finishes with three parties: the first being the conference banquet, the second the dinner in a Japanese restaurant, and the third a drink at an Irish pub. Interesting for the plot appears to be the ending, which may also be treated as the third party taking place in Ike's apartment, where the narrator has to face the bitter truth about himself and his company.

The initial image of Belfast as a city subjected to growing internationalisation changes, at least in the protagonist's mind, since the experience of being a foreigner provides him with a broader perspective on his own country. The image of a foreigner delineated by Kristeva stands for the alter ego of the national man. The former's role is to reveal the inadequacies of the latter, on the personal as well as the social level. Therefore, the trip to a foreign land and culture does not only serve the purpose of experiencing the culture of the other, but also aims at rediscovering one's own mentality – as seen from the perspective of the other. "He is the metaphor of the distance at which we should place ourselves in order to revive the dynamics of ideological and social transformation" unnoticeable for those who stay within the bounds of their native culture (Kristeva 1991: 134). A foreigner becomes an auto discursive person, who is capable of going beyond the boundaries of their native culture to approach it critically. The trope of a foreigner may also be applied to illustrate the double nature of human beings, who more often than not feel as strangers in their own country, as their otherness is not accepted by the majority. This being the case, a foreigner may be read as a symptom of the difficulty one encounters when being treated as "the other". The appearance of the feeling of foreignness among individuals or certain groups within a larger society signifies the limits of nation-states or the pitfalls of national consciousness, which fail to respond to the needs of those particular people (Kristeva 1991: 103). This and other understandings of a foreigner bring the scholar to a tentative conclusion that the essence of the problem never resides outside but within ourselves. Such an approach towards the idea of foreignness seems to be the key to understanding Patterson's novel.

The two cities present in the novel act as epitomes of the dichotomy between the Western and the Eastern cultures. Despite the obvious differences between the places described and the societies which occupy them, Northern Ireland and Japan have still several things in common. The geographical location of both countries situated on islands had and still has an enormous effect on their traditions, culture and economy. Among them the most significant seems to be the idea of isolationism, which both societies have experienced in the course of their history. Both of the societies have a violent past, with particular historical associations ascribed to them as labels: the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the nuclear bomb in Hiroshima. Sharing similar experiences in these aspects, the two countries appear to have followed different paths of development. The insular location of Ireland has never caused such problems as are visible in the case of Japan's constant struggle with a lack of space. This country with its metropolises and overpopulation stands in stark contrast with Ireland, which still has scarcely populated regions. The novel illustrates this aspect vividly: "In Japan we say *hyaku man toshi*," Said Tadao: "City of a million people.' '*Hyaku man toshi*,' I repeated. 'Belfast times three.' 'Limerick times ten'" (Patterson 2007: 26). The majority of Irish cities, which have had the opportunity to develop after both Irish states' entrance into the European Commission, still remain provincial with respect to such urban areas as Hiroshima, let alone Japan's capital.

The speed with which Japan has been advancing economically and culturally since the end of the Second World War is astounding enough to deserve the name of "a miracle-econom[y]" (Wrigley 1985: 76). It comes as no surprise that Irish people find it problematic to get accustomed to the noise of the Japanese city. The narrator is not able to sleep "listening to the traffic increase in volume" (Patterson 2007: 4). His stroll through the city centre proves to be quite shocking for the protagonist as he did not expect it to be so internationalized:

Most of the shops have open frontage on to the street. More than a few had someone posted on the threshold, stuffing packs of Kleenex into your fist, or simply hollering their wares. Music came from every side, and from every one of the last five decades, and all was beaten into a cocked hat by the innocuous-looking beat-box on a table before a chemist's shop that played nothing else but Wham! Little else but 'Bad Boys'. (Patterson 2007: 63)

The openness with which the Japanese approach the Western culture is astounding for the narrator, who when coming to such an exotic place searches for examples of the national culture. When collecting souvenirs for the family, he chooses a bag for his wife which is "unlike anything I could remember seeing in Belfast" (Patterson 2007: 60), which seems to look foreign enough to serve as a good present from a trip to Japan. The Sogo centre, where the protagonist

does his shopping is described to him as “a traditional place for Hiroshima people” (Patterson 2007: 37). The narrator tries to understand how a shopping centre may be defined as traditional in any sense: “Traditional. I took it she meant, since the opening of Tokyo Disneyland” (2007: 38). The immensity of the place is astounding for the foreigner, who concludes that “If we had something that size at home (...) they would probably have their own member of parliament” because the store appears to be “a Small World” of its own (Patterson 2007: 38). The distances between the places are also considerably large for the narrator, who tries to cross it on foot, but realises it is much farther than he expected. However, with time, he observes that his image of Belfast as a local place may be ascribed to his spatial orientation in the place. After spending several days in Hiroshima, he repeatedly ends up at the same spot. This draws him to a conclusion that “cities shrink with use” (Patterson 2007: 139). It transpires that the more one is familiar with a place, the smaller it appears to be. At first glance, Hiroshima seems larger for the narrator than it turns out to be after the foreigner learns the city.

Conversely to contemporary Hiroshima, Belfast is a place which “could not boast three noodle bars” (Patterson 2007: 16), exemplifying the Japanese cuisine. Northern Ireland transpires to be at the very beginning of the globalization process. The company, which sends the protagonist to Hiroshima, bases its advertising policy on the traditional images of Ireland: “Our first run of ads showed a pumpkin and a pea. Orange and green. (Start local, was our motto, go global.)” (Patterson 2007: 39). The narrator is aware that “what the world didn't know about Belfast, frankly, could fill a book” (Patterson 2007: 39); however, for the sake of the international market they take advantage of the images which are immediately associated with Belfast and Northern Ireland. Hence, the protagonist has to attend a Writing out of Conflict conference, where he may dispense the company's U bags. He justifies such a policy by stating that “We would adapt to the Japanese market” even if it means the reinforcement of the county's erroneous stereotypes being predominantly associated with the Troubles (Patterson 2007: 39). The global market, apart from requiring the intensification of economic transfer and the increase in worldwide communication, asks for a universality of products so that they may cater for the tastes of a wider public (Sutherland 2012: 163). However, the global production does not allow for mistakes to happen, since the results may be geographically far reaching. This is exactly what happens to the narrator's company, which is revealed at the end of the novel. The U bag prototype turns out to be faulty and the whole of its production ought to be destroyed. Since the loss of such an amount of product would be an exorbitant cost for the company, the narrator has been asked to illegally sell the cargo to another company in Sardinia. The aftermath of this operation comes to light after half a year, when more and more cases of strange diseases ap-

pear in Sardinia. The protagonist avoids punishment, though, as the narrator has organized all the legal documents confirming the utilisation of the faulty product. The negative example provided by the writer illustrates the emergence of a new tendency in the modern world observed by Bauman. The scholar enunciates that progress is no longer determined by the desire for a greater speed of improvement, but rather by the fear of failure leading to an exclusion from the rat race (2011: 24). The protagonist does not express any guilt for what he has done for the company, since the financial success appears to be of paramount importance in the twenty-first century.

In the novel, the growing internationalisation of Ireland with its negative effects is not limited just to the economic sphere. Ike, who also comes from Belfast to Japan on business, dislodges the cultural aspect of the island going global. Being a guest at the conference, he represents Northern Ireland, which is still presumed to be in political and religious conflict. This rather obsolete image of the state is reinforced by such writers as Ike, who use the topic of the Troubles as a product to sell their wares. The narrator who is astounded by the fact that he knows none of Ike's novels, despite the fact that he as a Northern Irish writer should be familiar to him, decides to check Ike's literary output on Amazon. To his disillusionment: "They sounded like the sort of thing I would normally run a mile from, i.e. they featured words Northern and Ireland and the inevitable fruit of their union in print, the Troubles" (Patterson 2007: 19). This negative portrayal of such a kind of fiction is justified by Patterson's own words, who is critical of the so called Troubles thriller for making violence entertaining<sup>23</sup>. Ike who is a recognised writer abroad, treats his writing career as pure business. During his stay in Hiroshima, he asks the narrator for a possible story for the next novel. The protagonist tells him what he has experienced during his visit to the museum, but Ike seems unimpressed by this. It transpires that the writer has difficulty with writing another bestseller, which is most probably required from him by the publishing house. Dražen, who works for Ike, reveals that "he is afraid of running out of places to go" since:

[the p]assage he read this evening [i]s a passage he always reads. People queue up, they buy the book. It is not so easy as the passage they heard; they read, they read, waiting for this passage, but by the time they get there they are already bored from looking and he is already on a plane somewhere else, where he reads his passage and people queue up ... . (Patterson 2007: 151)

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<sup>23</sup> Pelaschiar in her article on Troubles thriller provides an example of Eoin McNamee's novel *Resurrection man*, which has been criticised by Glenn Patterson for its "florid descriptions of murder' and for flirting with 'horror and the strange beauty of violence'" (in Pelaschiar 2009: 56).

The mass production of novels and meetings with readers turn literature as well as Irish culture into a global product.

This is not the only instance in the text when Irish culture is being presented as exported goods. To the narrator's further dismay, the conference organizer takes him and Ike to an Irish pub: "Like 'Northern' and 'Ireland' on a book cover, there were no words I dreaded more to see paired on blackboard than 'Irish' and 'Bar'" (Patterson 2007: 141). The Irish culture seems to have become more internationalised than the country's economy. The typical decor of the place: "a passage lined with Guinness barrels, leading under a slab of wood saying 'Fáilte'" does not surprise the narrator so much as the presence of "a giant screen showing English Premiership football" (Patterson 2007: 142). Ike explains to him that "Irish Bar is another country", therefore the protagonist should not expect it to exemplify an authentic pub in Ireland. The fact that there are such places as this one around the world, which keep people under a misapprehension about Irish heritage as limited to the country's beer and whiskey, is rather disappointing for the man. Even worse are cases of "Irish bars in the States that sold a cocktail called a car bomb" (Patterson 2007: 143), which for the narrator displays not the lack of understanding but a pure ignorance of Irish culture and history. However, this is one of the consequences of what Sutherland names as a globalization of the nation-states, whose transformation takes place beyond the boundaries of the state (2012: 149), and which is partially due to the diasporas as well as the adoption of foreign customs by other societies in which the appearance of the national culture outside the country takes place. One of such events comprises St. Patrick's day, which has become internationalized to such an extent that it "has been celebrated with a far greater enthusiasm and lavish display outside Ireland than within the national territory" (Walter 2008: 192). Such a situation may be ascribed to a substantial number of the Irish diasporas as well as the fact that some celebrations have been adopted by foreign societies. This also signifies the increased need for demonstrating one's own national identity when abroad. The globalised world on the one hand facilitates diversity in heterogeneous societies (Sutherland 2012: 167), but, on the other, it poses a threat to the individual sense of security (Bauman 2011: 80).

Therefore, people prefer to remain foreign to a certain extent, so as to secure their individual sense of belonging. Thus, they accept the idea of multiculturalism inasmuch as we want to be accepted as foreigners (Kristeva 1991: 2-3). The narrator in order to feel foreign enough, avoids his compatriots: "I didn't make a habit of seeking out Belfast connections when I was abroad, but Hiroshima was a very long way from home" (Patterson 2007: 9). On the other hand, the sales executive is the epitome of a contemporary cosmopolitan, who accepts his foreignness since he feels as a resident of the world, spending the majority of his work time in different countries, cities and hotels. The fact that the narrator meets another person from Belfast in

such a far away country is for him curious enough to welcome his presence. This may be ascribed to the fact that his stay in a completely foreign culture evokes feelings of loss and longing for his homeland. Also the protagonist feels his foreignness cannot be threatened by his acquaintance with another Irish man. The two men seem to appreciate the meeting up to a point. When Ike realizes that the narrator has information about him that could expose him as a writer, he changes his approach towards the compatriot. As a form of revenge, Ike finds the embarrassing information about the protagonist's company and dislodges him. This instance well illustrates that by becoming a foreigner one may preserve one's own identity and at the same time self-fashion oneself so as to become the person one would like to be. By this token, Kristeva's foreigner as an alter ego comes to the fore.

Crucial for the understanding of the novel is also the narrator's visit to the A-Bomb Museum. He finds himself there for the first time by accident, as he did not expect a museum to be located in a basement. What he experiences there leaves a mark on him as an individual as well as an Northern Irishman: "I sat for maybe twenty minutes more in the basement, staring into the *Holocaust*, feeling myself reduced to something like my essence. Not as a sales executive, not as a father, not as a husband, or even a name" [emphasis original] (Patterson 2007: 61-62). Such shock is evoked in him by the place that his sense of individual self disappears or becomes meaningless when contrasted with the immensity of the tragedy<sup>24</sup>. A similar situation is observed by Bataille, who when analyzing John Hersey's collected account of the survivors from the Hiroshima nuclear bomb attack, notes how the narration in the book contrasts with the official announcement concerning the attack. The descriptions of the first responses of those Japanese people who could see the effects of the explosion are diminished to the reactions of animals. Similarly to Patterson's narrator, Hersey's victims become devoid of their human attributes, such as their social position or profession. Conversely, the human reception of the catastrophe is exemplified by Bataille with the speech of President Truman, who "situates the bombing of Hiroshima within history and defines the new possibilities that it has introduced into the world" [1947] (1995: 225). Such a negative portrayal of humanity which allows for such tragedies to happen, is to show the lack of imagination of those who seek progress at any cost. Hersey's book shows how difficult it is to communicate such atrocities in a humane way. Therefore, the author prefers to rely on the memory of the individuals, because, to follow Foucault, it is history that occupies the largest part of one's own memory, so even if delivered in a chaotic form, it still determines

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<sup>24</sup> Johnson notes that the amount of tourists visiting Hiroshima has met with the ambivalent approach of the city's native inhabitants, who do not appreciate the commercial side of the tourist market treating it as a profanation of the memorial space (2004: 324).

the human existence [1966] (2002: 237-238). The importance of individual histories is acknowledged by Eagleton, who while questioning the fragmentariness and discontinuity of postmodern history, advocates the necessity for individual accounts (1996: 65-66). Thanks to them, society may cease to be constrained by the official version of history written in a similar mode to Truman's announcement.

In the novel, the Japanese tragedy serves the purpose of commenting on the ongoing presence of violence around the world<sup>25</sup>. The Peace Bell in the museum, which the visitors ring to announce their objection to the prevalence of violence, appears to be very symbolic. The frequency with which the bell rings is so intense that it has become a common sound for the citizens "if ever the bell were to stop ringing altogether, the people of Hiroshima would know, the world would know" (Patterson 2007: 87). The narrator's experience in the museum changes his perception on the violence witnessed in his homeland. Due to the human reception of the Troubles, to use Bataille's line of thought, this conflict has very quickly been labelled by one side as a fight for freedom, by the other as the reaction against terrorism. The two sides of the conflict for a long time showed a lack of imagination and ignorance to the tragedy of individuals, for the sake of ideologies. Now, when Northern Ireland can appreciate peace as well, one may look at its past from a fresh perspective. That the narrator belongs to the generation of Irish people who remember hardly anything from that period is a fact that also appears significant: "That was one thing I did remember from the not-so-good old days at home, the difficulty deciding whether you were safer in a bunch, or simply a bigger target" (Patterson 2007: 117). This recollection appears in the mind of the protagonist as a reference to the alleged bomb scare taking place during the conference in Hiroshima. None of the participants believes in such a possibility. Neither is the narrator afraid, which shows that he does not remember much from the times when bomb attacks were part and parcel of everyday life in Belfast.

Nowadays, there are other places in the world where an analogous situation happens. The novel mentions Rwanda Genocide Week: "the skulls dissolved into rows of men in pink pyjamas staring from behind prison bars" (Patterson 2007: 68), the tragedy of which is being reduced to the television news. The military conflict is contrasted with the continuous call for peace of the bell. Interestingly enough, this opposition is also present in one of Derek Mahon's poems "The snow party". The resemblance of the poem's title to Patterson's novel does not seem coincidental, since Mahon in his work contrasts

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<sup>25</sup> Hiroshima, which has been designated by the Japanese government a "Peace city", has participated in a project of restructuring the city's space so that the newly created places bear the word peace in their names, for example Peace Hall, Peace Square, or Peace Arch (Johnson 2004: 324). Therefore, Hiroshima may be treated as a model for other peace projects, likewise the difficult peace process in Northern Ireland.

the peaceful atmosphere of a Japanese social event with the violence taking place in another part of the world: “Elsewhere they are burning / Witches and heretics / In the boiling squares, Thousands have died since dawn / In the service / Of barbarous kings / But there is silence / In the houses of Nagoya” [1975] (1993:57). Mahon uses in his poem the myth of the slaughtering of kings by their successors in a ritual which is supposed to act as the symbolic end to killings rather than the relentless presence of violence<sup>26</sup> (Corcoran 1997: 147). Therefore, the title of Patterson’s novel seems to link Mahon’s idea with the protagonist’s three visits to the museum.

The narrator goes back to the museum two more times, which he tries to explain in the following way: “I had turned up at its doors twenty-four hours to the minute after I had last walked through them, having persuaded myself that in this place of stopped watches I might be offered some way to retrieve the moment, repair the past” (Patterson 2007: 61). It turns out that the narrator is referring to the most recent past connected with his first visit to the museum, where he saw a woman. He did not have the courage to approach her at that time, so he comes back hoping she will be there again. This, however, does not happen. When he describes this experience to Ike, he finds it difficult to explain why he had deluded himself into thinking that he could leave his former life in Belfast: “I told him how at moments today I had felt I was watching my life rather than living it, as though I had left a door open between one way of going on and another” (Patterson 2007: 152). This was exactly the moment when he seemed to realize that: “Nothing good would come of Norma and me, I saw that. Nothing good for her more than for me” (Patterson 2007: 62). The visit to the museum divests the protagonist of Bataille’s human attributes so that he can see his contemporary life in Belfast as meaningless, by this token dislodging the poor quality of the consumer society’s existence. His “human” behaviour as a sales executive shows his ignorance and lack of imagination for the possible results of his illegal deeds, since the physical malformations caused by the U bags bear some resemblance to the aftermath of the nuclear radiation of the Hiroshima bomb. Therefore, the pursuit of progress, no matter if by the means of violence or a peaceful global market, has its negative consequences – with the individuals suffering most. Only thanks to the individual’s memory as the alternative to official history, may the public learn the truth, as do the visitors to the A-Bomb museum.

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<sup>26</sup> The poem belongs to the collection, which carries the same title *The snow party* (1975). According to Riordan, the whole collection treats of the future of civilization, whose advancement is presented as heading towards the worse status of culture and humanity (1984: 173-174). In contrast, Longley treats “The snow party” poem as Mahon’s depiction of the poetry’s being in the middle of the conflict between “the Romantic aesthetics and the Ulster Troubles” (1994: 261), which on the one hand is creative but on the other oppressive with history’s “raised insistence” (1994: 266).

In comparison to his former novels, Glenn Patterson in *The third party* provides the reader with a transposition of an urban setting from Belfast to Hiroshima in order to depict the Northern Irish capital from a different perspective. Thanks to such a change, the writer is able to present Northern Ireland as a country entering the global world. The new lifestyle embodied by the protagonist, whose work comprises frequent travelling abroad, shows the leading role of consumerism in the professional as well as private spheres. As a contemporary cosmopolitan, the Irishman well finds himself in the constant change of place, providing his family with new presents from the visited countries. A seemingly happy and easy life transpires to be void of any emotions, whereas the requirements of the global market targeted at constant profit forces its employees to avoid financial losses at any moral cost. Belfast, which seems to be a well developing modern capital, in comparison to the Japanese metropolis remains a rather local city. Contrary to the Northern Irish economy which strives to enter the global market, the Irish culture appears to have already become the best selling product abroad. Irish popular literature and customs are appreciated all over the world. This helps both the states of Ireland to boost their confidence as they are recognizable countries, but the images exported provide foreigners with a distorted picture of the contemporary Ireland, especially the case of the Troubles. The conflict, which by the Irish has always been treated as a tragic part of their national history, now has become part of Irish popular culture. What changes for the better is the fact that such Irish people are the ones who do not remember much from the time of the Troubles; but still some of them, like the narrator, have respect for the history, whilst people such as Ike abuse it for the sake of their professional career. Belfast, likewise Hiroshima, are places which seem to have learnt their lesson of history, since they keep a memory of the tragic events and at the same time build their future in peace.

#### 4.3. Memories de/encoded within the space of the city – Dublin in Anne Enright's *The gathering*

Dublin is a place which for almost a whole millennium was the only city providing the rest of Ireland with a direct link to the rest of the world (Smyth 1985: 12). Throughout its development it has remained the most important political and cultural capital of the island. Despite its vital role for the rest of the land, for a very long period the city was infamous for its reputation, being treated as the epitome of the English power over Ireland (Duffy 1997: 77). Such a representation has its roots in the eighteenth century, when the city's growth was ascribed to the ruling class of the Anglo-Irish. The native inhabitants of the island, living predominantly in the countryside, started to identify

the capital with the British rule. Thus, the appearance of the city in the works of such writers as Maria Edgeworth with *The absentee* (1812) are scarce, since the main plot revolves around the estates situated in rural areas (Moynahan 1984: 3). *The wild Irish boy* (1808) by Robert Maturin is another exception to the rule, since Dublin together with London comprise the urban setting of the novel (Burgess 2006: 49-50). Nevertheless, even if the city plays some part in this work, it serves the purpose of a binary opposition between the capital and the rest of the country, which later is used by Irish nationalists such as Thomas Davis to define the notion of nationalism (Lincoln 1993: 205-206). Therefore, the romanticised image of the West of Ireland with its unspoiled landscape and native language being still spoken in these regions has become an overwhelming image in the Irish literary world, marginalizing and downplaying the value of urban themes. This explains the persistent absence of the city in Irish literature till almost the end of the nineteenth century, with but a few exceptions, for example the works of George Moore (Smyth 2000: 16). And his depiction of the capital follows the Victorian moralising image of the city as a source of mockery and corruption. According to Martin, the first person to depict the city with the lack of didacticism common for modernism is James Joyce (1984: 37). As he suggests, by eliminating traditional plot from the narrative, Joyce has managed to focus solely on the action and has connected with it the contemporary state of the city. The new technique of description provides the reader with a timely picture of the city which lacks any cause and effect chain of events. This brought a sea change to the previous depiction of the capital, placing Dublin on the literary map of Ireland and, most importantly the maps of the worldwide literature too.

The newly created portrait became too powerful to encourage any novelist to question the modernistic vision. At the same time his contemporaries: Sean O'Casey, Liam O'Flaherty or James Stephens did not receive such an attention, but still weren't so much inhibited by the persona of Joyce not to write about Dublin as well (Smyth 2000: 20). The intimidation grew with the rise of the Joycean cult, therefore, not many writers in the second half of the twentieth century have been resolute enough to follow the modernist's path. The gap in the depiction of Dublin has become so extensive that several contemporary Irish writers have finally noticed the niche that it offers. Corcoran notes that the Joycean Dublin has disappeared since the urban development of the city has caused an irrefutable change to its urban landscape (1997: 100). This has encouraged many writers to make Dublin the setting for the Irish novel once again. The dynamic growth of the city demanded new modes of expression, which would be able to grasp the new character of the capital. The excessive spread of the suburbs around the capital enabled writers to avoid the traditional countryside/city dichotomy and create a new one between the suburb and the town (Ryan 2002: 145). The so called "Northside realism" represented by Der-

mot Bolger excludes in the novels the existence of the centre, marking his Dublin as a heap of displaced suburbs (Smyth 2000: 22)<sup>27</sup>. Despite the growing interest in the urban theme, the fictional presentation of Dublin remains a male domain, with few female voices writing on this topic. One exception to the rule is Anne Enright, who appears to be the only Irish woman writer who repeatedly uses the space of the capital as the setting for her narratives. Despite her continuous interest in the image of Dublin, critics do not seem to acknowledge her voice when it comes to urban studies. This phenomenon well illustrates Enright's comment on how she is labelled as a writer:

When I started out, I was always asked about 'Irish writing'. So for the whole of the eighties I was discussing Ireland and Irishness and how problematic that was as an idea, or how interesting, or how encouraging, or how energized you were, annoyed you were – all the contradictions involved. I never really got a gendered approach in the whole interview thing because they couldn't do two categories at once. (Enright in Bracken and Cahill 2011: 14)

The generalised attitude of the interviewers towards Enright as well as the triviality of topics ascribed to her literary output show the unequivocal treatment of Irish women's fiction in comparison to male contemporaries'. Hanson draws attention to the current interest of critics in works which directly treat on the issue of national identity, which Enright's works supposedly lack. Another justification lies in the writer's fragmentary narratives making the stories not so easily detectable as the academics would like them to be (2009: 216). The writer reveals the difficulty people find in analysing her novels on the basis of its being both Irish and female fiction, let alone its involving more sophisticated themes such as urban writing. Since it is not an easy task for her to compete with already established writers such as Bolger or Doyle, her novels in certain aspects seem to adopt the male point of view on the city following the common mode of its presentation.

Therefore, her Dublin is a combination of traditional, well known motives, and new, original aspects which can be ascribed just to Enright. The writer's awareness of the Irish literary heritage is expressed in such topics as the investigation of the past, suppressed family secrets or a growing secularisation of the Irish society. Among the novelties one may distinguish the contemporaneity of city life in the times of the Celtic Tiger as well as the growing need for individualism and materialism among the New Dubliners. The coexistence of old and new in Enright's fiction best illustrates her Booker Prize

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<sup>27</sup> "The Dublin 4" concept is yet another answer to the growing discrepancy between the modern city and rural countryside, introduced by a journalist, John Healy, to depict the places in Ireland which are not able to "redefine [themselves] outside of traditional models of Irishness" (Waters in Lincoln 1993: 206). Quickly it found its literary expression, for example in Meave Binchy's collection of four stories titled *Dublin 4*.

winning novel *The gathering* (2007). As Bracken and Cahill rightly observe, this novel, like the rest of her texts, may be treated as a direct comment on “the Irish cultural climate and societal change” (2011: 5). The validity of the text may be further justified by being in accordance with the prevailing trend in Irish literature to pursue the truth of marginalised groups and the victims of the social or cultural inequalities, who in the past did not have a voice in the dominant discourse, among them children and women prone to domestic violence and abuse (Peach 2004: 9). The reappearance of traditional topics in her fiction is explained by Enright in the following way: “History is something that has to be broken open again and again and retold though officially it’s something that has stopped. But as we continue, history shifts and changes all the time” (Enright in Bracken and Cahill 2011: 31). She seems to share the view of Patterson, whose novels express the necessity for providing the reading public with the alternative narratives of individual people. A certain similarity between the two writers in the individualization of history may be ascribed to their receiving the same education at the University of East Anglia. However, the disparity in their backgrounds make the two writers approach the issues of history and national identity differently. Patterson, as a Northern Irishman born in the 1960s cannot escape the difficult aspects of the country’s recent history directly linked with his own life. Enright, in contrast, when talking about history, does not want to involve herself in the discussion on revisionism of national history, but uses the term to indicate the histories of individuals who in her novel dig endlessly into their past memories in search of truth. No matter how common these topics may seem, the modern Dublin context provides them with a new quality.

The narrative in *The gathering*, told in the first person narration, unfolds the present as well as past life of Veronica, who at the beginning of the story learns about her brother’s, Liam’s, suicide. As the most composed person in a large family, she travels to Brighton to organize the transport of the body to Ireland. This event evokes the ensuing flood of long suppressed memories from their childhood, revealing the reason for Liam’s alcoholism and indirectly, his death – child abuse. Veronica as a witness is haunted by the sexual scene of Liam and Lambert Nugent, the landlord of their grandparents’ house. Unable to remember the true story, Veronica attempts at reconstructing the life of her grandparents, Ada and Charlie, trying to find the explanation for Lambert’s behaviour. She becomes so immersed in the past that her current family life is neglected. Her husband Tom and her two daughters have to endure Veronica’s lonely excursions to the city centre or her frequent trips to Brighton. The protagonist, who cannot find consolation for the tragedy, blames her mother for bearing so many children and neglecting them due to their father’s alcoholic problems. Veronica also finds fault with her family’s

Catholic morality, which treats woman and child abuse as a taboo<sup>28</sup>. Once the funeral takes place, the family gathers. This makes Veronica feel obliged to reveal the truth to its members. Tempted as she may seem, the protagonist realises that neither her mother nor her siblings would stand her honesty at such a moment. When the funeral is over, Veronica recovers from the remorse, trying to concentrate on what is still there: her family as well as Liam's son, about whom she learns only at the end of the novel.

Veronica who tells the story of her brother, has to rely heavily on her memory, which more often than not fails her in crucial moments for the plot. This goes in accordance with the theory of traumatic memory, which contrary to narrative memory, takes a long period of time to state the truth. Another important aspect is the fact that traumatic memory is not a social act, namely, it is not intended to communicate any message to other people but rather to help the speaker utter the hidden truth to themselves. Thirdly, one traumatic element triggers other aspects to flow automatically, which causes an uncontrollable flood of different memories related together only by one traumatic event (Kolk and Hart 1995: 163). This enunciation explicitly delineates the novel's narrative structure, which fluctuates between "now" and "then". Veronica's long-lasting account of the past events, interrupted by current situations, forces her to repeat certain moments. However, the source of repetitiveness lies predominantly in her inability to acknowledge what really happened to Liam. At face value it seems that Liam is the victim of the traumatic experience; however, Herman argues that even a passive participation in the child abuse results in the witness's conviction that they are partaking of the victimisation (1992: 104). Thus, Veronica undergoes her own trauma of having seen what happened to her brother. She has no problems with stating that: "the seeds of my brother's death were sown many years ago. The person who planted them is long dead – at least that's what I think" (Enright 2007: 13). From the very beginning of the account, Veronica is aware of the exact time when Liam's psychological problems began. When it comes to the detailed description of what she witnessed as an eight-year-old child, her memory starts to fail her though: "I think it may be a false memory, because there is a terrible tangle of things that I have to fight through to get to it, in my head. And also because it is unbearable" (Enright 2007: 144). The recollection appears to be too difficult for the narrator to express it, and only at the end of the novel does she manage to phrase it. Therefore, the whole plot reveals itself as the process of undergoing a

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<sup>28</sup> Similarly, in the contemporary poetry of the Republic the issues concerning the "shifts in the traditional markers of Irish identity" become the focus of attention. Jarniewicz and McDonagh to a certain extent differentiate between the Irish Republic and Northern Irish poetry, indicating the difference in topics resulting from the disparity in the problems the two societies encounter nowadays. However, the critics underline that in many instances the influences overlap, thus total separation of poetry into Southern and Northern appears impossible (2009: 121).

trauma as a verbal confrontation with a past event, which is too horrible to “be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge” and which thus has to return at a later time, when the person is adult enough to justify the tragic experience (Caruth 1995: 153). The complexity of the recovery process entails three main stages, which are easily identifiable in the novel. The victim or the witness of a traumatic event has to regain the sense of safety in order to be able to approach the memories from a secure position. The remembrance and mourning constitute the second stage. Once the trauma has been digested, there is a possibility of reconnecting with ordinary life (Herman 1992: 155). Veronica as an adult person, who in the past bore witness to a case of child abuse, feels secure due to her stable social position as a married woman and a mother of two children. Thus, she seems prepared to face the truth stored in her memories.

However, Veronica finds it difficult to face the facts, so she seeks justification for the physical abuse of Liam by Lambert. One of the ways is to create her own account of her grandmother’s life: “this is the tale that I would love to write (...) Lambert Nugent first saw my grandmother Ada Merriman in a hotel foyer in 1925. This is the moment I choose” (Enright 2007: 13). At first sight, the story Veronica describes does not seem to have much in common with her childhood experience, similarly with Freudian’s first stage of reading dreams as “a meaningless confusion” (Žižek 1989: 7). Only at the second stage may one observe the hidden meaning of Veronica’s account, which lies in the fact that Ada chooses Charlie, Lambert’s friend, and marries Veronica’s grandfather, instead of the landlord whom she was supposed to choose. Following Veronica’s logic, one may presume that the protagonist interprets Lambert’s behaviour not as paedophilia but as an act of revenge on Ada. Such an explanation is supposed to help the protagonist face the recollections which come back to her when she is almost forty. In this way, Veronica creates her own imagined traumatic event, which might not have occurred at all. However, it does fulfil its function of a reasonable explanation for the factual situation, which did take place indeed. This, as argues Alexander, is one of the aspects questioning the former theories of trauma, according to which events are the source of traumatic experiences. For him, the event itself does not have to produce trauma, so the occurrence of the traumatic experience is “a socially mediated attribution” (2012: 13). Therefore, Veronica’s story serves the purpose of justifying Liam’s later actions in his adult life as the consequence of the traumatic experience from his childhood.

The fact that the memories, kept at bay for many years, return at some point in Veronica’s life may be also expounded on the basis of the term “latency”. This word refers to Freud’s concept of a time period between a tragic event and the appearance of memories about it, when the effects of the traumatic experience are not visible (Caruth 1995: 7). The belatedness with which the trauma occurs results from, as Žižek explains, Lacan’s thoughts, the inner fear of the

Real that is suppressed into the unconsciousness. However the Real returns to the surface of consciousness sooner or later (Žižek 2006: 74-75). What enhances the return is another tragic event which evokes the past memories. In the novel, the death of Liam acts as the Lacanian Real, which forces Veronica to face the truth. The phase of awakening from latency is the moment of recognition of the past tragedy (Caruth 1996: 100). The shock Veronica undergoes is strong enough to make her realise that her brother's alcoholism was an aftermath of his difficult childhood. She learns that Liam drowned himself in the sea, as the police found stones in his pockets. He was dressed in a fluorescent jacket to make his body visible in the water. The awareness of how Liam was prepared to committing suicide has an enormous impact on Veronica's consciousness about her past as well as about her present situation: "I was living my life in inverted commas. I could pick up my keys and go 'home' where I could 'have sex' with my 'husband' just like lots of other people did. This is what I had been doing for years. And I didn't seem to mind the inverted commas, or even notice that I was living in them, until my brother died" (Enright 2007: 181). Veronica's seemingly easy and organized life falls into pieces when she confronts her brother's life tragedy. What she assumed as a happy family life becomes artificial in a new light. The words in inverted commas: home, have sex and husband, are the things Veronica begins to avoid in order to redefine their meaning and the role they play in her life.

The allusions to Freudian psychoanalysis introduced by Enright into this novel seem to be nothing new in the literature of this current day and age (Bracken and Cahill 2011: 30). However, the narrative is not limited to the typical reading of child abuse, but rather uses this aspect to comment on more complex matters closely connected with Irish Catholicism, which even at the dawn of the twenty-first century continues to treat many aspects of Irish family life as a taboo. As the narrator recalls, her mother was all the time expecting a baby, many of which died: "So I'm in a rage with every single one of my brothers and sisters, including Stevie, long dead, and Midge, recently dead, and I am boiling mad with Liam for being dead too" (Enright 2007: 10). Throughout the narrative, Veronica puts the blame on the mother, who would not stop giving birth to another child even when it was obvious that the family was already big enough. This rather stereotypical image of a Catholic family with a multitude of children is reinforced by the image of a father who: "attended church in his official capacity (...) all he was doing – he was having sex" (Enright 2007: 227). The figure of such an absent father, fulfilling his marital obligations mechanically as a Catholic and a husband, finally comes to light thanks to Veronica's account. Typically for the family, the narrator also has a brother, Ernest, who is a priest. In her story she presents him as a hypocrite who, likewise to the father, artificially performs his role in the society while conducting Liam's funeral.

The narrator questions not only her family's religiousness or the Catholic image of a family, but also her Catholic identity. The name the narrator has been given is problematic to her, since she does not identify with the saint it represents: "I am not Veronica. Though I have done my fair share of *wiping*, in my day, and it is true that I am attracted to people who suffer, or men who suffer, my suffering husband, my suffering brother, the suffering figure of Mr Nugent" [emphasis original] (Enright 2007: 129). This ironic comment on the irrelevance of the name the protagonist has, stands in a stark contrast to her past understanding of the name. As a child she used to treat her reference to Saint Veronica literally, practising: "with my own wounds and scabs" (Enright 2007: 129). Once she has managed to separate her own self from the Catholic influence, she decides to do the same with her late brother. By breaking the news to the rest of the family, she intends to fight the erroneous stereotype of Liam as a person who left Ireland and rejected Catholic life and which resulted in his alcoholism. "I know what I have to do – even though it is too late for the truth, I will tell the truth", for which she chooses Ernest, as a Catholic representative, to be the first to face the truth of the paedophilia, which in Ireland is one of the most current and contentious of issues (Enright 2007: 259). Only by this token can she reconcile with the tragic event as: "the past is not a happy place. And the pain of it belongs to her more than it does to me" (Enright 2007: 233). Although the pain connected with Liam's death is supposed to belong to the past, the very event seems to linger in-between then and now. This may be justified once again with the theory of trauma, in which the tragic event "has no place", belonging neither to the past nor to the present, since in the past it could not be fully experienced and now it cannot be totally understood (Caruth 1995: 153). This seems also connected with the fact that the event itself does not evoke trauma immediately after it takes place, but needs an appropriate context by which it can be triggered (Smelser 2004: 34). In the novel, the traumatic event becomes contextualised by Liam's suicide. Thus, the present incident acts as a prompt for the emergence of past memories. Hence, the traumatic experience is situated between the past and the present. Still, Veronica's attempt at reconstructing the past from bits and pieces of memories, clues and physical evidence, transpires to be just a partial redeemer (Ewins 2011: 136).

The connection between past and present as well as their reference to the concept of place are the "literary quintessence of an Irish idea of progress" (Medyńska 1999: 64). According to Medyńska, space is the only dimension which links here and there, enduring the passage of time. Therefore, by using places to encode and decode history, Irish society may go forward and at the same time keep looking backwards at its cultural heritage. Veronica belongs to the generation of Irish people who throughout her lives witness rapid changes in the society on the basis of what happens in their families. Her grandparents

and her mother still represent the old social order, heavily dependent on Catholic morality. The protagonist as a child still could experience the total acceptance of the Church's role in society with an overwhelming "superiority of the spiritual over the material" since still in 1960s the position of Catholicism in Ireland was still unquestionable (Penet after Girvin 2008: 146). It wasn't until the last decade of the twentieth century that the secularisation of society has taken a more advanced form. The Catholic Church's loss of reputation has coincided, or as other critics claims been boosted, by the sudden economic growth (Smyth 2012: 134, Penet 2008: 148). The life of the Celtic Tiger has triggered the necessity for defining Irish nationality anew, which was preceded by the collapse of the old system of values, which, according to Smyth, is still an unfinished process (2012: 134). Therefore it comes as no surprise that such topics remain popular in Irish prose, like in Enright's novel. As Veronica states at some point: "It was 1981. Nothing had happened yet, in Ireland – is that a funny thing to say? Nothing had happened yet in my life except the need to get out of it" (Enright 2007: 88). The narrator does not experience any substantial changes in the mentality of Irish society, but she does not appreciate the way her parents live and is already aware that her own life will take a new form. As a representative of a new generation, she cherishes physicality, individuality and materiality as key values of the contemporary world.

A drive towards individualism and a shift from spirituality to materialism is epitomised in the narrative by the focus on the body and concrete places. For Eleanor Birne, even "history is tangible, physical" since the narrator while dealing with the past and her brother's death, puts an emphasis on Liam's body together with his clothes (2007: 30). As an adult, Veronica, contrary to her mother, has control over her private life, especially her body. She decides when she wants to have sex with her husband, and how many children she intends to bear. The protagonist's profession is also important in this respect, because as a journalist writing on interior designs, she perceives places materialistically, taking notice of physical details, their spatial organization: "This is my house too. I was inside it, as it grew; as the dining room was knocked into the kitchen, as the kitchen swallowed the back garden" (Enright 2007: 4). "I do not think we remember our family in any real sense. We live in them, instead (...) you remember different places you have seen" (Enright 2007: 66, 260) is the way Veronica perceives reality. Thus, for her in remembering her brother helps her remember the places that they visited. One of the most significant is for the narrator the road to the Dublin airport and the car park before the terminal: "While I am doing this – my mute screaming in my convertible Saab in the airport car park in the rain – I can feel Liam laughing at me. Or I feel his absence laughing at me" (Enright 2007: 158). Veronica through the proximity of the space where she would pick up her brother from the airport, recalls that he used to laugh at her pedantic

parking of the car. This particular memory is encoded in this place. By this token, Veronica's memory is a "mental map" of places which are directly related to appropriate moments of her past (Enright 2007: 158). By driving through the city, the narrator is able to decode the messages hidden in the spatial dimension of Dublin and in this way bring back the memories. The fact that she experiences the city through the perspective of the car window, means that sometimes: "[t]here is no shift between my mind's eye and my real eye." (Enright 2007: 158). The memory thanks to the connection with concrete places is tangible and subjective. This appears to be typical for Enright's fiction since history and memory are always rooted in physical objects, either the body or the place (Ewin 2011: 142). By this token, seemingly abstract concepts become tangible, and thus more accessible. The emphasis on the individuality of memories breaks with the Irish traditional treatment of a collective and objectified memory as key to understanding the past (Graham 1997: 193). What also changes is that previously the public memory was stored in the landscape and now the place for embodying history has been shifted to the space of the city.

The depiction of Dublin in the novel varies according to the times presented. When Veronica tells the story of her grandparents, the capital is described in an organized, linear and realistic way: "I is half past ten on a Tuesday night. It is Lent. A few profane couples drift out to the Gresham or the Savoy Grill to take the tram or start to walk home, but otherwise the town is quiet" (Enright 2007: 30). The detailed descriptions of the public places make Dublin seem a provincial, sleepy town, where not much is happening. Such events as Easter Monday when "every car in Dublin is making for Fairyhouse" appear to be an exception to the usual, slow pace of life (Enright 2007: 105). Therefore, a contrast to the contemporary capital is significant. Together with the city changes the narration from the third to the first person. The dynamics of Dublin are further exerted with the fragmentariness of the spatial descriptions:

I am in a state of almost perfect fear as I work towards the centre of town; looking over my shoulder to check the emptiness in the car behind me, entering streets I have never entered before, always tending towards the sea. I hang on the steering wheel, and brake too hard for the lights. I clip the kerb of a central island, and when the jolt clears my head I find that we are already, the car and me, on our way north, along the curve of Dublin Bay (...) Before I know it I am out on Constitution Hall facing a low wall with a grey Virgin Mary standing on the grey, round world, but it is not the fortress I remember, with the buses in rows at the top. The bus station is further down the hill, though it is on the height, and as I sink towards the river I see, on my left, the church where we were caught robbing candles. (Enright 2007: 149-150)

The city presented from the car's perspective bears no resemblance to *the flaneur* stroll so popular in the first decades of the twentieth century. The

concept with time started to determine the person's identity not just as a leisurely strolling around the city, but as a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world (Kristeva 1991: 135). In Enright's novel, the leisurely walk has been replaced with a speedy window sightseeing, during which the images change too quickly for the visitors to take a glance at everything. This happens to Veronica too when she drives a car. She unconsciously picks places which either stand out as new or are familiar to her because of the private memories they store. The city seen through the perspective of the car well illustrates the quick pace of life in the times of the Celtic Tiger.

Another epitome of the contemporary Dublin is the airport<sup>29</sup>, which symbolically destroys Ireland's isolationism and further facilitates the country's "economic success and increased internationalisation" (Penet 2008: 149). For Veronica, the airport acts as a symbolic link with her brother, whereas after his death it becomes a place of escapism from her life in Dublin. Veronica devotes a lot of attention in her narrative to the space of the London Gatwick Airport, which according to Birne, is "a temporary, in-between, suspended place, a purgatory, full of lost souls" (2007: 31). The protagonist depicts the airport as a city existing on its own, regardless of the geographical divisions which do not apply to it: "This is not England. This is the flying city. This is extra time" (Enright 2007: 255). Veronica perceives the airport as a space where time stops, thus a place where one may metaphorically make a pause in one's own life to run away from everyday problems even for a while. A similar function is served by "a hotel in Gatwick airport where you could live for the rest of your life. You could stay there until they found you, and they would never find you (...) being in a Gatwick hotel does not mean that you have arrived. On the contrary, it means that you have plenty left to go" (Enright 2007: 254-255). The in-between location of the hotel and the airport allow for the feeling of suspension in time and space. The protagonist cherishes the moment of being completely lost to the world, the state from which she does not intend to be withdrawn. The state results also from the flight, which disturbs the link between the distance and the amount of time needed to pass it. At the airport, people do not feel that they have already left their place of departure, neither can they fully sense the moment of arrival. The effect of time-space compression, the narrator experiences, results in such places being perceived in a rather unrealistic way, as the basic concepts of space and time do not apply to it. This justifies the narrator's fragmented and chaotic depiction of the places she occupies, as they require a new mode of expression.

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<sup>29</sup> The aerial metaphore is telling especially with reference to Ryanair as the most astounding example of the Republic's economy getting international. As Brewster notes, this company has not only revolutionized the aviation industry in Ireland, but more importantly it has introduced a new quality of cheap flights in whole Europe (2009: 17-18).

Anne Enright in her novel *The gathering* by providing a contrast between the old and the new Ireland, tries to depict the rapidness of changes occurring in the country during the last decades of the twentieth century. In order to do so, the writer takes a glance at the past generation of Irish people who are still deeply immersed in the ideology of Catholic morality. The new generation represented by Veronica are already aware of the negative sides of such a blind obedience as practiced by people like her mother. The criticism revolves around the silent acceptance of the society towards the physical abuse of women and children. What happens to Liam is not less shocking to what Veronica's mother allows to be done to her body. The new generations seem to break with Catholic doctrines, choosing physicality, individuality and materialism as their values. The abandonment of traditional moral stances involves a shift in the importance of memory from the collective to the personal. The mental transformation of society overlaps with the economic growth and the fast development of the capital. Dublin becomes a modern metropolis which more often than not is experienced from the perspective of the car window. The city, albeit new, does not lose its link with the past. However, the past here is not perceived in historical or nationalistic terms, but as a collection of individual memories decoded in the space of the city. Finally, the novel responds to the appearance of spatial novelties in the structure of the city by devoting some attention to the specificity of the airports. Although they are formally ascribed to particular metropolises, airports constitute a separate entity, for which the conventional perceptions of time and space are irrelevant. The ubiquity of such places draws attention to the need for going beyond the already known conventions to appropriately depict them.

#### 4.4. Between boosting and flagging economy – contemporary Dublin in Anne Enright's *The forgotten waltz*<sup>30</sup>

A step into the contemporaneity of Dublin has its follow up in Enright's latter text *The forgotten waltz* (2011). The writer seems to continue her fight with stereotypical images by setting this novel in the last years of the Celtic Tiger. This time the city is inhabited by a new generation of affluent professionals, who find themselves in an adulterous relationship. Contrary to the previous narrative, the past appears to be non-existent, with the image of the New Dublin as a fragmented city, void of history. The new values introduced in *The*

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<sup>30</sup> This part was published in the form of an article titled: "The question of Northside realism's validity in contemporary Dublin: The fiction of Dermot Bolger and Anne Enright", in: Liliana Sikorska, Anna Chudzińska-Parkosadze, Joanna Jarząb, Marta Frątczak (eds.) *Clash(es) and new beginnings in literature and culture*, Poznań: Wydział Anglistyki UAM, 205-216.

*gathering*, here seem to be misused by the characters, who become too reliant on materialism and individualism. The economic crash, which at some point reaches the capital, not only changes the city's perspectives but also brings a solution to the unresolved love affair. Thus, the novel works against a common assumption that the economic decline results directly in the deterioration of lifestyle. What the narrative dislodges is the positive side of the crisis that allows its characters to become less money-oriented and to concentrate more on the quality of their family lives. Therefore, the first symptoms of the economic decline visible in the city enable its inhabitants, previously displaced in its fierce rhythm, to regain their sense of place.

The narrative delivered by Gina, the protagonist, starts in the year 2007. In the first part of the novel the narrator goes five years back to the beginning of her love affair with Sean. The story is told in the first person, the narration being limited exclusively to Gina's perspective. She meets Sean on her niece's birthday party. He is together with his daughter, Evie, and wife, Aileen. Gina is alone because her husband, Conor, has not yet returned from work. It turns out that Sean is a neighbour of Gina's sister, Fiona, who lives in a house at the seaside near Dublin. Gina lives in one of the suburbs of the capital working in the city centre in an IT company. Her affair develops unexpectedly during a conference in Montreux in which Sean participates. Further meetings take place in the different hotels or car parks. When her mother suddenly dies, Gina realises how she has neglected her family. As a result, she intends to bring the adulterous relationship to an end. The second part of the novel, which presents the further events till 2009, shows that together with the end of the Celtic Tiger, Gina's former lifestyle finishes as well. Having realised that she loves Sean, the narrator leaves her husband and moves to her late mother's house, which she fruitlessly tries to sell. Consequently, she begins her new life with Sean in the house, quits her job and finds a new one. Despite all the difficulties and a lack of understanding from her sister, Gina manages to make contact with Evie who fluctuates between the two parents.

So far the most recognizable image of New Dublin has been proposed by Dermot Bolger, according to whom the city has become decentralised due to the rapid development of the suburban areas. For him, the centre has been moved to the margins of the city, as it is there where the majority of life takes place (Ryan 2002: 155-156). This goes in accordance with sociological observations on the current trends in urban areas, whose suburbanization leads to social instability (Hall 1966: 178). The city centre, which in Bolger's novels becomes desolate, ceases to play an important part in the narratives. The industrial routine imposed on the characters of *The night shift* (1985) makes them indifferent to the city in which they live. It is not until the end of the novel that the protagonist realises:

He never before had time to pause and examine the place. There were so many changes from his childhood that he could hardly recognize some of the streets. He had grown up in this city and yet had never really bothered to examine it and now it was moving past him and he felt strangely homeless. As he stared at the new neon displays over the fast food huts and video arcades he seemed no longer certain of the sense of place he had taken for granted. (1985: 128)

Bolger's Dublin does not change overnight. It is the people who do not participate in the process of change, and who thus find the place alienating when they finally notice how indifferent they have been to what is happening around them. Even if Bolger's characters believe themselves to be familiar with the place they inhabit, at a certain point of the narrative it sinks into them that they have lived under a misapprehension, as it is the case in *The journey home* (2003): "I thought I knew North Country Dublin until that night" (Bolger 2003: 216). The northern part of the county, which with time is taken over by the city's suburbs, is of major concern to the writer, who was brought up there (Bolger 1988: 7). Not much connection is ever made between the old Dublin and the new districts, with the inner city becoming only a place for excessive drinking, accidental sex or aimless roaming within its alienating space (Smyth 1997: 77). The treatment of the city space as an embodiment of the id, the place where civilised behaviour is no longer restricted, is, according to John Short, a common trope of modern imagination (1991: 47). However, Bolger is more interested in suburban areas treated as the "invisible places" (Bolger 1988: 7). The new districts, which expanded over the regions formerly constituting the countryside, have for a long time "inhabited a penumbral position in the social world" (Short 1991: 52) posing a substantial problem to intellectuals: "this was neither country nor city – these streets possessed no place in the school books and poems we learnt at our wooden desks" (Bolger 1988: 7). What Bolger tries to do with his fiction is to draw attention to the fact that social as well as cultural consciousness have failed to respond to the rapidness of the city's growth. The void of representation of this space in literature is to be filled with his narratives, which allude to the common Dublin myths still prevailing in the society's awareness. Among them the most recognizable in his novels appears to be a traditional division of Dublin into a poor North and wealthy South as well as the common presumption that the contemporary capital is inhabited exclusively by newcomers, lacking real Dubliners (Bolger 1988: 9). However, Bolger's negative picture of an alien city is more often than not treated by critics as unintentionally validating the traditional notion of the capital as opposed to the real Ireland represented by rural areas (Kiberd 1995: 609).

What differs Enright from Bolger's vision of the city is, first and for all, her positive approach towards Dublin's development. Her characters find

themselves easily in the new spatial organization of the capital, shifting between the centre and the suburbs. Their love affair well illustrates the hectic pace of life they lead, being always on the move, having quick meetings on their way to or back from work. Therefore, the New Dubliners represent a generation of Irish people who have managed to succeed in the capital, concentrating predominantly on their professional careers. No longer pushed for money, they are more materialistic in their needs – rejecting traditional Irish values, with the family no longer in the centre of attention. Their consumerism meets with the disapproval of people outside the capital, who are jealous of: “the house, the car, the holidays in the sun. [They] take it personally, because [they]’re Irish” (Enright 2011: 32). The envy expressed by the people from the countryside highlights their inferiority complex with reference to the inhabitants of the capital, as other regions feel economically marginalised. Dublin, which used to be similarly poor and struggling with unemployment, now emerges as a metropolitan centre, therefore, the envy formerly targeted at such cities as London, now is turned on Dublin.

John Wilson Forster in his critical work on Irish literature states that: “the fiction writer’s preoccupation with place is a preoccupation with the past without which Irish selfhood is apparently inconceivable” (1991: 30) His approach towards fiction does not apply, however, to Enright’s presentation of Dublin. The city present in the text seems to be devoid of its rich background. No reference to a more distant past than a few years as well as a lack of architectural landmarks of the capital make the city seem historically deficient. Hansson argues that Enright’s novel destabilizes the traditional values connected with the national image of Ireland: the countryside, Catholicism or family. By consciously avoiding these aspects in her novel, the writer demythologises the Irish capital as dependent on these values. By this token, her text becomes post-national, as well as post-feminist and post-Freudian (2009: 222). The gaze is focused solely on the new architecture of the city: shopping centres, business centres, hotels, airports, car parks and the suburbs<sup>31</sup>. Such a fragmentary portrayal of the place goes in accordance with de Certeau’s treatment of stylistic figures in relation to spatial practices. The scholar distinguishes two contradictory treatments of places described by the means of synecdoche and asyndeton. The space described with such practices is respectively “transformed into enlarged singularities and separate islands” (1984: 101). In the case of the novel, the perspective on the city seems to re-

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<sup>31</sup> This is not the first novel in which Enright presents Dublin as a modern city with no reference to its past. In *The wig my father wore* (1995) Dublin is limited just to two places where the majority of the plot takes place. The protagonist moves between her parents’ house and the building belonging to the television company where she works. Such a fragmented picture of the city makes the protagonist seem displaced and lost between the spaces, which constitute separate entities.

flect the asyndeton-like spatial practice, since Dublin is treated as a heap of separate entities, having hardly any connection with one another.

This is clearly visible in the instance of Gina who, although living in Dublin, divides her life between the space of the old centre, where she works or meets with Sean, and her house, where she plays “the suburban couples game” (Enright 2011: 52). These two places stay in stark contradiction to her life at home being predictable and mundane, whereas her stay in the city is filled with inspiring and unpredictable moments. Her double life illustrates that Gina does not accept the traditional approach towards marriage as a responsibility. Conor remains blind to what is happening to his wife, which just infuriates her: “how could he be with me all evening, eat Indian takeaway, watch ‘The Sopranos’, and not realise the turmoil I was in?” (Enright 2011: 66). Her late arrivals at home remain unnoticed by the husband, whose presence in the house reveals only “the glow, upstairs, of Conor’s laptop” (Enright 2011: 70). The lack of interest of her workaholic husband together with her constant trips on business produce many opportunities for the clandestine relationship to thrive. First they choose hotels, each time a different one: “we discussed on each occasion, the decor; the pictures on the walls and the colour of the carpet: a hearty, natural brown in the Gresham and a strangely non-existent green in the airport hotel, where all the guests were on their way through” (Enright 2011: 62). With time they move beyond the walls of the hotels and choose anonymous open spaces such as car parks, especially when they are pressed for time: “we were both quite drunk and end up dragging each other into the Drury Street car park for another endless kiss in some concrete corner that smells of petrol and the rain, with the sound of people wandering through the far levels and the squawk of found cars answering the remote” (Enright 2011: 69). Interestingly enough, they do not avoid people, feeling safe in the crowded capital, their private lives being kept spatially separate from the city centre. Neither do they feel afraid to introduce their love game into their professional lives. Sean as a consultant is employed by Gina’s company to organize a campaign for Poland. As a result her meetings with Sean become official with the: “verifiable truth, reconstructible through emails here on my computer, calendar entries, phone calls made and received” (Enright 2011: 47). This clear division between the family life spatially represented by the suburban interior of the house and the professional as well as social life ascribed to the centre of the city follows a new way of approaching the theme of the contemporary Dublin in Irish literature. The generation of New Dubliners approach sex as being finally released from the moral constraints of Catholicism. From being a sin it transforms in the postmodern capital into a determinant of a relationship with money. The love affair appears to be articulated through expenses such as a hotel room, a dinner in the city centre or a trip abroad (Slattery 2003: 141).

Such an overtly optimistic acceptance of the novel rhythm of life dictated by the New Dublin, does not leave the protagonist without any negative consequences. Her negligent treatment of her family results in a lack of communication between her and the mother as well as the sister. She realises her mistake only when her mother passes away with no close person to help her. However, the city which is supposed to have a destructive effect on Gina, also brings a positive change to her privacy: "I felt I had killed my life, and no one was dead. On the contrary, we were all twice as alive" (Enright 2011: 36). Contrary to Bolger's negative depiction of sexual relationships in the city, the affair does not end at sex but with time takes the form of a close relationship. Moreover, it allows Gina to look at her marriage from a new perspective, noticing that her relationship with Conor is based on materialistic needs. Only then does one realise that Enright is playing with the common misconception of an affair always being a destructive force and marriage as the opposite of it.

The changes taking place in Gina's life coincide with the onset of the economic decline in Ireland. At first sight, the crisis worsens the financial situation of the characters, with the mother's house for sale as a *signum temporis*, whereas Fiona's husband, Shay becomes unemployed. What is more, Gina finds herself in a difficult position, since her husband: "is now fighting with me about money (...) in fact everyone is fighting with me about money: my sister too" (Enright 2011: 147). Sean's situation is not any better because despite the divorce he has to sleep from time to time in Enniskerry not to lose the right to the house, which brings the protagonist to a conclusion that: "you think it is about sex, and then you remember the money" (Enright 2011: 153). Nonetheless, the couple are ready to pay the cost of their relationship since for them money has lost its importance. What they both gain is a new start in life, symbolised by the change of the place. Thanks to the lack of interest in the mother's house, Gina and Sean do not have to depend on the public spaces of hotel rooms or car parks but start living together and creating their own private space: "I wanted a new life (...) that autumn with my mother's house suspended, like a dream, (...) I sensed there was nothing under our feet" (Enright 2011: 149). No longer suffering from a lack of space for her relationship, Gina begins to explore the city anew. Her lonely strolls, mainly at night, show the city from a different angle. Once thriving with energy, now Dublin seems to have fallen asleep for the winter time: "I expected Dublin to be bedlam, but the port tunnel was so empty and pure it felt like the future, and the quays, when I surfaced in the dark of the city centre, were deserted. I imagined the traffic spreading like an aftershock, washing up in a dirty rim in the foothills of the Dublin mountains, where the pure snow began" (Enright 2011: 151-152). The emptiness of the city for Gina, who has always known the capital as abounding in crowds, traffic and noise regardless of whether it's day or night, is a novel experience. The city like a living organism at some point has to re-

duce the tempo and, likewise to its citizens, rest from the frenzy of the Celtic Tiger boom. So does the protagonist, who devotes more attention to her new partner, spending more and more time at home.

Moreover, the fact that the mother's house is situated further from the city centre makes the narrator rediscover a lost connection between the countryside and the capital:

I hadn't been on a bus for years. And I liked it. I liked looking from this childhood height, seeing the gardens all redone, with their flagstones and big planters; the window boxes along Rathgar Road and cars guarding the gravel. The passengers were changed, too; they had funky haircuts and better clothes and they were all plugged into something, texting or listening to their headphones. We were across the canal before I realised that none of them were speaking English, and I liked that too. (Enright 2011: 142)

By commuting to work, Gina has time to rebuild the link between the space of her private life and her professional career. This also proves that the two seemingly contradictory spaces of rural and urban Ireland do not exist separately from each other but rather are interdependent. The narrator realises that the Dublin society is undergoing a process of transition, with many immigrants constituting its considerable part. Her positive approach towards the growing population of non-Irish citizens works as a comment on the negative myth of Dublin as a foreign city. By rejecting the old stereotypes of the capital, the writer concentrates more on the superficiality of the changes which occur in the Irish society. The city does advance economically but the mentality of its citizens in certain aspects remains reactionary to the cosmopolitan lifestyle presented in the narrative. Sean, who spent some time abroad, no longer feels in Ireland at home: "He talked about Boston where he did his MBA. Two years in America makes you an outsider for the rest of your life" (Enright 2011: 99). The education obtained abroad may add up to the success in his professional career, but it also makes him a permanent outsider even in the urban community. The stereotypical approach towards the quality of Dublin's higher education goes back to the first half of the twentieth century, when de Valera's policy was very restrictive. The economic and educational stagnation in the country forced many people to seek refuge abroad. The negative image of Dublin universities has survived till the contemporary times (Jones 1997: 52) and seems to permeate in Enright's novel as well. Dublin's society, probably due to its people's inferiority complex, seems to reject those who instead of studying in the capital opt for a foreign education – as providing more possibilities than the national one.

This seemingly tolerant and cosmopolitan capital, which on many occasions facilitated the development of the affair, now appears to be displeased with Gina's life choices. She is taken aback by the lack of acceptance for her

new relationship among her relatives: “the whole world was disgusted with me and worn out by my behaviour. The entire population of Dublin felt compromised, as they felt it keenly” (Enright 2011: 139). The community, which on the surface level seems to welcome the European style of living that the capital offers, turns out to be outraged with Gina’s decisions concerning her divorce and her new life with Sean. He is scorned for sacrificing his relations with Evie for the sake of his private happiness. As Jameson argues convincingly, more often than not post-modern cities evolve so quickly that its inhabitants find it impossible to comprehend new reality. Brought up in the old concept of the city’s space, they do not “possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace” (1993: 199). The lack of mental representation of the new city space results in the society misunderstanding the rules which govern the novel reality. Having no control over what people think of the relationship, for Gina the most problematic remains her ambiguous relations with Sean’s daughter. As she states at the end of the novel: “The snow will melt, the houses will sell – one house, or the other – and Evie will grow or be otherwise lost to me” (Enright 2011: 230). Looking into the foreseeable future, the narrator knows that the economic crisis will finally end, whereas Evie’s lost trust in her family and Gina cannot be restored. Using the space of Dublin as a synecdoche for the whole country, one may come to a conclusion that Ireland economically has great potential. Since it has already managed to become a thriving state at an astounding pace, it can continue to develop further. However, the people in its society appear to be unprepared for the changes in the lifestyle that the economic advancement imposes on them. The traditional Irish values violated by the characters’ pursuit of happiness seem too selfish for the rest of the conservative community, with the debate over divorce still being a controversial issue in Dublin, let alone the rest of the country.

To conclude, *The forgotten waltz* by Anne Enright remains to be one of the few female presentations of contemporary Dublin. Her novelistic treatment of the topic seems to be a response to the former images of the capital, especially the one presented by Dermot Bolger. The suburbanization of Dublin is the focus of attention of both writers; however, Enright does not reject the importance of the inner city, but rather tries to make the asyndetonian picture of Dublin more synecdochian in its structure. Therefore, she attempts at rebuilding the connection between the suburbs and the centre by drawing attention to their mutual dependence. Her rather balanced depiction of the life in the twentieth-century metropolis, with its all benefits and flaws, is one of the first attempts to respond to the economic growth and decline in Ireland. The novel carries also a more universal tone as it well illustrates the sense of instability that contemporary societies have to experience. The insecurity is not limited to the area of the economy but rather affects all spheres of life. Those changes connected with the economic advancement are easily acceptable, whereas the

new style of life resulting from it does not get applauded, especially from the Irish society which remains relatively conservative.

The comparative analysis of Anne Enright's *The gathering* and *The forgotten waltz* reveals her prevailing need to treat Dublin as the main conceptual point of her novels, whose aim is to reflect the rapid changes occurring in Irish society. These two narratives, due to the time of their being written, deal with a novel image of Dublin in Irish literature – as a Celtic Tiger centre. The New Dublin, although in some aspects it alludes to previous presentations of the city, emerges as still largely unknown to the literary world. The chaotic and fragmented descriptions, with many images overlapping one another, signify the void of an appropriate narrative device to fully depict the city, which is constantly on the move. What Enright does is to try presenting the city from the perspective of a contemporary citizen, namely, from the inside of a car, a bus, or as a collage of unrelated images. Moreover, she concentrates on new places, which indicate the capital's architectural progress such as the spread of the suburbs or the appearance of the airport. What differentiates these two texts is the presence of the past in the former and a lack of it in the latter narrative. Dublin from *The gathering*, albeit no longer reminding of important historical moments, remains the space for storing personal memories, whereas in *The forgotten waltz* the capital loses even this function, becoming a city of today and of tomorrow without any reference to the past. This shift in the perception of the capital well corresponds with the fact that the Irish society instead of staying immersed in the past begins to look forwards into the future. The disparate direction the characters take in both works is presupposed by the alteration in their moral stances. The contrast between the traditional values and the new approach towards life is clearly delineated in *The gathering*, where the new generation has just started to follow a new path based on materialism and individualism. In this respect, *The forgotten waltz* acts as a sequel to the previous narrative, developing the theme on the new mode of behaviour among New Dubliners with a more detailed insight into its consequences. The Irish society, which for too long was under the overwhelming influence of Catholic morality, favouring family and marriage stability at all costs, now seems to have reached the opposite extreme, with a new hedonism and individualism as novel approaches towards life. This being the case, Enright's fiction shows that Irish society is undergoing a process of modernization as the people's decisions are characterised by a lack of balance and anxiety.

The works of Glenn Patterson and Anne Enright cast some light on the growing regard for urban themes in Irish literature. Despite the fact that the increase in interest on the studies of the city and its space falls mostly on the middle of the twentieth century, Ireland has had to wait till the last decade of the same century to experience the surge of attention on this aspect of the

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country's life among Irish writers. There is a great discrepancy between the treatment of this topic in Ireland and Northern Ireland, which is determined by the differences in their cultural heritage and the political situation between the two states. Dublin as a major city on the island and the first capital in this land has gained much more attention in history than a provincial Belfast. The gap in representation results in the city lacking continuity in its history of development, which many contemporary novelists are now trying to fill. Such a trend in Irish writing justifies a statement that similarly to the topic of the city, many other aspects of everyday life have not been covered before. Consequently, contemporary prose more often than not instead of following current affairs in the country, first tries to give a voice to issues which for too long have been underplayed or suppressed. Those writers who manage to do both, as Enright does, have to fluctuate in their narratives between the past and the present. Patterson is in a dissimilar situation, as he appears to be one of the first Northern Irish novelists to constantly comment on the changes in the city. Belfast, which has sparked the interest of many a writer due to the infamous Troubles, now waits for the rediscovery of its apparently rich heritage as well as a more contemporary depiction of a city going global. Despite the differences in the literary heritage between Dublin and Belfast, there is a visible tendency towards a broader and more positive depiction of cities on both sides of the border, with the urban theme beginning to thrive in Ireland as well as Northern Ireland.



## Conclusion

The literary analysis of the representation of spaces and places depicted in the novels of the chosen Irish writers in many aspects signifies the processes of change the novelists have experienced throughout their literary careers. In some cases their attitude towards the place described has altered, sometimes it is also the place itself which undergoes a process of change. But not always is it possible to decipher whether the alteration is a conscious decision. Not many authors can pride themselves on being auto discursive enough to be capable of looking critically at their own literary output. At this point it is worth to go back to George Moore as one of those exceptional examples of a writer who is famous not only for rewriting his own novels, but more importantly for a highly critical approach towards his own social class and homeland (Noel 1991: 113-115). In this way, Moore throughout his life expressed his concern for Ireland in his literary works, but especially in his autobiographical *Hail and Farewell* (1913). This text to a certain extent embodies “a mock-heroic quest to create a holy book of Irish literature” (Grubgeld 2004: 146) since the writer comments on the literary achievements of his predecessors as well as his contemporaries. Despite the positive reviews, the literary society did not appreciate the ironic tone of Moore’s work, especially the representatives of the Irish Literary Revival, who taking the accusations personally started to take revenge on him<sup>1</sup> (Frazer 2000: 394). For the writer, the essence of Irishness, contrary to what the Revivalists believed, does not reside in the Gaelic mythology or the family lineage, but in the places of everyday life. Thus, the essence of his novels comprise houses, rural areas and the city as the three types of spaces dominant in the Irish consciousness. Moore as the precursor of modernism in form, was also able to envisage which way Irish literature should go with regard to the search for national identity. It comes as no surprise that the trope of the house, the countryside and the city have remained dominant in the Irish novel of the twentieth cen-

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, Adrian Frazer refers to W. B. Yeats spreading gossip about Moore’s alleged impotence, or his interest in women: “Moore has never has a love affair with a lady, but always with women of his own class” (2000: 396). This and other instances are to show how Moore’s critical approach towards the Irish literary heritage was misunderstood by such people as Yeats, who found it impossible to distance themselves from the Literary Revival. Thus, the accusations addressed to the movement were taken as a personal assault.

ture as well as beyond. Still, the example of George Moore shows how long it takes for people to accept the need for change in their perspective towards literary representations, let alone other aspects of social mentality such as collective identity.

Nonetheless, all the novels analyzed in the thesis touch upon the issue of a gradual process of alteration in the literary representation of space. The origin of the tropes discussed may be traced back to the construction of modern Ireland and its national identity at the beginning of the twentieth century, the years of George Moore's last works. The big house as the epitome of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy and the English class of landlords, the West of Ireland as the essence of Irishness, Dublin as the centre of corruption, or Belfast as the embodiment of Unionism are the stereotypes behind which is hidden the concept of Irishness based on the Gaelic culture and Catholic morality. However, these are not the only spatial representations which were created during the twentieth century. The anti-myth of the countryside as a backward province started to be contrasted with modern urban life. This reaction against the rural ethos aimed at demythologising the countryside and providing readers with naturalistic accounts of the Irish countryside, which after the famine had left its inhabitants with little, if anything apart from unemployment and poverty. The desire for a liberation from restrictive Catholic morality became yet another reason for people to leave the rural areas, considered to be conservative in comparison to the city, or even to leave the state in search of work and better living conditions. The protectionist politics of the Republic in the first half of the twentieth century has further strengthened the already existing stereotype of Dublin with its higher education considered to be of poor quality. Consequently, it has become a custom among young, aspiring Irishmen to study abroad. While Dublin has been suffering from the stagnation of academic life, Belfast has for a long time struggled with the Troubles as well as its cultural aftermath in the form of an infamous image of the capital as the centre of sectarianism and violence. All the images discussed in the analytical chapters encapsulate the process of the creation of national identity and its gradual transformation. What all the writers do with these images is to try deconstructing them by providing the readers with alternative narratives, which question the spatial misconceptions. Only by this token can the new quality in the national consciousness be built, namely, based on the diversity of individual perceptions on the spaces and places of everyday life.

The analysis of spatial perception and representation in the contemporary Irish novel, no matter if one takes the house, the countryside or the city into consideration, brings to a tentative conclusion that the Irish individual and national consciousness appears directed at diversity. The question arises whether this change should be approached as a value common for all cultures of the "liquid modern world" (Bauman 2011: 93), or if the social al-

terations discussed in the thesis ought to be ascribed solely to the idiosyncrasy of the Irish history, tradition and mentality (Parker 2009: 3). The truth lies on both sides since some of the changes observable in the Irish and Northern Irish societies belong to the more general tendencies discernible within the Western culture, if not the whole world. All members of the European Union once having entered the organization sooner or later experience economic development, increased internationalisation and mass migration. These phenomena more often than not are treated as part and parcel of post-modern times. What can differentiate one state from another is the extent to which the society accepts these changes and how people react to them, positively or negatively. Additionally, the process of transformation, though stimulated by similar determinants, looks differently depending on the initial level of economic development of a given country as well as the range of social aspects affected by it. Therefore, the case of Ireland and its two states is distinctive on many levels. The phenomenon of the Celtic Tiger, so widely examined by sociologists and economists, brings us to one salient enunciation that the rapidity of the growth as well as the fragility of this process has been unprecedented in the whole of Europe (Fagan 2009: 112). This is mainly ascribed to the fact that the period of economic development in Ireland has coincided with a great cultural and political transformation, and therefore the country has turned out to be not stable enough to maintain the high level reached in the 1990s. Kieran Keohane and Carmen Kuhling by calling the Celtic Tiger “Ireland’s ‘Great Hunger’ for development” well summarise the idiosyncrasy of this phenomenon as embedded in the culture and tragic history of the island (2009: 123). This is the case with the whole contemporary process of transformation in Ireland, thus apart from universal aspects typical for the European Union, more important appear those which make the Irish case unique. The novels discussed in the dissertation point to one dominant issue present in all three analyzed types of spatial representation: that space has remained one of the most crucial aspects in the construction of the individual and the collective identity.

The treatment of the domestic space as a trope in the Irish novel has changed from being implemented to comment on social problems connected with the collective identity to the more private matters of the individual self. In the earlier works, William Trevor and Jennifer Johnston use domestic space to depict the unresolved issue of the Protestant minority in The Republic of Ireland. Either of the writers refers to the specific type of the domestic interior, namely, the Big House ethos. Their works rest on this great literary tradition in order to provide Irish Protestants with a voice they have been denied after the partition. This does not lead to a biased point of view, as the novels provide an objectified picture of the conflict, tackling the problem from both sides. The writers avoid the issue of blame, tending to concentrate on

innocent people – both Protestants and Catholics, who suffer because of the conflict. Trevor and Johnston point to the necessity for rethinking the complexity of Irish nationality by accepting its plurality. Trevor and Johnston change their interest in the meaning of the domestic space focusing in their later works on the influence of the interior on the everyday life of individual people. The case of memory as embedded in the space of the house remains an essential aspect for both writers, but the individual identity based on these memories is no longer determined by the social background. The situation appears to be reversed, since the emphasis is placed on the individual's experience and memory as the basis for the construction of the collective identity.

The issue of the individual and collective identity appears likewise in the works of John McGahern and Deirdre Madden who focus predominantly on how the memories are encoded and decoded in the Irish landscape. A special relationship between place and memory appears in the narratives of McGahern, as many autobiographical overtones are traceable in his fiction. However, his main concern pertains to the local sense of place as the basis for the collective identity of the whole nation. His works depict a journey from disillusion with the rural ethos back to the Irish countryside as a possible alternative, though determined by the hardship and simplicity of living there. Madden focuses on the way places speak about their inhabitants, with every object being significant in learning the truth about the person's character. The writer tries to go beyond the two polarised representations of the Irish landscape with the myth of the West of Ireland and its anti-myth of being a desolate province, providing rather an objectified picture, similar to McGahern's understanding of the Irish countryside as beautiful and peaceful, but at the same time struggling with economic difficulties. Contemporary novels seem to have finally managed to gain a balanced picture of the Irish countryside which successfully avoids the two extremes, focusing on the new quality of this particular type of space with the growing popularity of ecology and tourism in Ireland.

A similar process of rehabilitation is visible in contemporary representations of the city in Irish literature. Such writers as Glenn Patterson and Anne Enright try to fight the negative images of Belfast and Dublin by showing that the urban space may also provide its inhabitants with a sense of individual and collective identity. Together with the growing importance of urban centres in the Republic of Ireland, Enright provides a positive picture of the capital as a modern city with prospects. Dublin as well as Belfast seem to have finally reached the point of becoming attractive to the newly emerging class of young Irish professionals, who even if they travel abroad, this time do it predominantly on business. Therefore, the space of the city best reflects the rapid changes taking place in both states, since the spatial organization of Dublin and Belfast well adapt to the requirements of the growing inter-nationalisation of the cities

as well as to the increasing consumerism of its citizens. Despite the alleged development of Belfast, Protestants, though living in a state dominated by their denomination, still feel like strangers in their own country. The complexity of the Protestant identity with regard to Irishness remains an unresolved problem even in the twenty-first century. On the one hand, they believe it is their duty to shoulder the responsibility of the partition and the escalation of violence, on the other, they feel dominated by the Catholic ethos, and thus they constantly try to testify their legitimacy. The peace process is gradually producing positive results in the political sense, but it would be a farfetched conclusion to treat the conflict as culturally non-existent.

The reconstruction of individual and national identity is not limited to the process of deconstructing the traditional national ideology in its political sense, but also involves denunciation and transformation of the social mentality. The changes which have already occurred in the Irish and Northern Irish societies are easily noticeable, since there is a great discrepancy between the older generation in the majority of novels epitomised by the parents, and the younger generation of their children. The gradual secularisation of the society results in the appearance of such topics as divorce, homosexuality, love affairs, accidental sex or single parent families. All these new phenomena quickly become part and parcel of everyday life, not only in the urban areas, but in the rural ones as well. One of the positive aspects of this process is the gradual obliteration of denomination as a prerequisite of one's own individual consciousness. Naturally, this change is more visible in the novels whose narratives are situated in the Republic of Ireland. Northern Irish texts tend to distinguish between Protestants and Catholics, even if they represent a lapsed approach towards religion. However, the more recent work of Glenn Patterson already lacks this distinction. At this point the question arises if the literary works still depict what is happening in the social mentality, or to follow Gibbon's line of argument, whether actually it is culture which sometimes pre-determines the existence of new forms of identity being generated and transformed by the literary and cultural representations (1996: 10).

This might be the case of Anne Haverty's latest novel *The free and easy* (2006)<sup>2</sup> whose narrative seems to respond to the majority of aspects, which for a long time have been constituent elements of the Irish inferiority complex. The novel in an interesting way plays with many stereotypical images of an Irishman as well as Ireland itself, touching upon such issues as emigration, education and culture. The protagonist of the novel is a young American of Irish descent, who is sent by his uncle to Ireland. His initial resistance

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<sup>2</sup> This novel could not be included in the main discussion, since for the time being this narrative remains the author's only one set in Ireland. Thus, it does not fit the structural organization of the thesis.

caused by the traditional image of the country is contrasted with what he experiences in Dublin. The city is depicted not only as the capital of a prosperous state, still in the period of the Celtic Tiger, but more importantly, the city transpires to be a cultural centre. The protagonist tells everyone he has arrived from America on business. As the company's representative, he is supposed to invest some money by buying several properties. No one appears to be surprised with this fact, as Dublin has the opinion of being a place well worth investing in. The young man becomes acquainted with a group of artists who show him the city. By this means, the man discovers the cultural side of the capital, which no longer attracts tourists with just its traditional Gaelic images, but rather with modern art. Fascinated by the place, the young man prolongs his stay and later considers remaining in Ireland. His uncle appears satisfied with the outcome of the visit, since he himself misses his motherland. But more importantly, he wanted his nephew to discover his Irish roots and experience the place on his own. This overtly optimistic vision of contemporary Ireland may be treated as a new tendency in Irish literature, which is supposed to actively participate in the process of the national identity's transformation by exerting an influence with such spatial representations on the individual as well as collective perception and imagery.

No matter if the spatial representations in the contemporary Irish novel are limited to reflections of the current situation of the country or include an "imagined community" in Anderson's understanding of the term, still one crucial aspect is present – the ongoing importance of spaces and places in the creation and recreation of the Irish individual and collective identity. Starting with the most elementary topos of the house representing the family unit, and finishing with the city as an epitome of the whole nation, the sense of place remains the most fundamental aspect of the personal and collective consciousness. In the Irish case, this relation has always had and still has a twofold meaning, as apart from the usual attachment to the place of origin, many Irish spaces have become determined by the prevalent denomination. The space of the big houses is unchangingly ascribed to Protestants, so is the region of Ulster. Dublin has become the stronghold of Catholics, similarly to the Irish countryside, whereas Belfast's space, though still marked by the physical traces of the past Troubles period, has already changed significantly, which is visible not only for tourists but also for the inhabitants themselves. Ireland being no longer the "island of saints and sages"<sup>3</sup> has to redefine its national consciousness so that it reflects the transformations the countries of the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland have undergone as states and as societies.

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase refers to James Joyce's *Ireland: Island of saints and sages* (1907).

# Domy, miasteczka, miasta – zmiana w postrzeganiu przestrzeni i miejsca we współczesnych powieściach irlandzkich

## Streszczenie

Niniejsza rozprawa doktorska podejmuje temat percepcji i reprezentacji przestrzeni we współczesnej powieści irlandzkiej pisanej w języku angielskim oraz analizuje znaczenie przestrzeni w konstruowaniu współczesnej tożsamości zarówno jednostkowej, jak i narodowej w kontekście Republiki Irlandzkiej i Irlandii Północnej. Dla lepszego zaprezentowania procesu zmian zachodzących w sposobie przedstawienia przestrzeni praca analizuje po dwa utwory każdego z wybranych pisarzy. Wybór tekstów podyktowany jest chęcią pokazania różnic powstających w przestrzennym odbiorze rzeczywistości na poziomie twórczości autorów. Aby przykłady tekstów ukazujących na zmiany percepcji i wyobrażenia miejsc były jak najbardziej zróżnicowane, pochodzą one od pisarzy różniących się wiekiem, pochodzeniem (tzn. z Republiki Irlandzkiej oraz Irlandii Północnej), a także płcią. Taka literacka kompilacja ma za zadanie wskazać na pewne wspólne tendencje wychodzące poza ramy jednostkowej twórczości, które można zakwalifikować jako występujące we współczesnej powieści irlandzkiej.

Dysertacja ma trzy podstawowe cele. Po pierwsze, skupia się na prezentacji trzech podstawowych typów przestrzeni, jakie można odnaleźć w powieści irlandzkiej: domu, wsi (countryside) i miasta. Po drugie, ukazuje na związek pomiędzy przestrzenią a tożsamością zarówno indywidualną, a także narodową o szczególnym znaczeniu w kontekście irlandzkim. Po trzecie, zakłada, iż poprzez analizę reprezentacji przestrzeni w powieściach irlandzkich można badać proces zmian zachodzących w tożsamości jednostkowej i narodowej Irlandczyków. Diachroniczność badań ma pomóc we wskazaniu różnic czasowych w przestrzennej prezentacji domu, wsi i miasta jako nośników zmian w mentalności Irlandczyków. Struktura pracy odzwierciedla kolejność analizy wymienionych nośników. Rozprawa podzielona jest na cztery rozdziały poprzedzone wstępem. Rozdział pierwszy to rozdział teoretyczny, natomiast pozostałe trzy rozdziały są rozdziałami analitycznymi.

Rozdział teoretyczny przedstawia: historię rozwoju dociekań teoretycznych na temat przestrzeni w ujęciu dwudziestowiecznym, wyjaśnienie pojęcia narodu i narodowości oraz to, jak postrzeganie tego problemu uległo

zmianie od początku do końca dwudziestego wieku, a także zgłębia zagadnienie narodowości w kontekście Irlandii. Analiza ewolucji myśli na temat przestrzeni w dwudziestym wieku wskazuje na dominację dwóch nurtów. Pierwszy, zapoczątkowany fenomenologiczną filozofią bytu Heidegger'a, przez większość stulecia pozostaje w opozycji do socjologicznego podejścia do przestrzeni, wywodzącego się od Marksistowskiej teorii socjalistycznej. Kluczowym dla dalszej analizy jest teoria Henrego Lefebvre, któremu udaje się po części połączyć obydwa kontrastujące ze sobą nurty, stawiając nową tezę na temat nowych przestrzeni, zawartą w książce pt.: *The production of space* (1974). Podejście Lefebvre do przestrzeni pozwala na pokazanie sposobu, w jaki przestrzeń hipotetycznie uczestniczy w kreowaniu jednostkowej oraz zbiorowej tożsamości. Tekst ten stanowi teoretyczną podstawę uzupełnioną o szereg innych teorii przestrzeni z zakresu filozofii, teorii literatury, socjologii czy antropologii, z uwzględnieniem literatury przedmiotu anglo-, niemiecko- i francuskojęzycznych.

Tezy na temat przestrzennej percepcji rzeczywistości, omawiane w pierwszym rozdziale, skupiają się wokół pojęcia tożsamości jednostkowej i zbiorowej. Pojęcie narodu i narodowości negatywnie kojarzone ze skrajnie nacjonalistycznymi ideologiami, których działalność wskazuje na rasizm, antysemityzm czy faszyzm, pochodzi z okresu początku dwudziestego wieku, kiedy to ruchy nacjonalistyczne przybierały najbardziej skrajne formy (Hobsbawm 1992). Zmiana w postrzeganiu pojęcia narodowości zaczęła następować w latach osiemdziesiątych, pod wpływem pojawienia się nowych zjawisk społecznych: nasilającego się procesu globalizacji, internacjonalizacji i masowej migracji (Johnson 2004). Rozwój społeczeństw w stronę nowoczesności, rozumianej jako unifikacja stosunków gospodarczych, wielokulturowość czy wielonarodowość, wywołały dyskusję na temat znaczenia tożsamości narodowej we współczesnym świecie. Kraje zrzeszone w Unii Europejskiej zaczęły pielęgnować swój dorobek narodowy, podkreślając w ten sposób swoją odrębność kulturową w zjednoczonej Europie. Narodowość z ideologii politycznej przekształciła się w świadomość kulturową (Sutherland 2012). Paralelny proces stopniowego odchodzenia od pojęcia narodowości w znaczeniu politycznym można zaobserwować w kontekście Irlandii. Problematykę narodowości irlandzkiej stanowi nie tylko obecny podział społeczeństwa na dwie nacje, ale przede wszystkim odwieczny konflikt pomiędzy dwoma opozycyjnymi ideami tożsamości: irlandzkim nacjonalizmem obywatelskim (civic nationalism) i nacjonalizmem etnicznym (ethnic nationalism). Oprócz tych dwóch kontrastujących ze sobą teorii, pojawia się także trzecia, zakładająca istnienie dwóch nacji w obrębie Irlandii, której początków można upatrywać w okresie Renesansu, kiedy to północno-wschodnie regiony wyspy zostały jako jedyne skolonizowane. Wydzielenie Ulsteru jako miejsca na zawsze podzielonego wyspę na dwie odrębne nacje, czego finalnym rezultatem było wydzie-

lenie się Irlandii Północnej w 1922 roku (English 2006). Dlatego też istnieją przesłanki, aby w badaniach nad Irlandią traktować te dwie społeczności oddzielnie, ponieważ rozwój ich tożsamości zbiorowych szedł, i wciąż idzie, w dwóch odmiennych kierunkach.

W kolejnym etapie pracy dociekanie związku pomiędzy przestrzenią a tożsamością skupia się wokół dzieł literackich. Drugi rozdział zawiera analizę motywu domu na przykładzie powieści Williama Trevora i Jennifer Johnston. Rozważania na temat przestrzeni domu w przypadku obydwu pisarzy zaczynają się od etosu *big house* i znaczenia jego użycia we współczesnej powieści. Gatunek powieści *big house* ma swój początek w dziewiętnastym wieku, kiedy to irlandzkimi pisarzami byli głównie przedstawiciele szlachty, w większości angielskiego albo szkockiego pochodzenia. Przedstawiciele znikającej klasy Anglo-Irlandczyków zaczęli pisać powieści ukazujące życie tej grupy społecznej, jako skupione wokół majątku ziemskiego z domem, stanowiącym centrum ich życia społecznego i kulturalnego. W przypadku Williama Trevora, motyw ten zdaje się pozostawać w jego twórczości, ponieważ zarówno *The silence in the garden* (1989), jak i *Love and summer* (2009) poruszają ten problem. Trevor w swojej wcześniejszej powieści podejmuje szereg tematów związanych z okresem walki Irlandii o niepodległość. Problem obarczania się winą za grzechy niepopelnione bezpośrednio przez bohaterów, a przypisywanych im ze względu na ich pochodzenie, mieszają się z rzeczywistymi zbrodniami popelnionymi przypadkowo. Okres walki o niepodległość jest traktowany przez wielu jako okazja do wyrównywania prywatnych rozrachunków. Dla Trevora nie ma jednoznacznych winnych i ofiar okresu lat dwudziestych. Winę za nakręcanie spirali nienawiści przypisuje obu stronom konfliktu. Dom zyskuje znaczenie symboliczne. Jego powolny rozpad zaznacza zmierzch klasy, którą reprezentuje. Bohaterzy definiujący swoją tożsamość poprzez przestrzeń domu, tylko w jego obrębie czują się bezpiecznie. Tracąc dom, tracą swoją tożsamość. Druga powieść pisarza również dotyka problemu domu. Jednak tym razem motyw *big house* pokazuje, co stało się z majątkami Anglo-Irlandczyków w drugiej połowie dwudziestego wieku. Lokalna społeczność zdołała już zapomnieć o prawowitych właścicielach domów, co wskazuje miejsce kultury *big house* jako należącej już do historii. Chociaż dom przestał być nośnikiem tożsamości zbiorowej, pozostaje on nadal przestrzenią, w obrębie której rodzi się tożsamość jednostkowa bohaterów. Poczucie przemieszczenia (*displacement*) zauważalnego u bohaterów Trevora wskazuje na problemy współczesnego społeczeństwa, którego członkowie tracąc dom czują się wyobcowani we własnym kraju.

Powieści Jennifer Johnston, również analizowane w drugim rozdziale, wskazują na proces zmiany w podejściu pisarki do motywu domu na przestrzeni dwudziestu lat jej twórczości. *Fool's sanctuary* (1987) odnosi się do tradycji *big house*, podejmując wątek konfliktu tożsamości jednostkowej

z tożsamością narodową z perspektywy mniejszości anglo-irlandzkiej. Bohaterzy, reprezentujący zanikającą grupę właścicieli ziemskich, w okresie walki Irlandii o niepodległość zaczynają się dzielić na zwolenników i przeciwników autonomii irlandzkiej. Konflikt przybiera wymiar rodzinny, z przestrzenią domu rozdartą pomiędzy angielskością antenatów i irlandzkością teraźniejszych domowników. W drugiej powieści – *Foolish mortals* (2007) – Johnston porzuca motyw *big house* i przenosi wątek domu w realia współczesnego Dublina. Przestrzeń domu przestaje służyć procesowi budowania tożsamości narodowej, a staje się podstawą do określania tożsamości jednostkowej. W procesie budowania tożsamości kluczową rolę odgrywa dom, który pokazany jest jako miejsce przechowywania wspomnień. Jednak bez pamięci o przeszłości, dom staje się miejscem obcym, bez znaczenia. Miejsce okazuje się być ważnym w życiu człowieka tylko wtedy, gdy zostanie mu nadane znaczenie, kiedy przestrzeń odnosi nas do ważnych wydarzeń z naszego życia. Istotną zmianą w postrzeganiu przestrzeni domu u pisarki jest również wskazanie na relacje przestrzeni wnętrza z przestrzenią na zewnątrz, jako elementów nie kontrastujących ze sobą, a uzupełniających się i tworzących w tym przypadku jedność przestrzeni miejskiej.

Trzeci rozdział zgłębia ujęcie tematu wsi (countryside) na podstawie powieści Johna McGaherna i Dierdre Madden. Badanie genezy powracającego tropu wsi w kontekście irlandzkim jest ściśle powiązane z mitem zachodu Irlandii (The West of Ireland) oraz anti-mitem zacofanej prowincji. Ten pastoralny obraz wsi jako kwintesencji irlandzkości zaczął być krytykowany przez pisarzy pierwszej połowy dwudziestego wieku, przeciwnych idealizowaniu życia wiejskiego i w ten sposób zadających kłam tragicznej historii tych obszarów. Problematykę wsi podejmuje w swojej twórczości John McGahern. Analiza jego utworów może być odczytywana jako swoista wędrówka pisarza, który we wczesnej twórczości odwraca się od wsi, pokazując ją jako ucieleśnienie zakłamaney moralności katolickiej. Jednak swoją ostatnią powieścią powraca jako syn marnotrawny do motywu wsi, zataczając w ten sposób krąg tematyczny w swojej twórczości. W utworze *Amongst women* (1990) ojciec jest postacią odwzorowującą patriarchalny model rodziny, mający pełne wsparcie kościoła katolickiego. Motyw ojca jako ucieleśnienia władzy narzucanej reszcie rodziny przy pomocy przemocy fizycznej lub religii, stanowi jeden z ważniejszych aspektów twórczości pisarza. Jego ambiwalentny stosunek do rodzimej wsi wyraża się we wiecznej wędrówce jego bohaterów ze wsi do miasta i z powrotem. Wieś odzwierciedlająca patriarchalny układ świata zmusza mieszkańców do jej opuszczenia. Jednak paradoksalnie pozostają oni na zawsze związani z miejscem pochodzenia do tego stopnia, by stale do niego powracać. Ten negatywny obraz krajobrazu wiejskiego jako błędnego koła ulega znacznej zmianie w *That they may face the rising sun* (2002), gdzie pisarz, pochodzący z regionu Leitrim i silnie się z tym miejscem utożsa-

miający, wydaje się godzić z motywem wsi, który zawsze odgrywał szczególną rolę w jego życiu. Powieść jednak nie idealizuje życia obszarów wiejskich, wskazując na trud związany z codzienną pracą na roli czy hodowlą zwierząt. Dominantą kompozycyjną staje się cykliczność życia na wsi skoncentrowanego wokół jeziora. Rytm życia dyktowany jest przez zmieniające się pory roku i związane z nimi prace na farmie. Cykliczność wyraża się również w samym motywie jeziora jako centrum, wokół którego toczy się życie mieszkańców oraz w życiu samych ludzi, którzy (jak autor) zataczają kręgi wyjeżdżając ze wsi i na nią powracając.

Motyw wsi jest analizowany również w twórczości Deirdre Madden, która podejmuje temat prowincji w powieści *Nothing is black* (1995). Obraz regionu Donegal jest skontrastowany z odległym Dublinem, przeżywającym w tym okresie dynamiczny rozwój gospodarczy. Zachód Irlandii wydaje się być niezmiennym od wieków miejscem, co dla jednych jest zaletą a dla innych wadą. Turyści szukają tam mitycznej irlandzkości, zachwycając się celtyckimi ruinami. Dublinczycy mają ambiwalentny stosunek do wsi. Z jednej strony patrzą z nostalgią na prowincję, z której wielu mieszkańców stolicy się wywodzi, ale z drugiej strony nie rozumieją prostoty życia na wsi. Są też tacy, którzy (jak w przypadku bohaterów McGaherna) nacieszyli się już zgiełkiem miasta i świadomie wybierają prowincję. Madden kontrastując ze sobą znany mit i anty-mit wsi irlandzkiej, szuka złotego środka, obiektywnego obrazu krajobrazu wiejskiego. Ten utwór kontrastuje z *Molly Fox's birthday* (2008), gdzie motyw prowincji nie jest traktowany literalnie, a odnosi się do jednego z problemów społeczeństwa irlandzkiego, tzn. zagadnienia prowincjonalności Irlandii. Ten stereotypowy obraz Irlandii jako prowincji angielskiej jest jednym z większych kompleksów Irlandczyków, którego starali się pozbyć za wszelką cenę. Entuzjazm z jakim Dublin podpisał traktat akcesyjny do Wspólnoty Europejskiej w 1973 roku, która z czasem przekształciła się w Unię Europejską, był świadectwem nadziei Republiki Irlandzkiej na wydostanie się spod wpływu Anglii jako strategicznego partnera gospodarczego. Jednak wielu socjologów uważa, że Irlandia wpadła z deszczu pod rynnę, ponieważ w prowincji brytyjskiej stała się prowincjonalnym krajem Unii Europejskiej.

Rozdział czwarty zgłębia problematykę miasta z dwoma irlandzkimi stolicami jako synekdochami dwóch odrębnych krajów Irlandii. Rozważania nad współczesnym obrazem Belfastu bazują na twórczości Glenna Pattersona, a wizja ponowoczesnego Dublina skupia się na przykładach z powieści Anne Enright. Wybrane dwa utwory Glenna Pattersona pokazują drogę rozwoju północno-irlandzkiej stolicy od wczesnych lat dziewięćdziesiątych, która została dobrze zobrazowana w *Fat lad* (1992), do pierwszej dekady nowego tysiąclecia z *The third party* (2007), gdzie widoczna jest globalizacja rynku północno-irlandzkiego. Pierwszy utwór Pattersona pokazuje miasto w przededniu historycznej deklaracji organizacji IRA o zawieszeniu broni, która nastąpiła w 1994

roku. Choć Belfast w powieści jest jeszcze miastem strauumatyzowanym wydarzeniami ostatnich dwudziestu lat, widoczna jest również perspektywa zmian, mających nadejść niebawem. Zmieniające się miasto pozostaje wciąż związane z przeszłością jako integralną częścią historii rozwoju Belfastu. Pisarz cofa się w czasie do początku dwudziestego wieku, kiedy to miasto służyło z przemysłu stoczniowego. Są też i mniej chwalebne momenty – okres zamieszek (the Troubles) przypada na dzieciństwo głównego bohatera. Nieświadomy rangi wydarzeń, zostaje on jednak w pewnym stopniu nimi strauumatyzowany, ponieważ jako protestant obarcza się winą za te zajścia, choć nie brał w nich czynnego udziału. Drugi wybrany utwór Pattersona zabiera czytelnika w podróż do Japonii, by z perspektywy Hiroszimy spojrzeć na odległy Belfast. Stolica Północnej Irlandii jawi się jako bujnie rozwijające się miasto, starające się zaistnieć na rynku azjatyckim, co pokazuje, że globalizacja rynku nie ominęła Irlandii. Głównym produktem eksportowym wyspy okazuje się jednak szeroko pojęta kultura irlandzka. Mimo wszystko najważniejszym w powieści pozostaje kontekst traumatycznej przeszłości tym razem japońskiego miasta, z perspektywy którego wydarzenia w Belfaście tracą na tragizmie. Hiroszima, jako japońskie miasto pokoju, wiele lat temu została objęta specjalnym projektem, którego rezultaty są widoczne na każdym kroku. Dla Belfastu Hiroszima może stanowić dobry przykład, bo choć wiele się już zmieniło na lepsze, to wciąż proces pokojowy nie dobiegł końca.

Dalsza część rozdziału przybliży motyw Dublina, którego rozwój w dwudziestym wieku odbiega znacznie od północno-irlandzkiej stolicy. Różnica w problemach jakie napotyka republikańska stolica potwierdzają tezę, że po 1922 roku należy traktować aspekty Republiki Irlandzkiej i Irlandii Północnej oddzielnie, gdyż drogi tych dwóch państw zaczęły się rozchodzić. Każde z nich zaczęło napotykać inne przeciwności, dlatego też ich dalszy rozwój przebiegał i nadal przebiega inaczej. Dublin musiał przez długi okres walczyć z negatywnym stereotypem miasta bez perspektyw, dlatego kompleks niższości względem Londynu na długo pozostał w mentalności dublińczyków. Z drugiej strony, miasto było jedynym azylem w kraju dla ludzi, którzy chcieli uciec od klaustrofobizującej moralności katolickiej typowej dla terenów wiejskich. Z tego powodu w pierwszej analizowanej powieści Anne Enright – *The gathering* (2007) – pojawia się kontrast pomiędzy stylem życia młodych ludzi w mieście a ich rodziców pozostających na wsi. Tematy, które przez wiele lat były przemilczane, we współczesnej literaturze znajdują swoje miejsce. Społeczność irlandzka zaczyna w końcu głośno mówić o przemocach fizycznej stosowanej w domu oraz o problemie pedofilii, który w Republice Irlandzkiej doprowadził do największego w historii kościoła katolickiego kryzysu wiary. Pamięć jest aspektem kluczowym w tej powieści, podczas gdy przestrzeń miasta jest miejscem, gdzie wszystkie te wspomnienia są kodowane i odkodowywane przez mieszkańców. Miasto zmieniające się dynamicznie w efekcie

rozwoju gospodarczego lat dziewięćdziesiątych, pozostaje wciąż przestrzenią, gdzie pamięć o przeszłości jest widoczna na każdym kroku.

W drugiej powieści - *The forgotten waltz* (2011) – Anne Enright pokazuje dalsze etapy rozwoju Dublina, zaczynając od ostatniego okresu boomu gospodarczego – zwanego potocznie celtyckim tygrysem (the Celtic Tiger) – a pierwszymi oznakami zbliżającego się kryzysu gospodarczego, który jako pierwszy w Europie dotknął zielonej wyspy. Miasto w tym utworze jest ponowoczesną metropolią, niczym nie różniącą się od innych stolic europejskich. Kompleks niższości względem Londynu wydaje się nie istnieć, gdyż Dublin ma w końcu wiele do zaoferowania swoim obywatelom. Powieść ukazuje nową klasę mieszkańców stolicy, grupę biznesmenów, których miejskie życie jest przerywane częstymi wyjazdami służbowymi za granicę. W życiu skoncentrowanym na pracy i wyjazdach, niewiele czasu pozostaje na rodzinę, która w znacznym stopniu cierpi z tego powodu. Dlatego też nadchodzący kryzys może na pierwszy rzut oka wydawać się tragedią dla dalszego rozwoju miasta i społeczeństwa, niemogącego się nacieszyć nigdy wcześniej nie doświadczonym dobrobytem. Jednak dla bohaterów recesja przynosi też pozytywne zmiany w nastawieniu do bliskich i własnej prywatności. Powieść, choć kończy się kryzysem gospodarczym, pokazuje że społeczeństwo irlandzkie przeszedłszy już niejedną taki regres, potrafi sobie poradzić i w tym przypadku.

Omówienie wybranych utworów pozwala na konkluzję, iż współczesna powieść irlandzka dostarcza wielu przykładów zmian w postrzeganiu i przedstawieniu przestrzeni na wszystkich trzech poziomach. Niezależnie czy mamy do czynienia z przestrzenią domu, wsi czy miasta, w każdym z typów miejsc następują analogiczne zmiany z negatywnego na bardziej pozytywny obraz. Biorąc pod uwagę fakt, iż przestrzeń tworzona jest na podstawie relacji społecznych, wszelkie zaobserwowane zmiany w przedstawieniu opisanych miejsc jasno wskazują na zmiany zachodzące w samym społeczeństwie. Szczególną uwagę należy przykładac do zmian w tożsamości indywidualnej i zbiorowej, ponieważ w przypadku Irlandii świadomość jednostki i społeczeństwa jest wciąż silnie związana z miejscem pochodzenia i przebywania. Dlatego kluczową rolę w budowaniu tożsamości odgrywają głęboko zakorzeniony etos *big house*, zachodu Irlandii, prowincjonalności Dublina oraz Belfastu jako gniazda przemocy i uprzedzeń religijnych. Te wszystkie negatywne stereotypy ulegają dekonstrukcji we współczesnej powieści, co wskazuje na potrzebę zmian w mentalności Irlandczyków. Aby móc na nowo konstruować swoją tożsamość, mieszkańcy Republiki Irlandzkiej i Irlandii Północnej muszą się najpierw zmierzyć z przeszłością i związanym z nią tradycyjnym postrzeganiem otaczającej ich rzeczywistości. Dopiero po demitologizacji domu, wsi i miasta, mogą oni zacząć budować swoją tożsamość, która będzie odwzorowywać zmiany, jakie już w Irlandii zaszły na poziomie gospodarczym i kulturowym.



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