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Can I Write About It Yet?: The Influence of Politics on Literary Representations of Lesbians in Irish Women's Writing

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Abstract:

The paper explores how lesbian representation evolves in a specifically Irish context. It examines selected texts of Mary Dorcey and Emma Donoghue, who were the leading lesbian authors of the last decade of the twentieth century, and whose writing entered Irish lesbian writing into a new stage of referring to lesbian desire in an open manner, thus entering lesbian fiction into the canon of Irish literature. The article analyses Dorcey's and Donoghue's lesbian works in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as well as the political atmosphere and the religious secularity of the Republic of Ireland, which prevented these works from coming out sooner, and whose characters are not only openly lesbian, but also occupy central spaces of their respective narratives.

Keywords: lesbian *Bildungsroman*, lesbian continuum, lesbian existence, *semiotic chora*, transnationalism

1. Introduction

The staggering advance of Irish lesbian rights and politics is quickly becoming an area of interest to many scholars. The Republic of Ireland, which, up to the late twentieth century, was a cradle of Catholicism, and where there was no place for discussing the topic of sexuality, let alone its 'deviant' forms, has transformed unchangeably in the last thirty years. This article will discuss how lesbian literature of Ireland was a fervent companion of the changing laws and legislations at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, that at first decriminalised and later equalised same-sex couples. It will also outline how factors such as the failing influence of the church and the increasing openness within Irish society accommodated the emergence of a lesbian subject that was excluded

from the pages of Irish fiction, and how a new reconciliation of multiple identities was formed alongside the concurrent publications of lesbian works at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Beginning with the year 1989, when the Republic was in the midst of David Norris's fight to decriminalise homosexual acts, an amendment that came into life in 1993, the article will discuss the literary activism of Mary Dorcey, who prepared the literary scene for the forthcoming changes. In her ground-breaking collection of short stories, *A Noise from the Woodshed* (1989), her short story "Scarlett O'Hara" (1990), and her only novel *Biography of Desire* (1997), Dorcey openly introduces the concept of lesbian desire, passion, and identity, with her lesbian heroines occupying central spaces of their respective narratives.

The article will then analyse three works of Emma Donoghue, *Stir-fry* (1994), *Hood* (1995), and *Landing* (2007), and map out the development of lesbian narrative towards and around the second decade of the twenty-first century, as well as the same-sex marriage referendum of 2015, whilst noticing trends in contemporary lesbian writing that contributed to the emergence of a non-stigmatised lesbian sexuality. This will be achieved by an analysis of the most prominent in that period of time narrational techniques, such as lesbian Bildungsroman, Rich's *lesbian existence* and *lesbian continuum*, and transnationalism, that aided Irish lesbian writers in entering the lesbian subject(s) and the historical presence of lesbians into the canon of Irish literature, which has been hitherto largely dominated by male heteronormative writing.

In 1977, David Norris, a lawyer and an active campaigner for homosexual rights, took a court action challenging the validity of sections 61 and 62 of the Offences Against the Persons Act and Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885, established by the British Parliament and continued by the Irish Free State following its foundation in 1922, which criminalised sexual activity between men, be it in private or in public, and for which penalties varied between three years of imprisonment and a life sentence. Norris argued that the sections invaded several of his rights, including his right to privacy, which should have been secured by the Constitution. After having lost the case both at first instance before the High Court and on appeal before the Supreme Court, Norris filed a complaint before the European Court of Human Rights stating that the Irish law violated his right to privacy under the European Convention on Human Rights. He won the case in 1988. Sections 61 and 62 of the 1861 Act, and section 11 of the 1885 Act were repealed and amended by the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993, that made offences of buggery illegal only if committed with a person under the age of seventeen, or who is mentally impaired, in order to maintain protection for the young and the vulnerable.

Parallel to Norris's case, between 1973 and 1993, many gay and lesbian movements rose to power and achieved general recognition. The Lesbian Movement itself gained more members each day and made itself seen within the society, thus strengthening the visibility of lesbians. Lesbian activists fought alongside gay men in order to achieve the same rights, understanding, acceptance, and their rightful place amongst Irish society. Organisations, services, and unions for gay men and lesbians of Ireland began to be formed, amongst them the Sexual Liberation Movement (1973), the Irish Gay Rights Movement (1974), as well as telephone befriending services for gay and lesbian individuals such as Tel-A-Friend (1974) or Dublin Lesbian Line (1979).

Mary Robinson actively supported David Norris, and in later course became his attorney. At the age of twenty-five, Robinson was the youngest law professor in Ireland. She was a campaigner for human rights and fought vigorously to improve the position of women and to abolish laws prohibiting homosexuality. In the early 1960s, during her stay in Paris, she came

across homosexuality for the first time: "I was astounded because I hadn't even heard that it was possible. And yet through literature and lifestyle in Paris, it was something that I took on board with great interest at the time" (O'Leary, Burke 1998, 20). Therefore, her 1967-graduation address was aimed at the necessity of changes that needed to take place in the Irish law; in this speech, she targeted issues that were not spoken about out loud before: divorce, contraception, suicide and, most importantly, the position of women in Irish society. She believed that these issues could be resolved by changing the law and overthrowing the old laws that were instigated, in large measure, by the Church: "I was very angry at a lot of what the Church stood for at that time, at how religion could become power-play and oppressive, undermining the true sense of spirituality and the true ethical norms and standards that are the highest reaches of the human mind" (19). Her involvement was initiated in 1977 when she served as a legal advisor for the Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform. She became the President of the Republic of Ireland on 3 December 1990 and held her post until 12 September 1997.

In 1988, the European Court ruled that the law criminalising same-sex activities was contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular Article 8, which protects the right to respect the private life. In 1992, one year before the final decriminalisation of homosexual acts in Ireland, Robinson invited the representatives of Irish Gay and Lesbian community to Áras an Uachtaráin (the official residence of the President of Ireland), which David Norris saw as a sign of "the final act of acceptance, [...] being welcomed into the Irish family at last" (107). Robinson's involvement in Norris's case, followed by her presidency, have not only had a significant input into Ireland's European politics, but have also influenced the lesbian narrative in terms of a new-found openness with which lesbian authors could textualise their desires. I notice a perceptible correlation between Robinson's presidency and lesbian fiction that has emerged during that time; it was a time of change, and lesbian writers began to celebrate and pay tribute to lesbian love through their voices that were no longer to be threatened by neither the censorship nor the law.

2. Merging of social, national, religious, and sexual identities

The following section outlines and emphasises the tension between national and sexual identities, which not only highlights the difficulty of concomitantly identifying as lesbian and Irish, but also shows how this identification affected the lesbian fiction of the Republic of Ireland in terms of a consecutive development of a lesbian subject.

Even the individual nation-state as an object of analysis in itself is problematic. The search for one's national belonging is often owed to the notion of nationalism. However, nationalism, in its hegemonic form, can also indoctrinate and dominate people's thinking and behaviour to such an extent that certain groups, which do not fit into its invented idea of national harmony, are frequently excluded. Nationalism, therefore, can also sometimes be seen as the main cause of creating problems for identifying with one's national belonging, or indeed, being refused a place in the national imaginary. With the precise case of Ireland in mind, I find Partha Chatterjee's contributions especially valuable. He constructed a division between imperial nationalism and the political nationalism that was created by anticolonialist nationalists long before separating from the imperial power. Postcolonial nationalists segregated their culture into two domains – material and spiritual. Firstly, they 'imagined' the nation into being in the spiritual sense before readying it for the political contest. The spiritual domain bears essential markers of cultural identity and it is associated with family, ancestry, culture, and religion. Furthermore, the spiritual domain, in opposition to the material domain, is considered feminine and is associated with the domestic

sphere (see Chatterjee 1993, 126). The material domain, on the other hand, is associated with the economy, technology, science, and statecraft, which is gendered as masculine. Whereas the coloniser proved its superiority over the material domain of the culture of the colony, and the post-colony agreed on the need for modernity (although still rejecting the colonial rule), the greater has become the need to preserve the spiritual sphere from any alien intrusion. Nationalists in postcolonial nations, in assuming that lesbian desire is a Western invention, instantaneously rejected it and perceived it as an invasion of the spiritual sphere of national culture. This type of nationalism could be classified as hegemonic nationalism, with its aggressiveness, chauvinism, fascism, and discrimination against minorities (see Wirth 1936, 725-729).

Some scholars, however, shed a different light on this issue. Benedict Anderson, for instance, who unlike certain Marxists, is of an opinion that nations and nationalisms are products of modernity that were invented in the West and later forced upon the rest of the world, understands nation as an imagined community, a value that cannot be defined strictly by speaking the same language or having similar beliefs of living within the country's borders. He purports that nationalism is a policy of threatened upper classes and the way of governments to control nations, initiated through, inter alia, popular mass media and compulsory education. He also states that the idea of an imagined community is based mainly on the common social identity that, through its deep psychological bond, creates a feeling of a "horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1991 [1983], 7), and that this factor precisely is used for State control. As there is no space for LGBTQ+ individuals within the modern imagining of the nation state, this control of population and its numbers, therefore, can also often be exhibited in an exclusion of sexual minority communities. Therefore, the insularity of Irish nationalism, which, despite secularism, was further served by the authoritarian Catholic Church, can be seen as one of the reasons why lesbians refused self-identification as Irish and chose to be perceived as communal, however oppressed, rather than national members in the past.

National identity, on the other hand, often refers to a sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, and language. Developing Anderson's opinion, that nations, nation-ness, and nationalism are difficult to define, I want to highlight the role of the Catholic Church in Irish nationalism, and how the Church interfered not only with the political sphere, but also with the spiritual aspect of Irish culture. The two modern versions of Irish political nationalism can be distinguished into Irish Catholic or Republican nationalism and Irish Protestant or Unionist nationalism. Religion has always had a major influence on the community. Lesbian identity especially, "is a rapture to the morality brigade attached to conservative agendas" (Kalra, Kaur, Hutnyk 2014 [2005], 63). Kathryn Conrad recognises the fact that Irish orthodox Catholicism has always demonised homosexuality; therefore, homosexuality was always troubling for the notions of nationalism and "Irishness" (2004, 125). She also instances David Lloyd who states that until recently, both colonial and the New Irish State excluded homosexual and lesbian narratives from the field of literature (*ibidem*). Therefore, I will be examining how the 1993 decriminalisation of homosexual acts has influenced the retraction from their previous actions.

The Catholic religion was a forming element of Irish identity and it played an important role in forging the unity that was necessary for nationalism's attainment in Ireland. Thus, "Catholicism was successfully conjoined with Irish nationalism [...] by the need for nationalism to have some widely accepted source of identity in society" (White, Thurschwell 2013, 48). Therefore, the Catholic Church and nationalism have become, until recently, reliant on each other and through the Church's interference in nationalistic politics, it became two inseparable and co-dependent institutions.

Ireland, with Catholicism as its main religion, opposed largely to any threats to the notion of 'the ideal family' that is to be consisting of a man and woman, husband and wife. Therefore, minorities, and in particular gay men and lesbians, were being demonised as anti-Irish. Having said that, it is understandable in what measure lesbians must have been stigmatised to identify themselves as Catholics and as Irish, since they had to overpower the two, closely intertwined, dominant forces: the Catholic Church, and the nation-state. Even though the Catholic Church is losing its power over the domestic, political, and public spheres of Ireland, the Republic is slowly shifting into post-religiousness. Presently, Ireland is thought to have entered the new millennium with an open-mindedness characterised by its younger generation. In the 1990s, however, it was a different matter. Political representatives, manipulated by religious authorities, were still under the influence of their predecessors' actions and continued to be in opposition to any changes, the perfect example being the opposition to the amendments of sections 61 and 62 of the Sexual Offences Acts.

In addition to the complexities of self-identifying one's nation, sexuality, and religion, the major impact of self-recognition was ignited by the sense of social identity. A person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or a group, therefore, dictates one's social identity. Consequently, a common social identification that is held by a group of individuals forms a social group. Therefore, persons who are similar to each other and fulfil group expectations are included within this group whereas, consecutively, those who differ are excluded and are thus perceived the abject members of the discriminated group: outcasts. Likewise, a lesbian circle or religious community or a group, welcome those similar to them and, respectively, refuse others. Furthermore, according to Tajfel and Turner, there exists a continuum between personal and social identities, and "shifts along this continuum determine the extent to which group-related or personal characteristics influence a person's feelings and actions" (1986 [1979], 298). The self becomes assimilated to the perceived within the group stereotypes and, therefore, is more likely to exhibit behaviours typical of that group that, as a result, influences behavioural intentions of the self. Therefore, on the assumption that Irish Catholics form a wide social group, one's self-identification with this group dictates the development of certain social identity. This can be translated into an unconscious and mutual hatred towards sexual minorities that only began to disappear under the influence of the process of transmigration and its advancements on human rights, resulting in creating grounds for multiplicitous acceptance. This identity merging is Donoghue's metaphorical emotional stir-fry that, in *Landing*, is presented by the use of cultural dislocation.

3. Breaking the tradition: A Noise from the Woodshed *by Mary Dorcey*

The first Irish lesbian author to underline and challenge the above difficulties was Mary Dorcey, who, upon the most significant time for Irish sexual minorities, revolutionised Irish lesbian fiction when she published her collection of short stories entitled *A Noise from the Woodshed*, where she deploys the Kristevan techniques of the *chora* and the *semiotic* in order to make the subject of lesbian desire more explicit. I recognise this collection as the turning point leading Ireland into an era of contemporary lesbian writing. When asked to summarise the most striking characteristics of Ireland at the time of her growing up, Dorcey replied:

> Silence. Repression. Censorship. [...] Nuns and priests everywhere. [...] Censorship of books and films. Fear and suspicion surrounding anything to do with the body or the personal life. The near total repression of ideas and information. A Catholic state for a Catholic people. (O'Carroll, Collins 1995, 25)

Mary Dorcey was born in Dublin in 1951. Whilst living in Paris she first came across women whom she suspected to be lesbians. After her return to Ireland in 1972, she began to attend meetings of the Irish Women's Movement, served as a founding member of Women for Radical Change, Irish Women United, and the Irish Gay Rights Movement. She is viewed as a forerunner of the lesbian and gay rights movement and the precursor of lesbian writing in modern Ireland. Dorcey writes poetry that "is informed by the struggle to articulate lesbian sexuality" (Monahagan 1996, 37) and, indeed, her writing celebrates lesbian love because it is "so exciting, so passionate, so time-consuming, so addictive, that once started there will be no getting people away from it" (O'Carroll, Collins 1995, 31). However, she is known mainly for her groundbreaking collection of short stories *A Noise from the Woodshed* that was awarded the Rooney Prize in 1990.

Subjects of Dorcey's collection of short stories are stigmatised Irish women – battered wives, victims of homophobia, patriarchy, religion. "All of the stories reflect the tensions in Ireland between the older values of the conservative and primarily Catholic state and the newer feminist theory and practices that Dorcey and her fellow activists sought to promote" (Casey 2006, 64). Furthermore, Dorcey's stories portray the transition of Irish women from ordinary housewives to passionate lesbians. "A Noise from the Woodshed" is the opening story of the collection with the following stories addressing the themes established in the title story. "A Noise from the Woodshed" has been "chosen to open the collection because it depicts both in its form and content the rush of possibilities open to women when they leave the well-worn path of social expectations far behind" (65). Dorcey's attitude towards Irish society is evident in her writing. She uses the second-person narrative and thus allows her readers to become "the experts of the mass media [to] transmit the required values" (Dorcey 1989, 157): "Of course there are other possibilities. [...] All of these things have happened and will again to you and others in this place or that. Any of them probable, none remarkable in itself" (176-178). Dorcey's stories, therefore, not only highlight the historical presence of lesbians, but state evidently that the personal is political, and that by changing the society's views her lesbian fiction can also change those of individuals:

> The traditional border-lines between psychology on the one side and political and social philosophy on the other have been made obsolete by the condition of man in the present era [...]: private disorder reflects more directly than before the disorder of the whole, and the cure of personal disorder depends more directly than before on the cure of the general disorder. (Marcuse 1970 [1955], 21)

This approach is also adapted in the later course by other Irish lesbian writers in their struggle to stabilise the position of lesbian relationships in private and political spheres of Ireland. 'A Noise from the Woodshed' represents the beginning of the new era. It is considered to be a groundbreaking story as it addresses the often-disruptive lesbian desire within the domestic sphere. Norris's victory the previous year had impacted Irish lesbian writing in a considerable measure. Since 1993, lesbian fiction in Ireland commences to portray women working and living together, forming women's communities and engaging in political work. This image resembles strikingly Zimmerman's concept of Lesbian Nation, where lesbian lovers dream of "the possible world in the making" (Dorcey 1989, 9). It is important to emphasise that I use the term Lesbian Nation to portray an imaginary lesbian mecca rather than the actual concept itself, since lesbian separatist groups have largely failed because of their utopianism and exclusive whiteness with no place for multiculturalism and diversity amongst lesbians. Although in "A Noise from the Woodshed", this place is only just beginning to be visible through "where a

window might have been if there had been a window" (6). The story is a statement of *lesbian existence* long before now, as "there had been other noises before" (15). Characters of the story question whether "it had just begun or if it might have been going on [for longer but people] might [...] not have noticed" (*ibidem*). The presence of the taboo that veiled lesbian sexuality until now is emphasised by the sounds of lesbians making love, a sound previously unheard of in Irish fiction. Dorcey's voice, the metaphorical "startling noise" (*ibidem*), brings to the surface women's hidden desires whilst breaking away from the tradition of heteronormative writing and openly introducing lesbian desire to Irish literary fiction. Furthermore, the nationality of the two lovers is an implication that it is time Ireland followed successes of the United States in approaching an understanding of lesbian desire and sexuality. Dorcey's detailed description of women's lovemaking, as well as an implication of an ever-existing lesbian presence, which began to be reiterated in the works of Elizabeth Bowen, Kate O'Brien and Edna O'Brien, challenged the hitherto prevailing covert references to same-sex female desire.

The use of unconventional narrative is transcended into other stories from the collection. Dorcey shifts between second- and third-person's narrative whilst, as in the case of "The Husband", deploying the male narrator to portray his wife's lesbian affair. Throughout the stories, there is an observable sense of impatience; the noises from the woodshed are escaping their confined, "unlit spaces" (133). Lesbians are "coming clear from years of camouflage [...] every day casting off layer by layer the outworn pretences: weakness, passivity, dependence on men – centuries of artifice sloughed away – the quick, vital core released" (137). Their independence is being regained, they are crossing fearlessly borders of homogenous and heteronormative territories to announce their presence, as "anything is better than being ignored" (58), anything is better than being "up to [their] knees in decaying refuse [...] alone, lonely and lovelorn" (16). The irrepressible need for change in societal attitudes becomes apparent in Dorcey's use of language, where the Kristevan semiotic and symbolic realms are intertwined. What lesbians used to express through their bodies has now found a way to be articulated through their writing.

"A Noise from the Woodshed" can be most accurately analysed with the use of the Kristevan *semiotic chora* and *thetic break*. Julia Kristeva reformulated Lacan's theory of the imaginary and the symbolic orders by making a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. Whereas the symbolic represents communicative, patriarchal discourse, and is "the horizon of the 'universal' bond with other members of [the] group [that] is rooted in the signs and syntax of [a] national language" (Kristeva 1984, 268), the semiotic is not limited by the structure of language and is "transverbal: it is made up of archaic representatives of drives and the senses" (269). The semiotic is characterised by non-verbal communication that comprises of tone, gesture, and rhythm, and is linked to primary processes and the bodily drives which Kristeva observes to be mainly anal and oral. The symbolic includes the traces of the unconscious from the earlier semiotic phase prior to the constitution of the subject through the acquisition of language. Drives are instinctual and pre-lingual body impulses or instincts, which Freud has reduced to two primary drives: the life and the death drives. The life drives primarily seek pleasure, although the reality principle, as opposed to the pleasure principle, may cause the pleasure to be diminished or postponed as it considers reality. The death drives, on the other hand, are the instincts to return to the quintessential state of being that precedes birth. Essentially, both life and death drives can be seen as a flow of impulses that are accumulated in the chora, which derives from the Greek word for a womb. Therefore, Kristeva forms her argument that a child's acquisition of language and the use of the symbolic communication is a reflection of observed gestures, behaviours, and speech, and the child develops ways of communication that are no longer connected with its mother's or his/her own body. Thus, the *chora*, the flow of energy

from the bodily drives, is disrupted as the child ceases to communicate through an inarticulate expression of its drives, which become repressed, and acquires the ability to use language upon its emergence into the symbolic world of culture. However, as I argue later, traces of the semiotic remain as the subject shifts constantly between the semiotic and the symbolic.

Similarly, lesbian writers leave the confines of silence, which in writings of their predecessors was exhibited by covert references to lesbian desire, and shift, metaphorically speaking, towards the symbolic communication and open representations of lesbian sexuality and existence. The consequence of this inevitable emergence of lesbian themes and characters in Irish female literature, similar to an entry of the child into the symbolic, is the Kristevan *thetic break*. The pulsing rhythms of Dorcey's prose fade, as lesbians try to develop ways of verbal communication within society. As lesbians cross the threshold of symbolic communication, they are forced to verbalise their existence through the convention of symbolic discourse that is accepted socially. And just like the child prior to the symbolic – whose early articulations are pre-symbolic and pre-verbal babblings – lesbians herald their coming with first holophrastic utterances in the form of incoherent and unintelligible noises (from the woodshed), similar to the child who develops early gesticulation until he or she learns the way to communicate through the use of language. Since the return to the semiotic, despite the consciousness' constant movement between the semiotic and the symbolic, lesbians seem to emit an infant's babble in the earlier stages; symbolic communication is not yet defined by linguistic structures and it no longer resembles the hypnotic rhythms of the *chora*. Before lesbians learn how to communicate with the wider society, and if I may allow myself a presumption of their being allowed to communicate their existence to the wider society, they are limited to noises that are yet not verbally clear. This presumption can also explain the covert references to lesbian desire in the past, since the kinetic functional stage of the semiotic precedes the establishment of the sign and verbalised linguistic communication.

Moreover, since the semiotic, as it is anterior to sign and syntax and has no social signification, lesbians, who cultivate the marginal and unspoken, must enter the patriarchal symbolic structure, which is a social effect, a phase of social identification and, therefore, linked to social laws pertaining to patriarchal power and social constraints. Lesbians' basic drives become removed and are further constrained by the social code as they enter into mainstream society – their *thetic break* is characterised by voicing needs other than those of pleasure. The hitherto prevailing social establishment is disturbed, or even subverted, as lesbians begin to seek social recognition. As lesbian articulations affect dominant/hegemonic forms of language and symbolic structures in order to accommodate lesbian difference, the semiotic disrupts the symbolic more generally, and the language of the social order and of lesbians is transformed, as lesbians begin to communicate openly their existence to the larger social world. Therefore, Dorcey's use of symbolism, such as the presence of reoccurring themes of water, is used to signify the turning point in Irish history, a time of change, starting with Norris's victory that granted the final decriminalisation of homosexual acts in Ireland. The river's flowing water represents a cleansing process for Irish lesbians, there are now no boundaries to keep lesbian desire covert, there are "more and more women [...] crossing the river, […] the thing is catching, infectious" (Dorcey 1989, 12-13).

Following the success of her first collection, Mary Dorcey published another short story – "Scarlett O'Hara" (1990). Within its pages, she mentions lesbian activism, the attitude of Irish society towards lesbians and the crucial timing. Despite the fact that her contribution of prose into Irish literary canon is not prolific, she is considered to be an influential and much-admired writer of this form. In "Scarlett O'Hara", Dorcey aims at denying reductive stereotypes and clichés present in Irish society of the time. The phrase "time [which is] of the essence" is repeated several times throughout the story; it is an analogical time to introduce lesbians amongst ho-

mosexual stereotypes and to emphasise their existence in spite of general beliefs: "We don't use that word [gay]. […] That's the men's expression. We say lesbian" (Dorcey 1990, 204). Mary Dorcey explains her approach in an interview with *Irish Literary Supplement*, where she considers "writing about the lives of women who are involved with other women" (Weekes 2000, 18) as challenging current stereotypes of lesbian literature. She is of an opinion that "writing about gay sexuality in certain clichéd forms has become popular, [...] [whereas] writing outside those conventions is still threatening" (*ibidem*). As in her previous stories, Dorcey comes to present her audience with an introduction of (and to) lesbian desire. Her character speaks openly about issues that circumvent in Irish society when considering the topic: "the nation [is no longer able] to turn a blind eye, let [lesbians] to get on with it as long as [they keep] it quiet" (Dorcey 1990, 184); the hitherto prevailing silence is now disturbed by the noises from the woodshed. Dorcey, therefore, continues a new tradition, which does not acquiesce to the hitherto prevailing restrictions concerning the marginal presence of lesbians within the narrative; lesbian desire begins to occupy a central space.

The decriminalisation, however, did not leave the power relations intact. The conflict between marginalised groups and the ruling institutions often resulted in the loss of power of the latter. Foucault argues that "every intensification, every extension of power relations to make the insubordinate [marginalised groups] submit can only result in the limits of power" (1984, 225). Indeed, at the threshold of Ireland entering the twenty-first century, the support for these institutions was supported rarely, as the State had lost its authority to silence and conceal the subject of lesbian sexuality that began to arise with a heightened frequency.

4. The narrative of post-decriminalisation: Emma Donoghue – queering the Bildungsroman

From this point onward, I shall refer to writings by Irish lesbian authors as post-decriminalisation lesbian fiction, as I would like to emphasise and make a clear distinction between pre- and post-decriminalisation narrative. Simply, whereas the pre-decriminalisation texts were subject to censorship and, therefore, references to lesbian desire had had to be covert, works published around 1993 were accessible to the general public. The following section will discuss the methods that Donoghue deployed in her fiction in order to portray the shift from a covert to over lesbian existence.

The best portrayal of the initiation of this transition can be seen in Emma Donoghue's short story, "Going Back" (1994a). Although at the time there were (and, in fact, still are) places in rural Ireland where lesbian sexuality was frowned upon and not spoken of, despite its regular appearances in media and popular culture, Emma Donoghue's story does not concentrate primarily on these negative feelings. Simply, it pays a tribute to the change in Irish law and (the underway) change in the way of thinking in the majority of Irish society – or at least its urban communities.

Emma Donoghue was born in Dublin in 1969. Her mother is a primary school teacher, and her father, Denis Donoghue, a literary critic. Alongside Mary Dorcey, Donoghue is considered an exemplar of contemporary Irish lesbian fiction. In accordance to Jeffers's categorisation of Irish 1990s novel, Donoghue "magnifies gender construction and sexual preference; [her writings] often present formerly marginalised groups or individuals: gays, children, battered women, the urban poor" (Jeffers 2003, 2). She has created her lesbian writings in various genres, including the short story, the coming-out novel, the psychological novel, the historical novel, and the campus novel. She has successfully established Irish lesbian and, to some extent, Catholic identities within her works.

Donoghue's short story, "Going Back", portrays two Irish immigrants in London: a lesbian – Cyn, and a gay man – Lou. The story touches upon many feelings that young gay men and lesbians of Ireland experienced at this time. In many conversations that the two characters have, they often mention Ireland, mostly reminiscing about their unhappiness. Donoghue, however, does not limit herself to describe only those feelings. The story illustrates difficulties of coming out, the first female president of Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church, and most importantly, the decriminalisation of homosexual acts. It demonstrates the pretences that the two characters had to keep to be "respectable" and for their "reputations [to be] saved" (Donoghue 1994a, 208). The fact that Cyn has not returned to Ireland once since she left in 1980, implies that her attempts to come out in her youth were unsuccessful, therefore, she has made the decision to emigrate. Lou, however, visits his parents on a regular basis, where he lives a lie and is not willing to reveal his sexuality, as this has already caused his withdrawal from a seminary. Yet he is the one who insists that Ireland is changing, and that Cyn and he should revisit and witness its "growing up" (221). Cyn, whose name most likely derives from her cynical approach, is dubious. She does not feel that she would ever fit in: "I felt more of an exile for twenty years in Ireland than I ever have in the twelve I've been out of it" (211). She comes to terms with losing her national identity for a greater cause – her sexual identity. Furthermore, Cyn states that she does not remember ever having been asked if she wants to be Irish in the first place, which can be seen as an exemplification of a mutual refusal of national identity. This seems to be an unexceptional matter when dealing with diasporic identities; an individual's sense of hurt transcends into hate towards one's country of origin. Even though Cyn admits that, as a lesbian, she was "never illegal" (220), the stigma and the feeling of being the society's outcast still pervades in many lesbians[1]. The story leaves the two characters on the verge, permitting them the choice whether to go back or not. However, it also leaves them filled with hope and, just like in "Scarlet O'Hara" the feeling of an imminent time of change, as "Dublin has its very own Pride March now" to celebrate the decriminalisation of homosexuality (*ibidem*), and "a female president up in the Park" (221).

I consider this story to be a sort of prelude to Donoghue's next two novels, as all three works have been written at a breaking moment for Irish lesbian writing upon its entrance into the stages of gender and sexuality realisation. Moira Casey argues that "Going Back", *Stir-fry* and *Hood* "directly engage with the cultural climate in Ireland surrounding homosexuality at that historical moment" (2011, 67). *Stir-fry* and *Hood* address Irish lesbians at the point of coming out, however, under different life circumstances of their protagonists. Whereas *Stir-fry* is a coming of age/coming out novel, portraying its heroine Maria moving to urban Dublin to attend a higher education institution, and eventually also discovering her sexual identity, *Hood* is an account of a middle-age lesbian, Pen, who is grieving a death of her love partner. The fictive exploration of a contemporary Irish lesbian identity had been the most innovative feature of Donoghue's first two novels. This section will, firstly, analyse *Stir-fry* from the perspective of a lesbian *Bildungsroman*, before moving to on to discuss the psychological elements contributing to the more overt of lesbian desire in *Hood*. Furthermore, the below analysis will also exemplify how *Stir-fry* and *Hood* are ingenuous portrayals of a transparent lack of acceptance within Irish society towards lesbians, thus creating particularly difficult circumstances for their main characters to not only be accepted, but also to accept their own sexualities.

[1] What Cyn refers to is the political invisibility of lesbians, as the before-mentioned acts 61 and 62 of Irish Constitution only criminalised homosexual acts between men.

Bildungsroman is a term signifying the novel of formation or education. The subject matter of the novel is the development of the protagonist's (typically gendered male) growth and character in the passage from their childhood or youth into maturity (Gazda, Tynecka-Makowska 2006, 87). The process of development usually involves the recognition of the protagonist's identity (Träger 1989, 70) or a development of an artistic consciousness that leads to the creation of a fully crystallised personality. *Bildungsroman* shows the spontaneous development of the individual against the background of a certain era, where the process of educational and intellectual development of the protagonist is often influenced by certain institutions or other characters that are often distant to the protagonist and stimulate the hero according to their intentions (Gazda, Tynecka-Makowska 2006, 87-88). The protagonist undergoes many trials and enters various environments where he/she meets new people whose influence can be either harmful or beneficial. In the classical type of *Bildungsroman*, identity is defined as the individual selfhood that is achieved through growth and social experience. Wilhelm Dilthey, who had introduced the term to the critical vocabulary by employing it in the 1870-biography of Friedrich Schleiermacher, and then popularising it in *Poetry and Experience* (1985), had specified five essential components of *Bildungsroman* that include the author's personal experiences, the protagonist's gender, individualism or uniqueness, and psychological maturation that culminates in their full self-realisation of the self's potential[2]. In the 1990s, there appeared a modern type of the genre that, as it introduces sex into discourse and makes it its central theme, transformed the traditional genre into a sexualised *Bildungsroman*, where the protagonist's maturity is achieved through accepting his/her sexuality. In *Stir-fry*, the qualities of the traditional and sexualised *Bildungsroman* have been transfigured to accommodate and promote the lesbian context, thus creating the lesbian novel of development, or the lesbian *Bildungsroman*, which, according to Sally Munt, "has an explicit pedagogic function, to instruct the reader in the complexity and contemporaneity of lesbian identity" (1988, 17). The genre, therefore, which traditionally portrays the psychological development and the process of self-discovery of the main character, at the same time subverts the heterosexual discourse of the heteronormative *Bildungsroman* by focusing on the heroine's sexual development and the self-realisation of her lesbian sexuality. Furthermore, there is a close connection between the previously discussed concept of national identity and Bildungsroman, as the reformulation of the genre, which is typically gendered as male, enters and introduces the topic of lesbian sexuality that defies the hitherto prevailing hegemonic notions of Irish literature.

Maria, *Stir-fry*'s heroine, is a conjectural lesbian whose initial loneliness in the heteropatriarchal society is induced by her deliberate lack of heterosexual friends, excluding her college peer, Yvonne, as well as by her dissimilarity to the majority of female society, which is manifested in her negative feelings towards men, "men-repugnance" (Donoghue 1994b, 27). Predictably, as a *Bildungsroman* protagonist, Maria moves to Dublin to receive higher education. Her geographical journey from countryside to the city symbolises her movement away from Irish patriarchy towards the lesbian world where the process of coming-out provides "a point of exit from mainstream heterosexist culture" (Jay 1978, 28).

To present the blinding contrast between the traditional and the lesbian versions of *Bildungsroman*, I will use Jennifer Jeffers's reformulation of Dilthey's five constituents of the

[2] In terms of Irish literature, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) by James Joyce is an exemplary model of masculinist *Bildungsroman*. Joyce, in portraying his protagonist's development, strictly follows the tradition whilst adhering to the five essential components of the genre. Furthermore, this masculinist tradition is exhibited in the very title itself.

genre. Firstly, the young protagonist of *Bildungsroman* is traditionally a male, whereas in *Stir-fry* we are dealing with a female protagonist. To adapt this element, the protagonist of *Stir-fry* negotiates gender difference and experiences gender inferiority. Furthermore, Maria's journey concentrates on her adolescence and education, much like in the traditional *Bildungsroman*, that results in an affirmation of her sexuality. Secondly, the protagonist usually presents an individualism or uniqueness. This quality is again transferred into a lesbian context, as Maria's uniqueness is portrayed through her refusal to engage in heteronormative behaviours. Her individualism is especially vivid when compared to Yvonne, who is the voice of homogenous and homophobic Irish patriarchal society. This contrast is strengthened when Maria changes her physical appearance by cutting her hair, the act of which in particular, is seen by Yvonne, for whom looking 'straight' is of great importance, as a stereotypical feature of lesbian sexuality. Maria's atypicality also involves articulation of her difference in terms of sexual preference. She is "wedged into that [...] abject space [...] of being neither heterosexual nor homosexual" (Jeffers 2002, 98). Therefore, her uniqueness is revealed further by the inadequacy of her first lover (a male), which creates a sense of her inability to decide on her sexual desire (195), and, in effect, delays the promulgation of her sexual preference. Thirdly, the author's personal experiences influence the narrative, and indeed "Maria's eventual coming out colludes with the novel's biographical element" (92-93). Donoghue textualises female desire against the heteronormative tradition of writing. Her rejection of silence that she manifests by writing an openly lesbian fiction, presents her protagonist's uniqueness, as well as her own. Fourthly, the protagonist must undergo a psychological maturation, a journey, to, fifthly, come to the full self-realisation of one's potential. Maria's achievement of psychological maturation, followed by her development, allows for her "movement [...] from confusion to clarity, from uncertainty to certainty" (94), which is portrayed in her final realisation of her sexuality. Therefore, Maria's journey is completed, her coming of age/coming out process has established her as a mature character, who is conscious of her (sexual) identity.

Regardless of the classification, however, whether *Stir-fry* is categorised as the lesbian novel of development, the lesbian *Bildungsroman*, or the coming-out novel, it generates larger implications for literature and gender studies, and questions the properties of the genre, whilst exemplifying the transformation of the narrative to accommodate and prioritise the lesbian context. Furthermore, the possibility to reformulate *Bildungsroman* shakes the foundations of all literary genres, and thus, literary theory in general. It opens prospects for the creation of new, and the obliteration of old, literary genres. Just as the term *queer* is impossible to define in strict terms, queering any literary text defies the possibility of its precise categorisation. The decriminalisation of homosexual acts in Ireland allowed for the emergence of more than just openly lesbian texts – it permitted lesbian writers to initiate the formation of a new Irish literary canon that is not obligated to follow conventions of the previously prevailing hegemonic and male-dominated literary tradition.

Leaving aside the problem of categorisation, another important factor is Maria's emergence from the closet that, to this day, is "a defining structure for gay oppression" (Sedgwick 2008, 7). This action symbolises the knowledge that this emergence imposed upon the society. The knowledge requires reaction: to know is to acknowledge. Donoghue's novel, therefore, is a representation of an undeniable, however ignorant, acknowledgment of lesbian presence within Irish society.

Furthermore, there is a noticeable shift in the narrative from the previous stages. Donoghue concentrates on the processes of Maria's emotional and psychological development whilst presenting other features of *Bildungsroman*. The events, for which Donoghue deploys the third-person narrative from Maria's point of view, are presented in an objective manner

without the use of subjective comments. Events are depicted in a simple way with the use of dialogues, and the narration is not in any way experimental, as if Donoghue did not intend to distract the readers' attention from the social and psychological problems – the protagonist's emotional stir-fry, discussed in the novel by introducing innovative techniques. In this way, she stresses the importance of these problems and aims to present them in an authentic manner by referring to everyday language in an Irish context.

Post-decriminalisation Irish lesbian fiction has shifted its narrative to address other issues than those before the decriminalisation. It is concerned primarily with the process of coming out, presenting the individual's perennial struggle of self-discovery and self-realisation (although this process can never be complete or final). There are no covert references to lesbian desire; it is here, in the open, unwary of society's reaction, and facing courageously the consequences of its emergence. The course of leaving the closet is prevalent in the works of the first half of the 1990s[3]. Donoghue tries to avoid the conviction that lesbophobia is brought upon lesbians by themselves. Valentine argues that to come out of the closet is to call it simultaneously into being; paradoxically, "coming out of the closet does not demolish it but threatens to reinforce the closet's prevalence, thus reinforcing the marginalisation and invisibility of homosexuality in society" (2002, 157). Furthermore, Maria's emergence from the literal and metaphorical closet can be understood, at this particular stage in Irish lesbian writing, as representing the end of an enforced silence of Irish lesbians:

> Maria's hand skimmed across the polished wood of the wardrobe, which was interrupted with scratches. She tried the intricate metal handle, half of which came off in her hand; as she was fitting it back into its hole, the door swung open. [...] Shutting her eyes, Maria let her fingertips follow the clothes [...] Perhaps ten minutes passed in this way, with her breath getting deeper and the slow boom of the heart the only sound. Then Maria reached under her nightshirt and touched herself for the first time since she could remember. [...] [At] the sound of a key in the front door . . . bending low, she slid out of the wardrobe without too much disturbance, and shut it softly behind her. (Donoghue 1994b, 183-184)

Hood (1995), Donoghue's next novel, other than presenting lesbian identity from a slightly different perspective, seems to be continuing the individualities of her characters, and is, just as *Stir-fry*, concerned with the process of coming out of its protagonist. However, Donoghue shifts her plot into a darker sphere, where her main character, Pen, grieves the death of her long-term partner, Cara. Pen's coming out seems to be more advanced than in the case of *Stir-fry*, as Pen has already undergone the first two stages of lesbian identity development process, therefore, her self-identification as a lesbian is already completed. Her process of coming out, in this instance, is taking place on other levels, as she discloses her sexual identity to her friends, family, colleagues, and incidental members of society. Pen's story of development is complex; unlike Maria, she does not achieve maturity or sexual realisation but, instead, faces difficulties of coming out in an austere Irish Catholic environment. Furthermore, Pen's identity development is parallelised with the process of grieving, where the stages of the grieving process can be identified in accordance with those indicated by Kübler-Ross (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance).

The plot of *Hood* plays a minor role and is dependent on the psychological experiences of its heroine. Psychological motifs are related closely to social and moral elements as Pen is

[3] In Donoghue's *Hood* (1995), Pen's metaphorical sexuality is also closeted by hiding a "Technically a Virgin" badge in her wardrobe.

entangled in various relationships and social dependences. The action is a sequence of psychological events to which other events are subordinated. Additionally, the fact that the plot is condensed within a space of a week makes Pen's experiences more vivid, and the consecutive stages of grieving that she encounters can at times be observed within one paragraph. Through encapsulating the plot and its events in short spaces of time, as Pen is forced to return to work only three days after Cara's death, Donoghue emphasises the need for a formal recognition of lesbian partnerships in state institutions. Additionally, Donoghue's attempt to illustrate lesbian individualism is portrayed in Pen's resistance to being identified with lesbians, Cara's friends, when she attends Cara's wake, and her further refusal to their invitations, as Pen seems to be resisting all these social practices in order to maintain her individuality.

As opposed to Donoghue's first novel, *Hood*'s protagonist is a much older and insular character. However, there is a noticeable continuation of the plot and the characters from *Stir-fry*[4]. Whereas Maria's disentanglement evolved around her process of coming out, the plot of *Hood*, despite Pen 'leaving the closet' on many other levels, "appears to advocate lesbian integration in mainstream Irish society, not through a denial of difference, but through mutual understanding and acceptance" (Quinn 2000, 164). What is more, Cara's death is used as a metaphor to present "a cry against homophobia on the part of heterosexual society and separation on the part of the lesbian community" (164-165). *Hood*, by denying Pen to grieve Cara openly, repudiates lesbian otherness by intersecting elements of theory and fiction that refer obliviously to traumatology, and concomitantly protesting silently against Section 37(1) of the Employment Equality Act.

5. Transnationalism in Emma Donoghue's Landing *(2007)*

Landing is significantly different in comparison to Donoghue's previous lesbian novels, as it openly portrays a transnational love affair between Irish Síle and Canadian Jude, who overcome the distance in order to be together. The novel, as opposed to Donoghue's writings from the nineties, does not deal with the process of coming out; instead, it moves onto discussing a lesbian relationship in transnational scenery that refers to the heightened interconnectivity and multiple interactions that link people across the borders of nation-states. The influence of the transnationalism on the narrative of the novel is indicated in the initiation of the main characters' relationship that takes place at the airport, in, as Casey observes, "a sort of in-between state" (2011, 70). Whereas in the mid-nineties, the process of coming out was of great interest to writers and readers, over a decade later the narrative has made a substantial shift into the modern world. Donoghue observes that "lesbian writing is not particularly known for its stylistic or structural experimentation; we're getting noticed for the new things we're saying, not for how we're saying them" (Thompson 2003, 175). Consequently, this is exactly what she does – she experiments with new themes that have occurred in lesbian existence in Ireland, by portraying present attitudes and making a noteworthy comparison to twentieth-century Ireland. Irish society is no longer portrayed as homo- and lesbophobic; as an alternative, Donoghue's characters move freely around the globe, making love and attending gay weddings. Male homosexuality, lesbian sexuality, bisexuality, and heterosexuality merge, forming a sense of long-awaited equality and happiness. Having said that, the aforementioned interdependence does not exclude racist and homophobic events that still make their appearance in the twenty-first-century Irish society of *Landing* (Donoghue 2007, 186-

[4] Cara replaces the polygamist butch Jael from *Stir-fry* and, equally, monogamist femme Ruth is replaced by Pen, the main character of *Hood*.

191). These, however, are of a minor importance to the plot's development and are ridiculed by its characters (35), as the novel primarily "problematises both points of origin and assumptions about whiteness and Irish identity" (O'Toole 2013, 139).

In the past, many Irish lesbians, at some point in their lives, have felt the need to emigrate, mainly to the UK, on the grounds of their sexualities.[5] This trend is now in full reversal, with many displaced Irish diasporans returning to Ireland. Ireland has noted an increased tendency for its emigrants to return to their roots, particularly between the mid-1990s and 2000. "When we were at college, [...] didn't it seem like everyone we knew was moving [away from Ireland]? But then the minute the Boom happened, most of them came rushing home" (Donoghue 2007, 292). Additionally, there is a contradistinction in the number of LGBTQI+ community members' rural to urban migration. Whereas it is still widely considered that, as Síle observes, "queers should head for the biggest city they know and stay there" (231), it is of a clichéd nature with many gay men and lesbians moving to rural parts of Ireland. Although "nothing's spelled out" and their neighbours would "rather not receive a wedding invitation", they "get on grand" (*ibidem*) and are generally accepted. In order to accentuate Landing's globalised nature, Donoghue places her characters "doing the time zone tango" (238) between Dublin, Ireland and Ireland, Ontario. This wordplay diminishes the feeling of great distance and makes the world a smaller place, a place in which distances and borders do not exist, where her characters are "citizen[s] of the world" (301).

The novel, therefore, is best analysed from the perspective of transnationalism. The term 'transnationalism' seems to be accurate in terms of assigning a new, imaginary space without the use of territorial claims and borders, as it concentrates on issues of mobility and border-transcending processes, whilst emphasising the fluidity of movement. Transmigrants, similarly, are "immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state" (Schiller, Basch, Szanton Blanc 1995, 48). In *Landing*, national boundaries are being displaced as Jude and Síle travel continuously in order to decide on their final destination. The choice here, contrary to previous reasons for migration, depends strictly on one's emotional attachment to the place of origin rather than old-fashioned patriotism. Mr Donohoe, in his August 2014 statement for *The Irish Times*, observes that in

> old ideas of patriotism, such as blind loyalty and unquestioning obedience do not sit well with [the Irish], and for good reason. History shows that powerful institutions like church, state or business must be challenged and scrutinised, so that they work for the common good, and not their own interests. To do otherwise can lead to scandal, corruption or dysfunction. (Collins 2014, n.p.)

Transnationalism in *Landing* is a result of the interconnectedness of the world as a consequence of global capitalism. It emphasises here the emergence of social process in which two women establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Donoghue "explores [...] the subject of desire across distances of various kinds: generational, cultural, [and] even spiritual" (Brownrigg 2007, n.p.). Despite the fact that the importance of immigrant groups in transnational activities has been limited, it is nevertheless significant in terms of development prospects for nations and communities. Transnationalism, especially contemporaneously, does indeed play an irrevocably crucial role in hybridising processes of contemporary societies. Síle

[5] The 1995 GLEN/Combat Poverty research demonstrated that 60% of Irish emigrants for the reason of their sexuality (Connolly, O'Toole 2005, 186-187).

and Jude, therefore, become representatives of the new generation of queer transmigrants that Donoghue has written in "an attempt to critique or reshape the homeland" (O'Toole 2013, 139). I must stipulate that when I refer to transnationalism, I have in mind the creation of a new social space and "the ways that the everyday practices of ordinary people, their feelings, and understandings of their conditions of existence, often modify those very conditions and thereby shape rather than merely reflect new modes of urban culture" (Smith 1992, 493). This is especially true in a lesbian context, where the power relations are being shaped in resistance to dominant hegemonic and patriarchal power structures, and where the transnational subjectivity is often acquired through the rejection of the concept of affiliation as the basis of identity. Here, I would like to return to the previously discussed theory of Benedict Anderson who, with his notions of 'imagined communities' and 'print capitalism', seemed to have reached out far into the future. The influence of the print in the era of capitalism, strengthened by inventions of the twentieth century, such as telecommunication and technology, as well as rendering of, and resistance to, the nation-state in the phase of globalisation, seem to be at the centre of the novel's long-distance relationship. General assumptions about national belonging, as well as identity, ethnicity, and sexuality, are reversed through its cosmopolitan, lesbian, and of an Indian-origin main character, Síle.

Furthermore, transnationalism is perceptible in the language of the novel. Donoghue equips her characters with the means of modern communication, information technology, and cheap air travel, to emphasise the existence of glocality and its influence on transnational queer subjectivity, as well as general perception and reception of lesbians. An ease with which the long-distance relationship between Canada and Ireland is pursued, implicates positive impacts of the era of the Celtic Tiger and a sudden improvement of Irish economy that resulted in globalisation. Civil society is to be understood here as "the voluntary civic and social organisations and institutions that form the basis of the functioning society" (Murphy 2009, n.p.) that at the local level are responsible for community's developmental processes. The Celtic Tiger, Ireland's participation in the EEC (later the European Union) affairs and opening its borders to allow fluid migration of workers, resulted in the creation of hybrid cultural identities. All these issues have been included in *Landing* that shows the contemporaneity of Irish society through the eyes of its excursionist, Síle. The borders between various identities and labels in *Landing* become fluid as its characters change their sexual preferences (Donoghue 2007, 42), geographical locations, and marital statuses. Donoghue reports intrinsically issues afflicting Ireland of the time – racism, homophobia, and paedophilia in the Church.

Although I discuss *Landing* from a transnational point of view, when approaching an analysis of its characters, it is vital to make a distinction between transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. Whereas the plot of the novel is a result of transnational movements, to classify Síle as an economic migrant would be a major misconception, because although transnationalism was used initially to describe movements, it now refers largely to economic migration. Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, is characterised by a more sophisticated border crossing. Bauman enables new insights into distinguishing these two terms by deploying the images of the tourist and the "vagabond" (1998, 93), where the latter refers to transnational people and the former represents intellectual individuals who demonstrate "an openness towards divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz 1996, 239). Since Síle's dislocation is voluntary and dictated by the country of origin of her partner, as well as influenced by the nature of her employment and the Celtic Tiger that transformed Dublin into a successful metropolis, she can be most accurately analysed with the use of a cosmopolitan lens. This approach, permitting to distinguish these two adverse definitions, allows for a clearer understanding of the consequences of transnationalism on the Irish lesbian narrative. Undeniably, the increased influx of immigrants, as well as returning

Irish nationals, has played a crucial role in the shaping of the lesbian narrative of Ireland. The progressive way of perception of sexual minorities is the biggest victory of the transnational movement for the Irish LGBTQI+ community, as the hitherto prevailing Irish insularity gives way to the Europeanised general mentality and lesbian authors follow their foreign predecessors in portraying their characters as inclusive sexual citizens of the world.

Despite Donoghue's own migration in 1990, I do believe that it is "the timing of the essence" (Dorcey 1990, 204) that contributed to the rapid development of lesbian writing in Ireland. In terms of transnationalism and allegoric references to Ireland's development, as well as being influenced by her own diasporic experiences, Donoghue creates two parallel settings that seem to be interdependent of each other: Dublin, Ireland and Ireland, Ontario. In this instance, however, Donoghue, quite ironically, portrays the Canadian town of Ireland as a representation of rural Ireland in the future context. Concomitantly, Donoghue's characters can be interpreted as the representation of two different Irelands. Whereas Jude symbolises the old Ireland, the cosmopolitanised Síle, with her neoliberal feminist approach, is an embodiment of the new globalised Ireland. Themes present in *Landing* are a reflection of Irish societal behaviour concerning homosexuality and lesbian sexuality. Transnationalism, through its unreserved flow of information and ideas, has allowed for a modernised and acceptant perception of lesbians within Irish society. This shows how the influence of geographical movement on representations and engagement with sexual identities. As I argue elsewhere, queer global movement allowed for the development of Irish lesbian fiction in a direction of an overt presence of lesbians on the pages of Irish lesbian writings, as it juxtaposed lesbian experiences in and of Ireland (Charczun 2019, 94-95). Furthermore, a transnationalistic approach in *Landing* emphasises the need to abolish the domination of a Western modernity that marginalises non-Western sexualities. The cultural heritage of Síle represents a challenge against the predominance of a Western hegemonic model of sexuality politics. In this way, Donoghue insists that the inclusion of diverse sexual identities in lesbian discourse is necessary to achieve a more-inclusive international queer community that will enable lesbians to see themselves as a part of a global community, where their commonalities will not be denied by race and nationality alone (Altman 1996, 84).

Transnationalism seems to also have changed Irish people's attitude towards Catholicism, as its absence in Donoghue's novel is highly noticeable. In fact, Ireland is already seen by some as a post-Catholic, or post-religious country. In the 1970s, almost ninety percent of Irish Catholics attended Mass at least once a week. Today, this number has decreased by sixty-five percent. In addition to this, in Dublin itself, only two or three percent of self-described Catholics go to church on a regular basis (Potter 2011, n.p.). I need to emphasise, however, that these numbers refer only to practising Catholics as, according to the Central Statistics Office, there are in Ireland still nearly four million registered Catholics, of whom over three and a half million are Irish (Census of Ireland 2011). Deborah Potter has also noticed an accelerated decline of the Irish Catholic Church. Whereas the cause of this cannot be ascribed to only one factor, such as the Church's sex scandals in recent accusations clerical paedophilia, it is, however, an undebatable end of the alternative religious society within Ireland, an alternative state within the state. The Church's influence has begun to wane further with the decreasing number of Irish Catholic Priests. In 1984, there were 171 ordinations, whereas twenty-two years later, in 2006, the number has plummeted drastically (McFadden 2014, n.p.). According to the Irish Catholic Directory (2008), if current trends continue, Ireland could lose over sixty percent of its priests by 2028. This shows the disappearing homophobic tendencies in Irish national culture, which in the past used to be incited by the preaching of the Catholic Church.

6. Conclusion

The narrative of Irish lesbian fiction has undergone an unrecognisable transformation; in the short space of just over twenty years, the authors have begun to not only discuss lesbian desire openly and fearlessly - they are celebrating lesbian love with a newly found courage and aim to discuss lesbian lives from a different perspective to the one from twenty years ago. This transformation is an effect of a variety of factors, ranging from the reconciliation of multiple identities, the battle to decriminalise homosexual acts, and a deployment of a plethora of intertextual narrational techniques to represent the hitherto minoritised lesbian sexualities and identities. Whereas at the end of the 1980s lesbian fiction dealt predominantly with the subject of coming out, the first decade of the twenty-first century experienced an over presence of lesbian desire on the pages of Irish lesbian fiction by Mary Dorcey and Emma Donoghue.

While Ireland has only recently granted equal marriage rights to same-sex couples (May 2015), the development process of the Irish lesbian novel seems complete. However, with the final stage now provisionally aachieved, Irsih lesbians face other challenges, away from the literary field alone. It is the role of the authors to record their experiences during those turbulent times of their fight for equality, and to enter lesbian existence into the canon of Irish literature, where lesbian desire will be spoken about not only in an open manner, but also with the sense of an immeasurable pride.

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