

# Wicked Female Characters in Roddy Doyle's "The Pram": Revisiting Celtic and Polish Myths in the Context of Twenty-First Century Ireland

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*Abstract:*

"The Pram" is the only horror story in Roddy Doyle's collection *The Departees and Other Stories* (2007). It is also unique in terms of its approach to Ireland's multicultural scene in the twenty-first century. Doyle turns the other side of the coin and introduces a migrant caretaker (Alina), who loses her mind due to her employees' (the O'Reilly family) ill-treatment. As a reaction to their scornful attitude, Alina becomes a murderer. Set in the context of twenty-first century Dublin, "The Pram" contains various references to Celtic and Polish mythological female figures (in particular, the Old Hag of Beara and Boginka), which strengthen the thrilling, mythical elements in the plot. This paper aims to examine the characters' negative attitude towards migrants in Ireland in the light of the racist discourse present in the story. Also, I will focus on the story's female characters and discuss the handicaps of being a female migrant in Ireland. The parallels between the mythical female figures and the protagonist Alina will be another point to be analyzed. The argument of this paper is that Doyle does not always portray the positive outcomes of a multicultural society. On the contrary, he conveys the perspective of the incoming migrant. "The Pram" stages the obstacles that a female outsider may experience in Ireland and her subsequent transformation as a result of the racism she encounters there.

*Keywords:* ethnicity, migration, motherhood, multiculturalism, Polish myths

Ireland shifted from being a mono-ethnic community to a multi-ethnic country in the early 1990s. Following the country's entry into the European Union in 1973, the Irish economy developed significantly. This economic

shift led to a demographic boom and newcomers were attracted by the roar of the “Celtic Tiger”, a phase which lasted until the first years of the twenty-first century. Ireland was now a home that various residents from all over the world would share. As Margaret Spillane states, “Ireland now has three Polish language newspapers, a Nigerian theatre company, Brazilian food shops, and Filipino restaurants” (2008, 146). The country’s transformation was not limited solely to the social sphere. As Marisol Morales Ladrón puts it, this vast inward mobility could also be observed at the cultural level: “[...] [T]he negotiation of a cultural site within which the diversity of immigrants and the Irish find their place has opened the ground for the emergence of what has been termed the ‘new Irish’ [...]” (2010, 165). In this sense, the new face of Ireland has represented a cultural celebration.

The reflection of Ireland’s multicultural phenomenon was immediately felt within the country’s literary scene. Contemporary writers such as Dermot Bolger (*The Journey Home*, 1990), Cauvery Madhavan (*Paddy Indian*, 2001) and Hugo Hamilton (*The Speckled People*, 2003) offer an overview in their work of Celtic Tiger Ireland by focusing on the new ethnographic landscape of the country. In an interview with Jody Allen-Randolph, Hamilton describes the country’s social scene clearly: “I think we’re headed into this global mixture of identities and openness, but at the same time we’ve lost our footing, too. It’s hard for me to know whether this is good or not” (Allen-Randolph 2010, 21). Roddy Doyle comes to the fore among these contemporary writers as he often writes about this “global mixture” in Ireland, publishing monthly short stories in *Metro Éireann*, an online newspaper that appeals to the immigrant community in Ireland. As Doyle puts it “[t]he whole idea was to embrace the new changes in Ireland creatively, rather than see them as statistics” (Allen-Randolph 2010, 147).

Indeed, there is heightened interest in recent years in the study of how immigration has affected contemporary Irish literature, as reflected, for instance, in the collection of essays *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland: The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Literature*, edited by Pilar Villar-Argáiz (2013). Likewise, Sinéad Moynihan’s work *Other People’s Diasporas: Negotiating Race in Contemporary Irish and American Culture* (2013) deals with the reflection of multiculturalism both on the cultural and literary levels. My study follows the lead set by these pioneering studies, in my interest in examining how Roddy Doyle’s work reflects Ireland’s multicultural reality in the twenty-first century.

Doyle’s short story collection *The Deportees and Other Stories* (2007) addresses to the multicultural phenomenon in Ireland. In its foreword, Doyle describes the Celtic Tiger as follows: “[i]t happened, I think, sometime in the mid-90s. I went to bed in one country and woke up in a different one” (2007, xi). This “different country” with its new residents springs to multicultural life in eight stories of the collection. The first story “Guess Who is

Coming for the Dinner” is about an Irish father’s prejudiced attitude against his daughter’s male Nigerian friend. In the second story “The Deportees”, we are introduced to Jimmy Rabitte, who was a teenager in Doyle’s first novel *The Commitments* (1987), and who has since formed a multicultural band. “New Boy” is a story of an African boy who is having adaptation problems at his new school in Dublin. The stories “57% Irish” and “Home to Harlem” are humorous tales of graduate researchers: in the former an Irish doctorate student tries to conduct an “Irishness” test on immigrants, while in the latter a black student from Ireland analyses the influence of the Harlem Renaissance movement on Irish literature. “Black Hoodie” focuses on a Nigerian woman accused of shoplifting and an Irish man wearing a black coat. The last story in the collection, “I Understand”, tells of an illegal immigrant who is fleeing the threats of drug dealers<sup>1</sup>. In contrast, “The Pram”, which this paper takes its cue from, is the only horror story in the collection<sup>2</sup>.

Doyle’s stories have been criticised for being unreal in their highly optimistic portrayal of the multicultural phenomenon in Ireland. In her study “Strangers in a Strange Land?: The New Irish Multicultural Fiction”, Amanda Tucker argues that Doyle’s popularity stems from the fact that his stories “ease cultural anxieties surrounding recent inward migration” (2013, 55). However, “The Pram” challenges this fact as Doyle puts forward a rather different setting when compared to the other peacefully resolved stories while undermining the intercultural relations between the Irish and the new Irish through his use of the disempowered migrant’s point of view. “The Pram” is narrated from the third person singular point of view and it is the predominant point of view of the migrant protagonist. In this way, the writer is directing readers’ attention and sympathies to the immigrant character. Set in the context of twenty-first century Dublin, the plot is about a Polish childminder (Alina) who loses her mind and kills her boss (Mrs. O’Reilly) due to the scornful treatment she receives from her employers, the O’Reilly family. The story opens with Alina’s love and motivation for her job as nanny to O’Reilly’s baby boy (Cillian). She is also responsible for the baby’s two sisters, Ocean and Saibhreas. At first, “[the sisters] were polite and they ate

<sup>1</sup> Sympathy with the migrant is observed more explicitly in the short story “I Understand”, where Doyle adopts the voice of the migrant. This fictional ventriloquism is highly subversive as it “decentralizes white Irish perspectives” (Villar-Argáiz 2013, 71) and asks Irish readers “to look at the Irish context differently, to move outside their comfort zone to a place where whiteness and Irishness are neither central nor normative” (Reddy 2007, 23).

<sup>2</sup> Doyle’s second short story collection *Bullfighting* (2011) deals with the middle age crisis of men. While, one of the short stories in the collection, “Slave”, successfully represents the figurative multicultural encounter of the native (an Irish man) and the migrant (a rat). For a comprehensive analysis see the recent study of Pilar Villar-Argáiz and B.G. Tekin (2014).

with good manners and apologised when they did not eat all that was on their plate” (Doyle 2007, 156). However, these “good manners” will not last long.

As the story continues, the reader is introduced to Alina’s unbearable working conditions as the O’Reilly family reacts to her encounter with a young Lithuanian biochemist. The encounter and the development of their love affair are depicted as follows:

One morning, she pushed past a handsome man who sat on the sea wall eating a large sandwich. [...] He was a biochemist from Lithuania but he was working in Dublin for a builder, constructing an extension to a very large house on her street. They met every morning, in the shelter. Always, he brought the flask. Sometimes, she brought cake. She watched through the portholes as they kissed. She told him she was being watched. He touched her breast; his hand was inside her coat. (Doyle 2007, 157-158)

Doyle prepares us for the mysterious details of Alina’s story as the narrator informs us that she “did not see the mother or the father but, sometimes, she thought she was being watched” (2007, 157). In her article, “Reading the Ghost Story: Roddy Doyle’s *The Deportees and Other Stories*”, Molly Ferguson employs Freud’s theory of “The Uncanny” in her analysis of “The Pram”. According to Ferguson, the plot is an embodiment of a ghost story in the sense that Alina takes revenge for the O’Reillys’ scornful attitude by frightening their daughters through her poignant articulation of the horrifying mythical Polish figure of Boginka. Ferguson underlines the function of such stories as follows: “[ghost stories] give voice to people at the bottom of the social hierarchy, disrupting the continuity of the powerful” (2009, 54). Likewise, Alina’s evolution from an ineffectual maid to an empowered woman is structured through her articulation of a ghost story. The first sign of Alina’s growing anger is indicated following the two daughters’ disclosure of Alina’s love affair.

– We want to go along the seafront, said Ocean.

– No, said Alina. – It is too windy today, I think.

– You were *late*, said Saibhreas.

– Very well, said Alina. – We go.

The biochemist waved his flask as she approached. Alina walked straight past him. She did not look at him. She did not look at the little girls as they strode past.

[...]

That night, quite late, the mother came home. The girls came out of their bedroom.

– Guess what, O’Reilly, [the daughters] said, together. – Alina has a boyfriend.

(Doyle 2007, 159)

The daughters’ sneaky behaviour can be accepted as the primary wicked act of the narrative. It would be beneficial to concentrate here on what is perhaps the most prominent wicked female character of the story, Mrs. O’Reilly.

Mrs. O'Reilly is presented as a very dominant businesswoman who has next to no time to spend with her children. As the narrator points out, "[E]veryone called her by her surname. She insisted upon this practice. It terrifies her clients, she told Alina. It was intriguing; it was sexy" (Doyle 2007, 158). Although Alina is attentive to the tasks she is given, Mrs. O'Reilly never misses the opportunity to reproach her. For instance, she constantly warns her not to "scrape the sides" (155) of the baby's pram. Besides which, Alina is not allowed to take the initiative: "She had walked for two hours, every morning. She had been ordered to do this. [S]he had been told which route to take" (155). Even her language use is restricted by Mrs. O'Reilly: "she had been instructed never to use her own language" (157). She is not allowed to talk Polish with the baby because "[Mrs. O'Reilly doesn't] want Cillian confused" (157). Ferguson indicates that "Cillian's hypothetical confusion might not only be linguistic, but perhaps he might also be confused about who his mother is if he hears Alina speak more often than her" (2009, 56). Ferguson also points out that "as a white female immigrant, Alina looks enough like her employers to not immediately *appear* foreign, yet that characteristic also makes her a disturbing double figure for the actual mother in the house" (56). Adrienne Rich claims "[p]owerless women have always used mothering as a channel – narrow but deep – for their own human will to power [...]" (1995, 38). Likewise Alina gets strength from 'mothering' Cillian. Although Alina fills in for the absence of the mother figure at home, she cannot ingratiate herself with Mrs. O'Reilly. On top of this, she is exposed to the racist discourse of her boss and often called a "Polish peasant" (Doyle 2007, 176), "Polish cailín" (169), or "[a] fucking nightmare" (176). As Jarmila Mildorf notes, "insults confer a certain identity on the person insulted and thus ultimately contribute to the construction of social group" (2005, 109). Unfortunately, Alina's forced displacement and her work as a nanny automatically define her status in Ireland. Since she pays Alina's salary and feels superior to her as she is the native, Mrs. O'Reilly feels justified in acting as Alina's mistress and tyrannizes over her. Thus, Alina has to cope with the social status quo and handicaps attached to being a female migrant by telling the horrifying myth of Boginka at the risk of losing her job and even her mind.

Racist or generally discriminative discourse is a common device employed in ghost stories. That is to say, evil fully enjoys power and control while the good figure is underestimated and forced to be an outcast by evil. In her review of "The Pram", Margaret Spillane discusses the dichotomy between Mrs. O'Reilly and Alina as follows:

What makes O'Reilly a monster? In Doyle shorthand: she has a profession, a husband and children to neglect, and an immigrant nanny to abuse. Perhaps Doyle intended his juxtaposition of grotesqueries – O'Reilly, with her womanhood denatured by economic power, and the nanny Alina, the long-suffering erasure – to recall to readers' minds fairy tales of wicked witches and kind-hearted maidens. (Spillane 2008, 150)

Doyle creates a modern pessimistic fairy tale of twenty-first century Dublin in which Mrs. O'Reilly is a dark representative of the new Irish woman. He identifies her as "a Tiger phenomenon" and underlines that "she has an inflated notion of herself" (interview with Tekin 2013, 115). She is presented as a dominant businesswoman who has no time to spend with her children, and is thus compelled to bring up her spoiled daughters with the help of her maid. She does not have any relation with the prototype woman shaped by the 1937 Irish Constitution; indeed, she is the opposite of the traditional iconographic image of Irish motherhood, "the angel in the house"<sup>3</sup>. Unlike this traditional mother figure, Mrs. O'Reilly's only concern is her own business. Furthermore, she is often away from home, bringing up her spoiled daughters with the help of her maid. The following lines exemplify Mrs. O'Reilly's imperfect maternity:

– I pay you to keep [Cillian] awake, she'd told Alina, once. – In this country, Alina, the babies sleep at night. Because the mummies have to get up in the morning to work, to pay the bloody childminders. (Doyle 2007, 166-167)

Labelled as a "bloody childminder", Alina is gradually forced to be an outcast. Doyle reveals the social gap between the maid and the boss through Mrs. O'Reilly's scornful gestures. For instance, following Mrs. O'Reilly's question as to whether she "[is] fucking [that] guy?" (Doyle 2007, 160), Alina looks up at O'Reilly and O'Reilly smiles down at her. Mrs. O'Reilly even degrades Alina by swearing at her: "[f]uck away, girl" (160). As a female migrant, Alina suffers not only the verbal abuse inflicted on her by Mrs. O'Reilly but also the sexual harassment of Mr. O'Reilly. Following the disclosure of Alina's affair with the biochemist, she becomes the embodiment of threat for Mrs. O'Reilly. She maintains her degrading attitude by limiting Alina's private life, stating that she cannot have sex "while [she is] working. Not here, on the property. And not with Mister O'Reilly" (160). As for Mr. O'Reilly, Alina signifies "the fresh prey". At one of the dinner scenes in the story, the narrator states that Alina "felt something, under the table, brush against her leg. Mr O'Reilly's foot" (169). In another scene, Mr. O'Reilly "looked at Alina's breast, beneath her Skinni Fit T-shirt, and thought how much he'd like to see them when she returned after a good walk in the wind and rain" (176). These examples prove Molly Ferguson's claim that Alina "experiences the trapped feeling of being fixed in the gaze of the host" (2009, 58). As a displaced, migrant female surrounded by cruel host figures, Alina's individuality is also entrapped and diminished.

<sup>3</sup> Lentin offers an in-depth analysis of how the 1937 Irish Constitution is gendered and underlines "the word 'father' is nowhere to be found" (1998, 11-12), while the role of women and mothers are mentioned on several occasions.

Let alone being counted as a person sharing the family home, Alina is not even considered an individual. Her “bedroom in the attic” (Doyle 2007, 156) can be taken as a reference to the classical works where “the outcast” or “the mad woman” is kept. For instance, in Charlotte Brontë’s famous novel *Jane Eyre* (1847), Mr. Rochester accuses his wife of being mad and confines her the attic. Likewise, in the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, we read about the life of a depressed woman who is doomed to spend her days upstairs by her husband. As in these classic examples, personal privacy is out of the question in Alina’s case: her bedroom door has no lock (Doyle 2007, 160), and when she asserts her right to have “[a] private affair” with reference to her encounter with the biochemist, Mrs. O’Reilly strictly states that “[n]othing can be [her] private affair [while she’s] working [there]” (160). Offering a pioneering in-depth analysis of various classical works from a feminist point of view, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar highlight the act of forgetting in the case of *Jane Eyre*. They state that “Brontë’s orphaned Jane Eyre seems to have lost (or symbolically ‘forgotten’) her family heritage” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000, 59). In *Hegel’s Theory of Madness* (1995), Daniel Berthold-Bond underlines the fact that forgetting and madness go hand in hand: “Forgetfulness is the act of nostalgia seeking to heal the wounds of suffered by spirit on its path of evolution by recovering its lost innocence” (90). Furthermore, the manifestation of forgetfulness occurs as “the falling apart of the ordinary causal and temporal connections of rational thought” (90). Similarly to *Jane Eyre*, Alina seems to lack family bonds. Furthermore, she makes efforts to – as Berthold-Bond calls it – “heal her wounds” through revisiting her culture’s folkloric horror story. Yet even she is influenced by Boginki’s story and forgets the boundaries of reality and goes mad like *Jane Eyre*’s Mrs. Rochester. She also meets Freud’s definition of the mad person as “neurotic”. Freud presents the neurotic as a self who “turns away from reality because he finds it unbearable” (1995, 301). Alina’s neurosis is the manifestation of a newcomer trying to elude her migrant identity crisis caused by the unwelcoming native.

The peak point of Alina’s unfortunate victory, the murder of Mrs. O’Reilly, is also enabled through the nanny’s madness. Gradually, Doyle prepares us for her terrible revenge. At first, as the narrator states, she “was going to murder the little girls” (Doyle 2007, 160). However, Alina’s plan changes to a more grotesque one:

She would, however, frighten them. She would terrify them. She would plant nightmares that would lurk, prowl, rub their evil backs against the soft walls of their minds, all their lives, until they were two old ladies, lying side by side on their one big deathbed. She would – she knew the phrase – scare them shitless. (Doyle 2007, 160)

Deprived of the possibility of creating her own space in a foreign home, Alina gains power only through telling the horror story of her own culture

as revenge for the native family's scornful attitude. As shown in the paragraph above, it is also crucial to note that Doyle employs free indirect discourse to reveal how Alina feels. He enables us to know the emotions of the migrant worker, accomplishing sympathy towards the character of Alina through these revelations. In this way, the predominant point of view – which is the challenging situation of a migrant – is provided throughout the story. That is why the murder of Mrs. O'Reilly appears to be the victory of the disempowered newcomer.

Alina's transformation from an ineffectual maid to an empowered woman is envisioned through her articulation of a ghost story about the Polish mythological figure 'Boginka'<sup>4</sup>. Theresa Bane provides a definition of Boginki as "a vampiric demon [...] found near riverbanks. Rather nymphlike in appearance [...] Boginki attack mothers with newborn children, stealing the babies to eat" (2012, 84). According to Micheal Ostling the 'Boginka' is a figure who avenges herself "on the living by stealing any infant children not yet protected by baptism" (2011, 203). This little kidnapper goddess of the rivers is reawakened in Alina's retelling of the story. As Alina informs O'Reilly's daughters, this "old and wicked lady" from her country "lived in a dark forest", and every night she "pushed the pram to the village" and "chose a baby" to steal it (Doyle 2007, 161). Following vain chasing attempts, the villagers decided to cut down the trees of the dark forest in order to find her and rescue their daughters. Thus, this kidnapper nymph had to "[move] to another place" where to find "new babies and new little girls" (165). The parallelism between the migrant protagonist and the Polish mythological figure is apparent. Through Alina, Doyle engenders a modern Boginka who is far away from her native land and has the urge to be a mother but is only able to push the prams of others. Resonating as Boginka, Alina walks with the pram of Cillian every day, and nurses a baby who is not hers. She sees various "mothers and other young women like herself" who push modern prams and "she envies them" (Doyle 2007, 157). Her first opportunity to be a real mother is hindered by the O'Reilly family because they do not approve of her relationship with the biochemist. With little hope of being a mother, Alina expands the myth of Boginka to scare the O'Reilly daughters.

In order to frighten the O'Reilly daughters, Alina emphasizes that Boginka "took only - the girls" (162). She also emphasizes that Boginka steals the girls for "their skin" (165). The reference to stealing the young girls' skin can be read as a symbol of the urge for rejuvenation. The negative attributes of Boginka, such as her old age and wickedness, echo a Celtic mythological figure: the Old Hag of Beara (Caileach Bhéarra), the goddess of prosperity

<sup>4</sup> The word "Bog" means God in Polish and the plural form of Boginka (Boginki) signifies "the little goddesses" (Bane 2012, 84).



in Celtic folklore, later re-imagined as the bringer of death in Irish-Catholic mythology (McCoy 1995, 211). Unlike the Old Hag of Beara, who can recover her splendour and youthful beauty through her sexual encounter with the rightful king of Ireland, the possibility of the fulfilment of Alina's womanly desires is precluded.

This reference to this Polish myth takes on a mystical meaning as gothic elements gradually gain predominance in the narrative when the daughters claim that Cillian's pram moved by itself (Doyle 2007, 168). As Alina tells her horrifying story to the girls, we learn that it is "dark outside", that "a crow perched on the chimneypot cawed down the chimney; its sharp beak seemed very close" and that the "wind continued to shriek and groan" (164-165). Such an inscrutable, creepy atmosphere integrates the drama of the story, to the extent that the pram appears haunted not only for the girls, but additionally for Alina herself: "The little girls screamed. And so did Alina. She had not touched the wheel. The pram had moved before her foot had reached it" (166). Alina eventually believes the folklore tale that she is telling and the narrative records her gradual descent into madness in her blind credence that the pram is really haunted. Influenced by this myth of Boginka, Alina confuses the boundaries of reality and fiction, and becomes a neurotic self who, in Freud's words, "turns away from reality because he finds it unbearable" (1995, 301). Doyle skilfully amalgamates the myth of Boginki and Alina's progression into madness, allowing "The Pram" to maintain its creepy tone and conclude with a horrible ending. Mrs. O'Reilly fires Alina because of her "hardcore" storytelling (Doyle 2007, 170) which even causes her daughters to pee themselves. She is on the phone cancelling the following day's meeting when Alina kills her. The murder of Mrs. O'Reilly is depicted as follows:

O'Reilly brought the phone down from her ear at the same time that Alina brought the poker down on O'Reilly's head. The poker was decorative, and heavy. It had never been used, until now. The first blow was sufficient. O'Reilly collapsed with not much noise, and her blood joined the urine on the rug. (Doyle 2007, 176)

The "poker" and the "blow" imply various meanings. The adjective "heavy" and "not used before" suggest Alina's ponderous revenge. The poker has not been used before, suggesting that it has been waiting for Alina's act of vengeance. On the other hand, O'Reilly's fall does not make much of a sound; that is to say, overthrowing O'Reilly is not an action that involves much noise as her power is rather superficial.

Alina's unexpected poker blow is also a symbol of Doyle's rigid criticism of racist discourse against migrants in his native land. Specifically, Alina stages the obstacles of a female outsider in Ireland and is the embodiment of the eventual transformation as a result of O'Reilly's scornful attitude. As Fer-

guson notes, this character “regains control only as a monster, and Doyle’s metatextual ghost story is implied as a cautionary tale for readers who may underestimate the effects of alienation on the migrant worker” (2009, 58). The effects of this alienation become all the more obvious in the new multicultural face of Ireland when contrasted with the way such workers were treated in the past. In Roddy Doyle’s autobiographical book, where he records the words of his parents, we learn that they used to perceive their maids not as servants but rather as friends. As Doyle’s mother Ita puts it, “We were conscious of who they were, not *what* they were” (2003, 37). Unappreciated for who she is, Alina helplessly takes sanctuary in her folklore. She transforms herself into a modern Boginki and escapes with the pram where the baby is sleeping. As the narrator states “[t]hey found her in the sludge. She was standing up to her thighs in the ooze and seaweed. She was trying to push the pram still deeper into the mud” (2007, 178). In the end, the pram can be read as a symbol of Alina’s vain efforts to bury the horrible memories she has been through in Ireland. The sludge or the bog (which means ‘soft’ in Gaelic and thus serves a traditional meaning) suggests the immigrant’s victimization within the fossilized notion of the native. Furthermore, it is a decomposed ground in contrast to solid land. As a result of its slippery and absorbent nature, the bog suggests instability. In Alina’s case, it represents her failure as an immigrant to establish a secure environment in Ireland for herself.

In this sense, the last image we get of Alina is of a woman whose mind has gone completely blank. The use of indirect speech at the beginning gradually disappears throughout the story as we stop having access to Alina’s mind. At this stage in the narrative we, as readers, have lost all sense of sympathetic identification with her. The narrative progressively becomes more mysterious, to the extent that, at the moment of O’Reilly’s murder, we are not allowed to hear the Polish migrant’s thoughts. This fact increases the suspense, as we do not know what to expect, and thus the murder takes us by surprise. Thus “The Pram” presents Doyle’s portrayal of the other side of the coin. For him, Ireland does not always provide positives outcomes for outsiders, while he also highlights the presence of racist discourse in the country. His idea coincides with that of Declan Kiberd, who comments “racism of the most ugly kind undeniably exists in Irish society: and the presence of ever-growing numbers of refugees and migrants from overseas has brought it to the surface” (2001, 51). Despite having hopes at first, Alina is forced to leave them aside, taking refuge in her native folklore. But she cannot find a way out, loses her mind and turns into a killer. Undoubtedly, this unique ghost story from *The Deportees* collection provides a dystopian look at a multicultural country with its national values still intensely present.

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