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## Irishness beyond National Boundaries

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### RESUMEN:

Este artículo investiga la naturaleza transnacional de los emigrantes irlandeses a causa de la Gran hambruna y su experiencia en América como una minoría recibida con cierta hostilidad. Los irlandeses en América lograron con éxito mantener su identidad de origen acercándose a los postulados del sueño americano y su identidad nacional, a pesar de su delicado estatus en términos de identidad y la percepción que de ellos tenía la sociedad americana de la época. La diáspora irlandesa en Estados Unidos ocupa un tercer espacio en términos espaciales y temporales, ya que dichos inmigrantes han experimentado un sentimiento de pertenencia a este nuevo país, al tiempo que mantenían fuertes vínculos identitarios con su nación de origen. Como sociedad oprimida a causa de la colonización inglesa y otras causas que obligaron al exilio a gran parte de su población, este artículo indaga en la representación de lo irlandés en los Estados Unidos. Dicho artículo proporciona nociones de hibridación en torno a cuestiones como identidad nacional y etnicidad como un fenómeno cultural, o identidad transnacional, bajo el precepto de comunidad imaginaria de la teoría poscolonial.

**Palabras clave:** irlandés, transnacional, americano, identidad, hibridación

### ABSTRACT:

My article investigates the transnational nature of the Irish Famine immigrants, recasting the Irish immigrant experience in America as that of minority which entered the hostile American pot. The Irish-American who portrayed themselves as transnational champions of freedom and democracy were resolved to maintain their complementary statuses as Irishmen and Americans. The Famine immigrants were aware of their fragile status in terms of their ethnic identity and their perceived place in the American society. The Irish diaspora in the United States occupies an interstitial time and space: no longer Irish and not yet Americans. The Irish immigrants experience a sense of belonging to the host community, as well as, a sense of attachment to Ireland. The Irish-American emerge as a race who throwing off the shackles of colonial oppression is seeking a new and more tolerant society. This article reinvestigated the cultural representation of Irish and immigrant Irish identity in America. My article champions cultural hybridity that infuses national and ethnic identities as contingent and culturally produced. The Irish nation was no longer bound to an island in the North Atlantic but was free to make new homes around the globe. Therefore, The Irish were an international imagined community.

**Keywords:** Irish, transnational, American, identity, hybridity

My article investigates the transnational nature of the Irish Famine immigrants, recasting the Irish immigrant experience in America as that of minority which entered the hostile American pot. Emigration has always been central to Irish life. The Irish-American who portrayed themselves as transnational champions of freedom and democracy were resolved to maintain their complementary statuses as Irishmen and Americans. The Famine immigrants were aware of their fragile status in terms of their ethnic identity and their perceived place in the American society. The Irish diaspora in the United States occupies an interstitial time and space: no longer Irish and not yet Americans. The Irish immigrants experience a sense of belonging to the host community, as well as, a sense of attachment to Ireland. As diasporic immigrants, the Irish are characterised by hybridity and heterogeneity which is defined by "a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and diaspora." (Braziel & Mannur, 2003: 5) Generally speaking, the entire issue of migration, the place of migrants in society and migrant identity is within a multitude of disciplines, hybridity, globalisation and multiculturalism. Diasporic subjects experience multiple identities where hybrid identities are located alongside other identity categories. They are simultaneously local and global constituting transnational identifications which encompass imagined and encountered communities. In addition, Irish immigrants faced another dilemma of adaptation to the new American society and its new culture and the desired preservation of their original and established identity. The increasing number of Irish immigrants that is doubled by decades of immigration gives the Irish-American a loud voice in the American society.

The communities that immigrants created throughout America provided a collective heritage of exile and insulation. Irish heritage was a transnational phenomenon. The creation of an Irish identity was based on the struggle against social and economic inequalities in Ireland and America. The transnational perspective from which Irish-Americans disavowed English colonization shaped their stout defense of American democracy. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson express gratitude for the roles the Irish had played in The American Revolution and Washington declaring his intention to become an Irishman by adoption draws a parallel between the Irish people and American democracy. Washington testified his "appreciation of the patriotic services rendered to our

cause by so many men of Irish blood, as well as the sympathetic feeling that exists between Ireland and America" (Guterl, 1999: 310).

The influx of Irish immigrants, a white foreign population challenged the economic, social and political structures of America, as well as threatened the Anglo-Saxon and the ethics of American identity. White supremacy was an important piece of the Irish-American identity. Irish-American culture struggles to locate itself along the lines of other ethnic minorities by striving to imbue itself with a sense of ethnic authenticity. Dislocated from the contemporary reality of its Irish heritage, as well as its genesis as an immigrant culture, Irish-American culture endeavours to endow itself with ethnic superiority by rewriting its past as a tale of racial discrimination in line with other successful minorities in America. The Irish in America yearned for artistic images of the old country because artistic representation allows an imagined journey back to a better time and place. Joseph P. O'Grady in *How Irish Became Americans* claims that the Romantic tendency among Irish-Americans was the result of the deplorable conditions of ghettos. He suggests that the Irish Americans living in the squalor world create "a romantic picture of the Emerald Isle that soon possessed no resemblance to the land they had left" (O'Grady, 1973: 38). The imagined Ireland was a fictional landscape. *The Shaughraun* (1874) by Dion Boucicault creates Ireland that is soaked in romanticised myth that Irish immigrants had brought to America. The play epitomises Victorian melodrama and sensation and relies heavily on Irish stereotypes and particularly on the hero who descends from the literary heritage that had been defaming the Irish for hundreds of years. Boucicault invokes an image from the epic past. The play is set in a modern world and uses more ancient and romantic imagery as sentimentalised scaffolding to frame its action. Boucicault's Ireland is still a land that has memory and agency. Boucicault believed that the realism of his work lies in his portrayal of an authentic Irish spirit and a kind of essential Irishness. Boucicault's reimagining of Ireland goes hand-in-hand with his project of reimagining the Irishman. A regular fixture of the Irishman in *Puck* and *Judge* as an ape is a menace to respectable society. He creates a vivid portrait of Ireland in *The Shaughraun* and he goes to describe an idealized sense of Irish identity. The play rejects the common stereotypes of Irishness and offers something different

in their place. The play instructs Irish-American audience members in how to be properly Irish. Cave suggests that during a Boucicault performance "an audience is being educated skilfully about a complex of Irish responses" (Boucicault, 1984: 109) and he celebrates this point elsewhere by explaining that Boucicault wishes to educate his American audiences "into a proper appreciation of the Irish sensibility and Irish values." (Boucicault, 1984: 115) Such a project appealed to the Irish in America as it helped them make sense of their ambiguous and conflicted identity. Boucicault despised the stage Irishman and those who exploited it for theatrical and financial gains. He condemns other Irish playwrights who used the character as "low down and good for nothing blatters and described the generation of the Irish plays that preceded him as "remarkable for their stupidity" (Fawkes, 1979: 117); however he never considered himself guilty of exploiting the same Irish stereotype that he thought of as unfashionable.

The early Irish experience of oppression in America was a similar experience of African-American experience of slavery. Theodore W. Allen in *Invention of the White Race* claims that "the reflector of Irish history affords insights into American racial oppression and white supremacy," and he documents how an oppressed race of Celts in Ireland were, in America, promoted to the white race and endowed with unprecedented civil and social privileges vis-a-vis the African-American" (Allen, 2006: 23) By 1950, Irish-American culture becomes the archetypal paradigm for ethnic assimilation. With the birth of Civil Rights, Irish-American culture finds itself stranded as a relic of Americanization, the unwanted offspring of national miscegenation and Irish-Americans began to close off their ties from their past, hoping towards a more form of American citizenship. The vicissitudes of the Irish engagement with American citizenship takes corporeal form. In their focus on the racial dynamism of the ante-bellum Irish, Americanization neglects the scope of this minority's engagement with American assimilation, its continuing evolution and changing fortune in American culture. Mathew Frye Jacobson in *Special Sorrows, Whiteness of a Different Color and Barbarian Virtues* reveals that the immigrant engagement with the racial lexicology of Americanization is an attempt to affirm their fitness for self government in Naturalization Act. Though seminal in its engagement with racial identity in the American citizenship debate, Jacobson's work neglects the peculiarity

of the Irish immigrant experience in its attempt to write the large cultural history of American immigration. Jacobson neglects the legacy the Irish and particularly the famine immigrants who brought with them Ireland in their new homeland. Similarly, the Irish famine immigrants challenged and undermined the very character of American national identity. The influx of Irish immigrants alters not only the body of politic but the meaning of America. The American nativist party of The Know Nothing Party claims that the impoverished Irish famine immigrants were corrupting the political, social and more importantly the moral character of America. One good example is the changing nature of the famine emigrants who were mostly Roman Catholics from pre-famine predecessors who were Protestants or Presbyterians. Also, unlike their pre-famine predecessors, famine immigrants were communal in nature and preferred congregation in immoral and unhealthy urban ghettos. Not only did they live in areas outside the realm of the British governance but they continued to live in communities which suffer the imposition of non-traditional and colonial framework of citizenship. Victor Walsh argues that "The Great Famine and its Consequences" in spite of the uprooting effects of immigration, the Irish brought with them to America a value system, a code of behaviour, and a world view of life that had been deeply affected by their past experiences and memory of the old land." (Walsh, 1988: 23) The immigrant's past experience of living beyond the pale affected the way in which they perceived and received the American social, cultural and political identity. The Irish immigrants have been represented as 'the cultural Other' which had been drawn from their earlier stereotypical English models. The psychology of Otherness at home, as well as their psychological and geographical displacement is represented in racial terms. The famine and post-famine immigrants find themselves depicted as a race that if not quite black, they are considered beyond the pale of American citizenship.

The Irish-American negotiates the complexities of how they are represented as 'other' and how they present themselves through the literary and cultural practices that define identity meaning. The connection between the Irish and American expresses itself culturally as that of disconnection, diaspora, longing, hope and resistance to oppression and survival. The Irish world view considers itself formed by the places from which it has emerged. Irish characters and less often women continue to offer a

kind of dark comic relief in Irish-American literary texts. Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996) is a good illustration. Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* reveals the problematic nature of Crane's construction of his Irish-American characters as 'Others' and outcasts of the society from which he himself came. The English colonizers imagined that the Irish were racially distinct and inferior to themselves. The English chose to construe the agrarian Irish as simple country buffoons in need of looking after by their English colonizer. The common factor in the comic representations is the inferiority of the other. In *Maggie*, Crane presented an objective presentation he witness everywhere in the economically depressed Bowery section of New York City. Crane used Irish characters and dialect to convey his personal vision of the tragic consequences of the brutal slum environment. Although Bowery housed other poor Irish-American characters, Crane's reduction of the Irish people intended to write a realistic text. The phrase "the wild Irish" is applicable to both men and women, can be traced to as early as fourteenth century England" (Duggan, 1973: 108). C.G Duggan presents a helpful summary regarding the history of the Irish stage, the Stage Irishman habitually bears the general name Pat, Paddy, or Teague. He has an atrocious Irish brogue, perpetual jokes, blunders and bulls in speaking and new fails to utter, by way of Hibernian seasoning, some wild screech or oath of Gaelic origin at every third word: he has a surpassable gift of blarney and cadges for tips and free drinks.... His face is one of simian bestiality with an expression of diabolical archness.... His main characteristics are his swagger, boisterousness, love of drink and pugnacity (Duggan, 1973: 2). *Maggie* herself fits into the different stereotype that was prevailing the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and was crystallised by the Famine. In Crane's representation, the outsider authorial voice is posing as an insider. Crane uses Irish-American vernacular dialect in his characters' dialogue. The characters' ill-educated speech marks them as inhabitants of the lowest social strata. Their inability to speak well or even to communicate at all functions as a key element in the sad degradation of daily life. By the last chapter the characters have been reduced to nameless figures. Furthermore, the inability to communicate defines the dysfunctional family relationships of the book. There is a remarkable outpouring of verbal expressions forming the last chapter and this allows for the parting

scene of the negative Irish mother. The ritualistic mourning by the mother and other female companions shows them as alien and repellent because they are both an active part of the communal women's culture of mourning and they are members of the slum Irish culture. There are strange funeral customs of any group felt to be Other. *Maggie's* mother embodies travesty that fits well with her character and the particular use of Irish cultural parlance to portray false mourning is something that an Irish-American writer would not do. Crane intended to create an honest and serious portrayal of Irish-American slum life in New York at the end of the nineteenth century. There is no doubt that Crane was having plenty of contacts with the Irish in Bowery area. Part of his aim in choosing victimized Ireland arose from his realistic reaction against the popular sentimental novels of the time in which the adversities of poverty, ignorance and violence were overcome by young heroines exerting the force of their innate goodness and determination. Whatever Crane's experience on the Lower East Side have been, his experiences were filtered through the mind of one who was an outsider to the culture.

The close association between Irish and African Americans is an appealing matter. Both the Irish converges derogatorily in their literary representations in the same racist terms applied to the Blacks. The Native Americans did not work hard to construct the Irish as an inferior racial as they did for the Blacks. The nativists share with their English counterparts the racialization of the Irish. Crane emphasized *Maggie's* milieu as exotic and radically different from the mainstream of his readership. The status of Other with all its conflicted connotations had been assigned to the immigrant Irish Catholics of the Famine generations of 1840s and 50s and still resonated in main stream American culture of the East Coast in Crane's time. Crane presented an attitude that characterized the Irish as alien to what he considered normal behaviour. For members of England's colonizing class, the whiteness of the Irish in Ireland made constructions of this group vicious. The challenge of racializing the Irish, along with other people was considered a threat to the New York Yankee nativists who also railed against the Irish for the same reasons and unfortunately constructing both Irish and African-American citizen in animal-like terms. Charles Kingsley wrote in his diaries after his trip to Sligo, Ireland that, "I am daunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault."

I believe that there are not only many more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better and more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But I see white chimpanzees is dreadful: if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours" (Watson, 1989: 17). Similarly, D.H. Lawrence offers a similar description of an Irish man that is applicable to any group designated as the 'Other', "he had the silent enduring beauty of a carved ivory negro mask with rather full eyes, compressed mouth, queerly- arched brows; that momentarily immobility, a timelessness which Buddha aims at... something old, old and acquaintance in the race! Aeon of acquaintance in race destiny like rats in a dark river" (Gibbons, 1996: 149).

Crane's vernacular Irish dialect attempts to capture the local colour of the Bowery. Dialect becomes a marker of class, a form of identification for the Irish. Since the English forbade by law the use of the Irish language in colonial Ireland, the Irish have had political, religious and social reasons for persisting in their subversive form of English. Eamonn Wall asserts that "For Irish Catholics in Ireland before independence/partition, to write and speak the "King's English" was impossible. To speak in that way indicated assenting to the right of the English to rule Ireland... Initially, the English language symbolized the domination of the Irish by the English, but eventually it [Hiberno-English] becomes a tool used by the Irish to defend themselves" (Eamonn, 1996: 69).

Woodrow Wilson claims that the deracinated of Irishman as American would break down his ties to Mother Ireland. "John Barry was an Irishman, but his heart crossed the Atlantic with him. He did not leave it in Ireland. ... Some Americans need hyphens in their names, because only part of them have come over; but when the whole man has come over, heart and thought and all, the hyphen drops of its own weight out of his name. This man was not an Irishman-American; he was an Irishman who became an American" (Baker and Dodd, 1925: 35-36). The Irish native culture has been repressed by the English colonizing culture and it is worth investigating what has been repressed and must find how it might be spoken and how it can be represented in literature. Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* (1996) concerns itself with the power of memory to discover and authenticate a personal and national past through the recreation of a specific owned place of Derry.

Deane's novel interrogates the notions of authenticity, origin and championing cultural hybridity that conceives national and ethnic identities as contingent and culturally produced. It is important to note the violent Irish image of 'Paddy' that was so pervasive in the American culture of late nineteenth century.

Irish immigrants to the United States and their descendents played an integral and evolving role within American society during the latter half of the nineteenth century, while at the same time seeking to improve the conditions and status of their native land. As those who fled from the Potato Famine in the 1840s and 1850s adjusted to the life in America, millions more arrived in the 1870s and 1880s due to the limited social and economic opportunities in Ireland and the hope of better prospects in the United States, created an ethnic and religious minorities that stirred feelings of fear and hostility among Anglo-Saxon Protestant American. Irish-American and especially Catholic Irish were excluded from 'the white society' and were discriminated in jobs and housing, as well as being ridiculed in popular culture and consequently Irish struggled to find their own place in the United States. There have been attacks directed at Irish-Americans by Anglo-Americans in the United States in the mid of the nineteenth century and Irishmen in America sought to become white in response to these attacks. Whiteness was a racial attribute the Irish sought to acquire. Mathew Frye Jacobson asserts that the Irish struggle to formulate a racial identity was intertwined with Ireland's struggle for independence from the English colonization in the late nineteenth-century. He asserts that "the language of racial unity was among the staples of Irish nationalistic polemic, and nationalist leaders continually sounded the chords of racial obligation and a race-bound group destiny in their efforts to keep the overseas Irish oriented toward the homeland and towards the promise of its eventual liberation" (Jacobson, 1998: 45).

The Irish have persistent presence in American literature during the period that stretches from the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. The prominent feature of the Irish is that they lurk in the background. The Irish-Americans exist in two types: the social climber and the romantic street tough. The history of Irish characters in America not only involves a simple stereotypes but it complicates the concept of the ethnic stereotype.

Many writers exploited the clichés of the drunk thug, the corrupt politician and the blarney-spouting policeman and there is a significant heritage of the Irish-American characterization that problematizes, defies and re-appropriates the image of new and often subversive image. Irishness has not a stable cultural concept in America, rather by examining the representations of the Irish-American characters; readers can witness that the dynamic and responsive Irishness depending on its shifting political and cultural contexts. Writers of various backgrounds used Irish-American characters as metaphoric figurations of persistent national anxieties in order to ignite debate on the social, cultural, political and religious issues. Irish-American writers pioneered methods of self-representation and stereotype subversion, they learned to write for sympathetic and hostile readers and they established rhetorical strategies to subvert social and political expectations and they found ways to criticise their community without undermining it and eventually they demonstrate how to use ethnic identity as an organizing principle for a novel or a play and most importantly they revealed how ethnic material could be both artistically and commercially appealing to a broad population. One of the interesting things about these stories is how familiar they have become due to their influence on generations of immigrant writing and public discourse about ethnic others. In contemporary American society, Irishness has been absorbed into a homogenous white culture that many Irish-Americans would be surprised at the degree to which their ethnicity would have served as a model of difference a century ago. For many literary representations of faith, whiteness, family, moral righteousness and economic prosperity all depend on ready-made associations that render the presence of an Irish-American character as the unwanted, outcast and the vulgar. In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, American writers developed a habit of talking about social and cultural deviancy through the metaphorical presence of the Irish. By casting Irish-American characters as unfit, writers developed a literary device for contemplating destabilising urges within society towards chaos and savagery. The Irish-American character offers a host of public fears. Through the literary constructions of Irishness, writers could discuss political corruption, criminality and challenges to social welfare. Irishness became a figuration of something at once familiar but at the same time foreign. It is hard to imagine that the Irish was at once considered non-white and a threat to the

nation's security and economy. Similarly, Irishness has become invisible ethnicity to many modern critics due to the complete assimilation of the Irish into mainstream American culture in the twentieth-century. In addition, many critics do not see Irishness or do not think it is relevant; therefore many Irish-American characters have been de-ethnicised in the literature of the past century and their Irishness emerges as an integral part of the story. In order for the Irish to establish themselves in America, they had to come together as a group that struggles against the social stigma of being the foreign other. American newspapers labelled the Famine Irish as 'culturally conservative.' Kerby Miller argued that the Irish in the mid-nineteenth century live in "a transition between traditional and modern patterns of thinking and behaving," and "they are dependent on communal support and the bond of the family that conflicted with American social behaviours, individualism and competition" (Miller, 1988: 87). The formation of a cohesive group of Irish identity was a complex process in which thousands of people were connected by a sense of similitude and communalities of ethnicity, religion, and nationalism. Traumatic events involved in leaving the homeland served to create a shared memory and an imagined history. Much of the shared memory is associated with a rich variety of symbols that link the displaced people with their former homeland. The symbolism forms a collective consciousness of remembrance reinforced with the danger in forgetting the homeland and the dispersal from it. Thus, Irish-Americans created a unified Irish identity through the use of symbols that serve as badges of ethnicity.

To maintain their unity as an immigrant group, The Irish-American constructed a dual loyalty to both their home and host community. The *Boston Pilot* reveals that while the Irish immigrants were eager to contribute to the American society, they brought with them their memories that link their thoughts, affections, aspirations and hopes to the land they left behind. For many immigrants living in this period, their Irish identity was beyond dual loyalty to both home and host. In its fullest expression, being Irish meant being part of an imagined community that spanned the entire earth. The sheer shock of over forty years of mass migration had radically altered Irish identity. Dermot Bolger claims that what characterises so many Irish and American writers is their sense of being engaged with understanding both their own and their parents past. The central

character in his novel *A Second Life* (1994), Sean Blake tried to understand his past in two ways: having been adopted, he has lived a second life; tracking down his natural mother means locating his first. At the same time, he is haunted by supernatural memories of nineteenth-century famine and of other brutal upbringing. His literal and personal search parallels a metaphorical and collective one: the impulse of the Irish to discover who they are. Eventually, Blake frees himself from atavism and learns to rededicate himself to his adopted mother and father at the end of the soccer match between Shelbourne and Karpoty Lvov. Thus, Blake defines himself in terms of a new Irishness away from the sentimentalised Celtic sense of national identity. Years before, readers were introduced to Blake posing for a postcard, "Aran Island Boy gathering Seaweed for Kelp" (Bolger, 1994: 84).

The Irish national movement was a transnational experience in the nineteenth century. Irish nationalism impacted the life of American Irish in tangible ways. The Irish population in the United States continued to support the Irish cause of independence, both emotionally and financially. Thomas Brown observes that the nationalist movement has a direct impact on Irish influence and power in America. Brown claims that "In the course of raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for the agitation in Ireland, the American Irish made themselves a force in American national life" (Brown, 1966: 178). The Irish ability to organize on such a massive scale was threatening to Anglo-Americans who feared that the Irish would overpowering the American establishment. Unsurprisingly, Anglo-American depicted the Irish as violent people. This was true in 1880s when a faction of the Irish nationalist movement engaged in bombing attacks in England. The Irish attacks were coupled with what the Anglo-Americans perceive as 'the thuggish' behaviour by the American Irish and consequently many Americans feared that the Irish potential for violence could be directed at them. Violence was depicted in two distinct ways. On some occasions, the Irish people were portrayed as victims of violence at the hands of the British and at other times, the Irish took a different stance on violence showing violent acts as signs of power and strength. Kevin Kenny remarks on the perception of violence and actual incidents of violence associated with the Irish community in America during the later half of the nineteenth century. Kenny focused on the participation of Irish soldiers during the Civil War and the Irish

involvement in the 1863 New York City Draft Riots, labour disturbances, including the Molly Maguire's incidents and the popular perception of the Irish as a nation with violent characteristics. Consequently, the stigma of violence followed the American Irish as they attempted to traverse the American landscape and find their place in the American society.

Similarly, many Americans of Irish heritage experience some kind of identity crisis in the early decades of the twentieth century. Since the Famine immigration, Irishness had changed from an identity implying a shared history to an identity connoting vague cultural similarities. As a result, many modern Irish-Americans felt disconnected from the culture of their ancestors and they felt disconnected from American culture. Confusion emerged from this sense of being deficiently Irish and deficiently American. The challenge of this generation becomes reconciling their American identity with their Irish cultural heritage. American literature of the early twentieth century reflects this complicated status of ethnic identity, with which Irish serving as exemplars of modernist identity anxieties. Irish-American characters offered writers ready-made models of alienations that best represents cultural isolation, fractured persons, historic discontinuity, economic despair and national insecurities that typify the period. Literary writers found in the Irish-American condition something particularly relevant to the American society, something that sums up the modernist dilemma and the consequent struggle to redefine personal, cultural and national identities. As a good illustration, T. S. Eliot's Sweeney, the morally bankrupt and spiritually empty and physically grotesque beast man who travels through several of Eliot's works. Eliot links these qualities to the character's ethnicity and readers are encouraged to understand his Irishness. Irish characters are useful in narratives about cultural fracture, social collapse and national change and showed that there is resonance in Irishman as a metaphorical character in the American imagination. The quintessential modern man is the Irish American to this ethnic inheritance. By the time T.S. Eliot began his literary career, the Irish population of the U.S had changed significantly and for large numbers of Americans and of Irish descents their ethnic heritage become invisible as they entered the mainstream culture. The Irish were no longer the newest or most obviously different immigrant ethnic group in America and when compared to recent arrivals from Eastern Europe and other locales, the Irish

appeared more acceptable to the Anglo-American social classes. The Irish became the model minority who learned English and adapted to American culture and customs quicker than any other group. In few generations, the Irish had gone from being dangerous interlopers to paragons of assimilation. Despite these changes, popular perceptions had not fully reconciled Irish identity with American identity and many problems remained for Americans of Irish heritage, "Newly revised categories of collective identity, in the 1920s complicated any ethnicity's claim to Americanism or citizenship (Michaels, 1995: 6). In addition, Irish Americans confronted the questioning of their national loyalties during the twentieth century. The Easter Rising of 1916 and the following civil war in Ireland invited attention to Irish nationalist cause in America. Meagher defines this interest as nationalist mania, that many Americans saw Irish nationalism an evidence of divided loyalties, if not a betrayal of America. President Woodrow Wilson, a pronounced anglophile himself openly and publicly questioned Irish-American patriotism and in a speech stated that Irish-Americans need hyphens in their names [i.e Irish-American] (Baker and Dodd, 1925: 329). The Irish-Americans of this era were not the target of ethnic slandering that had been common in the nineteenth century, nor were they confronted with insurmountable social, educational, occupational and legal obstacles that the Famine generation immigrants experienced; however these modern Irish Americans were not imagined to be entitled to equality with Anglo-American establishment. The Irish Americans were accommodated but not accepted. The debate of the previous century regarding the ability of the Irish to be Americanized which was obvious in the writings of Mark Twain, Harold Fredric and Frank Norris was concerned whether the Irish were American. Yet, they were imagined to be a different kind of America. This amounts to a significant shift in public perception. The Irish were no longer an external threat, instead they were an internal dilemma and the issues and anxieties of this generation reflected in their literature that emphasizes this shift in status. In examining the literature of this generation, Charles Fanning suggests that there "there was a general decline of Irish-American cultural self-consciousness" that resulted in Irish-American writers adopted an ambivalent attitude toward ethnicity that would last until James T. Farrell published *Studs Lonigan* books in 1932. Fanning's description of this Irish American "generation lost" provides

important context from this period. Fanning's ambivalent observation perceives that while it is true the self-image of the Irish became indefinite during this time, the same observation cannot be said for images of Irishness imposed from external sources including political cartoons, music, fiction and literature by non-Irish writers. Similarly, ethnic ambivalence itself is a topic worth studying in detail because of a lack of Irishness reveals the function and limits of ethnic identity as the presence of Irish traits. It is often the ambivalently ethnic characters who can teach the most about ethnic boundaries and identities since they are the ones who are testing the boundaries and challenging identities. The literary construction of Irish-American identity in 1920s reveals both a significant convergence of artistic agendas.

To conclude, the Irish-American emerge as a race who throwing off the shackles of colonial oppression is seeking a new and more tolerant society. This article acknowledged the cultural representation of Irish and immigrant Irish identity in America, taking into account the hybridity that infuses national and ethnic identities as culturally produced. The Irish nation is no longer bound to a North Atlantic island, but as an international imagined community, which resisted and overturned negative stereotypes associated with the Irish of the Famine era and created a new transatlantic Irish identity.

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