



ESCOLA DE DOUTORAMENTO
INTERNACIONAL DA USC

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Tese de doutoramento

Reverberations of Trauma: The
Great War Revisited through
Irish Women's Fiction

Santiago de Compostela, 2024



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**REVERBERATIONS OF TRAUMA:
THE GREAT WAR REVISITED
THROUGH IRISH WOMEN'S FICTION**

Antía Román Sotelo

Directora: Laura María Lojo Rodríguez



**PROGRAMA DE DOUTORAMENTO EN ESTUDOS INGLESES AVANZADOS:
LINGÜÍSTICA, LITERATURA E CULTURA**

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

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RESUMO

A participación de soldados e voluntarios irlandeses na Primeira Guerra Mundial dentro das forzas do Imperio Británico foi vista como unha traizón por moitos irlandeses republicanos nos anos que seguiron ao Alzamento de Pascua e ao subseguinte rexurdimento do nacionalismo irlandés, e foi, polo tanto, ignorada polas institucións de poder do Estado Libre Irlandés, que buscaron construír unha narrativa nacional o máis desligada posíbel da británica. Deste xeito, a implicación irlandesa no conflito foi reprimida a nivel político, social e cultural, dando como resultado unha amnesia histórica. A creación dunha identidade nacional na nova Irlanda independente estivo, no entanto, condicionada por esta verdade incómoda que non chegou a ser totalmente borrada, mais tampouco asimilada: como ben afirma Mandy Link, as discusións dos irlandeses sobre a guerra resultaron ser integrais na creación dunha identidade e narrativa nacionais na Irlanda poscolonial —“not only did the Irish participate in the war but their postwar discussions of it were integral to the creation of national identity and narrative in postcolonial Ireland” (2019: 2). As narrativas de colaboración co Imperio foron postas en oposición á unha idea homoxénea e artificialmente deseñada do concepto de *Irishness*, a cal non daba conta das diversas sensibilidades identitarias que estaban presentes en Irlanda. Por este motivo comezaron a xurdir nestes últimos tempos narrativas de ficción histórica situadas durante eses anos de guerra e revolución coa intención de desenterrar un pasado oculto á vez que aportaban novas perspectivas ás marxes da memoria oficial que representasen identidades irlandesas plurais.

Nun inicio, os irlandeses alistáronse coa aprobación e incitación do líder do Partido Parlamentario Irlandés, John Redmond, quen cría que en axudando aos británicos a gañar a guerra, a posta en práctica do Home Rule en Irlanda quedaría asegurada; de aí o feito de que a gran maioría apoiase o esforzo de guerra nos seus comezos. Porén, estes soldados e voluntarios víronse condenados ao ostracismo social tras o seu regreso a Irlanda, momento no que xa producira un cambio na opinión pública sobre o conflito debido, dunha banda, ao Alzamento de Pascua e ás represalias británicas que o aplacaron —consistindo na execución dos líderes da revolta e no establecemento prolongado da lei marcial— e, doutra banda, á cantidade de vítimas da fronte e á ameaza do recrutamento obrigatorio, de tal modo que dende ese momento en adiante, a participación irlandesa na guerra deixou de verse como algo necesario para vencer a un inimigo común e pasou, no seu lugar, a considerarse unha traizón por loitar do lado do Imperio Británico, visto como o auténtico inimigo de Irlanda. Consecuentemente, os relatos de guerra víronse eclipsados polos do Alzamento de Pascua e a Guerra de Independencia Irlandesa que o seguiu, de tal forma que o discurso republicano se centrou na conmemoración do Alzamento e, por conseguinte, a narrativa fundacional do novo estado baseouse na glorificación dos seus líderes e excluíu a unha gran parte de cidadáns irlandeses. Como conclúe Jason R. Myers, a memoria da Primeira Guerra Mundial en Irlanda é a historia de conceptos enfrontados de identidade nacional, e o que gañou foi o republicano, que recoñeceu o Alzamento de Pascua como a loita militar que sentou as bases da Irlanda independente —“the memory of the First World War in Ireland is the story of competing concepts of national identity. [...] The strongest was the republican Irish nationalist identity, which [...] recognized the Easter Rising as the military struggle that formed the basis of an independent Ireland” (2013: 282). Como resultado, os dezaseis líderes nacionalistas executados recibiron as súas debidas conmemoracións e foron tratados como heroes e mártires, mentres que as historias e experiencias dos máis de 200.000 soldados irlandeses que loitaron en Europa foron silenciadas.

Semellante indiferenza social e política explica o ostracismo cultural que tamén afectou aos primeiros autores que escribiron sobre a Gran Guerra, moitos deles con experiencia propia na fronte de batalla e, de igual modo, a falta dun canon de literatura de guerra en Irlanda, o cal só foi parcialmente definido recentemente da man de Terry Phillips (2015). Como exemplos paradigmáticos pódense mencionar o novelista e poeta Patrick MacGill, quen serviu nos London Irish Rifles e terminou migrando aos Estados Unidos tras ter escrito obras sobre a guerra que recibiron mellor acollida no Reino Unido ca en Irlanda; o aclamado escritor Liam O’Flaherty, quen sufriu de estrés postraumático e cuxa novela anti-guerra *The Return of Brute* (1929) pasou porén case desapercibida; o escritor de ascendencia irlandesa James Hanley, xa que a súa novela curta *The German Prisoner* (1930) foi publicada como parte da literatura canadense por unirse el a un rexemento de Canadá e nunca recibiu demasiada atención; o dramaturgo Seán O’Casey, porque a súa obra *The Silver Tassie* (1928) converteuse na súa única obra rexeitada polo Abbey Theatre e tivo, polo tanto, que estrearse en Londres. En consecuencia, algunhas obras sobre a guerra puideron perderse ou caer no esquecemento por non resultar de interese para o mercado editorial irlandés, como aconteceu co relato de O’Flaherty “The Discarded Soldier” (1925), que foi redescuberto e publicado de novo no xornal *People’s World* en 2018. Ademais, as historias de guerra escritas por mulleres e civís, que adoitaban ser desestimadas como testemuñas, sufriron dun maior rexeitamento en Irlanda. Esta significativa e prolongada carencia de fontes sobre o tema, xunto coa falta dunha memoria nacional real do conflito, fixo que cara a fin do século XX os membros máis novos de moitas familias irlandesas non fosen conscientes de que os seus antepasados tivesen loitado na fronte occidental, ou que incluso ignorasen que a Gran Guerra formase parte da historia irlandesa. F.X. Martin nomeou este fenómeno o gran esquecemento —“Great Oblivion”— o cal, segundo el, representaba un claro caso de amnesia nacional —“national amnesia” (1967: 68).

A necesidade inherente na Irlanda do século XX de ocultar unha parte da historia nacional precisamente revela a existencia dunha sociedade poscolonial que seguía en conflito consigo mesma, xa que as tensións internas persistiron na Irlanda independente ao longo da guerra civil e do conflito de Irlanda do Norte. De feito, R.F. Foster considerou a memoria da Primeira Guerra Mundial en Irlanda como un exemplo da disposición irlandesa ao esquecemento terapéutico: “the Irish propensity to therapeutic forgetting: the ability to change footing and gloss over the past” (2001: 145). Polo tanto, esta amnesia colectiva pode ser estudada como consecuencia directa dun pasado traumático, é dicir, da opresión prolongada e sistemática do Imperio Británico en Irlanda. Foi precisamente co cese de hostilidades en Irlanda —marcado polo alto ao fogo do IRA en 1994— cando a illa empezou a recuperarse das súas feridas coloniais, especialmente a través do proceso de paz en Irlanda do Norte que levou ao Acordo de Belfast en 1988. Neste sentido, os últimos anos do século XX e as primeiras décadas do XXI presenciaron unha importante revisión do pasado de Irlanda que incluíu a publicación tanto de estudos históricos como de ficción sobre a Primeira Guerra Mundial, os cales contribuíron á revalorización dese período esquecido; entre esas obras de ficción destacan a novela de Jennifer Johnston *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (1974), que abriu o camiño para a obra de teatro de Frank McGuinness *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985) e para dúas novelas posteriores, ambas publicadas no 2005: *A Long Long Way* de Sebastian Barry e Tom Phelan’s *The Canal Bridge* de Tom Phelan.

A raíz das conmemoracións polo centenario da Gran Guerra, as escritoras irlandesas tamén demostraron a necesidade de dar conta da súa propia visión da historia, da cal foran tradicionalmente excluídas. Como suxeitos periféricos, as mulleres escritoras irlandesas non se centraron de maneira primordial nos voluntarios e soldados que participaron no conflito ou nos líderes do Alzamento de Pascua, senón na xente ordinaria que fora relegada as marxes das

grandes narrativas nacionais (“grand narratives”) que constituíron a historia documental (“archival history”). Deste xeito, a produción literaria destas mulleres alíñase coas revisións actuais da historia levadas a cabo nun contexto posmodernista que desafiou o rigor e a veracidade da historia documental sinalando a súa natureza discursiva, que a miúdo debe ser complementada ou disputada por outras perspectivas. A este respecto, as historias literarias poden aportar valiosas percepcións do pasado e incluír novas experiencias e identidades que non se consideraron dignas de recoñecemento dende unha óptica histórica e que precisan, por tanto, ser definidas e integradas na sociedade irlandesa. Como afirma Linda Hutcheon, o que se volveu evidente cara finais de século foi que outras formas de identificación grupal tamén teñen cabida na forma de contar a historia: “what has become increasingly clear over the last century is that other forms of group identification also have a stake in how literature’s history is told: marginalized groups, in particular, insist that it be told with an activist, interventionist dimension” (2002: 6). Tradicionalmente carentes de representación, estas mulleres intentaron atopar o seu propio espazo na historia irlandesa tratando a través da ficción histórica o controvertido auxe do nacionalismo irlandés e a separación de Irlanda do Imperio —un momento que para calquera nación poscolonial continúa a ser un punto crítico e traumático que precisa ser revisado e asimilado. Neste sentido, a ficción demostra ser, como Mary O’Donnell suxire, un dos espazos no mundo das artes para articular a represión e a post-memoria —“one of the obvious ports of call in the world of the arts for articulating repression and post-memory” (Fogarty 2018: 167). Esta tese centrase, por conseguinte, na análise das seguintes novelas e relatos recentemente publicados por mulleres escritoras que pretenden cuestionar a historia documental reivindicando a inclusión das mulleres e a súa relevancia no desenvolvemento da identidade irlandesa: *Fallen* (2014) de Lia Mills, “Each Slow Dusk” (2014) e *Name Upon Name* (2015) de Sheena Wilkinson, e *Empire* (2018) de Mary O’Donnell.

A tese divídese en tres partes fundamentais: a primeira delas —“Ireland in Times of War”— desenvolve o contexto histórico e político de Irlanda antes e durante os anos de guerra; a segunda —“Ireland and the Remembrance of War”— céntrase en estudos de memoria e trauma e explora o desenvolvemento da memoria de guerra ao longo do século XX e arredor do centenario; a última parte —“Ireland on the Centenary of War and Revolution”— proporciona a análise das obras literarias seleccionadas, o cal reflicte as cuestións históricas e teóricas previamente tratadas. Deste xeito, o primeiro capítulo comeza expoñendo o grado de participación de Irlanda no conflito na sección titulada “Irish Participation in the Great War”: dita sección examina non só o alistamento de voluntarios, mais tamén o número de mulleres que se uniron ao Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) e as industrias que contribuíron na fabricación de municións e vehículos, amosando a relevancia e impacto da Primeira Guerra Mundial na historia de Irlanda. A seguinte sección, “Ireland in 1914: The Simmering Conflict of a Colony”, integra a Gran Guerra na narrativa nacional irlandesa dando conta da tensa atmosfera política de Irlanda no estalido da guerra —coa promulgación do Home Rule e a formación de grupos paramilitares— e retrotráese aos tempos coloniais para reclamar a condición de Irlanda como colonia do Imperio Británico, á vez que para esclarecer a formación de identidades divididas e de distintos patróns de comportamento asociados, o cal permite un mellor entendemento das controversias arredor da participación irlandesa na guerra. A terceira sección, nomeada “Beyond Ideological Reasons: The Irish Impulse to Join the Colours”, explora as diversas razóns que levaron aos irlandeses a alistarse voluntariamente, dende un espírito compartido de aventura e antigos valores de patriotismo e camaradería, ata as penurias económicas, a crecente militarización e as circunstancias políticas que caracterizaron o caso irlandés. A última sección do primeiro capítulo, titulada “1916: A Turning Point and Two Narratives”, explica como o Alzamento de Pascua pasou de ser a reprobada rebelión dunha

minoría a eclipsar e desacreditar a participación irlandesa na Primeira Guerra Mundial, xa que ambos eventos, coas súas respectivas conmemoracións e significacións, foron apropiados polas institucións de poder tanto na República como no Norte de Irlanda e postos en contraposición.

O segundo capítulo da tese, “Ireland and the Remembrance of War”, empeza coa sección titulada “Welcoming Irish Veterans: Commemorations and Amends”, que recapitula a evolución das conmemoracións de guerra en Irlanda comentando as diferentes polémicas que caracterizaron a construción de memoriais, a celebración de desfiles e as reparacións aos veteranos por parte do goberno. Ademais, dita sección debate se a memoria de guerra en Irlanda pode ser estudada como un caso de amnesia nacional. A seguinte sección, que leva por nome “History, Memory and Identity”, afonda nos estudos de memoria proporcionando, en primeira instancia, o contexto teórico da súa terminoloxía e posibles aplicacións para logo centrarse de maneira máis específica no funcionamento da memoria colectiva e no rol fundamental que esta xoga na construción dunha identidade nacional común e así mesmo, no rebatemento da historia oficial e dos discursos hexemónicos, á par que comenta as dinámicas que caracterizan a memoria colectiva irlandesa e a incorporación da memoria de guerra nestas. A terceira sección, “Working Through Trauma Theory: A Postcolonial Perspective”, traza a orixe e evolución da teoría do trauma, dende os primeiros estudos de finais do século XIX ata a consolidación do termo no *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) e as súas subseguintes aplicacións no ámbito das humanidades, incluíndo diversas formas de concibir o trauma tanto psicolóxica, como histórica e culturalmente. Este apartado ofrece, polo tanto, un entendemento do funcionamento do trauma, tanto a nivel individual como colectivo, así como dos síntomas postraumáticos —principalmente a través da clasificación desenvolta por Judith Herman— centrándose en especial nas tensións presentes na propia natureza do trauma, que elude o coñecemento á vez que precisa de verbalización durante o proceso de asimilación traumática. A represión da memoria de guerra en Irlanda examínase polo tanto nesta tese en relación co seu pasado traumático como nación colonial, o cal foi ademais política e culturalmente vindicado pasando a ser parte indisoluble da identidade nacional irlandesa, o cal explica que Irlanda continúe a estar aínda perseguida polo seu pasado. O último apartado deste segundo capítulo, “Unearthing the Past: Coming to Terms Through Literature”, trata o papel da literatura na verbalización e revisión de verdades incómodas e traumáticas, xa que o exercicio de construír unha narrativa demostra ser esencial na asimilación e entendemento dunha experiencia disruptiva, e tamén na creación dun espazo seguro para o diálogo e a negociación. A sección prosegue comentando as complexidades de representar o irrepresentable ou “unspeakable”, mais recoñece o predominio da función ética de dar testemuña e de espertar simpatía polas vítimas aínda cando as palabras semellan fallar. Amais, finalmente o apartado da conta das obras literarias irlandesas da Primeira Guerra Mundial, tanto das escritas por combatentes e baseadas, por conseguinte, nas súas propias experiencias na fronte, como das obras de ficción publicadas durante o conflito ou nos anos posteriores, incluíndo as reconstrucións literarias escritas polas xeracións posteriores dos anos 70 en adiante.

O terceiro e último capítulo está reservado á análise literaria das obras escritas durante as conmemoracións do centenario da Primeira Guerra Mundial, de aí o seu título: “Ireland on the Centenary of War and Revolution”. Dito capítulo comeza coa sección nomeada “Women Authors Revisit the Past: Rewriting War and National Identity”, a cal ofrece, dunha banda, unha contextualización das novelas e dos relatos a tratar dentro do panorama cultural irlandés, sobre todo no que se refire ás mulleres escritoras, e doutra banda, un breve resumo do argumento de cada narrativa. Cada apartado está logo subdividido en catro partes, cada unha delas correspondente a unha das obras literarias. Deste xeito, desenvólvese unha análise comparativa acorde a diferentes temáticas que coinciden en todos os traballos. En “Socio-Political Identities:

Tensions and Divergences” faise unha contextualización literaria dese período na historia de Irlanda, prestando particular atención ás confrontacións relixiosas, sociais e ideolóxicas que a miúdo provocan divisións no seno familiar. A seguinte sección, titulada “Irish Involvement in the First World War: Duty or Treason?”, examina a representación de opinións diverxentes no que respecta á colaboración de Irlanda na guerra, así como as motivacións daqueles que decidiron alistarse. O apartado posterior, “Representations of War: Trauma and Mourning”, analiza os recursos literarios que as narrativas empregan á ora de representar a guerra e as súas consecuencias, especialmente as traumáticas. “New Perspectives on the Easter Rising: Beyond Martyrs and Perpetrators” valora, pola contra, as representacións literarias do Alzamento de Pascua acadadas por estas novelas e relatos, recoñecendo o uso de perspectivas múltiples para incluír tamén aos civís, á xente de a pé que tradicionalmente non formara parte das narrativas principais dos eventos. Finalmente, “Women’s Lives in the Midst of Change: Opportunities and Obstacles” aborda as personaxes femininas destas pezas literarias, en particular, como estas reaccionan ante a guerra e a revolución e as decisións e riscos que deciden tomar para formar parte integral da nova nación de Irlanda.

As ficcións literarias analizadas nesta tese remarcán a importancia da Primeira Guerra Mundial para Irlanda, dando conta non só do carácter e das diversas motivacións dos voluntarios que decidiron colaborar co exército británico pola causa, senón tamén das mulleres que se converteron en enfermeiras e que atenderon tanto os soldados alistados como os rebeldes e vítimas civís do Alzamento. Así mesmo, tamén fan mención ás actividades ou industrias dedicadas, nesa época, ao esforzo de guerra, incluíndo a recollida de musgo para fabricar vendaxes, mais tamén as tarefas escolares de envío de paquetes aos soldados, por exemplo. Deste xeito, as novelas e relatos comprométese coa representación daqueles suxeitos que dun modo ou outro se viron implicados pola participación de Irlanda na Gran Guerra pero que foron tradicionalmente relegados á periferia das conmemoracións e dos discursos oficiais, outorgándolles así axencia e voz propia nestas obras. Cabe destacar, neste sentido, o rol das mulleres nestas obras literarias, que no só buscan aproveitar o recente acceso da muller á universidade para optar a unha integración na vida pública da súa comunidade, senón que tamén se interesan polas circunstancias políticas e queren tomar parte nos debates. Ademais, estas mulleres tamén se interesan pola realidade da guerra, converténdose en testemuñas das historias dos seus seres queridos na fronte, e sofren as consecuencias desa violencia, pois pasan por procesos de perda e loito.

Ademais, estas narrativas reflicten a relevancia do conflito para os propio desenvolvemento histórico de Irlanda como nación, xa que integran a narrativa da guerra dentro dos eventos entorno á promulgación do Home Rule e ao Alzamento de Pascua, os cales representaron o momento fundacional do Estado Libre Irlandés. As obras de ficción abordan este momento de transición que inicia a separación de Irlanda do Imperio Británico dende unha pluralidade de perspectivas que permiten explorar a ambigüidade da posición dos irlandeses dentro do imperio como oprimidos á vez que beneficiarios, explorando lealdades e opinións cambiantes nese momento de crise e transformación política. Polo tanto, estas ficcións conseguen refutar os discursos establecidos de identidades monolíticas por parte do estado irlandés. Deste xeito, a análise das obras literarias demostra ser non soamente útil para a revisión do pasado de Irlanda, a cal axuda a entender as tensións que continúan a estar a presentes na illa e que foron especialmente exacerbadas novamente a raíz do proceso do Brexit e do restablecemento de fronteiras, senón tamén para trazar puntos en común no actual panorama cultural irlandés, que busca, a través da revisión dun pasado parcialmente oculto e a inclusión de novas perspectivas, aportar un novo espazo de conciliación no que redefinir a identidade nacional.

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*This is what language did to us. Here
is the wound, the silence, the wretchedness
of tides and hillsides and stars where
we languish in a grammar of sighs [...].*

*Write us out of the poem. Make us human
in cadences of change and mortal pain
and words we can grow old and die in.*

“Time and Violence”

*Summon
our island: a story that needed to be told—
the patriots still bleeding in the lithographs
when we were born. Those who wrote that story
labored to own it.*

*But these are women we loved.
Record-keepers with a different task.
To stop memory becoming history.
To stop words healing what should not be healed.*

“The Historians”

*That was your world: your entry to
Our ancestry in our darkest century.
Ghost-sufferer, our ghost-sister
Remind us now again that history
Changes in one moment with one mind.
That it belongs to us, to all of us.*

“Our Future Will Become the Past of Other Women”

Eavan Boland (1944-2020)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
INTRODUCTION	3
OBJECTIVES	5
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
METHODOLOGY	7
CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	8
1 IRELAND IN TIMES OF WAR	11
1.1 IRISH PARTICIPATION IN THE GREAT WAR.....	11
1.2 IRELAND IN 1914: THE SIMMERING CONFLICT OF A COLONY	14
1.3 BEYOND IDEOLOGICAL REASONS: THE IRISH IMPULSE TO JOIN THE COLOURS	21
1.4 1916: A TURNING POINT AND TWO NARRATIVES.....	25
2 IRELAND AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF WAR.....	37
2.1 WELCOMING IRISH VETERANS: COMMEMORATIONS AND AMENDS	37
2.2 HISTORY, MEMORY AND IDENTITY	50
2.3 WORKING THROUGH TRAUMA THEORY: A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE	65
2.4 UNEARTHING THE PAST: COMING TO TERMS THROUGH LITERATURE	96
3 IRELAND ON THE CENTENARY OF WAR AND REVOLUTION.....	121
3.1 WOMEN AUTHORS REVISIT THE PAST: REWRITING WAR AND NATIONAL IDENTITY	121
3.1.1 <i>Name Upon Name</i> by Sheena Wilkinson.....	125
3.1.2 <i>Fallen</i> by Lia Mills.....	126
3.1.3 “ <i>Each Slow Dusk</i> ” by Sheena Wilkinson.....	127
3.1.4 <i>Empire</i> by Mary O’Donnell.....	128
3.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL IDENTITIES: TENSIONS AND DIVERGENCES.....	129
3.2.1 <i>Name Upon Name</i>	129
3.2.2 <i>Fallen</i>	132
3.2.3 “ <i>Each Slow Dusk</i> ”.....	135
3.2.4 <i>Empire</i> : “ <i>Empire</i> ” and “ <i>Mrs Ward’s Diary</i> ”.....	135
3.3 IRISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR: DUTY OR TREASON?	145
3.3.1 <i>Name Upon Name</i>	145
3.3.2 <i>Fallen</i>	150
3.3.3 “ <i>Each Slow Dusk</i> ”.....	154
3.3.4 <i>Empire</i> : “ <i>Fortune on a Fair Day</i> ” and “ <i>The Moss-Picker</i> ”.....	156
3.4 REPRESENTATIONS OF WAR: TRAUMA AND MOURNING.....	160
3.4.1 <i>Name Upon Name</i>	160
3.4.2 <i>Fallen</i>	165
3.4.3 “ <i>Each Slow Dusk</i> ”.....	181
3.4.4 <i>Empire</i> : “ <i>Tutty’s Mother</i> ” and “ <i>The Moss-Picker</i> ”.....	184
3.5 NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE EASTER RISING: BEYOND MARTYRS AND PERPETRATORS.....	186
3.5.1 <i>Name Upon Name</i>	186

3.5.2	<i>Fallen</i>	194
3.5.3	“Each Slow Dusk”	204
3.5.4	<i>Empire</i> : “The Black Church” and “The Unchosen”.....	205
3.6	WOMEN’S LIVES IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE: OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES...	211
3.6.1	<i>Name Upon Name</i>	211
3.6.2	<i>Fallen</i>	216
3.6.3	“Each Slow Dusk”	222
3.6.4	<i>Empire</i> : “Empire” and “The Moss-Picker”	225
CONCLUSIONS		233
WORKS CITED.....		239

ABSTRACT

The participation of Irish soldiers in the First World War under the British flag at the height of Irish nationalism has been considered for decades as a shameful and traumatic event by a large faction of Irish people, and thus it has been politically, socially and culturally repressed, resulting in a historical amnesia that diametrically affected the identity of the Irish. This fact accounts for a sustained lack of an Irish canon of war literature, since the authors who addressed the theme saw themselves excluded from the literary scene, as well as from many in-depth studies on the topic. It was with the ending of the Troubles that many contemporary authors started to write about the Great War due to the need of coming to terms with past conflicts. This thesis therefore aims to contribute to that reassessment by analyzing historical fiction published during the war's centennial and also by exploring the different strategies that literature employs to represent what usually remains repressed for being an inconvenient truth that comes into conflict with the official discourse. To this end, an interdisciplinary approach consisting of trauma theory and memory studies applied to the specific case of Ireland as a postcolonial nation will be followed, so as to explain the factors that impeded the transmission of war memory, as well as the need, on the part of contemporary women authors, to rewrite Irish history and national identities.

RESUMEN

La participación de soldados irlandeses en la Primera Guerra Mundial apoyando al Reino Unido en pleno auge del nacionalismo irlandés pasó a considerarse un hecho histórico vergonzoso y traumático para una gran parte de la sociedad irlandesa, el cual fue reprimido y silenciado en términos sociales, políticos y culturales, hasta el punto de producirse una amnesia histórica que afectó de manera diametral a la identidad del pueblo irlandés. Este hecho explica la prolongada falta tanto de un canon de literatura de guerra en Irlanda, ya que los/as autores/as que abordaron el tema se vieron excluidos/as del panorama literario, como también de estudios exhaustivos al respecto. Una vez terminado el conflicto norirlandés conocido como “the Troubles”, distintos autores contemporáneos empezaron a escribir sobre la Gran Guerra debido a la necesidad de reconciliación con los conflictos del pasado. Esta tesis pretende, por tanto, contribuir a esa revisión a través del análisis de ficción histórica publicada durante el centenario de guerra, explorando las diferentes estrategias de las que se sirve la literatura para representar lo que suele reprimirse por contener una verdad incómoda que entra en conflicto con el discurso oficial. Para lograr tal objetivo, se seguirá una metodología interdisciplinar que consiste en aplicar teoría del trauma y estudios de memoria a una nación postcolonial como es Irlanda, para poder dar cuenta de los factores que impidieron la transmisión de la memoria de guerra, así como de la necesidad, por parte de autoras contemporáneas, de reescribir la historia y las identidades irlandesas.

RESUMO

A participación de soldados irlandeses na Primeira Guerra Mundial apoiando ao Reino Unido en pleno auge do nacionalismo irlandés pasou a considerarse un feito histórico vergoñento e traumático para unha gran parte da sociedade irlandesa, o cal foi reprimido e silenciado en termos sociais, políticos e culturais, até o punto de producirse unha amnesia histórica que afectou de xeito diametral á identidade do pobo irlandés. Este feito explica á falla, durante anos,

tanto dun canon de literatura de guerra en Irlanda, xa que os/as autores/as que abordaron o tema víronse excluídos/as do panorama literario, como tamén de estudos exhaustivos ao respecto. Unha vez rematado o conflito norirlandés coñecido como “the Troubles”, distintos autores comezaron a escribir sobre a Gran Guerra debido á necesidade de reconciliación cos conflitos do pasado. Esta tese pretende, polo tanto, contribuír a esa revisión a través da análise de ficción histórica publicada durante o centenario da guerra, explorando as distintas estratexias das que se serve a literatura para representar o que adoita reprimirse por conter unha verdade incómoda que entra en conflito co discurso oficial. Para acadar tal obxectivo, seguirase unha metodoloxía interdisciplinar que consiste na aplicación da teoría do trauma e dos estudos de memoria nunha nación postcolonial como é Irlanda, para poder dar conta dos factores que impediron a transmisión da memoria da guerra, así como da necesidade, por parte de autoras contemporáneas, de reescribir a historia e as identidades irlandesas.

It is no new thing for the sons of Ireland to perish in a forlorn hope and a fruitless struggle; they go forth to battle only to fall, yet there springs from their graves a glorious memory for the example of future generations.

Bryan Cooper (1918: 179)

INTRODUCTION

The participation of Irish soldiers and volunteers in the Great War as forces of the British Empire was deemed as treason by many Irish republicans in the years that followed the Easter Rising and the subsequent upsurge of Irish nationalism, and consequently casted aside by the power institutions of the Irish Free State, which attempted to construct a national narrative as detached as possible from the British. Thus, Irish involvement in the conflict was politically, socially and culturally repressed, which eventually resulted in a historical amnesia. The creation of a national identity in the new independent Ireland was, nonetheless, much conditioned by this inconvenient truth which was neither completely erased, nor assimilated: as Mandy Link has asserted, “not only did the Irish participate in the war but their postwar discussions of it were integral to the creation of national identity and narrative in postcolonial Ireland” (2019: 2). Narratives of collaboration with the Empire were put in opposition to an idea of *Irishness* that was artificially created as homogenous and did not encompass the different identity sensibilities that were present in Ireland. That is the main the reason for the emergence in later years of historical fiction narratives set around those years of war and revolution, which attempted to unearth that hidden past, while simultaneously providing new perspectives aside the official memory by representing Irish identities as multi-layered and plural.

The Irish had initially enlisted with the approval and encouragement of the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, MP John Redmond, who believed that in helping the British winning the war, the implementation of the Home Rule for Ireland would be ensured; hence the fact that the war effort was supported by a vast majority. Notwithstanding, these soldiers and volunteers saw themselves condemned to social ostracism upon their return, since a shift in public opinion on the war was produced, owing to, on the one hand, the Easter Rising and the consequent British reprisals that put an end to the rebellion—with the executions of its leaders and the prolonged establishment of martial law—and, on the other, the amount of casualties from the front and the menace of conscription, so that from that moment onwards, Irish enlistment was no longer seen as necessary, for being a fight against a common enemy, but as treason, for fighting alongside the true enemy of Ireland, the British Empire. Consequently, war accounts were overshadowed by those of the Rising and the Irish War of Independence that followed, so that the republican discourse focused on the commemoration of the Easter Rising. Subsequently, the glorification of the Rising leaders as martyrs of the Irish nation became the foundational narrative of the new state, excluding a large part of Irish citizens. As Jason R. Myers has concluded, “the memory of the First World War in Ireland is the story of competing concepts of national identity. [...] The strongest was the republican Irish nationalist identity, which [...] recognized the Easter Rising as the military struggle that formed the basis of an

independent Ireland” (2013: 282). As a result, the sixteen executed nationalist leaders received proper commemoration and were treated as heroes and martyrs, whereas the narratives and experiences of the more than 200,000 Irish soldiers who participated in the European conflict were either obviated or silenced.

Such socio-political disregard explains the cultural ostracism to which the first authors who wrote about the Great War, many of them soldiers with first-hand experience on the battlefield, were condemned, and thus also the lack of a proper Irish canon of war literature, which has only recently come to be partly defined by Terry Phillips (2015). Paradigmatic examples are novelist and poet Patrick MacGill, who served in the London Irish Rifles and ended up migrating to the US after writing several works about the war that found better reception in the United Kingdom than in Ireland; acclaimed writer Liam O’Flaherty, who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and whose anti-war novel *The Return of Brute* (1929) passed almost unnoticed; writer of Irish descent James Hanley, whose novella *The German Prisoner* (1930) was published as part of Canadian literature because he had joined the conflict through a Canadian regiment and never received much attention; playwright Seán O’Casey, whose play *The Silver Tassie* (1928) became the only one of his works rejected by the Abbey Theatre and had its premiere in London. Some of the works about the war might have been consequently lost or forgotten, since they were not of interest for the Irish publishing market, as happened to O’Flaherty’s short story “The Discarded Soldier” (1925), which was rediscovered and republished in the newspaper *People’s World* in 2018. In addition to this, war stories written by both women and civilians, which were already frequently underestimated as valuable accounts, suffered even greater disregard in Ireland. Therefore, this noteworthy and prolonged scarcity of sources on the topic, together with the lack of a proper national memory of the conflict, explained that towards the end of the twentieth century younger members of many Irish families were unaware of the fact that their forbears had fought in the Western front or even ignored that the Great War was also part of Irish history. F.X. Martin named such phenomenon the “Great Oblivion”, which, in his words, represented a clear case of “national amnesia” (1967: 68).

This inherent need in twentieth-century Ireland to conceal part of the nation’s history precisely unveils the existence of a postcolonial society that was still in conflict with itself, since internal conflicts persisted in independent Ireland through the Civil War and the Troubles. In fact, R.F. Foster saw the memory of the First World War in Ireland as an example of “the Irish propensity to therapeutic forgetting: the ability to change footing and gloss over the past” (2001: 145). Thus, this collective amnesia can be studied as the direct consequence of a traumatic past, that is, of the long and systematic oppression of the British Empire in Ireland. It was precisely with the cessation of hostilities in Ireland —marked by the IRA ceasefire in 1994— that the island began to recover from its colonial wounds, especially through the Northern Ireland peace process that led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. In this respect, the closing years of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first witnessed an important revision of Ireland’s past which included the publication of historical studies and fiction on the First World War which contributed to the reassessment of such a forgotten period; among them, Jennifer Johnston’s novel *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (1974), which seemed to pave the way for Frank McGuinness’s play *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985) and for two other later novels, both of them published in 2005: Sebastian Barry’s *A Long Long Way* and Tom Phelan’s *The Canal Bridge*.

In the wake of the Great War’s centennial commemorations, Irish women writers also showed an urge to provide their own particular accounts of Irish history from whose making they had been traditionally excluded. As peripheral subjects, Irish women writers did not

particularly focus on the volunteers and soldiers who participated in the conflict, nor on the leaders of the Easter Rising, but rather on the ordinary people who had been relegated to the periphery of those national “grand narratives” that have usually conformed “archival history”. Thus, these women’s literary production aligns with present day re-examinations of history in the wake of postmodernism, which has challenged the rigour and veracity of archival history by signalling its discursive nature, often in need of being supplemented, or contested, by other perspectives. In this sense, literary accounts can provide valuable insights into the past and include new experiences and identities which have not been traditionally considered worthy of recognition from a historical perspective, but which also need to be defined and integrated in society. As Linda Hutcheon has asserted, “what has become increasingly clear over the last century is that other forms of group identification also have a stake in how literature’s history is told: marginalized groups, in particular, insist that it be told with an activist, interventionist dimension” (2002: 6). Being traditionally unrepresented, these women have therefore attempted to find their own place in Irish history by readdressing the controversial upsurge of Irish nationalism and Ireland’s detachment from the Empire—a moment that for any postcolonial nation continues to be a traumatic tipping point in need of revision and understanding—through historical fiction. In this respect, fiction proves to be, as Mary O’Donnell suggests, “one of the obvious ports of call in the world of the arts for articulating repression and post-memory” (Fogarty 2018: 167). This thesis will thus focus on the analysis of recently published novels and short stories by women writers which aim at questioning archival history and its foundations by vindicating women’s inclusion and their relevance in the making of Irish history and identity: *Fallen* (2014) by Lia Mills, “Each Slow Dusk” (2014) and *Name Upon Name* (2015) by Sheena Wilkinson, and *Empire* (2018) by Mary O’Donnell.

OBJECTIVES

This dissertation aims at giving visibility to a long-silenced event in the history of Ireland as was the First World War, in which both Irish soldiers and civilians were involved. Moreover, Ireland’s participation in the conflict will be shown as embedded in the history of the nation, proving that it became a determining factor in the subsequent development of events that led to the achievement of independence from the British Empire and to the establishment of the Irish Free State, as well as in the constitution of opposing senses of Irish identity, as will be reflected in the literary analysis of the chosen works of fiction. The thesis therefore fulfils the following objectives:

1. To analyse the historical, political, cultural and literary causes that might have contributed to the silencing of the participation of Irish soldiers in the First World War and to its consideration as a shameful and traumatic event in Irish history, after examining the extent to which Irish people—soldiers, volunteers and civilians—were involved in the war effort. Specifically, the concept of “trauma” will be analysed as an inherent characteristic of Ireland’s collective memory and national identity as a former colony of the British Empire.

2. To establish a literary corpus of Irish fictional narratives written by contemporary women writers who deal with the Great War and the Easter Rising as interrelated events, fostering a reflection of past conflicts and a negotiation of heterogeneous identities which continues to be of relevance today. Therefore, the connections between the participation in the war and the rise of Irish nationalism will be explored, as well as their influence in the articulation of *Irishness* for most of the twentieth century.

3. To examine the mechanisms and strategies that female contemporary writers employ in the recovery of historical events and the value that these demonstrate to have in both literary and historical terms. The works will be properly contextualized as part of an Irish cultural

panorama of reconciliation with the past, but also of present uncertainty due to post-Brexit policies, and the different topics, characters, spaces and actions presented in the narratives will be properly compared and systematized.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the circumstances that deemed Irish participation in the Great War as a repressed subject in the Irish Free State, proper historical works on the matter only started to be published towards the end of the twentieth century. In this sense, David Fitzpatrick asserts that the only available material had been a tribute published in 1968 by Henry Harris, a retired British army major, until the Trinity History Workshop, under Fitzpatrick's own editorship, published a collection of essays in the 1986 issue (2015: 643). The first solid books to deal with the Irish experience at the front were already published with the turn of the century, attempting to claim the First World War as an important episode in the history of Ireland, as were Keith Jeffery's *Ireland and the Great War* (2000), Gregory and Pařeta's *Ireland and the Great War: "A War to Unite Us All?"* (2002), Nuala C. Johnson's *Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance* (2003) and John Horne's *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (2008). With the centenary of the war, studies continued to be published, evidencing that more discussion on the matter was still needed after such a prolonged silence on the part of official institutions, as seen in the case of Kevin Myers' *Ireland's Great War* (2014), Richard S. Grayson's *Dublin's Great Wars: The First World War, the Easter Rising and the Irish Revolution* (2018), which clearly embeds the war in the Irish narrative of independence, treating war a revolution as a series of concatenated events, and Niamh Gallagher's *Ireland and the Great War: A Social and Political History* (2019). In addition to these historical accounts, two other works highlight which have tried to deal with more specifically with the oblivion of the war from the perspective of memory studies: Jason R. Myers's *The Great War and Memory in Irish Culture, 1918-2010* (2013) and Mandy Link's *Remembrance of the Great War in the Irish Free State, 1914-1937: Specters of Empire* (2019), which became the first work in expressly discussing how the construction of an Irish postcolonial identity affected the collective memory of the Great War. All these contributions played their part in the recovery of memory of the war in Ireland, while simultaneously doing justice for the victims and their loved ones.

However, literary studies have been scarce in this respect and thus have failed to bring together a consistent canon of Irish war literature, with the exception of Terry Phillips's *Irish Literature and the First World War: Culture, Identity and Memory* (2015). Published in the same year as Phillips's book, although not providing such a compendium of authors, the doctoral thesis of Karen Bryant, *Ireland and the Cultural Impact of the First World War: Reclaiming Expurgated Narratives in Irish Art and Literature, 1915-1939* (2015), has mainly focused on the works by Thomas Kettle, Patrick MacGill and Liam O'Flaherty, but also addressed those of Pamela Hinkson and Katherine Tynan. An aspect that might have contributed since the beginning to the lack of a proper canon could be the habitude of gathering British and Irish literature together, for instance, in *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry* (2007). In addition to this, another problem in this respect was that most critics have focused on canonical authors such as W.B. Yeats, even though he barely treated the topic in his poetry, whereas other recent studies show a tendency to focus exclusively on the novel written by Sebastian Barry, *A Long Long Way* (2015), which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and consequently received considerable critical and public attention —among them, Sylvie Mikowski's "Le long cheminement de la mémoire collective irlandaise: *A Long Long Way* de Sebastian Barry (2005)" (2011); Liam Harte's "Politics of Pity in Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way*" (2015); Allison Haas's "Two 1916s: Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way*"

(2019); Juan Meneses's "Queering the Nation: Hegemonic Masculinity, Negative Sovereignty and the Great War in Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way*" (2021). Even though these works prove to be of great value in the discussion of war memory in Ireland by following a sociological and cultural perspective that sheds light to the reasons behind the overshadowing of some Irish narratives which did not fit into the political agenda of the Irish Free State, the fact that other important literary contributions written before and after Barry's novel have not been yet properly explored and analysed leaves the panorama of Irish war literature incomplete and unexploited. Thus, even if the aim of this dissertation is not to provide said canon, the analysis of recent literary works which have not yet received critical attention aspires to contribute to the enlargement and visibility of the available corpus.

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is theoretically informed by both memory studies and trauma theory and the intersections between both fields will be explored and specifically applied to the case of Ireland as a postcolonial nation, since, as Mandy Link stated, "understanding how a society copes with the trauma of war, in this case particularly in the postcolonial context, is essential" (2019: 6). Memory studies emerged in Europe in the 1980s on the basis of the pioneering works on collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs —*Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925)— with the aim of exploring memory as a new tool for rethinking the past in the present. Memory studies contributed to the questioning of history, particularly by bringing historiography to the fore as a practice consisting on the selection of specific discourses or memories to define national identity and by exploring the extent of the implication of power institutions in said process, which allowed for the acknowledgment and valorization of other marginal experiences that have been excluded from official discourses. Works on memory involved a classification and definition of different types of memory, which can operate both individually and collectively and under the influence of different social frames or socio-political circumstances, as well as the establishment of parallelisms and contrasts between memory and history and the definition and delimitation of both concepts. Said studies were conducted by scholars from different disciplines in the humanities —history, anthropology, sociology, literature— such as Pierre Nora, Jan and Aleida Assmann, Jay Winter, Paul Ricoeur and Anne Whitehead. In addition to this, they have also ethically engaged with politics of regret, accounting for the important function of practices of memory in the forging and preservation of communal bonds.

Similarly, trauma studies emerged with the aim of achieving a better understanding of the sociocultural repercussions of traumatic and shocking historical events, particularly taking into consideration the narratives that had been written about the Holocaust during the aftermath of the Second World War. Trauma theory began to develop in the 1990s at the hands of a group of American scholars, mostly from Yale University —Shoshana Felman, Geoffrey Hartman, Cathy Caruth, Kalí Tal— who started to apply psychological concepts in literary analysis on the basis, envisioned by Geoffrey Hartman, that trauma theory would allow us "to 'read the wound' with the aid of literature" (1995: 537). These pioneers in the field were, however, later accused of relying too much on psychoanalysis and philosophy, as was the case of Caruth, whose book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) brought together previous theories of trauma from figures such as Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Paul de Man, and of approaching the issue from a universalizing perspective that disregarded historical and social contexts, so other scholars such as Kai T. Erikson, Dominick LaCapra and Jeffery C. Alexander have attempted to study collective trauma in more sociological terms, specifically addressing historical, national and cultural trauma. A critique was also made in more recent years from the perspective of postcolonial studies —by scholars such as Gert

Buelens, Stef Craps, Michael Rothberg, Irene Visser, Sonya Andermahr and Michelle Balaev—which attempted to include non-Eurocentric examples of former colonies where systematic and prolonged oppression had caused different manifestations of trauma, all of which will be taken into account for the Irish case as an ambiguous, in-between country, considered both a colony and part of the imperial metropolis. In any case, trauma studies help raise ethical questions pertaining to commemorative practices and governmental responsibility, which actually became of great importance during the peace process in Ireland, and thus they allow for an understanding not only of the circumstances that led to the exclusion of the Great War from Irish national narrative, but also of the corresponding amendments and courses of action endorsed in the last decades, intrinsically connecting with studies on collective memory. In addition to this, trauma theory plays a fundamental role in the analysis of contemporary fictional narratives and their contextualization in a socio-political climax of reconciliation.

The study of literary works will be undertaken in the last part of the thesis, as they prove to be essential in the recovery of the traumatic memory. In Ireland's case, literature anticipated some historical studies on the Great War, as novelists and poets not only provided the first testimonies and accounts of the experience, but also took the role of reassessing that forgotten part of history and endowed it with meaning. In an article published in *The Guardian*, Elaine Byrne recalls the story of her great-grandfather, who enlisted with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in 1914, emphasizing the role played by fiction in the recuperation of historical and vernacular memory: “It was fiction that taught me the fact of Irish history” (2019). She specifically mentions Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way* as her first insight into the topic, since it was neither part of the syllabus at school —“until recently, Irish history text-books were silent about the reason why they were there at all” (Boyce 2002: 191)— nor of her family's conversations at home: “my grandmother did not tell her children about the circumstances of her father's death and his service in the first world war until she was in her 70s. She did not want anyone to think badly of the father she loved” (Byrne 2019). Thus, literature managed to break the silence in an attempt to exorcise the ghosts from the past that had created important misunderstandings and communication impediments among. Literature becomes, therefore, a space to work through trauma, that is, to articulate what usually remains unspoken and to imbue it with meaning; according to Constanza del Río-Álvaro, in this sense, literary works “transform Irish history into an experimental open-ended text that continuously demands re-interpretation [...] in an attempt to make it understandable” (2010: 5).

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is divided into three parts, the first one —“Ireland in Times of War”— corresponding to the socio-historical and political context of Ireland both previous to and in the war years, the second —“Ireland and the Remembrance of War”— dealing with memory and trauma studies and exploring the development of war memory from the twentieth century to the centennial, and the last one —“Ireland on the Centenary of War and Revolution”— providing the analysis of the selected literary works, which will reflect the historical and theoretical questions treated beforehand. Thus, the first chapter begins by acknowledging the extent of Irish involvement in the conflict in the section entitled “Irish Participation in the Great War”: the section examines not only the enlistment of volunteers, but also the number of women who joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) and the industries that contributed to munitions and vehicles, demonstrating its relevance and impact in the history of Ireland. The next section, “Ireland in 1914: The Simmering Conflict of a Colony”, integrates the Great War in the Irish national narrative by accounting for the tense political atmosphere of the Irish at the outbreak of war —with the introduction of Home Rule and the formation of paramilitary groups— and

retraces to colonial times in order not only to claim Ireland's condition as a colony of the British Empire, but also to shed light on Irish divided identities and patterns of behaviour, which allows for a better understanding of the controversies surrounding the war. The third section, named "Beyond Ideological Reasons: The Irish Impulse to Join the Colours", explores the different reasons that led the Irish to voluntarily enlist, from a general spirit of adventure and old values of patriotism and comradeship, which were shared across nations, to the economic hardship, the growing militarisation and political circumstances that specifically characterised the Irish case. The last section of this first chapter, titled "1916: A Turning Point and Two Narratives", explains how the Easter Rising moved from being the disapproved rebellion of a minority to overshadowing and discrediting Irish participation in the war, a fact which already shows how the two events were turned into confronted narratives and appropriated by power institutions in both the Republic and Northern Ireland.

The second chapter of the thesis, "Ireland and the Remembrance of War", starts with the section entitled "Welcoming Irish Veterans: Commemorations and Amends", which outlines the development of war commemorations in Ireland by commenting on the different controversies surrounding the building of memorials, the celebration of parades and the governmental repairs to veterans, and discusses whether the war memory in Ireland can be deemed as a case of national amnesia. The next section, "History, Memory and Identity" delves into memory studies, providing first a theoretical contextualization of their terminology and applications, and then focusing more specifically on how collective memory operates and the fundamental role it plays in the construction of a common national identity as well as in the contestation of official history and hegemonic discourses, while simultaneously commenting on the dynamics that characterize Irish collective memory and the incorporation of war memory thereto. The third section, titled "Working Through Trauma Theory: A Postcolonial Perspective", traces the origin and evolution of trauma theory, since the first studies at the end of the nineteenth century to the consolidation of the term in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) and its subsequent applications in the humanities, including different ways of conceiving trauma, psychologically, historically and culturally. This section provides an understanding of the functioning of trauma, both individually and collectively, as well as of post-traumatic symptoms—mainly through the classification developed by Judith Herman—especially focusing on the tensions between trauma's evasion of knowledge and its necessary verbalization in the assimilation process. Irish concealment of war memory is therefore here examined in connection with the nation's colonial traumatic past, which is viewed as politically and culturally endorsed and as indissoluble from Irish national identity, which explains the fact that Ireland is still haunted by its past. The last section of this second chapter, "Unearthing the Past: Coming to Terms Through Literature", deals with the role played by literature in the verbalization and revision of traumatic and inconvenient truths, since the exercise of constructing a narrative proves to be essential for the assimilation and understanding of shocking experiences, as well as in the creation of a safe space for dialogue and negotiation. The section further discusses the intricacies of representing the unspeakable, but recognises the prevalence of the ethical function of bearing witness and arousing empathy even when words seem to fail. In addition, the section finally exposes Irish literary works on the First World War, from those written by combatants and based on their own experiences, to those of fiction published both during the war and in its aftermath, including among them the literary re-enactments written by the post-generation from the 1970s onwards.

The third and last chapter is the one pertaining to the literary analysis of the works written during centennial commemorations of the First World War, hence its title "Ireland on the Centenary of War and Revolution". The chapter firstly begins with a section—"Women

Authors Revisit the Past: Rewriting War and National Identity”— which provides a contextualization of the novels and short stories within the Irish cultural panorama, specifically concerning women writers, and secondly contains a brief summary of the plot of each narrative. Every section is then subdivided into four parts, each of them corresponding to one of the literary works: *Name Upon Name* by Sheena Wilkinson, *Fallen* by Lia Mills, “Each Slow Dusk” by Sheena Wilkinson and *Empire* by Mary O’Donnell, and in this latter case, the short stories from the collection that are going to be particularly addressed in that subheading are also specified. Thus, a systematic and comparative analysis is developed according to different themes that coincide in all the works. In “Socio-Political Identities: Tensions and Divergences”, the literary contextualization of that period in Irish history is brought to the fore, paying particular attention to the religious, social and ideological confrontations that oftentimes provoke internal divisions within the family. The next section, titled “Irish Involvement in the First World War: Duty or Treason?”, deals with the portrayal of different opinions concerning Irish participation in the war, as well as of the motivations behind those who enlist. The following section, “Representations of War: Trauma and Mourning” analyses the literary resources that the narratives employ to depict the war and its consequences, and to convey trauma. “New Perspectives on the Easter Rising: Beyond Martyrs and Perpetrators” puts the literary representations of the Easter Rising accomplished by these novels and short stories in value, by acknowledging their use of multiple perspectives of ordinary civilians who had not made part in the main narrative of the events. Finally, “Women’s Lives in the Midst of Change: Opportunities and Obstacles” examines the female characters in these literary pieces and how they specifically react to the war and the revolution and the decisions and risks they decide to take to integrate in a new Irish nation.

*Know that we fools, now with the foolish dead,
Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor,—
But for a dream, born in a herdsman's shed,
And for the secret Scripture of the poor.*

Tom Kettle, “To My Daughter Betty, the Gift of God” (1916)

1 IRELAND IN TIMES OF WAR

1.1 IRISH PARTICIPATION IN THE GREAT WAR

In spite of the apparent lack of concern for the Great War that prevailed in Ireland until the end of the twentieth century, Irish participation in the conflict was not an insignificant matter, but rather a decisive event that involved a considerable number of citizens —both in the battlefield and in the homeland— and that conditioned the development of Irish history, including the country’s transition towards independence. David Fitzpatrick, who was one of the pioneers in studying the Great War in Ireland from a historical perspective, asserted that the number of Irish who joined the WWI ascended to 206,000 —of which only 58,000 were servicemen at the beginning of hostilities— but his figures did not include the men who enlisted in Britain, the colonies or the US (1995: 1018). His estimate was overall accepted as the official figure after considerable disagreement due to political manipulation, since, according to Keith Jeffery, “commentators sympathetic towards unionism may tend to boost the figures [...]; more extreme nationalists may seek to reduce or at least belittle them” (2011a: 6). According to Turtle Bunbury in 2014, “by the time you combine all the Irish or half-Irish who served in the British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and US armies, there was probably more than a quarter of a million” (2014: xiii). There was, for instance, a group of around 450 Irish in Montreal who formed a specific regiment which came to be known as the Irish Canadian Rangers. It has been argued that Irish participation was really low in comparison with other regions from the United Kingdom —“the Irish contingent represented only three per cent of the British armed forces; just three per cent of the Irish population, and eleven per cent of its eligible men” (Loughlin 2002: 136)— but as Fitzpatrick righteously points out, since conscription was introduced in Britain in 1916, but not in Ireland, “comparison of enlistment rates is practicable only for the years 1914 and 1915. During those years the Irish rate amounted to almost two-thirds of that for Britain, a much smaller gap than that usually cited” (1995: 1018-1020).

Soldiers and volunteers who enlisted during the wartime years were not the only Irish who collaborated with the war effort, since there was also a considerable number of women who joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) to work in field hospitals and recuperation centres at home: “Across Ireland, 239 Voluntary Aid Detachments supplied over 4,500 women for nursing and auxiliary service at home and abroad” (Jeffery 2011a: 32). In addition to this, many Irish women organized themselves to provide essential materials and funds for the servicemen:

The Irish War Hospital Supply Depot had 6,000 registered women volunteers in eight subdepots across Ireland manufacturing surgical and other hospital equipment. At the ‘Central Red Cross Workrooms’ in Dublin, 300 women

workers knitted over 20,000 pairs of socks and 10,000 mufflers for the troops. In the north the Ulster Women's Unionist Council established an Ulster Women's Gift Fund for servicemen's 'comforts' which by 1918 had raised over £100,000. (Jeffery 2011a: 33)

In addition to this, there was also an important contribution of work force on the part of different businesses. According to Jeffery, "this was especially true in the northeast where the shipbuilding, engineering and textile industries responded to the expanded wartime demand for their products" (2011a: 30); for example, in Belfast, up until "37,000 workers were involved in the shipbuilding industry during the war" ("Ireland's Role"). Also during this period munition factories were installed, "employing around 2,100 people, mostly women, in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Waterford" ("Ireland's Role"). In this respect, according to Jeffery, the Irish amnesia prevails, since that civilian support from the homeland has not yet been fully recognised (2011a: 30). It is therefore still necessary to acknowledge the resource mobilization that the First World War entailed for Irish society, together with the human cost, since it has been accepted that Irish casualties reached the 40,000; according to Jeffery, they ascended to 49,000 Irishmen (2011a: 35).

On top of that, the island witnessed the suffering of war not only in the hospitals at home that received high numbers of soldiers from the front —"By early 1915 large batches of men were arriving by boat, five hundred or more at a time" (Grayson 2018: 31)— but also because Ireland gave asylum to 3,000 Belgian refugees who, in Grayson's words, "brought further tales of horrors with them" (2018: 30). Furthermore, it was in the south coast of Ireland where the Cunard's RMS *Lusitania* was sunk by a German U-Boat in 1915, and, later that year, also the sinking of the White Star liner SS *Arabic* took place in the near of the Old Head of Kinsale. In fact, people from the city of Dublin, according to Grayson, "saw survivors at first hand, with about 300 passing through Kingsbridge (now Heuston) station on their way from Cork to various destinations" (2018: 80). Towards the end of the war, another ship, the RMS *Leinster*, in this case an Irish one, was also torpedoed by a German U-Boat outside Dublin Bay, "an event dubbed by the *Freeman's Journal* as 'Ireland's Lusitania'" (Grayson 2018: 261) and that was particularly shocking for the city of Dublin, where "bodies were still being washed ashore in December" (Grayson 2018: 262-263)

The vast majority of Irish volunteers participated in the war through three of the New Army divisions expressly created by Lord Kitchener after the outbreak of the war: the 10th (Irish) Division, which would take part in the unsuccessful Gallipoli campaign —"After just two months, half of the 10th Division's 17,000 soldiers were dead, missing, injured or sick" ("Ireland's Role"); and the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions, which saw action mainly in the Somme and in Flanders, also suffering great losses.¹ John Redmond saw the creation of the first specifically Irish Division —the 10th (Irish) Division— in the British Army in positive terms, considering it to mark "a turning point in the history of the relations between Ireland and the Empire" (Redmond 1918: viii).² Notwithstanding, there were reservations on the part of the British War Office to allow these divisions to be exclusively formed by Irish; for some time, it

¹ Field Marshal Kitchener (1850-1916), who became Secretary of State for War at the outset of the Great War, predicted that hostilities would last for years and therefore decided to raise new armies by launching a recruitment campaign which successfully attracted a large number of volunteers: "That New Army, as it was officially called, was the second-biggest volunteer army the world had ever seen and most likely will ever see. It drew in almost 2.5 million men from August 1914 until conscription was enacted from March 1916, and as such only the Indian Army in the Second World War had more volunteers" (Chinn 2014).

² John Redmond (1856-1918) was the Irish Member of Parliament who succeeded Charles Stewart Parnell in the leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party, also known as the Home Rule Party due to its nationalist ideology and its attempts to achieve Irish self-government. Redmond also became the leader of the Irish National Volunteers (INV) after the Irish Volunteers' split.

was also believed that Catholics were unrepresented among the higher ranks, which created resentment against the British and Irish Protestants, but that problem seemed to be based on the fact that “few Catholic schools had Officer Training Corps organisations: those which did, like the Jesuit schools, produced an officer class” (Boyce 2002: 203). In addition, two of the divisions were highly politicized: whereas the 16th came to represent nationalist and Catholic Ireland because many of its forces had been part of the Irish National Volunteers, the 36th was in opposition identified with unionism and thus with Protestantism, since it was mostly comprised by northern Irish who had been members of the Ulster Volunteer Force. According to Jeffery, it was the 10th (Irish) Division, precisely “the least politicised of the three” (2011a: 41), which suffered the biggest historical amnesia (2011a: 38).

Since the turn of the century, notwithstanding, many stories of those Irish who fought in the Western Front, writers and war poets among them, have been recovered and collected in volumes such as Philip Orr’s *The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story* (1987), Turtle Bunbury’s *The Glorious Madness: Tales of the Irish and the Great War* (2014) or Steven Moore’s *100 Irish Stories of the Great War: Ireland’s Experience of the 1914 - 1918 Conflict* (2016). These books contain not only stories about the deeds of the Irish regiments in the war, such as the one of how Michael O’Leary won a Victory Cross and became the face of propaganda posters, but also peculiar anecdotes for which the Irish were responsible, such as the popularization of Jack Judge’s song “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary”, which spread and became a marching song not only in the British Army, but also among the French, German and Russian ranks, in different versions. In fact, after the war, the singer was upset about the way in which the returned soldiers were received in Ireland: “In 1920 he performed a song called ‘Where is Peaceland?’ expressing his anger at the lack of jobs and pay, but Feldman [Judge’s music publisher] deemed it too controversial to publish” (Bunbury 2014: 25).

Today, the historical relevance of the Great War for Ireland’s history is no longer called into question. Moreover, it is seen as a key episode that disrupted the growing internal dispute over Home Rule in Ireland, prompting a series of concatenated events, starting with the Easter Rising which would eventually lead to the Irish War of Independence in 1919; in Foster’s words, “the First World War should be seen as one of the most decisive events in modern Irish history. Politically speaking, it temporarily defused the Ulster situation; it put Home Rule on ice; it altered the conditions of military crisis in Ireland at a stroke; and it created the rationale for an IRB rebellion” (1989: 471). Providing an interesting reflection in this respect, David Fitzpatrick imagines a much crueller scenario for Ireland had the war have not taken place: “In the absence of war, Ireland in 1918 might have been an even darker and more fractured country than the ravaged states that emerged from conflagration after 1922. The Great War brought mixed blessings as well as unmistakable horrors to Ireland” (2015: 658). The First World War, therefore, could even be seen as the event that prevented a premature Civil War in Ireland and helped raise the nationalist spirit that turned the struggle for independence into Ireland’s first priority. As Thomas Bartlett has also considered, “had the war with Germany ended at Christmas 1914, as many had predicted, hostilities within Ireland might well have taken its place. But the war dragged on until 1918, and when it was over, Ireland had been transformed by sacrifice abroad and by insurrection at home” (2010: 268). Thus, the disillusionment and prolonged tiredness caused by the war effort, together with the revival of Irish nationalism brought about by the Rising, irrevocably altered the Irish society and laid the foundation for political change.

1.2 IRELAND IN 1914: THE SIMMERING CONFLICT OF A COLONY

Before the outbreak of the First World War, Ireland was already immersed in an internal dispute that had its roots in the long process of conquest and colonization the country endured, which irrevocably affected the construction of *Irishness* or the Irish national character, forging new identities that came into conflict. There were at the time a group of Irish who claimed more autonomy or independence for Ireland, whereas others who disagreed aspired to a union with Britain. Even though they were not homogenous groups, nationalists were associated with Catholicism, whereas unionists tended to be Protestants from the north of Ireland. The pre-war atmosphere of the island had been tense since the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill by the Prime Minister H. H. Asquith in 1912, which led to the episode known as the Home Rule Crisis.³ Following the proposal, more than 400,000 men and women from the north signed the Ulster Covenant to express their nonconformity:

Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, [...] do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant, [...] to stand by one another in defending, for ourselves and our children, our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland. (Coleman 2014: 123)

Shortly after signing the Covenant, a group of Unionists and Protestants formed the Ulster Volunteer Force with the aim of impeding the implementation of Home Rule. In response, Irish nationalists from different factions—the Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the Irish Republican Brotherhood among them—also created their own paramilitary group in 1913, called the Irish Volunteers and intended to safeguard the enactment of the bill, which increased the latent hostility between the different Irish identities that had been coexisting as a result of British imperial policies. Both paramilitary organizations were armed with German weapons through smuggling operations: the Larne gun-running supplied the Ulster Volunteers, whereas the Howth gun-running helped equip the Irish Volunteers; this second operation was controversial, since it was intercepted by the British police and three civilians were killed by accident as a result, causing discontent and outrage among the population. In addition to this, another paramilitary force, the Irish Citizen Army (ICA), had been formed to protect the demonstrations held during the Dublin lock-out, which was the biggest industrial dispute that took place in Ireland, lasting from August 1913 to January 1914 with the aim of defending the workers' right to unionise.⁴

Under these series of circumstances, Ireland seemed to be on the verge of a civil war. After the outbreak of First World War, however, both forces of volunteers diverted their efforts to the cause: the Ulster Volunteers, led by Edward Carson, focused on providing recruits for Lord Kitchener's New Army as a way of proving their loyalty to the crown, whereas nationalist leader John Redmond urged the Irish Volunteers to enlist as a means to secure the implementation of Home Rule once the war was over, a decision which was not equally

³ The Bill would allow for the establishment of a bicameral Irish Parliament, as well as for the removal of the Dublin Castle Administration—the British government centre—with the exception of the Lord Lieutenant.

⁴ The Irish Citizen Army (ICA) was led first by James Larkin, founder of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), and later, having the new objective of establishing an Irish socialist republic, by James Connolly, who would become one of the leaders of the Rising.

accepted by all members.⁵ Redmond's encouragement to join the British Army provoked the split of the Irish Volunteers in 1914: the vast majority, supporters of the politician, formed the National Volunteers, while a remaining unit of around 15,000 Irish Volunteers, under the leadership of Eoin MacNeill, stood up for Ireland's neutrality in the conflict.⁶ MacNeill himself explained the reasons for their separation in colonial terms, disassociating Ireland from the Empire: "The issue between Mr. Redmond and ourselves is clear and simple. It is this, whether the Irish Volunteers are pledged to the cause of Ireland, of all Ireland, and of Ireland only, or are likewise bound to serve the Imperial Government in defence of the British Empire" (Martin 2013: 179).

Arguments and confrontations between different Irish groups were not infrequent or new, but the result of a long process of colonization that is still put into question, given the changing and unique position within the Empire that Ireland had occupied. However, the development of Britain's power in the island and the different practices therein conducted prove that Ireland was indeed Britain's oldest colony. Britain's claim to Ireland started really early, when some pseudo-historians modified Irish origins to legitimize their rule; for example, in the ninth century, the Welsh monk Nennius, author of *Historia Brittonum*, suggested that there had already been an ancient British settlement in Ireland based on some similarities in the Celtic languages to claim the land as British, whereas in the eleventh century, Geoffrey of Monmouth, author of, among other works, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, wrote that King Arthur had already conquered Ireland in the past (Lennon 2004: 37). But its true and most valid claim was founded on Papal authority, and it started with a reorganization of the Irish Church that took place in the twelfth century; to ensure its success, the Church decided to assign responsibility to a central and strong figure, which the island lacked: "by the papal bull *Laudabiliter*, Pope Adrian IV granted the Lordship of Ireland to the powerful King Henry II of England 'to reveal the truth of the Christian faith to peoples still untaught and barbarous'" (Ranelagh 2012: 39). This assumption was false, according to the historian John O'Beirne Ranelagh, since even though Ireland had no central political authority, it was already Christian and was ruled by three kings, which does not in the slightest indicate they were uncivilized. The English invasion started years later, in 1167, overthrowing the last native High King of Ireland, Rory O'Connor. Shortly afterwards, positions of religious power were occupied by the English, who remained loyal to the Irish Church, facilitating that "popes often supported English Protestant monarchs because they recognised, as the English empire expanded, the usefulness of having an influence on those who ran the empire through the ever-faithful Catholic Irish" (Ranelagh 2012: 45). In addition to gathering the support of the Church, the English also secured their power through military control and a reorganization of the land:

The English brought to Ireland not only a strong military tradition, but also a different English legal structure of common law based upon the personal ownership of land and not, as in Irish Brehon Law, ownership vested in an extended family or clan. To protect their lands, and to enforce their laws, the English built castles [...]. Dublin Castle, which was to become the seat of English government in Ireland, was begun in 1204 by King John. [...] The fortified nature of English buildings testified to the Englishmen's own warlike

⁵ Sir Edward Carson (1854-1935) was at the time both the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and of the Irish Unionist Parliamentary Party and thus he was the first person to sign the Ulster Covenant.

⁶ Eoin MacNeill (1867-1945) was the founder of the Gaelic League and also of the Irish Volunteers, after whose split he became Chief-of-Staff of the remaining members. He was later appointed member and chairperson of Dáil Éireann, as well as Member of Parliament for Londonderry.

qualities as well as to the fact that they were clearly invaders, surrounded by hostile and resentful Irishmen. (Ranelagh 2012: 45-46)

Notwithstanding, English authority was never fully accomplished in all the territories of the country, but restricted to specific areas such as what came to be known as the English Pale, and rebellions were frequent not only on the part of the Irish, but also of the Anglo-Irish as a result of their ambivalent identities.⁷ The majority of the native population was not properly represented in Parliament until 1922, being frequently formed by an Anglo-Irish ruling class that was supposed to differentiate itself from the common Irish —“One of the first laws passed by the thirteenth-century Parliament prohibited the Anglo-Irish from wearing Gaelic dress because it confused relationships between the governors and the governed” (Ranelagh 2012: 46). In addition to this, the Statutes of Kilkenny, in 1366, prohibited marriage between English and Gaelic people and also prevented the Anglo-Irish from playing the traditional Irish harp or speaking the Gaelic language.

Nevertheless, being the English immersed in foreign wars —The Hundred Years’ War (1337-1453) and the Wars of the Roses (1455-1487)— the Anglo-Irish, a minority within Ireland, felt their entitlement constantly threatened, which ended up producing “a defensive psychology to explain their situation to themselves and to England. Portrayal of the Irish as racially and culturally primitive (despite the assimilation that actually took place) was a particular result, producing propaganda that flourished for eight hundred years (Ranelagh 2012: 49). In effect, according to Stephen Howe in *Ireland and Empire*, depreciative stereotypes were attributed to the Irish from as early as the twelfth century, depicting them as barbaric and unreliable, turning them into the first victims of imperialist ideology (2002: 16). As a means of retaining power, the Anglo-Irish also encouraged the native population to continue with their livelihood activities, farming and herding, while offering benefits and equal treatment to Gaelic leaders who submitted to them, accepting intermarriage, which in turn made them more ‘Gaelicised’: “By the close of the fourteenth century, the Anglo-Irish had become more Irish than English, and many of them contributed to the revival of Gaelic literature and culture than took place during the period 1200 to 1400” (Ranelagh 2012: 48).

Concurrently, in the wake of England’s disregard —being immersed as it was in other political conflicts— and also as a result of the Gaelicization of the Anglo-Irish, as well as of the growing of an Irish Church more detached from the English rule, the Anglo-Irish started undertaking revolts against the British. In 1534, after Henry VIII schism from the Church, Thomas FitzGerald, son of a consolidated Anglo-Irish family, rebelled against the English king trying to get the Church’s support, but he failed. Even though he was killed in battle, “by his appeal to foreign power and the Pope he established what was to become the traditional pattern of Irish dissidence and subversive nationalism. England’s difficulty was henceforth seen as Ireland’s opportunity; England’s enemies were to be Ireland’s friends” (Ranelagh 2012: 54), which would also encourage the rising during the Great War years, with the British forces again immersed in a foreign conflict.

After years of intermittent conquest, measures became stricter from 1530 onwards owing to the European conquest of America, when Ireland “is progressively redefined as a crucial and strategic springboard for colonisation and provisioning of, migration to and trade with the New World” (W. Smyth 2001: 158). In 1536 the Irish Reformation Parliament endorsed by Henry VIII, which approved a law that promoted “English Order, Habit and Language”, reinforced the Statutes of Kilkenny: “The Gaelic language was prohibited along with Gaelic dress [...].

⁷ The English Pale included parts of the current counties of Dublin, Louth, Kildare and Meath and marked the extension of the English power in Ireland.

The brehons and Gaelic poets and harpists were banned. Intermarriage between the native Irish and the English was again forbidden” (Ranelagh 2012: 57). The situation particularly affected the vast majority of members of the Irish Church, who were Celtic speakers, and years later Mass was also prohibited. These attacks against the Catholic faith simultaneously disturbed the rites and the costumes of the Irish to the detriment of their own identities. Their situation did not improve with the accession to the throne of Catholic Mary (Queen from 1553 to 1558), who conducted the first effective plantations in Ireland —“the first spatially detailed proposal was the plantation of Leix and Offaly in 1556. The last was the plantation of Ormond in 1630” (Andrews 2000: 140).

During the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), the plantation policy continued and became firmer, entailing the extension of the Pale and the establishment of military fortifications — sometimes at the expense of dissolved monasteries— as well as the dispersal and isolation of the Irish population: “Dowdall, the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh whom she appointed, urged plantation as a policy, writing to the Queen that the solution to the problem of the rebellious Irish [...] was to drive out or kill them, and settle their lands with Englishmen” (Ranelagh 2012: 58). Consequently, different forms of resistance broke out; the guerrilla war conducted by the Munster FitzGerald from 1566 to 1583 or the rebellion led by Hugh O’Neill —leader of the Ulster family who descended from one of the High Kings of Ireland— from 1595 to 1603 were paradigmatic examples. O’Neill’s defeat was particularly significant, considered by Ranelagh to mark the end of Gaelic Ireland. In addition to this, O’Neill’s past in the court of Queen Elizabeth and his service in her army turned him into a traitor in the eyes of the English, which also negatively affected their image of the Irish.

In addition to the dispossession of the land, during the Jacobean era (1603-1625) Ireland enjoyed no religious tolerance —James I was afraid of a Catholic revolt after the Gunpowder Plot— so that the Irish who did not comply with the English manners were pursued and killed, which eventually provoked the Flight of the Earls in 1607. This episode set a precedent in Irish collective memory by embodying a determination to exile rather than surrender: “Over the next two centuries it fell largely to exiles to keep the flame of an Irish nationhood alight” (Ranelagh 2012: 62). As a result of the earls’ absence, their lands were confiscated and given to Scottish and English settlers to establish the first plantations in Ulster, resorting to starvation as a means of exerting pressure: “Elizabeth despatched Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, as Deputy. He [...] immediately proposed to ring Ulster with forts and create famine ‘as the chief instrument of reducing this Kingdom’” (Ranelagh 2012: 60). Ulster was one of the territories most affected by policies of plantations —“some estimates suggest that its population may have been halved in this devastating period” (W. Smyth 2001: 162).

The English plantations entailed the eviction of many native Irish who were relegated to restricted areas, enforcing segregation in the island: “As early as 1660, levels of segregation, as measured by the number of rural townlands without any ‘Irish’, ranged between 5 to 10 per cent of all townlands in the Ulster borderlands to a peak of over 20 per cent in the core area of planter settlement in north Armagh, south Antrim and east Londonderry” (W. Smyth 2001: 163). Moreover, James I prohibited Catholic priests from entering Ireland and his son Charles I continued the progressive placement of Englishmen in the Irish administration. As a consequence of Stuart practices, in 1642 Irish priests, together with native Irish and Old English, joined together in the Confederation of Kilkenny, establishing an Irish self-government that fostered the association of Catholicism with the Irish nationalist cause, a connection that persisted until the twentieth century and that can be seen in the church’s lack of condemnation and even legitimization of the violence exerted by nationalists in the Rising and also in the years

that followed it. This revolutionary self-government lasted until 1649, when Oliver Cromwell invaded the island as head of the new state.⁸

Cromwell's actions in Ireland consisted of striking terror through indiscriminate slaughters that still remain very present in Irish collective memory. Cromwell condoned his unsparing acts on the premise of a civilizing mission the Irish themselves compelled him to lead —“He went on to justify his action as ‘a righteous judgment of God upon those barbarous wretches who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood’ and argued that ‘it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future’” (Ranelagh 2012: 72). Furthermore, he conducted planting and deporting policies that punished Catholics the most, damaging Irish economy —“the expulsion of Catholic merchants was to temporarily retard economic recovery, for the loss of the old Catholic families meant a reduction in key shipping and infrastructural wealth” (W. Smyth 2001: 167)— and character: “Still in the mid-1650s much property stood empty, especially in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford, a symbol of the traumas and dislocation of the previous decade” (W. Smyth 2001: 168). After Cromwell, Catholics were no longer a majority in some cities, including Dublin, where they were relegated to the suburbs and outnumbered “by three to one in the city core” by the English settlers (W. Smyth 2001: 168).

When the Stuart monarchy was restored, even though the union with England was dissolved and the Irish Parliament recovered, Cromwellian organization of the land was not significantly altered; as a result, in 1685 “only 22 per cent of the land of Ireland was owned by Catholic Irishmen” (Ranelagh 2012: 74). Following this period, there came the Williamite-Jacobite War in Ireland, in which most of the Irish supported the Catholic king, James II. With the victory of the Protestant William of Orange on 1 July 1690 in the Battle of the Boyne, Ireland's rule was given to an Anglican Ascendancy⁹ governing class that would enforce their position through harsh measures such as the Penal Laws¹⁰ against Catholics —which would continue throughout the eighteenth century— leading many Irish to migrate, so that “by 1701, Ireland had been effectively occupied. About 27 per cent of its population was then of Scots or English origin” (Ranelagh 2012: 78) and towards the end of the eighteenth century, Catholic lands represented only a 5 per cent (Ranelagh 2012: 80). Moreover, since Catholics were more taxed than Protestants and had trouble with inheriting property, “many Catholics belonging to the landed and merchant classes turned Protestant” (Somerset Fry and Somerset Fry 1993: 167).

As a result of all these colonial practices, tensions between the Irish and the British, and also between Catholic Irish and the Ascendancy, continued growing: “To the Irish, the slaughters and plantations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the attack on Gaelic society, could only be explained in racist terms. To the planters and the government, however, the Irish were traitors who refused to accept the rights of conquest” (Ranelagh 2012: 63) based on papal order. The recurrent attacks against Catholics contributed to the identification of the Irish national character as inherently Catholic, as well as to the connections of the Irish Catholic Church with nationalism. Besides, in spite of all the measures applied against Catholics, the Irish Church resisted against the Anglican Church both during the Counter-Reformation, when Ireland in fact became the only European country in which “the Counter-Reformation succeeded against the will of the head of the state and the instruments of government” (W.

⁸ Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was a commander in the Parliamentary army, the winner party during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms that would abolish the monarchy with the execution of Charles I and establish a republic in its place, the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, which Cromwell governed as Lord Protector.

⁹ The Ascendancy was formed by “large Anglican landowners descended from sixteenth-century English settlers” (Ranelagh 2012: 77) and would remain “a colonial class that, unlike previous English rulers in Ireland, never came fully to identify with the country” (Ranelagh 2012: 84).

¹⁰ Penal Laws implied, among other prohibitions, that Catholics could not possess weapons, receive an education, vote in parliamentary elections, inherit land from Protestants, buy land or take out a mortgage.

Smyth 2001: 174), and also after the Cromwellian expulsion of Catholic priests and peasants, strengthening Irish Catholic identity as a resistant group against Protestant England. By 1731, according to W. Smyth, “a moral community of enormous power and durability had emerged from the traumas of the later sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries” (2001: 179).

Tensions caused by the Ascendancy burst into the Irish Rebellion of 1798, which was an important event in the history of colonial Ireland that became a benchmark for Irish republicanism. Influenced by the American and French revolutions, Catholics and Presbyterians—who had also been affected by the Penal Laws, since “Protestants of the Ascendancy [...] belonged to the Established Church of Ireland, but the Presbyterians were dissenters” (Somerset Fry and Somerset Fry 1993: 170)—joined for an uprising against the established government that was eventually suppressed by British forces and resulted in the Acts of Union of 1800: the Parliament of Ireland was then merged into the Parliament of the United Kingdom, forming the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801. During the nineteenth century, Ireland became thus part of the imperial metropolis and many Irish took part in the imperial enterprise alongside the British, but they also saw themselves in great difficulties and neglected by the English government during the Great Famine, the most traumatic event for the Irish, together with the Cromwell plantations, which became a fundamental motive of mourning and resistance in Irish nationalist discourse.¹¹

Even though there are some studies that do not consider Ireland as an English colony, but rather as a feudal baronage that was progressively conquered and then incorporated as part of a new kingdom, the island experienced English domination with consequences analogous to those of any other colonial nation. As aforementioned, the Irish endured centuries of systematic oppression and slaughter based on ethnicity and religion, dispossession of their lands and exclusion from Ireland’s political life and economy, which irreversibly affected their language and geography. Declan Kiberd summarizes the main differences of Ireland with respect to other colonies, including its proximity and affinities to Britain, without denying Ireland’s status as such, and mentioning the Union as another form of oppression:

Ireland differed from other countries in several important ways [...] Most obvious, perhaps, was the sheer duration of the colonial occupation, which lasted more than seven centuries. Set against that, however, was the close proximity of Ireland to England: affinities of climate, temperament and culture made it hard for the English to treat the Irish consistently as their absolute Other and led to attempts, such as the Act of Union in 1800, to assimilate the occupied land into a united kingdom. To some this seemed a benign offer of membership [...]; to many others it was the most insidious of all oppressive tactics. (1995: 251)

In addition to this, and despite the Union, Stephen Howe in *Ireland and Empire* notes that during the nineteenth century some British policies clearly treated Ireland as an external part of the Empire. Howe distinguishes between an early period in which Ireland was considered “an integral part of a United Kingdom” —similar to Wales and Scotland— and a turning point towards the end of the eighteenth century when the term *Empire* acquired “connotations of overseas expansion” and Ireland started to be occasionally seen as “part of *that* ‘Empire’”

¹¹ The Great Famine (1845-49) had its origin in a potato blight that deeply affected the Irish population, resulting in mass migration, with more than one million people leaving the country, and also in starvation, with one million deaths. The main identified causes were absentee landlordism and single-crop dependence, which were caused by the English administration of the land. On top of that, the consequences of the Famine were exacerbated by the lack of intervention of the English government during the first years, which caused bigger resentment on the part of the Irish.

(2002: 13). Consequently, the British began to separate themselves from the Irish by transforming them into the Other. During that century, according to Joseph Lennon, the British started categorizing the Irish as “Celtic”, as a different race, and attached to them a series of prejudices (2004: 139). As Terence Denman explains, the Irish migrations to England during that period increased the fear of the outsider and thus the “patronising attitudes” of the British: “The Irish, the Catholic Irish above all, were usually perceived in England in an unfavourable or a downright hostile fashion, which reflected the often troubled colonial relationship between England and Ireland” (1991: 352). The situation got worse in the first decades of the twentieth century with “dehumanizing representations of the cultures of Ireland and the Orient (as well as unflattering comparisons of the Irish with apes)” (Lennon 2004: 56). According to Homi K. Bhabha, “what is being dramatized is a separation —*between* races, cultures, histories, *within* histories— a separation between *before* and *after* that repeats obsessively the mythical moment of disjunction” (1994: 82). Through that separation, Bhabha explains, the colonial discourse denies them their capacity of self-government, while simultaneously pointing out the possibility of reforming them, which justifies the colonial mission. Hence, the idea to relate the Irish to apes and to the “Orient” to exclude them from purely Western white origins, thus claiming British physical and intellectual superiority.

These stereotypes also influenced the treatment that some Irish, especially Catholics, received in the British army, both before and during the Great War. According to Denman, “the recruitment of Catholic Irish at the end of the eighteenth century coincided with a period of particularly intense xenophobia and chauvinism among the English. [...] The Irish regiments acquired a reputation for indiscipline and brutishness which they never completely shook off” (1991: 353). In this respect, during the Great War, another myth was added: “that the Catholic Irish, because of their harsh upbringing, were naturally tougher than the English and made better soldiers” (Denman 1991: 354). Notwithstanding, this characteristic did not benefit the Irish soldiers, since they were, for this reason, frequently used as shock troops, suffering heavy casualties in consequence. Furthermore, they acquired a series of prejudices that were in truth not exclusively linked to them, but common problems among soldiers, such as heavy drinking and military crime (Denman 1991: 360). In this vein, according to Sylvie Mikowski, 239 Irish soldiers were executed or condemned to death during the war for desertion and disobedience, sentences which only in the twenty-first century were deemed to be unfair and motivated by racial prejudices —“Un rapport récent, publié seulement en 2004, a établi la preuve des préjugés racistes à l’encontre des Irlandais qui motivèrent ces jugements le plus souvent iniques et sans commune mesure avec la faute commise” (2011). It is also significant to mention that there were similarities between the stereotypes attributed to the Irish in the British army and those attributed to the black soldiers that were fighting in the French army: “Such comparisons reveal interesting parallels with the ‘colonial’ attitudes towards the Catholic Irish soldiers — recklessness, negligence, credulity— too easily complemented claims that the Irish were incapable of organising their political life in a responsible way” (Denman 1991: 364). However, the accomplishments of the Irish in the British army received praise. The writer Rudyard Kipling, who was an advocate of the Unionist cause and for this reason used to despise Catholic nationalists, “was nevertheless so moved by the deeds of the regiment that he modified his opinion of Catholic Ireland from antagonism to admiration” (Jeffery 2011a: 67-68).

Moreover, at the same time that the Irish Catholic was characterized as brute and vulgar, the Anglo-Irish was again associated, in Britain, with representations of the homosexual, due to Roger Casement’s trial: “His public pillorying, primarily as a homosexual and secondarily as an Irish nationalist, a German collaborator and a British traitor, re-infected Wildean aristocratic aestheticism and other-worldliness by explicitly connecting these prior ‘known’

qualities of ‘the homosexual’ with treason, collaboration and anti-colonialist activities” (Backus 1994: 48).¹² All these double standards to which the Irish were frequently subjected evince the ambiguity of Irish identities as a result of a process of colonization. In the words of Bhabha, “the colonial construction of the cultural (the site of the civilizing mission) through the process of disavowal is authoritative to the extent to which it is structured around the ambivalence of splitting, denial, repetition —strategies of defence that mobilize culture as an open-textured, warlike strategy whose aim ‘is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture’.” (1994: 114). Years of interaction and conflict between English and Irish produced new meanings, in what Bhabha names a “Third Space” —that is, “a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (1990: 211)— which is based “on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity” (1994: 38), often resulted from periods of colonization or from border experiences. Ireland occupied therefore a third or in-between space that was exclusive to this nation and, by extension, to its inhabitants, and should be treated as such. In the words of Joep Leerssen, “Ireland is in the Twilight between First and Third World, between the ones in the dark and the ones in the light” (1998: 173).

This idea of the third space in which new configurations of identities emerge —according to Bhabha, it is “the *in-between* space” precisely the one “that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (1994: 38)— directly connects with liminal studies, which have proven to be very useful when it comes to addressing the experience of the postcolonial subject. The liminal pertains to the interstice, where tensions and negotiations of difference take place, while also fostering potential transformation; it has been defined, by Victor Turner, “as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise” (1970: 97). Victor Turner based his studies on Arnold van Gennep’s theory on the rites of passage, that is to say, the idea that human lives can be divided into different stages achieved through a series of “transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next” (Van Gennep 1960: 3) which entail “preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition) and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)” (1960: 11).¹³ Correspondingly, “the attributes of liminality or of liminal personae (‘threshold people’) are necessarily ambiguous [...]. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner 2008: 95). In this respect, Lennon concludes that the liminal position of the Irish allowed them to identify themselves either as part of the “imperial metropole” or as part of the “colonized periphery” (2004: xxiii), which simultaneously granted them the double nature of beneficiaries and victims. It is therefore expected that the Irish experienced the disorientation and indecision that characterise liminal identities, especially at a decisive time in the history of Ireland, in transition from a colony to an independent state, when loyalties were put into question.

1.3 BEYOND IDEOLOGICAL REASONS: THE IRISH IMPULSE TO JOIN THE COLOURS

There were plenty of reasons that explain such a massive mobilization of millions of people to participate in the Great War, starting with a romanticised and heroic vision of the battle. Before the outbreak of war, there had been a considerably long peaceful period, so that, as A. J. P. Taylor remarks, “no man in the prime of life knew what war was like. All imagined that it would be an affair of great marches and great battles, quickly decided. It would be over by

¹² Roger Casement (1864-1916) was an Irish nationalist who was among the main organizers of the Rising. He had gone to Germany to negotiate a collaboration against the British, but when he returned to Ireland he was caught by the British authorities and sentenced to death.

¹³ Arnold van Gennep included, among these, “ceremonies of birth, childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, initiation into religious societies, and funerals”, whose purpose “is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined” (1960: 3).

Christmas” (1980: 22). This lack of knowledge contributed to that initial idealization of the battle, which would have nothing to do with modern warfare. Many Irishmen who ended up joining the war effort had no intention or will to serve the British Empire, but were instead influenced by that naive view and desire for adventure —“the general public, nationalist and unionist, responded, as everyone did in the early months of the war, with a naïve enthusiasm for war that now seems almost incomprehensible” (Boyce 2002: 193). In addition to this, also moral and communal values, including patriotism and the defence of the nation —“Men did not debate why they were fighting. They knew. It was to defend *la patrie*, the Fatherland, or Holy Russia” (Taylor 1980: 22)— played an important role in the political discourses of the different participants in the conflict.

In Ireland’s particular case, questions pertaining to ideology and political affiliations also influenced the numbers of enlistment, especially taking into account that joining the British regiments was in itself a controversial and political course of action for them; as it has been discussed in the previous section, whereas many unionists wanted to prove their loyalty to the crown, some nationalists expected to secure the implementation of Home Rule. In fact, in 1917, William Redmond, in a speech in Parliament, insisted on the promise that had been made and claimed that they had won the right to self-government: “I am trying [...] to represent [...] the hearts of tens of thousands of Irishmen who went with me and their colleagues to France, [...] they would say to this House, [...] in the name of God we here who are about to die, perhaps, ask you to do that which largely induced us to leave our homes” (1917).¹⁴ Therefore, the participation of Irish volunteers in the Great War under the British flag can only be understood by taking into consideration the different factors concerning the political and socio-historical context of the time. In this vein, and according to David Fitzpatrick, the individual perspective alone does not account for a comprehensive explanation; it is essential to investigate the collective pressures that came into play (1995: 1017).

First of all, the militarisation of Ireland prior to the Great War was a key factor that helped explain the high numbers of volunteers. In spite of the divergent political motivations that encouraged their enlistment, both forces ended up serving a similar number of men: The Ulster Volunteers became the main force of a quite homogenous Protestant and Unionist division, the 36th (Ulster) Division —“Nearly 31,000 men including 4,350 reservists were transferred from the Ulster Volunteers” (Fitzpatrick 1995: 1029)— and the Irish Volunteers “eventually contributed 32,000 men to the armed services, including 7,600 reservists” (Fitzpatrick 1995: 1028), fighting most of them in the 10th and 16th (Irish) Divisions. There has been a tendency, nevertheless, to emphasise alleged differences between Northern Ireland and the Republic in regards to the responses to the war. The belief, long perpetuated by Unionists, that there were higher enlistment rates among Protestants to accuse Catholics of traitors to the Empire was unfounded; according to Fitzpatrick, “The under-representation of catholics [*sic*] was [...] a by-product of Ulster’s excessive contribution to the forces [...]. County returns for 1915 indicate that catholics [*sic*] were more likely than protestants to be enlisted in no less than 14 counties” (1995: 1025).

The participation of Irish Catholics must be seen not only as a result of Redmond’s support to the war effort with a view to achieve Home Rule, but also of the moral discourse of defending small nations such as Belgium and Serbia. In fact, this represented one of the main recurrent motives in Irish war propaganda, together with the defence of the homeland, usually depicted “as an idyllic rural landscape” and portrayed through the image of a vulnerable woman who expects protection from a man, appealing to traditional masculinities (Johnson 1999: 44).

¹⁴ William Redmond (1861-1917) was John Redmond’s little brother and also an Irish nationalist politician. He joined the Royal Irish Regiment, took part in the war effort and was killed in action in 1917.

According to A. J. P. Taylor, due to Britain's location outside the European continent, instead of focusing on the defence from an unlikely invasion, the idea that was emphasized the most in British propaganda was that of fighting a common cause —as was the defence of civilization— and a common enemy that was menacing their peace and wellbeing: “they were in no danger of invasion. They had gone to war for a cause —the neutrality and independence of ‘little Belgium’. Therefore the British talked, from the beginning, in idealistic terms. This was ‘a war to end war’; ‘to make the world safe for democracy’. [...] Later, their idealism was echoed in other countries” (Taylor 1980: 22).

Such a discourse took root in a community that had been long exploited by a Protestant power and that had been closer than ever before to achieve Home Rule. In recruitment posters, Belgium was portrayed as a Catholic region threatened by an imperial, Protestant nation, emphasizing the existent parallelism with Ireland and Britain. The newspapers started to cover stories not only about what came to be known as the Rape of Belgium —with the remarkable burning of Louvain that involved the destruction of the Catholic University's library— but also about other similar acts, turning them into offenses expressly made against the Catholic Church: “That sense was amplified in September with the burning of Rheims cathedral, described by the *Freeman's Journal* as a ‘German crime against civilisation’” (Grayson 2018: 30). This religious factor arose internal tensions within the Irish Church as well, with some members being unable to remain neutral —as they were expected according to the Vatican policy— and publicly denouncing, instead, German barbarism: “Bishop O'Donnell coined a phrase which was exploited by the recruiting authorities in 1916 and 1918 —the ‘new Paganism’.” (Callan 1986: 105). In this vein, MP John Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge on September 20 also legitimized the war by putting the focus on the defence of religious and moral principles which were akin to theirs:

The interests of Ireland, of the whole of Ireland, are at stake in this war. This war is undertaken in defence of the highest interests of religion and morality and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country, a reproach to her manhood, and a denial of the lessons of her history if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, and shrinking from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which have distinguished their race all through its history. (Martin 2013: 159)

In addition to this, in light of the precarious situation of Ireland at that time, there were also economic reasons exerting pressure that led many Irish to enlist so as to support their families: “In a society with a high incidence of emigration, the army offered a kind of assisted passage away from home, but one with steady employment and a pension at the end. [...] Some recruiting calls explicitly emphasised the value of army pay and dependant's allowances” (Jeffery 2011a: 18-19). Many working-class families' subsistence started to depend on those separation allowances paid by the government, and the soldiers' wives came to be known as Separation Women. In 1915, even Irish Republican James Connolly —who would later become a leading participant in the Rising— while claiming that the efforts of the Irish should focus on the freedom of their country, recognized that many Irish, long subdued by British imperial abuses, had no other alternative but to comply with British interests:

Of late we have been getting accustomed to this new phrase, economic conscription, or the policy of forcing men into the army by depriving them of the means of earning a livelihood. [...] Fighting at the front today there are

many thousands whose whole soul revolts against what they are doing, but who must nevertheless continue fighting and murdering because they were deprived of a living at home, and compelled to enlist that those dear to them may not starve. (2015)

Moreover, David Fitzpatrick has also found out that “the enlistment of workers in several sectors of manufacturing industry was encouraged by guarantees of re-employment after demobilization and the provision of benefits for dependants of servicemen by trades unions” (1995: 1022-23). He then concludes that the enlistment rates were particularly stronger in established and well-organised workforces, which can relate to the high numbers of enlistment in industrialised Ulster, including both Catholics and Protestants equally (Jeffery 2011a: 20).

Regarding collective pressures, family tradition, as much as social circles came into play. Fitzpatrick has delved into the matter concluding that “those having fathers or brothers with military experience often emulated them as a matter of course” (1995: 1025). In addition to that, the people who took part on fraternities, militias or sporting clubs were also more prone to enlist with the other members. As examples of this, “the Orange and Protestant Friendly Society had over 16,000 members in uniform by late 1914; while veterans of the Boys’ Brigade accounted for nearly half of all protestant recruits in Dublin”; concerning sports affiliations, a prominent example could be the Pals’ Company of the 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, which began with the Irish Rugby Football Union (Fitzpatrick 1995: 1029). In this respect, Fitzpatrick further remarks that “recruiting strategists were well aware of the power of the sporting motif, and their stories of football in no-man’s-land lent glamour, and the illusion of fair play, to trench warfare. Such images of the masculine culture of soldiery provided potential recruits with reassurance of continuity between civilian and military life” (1995: 1030).

These expectations of team spirit and comradeship that fit well into the epic imaginary and traditional ideas of heroism, however, would not always be fulfilled in the reality of the trenches. Censorship permeated not only the news —“throughout the hostilities in the Great War, not a single paper, British or German, published a photograph of a single maimed body” (Kiberd 1995: 245)— but also the soldiers’ letters home, softening the cruelties from the front and distorting reality, while simultaneously driving a wedge between soldiers and civilians, who remained more estranged from the conflict:

Few soldiers wrote the truth in letters home for fear of causing needless uneasiness. If they did ever write the truth, it was excised by company officers, who censored all outgoing mail. The press was under rigid censorship throughout the war. Only correspondents willing to file wholesome, optimistic copy were permitted to visit France, and even these were seldom allowed near the line. (Fussell 2013: 95)

John Redmond himself also considered that the camaraderie that sprang from having a common objective at the front could be of benefit to the overcoming of Irish differences: “The men who had differed in religion and politics, and their whole outlook on life, became brothers in the 10th Division. Unionist and Nationalist, Catholic and Protestant, [...] combined for a common purpose: to fight the good fight for liberty and civilisation, and, in a special way, for the future liberty and honour of their own country” (1918: xii-xiii). Notwithstanding, even within the same unit some Catholics and Protestants refused to occupy the same spaces, and Catholic soldiers in particular were frequently ostracised.

All in all, it can be concluded that the vast majority of Irish volunteers were driven by more practical reasons derived from the daily concerns of ordinary people, such as providing for their

families, and thus were not mobilized by patriotic ideals towards Britain. In fact, Irish nationalists who found it necessary to gain Home Rule through diplomatic and pacific means enlisted only with the purpose of achieving more freedom for their homeland. Moreover, some Irish did not dismiss a necessary confrontation with Britain after the war —“Some nationalists appear to have joined the British army to gain if not experience, at least arms” (Jeffery 2011a: 27). In this respect, in Jennifer Johnston’s novel *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (1974), an Irish fervent republican enlists in the army with the aim of learning how to shoot a gun before his long-expected war for independence against Britain starts —“When I go back I’ll be one of the fellas really knows what the hell he’s doing when it comes to fighting” (2016: 102).

A fact that further reinforces this lack of political commitment to Britain is the later affiliation of some ex-soldiers to the IRA after their return home, which implied they would sometimes have to confront the men they had once been their fellows in combat (Jeffery 2011a: 66). Taking into consideration the ex-soldiers’ poor psychological condition after the war, their change of organization could be seen as a mere transposition of the violence of the front to the homeland: “Thus the shadow of Suvla, Salonika and the Somme fell across the hostilities of Ireland’s post-war ‘Troubles’ as surely as it darkened the lives of individuals more directly involved with those battles, whether as casualties, survivors or the bereaved” (Jeffery 2011a: 66). What could be seen as a radical change, moving from the British Army to the IRA, can be rationalised as a reflection of the ambivalent identity of the Irish, who not only had diverse and incompatible paths to follow, but also doubts regarding which one was right. Despite all this, Irish soldiers were severely criticized and condemned for being British allies. Even if moved by the idealism that imbued political discourses, that only reveals they were not different than those involved in the Rising; as Declan Kiberd suggests, “the Great War was, in Scott Fitzgerald’s words, the last great love battle, fought for all the old, high abstractions: and so was Easter 1916” (1995: 246).

1.4 1916: A TURNING POINT AND TWO NARRATIVES

The year 1916 marked a permanent difference in Ireland’s split collective memory and identity: commemorations of the Easter Rising, which took place in April, and of the Battle of the Somme, which lasted from July to November, have seemed to be incompatible along the twentieth century, due to the lack of representation of the Great War in public memory when compared to the Rising, as well as to sporadic altercations between nationalists and unionists. Both the 16th (Irish) Division and the 36th (Ulster) Division fought at the Battle of the Somme, but only the 36th received some recognition within the north of Ireland, since the Somme came to be very present in Ulster’s memory as a means to claim their service and loyalty to the British Empire; according to Brian Graham and Peter Shirlow, it also came to represent Protestant working-class identity and to legitimize the Ulster Volunteer Force (2002: 893), even though it was more a public appropriation than an official, recognised memory —“In some contrast to its highly visible paramilitary appropriation, official memorialization of the Somme within Ulster is and always has been relatively muted” (Graham and Shirlow 2002: 889).¹⁵ Members of the 16th (Irish) Division, however, being mainly Catholics and nationalists who had belonged to the Irish National Volunteers, were despised in the north —often put in contrast with Ulstermen’s masculinities— and also in the south, where the commemorations of the Easter Rising leaders as symbols of the national cause eclipsed other possible narratives of remembrance beyond the homeland. The Easter Rising, with the series of concatenated events that triggered, was

¹⁵ The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), which took its name from the Ulster Volunteers, was a Protestant paramilitary organization that was formed in 1966, during the Troubles, to safeguard the union of Northern Ireland with Britain, fighting against Republican groups as the IRA.


therefore the disruptive event that would end up altering the collective memory of the Irish by monopolizing the Irish Free State's national memory.

In 1914, the vast majority of the Irish nationalists supported Home Rule and Redmond's political decisions on the matter —when the Irish Volunteers split, according to Grayson, around 93% of the Volunteers supported Redmond and formed the National Volunteers, so they were “158,360 to 12,306” (2018: 25) remaining. Thus, they were sympathetic to the war effort, as evinced by the high numbers of volunteers, as well as by the general approval and respect many of them enjoyed: “When recruits for the Royal Munster Fusiliers left in August 1914 for the regimental depot in Tralee, they were seen off by enthusiastic crowds singing ‘Rule Britannia’ and ‘A Nation Once Again’ at Limerick station” (Boyce 2002: 193). In addition to this, there was also a decline in activity, as David Fitzpatrick discovered, of “radical nationalist bodies, including the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, Sinn Féin, and the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union” (2015: 651), which led him to the conclusion that, in contrast to the expectations of many separatists, “the outbreak of the war failed to stimulate disenchantment with Home Rule or desire for rebellion” (2015: 651).

Notwithstanding, the war which everyone thought would be over before Christmas started to prolong, which dwindled the forces of the National Volunteers —since many of them enlisted— whereas the remaining minority of the Irish Volunteers started growing. According to Charles Townshend, the Irish Volunteers' minority was counterbalanced by a “higher level of political commitment and determination [...]. Growing by 1915 to ten, and later to fifteen, thousand, its paper strength scarcely exaggerated its real strength” (1983: 279). Within the Irish Volunteers, there were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood —among them, John MacBride, Tom Clarke, Seán Mac Diarmada, Joseph Plunkett, Thomas MacDonagh and Patrick Pearse— trying to control the organization; consequently, according to Foster, the Irish Volunteers “became closely identified with Sinn Féin's anti-recruitment campaign and the broad front of Anglophobia that merged inevitably into pro-Germanism” (1989: 473). Furthermore, according to W. Alison Phillips, the Irish Volunteers were given a free hand to develop their activities and were sometimes backed up by the police:

At Limerick, for instance, on White Sunday, 1915, a parade of Irish Volunteers was only saved from ending in a humiliating rout by the intervention of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The Volunteers, who were over one thousand strong and most of them armed, were returning to the station through the Irishtown quarter, where many soldiers' families lived, when they were furiously attacked by a crowd of women —mostly wives of the Munster Fusiliers— and had to be shepherded through the danger zone by an escort of constables. (1926: 87)

At the beginning of 1916, conscription was imposed in Great Britain and thus some Irish nationalists returned home to avoid its extension to Ireland, such was the case of Michael Collins (Jeffery 2011a: 26).¹⁶ This fact, together with economic hardships and political unrest, also contributed to the urgency of national rebellion. Still, the numbers of citizens serving the British or the National Volunteers were much bigger than those of the Irish Volunteers —“In April 1916 there were at an optimistic estimate 16,000 Irish Volunteers under MacNeill; in contrast there were 150,000 Irish serving with the British Army, and a further 115,000 Irish serving with the British in the R.I.C., the D.M.P., and in Redmond's National Volunteers. For every Irishman with MacNeill there were over sixteen with the British” (Martin 1967: 108).

 ¹⁶ Michael Collins (1890-1922) was a leading figure in the Irish War of Independence, being an elected Sinn Féin member and minister in the Dáil, and also the Director of Intelligence of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

On top of that, the opinion of the Irish Volunteers was divided, since many of them, including MacNeill himself, opposed a rebellion and thus were not completely informed of the Rising's plans, which were made, for the most part, by the IRB. In fact, "MacNeill learned of the planned Rising only late on Thursday 20 April, and [...] placed an advertisement in the *Sunday Independent* cancelling the day's manoeuvres" (Grayson 2018: 121-22) which caused great confusion but did not come in time to prevent it. According to Townshend, it was precisely the "double secrecy" of the planning, both with respect to the authorities and also to the nationalists supporting MacNeill —"The greatest concealment was that within the Volunteer executive, where Pearse's systematic deception of MacNeill was the cause of permanent bitterness" (Townshend 1983: 293)— which resulted more detrimental to the Rising. That is the reason why F.X. Martin suggested that the Rising could be described as a revolt of "a minority of a minority of the minority": "the insurgents (inspired by the I.R.B.) were only a minority within the Irish Volunteers, who in turn were a minority group even among Irish nationalists" (1968: 132). In fact, according to Martin, the number of Irish who finally took part in the revolt was only between 1,550 and 1,600 (1967: 64).

Justification for a rebellion was provided by the ideas and rhetoric of Patrick Pearse long before it happened.¹⁷ In November 1913, Pearse wrote about the possibilities of renewal and freedom that armed struggle could bring: "We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms. We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing [...]. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them" (1916: 98-99). In correlation with this idea, he regarded the Great War on positive terms as well, as an opportunity to display old values of honour and glory; in December 1915, he considered that "the last sixteen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth" (Pearse 1916: 216). James Connolly, however, even though he ends up allying with him out of the circumstances fostered by the war, opposed Pearse's idea of blood sacrifice and so he demonstrated in his declarations in the *Workers' Republic* on 25 December 1915 —"we do not think that the old heart of the earth needs to be warmed with the red wine of millions of lives. We think anyone who does is a blithering idiot. We are sick of such teaching, and the world is sick of such teaching" (qtd. in Townshend 1983: 283)— serving as an example of the disagreements among nationalists.

Pearse also showed early predilection for Germany's motives over Britain's and spoke of nationalism as the main motor and inspiration for fighting: "On whichever side the men who rule the peoples have marshalled them, whether with England to uphold her tyranny of the seas, or with Germany to break that tyranny, the people themselves have gone into battle because to each the old voice that speaks out of the soil of a nation has spoken anew. [...] it is patriotism that stirs the peoples" (Pearse 1916: 216). Moreover, he gives religious connotations to the sacrifice of blood on the battlefield in the name of one's nation: "Such august homage was never before offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country" (1916: 216). According to Townshend, "violence came, for him, to represent national political redemption" (1983: 282). These ideas of patriotism, heroism and sacrifice expressed by Pearse when referring to a revolutionary war in Ireland to achieve independence, have also been present in the many discourses and propaganda that encouraged participation in the Great War.

¹⁷ Patrick Pearse (1879-1916) was an Irish nationalist leader and poet, director of the Gaelic League, who contributed largely to the promotion of the Irish language. As a Supreme Council member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), he was one of the minds behind the Easter Rising and he in fact became the president of the provisional government that was proclaimed during the revolt until he was arrested and executed.

Being a minority with internal disagreements, it was precisely the irruption of the First World War which precipitated the rising, since, as Grayson explains and as was already pointed out in section 1.2, “a traditional nationalist view, associated first with Daniel O’Connell in the 1850s, was that ‘England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity’” (2018: 23). According to Grayson, arranged in its beginnings by Thomas Clarke and Seán Mac Diarmada, “the rebellion was planned by the IRB’s Military Council from mid-1915” (2018: 115), in which Pearse took part. Thus, his ideas came into action when insurgents tried to get German support: “Not only was Germany, as England’s enemy, seen as an ally for separatist Irish republicans [...], but the more internationalist republicans argued that the war could enhance freedom generally by destroying the British Empire and British imperial domination of the world” (Jeffery 2011a: 47-48). Roger Casement went to Berlin to negotiate, and a gunrunning German ship, the *Aud*, was supposed to land in Kerry, but was intercepted by the Royal Navy, which was aware of the operation; consequently, they also captured and prosecuted Casement for treason. Before such failure, “even MacNeill accepted that such an infusion of weapons would make armed struggle a possibility” (Townshend 1983: 297).

Those negotiations with Germany became a controversial issue that damaged the image of the Easter Rising leaders, especially among the families of the Irish soldiers. During the Rising, there were also confrontations at the gates of the GPO between the rebels and the Separation Women who were intended to collect their allowances and thus started to protest against the closure of the office. There were mixed reactions to the Rising depending on the political conviction and also on the social class —“The reactions of working-class Dublin concentrated more prosaically on epic feats of looting in the damaged shops, and those of bourgeois Dublin on appalled repudiation of what was generally seen as a German plot and an attempt to stab Redmond in the back” (Foster 1989: 482)— but in general terms, people were shocked by the events and expectant, not knowing how they would unfold. Once the Rising ended, the rebels had to pass through multitudes of people, most of which were openly hostile, with only a few showing support. According to Grayson, “it is easy to understand how the ‘separation women’ would have been especially angry. Across the war, 1,082 men from these roads served in the British military. [...] we can expect that around 868 of the 1,082 were already serving. Of these, 121 had already been killed before the Rising” (2018: 163).

The Easter Rising, nevertheless, ended up becoming a turning point that contributed to the change of attitudes of the Irish with respect to the Great War, especially because of the British response, which started with the declaration of martial law in Dublin on the third day of the uprising on 26 April 1916. According to Foster, “the draconian reaction of the authorities to the rebellion should be understood in terms of international war and national security” (1989: 484), but, even so, the decisions made would be hardly criticised and accountability demanded. Moreover, the following day, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, who had supported Home Rule but not the formation of paramilitary forces and the resort to violence, was executed without notice among other civilians who also had no connections with the Rising; such civilians were Thomas Dickson, editor of *The Eye-Opener*, and Patrick McIntyre, editor of *The Searchlight*, “papers with strong unionist sympathies” (Redmond 2006).¹⁸ Skeffington in particular had been arrested the previous day when he was heading home after a meeting called by himself with the aim of stopping looting.

Skeffington’s murder was unsettling for many Irish, including Constance Markievicz, one of the revolutionaries sentenced to death penalty—in her case commuted to transportation to Dublin’s Mountjoy Prison. When her sister Eva Gore-Booth went to visit her, she already knew

¹⁸ Francis Sheehy-Skeffington (1878-1916), also known as Skeffy, was an Irish writer and activist who had been member of the Irish Citizen Army only until Connolly opened negotiations with the IRB, and who therefore took no part in the Rising.

about the executions of the main leaders of the revolt —Patrick Pearse, Tom Clarke, James Connolly, and Joseph Plunkett, among others— and, according to her sister’s account, “seemed only really puzzled by one thing: ‘Why on earth did they shoot Skeffy?’ she said. ‘After all, he wasn’t in it. He didn’t even believe in fighting.’” (Gore-Booth 2015: 195). The event caused further controversy when the captain responsible for ordering the executions, John Bowen-Colthurst, was finally found guilty by court martial, but insane; due to his previous experiences at the front, both in the Second Boer War and in the First World War, he was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Consequently, he was detained in a lunatic asylum for some time, which caused more resentment among the Irish population —“To many, given the extraordinary circumstances, British justice itself was on trial” (“Captain John Bowen-Colthurst” 2020). In fact, when he was released in 1918, even though he migrated to Canada, his family house in Ireland was burned by the IRA in 1920, a retaliation that reflects the persistence of the acrimony.

In addition to these events, having suppressed the rebellion on 28 April, the British forces proceeded, under the commandment of General Maxwell, with the arrestment of more than three thousand Irish men and women —many of whom had no connection with the conflict— as well as with the holding of ethically-questionable courts-martial conducted in secret and without defence. As a result, over a time of ten days —from 2 to 12 May— ninety people were sentenced to death, fourteen of whom had their sentences confirmed by Maxwell and were consequently executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Gaol. Within that same period, Thomas Kent was also put to death after a court martial in Cork. Later on, Roger Casement was sentenced to death as well after a trial process in London in which the British authorities exposed Casement’s homosexuality to damage his public image, and then hanged on 3 August, thus raising the total to sixteen executed Irishmen who went down in history as national martyrs.

On 11 May, John Dillon introduced a motion in Parliament to stop the British executions and gave a speech that fostered the change of perception of the Rising leaders from insurgents to national heroes: “there were some very bad actions, but as regards the main body of the insurgents, their conduct was beyond reproach as fighting men. I admit they were wrong; [...] but they fought a clean fight, and they fought with superb bravery and skill, and no act of savagery or act against the usual customs of war that I know of has been brought home” (1916).¹⁹ Besides from highlighting their bravery and honour in battle and refusing to condemn their acts, he provided further justification for them and declared he was proud of them, which sparked indignation and jeering among the members of the House: “That may horrify you, but I declare most solemnly, and I am not ashamed to say it in the House of Commons, that I am proud of these men. They were foolish; they were misled” (1916). Notwithstanding, Prime Minister Asquith agreed with Dillon in the bravery of the rebels, admitted their motives could be understood and thus put an end to the executions, in spite of Maxwell’s reservations.

As a consequence of the British reprisals, the Irish population became more sympathetic towards the rebels and their cause, which entailed an increasing nationalist sentiment. In Townshend’s words, “the British response to Easter week reinforced, at several levels, the Irish demand for self-determination. Most importantly, it validated the insurrectionists’ attitude to physical force” (1983: 312). What is also worth mentioning and could have also contributed to the legitimization of violence, “is that there was no official condemnation of the rising by the Catholic hierarchy” (Martin 1967: 113). R.F. Foster further engages with the question by comparing Lady Gregory’s opinions of the leaders of the Rising before and after their executions, as expressed in her letters to Yeats —“The letters [...] begin with references to

¹⁹ John Dillon (1851-1927) was an Irish nationalist politician who had supported Home Rule. He became the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) after John Redmond’s death in 1918.

‘corner-boys’ and ‘rabble’; but they change, particularly with the executions. [...] Particularly significant is an exchange where Yeats sends her articles from the *Westminster Review* stressing the Rising as a German plot; and she retaliates with quotations from Shelley on the execution of people who deliberately risk the death penalty from motives of political idealism” (2001: 130).

Yeats himself was ambivalent as to how to react to the Easter Rising and the subsequent events, famously reflected in his poem “Easter 1916” (1916), where he simultaneously laments the bloodshed—he was against the use of violence to achieve freedom or independence—and eulogizes the sacrifice of the rebels, urging readers to commemorate them —“our part / To murmur name upon name, / As a mother names her child / When sleep at last has come” (Yeats 1999: 38). Thus the poem, according to Nicholas Drake, “adopts elements of the language of prayer and of public oath” (1991: 50). His ambiguous feelings are clearly portrayed in the refrain “All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born” (Yeats 1999: 36), which simultaneously conveys the possibility of a new start for Ireland and acknowledging the sacrifices made to achieve that change. In this vein, Yeats was careful not to take a strong political stand, and hence, as Foster has found, “he told John Quinn that he could include ‘Easter 1916’ in his next collection only if the war came to an end before then, well aware that in many people’s eyes pro-rebel equalled pro-German. What the years from 1916 to 1920 are remarkable for, therefore, is a good deal of writing that was withheld from publication” (2001: 133).

Thus, the change in public opinion was progressive and it did not become a determining factor in the enlistment rates —“Specifically ‘Irish’ events left no clear impression on the temporal pattern of enlistment” (Fitzpatrick 1995: 1021). In fact, whereas Irish recruitment declined after the Rising no more than it did in the other regions —Scotland, Wales and England— in the final months of the war there was a final increase in recruitment aimed to prevent conscription (Jeffery 2011a: 8). Still, Sinn Féin started to gain more support from that moment onwards and “by early 1917 Cumann na mBan and other extreme nationalist organizations were being given a new kind of respectful coverage” (Foster 1989: 485-86). During that year, Sinn Féin began to absorb new movements like the Irish National League or the women’s movement and to grow even more: “By October 1917 there were probably 1,200 Sinn Féin Clubs, with about 250,000 members; by 1918 the movement had on many levels succeeded to the position enjoyed by Parnell’s Irish Parliamentary Party in the early 1880s” (Foster 1989: 488).

British reprisals after the Rising—including the indefinite extension of martial law at the end of May, which given the circumstances, as Townshend considers, “was contrary to all legal precedent” (1983: 310)— were not the only factor that produced disenchantment in Ireland, but also the amount of casualties from the front and especially the menace of establishing conscription: “Whereas the outbreak of the war had reconciled Irish nationalists with Britain as never before, the threat of conscription caused alienation on a scale unknown since the 1800s” (Fitzpatrick 2015: 654). It is remarkable, in this respect, a letter that Yeats wrote to Lord Haldane—Lord High Chancellor in H.H. Asquith’s government until 1915— in October 1918 warning about the dangers of introducing conscription at such a delicate moment in Ireland, and thus breaking his rule of non-intervention in political affairs:

I write to you because you are a man of letters, and we, therefore, may speak the same language. I have no part in politics and no liking for politics, but there are moments when one cannot keep out of them. I have met nobody in close contact with the people who believes that conscription can be imposed without the killing of men, and perhaps of women. Lady Gregory, who knows the country as few know it, [...] is convinced that the women and children will stand

in front of their men and receive the bullets. I do not say this will happen, but I do say that there is in this country an extravagance of emotion which few Englishmen accustomed to more objective habits of thought, can understand. There is something oriental in the people, and it is impossible to say how great a tragedy may lie before us. [...] There is a danger of a popular hysteria that may go to any height or any whither. There is a return to that sense of crisis which followed the Rising. Some two months after the Rising I called on a well-known Dublin doctor, and as I entered his room, an old cabinet-maker went out. The doctor said to me: 'That man has just said a very strange thing. He says there will be more trouble yet, for 'the young men are mad jealous of their leaders for being shot.' That jealousy is still in the country. It is not a question as to whether it is justified or not justified, for these men believe —an incredible thought, perhaps, to Englishmen— that the population of Ireland has gone down one-half through English misgovernment, that the union of Ireland, in our time, was made impossible because England armed the minority of people with rifles and machine-guns. When they think to themselves: 'Now England expects us to die for her', is it wonderful that they say to themselves afterwards: 'We shall bring our deaths to a different market.' [...] it seems to me a strangely wanton thing that England, for the sake of fifty thousand Irish soldiers, is prepared to hollow another trench between the countries and fill it with blood. If that is done England will only suffer in reputation, but Ireland will suffer in her character, and all the work of my life-time and that of my fellow-workers, all our effort to clarify and sweeten the popular mind, will be destroyed and Ireland, for another hundred years, will live in the sterility of her bitterness. (Sommer 1960: 356-57)

Yeats's letter not only warns about the popular discontent that followed the Rising and hints at the possibility of social revolt in case of introducing conscription, but also contains noteworthy comments that relate to colonial practices; on the one hand, he mentions the Irish suspicion that the halving of their population was due to Britain's policies, legitimizing their discontent and resistance to conscription, and on the other hand, he describes the Irish as having something oriental that makes them inherently more passionate and prone to impulsive, violent reactions, endorsing British colonial ideology.

It was in April 1918 when Prime Minister Lloyd George first introduced the Manpower Bill, which extended conscription to Ireland, triggering a crisis in Ireland that would alter the Irish political panorama to the benefit of Sinn Féin:

A violent reaction brought together Sinn Féin, the Irish Parliamentary Party and every other Irish nationalist group into a massive anti-conscription campaign, based on abstention from Westminster and a broad front of popular agitation. It was backed by the Church [...] and the trade unions, which produced a one-day general strike (outside Ulster) on 23 April. All this [...] provided the final legitimization of Sinn Féin as a 'national' political party, and the culmination of the wartime government's record of disastrous Irish decisions. (Foster 1989: 490)

In fact, the Catholic Church legitimized the Irish protests as a fair defence against oppression, according to Townshend, "with its famous declaration that 'conscription forced in this way on Ireland is an oppressive and inhuman law which the Irish have a right to resist by every means that are consonant with the laws of God'" (1983: 281). Thus, due to the Conscription Crisis of 1918, "the Sinn Féin leadership found for the first time a national political issue which could

mobilize the mass of the people” (Townshend 1983: 318), which entailed a shift in Irish politics that was reflected in the results of the Irish general election celebrated in December, in which Sinn Féin won in a landslide victory, defeating the Irish Parliamentary Party: “Sinn Féin won seventy-three seats against the Irish Parliamentary Party’s six, with 48 per cent of votes cast — 65 per cent in the twenty six counties outside what would soon be called ‘Northern Ireland’. They were uncontested in twenty-five constituencies” (Foster 1989: 490).²⁰ In spite of the Sinn Féin’s majority, the British did not accept the establishment of an Irish Republic, but only a Parliament within the United Kingdom, which was not enough for Irish nationalists in power, “so following the 1918 general election, the Sinn Féin MPs refused to attend at Westminster and established their own Dáil Éireann, an independent Parliament” (Grayson 2018: 273), constructing the new nation with a unique, nationalist narrative.

There was in 1916, nevertheless, other events that were also significant in Irish history, even in spite of being located beyond its borders. The beginning of the year marked the ending of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, in which the 10th (Irish) Division had participated, but this particular unit was the one that suffered the biggest amnesia. According to Grayson, “the Gallipoli narrative was overtaken by that happened over Easter 1916 in Dublin, not because the public did not care about losses in the Dardanelles” (2018: 111). In fact, in September 1915, Katharine Tynan, a prolific Irish writer and poet, put into words the discouragement that permeated Irish society in the middle of the Gallipoli offensive:

So many of our friends had gone out in the 10th Division to perish at Suvla. For the first time came bitterness, for we felt that their lives had been thrown away and that their heroism had gone unrecognised. Suvla —the burning beach, and the poisoned wells, and the blazing scrub, does not bear thinking on. Dublin was full of mourning, and on the faces one met there was a hard brightness of pain as though the people’s hearts burnt in the fire and were not consumed. (Tynan 1919: 178)

At the time of the Rising, there were also many Irish soldiers fighting in the Great War, and casualties were bigger than those of the Rising: “Indeed, across the Monday to Saturday of the Rising, nearly three times as many Dubliners were killed serving in the British army in the First World War, as the total number of rebels killed in Dublin” (Grayson 2018: 3). Thus, 1916 is also particularly remembered as the year of the Battle of the Somme, one of the bloodiest of the war. The 36th (Ulster) Division was one of the British units that was in the Battle of the Somme from its beginning, that is to say, from the 1st of July, and thus one of the most affected by German fire —“In the first three days of the Somme offensive, it suffered around 5500 casualties, almost 3000 of whom were fatalities” (Graham and Shirlow 2002: 882)— but also the 16th (Irish) Division took part in the offensive from late July onwards.

The Irish soldiers lived all the events concerning the Irish negotiations with Germany, and especially those concerning the Easter Rising, in the middle of the fight. Before the Rising, when Casement visited the German camps, he visited the Irish prisoners of war and attempted to form an Irish Brigade that could fight under the German flag and against the British —“Roger Casement arrived citing ‘1798, or rotten Government, and what our forefathers bled for’. He promised money (£20), free passage to the USA and work after the war” (Grayson 2018: 78). Most of them refused the offer, mainly because they did not want to fight against his Irish

²⁰ The Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) was the moderate nationalist party that had dominated Irish politics since the 1880s. After the overwhelming defeat in the 1918 election, it was dissolved, and some of his members formed the Nationalist Party in Northern Ireland.

countrymen, but fifty-six of them did (Grayson 2018: 78). In this vein, the German armies started to favor the Irish prisoners of war, according to the accounts of Irish soldiers themselves:

Following fatigues one day the Commandant said, ‘All Irish step forward.’ Wilson said, ‘he told us that we were not going to work anymore as we were the friend of the Germans, and the English must do the work’. [...] The move to Limburg was part of an attempt to give the Irish better conditions, which seems to have been reflected in lighter work plus better washing, lavatories and clothing, but not food. (Grayson 2018: 76-77)

When the news of the Easter Rising came to the front, soldiers felt betrayed, according to the Protestant nationalist journalist and politician Stephen Gwynn: “I shall never forget the men’s indignation. They felt they had been stabbed in the back” (1919: 230). The idea of an alliance with Germans, their current enemies in the battlefield, increased the sense of betrayal: “The phrase, ‘gallant allies in Europe’ [...] in the 1916 Proclamation annoyed and disgusted the soldiers who faced the ‘Huns’ in mortal combat in the trenches” (Power 2015). On top of that, troops from the 16th (Irish) Division found out about the Rising by German placards: “one of them said: ‘Irishmen. Great uproar in Ireland. English guns are firing on your wives [*sic*] and children.’, whereas another said, ‘English dreadnought sunk: English Military Bill refused. Sir Roger Casement persecuted. Throw your arms away. We will give you a hearty welcome’” (Grayson 2018: 164). Notwithstanding, the impact of the executions was also significantly outrageous among the Irish ranks: “John Lucy, a sergeant with the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles, noted, ‘my fellow soldiers had no great sympathy with the rebels, but got fed up when they heard of the executions of the leaders’” (Power 2015).

At the end of the war, the Irish soldiers returned, therefore, to an Ireland that had a new government with aims that did not correlate or continue with those for which they had fought. James Loughlin remarks the importance of 1916 “as the year in which the Irish question, as it had existed since Parnell had mobilised nationalist Ireland in pursuit of Home Rule in the 1880s, was dramatically transformed by the Easter Rising” (2002: 133).²¹ Home Rule had already been discarded by the prospect of consolidating an Irish Republic, which led to the Irish War of Independence in 1919. D.G. Boyce sees some irony in the lack of correspondence between the rebels’ intentions and their real outcomes: “The 1916 rebels fought, as they saw it, for a united and free Ireland, promising to cherish all the children of the nation equally. Yet it is commonly acknowledged by historians at least that their Rising further exacerbated the divisions within Ireland between unionist and nationalist” (2002: 212). In fact, one of the consequences of the Rising was Ulster’s firmest resolution than ever of remaining aside from an independent Ireland: “heavily committed to the war effort, [...] the prospect of entering a nationalist Ireland that had tried to stab the Empire in the back was less alluring than ever. By 1917 [...] both moderate nationalists and Unionists accepted the exclusion of a six-county Ulster” (Foster 1989: 486). The rhetoric of the joint blood sacrifice of the Great War was indeed used in the creation of a six-county Northern Ireland in 1920, according to Guy Beiner, “as is evident in the speech of King George V at the opening of the devolved parliament: he lauded Ulster’s ‘patriotic devotion to the Empire which you proved so gallantly in the Great War’” (2007: 380).

The impossibility of reaching an agreement with Ulster’s counties only exacerbated the anger of some Irish nationalists who were unable to respect Ulster’s decision for decades throughout the twentieth century, which resulted in continuous violent confrontations during

²¹ Charles Parnell (1846-1891) was an Irish nationalist politician who had tried to achieve Home Rule for Ireland. He was the leader of the Home Rule League and also of the Irish Parliamentary Party from 1882 to 1891.

the Troubles. In particular, ex-soldiers suffered considerably, as they were frequently ostracized and sometimes even persecuted: “One recent study of three Munster counties shows that ex-servicemen faced much hostility [...] because of their past service, but also that this was part of much wider violence directed against Protestants. Over 120 war veterans were killed by the IRA in various guises between 1919 and 1924” (Grayson 2018: 324). In spite of that, some soldiers joined the IRA and participated in the War of Independence playing important roles that continued the violence started by the war abroad and by the Rising in the homeland: “They provided military expertise, insights into discipline, and the ability to pose as British officers. Those who remained in the army could also be an important source of weapons” (Grayson 2018: 271). In effect, since the Rising, the resort to violence became part of Irish politics, as seen in the War of Independence, conducted as a guerrilla, and in the following Civil War. In Townshend’s words,

The rising was certainly a manifestation of political violence, but it was more than this: it was, to a large extent, a manifestation of violence as politics. It was not the prelude to a democratic national movement which led in turn to the establishment of a ‘normal’ constitutional national polity. It was, rather, a form of politics which may be called ‘demonstration politics’, the armed propaganda of a self-selected vanguard which claimed the power to interpret the general will. Cathartic action was substituted for methodical debate; ideal types replaced reality; symbols took on real powers. (1983: 312)

In this respect, the members of the new government were selected because of their participation in the Rising, systematically excluding other groups of Irish: “Each deputy was elected because of his (or her) ‘national record’ and usually this meant having fought against the British during Easter Week or at least having been imprisoned because of the rising” (Martin 1967: 66). Their imposition of a common national narrative that could validate the establishment of the Republic had permanent effects on Irish collective memory. As Tom Kettle, the Irish writer and politician, already predicted in the summer of 1916 after the Rising, “these men will go down to history as heroes and martyrs and I will go down—if I go down at all—as a bloody British soldier” (qtd. in Grayson 2018: 200).²² Already in the following year of the Rising, the anniversary was celebrated with Republican symbols with no firm intervention by the police forces —“On Easter Monday 1917, 9 April, a crowd of around 2,000 people gathered in the city centre, marching and singing republican songs to mark the anniversary of the Rising. Some hoisted a tricolour on the roof of the GPO and a police attempt to confiscate it after it had been taken down ended in ‘a fiasco’” (Grayson 2018: 232).

There were, therefore, important differences in how both events, the Rising and the Somme, were commemorated in the Republic and in Northern Ireland: whereas in the Irish Free State the Easter Rising leaders were extolled as national heroes—which was reflected on the “rising sales of photographs of the rebel leaders, copies of letters they had written on the eve of execution and ‘mourning badges of green and black ribbon’ throughout the summer of 1916” (Stover 2017: 120)— in the north of Ireland nationalists and, by extension, Catholics, were disregarded and often contrasted to Ulstermen in terms of masculinity and bravery, to the detriment of the other members of the 36th Ulster Division —“Recent research suggests that

²² Thomas Kettle (1880-1916) was an important figure in Irish nationalism, since he had been member of the Irish Volunteers until its split, when he supported Redmond and became a National Volunteer who ended up enlisting in the war. The same as Redmond, he also believed that the joint participation of Protestants and Catholics could be of benefit for the future of Ireland, and thus, in spite of lamenting the executions, “Kettle also believed that the Rising’s leaders had ‘all but destroyed his dream of an Ireland enjoying the freedom of Europe’” (Grayson 2018: 200). He died in the Western Front during the Somme offensive.

over 15 per cent of soldiers in some battalions were Catholic” (Johnson 1999: 42)— as well as the members from other divisions, which were predominately Catholic —“Those who had fought with the 36th Division became part of the province’s mythology of modern masculinities, whereas veterans from the 10th (Irish) and 16th (Irish) [...] were pointedly overlooked [...]. The consequence of this omission was the devaluation of their status as both men and veterans” (McGaughey 2012: 203). Moreover, in Northern Ireland, hospitalized Catholic soldiers were “the target of threats and intimidation” (McGaughey 2012: 306) and during the post-war years, ex-servicemen received an unequal treatment through “practices of eviction, expulsion and exclusion” (McGaughey 2012: 309) that benefitted Protestants. The exclusive praise of the Ulster Division in the north and the inconsistent and discreet commemorations of the war in the Republic diminished the importance and remembrance of the collaboration between the 36th and the 16th Divisions, and thus between Protestants and Catholics, in the Battle of the Somme, which could have served as an element of union between the two Irish identities. Thus, both events, the Rising and the Great War, were put in opposition as competing narratives, to the detriment of ex-servicemen from the south: “‘Where were you in 1916?’ was so often used as a knock-out blow in acrimonious political discussion that it finally passed into current use as a term of ridicule” (Martin 1967: 66). In fact, territorial differences regarding the commemoration and remembrance of the Somme are still present today, because they have not entirely achieved to represent a joint narrative:

Since at least the mid-2000s, the Republic of Ireland has made official efforts to include the Somme in a more inclusive all-Ireland narrative of the war [...]. Despite that, no commemoration of 1 July which takes place in the Republic can compare to what happens in Ulster, and there is no sense in which any part of Dublin claims a special connection with the battle. Yet Dublin lost more men killed on 1 July 1916 than on any other day of the war. The 36th Division was not solely recruited in Ulster, and Dubliners played a now-forgotten role in it, especially through the 9th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Dubliners were also involved on 1 July in both the 1st and 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and in the 1st Inniskillings, plus a wide range of other units. (Grayson 2018: 181-82)

The two events that took place in 1916 and their subsequent symbolic connections to the two main differentiated communities of Ireland —Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists— paved the way for Irish ideas of national identity and history to be constructed and remembered in a distinctive and separate way in both the Republic and in Northern Ireland: “On an island that is divided between two states and two ethno-religious identities that have a history of sectarian conflict, commemoration of either identity’s history has always been divisive [...] [and] perceived [...] as [...] narrating only one side of history” (Cronin 2021: 462). In both cases, memories from the events became useful and highly politicized narratives: the Irish Free State used the rebels as symbols of the martyrdom of Ireland and of collective sacrifice to achieve freedom —“‘Easter 1916’ concerns the foundation of a nation by the transformation of individuals into symbols” (Lloyd 1993: 69)— whereas Ulster unionists appropriated the sacrifice in the Somme to support their own ‘national’ character, turning commemorations into a sectarian propaganda intended to exclude the Catholic community —by 1920, according to Loughlin, “war commemoration was not just becoming the preserve of the unionist community, but the Orange Order and the other loyal orders were taking control of the remembrance rituals”

(2002: 143).²³ This appropriation of the event as a distinctive Protestant memory by the Orange Order was propitiated or at least exacerbated by the significant date of the beginning of the Somme Offensive on the first of July, since it was the same date of William of Orange's victory against Catholic James II in 1690. In spite of the evident differences, the Great War was commemorated across the whole island to varying degrees depending on the period and government, and amends have been made from the ending of the Troubles, and especially in the last decades, to integrate the Great War into Irish collective memory, thus there is still some debate about the extent to which the Great War in Ireland can be considered an example of national amnesia.

²³ The Orange Order is a fraternal order characterised by the defence of Protestantism and Unionism, founded by Ulster Protestants in 1795. Its name is in honour of William of Orange, the Protestant king who defeated the Catholic James II during the Williamite War (1688-1691). It has been accused of sectarian and supremacist.

*Let Ireland weep: but not for sorrow, weep
That by her sons a land is sanctified,
For Christ arisen, and angels once again
Come back, like exile birds,
and watch their sleep.*

Francis Ledwidge (1917)

2 IRELAND AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF WAR

2.1 WELCOMING IRISH VETERANS: COMMEMORATIONS AND AMENDS

There is some controversy with respect to whether Ireland's remembrance of the Great War can be considered, indeed, a case of national amnesia, since commemorations have been made, though irregularly, and in a greater or lesser display, throughout the twentieth century. Irrespective of this, however, the lack of integration of the war in the historical narrative of Ireland—as evinced by its absence in many history books, literary works and school syllabus, as well as by a failure of intergenerational transmission—has frequently been explained in terms of collective amnesia.²⁴ Changes of opinion can be observed, already, between the sources from the 1980s and early 1990s, which tended to be more critical about the lack of consideration and remembrance, and those of the twenty-first century, which already recognise the different amends that have been made, particularly from the 1990s onwards, as well as the studies on the topic that came to light in the last two decades. For instance, Keith Jeffery, in 2011, points out the different events that took place and the fact that they were affected by the historical circumstances of that time, discarding that a historical amnesia as such was produced:

For nearly two decades after independence, there were large public demonstrations on Armistice Day (tens of thousands paraded in Dublin in the 1920s), official Irish government representatives laid wreaths at the London Cenotaph, the Fianna Fáil government after 1932 provided a publicly acknowledged state subsidy for the completion of the Edwin Lutyens-designed Irish National War Memorial, and Eamon de Valera himself agreed in principle to attend the opening of the memorial (though onset of the Second World War prevented this). (2011b: 257)

Thus, it cannot be denied that there was a commitment, on the part of the Irish society and also of the government, to commemorate the victims of the war and to provide some relief for the survivors, as well as for the families of the deceased; however, neither can it be denied that it was never a priority in the politics of the Irish Free State nor in the Republic of Ireland, and that all those affected did not feel sufficiently compensated, nor integrated into the Irish new state.

²⁴ According to Jason R. Myers, “silence in the area of formal education in the south on the subject of the First World War exemplified just how deeply republican opposition to the war was. Sectarian and political divisions influenced history instruction in the Free State's primary and secondary schools” (2013: 198).

In spite of the celebration of parades —which represented, according to Nuala C. Johnson, “the first attempt in Ireland to attach cultural and political meaning to the war and as such they laid the foundations for the manner in which future generations would make sense of the war” (1999: 37)— and the arrangements made for memorials, there were important controversies shadowing the events. Already in 1919 during the celebration of the Armistice, even though “the *Evening Mail* reported the display of Union Flags, British Ensigns, the Stars and Stripes and other flags of the allies on public buildings and offices, as well as on motor vehicles” (Grayson 2018: 270), there were also confrontations between members of Sinn Féin and students from Trinity College —“some Trinity College students demonstrated outside the Sinn Féin headquarters in Harcourt Street, attempting to enter. [...] In the evening there was further violence as Sinn Féin supporters left a meeting at the Mansion House and clashed with crowds in Grafton Street and on O’Connell Bridge” (Grayson 2018: 270).²⁵ Moreover, in the months that followed the Armistice, “rival processions were orchestrated by the Sinn Féin to announce the release of their political prisoners” (Stover 2017: 121). Years later, in 1923 and 1924 some problems also aroused after the building of a temporary cenotaph in College Green, next to Trinity College: “great crowds gathered to mark the anniversary, but sporadic fighting between nationalists, unionists, ex-servicemen and, of course, students of both political persuasions also occurred” (Jeffery 2011a: 115-16). According to Terence Brown, tensions between different groups derived from the war and the Rising and thus were frequent during the 1920s, especially when veterans gathered to mark the anniversary of the armistice:

The wearing of a poppy was a mark of loyalties and bravado which stirred the resentment of a population which had seen Sackville Street (now O’Connell Street) laid waste by the British guns. Supporters of Sinn Fein found the poppy an intolerable affront. It was not uncommon, indeed, for the wearer of a commemorative poppy to have it ripped from his person by an enraged nationalist. Replying in bitter kind, a practice developed of including a razor blade with the petals of the paper flower to discourage such assaults upon the memory of the dead. (1993: 228)

Hence in Cork, before 1925, two separate parades were conducted to avoid confrontations, one being almost exclusively formed by Protestants and the other by Catholics (Jeffery 2011a: 129). Also in that same year, “armed raiders confiscated the war picture *Ypres* which was about to be shown to a large congregation of ex-servicemen at a cinema in Dublin” (Robinson 2017: 321), preventing the establishment of the war in Irish cultural memory. By referring to a particular case of a young woman, Kathleen Kavanagh, who in 1926 doused a shop selling poppies for Armistice Day with gasoline and set fire to a Union Jack flag, Mandy Link emphasizes the persistence of such a symbol of the First World War in Ireland and the subsequent need, on the part of different segments of society, to undermine it: “Kavanagh’s attempt to burn the Flanders poppy, an international symbol of the Western Front experience, alongside the Union Jack is indicative of the potency of the Great War in the Irish Free State. Had the war and its symbols failed to retain significance, Kavanagh and her accomplices would not have felt the desire to burn down a building housing them” (2019: 1).

In addition to these acts of hostility, no Irish head of government attended a public commemoration of the Great War in the interwar period. As a case in point, in 1926 William Cosgrave refused the invitation of British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin to the unveiling of

²⁵ Trinity College Dublin was founded by Queen Elizabeth I and thus connected to the Protestant Reformation that was conducted in Ireland. For many years since its establishment, because of that association with Protestantism, Catholics were banned from attending the university by order of the Catholic Church.

a tablet to the memory of the dead of the Empire who died in the war; he wrote an explanation letter in which he made reference to his part in the Rising and expressed concern regarding the bitterness and resentment that persisted after the revolt:

I know that there are citizens of ours who on that occasion lost brothers and sons who were serving in the British Army, and there still remains amongst them—and not unnaturally—a feeling of, I shall not say, bitterness, but rather of pain. For these I fear lest the personal presence at this ceremonial, in memory of their beloved ones, of one to whom they attribute responsibility for their bereavement should re-open wounds that are not yet quite healed. (qtd. in Jeffery 2011a: 126)

Another controversy had to do with imperial insignias in the graves' headstones, and also with their inscriptions, since they were not so inclined to openly state the victims' participation in the war. A significant case is that of Tom Kettle's grave, in which it was not allowed to write 'Killed in France', but instead, 'Killed at Guinchy 9 September 1916'; according to Jeffery, "in keeping with prevailing official attitudes to Ireland's engagement with the war, no indication is given of where Guinchy is, or what Kettle was doing there" (2011a: 128).

This need, out of shame, on the part of different social institutions and groups, to conceal Irish participation in the war, deeply affected ex-servicemen in their recovery, as well as in their reintegration in society. Different authors have already addressed how the lack of support and understanding exacerbated the feelings of anxiety, alienation and guilt that many Irish endured upon their return. Soldiers at the front used to cling to the idea that they were fighting for their country as a means to justify their violent actions so as to deal with guilt. In the case of the Irish, explains Joanna Bourke, "if their sacrifice was said to be worthy because it was 'given for Ireland', how was an Irish soldier to respond if 'Ireland' could not respect it?" (2002: 158). Moreover, traumatized subjects usually take refuge in the past, since they find the present situation unbearable, so it can be helpful for them to return to their previous, familiar environment. Thus, according to Bourke, "psychological collapse was more frequent when servicemen were returning to a country vastly different from the place veterans had left. This caused disorientation and disillusionment" (2002: 167). The Irish soldiers came back to an Ireland that had been utterly changed by the Rising and its repercussions; hence they suffered an "increasing disassociation between the Ireland they were fighting for and the Ireland they returned to, which made repatriation difficult for all Irish soldiers" (Bourke 2002: 158).

Consequently, Irish veterans frequently found themselves forced to hide their part in the war, which could have also contributed to the worsening of their psychological condition, taking into account that verbalizing and, especially, normalizing the experience can help in the healing process—"Upon their arrival in Ireland, many veterans soon realized that they were far from being seen as heroes and that their experiences of war including tokens of their army lives such as uniforms and medals, had to be locked away [...]. The veterans themselves sometimes deliberately chose to hide their army experiences so as to avoid several institutional and social hurdles" (Ogliari 2018: 54). Another factor that worsened their condition of alienation and isolation from society was that, in Ireland, ex-servicemen were a scattered minority unable to be as politically organized as those in Britain to exert pressure (Bourke 2002: 166), and thus they lacked a solid sense of community as well. On top of that, they were also subjected to different forms of discrimination and abuse:

These men were frequently discriminated against: in the 1920s, for instance, job priority in government was given to ex-Free State soldiers, while the service in

the British Army could even be held against the job applicants [...]. At worst, the Irish ex-servicemen could be murdered: in the early 1920s, having been soldiers in the British Army could be a sufficient reason to be perceived as enemies of the Republic. (Ogliari 2018: 54)

Irish volunteers had been promised housing and pensions for their service, and since the Irish government was not in a position to provide them, “in 1919 the British government, concerned about the prospects for ex-servicemen in what was clearly becoming a hostile nationalist Ireland, provided with the Irish Land (Provision for Sailors and Soldiers) Act a housing and land settlement scheme” (Jeffery 2011a: 117), an issue that aroused suspicion among Sinn Féin members, who feared the scheme could imply a new form of ‘Plantation’. In fact, the Free State did not want to be connected to the scheme, according to the Ministry of Labour —“The Ministry thus wrote that they had no choice but to proceed with the scheme ‘quietly’ in the Free State” (Robinson 2017: 323).

Regarding the assignment of pensions, the establishment of the Irish Free State did not entail any problem, because the British government continued with its obligations to provide pensions for disabled ex-servicemen through the Ministry of Pensions. In fact, according to Grayson, from that moment onwards the Irish had actually more possibilities of receiving a pension than the British:

While there were significant problems in the organisation of pension claims in the early years, by all measures veterans in the Free State were more likely to receive a pension than their counterparts in Great Britain, and at a higher rate. [...] Possible reasons for this include, for example, Irish soldiers having served longer (due to Irish recruitment having been mostly before 1916), the Ministry of Pensions possibly being more generous to Irish applicants knowing that they would not receive other support in the Free State, or Irish claimants simply being more effective in their applications. (2018: 321)

In effect, the Irish Free State government preferred not to take responsibility for the pensions and treatment of disabled veterans and they entrusted the task to British authorities exclusively instead. A possible reason might have been the avoidance of further conflicts with anti-Treaty nationalists: “This prediction proved accurate. The secretary of a local pensions committee in County Leitrim was shot dead during the conflict. On 14 March 1922, a Pensions Office in Cork was also set ablaze by anti-treaty IRA forces” (Robinson 2017: 319). Notwithstanding, even though the government of the Irish Free State did not provide further support to incapacitated veterans, it did worry about the provision of pensions for former members of the IRA, and, according to Grayson, “these were not only for wounded veterans but also those who served, on the basis that IRA members missed out on career opportunities through the act of serving” (2018: 321). On top of that, the system of pensions and housing proved to be insufficient for the large demand of applications. There were charities to assist veterans when governmental organizations failed to provide help, such as the British Legion, which reported in 1926 that many Irishmen refused to identify themselves with the legion in fear of reprisals, particularly of unemployment (Robinson 2017: 320). Hostility in the Irish Free State towards the organization was palpable; in 1934, for instance, “British Legion headquarters was ransacked by young men who destroyed valuable files and papers” (Robinson 2017: 321).

All this taken into consideration, it is not surprising that the Irish needed more psychological support than their other counterparts who did not feel socially rejected upon their return:

Irish soldiers were often regarded as emotionally vulnerable. Pensioning authorities and the War Office constantly asserted (without reliable statistical verification) that proportionately more Irish servicemen were driven insane during the war than their English, Scottish, or Welsh comrades. Ulstermen were exonerated from this devastating slur. In ‘Ireland (South)’, otherwise known as the ‘South Ireland Pension Area’, the proportion of ex-servicemen receiving pensions for neurasthenia (and, indeed, all other forms of disablement) was said to be well over the average. (Bourke 2002: 159)

This spread accusation of vulnerability was detrimental to the Irish self-esteem and sense of masculinity, not to mention the fact that, being psychologically incapacitated prevented them either from participating or performing well in the War of Independence, as well as in the Civil War, which, as Bourke concludes, “in an increasingly militaristic society, discredited their very masculinity” (2002: 167). This association of mental breakdown as emasculating was exacerbated at a time in which studies on shell shock and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder were still scarce, since previous wars could not be compared to the modern warfare the soldiers experienced; furthermore, conscription created liminal spaces between soldiers and civilians; as Sarah Cole remarks, “the vast conscripted armies of modern warfare are replete with men who do not view themselves as belonging, in fundamental ways, to the codes and realities of the military” (2009: 31) and were therefore even more mentally unprepared. The term *shell shock* was actually coined only months after the starting of the war, in 1915, and early research considered it a physical injury (Alexander 2010). In effect, “many medical officers believed that psychological breakdown was a form of cowardice” (Bourke 2002: 162). It was not until much later, particularly as a result of research on the experiences of soldiers during the Vietnam War, that knowledge on psychological effects of trauma expanded —“A campaign by veterans and clinicians led to the formal recognition of PTSD by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. It represented a turning point [...]. In both World Wars the individual had been held responsible for his breakdown [...]. PTSD reversed this causal explanation” (Jones 2014). Recent studies on traumatized subjects suggest that there exists the possibility of retraumatization: “A posttraumatic stress disorder [...] can be reactualized (updated) by renewed stress and stimuli [...]. If the victim is confronted with a severe or long lasting stressful situation or a new loss of safety and coping possibilities [...], there is a risk for a so called retraumatization with acute crisis and eventually persistent exacerbation of the trauma” (Wenk-Ansohn 2007: 90). Therefore, as Bourke exposes, posterior studies corroborated aforementioned statements on the Irish proneness to suffer major psychological repercussions:

Much evidence —most notoriously from the Vietnam War— suggests that negative psychological reactions to war by service-personnel dramatically increase under two conditions. First, the absence of ‘purification rites’ upon their return home made servicemen vulnerable. Thus, emotional turmoil leading to psychiatric collapse often occurred when hostile crowds greeted the return of servicemen, rather than friendly, grateful crowds willing to confirm the rightness of the slaughter, bestow understanding and forgiveness upon uneasy consciences, and embrace their ‘boys’ as returning ‘men’. (2002: 166-67)

As Bourke mentions, ‘purification rites’ such as hospital treatments, compensations and parades are significant in the reintegration of the Irish soldiers, but also the building of memorials is equally meaningful for the families of those who perished at the front. As Jeffery explains, “since the British practice was (and is) to bury war dead on the battlefield, or as close as possible

to the place of death, the bereaved have no local grave to visit. [...] So war memorials served as surrogate graves and the Remembrance ceremony became an occasion [...] to grieve and try to make sense of, or at least come to terms with, their loss” (2011a: 127). In this respect, the fact that the Irish government took so long to provide a memorial space was one of the main reasons why it was accused of intentionally enforcing a historical amnesia.

Today, there are two memorial monuments that stand out the most: the Ulster Tower, in Northern Ireland, and the Irish National War Memorial, in the Republic of Ireland. The Ulster Tower was not only one of the earliest Irish Great War memorials, having been erected in 1921, but also one of the largest, which illustrates the differences in commemoration, since this monument recognized exclusively the soldiers pertaining to the 36th Division. The biggest of all memorials, nevertheless, took longer to be completed; according to Jeffery, the planning of the Irish National War Memorial in Dublin is also a sign of the troubles affecting war commemorations in Ireland, even despite the fact that “contributions to the fund were received from all parts of Ireland and totaled some £42,000” (2011: 10). There were different debates and controversies that were constantly provoking its delay, among them, debates regarding whether the construction of a monument should be utilitarian or simply ornamental (Jeffery 2011a: 110). In this vein, there was also some disagreement in relation to the administration of funds, specifically to the amount of money that should be devoted to the raising of a memorial as opposed to the provisioning of housing for ex-servicemen (Jeffery 2011a: 112). The situation became more critical when Merrion Square —located in the city center of Dublin— was suggested as a possible location for the memorial and the Irish government opposed the project:

A year before it came to the legislature, William Cosgrave, the president of the executive Council, had told James MacNeill, the Irish Free State representative in London, that ‘a large section of nationalist opinion regards the scheme as part of a political movement of an imperialist nature and view it with the same resentment as they view the exploitation of Poppy Day in Dublin by the most hostile elements of the old Unionist class.’ [...] When the issue was debated in the Dáil in March 1927, Kevin O’Higgins, Cosgrave’s vice-president, forcefully outlined the government’s position. ‘To devote Merrion Square to this purpose’, he declared, ‘would be to give a wrong twist, as it were, a wrong suggestion to the origins of this State. [...] it is not on *their* sacrifice that this State is based.’ (Jeffery 2011a: 113-14)

Among those in favor of the scheme who raised their voice against the government’s decision, was William Archer Redmond, son and nephew of John and William Redmond, respectively: “He asked one question: ‘Are the surviving British ex-servicemen [...] to be regarded as citizens of this State with equal rights with any other citizens, or are they not?’” (Jeffery 2011a: 115). In 1929, they were already thinking whether it would be necessary to return subscriptions, when the decision was agreed to construct a public park at Islandbridge, which combined “monumentality, utility and, for the perceived public good of the independent Irish State, a certain degree of invisibility” (Jeffery 2011a: 118). In fact, for several historians such as Elena Ogliari, the location of the site outside Dublin was denigrating and a clear indicator of the government’s intention to keep the memory out of the main national narrative: “The very decision to locate the war memorial dedicated to the fallen soldiers in Islandbridge contained the implicit, albeit clear, message that the soldiers’ service on the side of England and the Allies was not to be connected to the emergence of an independent Ireland” (2018: 55). Another issue that hindered the project was the fact that the memorial was left unfinished for years. The works

started towards the end of 1935 and were almost finished in 1938, but the ancillary works and the inauguration were postponed by De Valera due to the Second World War.

The Second World War, which increased the already existing tensions between Ireland and Britain, interrupted ceremonies and parades, affecting the memory of the previous war. Even though De Valera had shown himself predisposed to the building of the memorial, and even intended to attend the inauguration at Islandbridge —“though this was ‘conditional on the absence of anything which might tend to create ill feeling or resentment or to embarrass the Government in the slightest degree’, no doubt a warning to avoid singing ‘God Save the King’ or promiscuously displaying Union Jacks” (Jeffery 2011a: 122-23)— he decided to postpone the official ceremonial opening to avoid popular discontent and misinterpretations, since they intended Ireland to remain neutral; “the British, moreover, had announced that conscription was to be introduced, and there was a possibility that it might be applied ‘to our fellow countrymen in the Six Counties’. In these circumstances the planned ceremonial opening ‘might evoke hostility and give rise to misunderstanding’.” (Jeffery 2011a: 123). In addition to that, while the Second World War lasted, parades during Armistice Day were banned in Dublin, together with flags, anthems and medals, in case they might be considered “manifestations of *Britishness*” that symbolized support for the war (Jeffery 2011a: 135).

After the Second World War the situation did not improve much, since internal tensions in Ireland continued, notably with the bursting of the Troubles in the late 1960s, which suspended many public commemorations of the Great War in both the North and the Republic, in fear of repercussions —“Fearing IRA violence, public Remembrance Day ceremonies were cancelled in 1969 across Northern Ireland” (Myers 2013: 221) and “after 1971, the reduced commemorative ceremonies became the norm in the south” (Myers 2013: 222).²⁶ According to Boyce, in 1966, “the preparations for the Somme anniversary caused rancorous divisions among nationalists and unionists in Ulster”, whereas the “Somme anniversary went by with no mention, no commendation in the Republic of Ireland” (2002: 191). There was, in this respect, an important incident perpetrated by the IRA that took place in 1987, the Enniskillen bombing on Remembrance Day, which came to be known as the Poppy Day massacre. The target of the Irish Republican Army were the British soldiers that had gathered there for a military parade, but civilians were the hardest hit, with ten casualties and more than sixty injured. In addition to this, the memorial at Islandbridge was neglected —according to Grayson, the park was closed “between 1971 and 1988 over fears of IRA action against ceremonies” (2018: 336)— to the point that some historians have compared its state of decay during the second half of the century with the State’s negligence with respect to the soldiers: “until the mid-1980s, this site was in an emblematical state of ruin, because the Government’s refusal to provide for its care allowed the site to fall into dilapidation and vandalism over the following decades. Its bad state epitomized the oblivion to which Ireland’s participation in the First World War had succumbed” (Ogliari 2018: 55). Foster goes even beyond by affirming that the national amnesia on the part of the Irish government was “symbolized by the deliberate and mean-spirited ruination of Luteyns’s war-memorial park at Islandbridge” (1989: 472). For Ann Rigney, the failure of the Islandbridge memorial reflected that its building was premature for a society that was not ready to integrate the Great War in its history: “whereas public monuments are usually the outcome of a long process leading to official recognition, [...] the Islandbridge monument was put down

²⁶ The Troubles, also known as the Northern Ireland conflict, was a turbulent period with sporadic manifestations of violence that lasted for thirty years, from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, over the status of Northern Ireland, confronting unionists and nationalists. It was definitely over with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement —also known as the Belfast Agreement— in 1998.

in the public space before the story it mediated had found a place within the dominant memory of the Irish state” (2008: 94).

Paradoxically, at the same time that official war commemorations were interrupted during the Troubles, cultural memory of the conflict started to emerge among a small group of artists who became critical with the unsettling political situation of Ireland —“Irish authors and musicians began to use First World War imagery and situations as an historical parallel to events in contemporary Ireland” (Myers 2013: 223). In fact, the first Irish fictional novel that deals with the question of the Great War, Jennifer Johnston’s *How Many Miles to Babylon?*, was precisely published around this time, in 1974. According to Jason R. Myers, during the 1970s, the Irish people, after enduring years of violence and systematic ideological oppression, started to question the sense of national identity that had been imposed by the Republic and thus to accept alternative Irish identities as a result of a pluralistic past —“The problems and violence generated by the Troubles led many in the Republic to begin questioning the Pearse/de Valera/Fianna Fáil version of Irish nationalism, and by doing so they became more receptive to the idea and existence of alternative concepts of Irish identity” (2013: 223).

Added to this progressive change in people’s minds, Ireland’s entrance to the European Union also facilitated new revisions of Irish nationalism and the acceptance of a multi-layered conception of Irish history and identity. The entrance of both Ireland and the United Kingdom in the European Communities (EC) in 1973, and especially in the subsequent European Union (UE) in 1993, prompted a new and egalitarian space for dialogue between both countries that ultimately led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, as well as to the softening of the Irish border: “Gone were the intrusive customs posts, check points and the British army towers” (Laffan 2018: 572). The Belfast Agreement established avenues of cooperation not only horizontally, that is, between Ireland and the UK, but also vertically and internally, that is, between the Republic and Northern Ireland, and between the two ethno-identities in the north —“Ireland’s north/south and east/west relationships were transformed upon accession to the European Economy Community (EEC). [...] This had a particular effect around the Irish border in terms of cross-border cooperation and a growing ill-island economy” (Hayward 2021: 67). In addition to this, the sense of belonging to the common space of Europe helped create, in the words of Fintan O’Toole, a “third identity that was neither Irish nor British but that could be equally shared” (2019: 68). Accordingly, the Agreement recognized the right of Northern Irish to define themselves as British, as Irish or both, so that, for O’Toole, it accepted that national identity was “a matter of choice” and that “identities are fluid, contingent and multiple” (2019: 68).

Therefore, in the 1990s, with the progressive cessation of hostilities during the Northern Ireland peace process, Irish attitudes towards Great War commemorations started changing: “the cease-fires in the North have increased non-protestant participation in Remembrance Day services, long regarded as a unionist ceremony. This was particularly so in the Irish Republic in 1998, when [...] the Remembrance Day commemoration of shared suffering and death was seen as a persuasive symbol of reconciliation” (Graham and Shirlow 2002: 899). This proves both Jay Winter —“contemporary politics transform commemoration” (2014: 168)— and Mike Cronin’s theses —“all acts of commemoration or remembrance are political and are constantly shaped and reshaped by the passage of time” (2021: 461)— to be particularly accurate. In fact, on the occasion of the centenary of the Great War, Jay Winter published an article in which he addressed the upsurge of interest in commemoration practices of the war, with specific mention to the Irish case. Winter considers that the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 put an end to the need of choosing between honouring the Rising or the First World War —“In the space of 16 years, 1914 and 1916 have literally been fused together. Now it is no longer necessary to choose

between them” (2014: 168). Both conflicts were then put together within a series of concatenated events, and as outcomes of the particular political circumstances: “This is the strongest case to date of Great War commemoration shifting from highlighting, even exacerbating conflict, to transcending it” (Winter 2014: 168). This process of reconciliation, in O’Toole’s view, was also reinforced by the secularization of the country that resulted from the collapse of Catholic power which took place when revelations of child abuse on the part of the clergy came into light also during the 1990s (2019: 66), which might have, according to Winter, “made it easier for Roman Catholics to bury the language of martyrdom and the sacredness of blood sacrifice imbedded in the rhetoric of the Irish revolution and the poetry of Patrick Pearse” (2014: 168), allowing for a predisposition to embrace both events equally and in peaceful terms, as well as for the mitigation of old confrontations of a religious nature.

There were, during this decade, three significant events that marked a real difference in this respect, showing a will to come to terms with the war experience in a way that could include different Irish identities and political ideologies: the attendance, in 1993, of Mary Robison — at that time President of Ireland— to the Dublin Remembrance Day service; the finalization, in 1994, of the Irish National War Memorial at Islandbridge —the place of monuments in the public space is quite significant, since it entails, according to Rigney, “the final outcome of a process whereby minority counter-memories are accommodated within the larger social frame and given state recognition” (2008: 93); and the presence, in 1998, of Mary MacAleese —then President of Ireland— Queen Elizabeth II and King Albert of Belgium at the ceremonial opening of the Peace Park at Messines, Belgium, “which marked the first formal recognition beyond the island by the Irish state of its war dead” (Graham and Shirlow 2002: 899). Since in the Battle of Messines both the 16th and the 36th Divisions fought alongside each other, the place has become a significant site of reconciliation, a message that, according to Grayson, was reinforced by President McAleese’s speech at its inauguration: “The men of the 36th Ulster Division and the 16th Irish Division died here. They came from every corner of Ireland. Among them were Protestants, Catholics, Unionists and Nationalists, their differences transcended by a common commitment not to flag but to freedom. Today we seek to put their memory at the service of another common cause” (qtd. in Grayson 2018: 242). In the wake of this event, some concluded that the war was no longer a taboo, nor an issue that continued to aggravate social division and resentment, Garret FitzGerald among them:²⁷

Writing about these events, the former Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald, has argued that ‘nationalist Ireland now has the capacity to understand and accept the points of view of both the majority and the minority of nationalists in August 1914’. There is, he said, no longer any need to take sides, ‘to identify with either Redmond or Pearse. Both played valid roles and can now be accepted side by side in our Irish Pantheon.’ The Irish state, he concluded, has ‘reached maturity’. (Jeffery 2011a: 142)

Notwithstanding, Graham and Shirlow, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, considered that, even though in Northern Ireland there was already a recognition of the Great War as a common fight in which unionists and nationalists alike took part side-by-side —the opening in 1994 of the Somme Heritage Centre in County Down, which commemorated the three divisions and their joint effort, as evidence of this— the Troubles were still “too close and too bitter for that reconciliation to occur within an internal Ulster narrative” (2002: 899). With

²⁷ Garret Desmond FitzGerald (926-2011) was an Irish politician in Fine Gael who served as Taoiseach, that is, as prime minister of Ireland, in two occasions: from 1981 to 1982 and from 1982 to 1987.

the anniversary of the Great War in 2014, more literature on the topic started to be published in Ireland, proving the still existing need of consideration and re-examination. In that same year, the then President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins gave a speech at the Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin, on the occasion of the dedication of a cross of sacrifice:

In his address, President Higgins said, ‘We cannot give back their lives to the dead, nor whole bodies to those who were wounded, or repair the grief, undo the disrespect that was sometimes shown to those who fought or their families. [...] To all of them in their silence we offer our own silence, without judgement, and with respect for their ideals, as they knew them, and for the humanity they expressed towards each other.’ (“Ireland’s Role”)

It was thus a clear admission of guilt, of the problems and controversies that shadowed Irish commemorations of the war, as well as an honest recognition of the soldiers and volunteers’ sacrifice, whatever the motives that drove them. According to Grayson, “Higgins effectively argued that remembering the war should not be about recognising another tradition but about accepting that Irishness is multifaceted. [...] He had spoken there about Irishmen in the British army in WWI having a ‘multilayered sense of identity’” (2018: 338). Higgins also readdressed the issue at Westminster valuing the effort of all the volunteers, men and women. For Bunbury, that event was “another coming-of-age moment for Ireland, an end to decades of silent schizophrenia” (2014: ii). As Kiberd has also accurately observed, “only a state which was anxious to repudiate its own origins could have failed [...] to evolve a joint ceremony which celebrated the men who served in either army” (1995: 240).

It has been therefore widely suggested that such a historical amnesia was due to the need, in the middle of the claim for independence, to present and consolidate a strong Irish nation; to achieve this purpose, the Cumman na nGaedheal government focused on projecting a solid and homogenous national narrative, on “writing the official nation-building narrative” (Ogliari 2018: 55). As Maria Fengler perfectly explains,

For the political stability of the new state, riven by conflicts as it was [...] it was deemed necessary to perpetuate a myth of homogeneous Celtic and catholic society, united in opposition against British colonial domination. Naturally, this foundation myth had no room for pre-war social, economic and political tensions within Irish society and it certainly had no room for Irish soldiers in the British Army. [...] In the interests of national unity, the Great War had to be forgotten, precisely because it undermined the anti-British narrative and exposed all the divisions which the foundation myth was trying to elide. (2015: 211)

This urge to construct a national narrative relates, in effect, to the colonial question, and the fact that years of systematic oppression had dismantled and hindered an Irish sense of collective identity. Colonization turned Britain for some into the main enemy of Ireland at the time of the war, even ahead of Germany, and the First World War was perceived as a British conflict and consequently treated as alien to Irish interests: “the slaughter of the Great War pertained to British politics and motives, and therefore the Irishmen who had fought on the Continent had only furthered the political agenda of Ireland’s oppressor” (Ogliari 2018: 55). Furthermore, the fact that hindered war commemorations for so long might have been, according to Rigney, the lack of agreement, because of partition, as to whether the independence of Ireland had indeed been accomplished (2008: 90); hence the continuation of hostilities, but also of the need to

perpetuate the nationalist discourse and the impossibility of coming to terms with other experiences of collaboration with the British —“It has been argued of First World War remembrance that issues arose around it not simply because of people wanted to ‘expunge the memory of the war’ but because ‘the war of ideas and ideological conflict which had marked 1914-18 was not over’” (Grayson 2018: 334).

Thus, Heinz Kosok relates the deprecation of the war soldiers to the development of the nationalist pro-independence movement that came after the Rising —“the independence movement that began soon after the War [...] made the role of Irish soldiers in the British Army in retrospect appear as questionable if not downright treasonable, and for many years to come the wartime allegiance was passed over in silence, except where it was belittled, denigrated or treated with outright contempt” (2007: 55). Bunbury, from a similar perspective, considers that resentment against the Empire was projected over Irish veterans and that hatred became the main force that led to amnesia —“there were powerful elements within the new order that would oblige the country at large to throw an unforgiving eye on ex-servicemen of the British Empire. In time, the hostility became amnesia” (2014: xii). There was indeed a clear intention, not contested by the government, to publicly undermine ex-soldiers and their reasons to enlist. The Republican newspaper *An Phoblacht*, for instance, openly criticized the war veterans, treating them as traitors for serving the British. Some voices, though a minority, tried to offer a counter-discourse, such was the case of Captain Daniel Desmond Sheehan, former MP and volunteer in the war and then editor of the *South Dublin Chronicle*, who decided to answer back to *An Phoblacht* in one of his articles in 1929:

An Phoblacht writes: ‘Mislead by lying promises and faked propaganda, you fought for England.’ Nothing of the kind! There were no lying promises and no faked propaganda; and the Irishmen who fought in the Great War did not fight for England. They fought for liberty, they fought for the freedom of humanity, and against the spirit of Prussianism, which if it had prevailed would put the whole world under the sway of an atrocious tyranny. As well say that the Americans, the Italians, the Belgians, the Canadians, the Anzacs and all the others who rallied to the standard of the Allied cause, fought for England. The thing is too absurd and ridiculous for words. (qtd. in Bunbury 2014: 71)

It is also worth mentioning, in this respect, the Irish juvenile press that was published at that time, which became a powerful media to spread nationalist ideology while also undermining the role of the soldiers in the war. In a similar way to *An Phoblacht*, “according to the contributors of *Fianna*, *Young Ireland* and *St. Edna’s* the Irish had been brainwashed into the Great War” (2018: 62).²⁸ The magazine *Our Boys* is a remarkable case of how public opinion shifted towards more extreme forms of nationalism, because when it started to be published in 1914, it presented a much more moderate and Redmondite political approach that it did only a few years later, when it started to uphold a more radical political position —“*Our Boys* was forced to adjust its views on Irish politics, in order to fit public opinion and its readership’s desire” (Ogliari 2018: 65).²⁹ At first, in the tales of trench life that were published in the magazine, Irish soldiers were respected by their faith and their national sacrifice, understood: “All the stories published between 1914 and the spring of 1918 represent the Irish soldiers in the British Army under a positive light: they are shown respect, though this is signalled through

²⁸ *Fianna* was founded already in 1915 to spread the ideas of the Fianna, whereas *Young Ireland* was founded in 1917 to spread Sinn Féin ideology (Ogliari 2018: 57). *St. Edna’s* was first published in 1918 and inspired by the ideas of Patrick Pearse.

²⁹ *Our Boys* was committed by the Christian Brothers, who according to Ogliari “were determined to shape the future of Ireland in a Catholic and anti-British direction” (2018: 57).

stories that extol not their bravery, but their commitment to Catholicism and [...] to Ireland” (Ogliari 2018: 60). It is also worth mentioning, though, that these narratives differed from those romanticised accounts published in British magazines:

Our Boys offered no space for the potent mythos that depicted war in a romantic fashion, as a time for youthful heroism when to display widely acclaimed characteristics such as patriotism, camaraderie and athletic prowess. In *Our Boys*, to die fighting at a young age is not the noblest death of all, but just the death of a boy: rather than celebrating the glory of warfare, these stories expose its horrors. (Ogliari 2018: 59)

The magazine’s approach to the conflict, however, which criticized German barbarism, entered in conflict with the interests of other radical nationalists: “The journalists of *Fianna* were vocal in faulting *Our Boys* for not questioning the accuracy of the alleged German atrocities” (Ogliari 2018: 60), since “the construction of Britain as Ireland’s first and foremost enemy was a crucial process for the contributors of *Fianna*, eager to legitimise their independents’ cause as the only one Irish people had to fight for” (Ogliari 2018: 62). *St. Edna’s*, which started to be published in 1918, according to Ogliari, supported “nationalism and the equation between Irishness and Catholicism, with the second element of the equation conceived as a quintessential characteristic of Irish identity” (2018: 58) and its numbers from the 1920s reflect the process of “downsizing’ the First World War” (2018: 58). The Great War in the press was thus either a matter of disdain or was completely absent in favour of other national narratives: “The silent surrounding Ireland’s participation in the war and the tragic historical event itself contrasts sharply with the prominence and wealth of articles on the other two wars promoted by both *Our Boys* and *Young Ireland* —the war on Anglicisation that was conducive to the war for independence” (Ogliari 2018: 66).

All the different controversies surrounding Great War commemorations in Ireland, together with the active intention, on the part of different public authorities and organisations, to establish an official discourse that necessarily stood in contrast with old collaborations with Britain ended up, in effect, producing a national amnesia. In 1967, F.X. Martin became one of the first historians that employed such term to refer to the Irish participation in the Great War. At his time, Martin noticed: “outside the Six Counties, it is difficult to find men and women who will acknowledge that they are children of the men who were serving during 1916 in the British Army, the R.I.C., the D.M.P., and Redmond’s Irish National Volunteers. This is the ‘Great Oblivion’, an example of national amnesia” (1967: 68). Insisting on the exceptionality of the phenomenon, he contrasted it with memories of the Rising, which were clearly integrated into the Irish identity and popular culture, to the point that any connections with the Rising were a source of pride —“By contrast, it is surprising how many claim a family connection with the men who rose in 1916 or at least assert that a grandfather was in the I.R.B” (Martin 1967: 68).

In this vein, in 1983, Charles Townshend identified the Easter Rising as the referent event that excluded the Great War from Irish history —“The years 1914-18, grimly familiar as an epoch in the history of Europe, are seldom viewed as a distinct period in Irish history. The Easter Rising so dominates the horizon that the overwhelming tendency is to divide that history into ‘before’ and ‘after’ 1916” (1983: 277). A few years later, R. F. Foster talked about “a policy of intentional amnesia” (1989: 472) on the part of the Irish state, putting the focus of the problem on the lack of an official memory of the war that was orchestrated by the state. The same idea is still supported in the twenty-first century by historians such as Jason R. Myers —“the official memory of the war in the south would become known as a ‘national amnesia’” (2013: 11)— and D.G. Boyce —“Ex-servicemen, and their cause, simply sank into political

oblivion, as nationalists applied a sort of field dressing, in the shape of a national amnesia, to the Great War experience” (2002: 201). According to Justin Dolan Stover, republicans purposely undermined veterans and interrupted their ceremonies with the intention of “preventing the establishment of cultural memory of the conflict” (2017: 120-21).

Constant interruptions and tensions affecting commemorations, either due to Republican policies or to the ongoing hostilities which continued throughout the twentieth-century, definitely prevented the Great War from being assimilated into official memory —“shaped by the government, whether central or local” (Myers 2013: 3). Thus, its remembrance was confined to a reduced space of vernacular memory —“operated beyond the direct influence of the government and developed in a bottom-up fashion” (Myers 2013: 3). According to Myers, therefore, it was the “vernacular memory in the south which challenged the official memory of the war, which was almost not existent” (2013: 3), but still, partly because of the social pressure of the new Irish political order which made many veterans hide their participation in the front from the public eye, partly because of their own sense of guilt and difficulties of verbalizing the traumatic nature of the events, vernacular memory was unfrequently transmitted from generation to generation. Reaching such kind of oblivion in spite of the high numbers of participants and the annual celebrations on Armistice Day indicates that there were other intervening factors. In fact, Declan Kiberd, while also stating that official representations had a bearing on the amnesia, recognizes that such a phenomenon was rare, taking also into account that many ex-servicemen took part in the Irish War of Independence and in IRA activities:

For decades after independence, the 150,000 Irish who fought in the Great War [...] had been officially extirpated from the record. No government representative attended their annual commemoration ceremonies in Christ Church: and none publicly sported a poppy. Such amnesia was weird, given the large number of families whose men were involved, but also considering the manifest links of mood and mentality between the Easter rebels and the battlers at the Somme. (1995: 239)

In the 1990s, precisely when trauma theory started to emerge in the field of humanities, Terence Brown offered a perspective deeply connected to the first studies on the workings of trauma, specifically to its concealment, to the detriment of intergenerational transmission and of the possibility of overcoming the traumatic past: “The Great War is one of the great unspoken of Irish life, something which rattles skeletons in many a family closet, something which even now cannot find that full expression which would lay to rest for ever all its Irish victims” (1993: 228). In this respect, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok’s concept of the “transgenerational phantom” proves to be useful to understand the consequences of neglecting the past, since it postulates that descendants may involuntarily inherit the secrets of their ancestors when traumas have not been outspoken, which inevitably affects social relations and identities: “what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others” (Abraham 1994: 171). The unique situation of Ireland as a territory that has endured years of systemic imperial oppression and oscillated between colony and part of the metropolis makes it thus necessary, whenever dealing with questions pertaining to its national history and identity, to take into consideration the collective trauma to which the Irish society has been long subjected. Ireland has constructed its national identity on narratives of defeat that simultaneously implied both victimization and resistance, as opposed to British triumphalism and oppression, conditioning the type of stories that could fit into its national history and character. Hence the ultimate resistance, on the part of the institutions of power but also of the citizens —impeding thus the establishing of both

official and vernacular memory on the matter—to commemorate which was a common fight and victory with Britain.

2.2 HISTORY, MEMORY AND IDENTITY

The construction of a common national identity is inherently related to the discipline of history, as well as to the practices or ways of performing memory in a particular community —“The performative act of remembrance is an essential way in which collective identities are formed and reiterated” (Winter 2010: 15). Throughout the twentieth century, but especially in its last decades, a thorough examination and delimitation of the workings and relations of memory and history has been conducted in the field of sociology, shedding some light on the gaps or contradictions observed in many national histories which are now being revisited through counter-narratives. It was already from the early 1960s onwards, according to Patricia Waugh, when “different groups and individuals would seize upon metaphors of revision, rewriting and reclamation to describe their own social and cultural struggles”, so that “increasingly, since the 1970s, the concept of representative democracy has come under strain as more and more social, ethnic and racial groups have claimed the right to speak for themselves and to write their own histories” (1997: 59). Such was the case of Ireland, in which only the stories that helped sustain the myth of national unity became properly integrated into the official history and public memory of the country, to the detriment of other Irish realities and experiences that had also been part of a collective, even if more private, memory. Said sociological studies, therefore, by putting the discipline of history into question and using different approaches to address the past, allow us to explore the reasons why a particular community might commemorate some events and exclude others, to understand how memory is constructed and preserved, and to analyse the different ways in which the past and the socio-political circumstances condition people’s identities and subjectivities.

The term *collective memory* was academically used and popularized as an object of study through the work of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who considered memory as a social process. It was first introduced in his work *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, published in 1925, and then further developed in *La Mémoire collective* in 1950. Halbwachs distinguished between *individual memory* —also referred by him as *internal or inward memory*, *personal memory* or *autobiographical memory* (1980: 52)— which is basically the individual’s own capacity to remember, a process that “relies upon, relocates itself within, momentarily merges with, the collective memory” (1980: 51)— and *collective memory* itself —also referred, in contraposition, as *external memory*, *social memory* and *historical memory* (1980: 52)— which integrates every individual memory as a viewpoint and yet remains different from them: “It evolves according to its own laws, and any individual remembrances that may penetrate are transformed within a totality having no personal consciousness” (1980: 51).

In this vein, Halbwachs upheld that an individual cannot remember on its own, inasmuch as memory depends on *social frames*. According to Halbwachs, every human being is inextricably embedded in specific social groups —the family, the nation, the generation, etc.— and therefore influenced by their common history —history understood by Halbwachs here as “whatever distinguishes one period from all others” (1980: 57)— that is, by their shared experiences and values, which necessarily play a part in determining the way that each of us remembers events. In this respect, the sociologist emphasised the importance of shared spaces and socio-historical contexts, as well as the possibility for memory to evolve according to different time periods and generations, which laid the foundation for the consideration of memory as a living organism that is never completely fixed. Thus today, it has been agreed that collective memory is “continuously performing”, being conditioned by moments of recollection

and forgetting “in the light of changing patterns of relevance and shifting social frameworks” (Rigney 2008: 93).

Together with the fact that individual memory seems to be always dependent upon social frames, individual and collective memories, according to Halbwachs, must support or correlate one another: “To be aided by others’ memory, ours must not merely be provided testimony and evidence but must also remain in harmony with theirs. There must be enough points of contact so that any remembrance they recall to us can be reconstructed on a common foundation” (1980: 31). Hence the importance of belonging to a particular group or society that includes and reinforces your own view or experience in the establishment of collective memory. In effect, Halbwachs also stated that “what stand in the foreground of group memory are remembrances of events and experiences of concern to the greatest number of members” whereas “remembrances concerning very few members [...] merge into the background” (1980: 43). This might partially explain why the vernacular or unofficial memory of the Great War in Ireland, which came to be considered a minor or alien event within Ireland’s history performed by a reduced number of inhabitants, proved to be insufficient for an intergenerational transmission at a national level.

Some of Halbwachs’s ideas have been later criticised, for instance, the lack of autonomy of individual subjects when it comes to the ability to remember on their own, since for Halbwachs individual memory was only a viewpoint within the collective memory. Individual memory was much more vindicated by authors such as Aleida Assmann, who claimed individuals’ capacity and necessity to remember, not only for the group but also for personal development —“Without this capacity and at least a sense of its reliability, we could not construct a self nor could we communicate with others. Personal memory is the dynamic medium for processing subjective experience and building up a social identity” (2010: 40). Also, Jeffrey K. Olick, to be more precise with the broad term of *collective memory* —which for him was being used rather indiscriminately for the memories of a group; for established ways of thinking; and for practices of remembrance, which he termed *mnemonic practices*—distinguished between *collected memory* —“based on individualistic principles: the aggregated individual memories of members of a group” (2007: 23), even if the memories of some members receive more are more valued than others— and *collective memory* itself, which goes beyond that accumulation of individual memories, since “ideas and institutions are subject to pressures and take on patterns that cannot be explained by the interests, capacities, or activities of individuals” (2007: 28).

Another important critique regarding Halbwachs’s studies was the time constraint he assigned to memory, since for him collective memory only extended to what it can be considered now as *living memory*, that is, the one that does not surpass a human life —his definition of collective memory being “a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive” (1980: 80). Halbwachs thought, therefore, that once the memories of a generation vanished, the past was already preserved through history. In this respect, Jan Assmann, attempting to broaden Halbwachs’s limited conception of memory, distinguished between *communicative* or *everyday memory* —“based exclusively on everyday communications” (1995: 126)— and *cultural memory*, whose “horizon does not change with the passing of time” (1995: 129) because it contains the collected knowledge of a society through different generations and social practices (1995: 126). For Assmann, there exist a series of fixed points, that is to say, “fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)” (1995: 129), which he termed *figures of*

memory, as well as a structure of knowledge that keeps groups connected, which he called the *concretion of identity* —“With this we mean that a group bases its consciousness of unity and specificity upon this knowledge and derives formative and normative impulses from it, which allows the group to reproduce its identity” (1995: 128). For Assmann, cultural memory both preserves this *concretion of identity* and has capacity to reconstruct, adjusting its knowledge to present time: “True, it [collective memory] is fixed in immovable figures of memory and stores of knowledge, but every contemporary context relates to these differently, sometimes by appropriation, sometimes by criticism, sometimes by preservation or by transformation” (1995: 130).

Other later theorists developed new typologies of memory that went beyond the dichotomy between individual and collective forms. There is, in this regard, a distinction that has been widely accepted, which is that of *official memory* —“the representation of the past through public commemoration for particular goals by those in power”, including “war memorials, official ceremonies, school textbooks” (Van Ypersele 2010: 576)— as opposed to *vernacular memory*, as the one that is built aside the institutions of power (Myers 2013: 3). Laurence van Ypersele considered, furthermore, that both types of memory could either “overlap and confirm each other or do the opposite” (2010: 576), which can help explain many inconsistencies in national memories and histories. Aleida Assmann expanded even more the term of *collective memory* by dividing it into three differentiated types; thus, her classification presents a total of four types: *individual* and *social memory*, on the one hand, as those that are embodied —“both formats cling to and abide with human beings and their embodied interaction” (2010: 42)— and *political* and *cultural memory* on the other, as those that are necessarily mediated —“to become a kind of memory, they both need to be re-embodied; both are founded on durable carriers of symbols and material representations” (Assmann 2010: 42). A further distinction Assmann draws is related to the fact that social memory might entail an inter-generational transmission —to immediate descendants— whereas political and cultural memories aim at a trans-generational transmission —when the memories go beyond those descendants, reaching next generations. Social memory “refers to the past as experienced and communicated (or represented) within a given society”, and it “is continuously changing as it disappears with the death of individuals” (2010: 41) and thus not homogenous, but fragmented into generational memories, whereas political and cultural forms of memory search for their permanency through memorials, museums or archives, among other resources; political constructions of memory, in particular, “tend towards homogeneous unity” and are “emplotted in a narrative that is emotionally charged and conveys a clear and invigorating message” (2010: 43).

Concerning this idea of the transcendence of memory, Assmann holds: “As we cross the shadow-line from short-term to long-term durability, an embodied, implicit, and fuzzy *bottom-up memory* is transformed into an institutionalized *top-down memory*” (2010: 42). The idea of a top-down process precisely entails that institutionalised or official memories might impose or control social memory, and it needs to be taken into account that these political and cultural types of memory are necessarily selective, as she emphasizes:

Institutions and larger social groups, such as nations, states, the church, or a business firm do not ‘have’ a memory, they ‘make’ one for themselves with the aid of memorial signs such as monuments, museums, commemoration rites, and ceremonies. Together with such a memory, these groups and institutions ‘construct’ an identity. A memory that is intentionally and symbolically constructed is based on acts of selection and exclusion, neatly separating useful from not useful, relevant from irrelevant memories. (Assmann 2010: 42-43)

Paul Ricoeur, in this respect, considered that memory could be *instrumentalized* precisely because of the intersections between memory and identity, since by controlling one you can control the other. Ideology was for Ricoeur “the guardian of identity” (2006: 83) and, in his view, “it is on the level where ideology operates as a discourse justifying power, domination, that the resources of manipulation provided by narrative are mobilized. [...] Even the tyrant needs a rhetorician, a sophist, to broadcast his enterprise of seduction and intimidation in the form of words” (Ricoeur 2006: 85). Among these narratives, Ricoeur includes “stories of founding events, of glory and humiliation” (2006: 85) that manipulate memory: “imposed memory is armed with a history that is itself ‘authorized,’ the official history, the history publicly learned and celebrated” (2006: 85). In this vein, Mary Douglas, proceeding on the basis of the sociological studies of Émile Durkheim and Ludwig Fleck, explored the way institutions established and controlled the ways of thinking of a particular society and how these have a direct bearing on their memories —regarding both what has to be remembered and what falls by the wayside— and thus also on their writing of history:

When we look closely at the construction of past time, we find the process has very little to do with the past at all and everything to do with the present. Institutions create shadowed places in which nothing can be seen and no questions asked. [...] History emerges in an unintended shape as a result of practices directed to immediate, practical ends. To watch these practices establish selective principles that highlight some kinds of events and obscure others is to inspect the social order operating on individual minds. (1987: 69-70)

All these ideas with respect to how memory can be directed and redirected are essential to understand Ireland’s case. The establishment of the Irish Free State entailed the construction and legitimization of a particular national history through official practices of political and cultural memory that could sustain the foundation of an independent country; as David Lloyd has contended, “the founding of any nation state is necessarily an act of violence irrupting as an absolute discontinuity in the course of history, an utter transformation by way of a singularly transformative utterance, and its legitimacy is established not in itself but in the subsequent remembrance it invokes” (1993: 72). Consequently, pure Irish identities and origins were prioritized by institutions in power, having even recourse to Celtic origins and myths, leaving other aside experiences behind for not fitting into the predominant narrative of resistance epitomized by the Easter Rising martyr figures. Such narratives of victimization and resistance had been part of Ireland’s collective memory, in Jeffrey K. Olick’s sense of the term, who saw collective memory as conditioned by different pressures created by specific socio-historical circumstances —“there are clearly demonstrable long-term structures to what societies remember or commemorate that are stubbornly impervious to the efforts of individuals to escape them” (2007: 28). It could be thus considered that the different events the Irish experienced against Britain in a long context of colonialism established a specific pattern, in which different *figures of memory* were created, since many lost battles were commemorated to promote a sense of union and hope for the future liberation of Ireland, establishing a *concretion of identity* for the Irish as an oppressed but also resilient community.

In this respect, Ludwig Fleck also referred to the *thought style* as the past knowledge and ways of thinking of a group, affirming that “[t]he individual within the collective is never, or hardly ever, conscious of the prevailing thought style, which almost always exerts an absolutely compulsive force upon his thinking” (1979: 41), which, in turn, coincides with Halbwachs’s ideas about how individuals were always conditioned by social frames: “A ‘current of social

thought' is ordinarily as invisible as the atmosphere we breathe. In normal life its existence is recognized only when it is resisted" (1980: 38). That would likewise help understand the weight of family tradition, as well as of the socio-political situation of Ireland at that time as part of the United Kingdom, on the different choices made by the Irish during the war years, and the fact that it was only when they had to make uncomfortable decisions and to contest those imposed currents of thought, that they started questioning their own identities as Irish. Their decisions to enlist or to join the empire administration were, to a large extent, also motivated by the demanding economic circumstances and to the pressures exerted by the institutions in charge, as was the case of John Redmond's support of the cause to ensure Home Rule; according to Mary Douglas, "individuals in crisis do not make life and death decisions on their own. [...] Putting it even more strongly, individual ratiocination cannot solve such problems. An answer is only seen to be the right one if it sustains the institutional thinking that is already in the minds of individuals as they try to decide" (1987: 4). Hence the incapability of many Irish of making choices without hesitation or regret, and also their incapability of coping with their acts, especially, in the case of veterans, after barely receiving any social support and understanding.

Moreover, the memory of the Great War in Ireland was firstly transformed into a narrative of collaboration with the Empire, evinced, for instance, by how the symbol of the poppy lost its intended meaning of celebration of peace to be seen as treason, as a sign of support of the union. When the situation in Ireland changed, that is to say, when political efforts were no longer focused on the establishment of an independent, Irish republic, but rather on overcoming past conflicts, the memory of the war, being a common fight in which British, Northern Irish and Irish fought alongside each other, was redirected and turned into a symbol of a common past and future reconciliation, proving how both the institutions in power and the contemporary socio-political circumstances dictate which and how events are remembered. As was already mentioned in the previous section, Jay Winter has specifically brought Ireland's case to the fore in order to prove the idea that cultural memory is not immutable, but can be constantly shaped and moved in different directions; in his words, "who would have thought that the Ulster tower would be a site for the coming together on 1 July of men with completely different points of view, but with a common past? Now they can turn that recognition into a common narrative about the war. Many people are now in a position to shape cultural memory" (2014: 173). Thus, tensions between official and vernacular memories, and between lived and remembered history have been very present in Ireland, as concluded by Mikowski: "L'Irlande [...] offre un exemple frappant d'une part d'une concurrence entre mémoire et histoire, d'autre part d'une mémoire sélective et forcée, mise au service d'une idéologie visant à construire ou pour le moins renforcer une identité nationale" (2011).

As seen with Ireland's case, the discipline of history has been traditionally put to the service of the nation-state, as a tool to legitimize its establishment and strengthening, and thus linked to the construction of national identities in times of rising nationalisms — "the spectacular rise of academic history as an institution is usually explained by the direct connection between the professionalization of history at the one side and the nation-state at the other" (Lorenz 2010: 71). In fact, as evidence of this, Chris Lorenz has observed that all national histories in Europe share eight common characteristics, which means they all have tried to perform the same functions for the sake of the state: the assertion of a "unique national identity [...] in terms of ethnicity [...], in terms of religious affiliation, in terms of race, in political terms [...] or as mixes of the aforementioned criteria" (2010: 78); the delineation of that identity through the exclusion of the other, "negating other nations and other groups within the nation" (2010: 78); the justification of said identity on the basis of a common origin and history; the strengthening of the national identity through the imagery provided by national heroes, as well as by battles

and struggles against common enemies; the insistence on the long existence and continuity of the nation; the gendered representation of the nation to serve an ideology based on heroism or oppression; the statement of the nation as an “harmonious unity” with a specific “family model” (2010: 79); and the relation of the establishment and development of the nation with a fair cause that relates to God. All of those characteristics can be observed in the creation of an Irish national identity; as paradigmatic examples, the constitution of Irish identity as Catholic and rural, constructed in opposition to British and Anglo-Irish of the north—as it will be developed in the following section—the search for Celtic myths of origin or the female representation of the island under attack by a male empire.

Notwithstanding, these circumstances already started to change in the twentieth century, since most nations had already been consolidated and the era of nationalisms had come to an end. The historian’s original task, according to Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, that is to say, “to construct a continuous story-line between the nation’s holy origins and the present state of the nation” (2008: 15) was consequently lost. For the French historian Pierre Nora, it was at that moment that society displaced the nation-state and became the main actor in the creation and maintenance of a common past and identity: “No longer a cause, the nation has become a given; history is now a social science, memory a purely private phenomenon. The memory-nation was thus the last incarnation of the unification of memory and history” (1989: 11). Accompanying this change, a particular turning point took place in the last half of the century, after the Second World War, when politics began to open to an international scale as a means to ensure world order and peace: “At the latest since 1990, academic history is confronted by the ever-rising tide of world, global history, and transnational history. Whatever the exact meaning of those terms, they all clearly express the supranational wish to go beyond the nation state” (Lorenz 2010: 80). This new global organization fostered a series of social changes—migration, acceptance of denied or marginal identities—that entailed a dismantling of official and restricted concepts of national identity—“All conceptions of collective identity [...] in academic history have been deconstructed increasingly since the 1970s as social and political constructions” (Lorenz 2010: 80).

In addition to this, two cultural movements facilitated the questioning of established knowledge. In the 1970s, the so-termed *cultural turn* takes place, whose achievement, according to Tadhg O’Keeffe, “was to finally secure as orthodoxy the view that the study of society is not objective, ideologically-neutral, value-free, or apolitical” (2007: 3). Accompanying this process, from the 1970s to the 1990s, the postmodernist deconstruction of essentialisms and absolute truths also contributed to the demystification of history, which since then started to be seen as a human product that was consequently incomplete and biased: “With the deconstruction of all essentialisms, the very idea of History with a capital H was discredited, and with it the very idea of ‘objective’ origins and of ‘objective’ teleology. Since then, every origin and *telos* in history is being recognized as ‘man-made’” (Lorenz 2010: 80). As Henry Giroux contends, “Postmodernism rejects the modernist discourse on history which views it as uniform, chronological, and teleological. In contrast, it argues for a view of history that is decentered, discontinuous, fragmented, and plural” (1993: 466). This did not necessarily implied that national history became completely denigrated, but rather that it was no longer “the unquestioned hegemonic form of academic history” (Lorenz 2010: 80), opening up new possible approaches to deal with the past, as was the case with collective memory studies—“from the 1980s onwards and especially after 1990, another development can be observed which is undermining ‘the nation’ and, by implication, the ‘modern’ regime of historicity and the related conceptions of academic history: the rise of ‘collective memory’ studies” (Lorenz 2010: 81).

As a result of this, memory was separated and differentiated from history. According to Pierre Nora, who analysed this change of paradigm in his home country, precisely “the most tangible sign of the split between history and memory has been the emergence of a history of history, the wakening, quite recent in France, of a historiographical consciousness” (1989: 9) which, through the revision of what seemed to be the immutable history of the country, was intended to expand the existent knowledge of the past by including memory as an object of study to take into consideration:

That we study the historiography of the French Revolution, that we reconstitute its myths and interpretations, implies that we no longer unquestioningly identify with its heritage. To interrogate a tradition, venerable though it may be, is no longer to pass it on intact. Moreover, the history of history does not restrict itself to addressing the most sacred objects of our national tradition. By questioning its own traditional structure, its own conceptual and material resources, its operating procedures and social means of distribution, the entire discipline of history has entered its historiographical age consummating its dissociation from memory —which in turn has become a possible object of history. (Nora 1989: 10)³⁰

There has certainly been some debate, prior to the integration of collective memory into social sciences, on the relationship between memory and history, especially during the nineteenth century, which resulted in two main confronted thoughts: for some, history and memory were two sides of the same coin —either memory was seen as a simple element of history, or history was considered as the officially accepted memory; for others, nevertheless, they were opposed forces competing against each other. Currently, there are still divergent opinions, though those who attempt to differentiate and define both concepts or practices do so by taking into account their similarities and intersections. For Guy Beiner, for instance, they nourish one another: “Memory maintains a dialectical relationship with history. [...] Just as memory is constructed by history, at some level, history is apparently constructed by memory” (2014: 301). For Anne Whitehead, notwithstanding, there is an important difference inasmuch as the former creates continuities —“collective memory perpetuates the feelings and images that form the substance of the group’s identity” (2009: 131)— and the latter discontinuities —“History, on the contrary, by focusing on the whole, tends to emphasize the alterity of the past and is persuaded that societies are in constant transformation” (2009: 131). Whitehead’s opinion regarding collective memory coincides with that of Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, who emphasized its role and importance for the understanding of social connections, reactions and developments through time: “Collective memory is a precious resource [...] for maintaining social bonds and claiming authority, for mobilizing action and legitimating it. Indeed, it is one of the most important symbolic resources we have, imbued [...] with quasi-sacred meanings and capable of evoking very powerful emotions” (1994: 67). In this vein, Jay Winter distinguishes both concepts by opposing working reason to experiential feeling: “History is memory seen through and criticized with the aid of documents of many kinds —written, aural, visual. Memory is history seen through affect. [...] History is a discipline. We learn and teach its rules and its limits. Memory is a faculty. We live with it, and at times are sustained by it” (2010: 12). Related to

³⁰ Paul Ricoeur, notwithstanding, neither agrees that memory can be limited to an object of history, nor that it can stand on its own as an opposite of history: “The temptation then is great to transform this plea into a claim on behalf of memory in opposition to history. Just as I shall resist, when the time comes, the inverse claim to reduce memory to a simple object of history, among its ‘new objects,’ at the risk of stripping it of its function of matrix, so too shall I refuse to allow myself to be enlisted into making the inverse plea” (2006: 87).

these ideas of establishing continuities through affect and social bonds, Barbara A. Misztal connects memory to myth because, in her words, “it offers narratives through which people identify salient characteristics of the kind of people they believe themselves to be” (2011: 7). It has been therefore mostly established that memory has to be seen as a living organism that mirrors social needs and tendencies and is continuously evolving, whereas history is an artificial construction, that is, a particular selection and interpretation of the past which is by nature partial and incomplete:³¹

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. (Nora 1989: 8)

According to the aforementioned change of paradigm and to the idea that memory is much more malleable and subjected to human subjectivities, Aleida Assmann brings to the fore that the term *collective memory* started to substitute *ideology* —“the term ‘ideology’ has dropped from contemporary discourse after a period of heavy usage in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. As the use of this term disappeared, ‘collective memory’ rose and eventually took its place” (2010: 38)— since the latter had become derogatory —“it is never used for our own way of thinking but always for how others misunderstand or distort what we hold to be true” (2010: 38). *Collective memory*, on the contrary, seemed to offer a more autonomous and democratic vision of how national identities should be defined and performed, in line with Nora’s ideas about the change of focus from the nation-estate to society. This democratization fostered new approaches and interests in social connections and identities; in the words of Assmann, “the memory boom reflects a general desire to reclaim the past as an indispensable part of the present, and to reconsider, to revalue and to reassess it as an important dimension of individual biographies and historical consciousness. It also provides a repository for group affinities, loyalties, and identity formations” (2010: 39). The act of remembrance or the performance of memory becomes thus a way of creating, reinforcing and reassessing social and national identities. Said process of democratization necessarily entailed a production of different sources on the part of individuals, and thus aside from traditional institutions and authorities, which could collect and preserve memories:

In just a few years, then, the materialization of memory has been tremendously dilated, multiplied, decentralized, democratized. In the classical period, the three main producers of archives were the great families, the church, and the state. But who, today, does not feel compelled to record his feelings. To write his memoirs —not only the most minor historical actor but also his witnesses, his spouse, and his doctor. The less extraordinary the testimony, the more aptly it seems to illustrate the average mentality. (Nora 1989: 14)

³¹ Tzvetan Todorov also considered that the work of the historian was not merely a recollection of facts, but one that necessarily entailed a process of biased selection with a specific purpose in mind, but Todorov does not attribute this to the fact of having to serve a particular ideology, but of trying to achieve a moral good instead: “Le travail de l’historien, comme tout travail sur le passé, ne consiste jamais seulement à établir des faits, mais aussi à choisir certains d’entre eux comme étant plus saillants et plus significatifs que d’autres, à les mettre ensuite en relation entre eux ; or ce travail de sélection et de combinaison est nécessairement orienté par la recherche, non de la vérité, mais du bien” (1998: 50).

Being therefore now the task of individual subjects to capture memory, they become, according to Nora, “memory-individuals” (1989: 16). In this respect, Nora considered that the figure of the historian had also changed, for developing now more personal approaches and connections with the object of study —“with the disintegration of history-memory, a new type of historian emerges who, unlike his precursors, is ready to confess the intimate relation he maintains to his subject. Better still, he is ready to proclaim it, deepen it, make of it not the obstacle but the means of his understanding” (1989: 18). It is worth mentioning, in this regard, that in many cases in Ireland they were precisely the descendants of war veterans the ones that started addressing the issue, encouraged by family stories and objects, surprised on some occasions by the discovery that one of their relatives had participated in the conflict. Thus, their task was to break the silence that was installed within the family for many years and, by delving into their own history, to also revisit the history of Ireland. This once again connects with Nora’s ideas, since, based on the fact that memory and identity are interrelated, the individual’s task to unearth the past is precisely motivated by a search of their own identity as a member of a group: “for the individual, the discovery of roots, of ‘belonging’ to some group, becomes the source of identity, its true and hidden meaning. Belonging, in turn, becomes a total commitment. [...] The less collective the experience of memory is, the greater the need for individuals to bear the burden” (1996: 11).

The need to write down memory by creating archives was even more evident due to the secularization that accompanied the aforementioned democratization of history. Memory had been traditionally associated with ritualized practices that involved some kind of physicality, so that memory was preserved through generations by being constantly embodied. Currently, according to Nora, we need to “create archives, mark anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and authenticate documents because such things no longer happen as a matter of course” (1996: 7). Pierre Nora, to this end, introduced the term *lieux de mémoire*, among which he includes different objects, memorials, initiatives and ceremonies whose role is that of ritualizing an event so that it becomes embedded in the collective memory of a society that no longer calls for remembrance —“They make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of our world —producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal” (1989: 12), and thus become “the rituals of a ritual-less society; fleeting incursions of the sacred into a disenchanting world” (1996: 7). From Nora’s point of view, therefore, everything that involved an element of ritualization, could be considered a *realm of memory*: “A purely functional site, like a classroom manual, a testament, or a veterans’ reunion belongs to the category only inasmuch as it is also the object of a ritual. And the observance of a commemorative minute of silence [...] serves as a concentrated appeal to memory by literally breaking a temporal continuity” (1989: 19). These *realms of memory* necessarily entail the will to remember and have thus a clear purpose: “to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial [...] all of this to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs” (Nora 1989: 19). In this respect, Waugh later asserted that history has become “indissociable from textuality” (1997: 56). However, she brought to the fore the problems derived from that textualization of history insofar as it implied a banalization, rather than a democratization, of the discipline; according to Waugh, for historical materialists the fact that every experience is “potentially opened up to endless textual reinscription” is seen “as the wearisome and nihilistic spectacle of ‘one void chasing another’ in a return less to *history* than to a plurality of *theories* of history” (1997: 57). Thus, Waugh

sees “the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems” (1996: 9).

The different forms of remembering the Great War throughout the twentieth century, from the first official commemorations on the part of the state, to more personal testimonies and explorations of peace and reconciliation, reflect these social changes. Immediately after the armistice, the different countries that took part in the conflict were in charge of making the corresponding reparations, and did so by honouring the collective sacrifice made in the name of the nation and by focusing on the bravery and heroism of the soldiers —“The monuments thus evoked the obligation of the postwar nation to remember and live up to the sacrifice made by its combatants” (Van Ypersele 2010: 580). These type of commemorations in the form of parades and monuments often became a means to justify the war effort and to reaffirm national identity in the benefit of the institutions in charge of post-conflict reconstruction. For instance, in the case of Italy, “the cult of the military dead was used to justify the state’s decision to participate in a war [...]. Commemorating the dead with war memorials emerged as ‘the first patriotic cult of united Italy,’ helping construct a national identity before being appropriated by fascism” (Van Ypersele 2010: 577). In addition to the influence of the present in remembrance practices, since, as aforementioned, collective memory is deeply integrated into social frames, so is commemoration also dependent upon the social conditions of a specific community; according to Gilbert et al., “commemoration is founded on, and therefore an expression of, our values” (2000: 1). Jay Winter, expert historian of the Great War, precisely defined war memorials as “collective symbols” (1995: 51) subjected to different socio-cultural contexts — “different cultural norms and religious traditions yield different meanings” (1995: 78)— putting the example of the so-called *monument aux morts* in France, a term which, in his view, “locates French war memorials within a tradition of suffering and sacrifice” (1995: 78).

After the Second World War, however, the practices of commemoration were changed, not only affecting the subsequent memory of this last war, but also that of the previous one. The failure of a proper international reconciliation after the Great War, together with the state of devastation in which the world, and especially Europe, was left in 1945, raised awareness among Western countries: “In Western Europe, commemorating both world wars has moved out of the register of martyrdom into the register of pacifism” (Winter 2014: 171). Contrasting with the mythicized heroic narratives of glory and sacrifice that enhanced national pride, new mnemonic practices emphasized a sense of purposelessness and regret. According to van Ypersele, notwithstanding, it was not until the 1960s that a proper change in the dynamics of commemoration was noticed:

It was not until the end of the 1960s (also the moment when the generation of 1914 began to disappear) that a different commemorative framework emerged, without necessarily displacing heroic memory, which dwelt on the absolute nature of victimhood. This victim memory is no longer linked to the concept of sacrifice but to the memory of an indefensible offence against humanity, culminating in genocide. It does not claim civic recognition throughout community ceremonies but proclaims universal human rights. (2010: 587)

Such a change of approach to war remembrance might have also prompted the readdressing of the Great War in Ireland, since it offered a new perspective that did not glorified the Irish volunteers in the British army, but prioritized instead the resolution of past conflicts out of a willingness for peace and welfare on a national and international scale. Added to this, the fact that the generation who had first-hand experience in the conflict started to pass away, as mentioned by van Ypersele, fostered the gathering of those memories by the next generations,

who were then charged with the task to bear witness; this case becomes thus one of *postmemory*, the term coined by Marianne Hirsch that “describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (2012: 5). Here affective relations are important triggers of recollection. An Irish example of this in the literary field would be that of Jennifer Johnston, author of the novel *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (1974) and part of the post-war generation. Johnston revealed in an interview to *The Irish Times* that she has kept her uncle’s last letter from the front in her wallet for years. The fact that her uncle fought and died in the Great War was silenced in the family —“I knew almost nothing about my uncle. No one talked about him” (Johnston 2017)— so writing her fictional novel about the Great War was for her a way to both break the silence and honor his memory.

First World War commemorations regained even more importance, in this respect, at the turn of the century and during the years surrounding its centenary, in 2014, when the *social memory* of the event—that which encompassed immediate descendants, following Aleida Assmann’s classifications—came to an end and *cultural memory* took its place. As Jay Winter explains, “after this three-generational period of first-person storytelling, we do not have access to direct witnesses [...]. At this precise moment, then, we have to resort to other kinds of storytelling, imbedded not in individual voices, but in documents, in historic sites, and in the rituals and ceremonies surrounding them” (2014: 173). In Ireland, this tendency can be observed in the recent increase of publications that revolved around the conflict, including, once again, historical fiction, which has represented the issue differently according to the present sociological circumstances and needs, as it will be explored in the following sections. This proves the previously exposed theory that memory and practices of remembrance are constantly evolving and adapting; as Olick for instance has explained, these *mnemonic practices*, as he termed them, are “multiple” and continuously performing, as memory is “an active process of construction and reconstruction in time” (2007: 10).

Notwithstanding, regardless of the differences and developments seen in the practices of remembrance, commemorations of problematic and violent events, no matter the socio-political situation, are supposed to include common moral functions that render them necessary and worthy of integration in the mnemonic practices of a community. Winter particularly emphasized their provision of a space “where people could mourn [...] and be seen to mourn” (1995: 93), ritualizing the process of mourning in order to deal better with loss. Thus, their main purpose could be, in Winter’s terms, to deconstruct death: “its horror, its undeniable individuality, its trauma, and the ignominy often associated with it, are buried. Then it is reinvested with meaning, as an abstraction, a collective sacrifice” (1995: 94). It is precisely through such a process of ritualization and collectivization, as commented before, that loss becomes embedded within a social or national memory. Winter considers, in fact, not only that both public recognition and a sense of indebtedness are essential factors in the process of commemoration, but also that they provide the necessary rituals to avoid what Freud termed *melancholia*: “Ritual here is a means of forgetting, as much as of commemoration, and war memorials, with their material representation of names and losses, are there to help in the necessary art of forgetting” (1995: 115). However, van Ypersele views the process of commemoration with respect to the war as more complex, since while attempting to overcome loss, it also demands prolonged remembrance:



the commemorative messages of the war memorials were ambiguous. On the one hand, they spoke of the eternal glory of the departed and so rejected grief,

yet on the other hand they demanded grief without end, since only the tears of the living guaranteed that the memory of the dead would survive. And among the tragic aspects of death in war which the memorials and rituals could not overcome were the impossibility of being with the loved one in his final moments, the absence of bodies, and the inversion of the normal passage of the generations, with the young dying before the old. It is understandable that mourning remained problematic for many families throughout the interwar years and even later. (2010: 581)

This predicament actually takes part of the bigger dilemma on how to better deal with a conflicting past: whether it is necessary to continue to remember and commemorate some events, so that individuals within a community can preserve a sense of identity and avoid committing the same mistakes, or if it would be preferable, once the necessary amends for reconciliation are made, to move on so as to not to be haunted by the past. In this respect, Assmann suggests that “the memory discourse has to [...] provide criteria for [...] distinguishing between uses and abuses of the past, between memories that perpetuate resentment, separatism, and violence on the one hand and those that further inter-group relations and have a therapeutic or ethical value on the other” (2010: 39). A problematic issue also concerning these crosses between uses and abuses of the past, according to Irwin-Zarecka, lies in the fact that achieving a proper resolution and reconciliation ultimately depends on the victims’ judgement, on how they perceive the consequences and corresponding reparations (1994: 78).

In this vein, the process of forgiveness has been associated with an attempt or involuntary act of undoing the past and thus its pragmatics have been put into question —“common was the perception that forgiveness could function to erase or forget the past and thus invalidate the atrocity” (Goman and Kelley 2016: 93). Ricoeur considered that there was a fine line between forgiving and forgetting —“The boundary between forgetting and forgiving is crossed surreptitiously” (2006: 453)— and even signalled the common etymological origin between *amnesia* and *amnesty*, since both words came from Greek and meant ‘oblivion’, as an obvious indication of their intersections: “The proximity, which is more than phonetic, or even semantic, between amnesty and amnesia signals the existence of a secret pact with the denial of memory, which [...] distances it from forgiving” (2006: 453). Even though the purpose of amnesty is to establish peace, in Ricoeur’s view, because of its proximity or tendency to forgetfulness, “amnesty places the relation to the past outside of the field in which the problematic of forgiving would find its rightful place along with *dissensus*”, which for Ricoeur might be more enriching and enlightening for a community willing to come to terms with their troubles, than the fact of “condemning competing memories to an unhealthy underground existence” (2006: 455).

Nevertheless, Hannah Arendt considered forgiveness and forgetting to be different, insofar, first of all, as the first requires the implication of another, that is to say, it cannot be achieved by oneself: “Forgiving and the relationship it establishes is always an eminently personal (though not necessarily individual or private) affair in which *what* was done is forgiven in the sake of *who* did it” (2000: 241). Robert Eaglestone, following Hannah Arendt’s views, stated that —precisely because one needs to know what and who is forgiving so that the act is properly accomplished— “forgiveness without a sense of the past is empty” (2000: 80). Arendt also underlined unique characteristics of the act of forgiving as “the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven”

(2000: 241).³² Otherwise, if people are not pardoned, they are bound and subjected to the consequences of their act and therefore “remain the victims of its consequences forever” (Arendt 2000: 237). Thus, Arendt saw forgiveness as the only “possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility” and thought that “the faculty to make and keep promises” was the only remedy “for the chaotic uncertainty of the future” (2000: 237), hence the fact that both of them might interrelate in questions pertaining to moral justice and historical responsibility. In this respect, Eaglestone defined the process of forgiveness as “a coming to terms with person and their past” (2000: 80). In this regard, Carmen Goman and Douglas Kelley likewise agreed that such a process entails an acknowledgement, understanding and resolution of past conflicts —“forgiveness is a process that, rather than denying, intentionally remembers what happened so that the problem can be dealt with, lessons can be learned, and relational negotiations can be made based on recognition of the transgressions” (2016: 82).

Thus, a clear commitment, on the part of the state or society, of coming to terms with the past, underlies commemorative practices; different practices of remembrance are therefore the only way of bringing justice and have the ultimate goal of making peace and achieving social forgiveness. In this regard, Ricoeur employed the term *obligated memory* to refer to a moral duty to remember that he related to the idea of justice; in his words, “it is justice that turns memory into a project; and it is this same project of justice that gives the form of the future and of the imperative to the duty of memory” (2006: 88). He considered it natural to feel indebted to our ancestors and a matter of feeling, which gave the impulse and the continuity of commemorations —“We are indebted to those who have gone before us for part of what we are. The duty of memory is not restricted to preserving the material trace, whether scriptural or other, of past events, but maintains the feeling of being obligated with respect to these others” (2006: 89). Tzvetan Todorov named it *exemplary memory*, which he also connected to the discipline of justice, considering that it allowed us to learn from the past and change the present accordingly, that is to say, to acknowledge injustice and to consequently improve the present situation of those who had been previously oppressed: “L’usage exemplaire [...] permet d’utiliser le passé en vue du présent, de se servir des leçons des injustices subies pour combattre celles qui ont cours aujourd’hui, de quitter le soi pour aller vers l’autre” (1998: 31-32). Along the lines of Judith Butler’s *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, political and collective responsibility can be claimed on the basis of the social structure itself, since it is by virtue of human connections that people are vulnerable, exposed to different forms of violence —“Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure” (2004: 20). For Butler, the recognition of such vulnerability was essential in any ethical encounter.

This sense of duty and justice surrounding practices of remembrance was especially prominent in the last decades, as Whitehead has noted: “the last few years have witnessed an accelerated fashion for scenes of public repentance, forgiveness, apology, or confession” (2009: 153).³³ As aforementioned, towards the end of the century, public commemorations of war moved from heroism to repentance, mirroring the general state of affairs that was left after such a convulsive century, and were redirected towards the improvement of international relationships; in Whitehead’s words, “these phenomena respond to a growing public interest in

³² Hannah Arendt, in fact, opposes forgiveness to vengeance inasmuch as the latter keeps you tied to the offense, to the past, for vengeance, in Arendt’s words, “acts in the form of re-acting against an original trespassing, whereby far from putting an end to the consequences of the first misdeed, everybody remains bound to the process” (2000: 240).

³³ In this respect, as Jeffrey C. Alexander remarks, “the 1945 Nuremberg Trials were critical. They created revolutionary new law [...], laying the basis for dozens of highly publicized lawsuits that in later years created significant dramaturgy and unleashed profound moral effects” (2017: 21).

restorative justice and aim to promote healing and reconciliation in the aftermath of political violence” (2009: 154). As a result, according to Olick, a “universal human rights’ paradigm” has been accepted and institutionally supported, as evinced by “the expanded powers of international tribunals to prosecute war crimes, as well as the growth of trans- and nongovernmental watchdog organizations” (2007: 121). As Olick himself points out, these measurements reveal an interest in promoting and sustaining international trade —“Reparation of past injustice maintains restitutive norms essential for contemporary forms of international commerce” (2007: 131). In fact, when Ireland entered the EU, the country received financial help from Europe precisely to apply reconciliation policies. Specifically in Ireland, thus, the process of reconciliation with the past has been particularly intense and wide from the peace process of the 1990s onwards, including, for instance, the investigations on child abuse and mortality affecting industrial schools and mother and baby homes.³⁴ Also regarding Anglo-Irish relations, in 1997, for example, British Prime Minister Tony Blair publicly apologized for Britain’s role and inaction in the Irish potato famine.

All this taken into consideration, Olick has defined this attitude in terms of *politics of regret* —“New regimes seek ways to settle the residues of their predecessors, while established systems face a rise in historical consciousness and increasingly pursue a *politics of regret*” (2007: 17)— which for him have two frameworks for analysis: “a philosophical-jurisprudential discourse centered around the concept of universal human rights, and a comparative-political study of regime transitions now often referred to as *transitology*” (2007: 122). The problem of the former is that it “dismisses historical or cross-cultural contextualization” (2007: 125) by prioritizing universal values that seem to be compliant with Western culture, whereas the latter focuses much more on establishing a typology of how some societies deal with post-conflict transition to new regimes of peace and how to apply political justice —through reconciliation, compensation, amnesty, memorialization, or amnesia, among other practices. This second, context-based approach, goes in line and intersects with recent tendencies in trauma studies, which have moved from Freud’s original attempt to establish a universal theory of trauma, to the exploration of how specific communities, such as post-colonies, have endured and processed trauma —as it will be explored in the following section. In this vein, Olick sees political culture as a field that is no longer focused on subjective values, but on specific symbols and patterns that can be understood “as part of objective systems that give meaning to political outcomes” (2007: 7) —culture in this case is therefore “embodied in symbolism and patterns of meaning” (2007: 22). And it is precisely because of this focus on culture and society, on particular communities and divergences, that collective memory, with its concern about the forging of identities, intersects with political culture, in Olick’s view —“scholarly work on collective memory can be seen as part of the field of political culture research insofar as it is concerned with the cultural constitution of political identities and activities” (2007: 21).

In addition to these political tendencies, Olick also finds evidence, on the part of the citizens, of that haunting presence of a “repulsive past” in the front-page stories of newspapers and in redress movements (2007: 121). Such impulse to claim for justice forms part of the

³⁴ It has been recently exposed in Ireland the negligence and abuse on the part of religious state-funded institutions, namely Mother and Baby Homes —where many parents confined their pregnant unmarried daughters to give birth hidden from the public eye— and industrial and reformatory schools, some of which had been active until the last decades of the twentieth century. The Irish government has made amends through the constitution of two commissions in charge of enquiring into the irregularities there committed: the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, which published its final report —The Ryan Report— in 2009, and the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes, whose report came out at the beginning of 2021. The conclusions reached by both recognized, among other faults, the malpractice of such institutions —frequently overcrowded and in poor conditions, which led to high mortality rates— and also, especially regarding industrial schools and reformatories, the physical and emotional child abuses that went unpunished, as they were frequently concealed by the Church.

postmodern rejection of established narratives and the subsequent revision of history that took place at the turn of the century. As Olick explains, “within societies, disenfranchised groups produce alternative historical narratives that call elites to account for historical wrongs; across societies, subjugated peoples in the periphery challenge the arrogance of the center” (2007: 129). The need to readdress the past evinces therefore governmental failures in regards to citizens’ security and integration —“Memory and regret are not the result of the integration of the collectivity but of the impossibility of this in an age of competing claims, multiple histories, and plural perceptions” (Olick 2007: 137). Unearthing the past can be therefore legitimized due to the impossibility of moving forward otherwise, which again relates to trauma theory through the concept of the “transgenerational phantom”, that is, the persistence of a generation’s unresolved trauma in the form of a haunting presence in the present: “When killings, expulsion, oppression go unacknowledged, [...] when those responsible are allowed the comforts of forgetting, the wounds remain open. The passing of time does not heal these wounds [...]. If the historical moral accounts have never been settled, in other words, time collapses.” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 77). Hence the moral obligation, on a personal and public scale, to revise as well as to give visibility to contradictions in memory and history, to provide closure and reconciliation, as Esterling et al. bring to the fore:

The process of gathering and testing evidence, of scrutinising competing narratives [...] and then producing a systematic and forensic normative narrative of the organisations behind the abuses or atrocities [...] helps to break the silences necessary to sustain forms of unregulated and raw power. [...] It may accordingly provide a form of closure for victim communities, for example, one which reconnects the present with the past, one which distances the present from the past, or in a paradoxical way, both. (2000: 54)

All in all, it can be concluded that collective memory, in general terms, can be understood as the shared knowledge, values and character of a group, which ensure a presence of the past in the present. Memory, in its different manifestations, can offer continuities by stressing the commonalities of a group and codifying experiences, that is, providing figures of memory and symbols, and by reflecting socio-political developments, while simultaneously acknowledging divergent narratives and contesting discourses of power —“memory can make truth claims and can play an important role as a source of truth when, for example, political power heavily censors national history” (Misztal 2011: 7). An understanding of the different types of memory as well as of the social frameworks to which they are submitted, allows for an exploration of how institutions in power and political discourse can manipulate memory in different ways — through a biased selection and marginalization of specific narratives, through practices of commemoration— and impose authorized memories that give rise to tensions and contradictions with respect to non-official memories. Memory thus moves between history and myth, since it both encapsulates and questions the past, while also offering symbolic narratives that provide a sense of being and belonging. As a result, it can become a productive approach to deal with questions pertaining to identities and ideologies, especially because it can function interdisciplinary. Instead of trying to demarcate different fields of study, an interdisciplinary approach would be more enriching given the intersections between memory, history, politics and culture. Moreover, when it comes to troubling pasts, it is essential to go through a process of what in German is termed *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, that is, of coping or coming to terms with the past, which requires of politics of regret, such as the creation of cultural memory, the making of amends, and the practices of commemoration and reconciliation. The more the memories of a community are interrupted and distorted, the more it is condemned to readdress

and reassess the past, according to theories of trauma. In Ireland's particular case, this intersection of the workings of memory with those of trauma proves to be the most useful framework for the understanding of both Irish memories and identities.

2.3 WORKING THROUGH TRAUMA THEORY: A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

In the field of trauma studies, which developed as a discipline within the humanities in the 1990s—partly motivated by the upsurge of memory studies as well as by the so called “ethical turn”—by American theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Kalí Tal, Geoffrey Hartman, Dori Laub or Dominik LaCapra, questions pertaining to memory and amnesia have also been explored, accounting for the complexities of verbalizing experiences that go beyond our capacity to process ordinary, day-to-day events, as well as for the subsequent difficulties of integrating or accepting these memories into our lives, both at an individual and at a collective level. In this respect, when dealing with the Irish context, it is essential to take into account that the traumatic past of the community, for long submitted to British rule, has by force had an impact on how and which historical events are remembered. To properly understand how memory has operated in Ireland, according to Oona Frawley, it is necessary to think in terms of *postcolonial memory*—“it is not possible [...] to calcify Irish cultural memory in quite the same way that might be possible in nations like France, England, Russia, or the United States as major powers who have been colonizers. The colonial and postcolonial experience has made itself forcefully felt as a cultural imperative that has had repercussions for Irish cultural memory” (2011b: 29). This translates into the fact that “Irish cultural memory must necessarily be less monumental and more fragmented than other counterparts” (Frawley, 2011a: xix). More recent studies on the matter have revised the first approaches to trauma, which were mostly influenced by psychoanalysis, claiming for a necessary decolonization of trauma theory that entailed a rejection of Eurocentric values as well as a fair contextualization of the trauma experience.

The evolution of the study of trauma has been discontinuous, with specific moments in the history of the last two centuries—such as the treatment of hysteria, the two world wars and the Vietnam war—that allowed for renewed interest and work on the matter; as Judith Herman corroborates, “the study of psychological trauma has a curious history—one of episodic amnesia. Periods of active investigation have alternated with periods of oblivion” (2014: 7). Roger Luckhurst considers that the concept of trauma emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century and became more prominent after the Second World War; thus, he argues that “trauma is a concept that can only emerge within modernity, tracing it as an effect of the rise, in the nineteenth century, of the technological and statistical society that can generate, multiply and quantify the ‘shocks’ of modern life” (2008: 19). In fact, it was not until 1895 that the term *trauma* started to signify something other than a physical wound, according to Luckhurst, when in an edition of *Popular Science Monthly* it was used to design a nervous condition (2008: 2-3). Only a few years before, in 1889, psychiatrist Herman Oppenheim, after studying the symptoms presented by people who had suffered from railway and industrial accidents, “used the term neurosis because he regarded the symptoms as *functional* rather than *organic* disorders—that is, as disorders of the *action* of the nervous system, not of the *structure* of the nerves themselves. These were transient rather than permanent disorders and thus treatable. He also recognized the emotional effect of shock was responsible for the majority of symptoms” (Luckhurst 2008: 34). This could be seen as the first investigation on the workings of trauma, since any psychological symptoms presented at this time were often suspected to be inherited instead of caused by a shocking, traumatic event—“From about 1870, the enlightenment hope that moral management might cure or ameliorate lunacy tended to be replaced with a stark biological determinism” (Luckhurst 2008: 36).

Around this time, a specific mental disorder known as hysteria was attracting a significant amount of scientific attention. Relevant studies on the issue were conducted by French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot in the Salpêtrière hospital —“an asylum for the most wretched of the Parisian proletariat: beggars, prostitutes, and the insane” (Herman 2014: 10)— and different physicians visited the place and learnt from Charcot, among them, Pierre Janet, William James, and Sigmund Freud, who later tried to surpass his findings by demonstrating the cause of the disorder. According to Herman, by the 1890s both Janet in France and Freud and Breuer in Austria, working independently, arrived at the very similar conclusion that “hysteria was a condition caused by psychological trauma. Unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events produced an altered state of consciousness, which in turn induced the hysterical symptoms. Janet called this alteration in consciousness ‘dissociation.’ Breuer and Freud called it ‘double consciousness.’” (Herman 2014: 12). In addition to this, they discovered an effective treatment to alleviate hysterical symptoms: the ‘talking cure’. They found it the most helpful “when the traumatic memories, as well as the intense feelings that accompanied them, were recovered and put into words. This method of treatment became the basis of modern psychotherapy” (Herman 2014: 12). Freud, in this respect, came to the conclusion that many causes of hysteria in women came from childhood sexual abuse. Even though later on he decided to retract these studies due to the scandalous implications they entailed for the bourgeois society of Vienna, the idea of trauma as a psychological wound caused by a shocking event that produced lasting mental symptoms or alterations started to take shape.

Only a few years later, more research on trauma was conducted due to the terrible psychological consequences that the First World War provoked on the soldiers who fought at the front —“The reality of psychological trauma was forced upon public consciousness once again by the catastrophe of the First World War” (Herman 2014: 20). The Great War introduced both soldiers and civilians into the powerful and destructive machinery of modern warfare; the magnitude of those technological advances had not been tested before and thus shook the foundations of civilization, affecting national politics, the legitimacy of war, traditional conceptions of masculinity and the understanding of trauma. As Judith Herman explains,

One of the many casualties of the war’s devastation was the illusion of manly horror and glory in battle. Under conditions of unremitting exposure to the horrors of trench warfare, men began to break down in shocking numbers. Confined and rendered helpless, subjected to constant threat of annihilation, and forced to witness the mutilation and death of their comrades without any hope of reprieve, many soldiers began to act like hysterical women. They screamed and wept uncontrollably. They froze and could not move. They became mute and unresponsive. They lost their memory and their capacity to feel. The number of psychiatric casualties was so great that hospitals had to be hastily requisitioned to house them. According to one estimate, mental breakdowns represented 40 percent of British battle casualties. Military authorities attempted to suppress reports of psychiatric casualties because of their demoralizing effect on the public. (2014: 20)

At first, those mental breakdowns and disorders were attributed to physical causes, since it was thought that bombardments provoked alterations in the nervous system of the soldiers: “The British psychologist Charles Myers, who examined some of the first cases, attributed their symptoms to the concussive effects of exploding shells” (Herman 2014: 20). Thus the illness, which would today be classified as post-traumatic stress disorder, came to be known as *shell shock* in English, with similar variants in other languages: “Germans termed it *Granatshock* or

Granatkontusion, the French *vent du projectile*” (Luckhurst 2008: 51). Consequently, soldiers were not properly assisted, frequently treated with electric shocks and often judged as physically inferior or morally weak, and were expected to get back to combat as soon as possible: “The soldier who developed a traumatic neurosis was at best a constitutionally inferior human being, at worst a malingerer and a coward. [...] Some military authorities maintained that these men did not deserve to be patients at all, that they should be court-martialed or dishonorably discharged rather than given medical treatment” (Herman 2014: 21). As the war progressed, however, “military psychiatrists were forced to acknowledge that the symptoms of shell shock were due to psychological trauma” (Herman 2014: 20) and diverse medical authorities claimed for new treatment approaches based on psychoanalysis, among them, the physician W. H. R. Rivers, who treated young officer and poet Siegfried Sassoon. Sassoon presented symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder but was already highly respected for his bravery in the trenches; therefore, he not only served as a good example that the terrors of war affected everyone in similar ways, but also became the living proof of the success of the psychoanalytic approach —“River’s treatment of Sassoon was intended to demonstrate the superiority of humane, enlightened treatment over the more punitive traditionalist approach” through the application of the *talking cure* (Herman 2014: 22). His psychotherapy proved to be a success when Sassoon, himself declared a pacifist, decided to return to the front out of loyalty to his comrades. According to Herman, “he had demonstrated, first, that men of unquestioned bravery could succumb to overwhelming fear and, second, that the most effective motivation to overcome that fear was something stronger than patriotism, abstract principles, or hatred of the enemy. It was the love of soldiers for one another” (2014: 22), which relates to the idea, very established in trauma theory, that personal bonds and social integration favour the overcoming of traumatic symptoms.

When the Second World War broke out, the fact that warfare has psychological effects on every man, no matter their physical or mental condition, had to be acknowledged and accepted in order to predict psychological casualties and to provide adequate treatments that could send the soldiers back to the front: “In the hopes of finding a rapid, efficacious treatment, military psychiatrists tried to remove the stigma from the stress reactions of combat. It was recognized for the first time that *any* man could break down under fire and that psychiatric casualties could be predicted in direct proportion to the severity of combat exposure” (Herman 2014: 24-25). Different psychiatrists reached the conclusion that “the strongest protection against psychological breakdown was the morale and leadership of the small fighting unit” (Herman 2014: 25), as was the case of Sassoon. The problem was that doctors focused on rapid, practical treatments to improve traumatic symptoms and once the fight was over, they did no longer take into account the post-war condition of veterans: “With the end of the war, the familiar process of amnesia set in once again. There was little medical or public interest in the psychological condition of returning soldiers. The lasting effects of war trauma were once again forgotten” (Herman 2014: 26).

Notwithstanding, from the 1960s onwards, due to the ongoing anti-war movement that opposed the Vietnam War, the situation started changing, since more public awareness on the psychological effects of trauma spread, and veterans were then provided psychological assistance: “The moral legitimacy of the antiwar movement and the national experience of defeat in a discredited war had made it possible to recognize psychological trauma as a lasting and inevitable legacy of war” (Herman 2014: 27). This paved the way for the inclusion, in 1980, of *post-traumatic stress disorder* into the third edition of the official Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association, which implied that “for the first time, the characteristic syndrome of psychological trauma became a ‘real’ diagnosis” (Herman 2014: 27-

28). The official recognition of the pathology implied that not only war veterans could receive adequate diagnosis, but also other victims of trauma: “suddenly responses not only to combat and to natural catastrophes but also to rape, child abuse, and a number of other violent occurrences have been understood in terms of PTSD” (Caruth 1995b: 3).

The definition provided by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1980, nevertheless, was later criticized for being too reductive, since the traumatic event was considered to be “outside the range of usual human experience” (DSM 1980: 236), which could definitely include war trauma or natural catastrophes, but did not seem to equally include experiences integrated into ordinary life, and also because it failed to acknowledge secondary and vicarious trauma. The systematic oppression endured by members of a colony, for instance, needs to be taken into consideration as an experience embedded within the daily reality of the colonized. As Herman has noted, “traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death” (2014: 33). In this line, in the current edition of the manual, the definition of PTSD has broadened to include, in general terms, “exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence”, whether it came from experiencing the traumatic event directly or from witnessing or learning about it (2013: 271).³⁵ Nevertheless, it still has been deemed inefficient when it comes to dealing with colonial identities, since it does not elaborate on collective manifestations of trauma, but simply conceives that “the risk of onset and severity of PTSD may differ across cultural groups as a result of variation in the type of traumatic exposure” or “the ongoing sociocultural context” (2013: 278), giving as examples genocide and post-conflict settings in which perpetrators go unpunished. In addition, among traumatic experiences, the manual only includes “natural or human-made disasters”, “war” and “incarceration as a prisoner of war”, “physical assault”, “sexual violence”, “being kidnapped” or “being taken hostage”, “terrorist attack”, “torture”, and “motor vehicle accidents” (2013: 274). Thus, trauma theory in general has always prioritized the individual dimension as well as “the traditional event-based model of trauma, according to which trauma results from a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event”, as Stef Craps has pointed out (2013: 31).

Trauma has been traditionally defined as a wound inflicted upon the mind that cannot be fully assimilated into conscience due to its unexpectedness. Cathy Caruth, drawing conclusions from Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, provided such definition, which has been widely accepted in the field of the humanities; as she noted, a “wound of the mind—the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that [...] is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (1996: 4). These later manifestations or symptoms of trauma, according to Freud, suggest *acting out* as a response: “the patient does not *remember* anything at all of what he has forgotten and repressed, but rather *acts it out*. He reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he *repeats* it, without of course being aware of the fact that he is repeating it” (2003: 36). This is due to the fact, in Freud’s view, that the response enacted by trauma was one of fright, which operates differently from

³⁵ As experts in the field of trauma studies such as Roger Luckhurst have emphasized, “trauma appears to be worryingly transmissible: it leaks between mental and physical symptoms, between patients (as in the ‘contagions’ of hysteria or shell shock), between patients and doctors via the mysterious processes of transference or suggestion, and between victims and their listeners or viewers who are commonly moved to forms of overwhelming sympathy, even to the extent of claiming secondary victimhood” (2008: 3).

fear: whereas fear was an “inner state amounting to expectation of, and preparation for, danger of some kind”, the feeling of fright for Freud “emphasizes the element of surprise; it describes the state that possesses us when we find ourselves plunged into danger without being prepared for it” (2003: 51). In connection with this reasoning, psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, starting from the basis that we do not process experiences without the help of prior knowledge and ideas, sees the event of Hiroshima as hardly assimilable for there was, in his words, “precious little prior imagery that could enable people to take in the Hiroshima experience” (2014: 9). He further comments that the survivors he interviewed from Hiroshima and the Holocaust were convinced they had learned something new that they could not completely grasp, which he translated into a knowledge of death. It is therefore this lack of preparation for something that can disrupt our reality as we know it and understand it, what makes us unable to grasp the experience of trauma completely, to comprehend it as any other life experience, so that it remains in the unconscious. This makes the images and emotions associated to that experience return constantly to our minds, uncontrollably; in Freud’s words, “the fact that the traumatic experience repeatedly forces itself on the patient even during sleep is assumed to be proof indeed of just how deep an impression it made. The patient is assumed to be, so to speak, psychically fixated on the trauma” (2003: 51). Thus, paradoxically, it is the immediacy of the event what produces its *belatedness*, a fact which became essential in the understanding of the workings of trauma as something that, being overwhelming, manifests in the aftermath of the event. On the one hand, it seems impossible to get access to the entire remembrance, which might appear distorted and fragmented; on the other hand, the subject cannot escape the assaulting imprints and glimpses of that which has shocked him.

Correlating with psychoanalytic views on trauma, scientific experts have confirmed that trauma produces physical manifestations in the body, altering “physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory. Moreover, traumatic events may sever these normally integrated functions from one another” (Herman 2014: 34). Experiencing traumatic events affects, in general, the whole cortex, which is the part of the brain in charge of such higher-level processes of cognition, that is to say, of any acquisition of knowledge either through the senses or thought, including reasoning and learning, personality and feelings, language and memory, so that all these functions can be troubled in different degrees. According to the research conducted by Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, the hippocampus specifically, which is where memories are located in specific times and places, can be easily damaged by situations of anxiety: “severe or prolonged stress can suppress hippocampal functioning, creating context-free fearful associations [...]. This results in amnesia for the specifics of traumatic experiences but not the feelings associated with them” (1995: 172). This helps explain the recurring images and flashbacks that haunt the individual and, simultaneously, the inability of the individual to structure those in a coherent manner: “When people are exposed to trauma, [...] they experience ‘speechless terror’ [...]. The experience cannot be organized on a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level: as somatic sensations, behavioral reenactments, nightmares, and flashbacks” (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1995: 172).³⁶ Trauma seems to produce, therefore, a split or disconnection between knowledge and senses. In this respect, Dominik LaCapra affirms that experiencing trauma results in “a dissociation between cognition and affect” in which “one typically can represent numbly or with aloofness what one cannot feel, and one feels overwhelmingly what one is unable to represent, at least with any critical distance and

³⁶ The research conducted by psychiatrist Judith Herman also concluded that traumatic memories “are not encoded like the ordinary memories of adults in a verbal, linear narrative that is assimilated into an ongoing life story” (2014: 37); rather, they “lack verbal narrative and context” and so “they are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images” (2014: 38).

cognitive control” (2004: 117). As a case example, Charlotte Delbo’s memory of the Holocaust as a survival makes that split between thinking and emotional dimensions apparent. She differentiated between *external* or *intellectual memory* —“the memory connected with thinking processes” and therefore voluntary and conscious— and *deep memory* —“memory of the senses” that “preserves sensations, physical imprints” (2001: 3) and therefore escapes control or rationalization.

As a result, scientists have agreed that trauma disrupts the subject provoking a split psyche that needs to be somehow restored. Herman explains the consequences of trauma in terms of a destruction of the previous identity of the subject: “Traumatized people suffer damage to the basic structures of the self. [...] Their self-esteem is assaulted by experiences of humiliation, guilt, and helplessness. Their capacity for intimacy is compromised by intense and contradictory feelings of need and fear. The identity they have formed prior to the trauma is irrevocably destroyed” (2014: 56). As Jay Lifton explains, however, “extreme trauma creates a second self”, that is, a “traumatized self” (2014: 11) and thus “the struggle in the post-traumatic experience is to reconstitute the self into the single self, reintegrate itself” (Jay Lifton 2014: 12). It is indeed a struggle, as psychiatrist Dori Laub and psychologist Nanette Auerhahn asseverate, since people see themselves “caught between the compulsion to complete the process of knowing and the inability or fear of doing so” (1993: 287). But it is precisely, according to Jay Lifton, in “that combination of feeling and not feeling that the creative aspect of the survivor experience, or the potentially illuminating aspect of the survivor experience, takes shape” (2014: 12). That “potentially illuminating aspect” may be the truth which that knowledge of death conveys and human beings resist to recognise. For Freud, the inability to remember and to partake the experience represented the patient’s resistance to know that truth and considered that in this respect, time was key to confront it: “One has to give the patient time to familiarize himself with the resistance now that he is aware of it, to *work his way through it*, to overcome it by defying it” (2003: 41). Instead of acting out, the subject eventually needs to work through: “*Working-through means work on posttraumatic symptoms* in order to mitigate the effects of trauma by generating counterforces to compulsive repetition (or acting-out), thereby enabling a more viable articulation of affect and cognition or representation, as well as ethical and sociopolitical agency, in the present and future” (LaCapra 2004: 119).

Thus, even though, in the words of Laub and Auerhahn, “it is the nature of trauma to elude knowledge” (1993: 287), the subject must eventually make the effort to confront it, both for their own sake as well as for that of history itself. In connection with Jay Lifton’s ideas, Cathy Caruth considered that “in its repeated imposition as both image and amnesia, the trauma thus seems to evoke the difficult truth of a history that is constituted by the very incomprehensibility of its occurrence” (1995a: 153). Caruth insists on the fact that even while not being able to fully understand and process trauma, it does carry truth and meaning, which can eventually be somehow transmitted: “The flashback or traumatic reenactment conveys, that is, both *the truth of an event*, and *the truth of its incomprehensibility*” (1995a: 153), so that it can be said that “its truth is bound up with its crisis of truth” (1995b: 8). The truth that torments the subject, therefore, is not only the nature of the event, its brutality, but also the way it resists being processed. This paradox between knowing and not-knowing “creates a dilemma for historical understanding” (Caruth 1995a: 153). It is the literality of the event, the truth it entails, what returns to haunt the subject and what therefore needs to be acknowledged and worked through: “It is indeed this truth of traumatic experience that forms the center of its pathology or symptoms; it is not a pathology, that is, of falsehood or displacement of meaning, but of history itself. [...] The traumatized [...] carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (Caruth 1995b: 5). It is

thus undoubtedly necessary to revisit the past, to get deep into the questions that resist interpretation and comprehension, so that neither the subject nor history remain lost or dislocated.

In this vein, since, as it has been discussed, experiencing trauma entails a series of persistent post-traumatic symptoms that need to be progressively assimilated and treated, different experts, psychologists and psychiatrists have worked on the matter by trying to provide classifications of possible manifestations of trauma, as well as of the reactions or strategies to deal with it. In this respect, psychiatrist Judith Herman has classified the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder into three main categories which correlate with the symptomatology described in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*: intrusion, hyperarousal and constriction. Intrusion refers to uncontrolled recurrent memories which “often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event” (Herman 2014: 37) either in thoughts or dreams, and to reenactments, which relive the event through action. Herman distinguishes, in this regard, between reenactments that are consciously chosen and those—which are more common—in which the subject remains oblivious to the situation; as her research has concluded, victims often “feel impelled to re-create the moment of terror [...]. Sometimes people reenact the traumatic moment with a fantasy of changing the outcome of the dangerous encounter. In their attempts to undo the traumatic moment, survivors may even put themselves at risk of further harm” (Herman 2014: 39). There is, therefore, this physiological and individual aspect of re-enacting, which may entail compulsive repetitions such as patterns of behaviour—for instance, victims of sexual abuse during childhood might tend to have abusive partners—but there is also, on a collective scale, a ritualization and fixation of the past through social and cultural practices of commemoration and transmission. According to Caruth, “insistent re-enactment of the past do not simply serve as testimony to an event, but may also [...] bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred. Trauma does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned” (1995a: 151). Said responses, both individually and collectively, can be interpreted equally for Caruth as attempts to capture the past so as to integrate it into our fragmented psyches and memories “both for the sake of testimony and for the sake of cure” (1995a: 153). Herman is however more cautious in this respect, and she reflects on the ambiguity of reenactments when it comes to dealing with trauma: on the one hand, she considers that some reenactments can be productive and used as a means of adaptation—“Survivors may find a way to integrate reliving experiences into their lives in a contained, even socially useful manner” (2014: 40)—but on the other hand, she finds an uncanniness in their nature, since “even when they are consciously chosen, they have a feeling of involuntariness. Even when they are not dangerous, they have a driven, tenacious quality. Freud named this recurrent intrusion of traumatic experience the ‘repetition compulsion’” (Herman 2014: 41).

Regarding Herman’s second category, when in a state of hyperarousal, “the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, [...] the traumatized person startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocations, and sleeps poorly” (2014: 35). As opposed to this, constriction implies “a state of surrender” in which “the system of self-defense shuts down entirely” (Herman 2014: 42). Therefore, instead of opting for a course of action, the subject becomes numb, which could be the response “of captured prey to predator”, “of a defeated contestant in battle” or even of the “state of surrender” of a rape victim (Herman 2014: 42). Herman explains the reasons to opt for that state of numbing or surrender and the resulting process in the following terms:

Sometimes situations of inescapable danger may evoke not only terror and rage but also, paradoxically, a state of detached calm, in which terror, rage, and pain dissolve. Events continue to register in awareness, but it is as though these events have been disconnected from their ordinary meanings. Perceptions may be numbed or distorted, with partial anesthesia or the loss of particular sensations. Time sense may be altered, often with a sense of slow motion, and the experience may lose its quality of ordinary reality. The person may feel as though the event is not happening to her, as though she is observing from outside her body, or as though the whole experience is a bad dream from which she will shortly awaken. These perceptual changes combine with a feeling of indifference, emotional detachment, and profound passivity in which the person relinquishes all initiative and struggle. This altered state of consciousness might be regarded as one of nature's small mercies, a protection against unbearable pain. (2014: 42-43)

Besides this form of spontaneous dissociation, another form of constriction would be the resort to alcohol or narcotics “to produce similar numbing effects” (Herman 2014: 44). In fact, it has been established that veterans are more prone to falling into drug abuse in order to control their post-traumatic symptoms by avoiding intrusion and hyperarousal. In this respect, amnesia could also be a paradigmatic case in the sense that it keeps “painful memories split off from ordinary awareness” (Herman 2014: 45); furthermore, sometimes, instead of a complete amnesia, memories simply remain “devoid of emotion and meaning” (Herman 2014: 46). Even though constriction may prevent other manifestations of post-traumatic symptoms, since these mechanisms of constriction “keep the traumatic experience walled off from ordinary consciousness, they prevent the integration necessary for healing” (Herman 2014: 45). Even though symptomatology can be divided into these three differentiated categories, that does not imply that these are mutually exclusive, since they can alternate: “In the aftermath of an experience of overwhelming danger, the two contradictory responses of intrusion and constriction establish an oscillating rhythm. This dialectic of opposing psychological states is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the post-traumatic syndromes” (Herman 2014: 47). Moreover, symptomatology is not simply dependent on the nature of the event and the level of exposure to it; people may react differently after enduring similar situations according to their level of resistance: “Though the likelihood that a person will develop post-traumatic stress disorder depends primarily on the nature of the traumatic event, individual differences play an important part in determining the form that the disorder will take. No two people have identical reactions, even to the same event” (Herman 2014: 58); in effect, those who are in a subordinate or more isolated position are usually the ones who are at increased risk (Herman 2014: 60). This can be partly explained by the fact that trauma hinders our connections with others, which prove to be essential to provide solace and to reintegrate both the subject and its place in society.

It is to be expected that if traumatic events produce alterations in our psyche and in the way that we process reality, they can also affect the way we relate to the environment, that is, to others: “They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis” (Herman 2014: 51). Also the sociologist Kai Erikson has agreed with this and stated that “the experience of trauma [...] can mean not only a loss of confidence in the self, but a loss of confidence in the surrounding tissue of family and community, in the structures of human government, in the larger logics by which humankind lives, in the ways of nature itself, and often [...] in God” (1995: 198). This is due to the fact, according to Herman, that personality is

constructed on these bases, that is to say, on social connections and cultural meanings that give the person a place within a community and thus a sense of self with a purpose (2014: 52). Consequently, when those connections fail, “developmental conflicts of childhood and adolescence, long since resolved, are suddenly reopened. Trauma forces the survivor to relive all her earlier struggles over autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy” (Herman 2014: 52).³⁷ A shared, collective trauma, therefore, might reopen questions about national identities and affiliations —“In the aftermath of traumatic events, survivors doubt both others and themselves” (2014: 53). In this respect, as Herman has pertinently exposed, “in situations of terror, people spontaneously seek their first source of comfort and protection” (2014: 52), which is, in the first instance, the family and other loved ones, and in the second, social circles and institutions.

Thus, if a subject has been traumatized and is therefore left with a sense of alienation and vulnerability, it is on these social structures that responsibility falls, and it is through the reestablishment of those connections that the self can be rebuilt — “Restoration of the breach between the traumatized person and the community depends, first, upon public acknowledgement of the traumatic event and, second, upon some form of community action. [...]. These two responses —recognition and restitution— are necessary to rebuild the survivor’s sense of order and justice” (Herman 2014: 70). This correlates with Judith Butler’s theories on political responsibility for human vulnerabilities mentioned above; in fact, Butler defends the relevance of grieving as a public ritual that can reinforce community bonds and order: “Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility” (2004: 22). In effect, Butler considers the obituary to be “an act of nation-building”, since it provides “the means by which a life becomes, or fails to become, a publicly grievable life, an icon for national self-recognition, the means by which a life becomes noteworthy” (2004: 34). In this respect, and also in line with the ideas commented in the previous section, LaCapra considers the deritualization of contemporary society which was already acknowledged by Pierre Nora to be an impediment for successful mourning —“The possibility of even limited working through may seem foreclosed in modern societies precisely because of the relative dearth of effective rites of passage, including rituals or, more generally, effective social processes such as mourning” (LaCapra 2001: 76). Social efforts need therefore to go beyond individual attention; they rather require collective repairs and changes. Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué point out that “individual psychological recovery” is oftentimes “given priority at the expense of neglecting material restitution”, which means that “the pernicious social, political, and economic conditions that enabled that collective trauma” remain unchanged (2011: xix). For them, it is only “when the wrong social/political/economic structures are radically questioned and transformed” (2011: xix) that some form of healing can be accomplished.

In this vein, Judith Herman likewise establishes three possible stages of recovery for traumatic disorders, while acknowledging that these do not tend to follow a straight order, but rather might overlap: safety; remembrance and mourning; and reconnection with ordinary life. The stage of safety relates to the idea of regaining power and control and is of major importance

³⁷ Precisely in connection with this idea, Schwab emphasizes the importance of social relations in the reconstruction of the traumatized self with the consequential explanation that, “like the formation of the self in early infancy, the rebuilding of the self after catastrophic events is relational and requires the support of others through mirroring experiences. Just as the self needs the other’s mirror for its formation, it needs a mirror to be rebuilt after a shattering experience” (2016: 120).

according to Herman, “for no other therapeutic work can possibly succeed if safety has not been adequately secured” (2014: 159). It would consist, first of all, in taking control of the body and then of the environment, including, in the latter case, “a safe living situation, financial security, mobility, and a plan for self-protection that encompasses the full range of the patient’s daily life”, which requires social and institutional support (Herman 2014: 160). As Arthur G. Neal also states, “restoring a sense of order and coherence becomes a necessary societal response to conditions of trauma. Insofar as traumatic events result in a fragmented community, a great deal of repair work may be necessary to discover new forms of social glue for binding people together into a shared form of membership and belonging” (2017: 21). In the stage of remembrance and mourning, the person needs to confront trauma, which means to put the experience and feelings associated with it into words: “This work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story” (Herman 2014: 175). Such process needs to be carried out while ensuring the safe space, in order to negotiate tendencies towards conscription and intrusion: to avoid the distress of reliving the facts, the subject might fall into a state of numbing, which impedes the confrontation and therefore the assimilation of trauma; likewise, a hurried or forced effort to remember can also lead to overwhelming intrusive symptoms. The telling of trauma, nevertheless, unavoidably “plunges the survivor into profound grief” (Herman 2014: 188), but such a period of mourning is of fundamental importance for the subject because it is a means of working through; otherwise, one falls into what Freud termed *melancholia*, which would be a way of acting out.³⁸ While mourning was for Freud a common reaction “to the loss of a beloved person or an abstraction taking the place of the person, such as fatherland, freedom, an ideal and so on” (2005: 203), if *melancholia* takes over the process of mourning, what follows is “a profoundly painful depression, a loss of interest in the outside world, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction in the sense of self, expressed in self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment” (2005: 204).³⁹ This process of revisiting trauma and coming to terms with its effects, facilitates the stage of reconnection with ordinary life, which entails an active role on the part of the victim to engage in society and to finish reconnecting with the world: “Having come to terms with the traumatic past, the survivor faces the task of creating a future. She has mourned the old self that the trauma destroyed; now she must develop a new self. Her relationships have been tested and forever changed by the trauma; now she must develop new relationships” (Herman 2014: 196). This idea coincides with Judith Butler’s understanding of a successful grieving as the recognition that the subject has lost something and consequently has been irrevocably changed: “I do not think that successful grieving implies that one has forgotten another person or that something else has come along to take its place [...]. Perhaps, rather, one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever” (2004: 21). It is because of this reason that it is now widely acknowledged that a person who has been exposed to severe trauma can never be healed completely; recovery is rather a question of learning to live with that trauma.

³⁸ Ricoeur takes into consideration the relevance of the process of mourning for remembrance: “it is as a work of remembering that the work of mourning proves to be liberating, although at a certain cost [...]. The work of mourning is the cost of the work of remembering, but the work of remembering is the benefit of the work of mourning” (2006: 72).

LaCapra also recognizes the high importance of mourning as a way of working through, while also acknowledging other possibilities to achieve that purpose, such as “forms of nontotalizing narrative and critical, as well as self-critical, thought and practice” (2001: 67).

³⁹ Even though, as Freud himself remarks, some of the former traits can also be found in the process of mourning, “the disorder of self-esteem is absent” (2005: 204): “in mourning, the world has become poor and empty, in melancholia it is the ego that has become so. The patient describes his ego to us as being worthless, incapable of functioning and morally reprehensible, he is filled with self-reproach, he levels insults against himself and expects ostracism and punishment” (2005: 205-06).

Contrary to these stages of recovery, as it has been already exposed in previous sections of the thesis, the Irish veterans often felt unwelcome, were treated with contempt and did not receive proper attention when they returned home from the front and in the years that were to come, amid the violence and hate that was spread during the Irish War of Independence and the subsequent civil war, which differed from other cases, since according to Herman, “once the soldier has returned home, problems of safety and protection do not generally arise. Similarly in civilian disasters and ordinary crimes, the victim’s immediate family and friends usually mobilize to provide refuge and safety” (2014: 62). Instead, their return to an environment of political unrest did not provide that safe space for them, which could aggravate post-traumatic symptoms, particularly those of hyperarousal. In addition to this, the feelings that a survivor of trauma normally carries, that is, those of guilt and isolation —especially in the case of soldiers, as victims who were also perpetrators who committed violent acts— had to be undoubtedly exacerbated by a society that did not give them the recognition of having been to war and even put into question the legitimacy of their participation in the conflict under the British flag — “In coming to terms with issues of guilt, the survivor needs the help of others who are willing to recognize that a traumatic event has occurred, to suspend their preconceived judgments, and simply to bear witness to her tale. When others can listen without ascribing blame, the survivor can accept her own failure to live up to ideal standards at the moment of extremity” (Herman 2014: 68). In this respect, the situation could be comparable to the veterans of the War of Vietnam, since the responses to that conflict were so critical that they also felt ostracized — “Caught in a political conflict that should have been resolved before their lives were placed at risk, returning soldiers often felt traumatized a second time when they encountered public criticism and rejection of the war they had fought and lost” (Herman 2014: 71). Consequently, the lack of understanding on the part of different social structures prevented the soldiers from a fulfilling stage of remembrance and mourning, as evinced by the fact that their participation in the war became a taboo subject in the family that prevented the next generations from knowing.

The repercussions of denied grief have also been explored on both sociological and scientific fields, not only concerning individuals, but also collectivities. From a historical and social perspective, unresolved grief or trauma can develop into a haunting past that intrudes on, or continues to pervade, the present. This can be the result of either trying to elude trauma or of having been denied the opportunity to mourn, and has been widely acknowledged by different authors. As Ricoeur explains, “every effort ‘not to think about it anymore’ is spontaneously transformed into ‘obsessive thinking.’ [...] Hauntedness is to collective memory what hallucination is to private memory, a pathological modality of the incrustation of the past at the heart of the present” (2006: 54). Gabriele M. Schwab acknowledges that societies have always silenced violent histories as a survival mechanism, but underlines that too much silence makes a society prone to repression: “The collective or communal silencing of violent histories leads to the transgenerational transmission of trauma and the phantomatic return of the past” (2016: 120). LaCapra offers an explanation in this respect that goes back to Freud’s concepts of mourning and melancholia, which he applies to historical trauma by emphasizing the importance of public mourning —“historical losses call for mourning —and possibly for critique and transformative sociopolitical practice” (2001: 68)— as a form of working through to prevent turning “continually back into endless melancholy” (LaCapra 2001: 68); otherwise, LaCapra warns, “in acting out, the past is performatively regenerated or relieved as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription, and it hauntingly returns as the repressed” (2001: 70).

This transmission of a traumatic past through generations brings us back to Abraham and Torok's concept of *transgenerational phantom* which was already mentioned in previous sections. In order to sustain their theory, Abraham and Torok elaborate on Freud's concepts of mourning and melancholia by distinguishing between introjection and incorporation: "Incorporation denotes a fantasy, introjection a process" (1994: 125). Introjection, for them, implied the development of metaphors that allowed people to deal with loss and, as such, it related to fantasy, understood as "all those representations, beliefs, or bodily states that gravitate toward [...] the preservation of the status quo" (Abraham and Torok 1994: 125). It therefore means an unconscious modification of reality in benefit of the subject, whereas incorporation implies a failure in transforming a literal loss into a figurative one. Thus, incorporation is a refusal to mourn, an avoidance of "the painful process of reorganization" (Abraham and Torok 1994: 127) in which the loss is taken literally: "in order not to have to 'swallow' a loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing" (Abraham and Torok 1994: 126). Incorporation affects the psyche deeply because it does not recognize the loss and its meaning, the transformative effect it has in the self. As a consequence to that denial of the loss, "the words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed—everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved. Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject" (Abraham and Torok 1994: 130). Abraham and Torok, therefore, develop this metaphor of the crypt in which the loss, the trauma, is buried alive and turns into a ghost: "the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations" (1994: 130).

In addition to this, and connected to the social ostracism to which Irish veterans were condemned, Judith Butler opines that when a group is socially excluded to the point that "discourse itself effects violence through omission" (2004: 34), their lives are denied and they consequentially become specters: "If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. [...] The derealisation of the 'Other' means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral" (2004: 33-34). The metaphor of the spectre has been diversely applied and widely discussed in recent trauma theory when dealing with the idea of a haunting past. In this respect, Jacques Derrida, influenced by the works of Abraham and Torok, coined the term *hauntology* in *Specters of Marx* (1993) which was intended to establish a contrast with the concept of *ontology*. If ontology deals with the study of being, hauntology is concerned with the tensions and convergences of presence and absence, with a remaining sense of loss —of time, of space and the self— with a past that seems to be no longer alive, but neither dead: "To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time" (2006: 202). These ideas pertaining to the transgenerational transmission of trauma and the return of the repressed help explain the need, years later, on the part of Irish writers to unearth those stories through fictional narratives as a form of liberation from that historical burden, whether it was a question of public responsibility for grievable lives or of unveiling the traumatic secrets that were still affecting the social fabric of the country in order to better understand present identities and evolve from there.

In order to properly understand the social dynamics between past and present when it comes to traumatic histories, it becomes thus necessary to apply the studies of trauma developed during the twentieth century —which tended, as has been exposed above, to focus on the individual— on a collective level to social groups and nations. More recent approaches to

trauma in the humanities have indeed followed this tendency, but there has been some debate as to which point is viable to transfer individual conceptions of trauma and ways of dealing with post-traumatic symptoms to entire communities. LaCapra, for instance, was one of the scholars who defended the application of psychoanalytic concepts to social groups —“I would also maintain that it is mistaken to believe that psychoanalytic concepts apply first and foremost to individuals and not at all or only by analogy to collectivities” (2004: 73). Neal also considers trauma, whether experienced individually or collectively, to be processed similarly in consciousness, in the sense that what is needed is a meaningful reconstruction and assimilation of the event which, if denied or disregarded, reappears in such a way that disturbs the psychological state —“the conditions surrounding a trauma are played and replayed in the national consciousness in an attempt to extract some sense of coherence from a meaningless experience. When the event is dismissed from consciousness, it resurfaces in feelings of anxiety and despair” (2017: 4). What is, in any case, unquestionable is therefore the fact that trauma can affect social groups, which in turn can have effects on questions pertaining to national histories and identities, as well as to community and family bonds. The origin of trauma studies in the humanities in the 1990s was precisely focused on the Holocaust case, which was undoubtedly a collective trauma affecting a specific group of population which also gave rise to a historical shame at a national scale that was transmitted through generations and continues thus to affect the German population not only in their politics, but also in their characters and behaviors. In spite of this fact, they were later accused of relying too much on psychoanalysis and of following too individualistic approaches. It was also later vindicated that when studying collective trauma, the focus was put on its tense relation with history, that is, on how traumatic events can intercede with said discipline, as well as with social and official memory: “while other modes of trauma studies focus on how traumatic historical events complicate historiography itself, very few theorists take up the question of intersectionality or difference in relation to trauma” (Stevens 2016: 21). Even when there is still much more to be explored regarding different perspectives of trauma in order to revive trauma studies as a useful theoretical framework, collective trauma has been already addressed in the last years in terms of *historical* or *national trauma*, and also of *cultural trauma*.

Already in the 1970s, American sociologist Kai T. Erikson clearly differentiated between *individual trauma*, which for him could be defined according to the traditional definition as “a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively” (1976: 153), and *collective trauma*, which in his words entailed “a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (1976: 154). Contrary to individual trauma, collective trauma for him “works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with ‘trauma.’ But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared” (1976: 154). In this respect, it has been acknowledged that trauma entails not only a psychological dimension, but also a sociological one that needs further consideration; as Goman and Kelley defend, “both the experience and the treatment of trauma need to be approached through a social perspective because human experience [...] cannot be abstracted from social context” (2016: 83). In fact, for Neal, “an event becomes a collective trauma when it appears to threaten or seriously invalidate our usual assessments of social reality” (2017: 7). Similarly to this conception of collective trauma, *historical trauma* is defined by Goman and Kelley as the result of events that have taken place “in the midst of national transgressions, have affected a great number of people, and persist in their historical and national memory” (2016:

82). Since collective traumas entail therefore a crisis of the status quo as well as of the sense of shared identity which has enduring changes, a *national trauma*, according to Neal, does not have to do with the magnitude of the traumatic event, but rather with the fact that it produces “a cohesive effect” that invites collective reflection “on the tragedy and its consequences” (2017: 4).⁴⁰

In addition to these ideas on how trauma might achieve group dimension, Jeffrey C. Alexander, one of the main exponents of the cultural turn and also one of the precursors of *cultural trauma*, opined that in order to talk about *collective trauma*, “social crises must become cultural crises” (2017: 15). Some years before, Herrero and Baelo-Allué had already talked about the concept of *cultural trauma* and claimed the still existing void, in the twenty-first century, in its proper study and application —“there is a need to study cultural trauma and its effects, not just on specific individuals but on whole societies that have seen their sense of identity shattered by a traumatic experience” (2011: x)— and mentioned, in this respect, three important characteristics for an event or experience to become a cultural trauma which actually gathered the previously commented ideas on collective and national trauma: it affects a considerable number of people, it is passed through generations —“An event becomes a cultural trauma when it reaches many individuals, who preserve the memory of the event and pass it on to the next generation (2011: xiv)— and it shatters the truths of a community —“for an event or situation to acquire the dimension of trauma, it must have destabilized the structures of meaning of a collectivity” (2011: xiii). Jeffrey C. Alexander shares a similar conception of cultural trauma and especially emphasizes the persistence of its effects on the self, that is to say, the fact that trauma cannot be unmade and thus its aftermath cannot be fully overcome — “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (2017: 6)— but went far beyond that, and considered trauma itself to be a cultural product, that is, a result of cultural practices.⁴¹

The event itself is not inherently traumatic, following Alexander’s theory, but rather the feelings and implications socially attributed to it through social practices and cultural representations, as well as through its incorporation into a collective sense of identity —“Events are one thing; representations of these events are quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (2017: 15). It is evidently necessary, in this respect, to keep in mind that institutions in power —“power structures and [...] the contingent skills of reflexive social agents” (Alexander 2017: 15)— exert a great influence in this sociocultural process which is “the result of an exercise of human agency, of the successful imposition of a new system of cultural classification” (Alexander 2017: 15). This “cultural construction of trauma” is, in Alexander’s view, “a claim to some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution”

⁴⁰ Arthur G. Neal differentiated, at a national scale, between acute crises —which are abrupt— and chronic crises, which are long-lasting and grow “out of enduring conflicts within a social system and the emergence of a crisis of authority” (2017: 8); paradigmatic cases of national traumas in the US would be, for Neal, the Great Depression and the Vietnam War.

⁴¹ Other scholars agreed with the understanding of trauma as a cultural object that not only was constructed by society, but also had a direct influence on it, so they are fed back. Trauma implies a series of configurations and representations that then help guide not only the political or social course of action, but also the national character: “*trauma* is not simply a concept that describes particularly overwhelming events, [...] it is a cultural object whose function produces particular types of subjects, and predisposes specific affect flows that it then manages and ultimately shunts into political projects of various types. *Trauma does not describe, trauma makes*” (Stevens 2016: 20).

(2017: 16). It is consequently fundamental to identify the workings of trauma and their influence in the construction of history and in the development of socio-political practices of a country in order to understand the current state of affairs. Alexander therefore concludes that cultural trauma is an object of study that can be scientifically defined and analysed, so that it provides understanding of the past, but also sheds light on the present, inviting active responses of political and social responsibility:

Cultural trauma is first of all an empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and causal relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions. But this new scientific concept also illuminates an emerging domain of social responsibility and political action. It is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but “take on board” some significant responsibility for it. (2004: 1)

Even though it has been exposed above that trauma might lead to isolation and to states of mind in which the individual can feel disconnected from reality, thus losing the sense of belonging to a group, when trauma affects a whole group or nation, it can also foster social connections by creating a sense of community and shared identity, for those who lived the same experience might be able to understand each other and to develop feelings of camaraderie and protection towards the other members. In Kai Erikson’s words, “trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can. There is a spiritual kinship there, a sense of identity, even when feelings of affection are deadened and the ability to care numbed” (1995: 186). Thus, as Erikson himself concludes, “trauma has both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. It draws one away from the center of group space while at the same time drawing one back” (1995: 186). LaCapra also recognized there were tensions affecting history, memory and identity that could either create continuities and social cohesion or discontinuities and ruptures —“History, memory, and identity may be marked by both a desire for unification or integration and by processes of decentering, pluralisation, and splitting” (2016: 391)— and found that trauma played a part in those processes: “Traumatic experience has dimensions that may threaten or even shatter identity and may not be ‘captured’ by history, recorded in written archives, or contained by conscious recall. Yet it may paradoxically become the center or vortex-like hole of identity-formation, especially in the founding or foundational trauma” (2016: 391). For LaCapra, a *founding trauma* is that which “paradoxically becomes the basis for collective or personal identity, or both” (2001: 80).⁴²

In this respect, Irwin-Zarecka recognizes the existence of *communities of memory* that were precisely created by experiencing the same events and by subsequently sharing the memories of those, and one of the most powerful experiences that help create this sense of community is that of trauma, since “it is often the victims of traumas who most immediately and most ‘naturally’ bond together” (1994: 50). In addition to this, and correlating with ideas on cultural trauma, according to Irwin-Zarecka, “it is the meaning given to the event, rather than the event itself which may create a community of memory” (1994: 49), but she considers that “a community of memory cannot be artificially created by imposing an ‘objectively’ traumatic meaning on events” (1994: 49). The sociocultural process that makes an event a traumatic experience demands, first of all, the community outreach when it comes to the recognition of

⁴² In this regard, using LaCapra’s term, Costello-Sullivan characterizes the Famine as a “founding trauma” for the Irish society, one that contributed to the “silences endemic in Irish society” (2018: 11).

the experience —“it is through a transition from unspoken bonding to outspoken [...] activity that the community of memory acquires public resonance” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 51); the establishment and ritualization of practices of commemoration and remembrance —“bonds between people, formed in shared experience, demand renewing through the telling” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 88); and the translations of those shared memories into stories with cultural meaning through the creation of myths and legends —“Such accounts provide ingredients for the creation of a sense of moral unity among any given group of people and permit linking personal lives with historical circumstances” (Neal 2017: 20). Second of all, it is also fundamental to rely on previous senses of belonging and ideological convictions: “It is as if suffering itself survives as a visceral memory, while its explanation, still deeply felt, is more a result of ideological work, the work of framing remembrance in categories of victim/oppressor” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 60). In Ireland, the Easter Rising leaders were turned into symbols of martyrdom, which allowed for the recognition of the event as part of a collective sacrifice that sustained the republican discourse. The Irish Free State clearly benefited or imposed this type of narrative that helped consolidate a community of memory on a national scale, but it did not artificially create it: the shared trauma of the colonial experience had already established a national consciousness of suffering and resistance. Irish collective identity, thus, could naturally rest on a narrative of victimization.

Also in connection with these ideas, Ricoeur considered that identities could be affected by different external factors —what he termed the *fragility of identity*— concluding that one of the most salient conditioners was “the heritage of founding violence”, which was common to all communities, since the origins of every identity group usually relate to war and conquest; therefore, according to Ricoeur, “what we celebrate under the heading of founding events are, essentially, violent acts legitimated after the fact by a precarious state of right [...]. The same events are thus found to signify glory for some, humiliation for others. [...] It is in this way that real and symbolic wounds are stored in the archives of collective memory” (2006: 82). In fact, it is not only through traumatic experiences that communities might establish a sense of a common past and identity, but also through moments of triumph which can exhibit national glory and pride —“referring to a past as a collective triumph or a collective trauma transcends the contingent relationships between individual persons and forges them into a collective identity” (Giesen 2004: 113).⁴³ In effect, there is no country whose history is not constructed based on both traumas and triumphs, as Bernhard Giesen observes: “Collective identity is never exclusively triumphant or traumatic; it is never based only on an imagined homogeneity of insiders or only by the excluded otherness of outsider; it is never driven only by Eros or only by Thanatos —it is always both” (2004: 114). Nevertheless, in some communities, for instance, those with a colonial past of imperial oppression such as Ireland, the weight of trauma preponderates in their building of a national identity, whereas in others such as the United Kingdom, national character was very much forged by the glory of the British Empire; in Linda Hutcheon’s words, “where many nations’ identities have been grounded in remembered moments of heroism and glory, a postcolonial nation would be defined [...] by its relation to the lived and recollected trauma of empire and by its reactions to that” (2003: 20). In addition, and correlating with Giesen’s view, in any nation there might be different communities coexisting that do not share the same victories and defeats, but rather keep opposing histories,

⁴³ In this respect, integrating a narrative of triumph entails a similar process to that of integrating narratives of trauma in which ritualization and mythification play essential roles: “The utmost intensity of the triumph is beyond communication in the very moment when it occurs [...]. Even those members of the community who did not participate in the event itself can recall it by ritual celebrations and mythical stories. These myths represent the unique founding moment by familiar patterns and turn the unspeakable experience into a story that can be communicated” (Giesen 2004: 113).

as in Ireland's case, and whereas ones exert the role of victors, others do so of victims. After all, individual and communal identity is always defined in opposition to the Other: "the self-definition as a victim clearly marks the boundary between 'us' and 'them' in ways only matched by ties of kinship" (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 60).

In Ireland, narratives of trauma and triumph have revolved around colonial practices already since what came to be known, by the victors, as the Williamite War (1688-91), when Catholics who supported the dismissed Stuart King James II lost to Protestants who fought for King William III of Orange. This event, in the words of Beiner, "cemented two competing traditions of memory, one based in celebration of triumph and the other in lamenting defeat. Their impact would prove to be long lasting and would ultimately influence the ways in which both nationalist and unionist communities chose to commemorate the historical events of 1916" (2007: 371). Even though it also incorporated a memory of trauma and there was never an absolute correspondence between unionism and Protestantism, on the one hand, and nationalism and Catholicism on the other, the "unionist loyalist memory" essentially became "a triumphalist celebration of a Protestant elite asserting its [...] domination over a largely Catholic population" (Beiner 2007: 372). In contrast to this, the Jacobites mythologized the event in terms of a religious struggle for freedom which not only legitimated their cause —"a flourishing Irish language literary tradition elevated King James and his heirs to the messianic role of deliverers destined, with the support of foreign military aid, to liberate the downtrodden" (Beiner 2007: 374)— but also offered hope to the resilient and laid the foundations of Irish nationalism: "its interpretation of defeat in the past as entailing a millenarian promise of future victory served as a foundation for a modern nationalist memory" (Beiner 2007: 374). Thus, according to Beiner, "in its origins, the memory of defeat was inherently subaltern and positioned itself in opposition to the Ascendancy public sculpture that adorned a culture of imperial unionist commemoration" (2007: 376), proving that different historical situations of domination and oppression result in narratives that are either stronger based on triumph or on trauma, respectively, which then constitute different collective identities.

This tendency was later reinforced in two Irish nationalist rebellions: the Irish Rebellion of 1798, which was suppressed by British forces and led to the Acts of Union of 1800, after which "memories of grievances in the popular press began elevating the vanquished United Irish leaders into heroic martyrs" (Beiner 2007: 374); and the following Irish Rebellion of 1803, where the leader of the insurrection, Robert Emmet, claimed: "When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written" (qtd. in Beiner 2007: 375). Evidently, the Easter Rising in 1916 "marked the zenith of the nationalist republican tradition of 'triumph of defeat.'" (Beiner 2007: 377). Such tradition, that is to say, the correlation with the previous rebellions is made evident by Patrick Pearse's reference to Robert Emmet: "he argued [...] that Emmet's rising was 'not a failure, but a triumph for that deathless thing we call Irish Nationality'" (Beiner 2007: 377). Similarly to how the republicans saw a memory of glorious resistance in an unsuccessful revolt, the unionists commemorated the performance of the Ulster Division in the Somme, which ended in defeat, in terms of triumph, following the tendencies that have characterized both sectarian groups; as Beiner remarks, "though it was at best a 'glorious defeat,' the performance of the Ulster Division at the Somme would be described by contemporaries as 'one of the greatest victories of the war'" (2007: 381).⁴⁴ Beiner specifies, in this respect, one relevant difference: "unionist sacrifice, as opposed to republican martyrdom, was not invested in an intangible future destiny but was presented as

⁴⁴ Notwithstanding, and in correlation with Giesen's observations, Beiner points out that "both nationalist republican Catholic and unionist loyalist Protestant memories engage with triumphalism and trauma so that distinct characterizations of these traditions may prove misleading" (2007: 384-85).

a concrete political debt that would be redeemed from Britain” (2007: 385). The significance and the memory of the Great War was therefore translated into different codes to fit in two different traditions, so that whereas it could be integrated by Irish unionists as part of a narrative of joint triumphalism, it was seen as an alien victory with Irish losses by the nationalists. In addition, views on the war continued to be conditioned by Irish socio-political circumstances and by the perpetuation of the two main ethno-national Irish identities that were created by imperial practices and that continue to be in confrontation today.

The memory of the Great War in Ireland was to a great extent impaired by the fact that Ireland’s colonial past continued to be an impediment to achieve peace through the most part of the twentieth century, firstly for the struggle for independence and, after partition, for the aspiration of the reunification of Ireland. Justin Dolan Stover considers therefore that “the Easter Rising, and the War of Independence it inspired, supplanted the Great War as nationalist Ireland’s chosen trauma” (2017: 120). This was particularly endorsed through the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), because of the physical and mental strain caused by the guerrilla warfare, together with the extreme violence exerted by the Black and Tans.⁴⁵ Most of the recruited constables that formed such group were unemployed British ex-soldiers from the Great War, including among them a small number of Irish. Many were thus traumatized subjects mentally unstable and brutalized, who consequently committed cruel acts against Irish civilians —“Women, children and families were particularly vulnerable and experienced raids, searches, sexual advances and violence with unpredictable frequency” (Stover 2017: 126). During the war, Irish republicans and civilians were constantly exposed to violence and thus also became traumatized victims, both directly and vicariously, a fact that, according to Stover, “contradict[s] certain contemporary claims that guerrilla warfare, raids and reprisals and imprisonment did not break ‘the nerves of any men in Ireland’ or their supporters” (2017: 124). Moreover, their own perpetration of violence also contributed to the alteration of their mental stability —“committing acts of violence [...] resulted in anxiety, shock and brutalization” (Stover 2017: 124-25). Subsequently, “these psychological by-products, both personally suffered and collectively observed, aided in the entrenchment of the war of independence as Ireland’s chosen trauma” (Stover 2017: 124-25), regardless of the fact that, as Stover also pertinently remarks, members of the other side and their families equally endured the tension of the war and the pressure exerted by the IRA paramilitaries —“victimhood was not exclusive to IRA and its supporters”, since “the families of British soldiers, the RIC, loyalists and others considered to be ‘disloyal’ to the Irish republic [...] received visits from members of the IRA” (Stover 2017: 127). Therefore, even though, according to Mark Suzman, “between 1920-21 the Republicans killed some 525 people, and wounded more than 1000” (1999: 138), “public sentiment steadily hardened against the British as the general populace chafed under the restrictions of martial law, mass arrests and atrocities committed by government forces” (1999: 138-39). Thus the victimization of the republicans, who became after all the victors of the war, superseded that of the defeated.

Following the Irish War of Independence, the confrontation between the two main national identities of the island was exacerbated, firstly by the need of the recently constituted Irish Free State to detach itself from the British, which prompted the imposition of a unique national identity —“National unity may be a pure fiction, but when is violently disrupted, as in civil war, it becomes an abiding ideal towards which the imagination constantly reaches” (Cole 2009: 28)— and secondly by the fact that Irish nationalists felt a sense of incompleteness due to the

⁴⁵ The Black and Tans were a reinforcement group of approximately 10,000 men that became part of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) during the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). Their pseudonym derives from the colours of their uniforms, which were partly dark green for the RIC and partly khaki for the British Army.

fact that the north continued to be part of the United Kingdom. The creation of Northern Ireland was firstly conceived as a provisional measure to the problem of establishing an independent Ireland, since many counties from the north were composed of a unionist majority. The Anglo-Irish Treaty that put an end to the Irish War of Independence in 1921 gave thus Northern Ireland the power to opt out of the formation of the Irish Free State, a right they chose to exercise. The partition of Ireland was not, however, unanimously accepted, and consequently exacerbated the conflict between Irish unionists and nationalists, resulting in the Irish Civil War. From that moment onwards, the border between the Irish State and Northern Ireland became one of the main focus of tensions and violence in the island, not only through the war period, but also through the Troubles, and thus achieved, according to Kathy Hayward, “significance of its own” (2021: 62).

Even though what came to be referred to as an internal “ethno-national” division had been historically present during Ireland’s belonging to the British Empire, since the British Protestants had traditionally stood in opposition to the Catholic Irish —“The exclusion of Roman Catholics from voting, from membership of both houses of parliament and from state offices (and the monarchy which still remains), which lasted until 1829, was a clear indication that they constituted an Other” (Robbins 2008: 244)— the new border exacerbated those differences once again; in Hayward’s words, “as the Irish state became ‘more Irish’, so those outside its jurisdiction became *ipso facto* less so. [...]the more trenchantly Ireland was identified as Gaelic, Catholic and rural, so almost by default, Northern Ireland was seen as a land of the planter, Protestant and industrialised. The casual use of such indiscriminate markers [...] gave the new political boundary the status of an ‘ethnic’ divide.” (2021: 63).⁴⁶ Thus, Northern Irish constructed their own identity as a new distinct territory opposing themselves to the Irish Other beyond the border, even if real identities and ideologies were much more complex and blurred —“Nationality, ethnicity, religion and class were in reality infinitely more complicated, in both entities, than might be assumed from such bold categorisations” (Robbins 2008: 247). This fits in with Homi Bhabha’s theory that cultural meaning is produced when confronting difference —“It is in the emergence of the interstices —the overlap and displacement of domains of difference— that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (1994: 2).

In this vein, within Northern Ireland, whose population has never been uniformly defined as either Protestant or Unionist, that clear distinction between two opposing ethno-national identities was endorsed by politics and social practices of segregation —“residential segregation has been maintained, particularly in working class areas, through public housing policies, through the demarcation of space using memorials, murals, flags, and parades, and a largely segregated school system” (Bryan and Gillespie 2021: 110). Throughout the twentieth century, cultural practices in Northern Ireland have differed and competed against each other

⁴⁶ In spite of the fact that the Republic of Ireland initially identified with the Catholic and rural in contraposition with the British and the Anglican Ascendancy, who were associated as Protestant and urban, Ireland’s entrance in the European Union, its openness to international market and exposition to flows of migration, indicate an embrace of cosmopolitanism, not to mention its own history as a country itself marked by exile and the fact that Irish nationalists have frequently looked for foreign sympathy and examples of resistance. Interestingly in this respect, Santanu Das sees the connection of former colonies’ nationalism to cosmopolitanism as a way of escaping the traditional stereotypes attributed by the Empire which usually characterized the colonized as primitive, as well as of starting cross-colonial conversations: “If, in the context of European nation-states, cosmopolitanism and nationalism are usually regarded as oppositional —the latter aligned with imperial aggression and parochialism— the relation between the two is very different in the context of former colonial states. Nationalism, in the Indian context, was often fuelled by ‘cosmopolitan sympathies’, with the Irish cause or with Soviet Bolshevism. Cosmopolitanism in this version provides the ethical ground on which ‘zones of conversation’ outside the imperial axis and between different cultural, linguistic and political communities develop in the pursuit of shared interests and perceived good. [...] In this narrative, ‘anti-colonial cosmopolitanism’ becomes one of the most important features of colonial modernity, binding together transnational groups (both white and non-white) and feeding into the process of decolonization” (2018: 244-45).

—“the landscape of Northern Ireland [...] is littered with points of symbolic demarcations just as the annual calendar is full of days of remembering, commemoration, and celebration that mark difference and help imagine the delineation of ethnic groups in space and time” (Bryan and Gillespie 2021: 113)— so that two different political identities within the same nation were created, helping perpetuate the traditional associations of Irish nationalism with Catholicism, on one hand, and unionism with Protestantism, on the other. These tensions have also been materialized in the symbolic use of colours in kerbstones —“kerbstones are painted red, white and blue or green, white and orange to signal loyalist and nationalist allegiance respectively” (Donnan and Wilson 2001: 76)— in the hanging of flags and banners in the streets, and in the paintings of the widely known Northern Ireland’s murals. In fact, according to O’Keeffe, “the graffitied wall can now be understood not as landscape-situated responses (of compliance, of resistance) to authority that is articulated in the landscape, but as acts of landscape-construction and so of identity-formation in their own right” (2007: 4). It is therefore reasonable to affirm that the inhabitants of those places around the border are the ones who actually ended up delineating the national frontier, as Donnan and Wilson also conclude: “The people of the Irish border have their own means of marking their local, regional and national boundaries” (2001: 75).

Nevertheless, with the implications —previously mentioned in the above section— of Ireland’s entrance in the European Union, which entailed a shared space for dialogue and negotiation with the United Kingdom, and the subsequent Irish peace process of the 1990s, this traditional binary started to fade. Ireland has since then undergone a process of internationalization and rapid economic growth, which came to be known as the Celtic Tiger —“the Irish economy, home to the European headquarters of many of the major multinational IT and pharmaceutical corporations, became the poster child for globalization” (O’Toole 2019: 66-67)— as well as of reconciliation with past conflicts that necessarily entailed a negotiation of identities: “Things that nation-states do not like —ambiguity, contingency, multiplicity— would have to be lived with and perhaps even embraced” (O’Toole 2019: 67). As a result of this conciliatory process, the territorial claim over Northern Ireland was withdrawn from the constitution of Ireland in 1998 and substituted for “a stated desire ‘in harmony and friendship, to unite all the people who share the territory of the island of Ireland, in all the diversity of their identities and traditions’. Those plurals resonate: Irish nationalism rests itself now on notions of shared space and of multiple identities” (O’Toole 2019: 67).

As opposed to Ireland’s progress, it has been widely suggested that the ultimate force behind Brexit was the rising of an English nationalism that evinced an improper integration of the constituent nations of the United Kingdom. In fact, Fintan O’Toole draws a parallel between Churchill’s discourse in 1922, in the context of the Partition of Ireland, and those that revolved around Brexit: in both cases, the Irish Question has been treated as an external factor, and the Irish have been constantly referred to as *they* in opposition to *us*, the English (2019: 60-61). This proves that the UK had not gone through the process of recognizing the existence of plural national identities in its land. In addition to this, O’Toole specifically takes Ireland’s example as a territory that went from imposing a unified national identity after achieving independence —which entailed a cultural revival that sought to enhance their old, Celtic roots— to including a multi-layered sense of national character and history, in order to establish a parallelism with the contemporary situation of the British: “Since recent history is always full of compromises, complexities and contradictions, they seek out a version of the past that is not history but myth. Irish nationalism did this for well over a century: for English nationalism’s June 2016, there is Irish nationalism’s Easter 1916” (2019: 64). Thus, similarly to how Irish nationalism justified itself through the suffering and oppression perpetrated by the British Empire, now English

nationalists have depicted themselves as colonized subjects of the European Union: “The history of the last 45 years of EU membership is reshaped as a nightmare that is not so much to be awoken from as to be transformed into a masochistic fantasy of an intolerable oppression” (O’Toole 2019: 65).

The outcomes of Ireland’s membership to the European Union, however, are widely acknowledged and appreciated, since it allowed the country to prosper to the point of becoming one of the main powers of the continent —“In Ireland, the pooling of sovereignty and economic integration that went along with EU membership were felt to be facts that allowed a small, geographically peripheral country to access opportunities for growth” (Lawless 2021: 175). Hence the fact that a party who had previously opposed the EU, as was the Sinn Féin, changed their attitude towards Ireland’s membership with the turn of the century. This tendency to see the European membership in positive light was reflected in the Brexit referendum in 2016: the majority of Catholics voted remain and even though the Protestant and unionist part of the population was more politically divided, fewer of them ended up supporting Leave. Thus, “overall, 56 percent of the electorate voted to remain, making Northern Ireland, together with Scotland, the two Remain strongholds in the UK” (Laffan 2018: 572).

Thus, and taken Northern Ireland’s vote into account, the withdrawal from the EU has been highly controversial and involved different implications, mainly that it has, according to Carine Berberi, “deprive[d] the British and Irish governments of the EU as a neutral space where they could collaborate” (2017: 9), and also consequently raised concern for the fulfilment of the Good Friday Agreement, particularly around the issue of the border, due to the lack of proper measures and agreements to prevent a hard border. As a result, the process of Brexit triggered the resumption of tensions on the border, affecting both Ireland and Northern Ireland by reviving once again the political divisions between Irish nationalists and unionists. According to Brigid Laffan, in effect, “the conflict between the two communities in Northern Ireland was not resolved by the GFA”, it simply allowed for its transformation “into a non-violent conflict, an uneasy peace” (2018: 568), but the UK referendum served as “a reminder to the two communities in Northern Ireland that they were deeply divided on core political issues” (2018: 572). Immediately after the leave vote, the Sinn Féin called for a Border poll but, in spite of the fact that more Northern Irish people voted remain, Colin Coulter and Peter Shirlow are quite sceptical of the fact that the poll could lead to Ireland’s unification. They consider that, even despite the increase in the number of Catholics in Northern Ireland, which has now surpassed the population of Protestants, the former are more politically divided when it comes to claiming an unification, whereas the latter are more homogeneous when it comes to endorsing the union (2021: 212-13). In addition to this, they highlight the emergence of a younger generation that, growing up in a post-Troubles era, no longer identifies with either of the two traditional ethno-national identities in conflict —“In 2019, 39% of people described themselves as neither unionist nor nationalist” (Bryan and Gillespie 2021: 117)— and consequently they either choose electoral alternatives aside from the unionist and nationalist traditional distinction, or abstain from voting as a result of the discontent against a system that perpetuates and benefits the old binaries (2021: 217-18). Thus, this *generation of neither* is progressively transforming the political landscape of Northern Ireland, proving that identities are subjected to political shifts and therefore need to be constantly negotiated.

Therefore, the establishment and development of the Republic of Ireland during the twentieth century was burdened and conditioned by its traumatic past as a colony, which irrevocably transformed Irish identities and ideological associations, as evinced by the renewal of confrontations fostered by the Brexit process. Precisely in the light of these ideas, many scholars have insisted on considering Ireland a postcolonial nation and thus on the need to

conduct Irish studies following the theoretical perspective of postcolonial theory. The need, on the part of the Irish Free State, to disassociate itself from the British, which led to a lack of recognition of some histories and identities that also constituted part of the nation—in David Lloyd’s words, “the formation of identity requires the negation of other possible forms of existing” (1993: 4)— can be seen as a denial of the traumatic truth, that is, of the workings of trauma on the self which are necessarily transformative, and so it is, according to Leela Gandhi, symptomatic of postcolonial nations:

The emergence of anti-colonial and ‘independent’ nation-States after colonialism is frequently accompanied by a desire to forget the colonial past. This “will-to-forget” takes a number of historical forms, and is impelled by a variety of cultural and political motivations. Principally, postcolonial amnesia is symptomatic of the urge for historical self-invention or the need to make a new start—to erase painful memories of colonial subordination. As it happens, histories, much as families, cannot be freely chosen by a simple act of will, and newly emergent postcolonial nation-States are often deluded and unsuccessful in their attempts to disown the burdens of their colonial inheritance. The mere repression of colonial memories is never, in itself, tantamount to a surpassing of or emancipation from the uncomfortable realities of the colonial encounter. (1998: 4)

As a consequence of repression, the past constantly returns to haunt and destabilize the Irish society, forcing new revisions and configurations of Irishness; according to Lloyd, “doubtless only a culture similarly deracinated could pose the question of identity with such insistence as it has been posed historically in Ireland” (1993: 3). As Christine van Boheemen-Saaf explains, “separated from an original mooring, a postcolonial subject can only mourn the gap that divides himself or herself from the possibility of interiority and self-presence that might have been had history been different” (1999: 2). In line with these ideas, “*postcoloniality* is defined as that condition in which colonized peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical subjects” (Boehmer 1995: 3). Alexander has provided, in this respect, an interesting reflection on the negotiations and reconstructions of collective identity fostered by traumatic pasts, in particular, on the importance of consolidating a new sense of self through sociocultural practices for the wellbeing and future of the community:

Insofar as traumas are so experienced, and thus imagined and represented, the collective identity will become significantly revised. This identity revision means that there will be a searching re-remembering of the collective past, for memory is not only social and fluid but deeply connected to the contemporary sense of the self. Identities are continuously constructed and secured not only by facing the present and future but also by reconstructing the collectivity’s earlier life. Once the collective identity has been so reconstructed, there will eventually emerge a period of “calming down.” The spiral of signification flattens out, affect and emotion become less inflamed, preoccupation with sacrality and pollution fades. Charisma becomes routinized, effervescence evaporates, and liminality gives way to reaggregation. As the heightened and powerfully affecting discourse of trauma disappears, the ‘lessons’ of the trauma become objectified in monuments, museums, and collections of historical artifacts. The new collective identity will be rooted in sacred places and structured in ritual routines. (2004: 22-23)

Ireland seemed to have achieved that moment of coming to terms with its past after entering a process of internationalization, commemoration and peace, when old wounds seemed to be unearthed and overcome, and identities negotiated and reconstituted. In fact, Lloyd, while drawing the attention to the memorials of the Irish Famine that were held at the end of the twentieth century, observed that “for many, the commemoration was seen as a means precisely to overcome certain ‘melancholic’ fixations and seemingly obsessive repetitions in Irish culture, from alcoholism and domestic abuse to political violence itself” under the premise that “if we could leave our dead and their suffering behind and overcome our melancholy, we could at last shake off the burden of the past and enter modernity as fully formed subjects” (2000: 221).⁴⁷ Notwithstanding, the foundational trauma on which Irish republicanism and nationalism was constructed, together with the fact that the whole island of Ireland never achieved the independence to which nationalists aspired, seem to remain strong impediments in the surpassing of old tensions. Not only more radical nationalists are still reluctant to acknowledge Northern Ireland’s will to be part of the United Kingdom, but also the identities around a border that was artificially imposed continue to be quite heterogeneous, even when younger generations might seem more detached from traditional political binarism.

In light of all this, it cannot be denied that Ireland, though a particular case among other colonial nations due to its ambiguity as both exponent and subaltern of the British Empire, has to be considered a postcolonial nation. As already argued in the first chapter of this dissertation, different strategies of imperial domination were used to justify the settlement and government of Ireland, among them, the imposition of the question of *race* in the nineteenth century to establish a clear separation between the white colonizers and the *natives*, to whom they referred as inferior and primitive: “The usefulness of the concept of race in both establishing the innate superiority of imperial culture as it approached its zenith and, at the same time, lumping together the ‘inferior’ races under its control, can be seen in the example of English commentary on the ‘races’ of Britain itself —particularly the Irish” (Ashcroft et al. 2013: 221-22).⁴⁸ Some scholars consider that Ireland was a colony in the first instance, but also that the lines have blurred since the union of crowns in 1801, for the Irish have taken part in the British Empire administration and Army. It has been more debated and controversial to address Northern Ireland in postcolonial terms, as Marisol Morales Ladrón has observed, since Northern Ireland continues to be part of the United Kingdom and is undoubtedly a hybrid space.⁴⁹ Nevertheless,

⁴⁷ In this respect, Geraldine Moane has commented on the high levels of alcohol consumption and drug abuse among the cultural pathologies of the legacies of colonialism in Ireland, which have only recently been recognized: “The view that the Irish are not exceptional in our alcohol use has finally been discredited by recent comprehensive national research which shows that they are among the highest consumers of alcohol in Europe, and that Irish students are among the highest consumers of drugs in Europe” (2002: 117-18).

⁴⁸ In this regard, Ashcroft et al. have compiled exemplary cases: “Edmund Spenser refers to the ‘bestial Irishmen’, while William Camden in 1610 recounted the profanity, cannibalism, musicality, witchcraft, violence, incest and gluttony of the ‘wilde and very uncivill’ Irish. In this description the Irish sound remarkably like Africans as described by nineteenth-century English commentators. Indeed, by 1885, John Beddoe, president of the Anthropological Institute, had developed an ‘index of Nigrescence’ that showed the people of Wales, Scotland, Cornwall and Ireland to be racially separate from the British” (2013: 222) and so he argued that they were immigrants from Africa based on physical traits.

⁴⁹ According to Morales Ladrón, “emplear el concepto de postcolonial en la realidad norirlandesa es todavía más problemático porque Irlanda del Norte sigue manteniendo lazos políticos y sociales con el Reino Unido. Mientras unos insisten en buscar los orígenes de los conocidos *Troubles* en las diferentes formas de colonización que sufrió Irlanda del Norte a lo largo de su historia —desde la plantación del Ulster hasta la Gran Hambruna, pasando por la imposición de la lengua, cuestiones de identidad nacional o la apropiación de la tierra—, otros siguen sin aceptar que esta región haya vivido —o, menos aún, siga viviendo— una experiencia colonial. En cualquiera de los casos, [...] las cuestiones de identidad resultan especialmente resbaladizas cuando se intentan aplicar a la realidad norirlandesa, donde ni los protestantes más afines al Reino Unido son considerados británicos por éstos, ni los católicos del Norte son percibidos como irlandeses —sin el necesario prefijo ‘nor’— por los nacionalistas. Es decir, Irlanda del Norte es el resultado de la intersección entre dos culturas, religiones y políticas, que la convierten en un espacio identitario híbrido, acogedor tanto de ‘lo británico’ como de ‘lo irlandés’ a la vez que insensible a las

Ireland's fight for independence served as an example to other colonies worldwide —“its resistance struggle was in certain other colonies taken as talismanic by nationalist movements” (Boehmer 1995: 4)— especially in the case of India; as stated by Elleke Boehmer, “Irish strategies of both parliamentary pressure and armed insurrection were investigated by Indian nationalists [...]. Writers too felt the pull of Irish contact. [...] Tagore endorsed W. B. Yeats's call for writers to go back to legends and myths” (1995: 114).

In this vein, Isabel Carrera has defended the relevance of postcolonial theory for Irish studies. In the definition of the term “postcolonial”, Carrera encompasses four important questions —periodization, aesthetic practices, reading practices and political interventions based on a desire of social transformation— concluding that Ireland meets all these four requirements: “En todas estas variantes de su definición han coincidido los estudios postcoloniales con los irlandeses” (2007: 5). Carrera also acknowledges the productivity of applying postcolonial theory when dealing with Irish literature, regardless of the fact that it was not unanimously accepted, to the point of becoming one of the dominant theories in Irish studies: “la Teoría postcolonial ha sido utilizada muy eficazmente por una amplia lista de expertos en Estudios irlandeses, y lo que es más importante, [...] estos han contribuido a ampliar los horizontes de la Teoría postcolonial y a definir mejor sus aplicaciones y sus análisis” (2007: 7). As proof of the relevance of postcolonial studies, Carrera mentions the publication of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Literature* as an effort of *decolonizing* Irish literary studies, which had always been included within British literature and thus overshadowed by English works: “Se trata, en suma, de un plan de territorialización de la literatura irlandesa, históricamente fagocitada por la ‘literatura inglesa’, un meditado paso de redefinición cultural o ‘descolonización de la mente’” (2007: 8).

All in all, Ireland's past has been undoubtedly marked by trauma with an origin in colonization and therefore, in order to understand its sociopolitical dynamics, it is necessary to examine the Irish case from an intersectional perspective that can encompass both trauma and postcolonial theory. In this respect, it is required a theory of collective trauma able to trace the connections between a community's history and their traumatized condition. As stated by Lloyd, “in the case of colonialism, the relation to the past is strictly not a relation to one's own past but to a social history and its material and institutional effects and in no simple way a matter of internal psychic dynamics” (2000: 216). Lloyd considered the transition from the dimension of the individual, that is, the psychological, to a social level could be theorized based on ideological connections between the two; thence, their correspondence must be seen “as a constitutive element of the common sense of domination” (2000: 216). Postcolonialism, therefore, as accurately defined by Gandhi, “can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past” (1998: 4).

Added to the critique on trauma theory being too focused on the individual instead of on whole communities, trauma studies have also been recently accused of following a universalizing Eurocentric perspective. Freud's theory on trauma entailed a universalizing perspective founded on birth trauma, and delved into the idea, in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), that Jewish people carried on a collective sense of trauma and guilt, transmitted through generations, out of the murder of Moses, failing to acknowledge different manifestations of trauma not only regarding individuals, but also socio-historical conditions. In this respect, LaCapra has made a clear distinction between *structural trauma*, to which everyone is subject —“One may argue that structural trauma is related to (even correlated with) transhistorical

definiciones delimitadoras que suponen estos términos. Es por ello que los estudios postcoloniales sobre la realidad norirlandesa han sido escasos” (2007: xx-xxi).

absence (absence of/at the origin) and appears in different ways in all societies and all lives” (2001: 76-77)— and *historical trauma*, which is “specific”, so “not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it” (LaCapra 2001: 78), and in which “the distinction between victims, perpetrators, and bystanders is crucial” (LaCapra 2001: 79). Postcolonial theory in particular has made a fair contribution to the vindication of the role of specific contexts in the study of collective or historical trauma. Irene Visser, for instance, has criticized Freud’s “internal, abstract and ‘unsayable’ causation of trauma” to the detriment of “a historically concrete, knowable, external causation” since, in Visser’s words, “this lack of historical particularity sits uneasily with postcolonialism’s eponymous focus on historical, political and socio-economic factors in processes of colonization and decolonization” (2011: 273), which unquestionably also need to be taken into consideration as traumatic experiences, as Lloyd pertinently explains:

Trauma entails violent intrusion and a sense of utter objectification that annihilates the person as subject or agent. This is no less apt as a description of the effects and mechanisms of colonization: the overwhelming technological, military and economic power of the colonizer, the violence and programmatically excessive atrocities committed in the course of putting down resistance to intrusion, the deliberate destruction of the symbolic and practical resources of whole populations. It would seem that we can map the psychological effects of trauma on to the cultures that undergo colonization. By the same token, the after-effects of colonization for a culture could be held to be identical with those for the traumatized individual. (2000: 214)

Frantz Fanon was actually one of the first scholars to call the attention towards the collective trauma endured by the colonized and the inadequacy or lack of proper methods to treat them, even before the first exhaustive studies on trauma theory from the 1990s. As he explains in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), “colonization [...] already appeared to be a great purveyor of psychiatric hospitals. Since 1954 we have drawn the attention to French and international psychiatrists in scientific works to the difficulty of ‘curing’ a colonized subject correctly, in other words making him thoroughly fit into a social environment of the colonial type” (2004: 181-82). Fanon also mentioned, as post-traumatic effect, a fragmented or dubious sense of identity, an issue particularly important to tackle in the case of colonialism, which exerts systematic oppression and denies agency —“Because it is a systematized negation of the other, a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity, colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: ‘Who am I in reality?’” (2004: 182). In addition to this, when addressing a type of initial phase of colonization in which the colonizers seem to encounter no resistance, Fanon seems to be acknowledging a response to trauma of constriction in which the subject is rendered powerless and can only opt for surrendering, which then entails further manifestations of trauma that need to be taken into consideration as a direct consequence of colonial practices: “When colonization remains unchallenged by armed resistance, when the sum of harmful stimulants exceeds a certain threshold, the colonized’s defences collapse, and many of them end up in psychiatric institutions. In the calm of this period of triumphant colonization, a constant and considerable stream of mental symptoms are direct sequels of this oppression” (2004: 182).

Fanon’s vindications from the perspective of postcolonial studies were actually motivated by the social awareness that spread after the Second World War, which, likewise, gave rise to the ethical turn. According to Michael Rothberg, the period of remembrance that came after the Holocaust, which coincided or, more accurately, “emerged in dialogue” (2009: 7) with the

rising of nationalism in the colonies and the process of decolonization, invited further reflection on other genocides and racial violence —“The period between 1945 and 1962 contains both the rise of consciousness of the Holocaust as an unprecedented form of modern genocide and the coming to national consciousness and political independence of many of the subjects of European colonialism” (2009: 7). In Rothberg’s view, it was precisely as a response to the understanding of the Nazi genocide that “intellectuals interested in indigenous, minority, and colonial histories challenged the uniqueness of the Holocaust and fostered research into other histories of extreme violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide” (2009: 8). In addition to this, as seen by Dave Boothroyd, later in the century, with the reinterpretation and reapplication in the contemporary political-economic situation, on the part of postmodernism, of the death of God previously proclaimed by Nietzsche, “ethics has resurfaced as a watchword in contemporary critical studies of almost everything” (2013: 1). Thus, Boothroyd considers the ethical turn to have taken place at the 1990s, affecting different fields of study since that moment onwards: “Over the last twenty years [...] we have witnessed an ‘ethical turn’ in the theorising of culture, society and politics, as well as of the arts and creative enterprise, which has coincided with and drawn upon the full diversity of postmodern theory” (2013: 1).

Accompanying that increase of social responsibility and reparations for the past, with the beginning of the twenty-first century new terms emerged attempting to give a name that could better represent the unique experience of trauma in a colonial context, not only on the part of academic studies, but also on the part of politics and institutions motivated by a sense of justice. Tāriana Tūria, for instance, former Labour Party Member of Parliament and associate minister of health in New Zealand claimed in August 2000 that Māori suffered from *post-colonial traumatic stress disorder*. Psychologists Lisa B. Spanierman and V. Paul Poteat have pointed to the need of distinguishing between specific aggressions against particular individuals, which in their view correlate more with the notion of trauma as it has been critically understood —“Racist incidents are most easily comparable with the established notion of trauma when they are overt and distinct events experienced directly by an individual” (2005: 517)— and systemic ways of oppression that contribute to prolonged collective traumatization: “complicating the inclusion of institutional and cultural racist incidents is the comparison of race-based trauma to forms of trauma that are enacted at the individual level. [...] Racial and ethnic minorities can directly experience trauma from racist incidents occurring at the institutional and cultural levels” (2005: 517-18). Thus, in their article, they suggested the more inclusive concept of *oppression-based trauma* so as to broaden our understanding of the different levels at which trauma might operate: “We propose that a general category of oppression-based trauma be formed and eventually incorporated into the *DSM-IV-TR* to encapsulate these more specific forms of trauma (e.g., race-based trauma, heterosexism-based trauma, and ability-based trauma)” (Spanierman and Poteat 2005: 518).

In light of this increased awareness, recent studies on psychiatry and psychology are presently engaged in exploring non-Eurocentric perspectives, demonstrating some previous knowledge to be biased for being Western-focused and lacking successful applications and results in other cultures and experiences. Psychiatrist Derek Summerfield has brought to the fore that there are different ways of understanding and practicing the discipline, and the Western way is only one of them, though it has been the most exported and imposed: “There are many true descriptions of the world and what might be called psychological knowledge is the product of a particular culture at a particular point in its history. Western psychiatry is merely one among many ethnomedical systems” (2004: 237). On this basis, the problem, according to Summerfield, lies in the failure to recognize other differing cultural codes and meanings: “The fallacy is the assumption that because phenomena can be identified in differing social settings,

they mean the same thing in those settings. The histories of terms like ‘depression’ or ‘posttraumatic stress disorder’, and the particular meanings and responses they mobilize in contemporary Western culture, are simply not straightforwardly reproduced elsewhere” (2004: 238). Due to this lack of equivalent terminology in other cultures for questions pertaining to depression, trauma or guilt, Summerfield therefore concludes that “depression or PTSD, as they stand, simply cannot be universally valid diagnostic categories” (2004: 238). Moreover, he states that this imposition of an occidental model of psychology might be seen as a neo-colonial practice: “Psychiatric universalism risks being imperialistic, reminding us of the colonial era when what was presented to indigenous peoples was that there were different types of knowledge, and theirs was second-rate. Sociocultural phenomena were framed in European terms and the responsible pursuit of traditional values was regarded as evidence of backwardness” (2004: 238). In addition to this, social-oriented cultures present different ideas of individuality and of the value or characteristics attributed to the self that differ from individual conceptions of trauma and its process of healing: “In many cultures the harmony of the family or group matters more than the autonomy of the individual, who is not conceived of as a free-standing unit. Indeed, many African languages have no word for the self” (Summerfield 2004: 239).

In the fields of literature and sociology, the most exhaustive and thought-provoking vindications against the traditional model of trauma theory were firstly made in the publication of a special issue in the journal *Studies in the Novel* titled *Postcolonial Trauma Novels* in 2008, which laid the foundations for later studies on the decolonization of trauma studies. The articles compiled in said volume focus on “the intersection of trauma, narrative, and the postcolonial” by specifically addressing “colonial traumas such as dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, slavery, segregation, racism, political violence, and genocide” (Craps and Buelens 2008: 3). The editors of the issue, Stef Craps and Gert Buelens, intended to include structural violence or systemic oppression within the field of trauma studies; as they stated, “routinely ignored or dismissed in trauma research, the chronic psychic suffering produced by the structural violence of racial, gender, sexual, class, and other inequities has yet to be fully accounted for” (2008: 4). Consequently, they emphasized the need in colonial and postcolonial communities to study the question of trauma from a collective perspective: “Colonial trauma, however, is a collective experience, which means that its specificity cannot be recognized unless the object of trauma research shifts from the individual to larger social entities, such as communities or nations” (2008: 4). Furthermore, with regards to the traditional tendency towards individual manifestations of trauma, they denounced the fact that responsibility for healing was placed exclusively in the hands of the subject, impeding political and social responsibility on the matter; as they noted, “the psychologization of social suffering encourages the idea that recovery from the traumas of colonialism is basically a matter of the individual witness gaining linguistic control over his or her pain” (Craps and Buelens 2008: 4). In this respect, literary scholars Herrero and Baelo-Allué have also insisted on the importance of studying the effects of trauma collectively, since the “focus on an individual/psychological perspective may pose the danger of separating facts from their causes, thus blurring the importance of the historical and social context, which is particularly relevant in postcolonial trauma narratives” (2011: xi). By the same token, Visser has also stated that Caruth’s understanding of trauma, which was highly influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis, was “characterized by homogenizing and dehistoricizing tendencies” (2011: 274), which prevent deeper study of the causes that foster that type of trauma and thence, the assumption of responsibility for those actions. A few years later, Craps elaborates more on these question by exposing the following:

by narrowly focusing on the level of the individual psyche, one tends to leave unquestioned the conditions that enabled the traumatic abuse, such as racism, economic domination, or political oppression. Problems that are essentially political or economic are medicalized, and the people affected by them are pathologized as victims without agency, sufferers from an illness that can be cured through psychological counselling. The failure to situate these problems in their larger historical context can thus lead to psychological recovery being privileged over the transformation of a wounding political, social, or economic system. Insofar as it negates the need for taking collective action towards systemic change, the hegemonic trauma discourse can be seen to serve as a political palliative to the socially disempowered” (2014: 50)

After the publication of the issue of *Postcolonial Trauma Novels* in 2008, therefore, Stef Craps continued developing his ideas on how to adapt trauma theory to postcolonial contexts, as evinced by the publication of his book *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2013), where he traces a clear connection between the emergence of trauma studies in the 1990s and the ethical turn that was also taking place at that moment: “Amid accusations that literary scholarship, particularly in its deconstructive, poststructuralist, or textualist guise, had become indifferent or oblivious to ‘what goes on in the real world’ [...], trauma theory confidently announced itself as an essential apparatus for understanding ‘the real world’ and even as a potential means for changing it for the better” (2013: 1). On the other hand, Craps criticizes the failure of trauma theory to do so, “to live up to this promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement” (2013: 2), which he demonstrates by grouping its faults on four different aspects:

They fail on at least four counts: they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas. (Craps 2013: 2)

It is therefore evident that the representation of minorities aside from occidental realities was not properly included in the baseline for the development of trauma studies. The psychological studies above mentioned have proven the first two counts, that is to say, both the fact of disregarding their experiences while studying the concept of trauma, and the attempt to impose Western practices and cultural constructions as universal. In this respect, a significant problem that some scholars have observed in trauma theory was the characterization of the person who has endured a traumatic experience as a victim, in a sense that renders the subject powerless and passive. Traditional studies have taken the vulnerability of the traumatized into consideration, and how the relations of the individual to both other human beings and the environment are affected by trauma; as defined by Herman, “psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force” (2014: 33). Postcolonial views on the matter have however tried to include responses of resistance and resilience among the possible reactions to trauma. Roger Luckhurst has called the attention towards the fact that if trauma theory only admitted a helpless response to shock and violence, other positive reactions of resistance and adaptation could be mistakenly understood as post-traumatic symptoms: “With this default, signs of resilience could even could even be pathologized: simply enduring mourning in an undemonstrative way, for instance, can be seen to be suffering from ‘absent grief’” (2008: 210). In this regard, Visser has

also emphasized the western inability to recognize the importance of spirituality in ritualized communities for the improvement and restoration of traumatic aftereffects —“The western trauma model does not acknowledge spirituality as a reference point; indeed, its deconstructivist mode denies the possibility of regeneration through ritual and belief systems” (2011: 279). Thus, Lloyd argues that “a non-therapeutic relation to the past, structured around the notion of survival or living on rather than recovery, is what should guide our critique of modernity and ground a different mode of historicization” (2000: 219-20).

Another issue that postcolonial scholars found worthy of revision, and which has also been pointed out by Craps, has to do with what was established as the normative aesthetic representation of trauma, which was also defined from a Eurocentric point of view. The aesthetics of trauma was mostly defined around narratives of the Great War and thence it was highly influenced by Modernism, which was the ongoing literary movement at the time. This, together with the fact that trauma usually impedes consistent recollection and narration, resulted in a definition that was based on unrepresentability and aporia, that is, on “various modes of disjunction, as of style, tense and focalization” (Visser 2011: 277) through the use of elusion, ellipsis, fragmentation and interruptions, as well as of compulsive repetitions, for soldiers and authors who tried to verbalize their experiences found themselves without words that could do justice or actually managed to account for what they had been through. As Craps explained, “trauma theorists often justify their focus on anti-narrative, fragmented, modernist forms by pointing to similarities with the psychic experience of trauma. An experience that exceeds the possibility of narrative knowledge, so the logic goes, will best be represented by a failure of narrative” (2014: 50).⁵⁰ This conviction was reflected in Theodor Adorno’s well-known statement: “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today” (1988: 34). Part of the decolonization of trauma studies entails, therefore, to contextualize narratives and other cultural manifestations of trauma according to their writing traditions and conventions, so that different ways of representation of violence, oppression and working through can be explored; in the words of Craps, “trauma theory should take account of the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received, and be open and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance that these contexts invite or necessitate” (2013: 5).

In addition to this, the fact that internal psychic split has always been defined in negative terms, conceived as a non-desirable and problematic issue was also criticized. In the words of Stock, “the shared emphasis on the reintegration of a consciousness fragmented by an unassimilable event assumes the pre-existence of a state of perceived psychic unity that ‘healing’ aims to restore, and [...] there is no real sense in which psychological division might be conceived of as a healthy or desirable foundation for the formation of identity” (2007: 74-75). Contrary to this idea of returning to an idyllic state of the self, in accordance with the experiences in postcolonial societies, it seems the most necessary and productive for a postcolonial subject to learn how to live with that fragmented, ambiguous and forever altered identity, instead of ignoring historical transformation and be consumed by a sense of absence or loss of a previously integrated self that might not have existed as such; thence the obligation of the postcolonial scholar, according to Gandhi, of assisting “the subjects of postcoloniality to live with the gaps and fissures of their condition, and thereby learn to proceed with self-understanding” (1998: 8). The objective of providing a cure for the self, on the part of Western conceptions of trauma, denotes once again that lack of sensitivity towards other cultural ways

⁵⁰ According to Michelle Balaev, “the traditional Lacanian approach only works if the psychological definition of trauma conforms to a particular theoretical recipe that draws from Freud to portray traumatic experience as a pre-linguistic event that universally causes dissociation” (2014: 2).

of constructing identity and community. As Claire Stocks brings out, “unable to conceive of multiple or divided identity as anything other than a symptom that must be cured, trauma theory [...] implicitly reinforces ethically weighted distinctions between ‘good’ Western, healthy conceptions of self and ‘bad’ pathological, fragmented ‘others’” (2007: 77). In this sense, a positive valorization of plural identities actually goes in line with Ireland’s negotiation of the sense of Irishness during the peace process, as opposed to Britain’s failure to accept multiplicity, which resulted in the Brexit process. In relation to these ideas, Visser has realized that the definition for the traumatic aftermath should become more comprehensive, allowing for a further exploration of the pervasive aftereffects of such a prolonged and normalized regime of oppression in which they could eventually have taken part: “Trauma theory would need to be expanded to enable interrogations of the complex workings of trauma during colonization as well as in processes of self-construction under decolonization processes, in which complicity, guilt and agency are crucial issues” (2011: 276). In this respect, the traditional model of trauma has also been challenged, since its definition does not properly comprehend colonial trauma, which is based on a long systemic oppression, rather than on a single identifiable event: “the ‘sudden’ or unexpected aspect of trauma is not the prolonged, cumulative hurt of long years of repression that constitutes the trauma of colonialism, with its repeated and cumulative stressor events” (Andermahr 2015: 9).

In this sense, there could be some debate regarding the application of LaCapra’s abovementioned concepts of *structural* and *historical trauma* in postcolonial contexts, where the lines between both seem to blur. LaCapra associates historical trauma to the idea of loss, which derives from historical events and thus can be worked through, and structural trauma to absence, which might impede said process: “Historical losses call for mourning —and possibly for critique and transformative socio-political practice. When absence, approximated to loss, becomes the object of mourning, the mourning may (perhaps must) become impossible and turn continually back into endless melancholy” (1999: 715). For LaCapra, therefore, whereas “traumatizing events in historical trauma can be determined”, “structural trauma (like absence) is not an event but an anxiety-producing condition of possibility related to the potential for historical traumatization” (2001: 82), and as such, being related to “a gap in existence”, absence “may not be cured but only lived with” as “a condition of possibility of historicity” (2001: 84). Ireland’s case in particular seems to share some similitudes with *structural trauma*, since not only, as it has been discussed, the effects of colonialism still permeate the current Irish society, but also Irish nationalists in the twentieth century and more radical nationalists of the present seem to hold on to the ideal of a united Ireland with an homogeneous, indisputable sense of identity that was lost with British colonization, but which might have never existed in the first instance; as LaCapra stated, “in terms of absence, one may recognize that one cannot lose what one never had” (1999: 701). Absence implied for him “the absence of an absolute that should not itself be absolutized and fetishized such that it becomes an object of fixation and absorbs, mystifies, or downgrades the significance of particular historical losses” (1999: 702).⁵¹ In Craps’s view, nevertheless, neither of LaCapra’s concepts of loss and absence can fit properly into a context of racism such as that of colonization, and thus they do not do justice to the “cumulative trauma suffered by victims of racism or other forms of structural oppression” (2013: 4). As Craps explains, “unlike structural trauma, racism is historically specific; yet, unlike historical trauma, it is not related to a particular event, with a before and an after.

⁵¹ The difficulty in those cases, according to LaCapra, lies in the conversion of absence into loss, “notably through the notion of a fall from a putative state of grace, at-homeness, unity, or community” (2001: 77), which makes one assume that there could have been “some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity which others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made ‘us’ lose” (1999: 707).

Understanding racism as a historical trauma, which can be worked through, would be to obscure the fact that it continues to cause damage in the present” (2013: 32). It seems therefore to be the case that trauma theory has failed to provide the necessary tools to deal with colonial and postcolonial realities.

In an article of the special issue of *Studies in the Novel*, Michael Rothberg, without undermining the work of *Postcolonial Trauma Novels*, had already brought to the fore the contradictory claims that the volume presented: “on the one hand, to force trauma studies to fulfill its aspirations for cross-cultural understanding; on the other hand, to question whether trauma provides the best framework for thinking about the legacies of violence in the colonized/postcolonial world” (2008: 226). For Rothberg, the main challenge regarding trauma theory might lie in finding a proper balance between universal and particular applications and thus he suggests a multidirectional model of collective memory:

Theory demands a certain level of generalization and a certain level of homogeneity. Since, as I have noted, an inverse tendency toward over-homogenization also afflicts contemporary approaches when they treat the dominant ‘West,’ the difficult part becomes knowing when and how to draw the line. In negotiating these difficult traps, postcolonial trauma studies [...] can seek to pursue an approach between homogenizing universalism and nominalist particularism. My own approach focuses on the multidirectionality of collective memory, but other theorists of comparison use ‘incommensurability’ or ‘translation’ to describe such an in-between space. (2008: 229-30)

Rothberg’s understanding of what he terms *multidirectional memory* is that which surpasses the idea of competing memories, and one that is instead “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing: as productive and not privative”, enabling us thus, for instance, to see and use “the presence of widespread Holocaust consciousness as a platform to articulate a vision of American racism past and present” (2009: 3). In this vein, in the introduction of the book *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism* (2014), Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant and Robert Eaglestone claim that trauma theory might not exactly be a field or methodology, but rather “a coming together of concerns and disciplines. The work done in it is usually profoundly interdisciplinary, drawing on literary and cultural studies, history, politics, sociology, psychology and philosophy” (Buelens et al. 2014: 3). Thence, their conclusion that “it is precisely because it is a point of intersection, of turbulence, that ‘trauma’ is such a powerful force” (Buelens et al. 2014: 1).

In relation to this, since the publication of the special issue in *Studies in the Novel*, further research on the matter was prompted with the intention of expanding the intersections between trauma and other branches of knowledge. As a paradigmatic example, in a special issue of the journal *Humanities* titled *Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism* (2015), the focus was put on creating “a decolonized trauma theory that attends to and accounts for the suffering of minority groups and non-Western cultures” (Andermahr 2015: 1). In the introduction, Sonya Andermahr, while acknowledging that there is still a long way to go in the decolonization of trauma studies —“there is an urgent need to decolonize trauma studies by recognizing the globalized contexts of traumatic events, the specific forms traumatic suffering takes, and the myriad ways in which it is represented in literary works” (2015: 2)— emphasizes that during the last years, “work in comparative literature and memory studies has contributed significantly to the process” (2015: 2). In this respect, the book *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (2014), edited by Michelle Balaev, attempts at presenting a “pluralistic model of trauma”, which “moves away from the focus on trauma as unrepresentable and toward

a focus on the specificity of trauma that locates meaning through a greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience” (Balaev 2014: 3). Balaev defends the work that has been done from different areas of expertise to challenge the idea that the traumatic past remains ineffable and unclaimed, signaling, among the critical approaches, “psychological, linguistic, and social mechanisms” (2014: 4), and concludes that this multidisciplinary framework with a focus on specific contexts “may function to acknowledge the impact of suffering on individuals and communities, to consider the role of literature in a violent world, or to analyze the ways language conveys extreme experiences” (2014: 4), thus fostering further knowledge on the visibility and representability of trauma through the use of language.

The articles and chapters presented in these recently published volumes critically engage with the literary analysis of trauma by using new perspectives and methodologies. Said works, which enlarge the narrowness of traditional trauma theory by taking into consideration different and non-Eurocentric cultural contexts, prove that literature is an excellent tool or mediator to understand the dynamics and intersections of history, memory, trauma and national identity. Therefore, the reexamination and expansion of trauma studies, mostly done from the perspective of postcolonial theory, has been necessary to give them a new validity and place in contemporary research, and, in turn, has prompted further investigation on manifestations of psychological and cultural types of trauma and on the aftermath and long-lasting effects thereof, as well as on discussions on commemoration and different modes of representation through the analysis of literature beyond the Western canon. Regardless of the discrepancies in the ways of working through trauma depending on the sociopolitical context and those involved, either individuals or communities, the narratives written by survivors and also retrospectively by descendants, that is, including both auto-biographical and fictional works, invite reflection and assimilation of the past, while simultaneously serving as a catharsis or liberation from its burden.

2.4 UNEARTHING THE PAST: COMING TO TERMS THROUGH LITERATURE

Great attention has been always devoted to the idea of verbalizing trauma as a way of coping with the demons of the past, of releasing feelings of guilt and shame and comprehending and accepting the reality of extraordinary and disruptive events. If trauma is repressed and subsequently persistently returns as a haunting phenomenon, the exercise of writing or of somehow translating those flashbacks into other artistic manifestations allows for new ways of expression of facts that resist interpretation and for the reconstruction of the fragmented pieces of memory. According to Catherine Gilbert, writings addressing the past can take a plurality of forms: “not just novels and poems and histories and the words engraved onto monuments, but names scratched on pebbles, brass words set into the ground, graffiti sprayed onto walls, witness-statements submitted to law-courts” (2000: 13). This rich variety actually evinces the desire or compulsion to tell, which goes in line with traditional trauma theory and psychoanalysis; in Cathy Caruth’s words, trauma “is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (1996: 4). Freud already resorts to literature to explore how trauma is experienced and represented for others to understand; in this respect, according to Caruth, “if Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (1996: 3). Also LaCapra acknowledged the fact that “certain forms of literature or art, as well as the type of discourse or theory which emulates its object, may provide a more expansive space (in psychological terms, a *relatively* safe haven) for exploring modalities of responding to trauma, including the role of affect” (2001: 185). Thus, literature can offer the tools and resources to tell uncomfortable facts

in different degrees of explicitness or directness, so that they can be exposed and transmitted, as well as the production of meaning or a sense of truth from the traumatic experiences that allows for personal reconstitution and emotional reconnection.

In this vein, it was established that the ability of a victim to narrate the events, and subsequently the so-called “talking cure”, was an important step in the path to recovery, since it involved assimilation or integration of the experience into your own cognitive frameworks and conceptions; as van der Kolk and van der Hart have exposed, “traumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language” (1995: 176). The explanation supporting this need of narrativity was based on the fact that, if trauma manages to disrupt one’s reality and linguistic capacities on a recurring manner, affected subjects need to take back control of their memories by recovering the power to tell their own story, so that they can move on from that. As psychiatrist Dori Laub has explained, “the survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive. [...] There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to tell and thus to come to know one’s story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. One has to know one’s buried truth in order to be able to live one’s life” (1995: 63). In this sense, constructing a narrative is an active process that enforces temporal continuity and a sense of stability; as Susan J. Brison states, “it is an act on the part of the narrator, a speech act that defuses traumatic memory, giving shape and a temporal order to the events recalled, establishing more control over their recalling, and helping the survivor to remake a self” (1999: 40).⁵² Otherwise, in Laub’s view, “the ‘not telling’ of the story serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny. The events become more and more distorted in their silent retention and pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor’s daily life” (1995: 64), leading to melancholia. In fact, Kate McLoughlin finds that the same dynamic operates in war narratives, which are not merely prompted by a promulgation of peace and justice: “Seldom stated, though nonetheless espoused, is the thought that writing about war brings about peace. [...] More realistic is the thought that writing about war somehow controls it: imposing at least verbal order on the chaos makes it seem more comprehensible” (2009: 18-19).⁵³

For a trauma narrative to provide solace, according to Herman, it needs to follow a series of steps which can actually be applied to literary analysis. First of all, some context previous to the event is required for the understanding of the impact and the meaning of trauma for a person or a community —“Reconstructing of the trauma story begins with a review of the patient’s life before the trauma and the circumstances that led up to the event” (Herman 2014: 176). In this respect, also Kalí Tal considers that “survivors can make sense of their sufferings by creating a historical context” (1996: 125). What should follow is a detailed account of the experience of trauma, in Herman’s words, “as recitation of fact”, including how it affected the victim and those around him —“The narrative includes not only the event itself but also the survivor’s response to it and the responses of the important people in her life” (Herman 2014: 177)— and, importantly, a fair description of the emotions and bodily sensations associated with the trauma

⁵² Catharine Savage Brosman has also stated, in this respect, that “in fiction, the linear movement of plot [...] and of prose itself, and the unavoidable interpretation of material that comes from selection and shaping, create a fictional rationality that tends to overcome formlessness and thus seems to ratify experience” (1992: 86). Also in this vein, specifically with respect to shell shock novels, Trevor Dodman asserted that “shell shock novels offer [...] construction in the wake of destruction” (2015: 5).

⁵³ In connection with these ideas of taking control of the distorted memories by providing narrative congruity, on a collective level, also new understandings emerge out of the writing of trauma. As Stevens exposes, in general terms, “our conventional understandings of trauma promise to bring the overwhelming, the numinous, the maddening, and the ruining under control and into management by providing a narrative of/for understanding” (2016: 30).

in question, since “the recitation of facts without the accompanying emotions is a sterile exercise, without therapeutic effect” (Herman 2014: 177). This exercise implies “reliving those feelings in the present” (Herman 2014: 177-78) so that, eventually, meaning is extracted from the process: “Reconstructing the trauma story also includes a systematic review of the meaning of the event, both to the patient and to the important people in her life” (Herman 2014: 178). Geoffrey Hartman agrees that the power of imagination, through talking, listening or reading, activates somatic sensations that eventually unveil memories: “Perhaps the only way to overcome a traumatic severance of body and mind is to come back to mind through the body” (1995: 541).

Notwithstanding, the idea that such verbalization conducts to healing has been put into question on several occasions, as there seems to be a fine line between speaking out and falling deeper into trauma, since sometimes excessive commemoration and remembrance might impose a fixation with the traumatic past.⁵⁴ Furthermore, people also react differently to traumatic situations and find their own paths to recovery. Jay Winter acknowledges this fact — “It is unclear to what extent such narration has helped individuals bear the burdens of their past; healing is a mystery” (2010: 19)— while also manifesting that there might be not only individual reasons but also a collective or social motivation behind the desire to give an account of what was painfully endured: “They do so at times for the benefit of their children and grandchildren, and at times to add their words to the campaign against denial. By speaking out, they lose some of the passivity of victimhood; by defining themselves, they set aside the story inflicted on them years ago” (Winter 2010: 19). The idea of reclaiming a past that was denied or silenced also becomes an imposing force to tell —one that might even “create openings in existence that did not exist before” (LaCapra 2004: 122)— together with the fact that being able to transmit some knowledge or truth from the experience gives the survivor a purpose and endows him with a sense of power: “repossessing one’s life story through giving testimony is itself a form of action, of change, which one has to actually pass through, in order to continue and complete the process of survival after liberation” (Laub 1995: 70). Laub brings to the fore the idea that narration, for the sake of giving testimony, facilitates the mourning process and the regaining of control over the situation even if full recovery or repairs are unattainable, while speaking out against concerns regarding stagnation and fixation with loss:

The testimony [...] cannot bring back the dead, undo the horror, or reestablish the safety, the authenticity and the harmony of what was home. But neither does it succumb to death, nostalgia, memorializing, ongoing repetitious embattlements with the past, or flight to superficiality or to the seductive temptation of the illusion of substitutions. It is a dialogical process of exploration and reconciliation of two worlds —the one that was brutally destroyed and the one that is— that are different and will always remain so. The testimony is inherently a process of facing loss —of going through the pain of the act of witnessing, and of the ending of the act of witnessing [...]. It re-enacts the passage through difference in such a way, however, that it allows perhaps a certain repossession of it. (1995: 73-74)

In connection with this idea of establishing dialogue and negotiating pre- and post-traumatic realities and conditions, Aleida Assmann explains the act of verbalizing an experience in terms

⁵⁴ Despite possible disagreements, Susan J. Brison concludes that narratives are undoubtedly helpful, even if they are not always enough: “This is not to say that narrating one’s memories of trauma is always therapeutic, not that it is, by itself, sufficient for recovery from trauma. But that such narratives contribute significantly to such recovery is currently accepted as uncontroversial in the field of the psychology of trauma” (1999: 40).

of a translation from private to public memory, so that it becomes democratised, that is, opened up to discussion: “Once verbalized, the individual’s memories are fused with the inter-subjective symbolic system of language and are, strictly speaking, no longer a purely exclusive and unalienable property. By encoding them in the common medium of language, they can be exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected, disputed” (2010: 36).⁵⁵ Talking about or writing down memories has to be seen thus as a way of accessing traumatic history, according to Hutcheon: “The original trauma becomes transformed into a narrative memory that permits the past to be put into words and communicated. In this way, it can be integrated into, first, one’s own and, then, others’ knowledge of the past” (2003: 22). Such knowledge of the past can be obtained or extracted precisely through the production of meaning that narration entails. In this sense, LaCapra sees writing trauma as a “signifying practice” that permits “‘giving voice’ to the past” (2001: 186), but also as a means “to work through posttraumatic symptoms in the present in a manner that opens possible futures” (LaCapra 2004: 121-22). In this regard, also Caruth saw the survivor’s impulse to tell as part of a life drive which fosters narrative possibilities and future change: “In the life drive, then, life itself and the language of creativity, begin as an act that bears witness to the past [...]. The language of the life drive does not simply point backwards, that is, but bears witness to the past by pointing to the future” (2014: 25).

Ironically, despite all these views on the therapeutic benefits of narration, it was simultaneously affirmed, in accordance with traditional trauma theory, that trauma was impossible to represent, that it was an unspeakable experience; LaCapra treats this contradiction in terms of a “paradox” or “double bind” —“The approach to trauma, including its rendering in narrative, has long been accompanied by a paradox or double bind: the traumatic experience is unspeakable yet calls for endless speech” (2013: 54). Traditional representations of trauma have thus usually revolved around responses of alexithymia; this is particularly the case when it comes to contemporary war literature from the Great War onwards, since, to the question of how chaos should be organized, “modernism and postmodernism solved the problem by writing chaos into the structure of fiction” (Brosman 1992: 91). Due to the magnitude of the conflict both concerning its global scale and the use therein of new technological resources for combat and machinery with high destructive power —“Never before had a conflict involved so many different nations from all over the world and introduced so many new technologies of combat. The Great War inaugurated aerial and chemical warfare with the development of new military technology such as flame throwers, explosive shells, mustard gas, tanks, fighter planes and zeppelins” (Sánchez-Palencia 2019)— the First World War gave as a result an unprecedented dimension and attention to trauma: “the first modern world-scale conflict thus opened up an entirely new dimension of suffering to both victims and witnesses” (Sánchez-Palencia 2019). Thence, according to Santanu Das and Kate McLoughlin, Great War literature ended up defining the forms, structures and literary devices of the genre as well as influencing the way that following wars were understood and integrated into collective imagination: “The literature of the trenches would come not just to define ‘war literature’ [...] but to form the terrain of First World War memory which, in turn, would provide the template for the cultural understanding of subsequent wars” (2018: 5).

Immediately after the conflict, the conclusion that was reached regarding war accounts can be summarized in Henry James’s popular phrase: “The war has used up words; they have weakened, they have deteriorated like motor-car tires.” It was believed that the magnitude of the war was impossible to describe or comprehend, and any attempts to do so could be seen as

⁵⁵ In this respect, also Vickroy stated: “Through careful attention and absorption of testimony, listeners —and I would extend this to readers of trauma literature as well— can participate in the process of translating traumatic experience and can take part in a process of reevaluation” (2002: 22).

a lack of respect towards the victims, since there was this belief that, if it was impossible to reflect the reality of the war, then it was subsequently impossible to do justice through language, which increased “the perception of a gulf between combatants [...] and those at home, who, from the point of view of combatants, seemed absolutely cut off from these hard realities, a situation at times to be welcomed, at others to be excoriated” (Cole 2018: 100). In this respect, Gilbert concludes that even when words seem to be insufficient, they still prove to be “a means of honouring the memory of the dead and conferring on them a semblance of dignity” (2000: 15). Modern war came to be defined in terms of the “unfathomable”, which comes from “fathom”, the unit of measurement that refers to “the length of two out-stretched arms”, that is to say, “what can be embraced” (Das and McLoughlin 2018: 12); accordingly, it “conveys the sense in which the war could not be encompassed, physically, intellectually or emotionally. Scale, complexity, intensity: all defied the processes of apprehension and assimilation” (Das and McLoughlin 2018: 12). This tendency established a pattern in subsequent manifestations of trauma, so that, as Dori Laub concludes, “there are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in *thought, memory, and speech*” (1995: 63).

Nevertheless, as pertinently pointed out by Das and McLoughlin, “there is a curious contrast between the claimed paucity of representative means and the actual superabundance of representation” (2018: 12). In light of the evidence, Paul Fussell rejected the idea that language was insufficient to narrate the experiences of war on the premise that there were plenty of accurate words to describe a reality, which, the same as language, is also created by human beings:

Logically there is no reason why the English language could not perfectly well render the actuality of trench warfare: it is rich in terms like *blood, terror, agony, madness, shit, cruelty, murder, sell-out, pain and hoax*, as well as phrases like *legs blown off, intestines gushing out over his hands, screaming all night, bleeding to death from the rectum*, and the like. Logically, one supposes, there’s no reason why a language devised by man should be inadequate to describe any of man’s works. The difficulty was in admitting that the war had been made by men and was being continued *ad infinitum* by them. The problem was less one of “language” than of gentility and optimism; it was less a problem of “linguistics” than of rhetoric. [...] The real reason is that soldiers have discovered that no one is very interested in the bad news they have to report. What listener wants to be torn and shaken when he doesn’t have to be? We have made *unspeakable* mean indescribable: it really means *nasty*. (2013: 184)

Kalí Tal, reflecting on Fussell’s argument, considered the problem to be more complex, since for her it is a question of how the experience transforms the signification of words, adding new understandings and contexts: “Words such as *blood, terror, agony* and *madness* gain new meaning, within the context of trauma, and survivors emerge from the traumatic environment with a new set of definitions. On the surface, language appears unchanged [...] and the dislocation of meaning is invisible” (1996: 16). Thus, authors’ aim consists precisely of learning how to put into words as accurately as possible the situation which was endured, so that a glimpse of understanding can be obtained from the text: “authors have to undergo a process of language re-construction so as try to narrow (but never completely eliminate) the gap between the experience and the representation of conflict” (Sánchez-Palencia 2019). Therefore in this sense, according to Hayden White, narrative can be the solution to “the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form

assimilable to structures of meaning” (1980: 5). In this precisely lies the challenge of grasping the knowledge of trauma, which seems to be inherently contradictory, being “as close to nescience as to knowledge” (Hartman 1995: 537): there is the event itself, which “seems to have bypassed perception and consciousness, and falls directly into the psyche” and then its memory, “in the form of a perpetual troping of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche. On the level of poetics, literal and figurative may correspond to these two types of cognition” (Hartman 1995: 537). In fact, for Hartman, it is precisely “the disjunction between experiencing (phenomenal or empirical) and understanding (thoughtful naming, in which words replace things, or their images) [...] what figurative language expresses and explores” (1995: 540).⁵⁶

All in all, it becomes fundamental to achieve a negotiation between two opposing forces, between the impulse to tell and to repress, for which purpose literary techniques are highly productive; as Anne Goarzin has contended, “the wound, which cannot be apprehended directly by the victims of historical or institutionalized violence in the contemporary era, sometimes finds its expression in poetry, drama or fiction” (2011). For instance, narrative “enables one to recount events and perhaps to evoke experience, typically through nonlinear movements that allow trauma to register in language and its hesitations, indirections, pauses, and silences” (LaCapra 2004: 122). Schwab also agreed with this unique capacity of literature to deal with trauma’s resistance to order and narration: “Traumatic silences can be accessed and transformed only via detours and indirections. Literature provides such detours to look into ourselves without the dangers of a direct, invasive confrontation” (2016: 121). In this sense, Visser has affirmed that “it is the domain of literature to present, re-present, and dramatize trauma in its many manifestations without making claims to precise definitions or complete exactitude” (2015: 11-12). The refusal of putting everything into words can therefore be also seen as a valid way of translating the traumatic experience, of conveying some inherent truth about its elusive nature that provides scope for interpretation in accordance with the readers’ set of ideas and images. Moreover, following scholars such as Luckhurst, new possibilities for the production of significance might also arise out of moments of crisis: “if trauma is a crisis in representation, then this generates narrative possibility just as much as impossibility, a compulsive outpouring of attempts to formulate narrative knowledge” (2008: 83). In this vein, Barry Stampfl recognizes the unspeakable “as a trope, a certain way of speaking” and therefore as “(paradoxically) part of a universe of discourse, a form of signification” (2014: 25). Also Jay Winter, in *War Beyond Words*, considered trauma-related silences to be imbued with meaning and consequently, to be sometimes intended; thus, Winter preferred to talk about *performative nonspeech acts* —“we have to make it plain to everyone that the silence of soldiers was not indifference, callousness, or just plain forgetting. Silence is a language of remembrance; it connotes meaning. It informs a special category of remembrance all of its own (2017: 176). In this respect, Winter used “liturgical approaches to mourning” (2017: 173) as an example, such as the minutes of silence. In addition to this, he differentiated between what we termed *categorical silence* on the part of official and medical administrations, which translated into “a wilful blindness to including in the number of men disabled by war those who suffered from psychological or neurological conditions” (Winter 2017: 192-93), and *communicative silence* on the part of the victims —“those suffering from the condition and its sequelae either were unable or unwilling to speak about it” (2017: 192-93)— oftentimes on the basis of feeling judged or ashamed.

⁵⁶ In addition, there existed the moral dilemma whether turning horror into art would be interpreted as an idealization or enhancement of violence: “There is, indeed, a dialectics of war by which destruction turns to creation, terror to courage, evil to good. Aesthetically speaking, creating literature from violence is already a reversal” (Brosman 1992: 93).

Despite attempts to repress the traumatic memory, some of its knowledge or truth never goes away completely, but rather manifests in a variety of forms, “ranging from flashbacks, isolated intrusive images, nightmares, neurotic and psychotic symptomatology, transference repetitions, character styles, and pervasive life themes, to familial, political, and social attitudes” (Laub and Auerhahn 1993: 289); such are the motives frequently encountered in trauma literature. It is therefore comprehensible that to be able to process the experience and acquire some understanding and meaning out of it, some time and perspective is needed, as explained by Laub and Auerhahn: “knowing, in the sense of articulation, analysis, elaboration, and reformulation, requires the preservation of a detached sensibility, which is destroyed in situations of horror. Close to the experience, survivors are captive observers who can only repeat it. They cannot make sense of it; they cannot know it cognitively” (1993: 288). This is the reason why, as stated by Tal, “survival literature tends to appear at least a decade after the traumatic experience in question” (1996: 125). After the Great War, for example, the impulse to tell was clearly reflected in poetry, a genre which possibly allowed for a more immediate while also evasive way of tacking such a disagreeable and controversial issue; in this respect, “it was estimated that some 2,225 poets from Britain and Ireland alone wrote war poetry during or immediately after the war” (Das and McLoughlin 2018: 3). Contrary to poems, however, most narratives on the matter started to be published much later, which evinces that some distance is needed in order to properly put into words shockingly painful moments, since it makes the experience more digestible to the writer, but also to the reading public for them to be more predisposed to know and understand. According to Kalí Tal, “literature of trauma is written from the need to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it ‘real’ both to the victim and to the community. Such writing serves both as validation and cathartic vehicle for the traumatized author” (Tal 1996: 21).

Literary narratives, which aim at arising an emotional response, can indeed effectively provide visibility to community concerns, while looking for public sympathy and empathy, which benefits both the recovery of the survivors and the memory of the victims; in this sense, we must conceive literature, or art, as Hartman would say, “as at once testimony and representation” (1995: 545). Theories of literature suggest that readers tend to get emotionally involved and also to identify with the characters: “Literature has the benefit of being directly connected to people lives and offers a ready —if not always immediately accessible— portal into the theme of suffering” and it can therefore be seen, according to Douglas S. Berman, in the same way as religion, as “a catharsis-enabling vehicle able to sooth pain and provide lessons in empathy” (2019). In this regard, the act of “bearing witness to the trauma” enables the reintegration of survivors into the community by means of affection and acceptance, which in turn re-establishes “connections essential to selfhood” (Brison 1999: 39-40); as Laurie Vickroy explains, “the possibilities for healing often depend upon social interconnections, through acts of witnessing or sympathy” (2014: 137). In addition, giving testimony is part of a commemoration process that remembers and honours the victims. Thus, and following Jay Lifton’s understanding, “carrying through the witness is a way of transmuting pain and guilt into responsibility, and carrying through that responsibility has enormous therapeutic value” (2014: 12). When representing trauma, the access to suffering turns the lives of the victims into grievable lives; as Judith Butler comments, “by arousing feelings of fear and sorrow”, stories have a “humanizing effect” which not simply means “that they humanize the lives that were lost along with those that narrowly escaped, but that they stage the scene and provide the narrative means by which ‘the human’ in its grievability is established” (2004: 38).

In a collective sense, accounts of trauma allow groups in the community to give visibility to lives or events that were politically and socially repressed or distorted. That is the reason

why giving testimony can be considered transgressive or provocative in certain sociocultural contexts:

Bearing witness is an aggressive act. It is born out of a refusal to bow to outside pressure to revise or to repress experience, a decision to embrace conflict rather than conformity, to endure a lifetime of anger and pain rather than to submit to the seductive pull of revision and repression. Its goal is change. The battle over the meaning of a traumatic experience is fought in the arena of political discourse, popular culture, and scholarly debate. The outcome of this battle shapes the rhetoric of the dominant culture and influences future political action. (Tal 1996: 7)⁵⁷

Literature, or popular culture in general terms, has been therefore put in opposition to the practice of history that is oftentimes supervised by institutions in power, but as LaCapra asserts, “narrative has been rehabilitated as a way of representing the past” (1985: 118) and if it is not taken into account as such by historiography, ulterior motives for that should be properly analysed: “there is something suspect about an approach to history—and particularly to intellectual history—that does not address the novel both as an object of study and self-reflexively as a way of coming to terms with problems in modern history itself” (1985: 116). Already in the 1980s, LaCapra saw the connections between both disciplines to be highly productive and thus he rejected the study of literature as an isolated product of formal devices, in the way New Criticism did —“We seem to have arrived at an impasse that signals the need for an alternative approach to literature. Here it may be noted that the formalistic idea of a text as a self-enclosed cosmos making use of purely literary devices is not an alternative, nor is any simple combination of documentary and formalistic methods” (1985: 126). Instead, LaCapra suggests putting the focus on content, particularly on that which refers to the socio-historical circumstances;⁵⁸ the value of the novel lies, in his view, “in its referential functions—the way it serves as a window on life or developments in the past [...]—its representation of social life, its characters, its themes, and so forth. In a word, the novel is pertinent to historical research to the extent that it may be converted into useful knowledge or information” (1985: 125). To achieve an intersectional approach of literary studies and historiography, he developed a methodology that included different “contexts of interpretation” to bear in mind: “those of writing, reception, and critical reading” (1985: 127). Contexts of writing would involve, among others, the ideology of the author, sociopolitical context and literary tradition, whereas those of reception “pose the problem of how texts are read, used, and abused in different social groups, institutions, and settings” (1985: 129) such as in education, political regimes, book reviews and critical studies. Regarding critical reading, LaCapra opines that it is fundamental to observe “the way a text renders its pertinent codes and contexts” (1985: 131) through the interpretation of its ideological, critical and transformative strategies. In this sense, also following LaCapra, the difference between history and fiction would be that whereas “history makes truth claims about events, their interpretation or explanation, and, more tenuously, about experience”,

⁵⁷ Victor Turner recognized the power of narrating particular events by transforming them and giving them cultural meanings that shape the future identity of the community: “narratives abound after the event, they explain that event, extol it, ethicize it, excuse it, deprecate it, repudiate it, name it as a significant marker of collective life-experience, as a model for future behaviour. Indeed, such narratives become scripts or arguments to be used by the instigators of new sequences, and equally by those who aim to rebut them” (1988: 33).

⁵⁸ In a more recent work, LaCapra considers that in effect it might be more productive to apply a “contextual reductionism in which a literary text is a mirror image or at least a symptom of some sociohistorical or perhaps transhistorical process or structure such as capitalism, colonialism, the rise of the individual, the emergence of a distinctive if not unique form of experience or subjectivity [...]. The text thus becomes a document of the times or perhaps of transhistorical forces” (2013: 13).

fiction “does so in a more indirect but still possibly informative, thought-provoking, at times disconcerting manner with respect to the understanding or ‘reading’ of events, experience, and memory” (2004: 131-32).

When it comes to unearthing controversial truths from the past, literature might in fact be a better tool than history precisely because of its indirectness, of its bigger range of possibilities and resources, as Patricia Waugh has asserted: “literary texts articulate their time through modes of indirection, metaphor, and counterfactuality, presenting the ‘imaginary’ hinterlands of everyday rationalized history” (1995: 12). Literature goes beyond history, therefore, in the sense that it does not simply engage the reader critically, but also emotionally in the level of personal experience —“Not only the novel but the literary in general has been seen as a special site for accessing experience, especially affect or feeling [...] –what the French term *le vécu*” (LaCapra 2013: 29). This forces readers to reconsider questions pertaining to their identity as individuals and as members of a community: “Effective trauma texts engage readers in a critical process by immersing them in, and yet providing perspective on, the flawed thinking, feeling, and behavior of the traumatized individual” (Vickroy 2014: 138). In addition, from an ethical and therapeutic perspective, “there is more *listening*, more *hearing* of words within words, and a greater openness to *testimony*” (Hartman 1995: 541). Literature provides thus an entrance to new perspectives and experiences which, according to Daniel R. Schwarz, can also increase the understanding of your own sense of self: “If awareness of oneself and one’s relationship to family and community—including one’s responsibilities, commitments, and values—is part of the ethical life, then reading contributes to greater self-understanding. Reading complements our experience by enabling us to live lives beyond those we live and to experience emotions that are not ours” (2001: 10).

If these ideas are applied to communities in which different groups were confronted because they diverged in identity and ideology, literature can also provide an understanding of the other’s situation and motivation, facilitating future reconciliation. It is through the exposition of traumatic stories that these can be finally acknowledged by the community and integrated within the wider national history: “reading the ‘art of trauma’ may engage the reader in a dialogue with that trauma which might open him or her up to begin to acknowledge its hitherto repressed presence. Thus literature may help the reader to bracket formative identifications, and generate a willingness to listen to the other” (Van Boheemen-Saaf 1999: 10-11). As Donna Coates remarks, it is therefore not sufficient to share the trauma with fellow survivors, since “it is only the community that can help individual victims to assimilate and work through their personal traumas, mainly by regarding them as a quintessential part of their collective/cultural traumatic legacy” (2011: 52). The acknowledgement and integration of a common traumatic past, in turn, brings to the fore dynamics of power and of cultural trauma in a very effective way, since literature demonstrates to have a broader scope and to move away from more official or politically-intervened disciplines:⁵⁹

Knowledge of trauma offers the opportunity to unveil new perspectives concerning relationships of power and their effects, to analyze what we repress and why, and to examine our need for cultural and individual myths that block understanding. As cultural attitudes affect the ways trauma is dealt with, changing public opinion is a worthwhile endeavor. Trauma literature has these

⁵⁹ In this regard, Ibarrola-Armendáriz asserts the following: “Although it may be contented that there are more practical ways to deal with trauma—such as amnesty, establishing truth commissions and victim reparation, or bringing the violators to trail—there is little question that the representation of collective traumatic events in narrative through personal testimony has played a key role in the recovery and management of memories that would otherwise have remained silent” (2011: 16-17).

potentially persuasive effects since the basis for these narratives is historical and contemporary social realities. (Vickroy 2002: 22)

In this respect, and serving as paradigmatic examples, “the appearance of new, subaltern narratives exposing institutional crimes and the suffering they caused are among the most effective instruments to counter official distortions of the events and accelerating the healing process of the afflicted group” (Ibarrola-Armendáriz 2011: 16). This is explained by the fact that the articulation of trauma “often raises questions about whose stories, voices, and histories have been documented and whose have been marginalized or ignored” (Escudero 2011: 135), which is of particular relevance for studies on the intersections between trauma and postcolonial theory. The acknowledgement of the legacies that are remembered and those which are, in turn, overshadowed, according to Maite Escudero, allows minority groups “to transform and to intervene in the concept of hegemonic memory” (2011: 135). Thus, Visser highlights that “resistance and resilience are to be seen [...] as part of a communal process of living and working through trauma” (2014: 108). In this sense, Hilde Lindemann Nelson, starting from the basis that “identities are narratively constituted and narratively damaged, [and] they can be narratively repaired” (2001: xii), sees counterstories as “tools designed to repair the damage inflicted on identities by abusive power systems. [...] They set out to resist [...] the stories that identify certain groups of people as targets for ill treatment. Their aim is to reidentify such people as competent members of the moral community and in doing so to enable their moral agency” (2001: xiii).⁶⁰ Therefore, “counterstories are stories of self-definition” (Lindemann Nelson 2001: 15) that also manage to “redefine a past that has been [...] characterized incorrectly” (Lindemann Nelson 2001: 18), as has been the case in colonial contexts. In connection with previously discussed ideas, Visser contends that the amount of postcolonial literature that has been written evinces the fact that “trauma itself instigates a strong need for narrative in order to come to terms with the aftermath of colonial wounding” (2015: 14) and attributes this reason to the empowering effect of narrativization both at an individual and a collective level, and as “crucial to cultural survival” (2015: 14).

Trauma narratives started to proliferate precisely during the second half of the twentieth century, when a new awareness emerged concerning different forms of past oppression: “Trauma narratives [...] are personalized responses to this century’s emerging awareness of the catastrophic effects of wars, poverty, colonization, and domestic abuse on the individual psyche” (Vickroy 2002: x). Vickroy subsequently considers that writers of the second half of the twentieth century such as Marguerite Duras and Toni Morrison were consequently “committed to bringing social, historical, and psychological awareness to readers” (2002: x), prompted by an “increased public awareness of trauma and trauma theory” especially during the 1980s and 1990s (2002: 2). This awareness was made possible through the interrelated cultural contexts of “postmodernism, postcolonialism and postwar legacy or consciousness” (Whitehead 2004: 81), as well as through the boom in memory studies that was already discussed in previous sections.⁶¹ In this sense, postmodernism challenged the idea of “the unified rational subject as the bearer of history” and saw it instead “as contradictory and multi-layered” (Giroux 1993: 467). Trauma narratives thus evidenced, at that moment, the necessity

⁶⁰ Lindemann Nelson talks about “damaged identities” when “a powerful social group views the members of her own, less powerful group as unworthy of full moral respect” because a different sense of identity has been established as mandatory, which generates “expectations about how group members are to behave” (2001: xii).

⁶¹ For Whitehead, trauma fiction brings together different aspects that are of particular interest for such studies: “the recognition that representing the past raises complex ethical problems; the challenge posed to conventional narrative frameworks and epistemologies by belated temporality; the difficulty of spatially locating the past; and the hitherto unrecognized cultural diversity of historical representation” (2004: 81).

of reflecting upon the convulsive and violent times lived in the last decades which had to be yet known and assimilated in the present; in the words of Hutcheon, “postmodernism returns to confront the problematic nature of the past as an object of knowledge for us in the present” (1995: 92). Literary accounts provide, for this purpose, new understandings that prove to be necessary to come to terms with the past, since, as Das and McLoughlin asseverate, “what cannot be understood or fathomed can be neither remembered nor forgotten” (2018: 7). The same as the traumatised subject is condemned to repeat what was repressed for not being properly understood and processed, on a social scale, a community also needs to confront and accept their conflicting past to liberate themselves and their future from its burden; otherwise, “collective amnesia may thus lead to repetition of undesirable patterns of history —racism, violence— and may obliterate the creative potential of the past in shaping images for the future” (Del Río-Álvaro 2010: 4). It is for this reason that not only autobiographies were published — as Vickroy acknowledges, “testimony and testimonial literature have had a huge impact on twentieth-century culture in preserving personal recollections of collective catastrophes and have been valuable venues for politically or socially marginalized witnesses” (2002: 5)— but also fiction written by those who had no first-hand experience.

Beyond testimonial accounts, next generations of people who had experienced trauma were also concerned with the preservation of memories from their immediate past, especially when certain events had involved their forebears and affected communication in their families, as well as with finding new responses to the occurrence and its aftermath —“With time, it is the second generation which increasingly enters the community of memory while searching for its own ethical answers” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 51). This allows for a wider contextualization of the nature and impact of those traumas, together with new interpretations and ways of representation. In Jane Potter’s words, this takes part of a “process of reconstructing memory”: “Every generation revisits, both physically and through the rehashing of memory, the recording and re-recording of memory. So [...] ‘what is commemorated’ is not static” (2000: 69-70). Collecting and putting down memories becomes an imperative need when the people belonging to the generation who lived through them or had first-hand experience start to pass away: “the need to write the history of a period, a society, or even a person is only aroused when the subject is already too distant in the past to allow for the testimony of those who preserve some remembrance of it” (Halbwachs 1980: 78-79). It is, therefore, as Whitehead expresses it, “in the face of mounting amnesia”, when “there is an urgent need to consciously establish meaningful connections with the past” (2004: 82). That is definitely one of the main reasons why many fictional works of the First World War were published at the turn of the century and also around the centenary of the war, evincing the ultimate incorporation of the conflict into cultural memory.

Historical fiction plays therefore a very important role in the long-term transmission of memories as well as in their integration and signification in a community’s culture and identity. However, war literature written by nonveterans has been oftentimes discredited and disregarded by scholars as an improper object of study. In her work *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, Kalí Tal focuses on survivors’ accounts, but considers that for any event there exist *literatures* of it —therefore, there is not a *literature of the Great War*, but *literatures of the Great War*— and, accordingly, literature by authors with no first-hand experience can be judged and analyzed as any other literary genre. In this case, rather than works that offer an enlightening historical approach to particular events, these should be considered as narratives that use violent and conflicting scenarios as a means to convey a particular message: “These works are the products of the authors’ urge to tell a story, make a point, create an aesthetic experience, to move people in a particular way. Nonveteran literature is, in short, the product

of a *literary decision*. The war, to nonveteran writers, is simply a metaphor, a vehicle for their message” (1996: 116). In the case of Irish fiction of the Great War, narratives do not simply provide historical knowledge of a period that has not been commonly known by the Irish — which they undeniably do— but also the social background of an identity conflict that merges with or unveils the root of the current situation of Ireland.⁶² The problem that LaCapra found when dealing with the intersections of literature and history had to do with the question of “how a literary text comes to terms with the pressures of historical events and forces” (2013: 29). When the status quo is at risk and identities confronted, both in the past as reflected in the narrative and at the present time of writing, some resolution should be found for the sake of personal and community healing, so as to give historical fiction a sense of purpose. That is when affect comes into play, especially in the current cultural context, when the time has come for the search of meanings dismantled by Postmodernism through the reestablishment of emotional and deep connections; as asseverated by Visser, “in the fictional dynamic of plot movements, we see a tendency towards inclusion and connectivity, which is recuperative and leads to a coming of terms with trauma” (2014: 126). The literary analysis that will be developed in the following chapter precisely demonstrates the prevalence of human connections and understandings in the face of adversity and ideological confrontations.

Besides from this tendency to re-establish connections and significance, different narrative techniques and literary devices have been explored to convey trauma, and these have differed across literary traditions and cultural contexts. Trauma narratives were believed to mirror the process of trauma, reflecting post-traumatic symptoms and struggles; in Vickroy’s words, “they internalize the rhythms, processes, and uncertainties of traumatic experience within their underlying sensibilities and structures. They reveal many obstacles to communicating such experience: silence, simultaneous knowledge and denial, dissociation, resistance, and repression, among others” (2002: 3). Many scholars concluded, as was previously discussed, that narratives reflected impediments in communication through the use of epanorthosis, repetition, analepsis and ellipsis. In this respect, Valerie Shaw has noted that “to recreate symptoms of ‘alexithymia, war writers make use of rhetorical tropes such as correction (hesitation, amendment, and restatement) and delay” (2013: 17). In a very similar approach, but broadening the resources, Whitehead has identified a series of typical narrative techniques for the representation of trauma that correlate with theoretical studies on the matter: intertextuality, which for her “can suggest the surfacing to consciousness of forgotten or repressed memories” (2004: 85);⁶³ gaps and repetitions —“Repetition mimics the effects of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression” (2004: 86); fragmented narrative voice and plurality of perspectives —“The narrative voice is dispersed or fragmented so that each of the protagonists takes up the story, adding to it his or her individual perspective. The multiplicity of testimonial voices suggests that recovery is based on a community of witnesses” (2004: 88). Hartman has also contributed, in this respect, to go beyond traditional representations of trauma by stating that “expressiveness in art is more than a repetition without relief. Should it further a mental flexibility that tolerates dialogue, irony, indeterminacy, ambivalence —all such complexities of communication— if it also augments, in short, a pausal and self-reflective capability, a linkage appears between literary expression and psychic health” (Hartman 2003: 260). In relation to this, precisely in the case of

⁶² In this respect, according to Vickroy, “authentic trauma fiction has a similar potential for historical truth in its ability to convey specific lived experience as well as some critical distance” (2002: 21).

⁶³ When it comes to intertextuality, Whitehead is able to find interrelations between trauma and postcolonial fiction: “Trauma fiction overlaps with postcolonial fiction in its use of intertextuality to allow formerly silenced voices to tell their own story” (2004: 85).

postcolonial scenarios, as Vickroy asserts, “there is a sense of a doubled self, needing to recover from a traumatic history, and attempts to acknowledge or reconstruct either a repressed culture or repressed experience” (2002: 10).

Postcolonial studies have provided new approaches in recent years taking into account literary and artistic productions which came up with different ways of conveying traumatic experiences, correlating with the discussion that has been conducted on the decolonization of trauma theory. E. Ann Kaplan, in her work *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, emphasizes the work done in two documentaries to dismantle the role of the other as a victim through portrayals of resistance and solidarity:

Mainstream culture has tended to start with recognizing white crimes by situating the ‘Other’ as a victim, as if this makes up for prior vilification and degradation. Rejecting white culture because of its violence against the innocent, and ‘going native’ does not solve anything for indigenous or colonized peoples; it can also seem condescending. But the documentaries by Essie Coffey [*My Survival as an Aboriginal* (1978)] and Obomsawin [*My Name is Kahentiosta* (1995)] enact the concept of witnessing because the protagonists in the films do not ask for empathy or situate themselves as victims. Rather, these strong women are seen actively resisting suppression, actively trying to make a difference by helping their people. (2005: 120-21)

Elaborating on their studies on the decolonization of trauma, Craps and Buelens, without rejecting the aesthetics of the disruptive narrative that attempts to present the complexities of trauma, take into consideration more realistic accounts that, while trying to provide order and coherence opposing the Western tradition, also depict valid representations of traumatic stories:

In some cases, a reliance on self-reflexivity and anti-linearity is shown to be an integral part of the authors’ critique of naively redemptive accounts in which colonial trauma is easily and definitively overcome. In others, an attachment to realism and indigenous literary practices is interpreted as a deliberate eschewal of the Western discourse of unspeakability, recourse to which is seen as politically debilitating. (2008: 5)

Approaching the question of the unspeakable from a different perspective, Stampfl, while analysing Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, comes to define it as a “transitional phase between traumatic break and psychological reconstitution wherein nothing as yet has been definitively decided” (2014: 27). This phase, which must be seen as part of the trauma process and not as “its predetermined endpoint” (Stampfl 2014: 16), is therefore characterized by “a search for new conceptual moorings —new, viable ways of understanding world and self— following the destruction of the familiar assumptive world” (Stampfl 2014: 29). As a moment of transition, or liminal phase, in a state of crisis, the unspeakable contains potential for transformation. Others scholars such as Kalí Tal agree with the idea that the traumatized can be seen as a liminal subject that needs to reintegrate into society; for Tal, the way to achieve it is precisely through narration: “Expression, in the form of narration, is frequently a step on the journey towards becoming postliminal, towards rewriting the traumatic events that severed their connections to the rest of society” (1996: 122).

Also in connection with the idea of the unspeakable, an alternative model of literary trauma theory has been developed by Joshua Pederson that encompasses divergent narratives aside from the traditional model that revolved around the question of amnesia on the basis of Richard J. McNally’s science studies on trauma —“laboratory experiments, flashbulb memories, and

field research” (2003: 62)— which contended that “stress does not impair memory; it strengthens it” (2003: 62); it is rather a question of the individual’s refusal to access those memories.⁶⁴ Thus, in order for us to abandon the theory of traumatic amnesia, which is no longer accepted at an individual, psychological level, Pederson provides a series of three methods that should be taken into consideration in the analysis of trauma literature: “*First, critics seeking to engage trauma in literature should turn their focus from gaps in the text to the text itself*” (2014: 338) and thus change the focus to what is written instead of devoting too much attention on what left unsaid; “*second, trauma theorists should seek out evidence of augmented narrative detail*” (2014: 339), since trauma can enhance memory according to McNally and, in this sense, “traumatic memory is often multisensory” (2014: 339); “*third, trauma theorists should focus on depictions of experiences that are temporally, physically, or ontologically distorted*”, because according to Pederson, even though there could be alterations in memory provoked, precisely, by a “heightened memory” of the traumatic experience, these did not “change the substance of the memory but instead its affect. Time may feel as if it’s slowing down. Spaces may loom. The world may feel unreal, or the victim may slip outside his or her own body” (2014: 339). In this regard, Pederson believes contemporary literature to be one of the best means to reflect the condition of the traumatized subject: “literature —and perhaps modern literature most convincingly—is capable of capturing the effects of this condition” (2014: 340).

Irish literature of the First World War has followed similar patterns to those that have been exposed above, from first accounts written by combatants with first-hand experience who either looked for reasons to support their cause or started to denounce the horror of the trenches, to post-generations which tried to recreate the memories of family members to break the silence over a topic that had become a taboo, and finally to fictional narratives that explored different ways of working through trauma and contributed to a process of unearthing a controversial part of their past to come to terms with different senses of Irish identity. Due to the ongoing situation in Ireland when the soldiers came back from the front, literary accounts about a conflict that was seen as alien to Irish national interests were scarce in comparison to those written in other countries involved. In this vein, the literary perspective has been very frequently set in Ireland, or has been divided between the island and the continent. In fact, Keith Jeffery affirms that from the twenty Irish plays that have dealt with the Great War, the vast majority are located in the homeland: these “focus on the Easter Rising of 1916, when the Great War merely serves as a kind of distant backdrop” (2011b: 255). Jeffery has therefore provided a revision of different works that dealt with the topic of war, which only started to be properly done at the beginning of the twenty-first century. During the 1990s, many scholars did not acknowledge the existence of many literary works that have dealt with the topic of war, even if sometimes treated more tangentially. Some of the research, moreover, was only focused on finding Irish Catholic writers who not only had taken active part in the conflict, but also embedded a sense of Irishness in their works; this decision excluded other valuable narratives that also served as an excellent testimony of the sociological context of the times, as well as of people’s responses to the war. In this respect, Terence Brown comments that “apart from several poems by Thomas MacGreevy, a novel by Liam O’Flaherty, who both fought in the king’s uniform, [...] it is difficult to find any literary record by participants of Catholic nationalist background in the

⁶⁴ McNally further explains that “people who have experienced harrowingly close brushes with death (such as falling off a mountain) often report extreme dissociative alterations in consciousness (time slowing down, everything seeming unreal), yet they remain fully capable of providing detailed narrative accounts of their experiences” (2003: 182). Thus, McNally concluded that it was not possible to “tell the difference between unavailability of the memory trace and refusal to disclose the abuse” (2003: 184).

terrible struggle; Patrick MacGill [...] writes more as a poet of working-class solidarities than of Irish nationalist feeling” (1993: 230). Brown thus concludes:

It was as if the Irish had agreed collectively, if for widely differing reasons, to dismiss from consciousness their own involvement in the greatest cataclysm ever to have befallen European civilization. And the silence of the country’s writers speaks volumes. Is it not extraordinary that there are no Irish war poets (if we except Francis Ledwidge of whom more anon), few war memoirs, no goodbyes to all that? (1993: 229-30)

Brown’s reference to Robert Graves’s famous autobiographical novel about the war, *Good-Bye to All That* (1929), enforces its categorization as part of British literature, instead of Irish. Although it is true that Graves was born in England, his father, Alfred Perceval Graves, was an important Irish figure in the Gaelic revival and thus he was also interested and well-informed in Celtic and Irish mythology, not to mention that he defined himself as Irish. The extent to which some works and authors could be classified as Irish or British is therefore a subject of much debate, since the lines are frequently blurred and have usually depended upon the author’s nationality or sense of identity, as well as upon the perspective from which the conflict was tackled. Some authors considered British were of Irish descent, or had themselves migrated from Ireland to Britain, and so they either made reference in their works to national identities with a specific mention to the Irish—which would be reasons to include them in an Irish canon—or they wrote for an English or a universal audience, which could prevent them from entering said canon. Notwithstanding, there were Irish writers who also addressed the issue lacking distinctive Irish aspects that could actually put them aside from other literature of war. The only exhaustive work that has contributed to the establishment of a comprehensive canon of Irish literature of the Great War that acknowledged those different tendencies and nuances has been Terry Phillips’s *Irish Literature and the First World War: Culture, Identity and Memory*, published in 2015; as Phillips himself asserts, the literary texts included in the volume “provide evidence that one can draw out a multiplicity of different positions along the spectrum of Irishness and Britishness” (2015: 9).

Phillips first gathers the Irish who fought at the front that could be given the title of “soldier poets” and who were therefore among the most well-known Irish literary figures of that time: Willoughby Weaving, Patrick MacGill, and Francis Ledwidge. Weaving, son to an Irish family but educated at Oxford, demonstrated a strong English literary influence of the pastoral and the chivalric, and expressed some doubts in his poetry whether the sacrifice was worth the price of so much death. MacGill, the most well-known Irish writer of the war, who was given the pseudonym “the navy poet”, came from a rural Catholic background in West Donegal, and thus was not influenced by the Celtic Revival, since he did not receive formal education. He left Ireland when he was an adolescent, but still he enlisted in an Irish regiment. MacGill was also ambivalent towards the war effort and provided valuable testimony of the life at the front. Francis Ledwidge died at the front in 1917 and was, for the most part, a pastoral poet, but also wrote about the war, showing both camaraderie and affect for his fellow soldiers, as well as disenchantment with life, weariness and acceptance of death. What is most interesting about Ledwidge is that he also wrote an elegy to his friend Thomas MacDonagh—leader in the Easter Rising—showing empathy for the rebels. Later, he came to regret the fact that he could not take part in the national struggle for freedom, because he was not in Ireland at the time the Rising took place; as Phillips asserts, “Ledwidge’s own sympathies were divided” (2015: 11). He joined the British army because he considered that Ireland and Britain shared the same cause and enemy and he justified himself in a letter accordingly: “I joined the British Army because

she stood between Ireland and an enemy common to our civilization and I would not have her say that she defended us while we did nothing at home but pass resolution” (qtd. in Phillips 2015: 26). Therefore, he was an example of an Irish who believed in the cause, that is to say, in the fact that the war was necessary, while simultaneously considering himself an Irish nationalist: “The poet claims, as other nationalist Irish soldiers did, that he too has fought for Ireland, in his case in Gallipoli and Macedonia” (Phillips 2015: 36).

A slightly different case would be that of Thomas Kettle, since he did not have as many war poems as the former ones, having been killed in action in 1916. The same as Ledwidge, Thomas Kettle, who was educated at University College Dublin and became an MP, “saw no contradiction as a nationalist in fighting in the army of Great Britain for a cause he perceived as just, but saw himself first and foremost as an Irishman” (Phillips 2015: 46). He wrote a satirical poem, “Paddy”, in which he criticized the fact that Ireland became of interest to Britain only in times of war, to provide them soldiers, but he has also treated the subject of war in other poems, according to Phillips, “in very abstract terms” (2015: 50). His most significant poem about the war was “To My Daughter Betty, the Gift of God”, which expressed his concern about how he will be remembered, in case of dying at the front. Kettle predicted, as already mentioned in previous sections, that the sacrifice of the Easter Rising rebels would change the meaning and implications of his own sacrifice in Europe. In fact, some lines of the poem are written in a bust in his honor, which “was erected after much debate about its appropriateness, and without a formal ceremony” (Phillips 2015: 1). In this respect, Brown also considers significant that Kettle “is now almost completely forgotten in Ireland and that his important works on Irish economics are largely ignored, along with his *The Ways of War* (1917) which gave his reasons for enlisting and describe his early experiences in the Belgian theatre” (1993: 230).

In addition to those who had first-hand experience and wrote immediate responses to the war, Phillips has vindicated the work done on the part of non-combatant poets, both during that time and in the post-war period, since its poetry was oftentimes undermined “lacking as it does, the element of witness which has attracted so many readers over the last century to the work of the war poets” (2015: 83). In this respect, Phillips gives credit to two studies of poetry: Fran Brearton’s *The Great War in Irish Poetry* (2000), which explores the work of W.B. Yeats, Robert Graves, and Louis MacNeice in the period 1914-1945 and of three contemporary Northern Irish poets: Derek Mahon, Seamus Heaney, and Michael Longley; and Jim Haughey’s *The First World War in Irish Poetry* (2002), which is much more comprehensive, since it includes over thirty poets. In this respect, even though Yeats has been frequently studied as one of the few Irish authors who addressed the topic, his attitude towards the issue was ambiguous, as seen in his poem “On Being Asked for a War Poem”, when he “expressed reluctance to write about what he described as the ‘bloody frivolity’, in a letter to Henry James” (Phillips 2015: 86) —being Henry James the one who made said request to Yeats— as well as in the poems he wrote in memory of Robert Gregory, commissioned by Lady Gregory herself: “An Irish Airman Foresees His Death” and “Shepherd and Goatherd”. Also among the group of Irish non-combatants, it is necessary to highlight George Russell’s most well-known war poem, “To the Memory of Some I Knew Who Are Dead and who Loved Ireland” (1917), which brings together the victims of both the Easter Rising and the Great War. Russell was an Irish nationalist and one of the founders of the Abbey Theater, but decided to equate both sacrifices, praising two Thomases, MacDonagh and Kettle. Thus, according to Kiberd, “George Russel wrote the only significant poem of the time to lament the Irishmen who died in both conflicts” (1995: 240).

Later in the century, Phillips also comments on Thomas MacGreevy’s poems, one of which, “Nocturne”, “suggests the isolation felt by the veteran, who cannot communicate his experience to the non-combatants around him” (2015: 179). According to Phillips, he attempted

to reconcile the horror he experienced with his faith in God and he is aware that the fight for small nations that the war entailed had no effect in the small nation of Ireland (2015: 182). More poetry was written around this period that addressed or mentioned events of the Great War by Michael Walsh, Randal McDonnell, Stephen Gwynn, Samuel McCurry, Thomas Carnduff, and Harry Midgley. Midgley's work in particular highlights "a concern for the political implications of remembering war in a way which contributes to peace, and to the creation of a better world for those who fought, and which avoids adding to the increasing divisions he saw in his own country" (Phillips 2015: 204). This, together with the amount of poems that made reference to the war, proves that the First World War had persisted in the Irish imagination during the post-war years. As Costello-Sullivan has exposed, "a desire to memorialize through representation has long been present in Irish society. Irish authors have taken up that challenge, increasingly exposing and engaging all kinds of societal oppressions and suffering through narrative" (2018: 12). Specifically in Northern Ireland, where the political situation was even more delicate during the twentieth century, however, the work of, for instance, Seamus Heaney and Derek Mahon, according to Phillips, "bears witness to the living reality of First World War memory in Northern Ireland, but neither poet engages directly with its significance for contemporary politics and life within the province" (2015: 211). In Seamus Heaney's "No Man's Land" — included in his collection *Wintering Out* (1972)— the setting of the poem in the Troubles intermingles with the First World War referenced in the title, but he, the same as Mahon and Paul Muldoon, "have resisted attempts to make them speak for one side or another" (Phillips 2015: 11). In Northern Ireland, it seemed to be Michel Longley the one who best explored the complexities "beneath individual, family, collective and official memory" (Phillips 2015: 211). His father had served in the war and was awarded a Military Cross, so his work was one of re-creation through his father's memories.

The special attention that has been devoted to, as McLoughlin calls it, "the premium on firsthand experience (autopsy) —earning the right to write about war through being there—" complicates the validation of women's accounts, since they were "traditionally denied access to the war zone" (2009: 16); hence the traditional exclusion of women writers from the canon of war literature.⁶⁵ In this sense, Catherine W. Reilly's work has been fundamental in the compilation and recovery of war poets in general, and of female authors in particular. First, in her book *English Poetry of the First World War: a Bibliography* (1978), she included 2,225 British people, more than 500 women among them. Later, she also published an anthology of war poetry, *Scars Upon My Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War* (1981), which was an essential contribution to their visibility, in which she included poetry by Katharine Tynan, one of the women poets Phillips mentions in her study, together with Winifred Letts and Eva Gore-Booth. Letts had both Irish and English ascendancy and thus she did not manifest tensions between the two, but was educated in England and consequently wrote for an English audience. According to Phillips, "it was not until Letts returned to live in Ireland that she wrote what may, undoubtedly, be termed an Irish war poem. This was 'The Connaught Rangers'" (2015: 104). Regardless, Letts became a VAD, which turned her into a valuable witness, and her sonnets "articulate the mourning of wives and sweethearts" (Phillips 2015: 99). Tynan's two sons enlisted to fight in the war and she ended up assuming, through her war poetry, the public role of providing solace for women who had beloved ones serving at the

⁶⁵ In this respect, Sánchez-Palencia also highlights the fact that in his work *The Great War and Modern Memory*, "Paul Fussell made almost no references to the literary contribution of nurses and other female authors during the conflict" (2019), since only male combatants have traditionally conformed the canon of war literature. Thus, Sánchez-Palencia concludes: "This narrow perspective has always marginalized women and non-combatants whose voices and testimonies have only started to be acknowledged in the last thirty years" (2019).

front. In order to achieve that effect, being a Catholic, Tynan employed religious mythology, with references to heaven, and defended the cause while recognizing the sacrifices it implied. She was, at the same time, a writer of the Revival period supported by Yeats, and a supporter of Home Rule, but she did not find her Irish nationalism and her patriotism towards Britain incompatible: “While she is, undoubtedly, politically aware, she does not directly confront the tension seen by some writers as existing between identity as an Irish writer and support for the British in the war” (Phillips 2015: 92) and thus she “describes hostility between England and Ireland as ‘a tragedy’” (Phillips 2015: 10-11). Irish identity is, for Tynan, “her primary, though not exclusive identity” (Phillips 2015: 105), which makes her “a good illustration of the compatibility of a self-conscious Irish identity with a civic patriotism towards Great Britain, and indeed the Empire” (Phillips 2015: 93). Gore-Booth lived in England during the war, the same as Letts, but had, the same as Tynan, connections with Irish nationalism, being her sister Constance Markiewicz, and thus she denoted a strong sense of Irish identity. Gore-Booth was the only one of the three poets to demonstrate opposition to the cause, but “her opposition to the war was based on convinced pacifism, not, as might be expected, on Irish nationalism” (Phillips 2015: 88).

Regarding Irish narratives of war, Phillips considered that there could be a division between those which simply depicted the experience of war and those which revolved around questions pertaining to national identity (2015: 53). Within the first category, the autobiographical novels of MacGill, *The Amateur Army* (1915), *The Red Horizon* (1916) and *The Great Push* (1916) serve as an excellent testimony to the life of soldiers in the First World War; his narratives are influenced by the Gothic but devoid of heroic elements, showing profound disillusionment with the horror and cynicism characteristic of the conflict, putting into question the political status quo, and denouncing the effects of violence in youths and the adherence to patriotic ideals. Concerning *The Great Push* in particular, Phillips considers it to be “an early example of the refusal to regard the enemy soldier as an enemy, which is encountered in the post-war writing of writers such as Erich Maria Remarque and Robert Graves” (2015: 61). MacGill’s works have been the most well-known Irish literary accounts of the war published during the conflict or immediately afterwards—he also published a post-war novel titled *Fear!* (1921)—but, in spite of his Catholic and rural background, “there is nothing in his war writing to suggest that he considers himself as fighting for Ireland” (Phillips 2015: 62). Contrary to MacGill, and already in the second category, George Birmingham—pseudonym of James Owen Hannay, minister of the Church of Ireland—served as Church of Ireland chaplain during the war and wrote a novel, *Gossamer* (1915), which focuses on the Irish political situation before the war. Also in this vein, St John Ervine’s *Changing Winds* (1917) deals with questions pertaining to national identity and patriotism and thus it reflects, according to Terry Phillips, “the author’s own dilemmas, about both his willingness to enlist in the international conflict and events in his native Ireland” (2015: 69), demonstrating loyalty towards both Ireland and Britain.

Also during the war years, Mrs. Victor Rickard, the pseudonym of Jessica Luisa Moore, who was Anglo-Irish, engaged with the question of Irish patriotism. Her father supported Home Rule and was involved in the defense of Gaelic, whereas her husband enlisted and died in the war. She published three novels that addressed the Great War and which are, according to Phillips, “ignored even in surveys of women’s First World War writing” (2015: 121): *The Light Above the Crossroads* (1916), *The Fire of Green Boughs* (1918) and *The House of Courage* (1919). In them, Rickard expresses patriotism both for Ireland and Britain and supports the war cause through religious images of martyrdom and self-sacrifice (Phillips 2015: 122), while criticizing strong notions of nationalism (Phillips 2015: 136). What the three novels have also in common is “a liminal moment, a moment when the boundaries, which patriotism creates by

its very existence, are permeated” (Phillips 2015: 127). Contrary to Rickard, William Orpen “exhibits no overt consciousness of issues of nationality or patriotism” (Phillips 2015: 119) in his account of the war as a non-combatant in *An Onlooker in France*, which was published later, in 1921. He was recruited as a war artist and, as many other Anglo-Irish of the time, “became disillusioned with events in Ireland, beginning with what he presumably saw as the betrayal of the Easter Rising, and, given his commitment to the war effort, this probably accounts for his near-silence on the subject in his war memoir” (Phillips 2015: 120). Lord Dunsany’s collection of short stories *Tales of War* (1918), which account for the experiences of soldiers at the front through the predominant motif of the desert, seems to offer one of the few examples of the short story genre at that period. Dunsany supported the cause in defense of small nations and thus his tales were propaganda against the Kaiser (Phillips 2015: 54).

There was therefore, during the first years of conflict, a generalized defense of the war effort that allowed for a justification of the fight. As Christophe Prochasson asserts, “the overwhelming majority of European intellectuals backed their state and supported the war”; moreover, “these attitudes enjoyed hegemonic status and were generally seen as the only viable viewpoint” (2010: 327).⁶⁶ The novels written on that immediate post-war period, however, already portray disillusionment with war or, in general terms, with humanity. In this sense, they fulfill a different function of war literature, more in line with modern times: “to demystify war and the military [...] and to support pacifism” through “a detached, objective descriptive and narrative style, as opposed to the old heroic vocabulary and conventions” (Brosman 1992: 89). Phillips mentions, in this respect, Liam O’Flaherty’s *Return of the Brute* (1929), which “provides none of the compensatory values of comradeship and fraternity, sometimes leading to real heroism, that are so important in the writing of Patrick MacGill” (2015: 173), and which, in his opinion, “deserves much wider critical acclaim” (2015: 176). He also considers that “there is little critical comment” on Margaret Barrington’s *My Cousin Justin* (1939), which he judges to be an “excellent novel” (Phillips 2015: 168) that characterizes the war “as futile and wasteful” (Phillips 2015: 169) and integrates it into the Irish series of successive conflicts. In addition, Phillips addresses two other novels that also deal specifically with the Irish context: *The Ladies Road* (1932) by Pamela Hinkson, daughter of Katharine Tynan, which “is a tale of frustration that the woman is condemned to an inactive role” (2015: 163) that “serves to emphasize, from a feminist perspective, what the First World War and the Anglo-Irish War have in common, rather than suggest a diametrical opposition” (2015: 164); and Eimar O’Duffy’s *The Wasted Island* (1929), which depicts a family of two sons who enlist and one that joins the Irish Volunteers instead, but in which affect between them prevails: “Neither brother allows their involvement in rival causes to assume more importance than their affection for one another” (Phillips 2015: 166).

Almost all of the narratives of war that have been taken into consideration for a possible canon, as already argued, have been novels. When taking into account the canon of British war literature in general, Anne-Marie Einhaus, in her publication *The Short Story and the First World War*, concludes that “short fiction [...] rarely features in the war’s literary memory” (2013: 2), coinciding with the Irish case, where examples are almost non-existent. Einhaus attributes this not so much to a lack of works of the genre, as opposed to poems and novels, but rather considers that “due to their publication primarily in magazines, short stories were one of the most ephemeral genres in which the experience of the war was reflected” (2013: 3). In this regard, Liam O’Flaherty’s “The Discarded Soldier” serves as an illustrative case of a never-

⁶⁶ Once the war was over, notwithstanding, the situation reversed and “intellectuals rapidly became the focus for criticism. Their support for the war effort came under sharp scrutiny and they were also accused of playing a role in the outbreak of the conflict” (Prochasson 2010: 335)

collected short story that was long forgotten, in spite of the fact that he was a well-known author whose war novel was among the most recognized works of the conflict in Ireland. O’Flaherty wrote the story to be published in *The Daily Worker* in 1925 at the request of his brother, Tom O’Flaherty, who was a columnist in the paper, and it has only recently been rediscovered and republished in 2018 by the newspaper *People’s World*, the successor to *The Daily Worker*. Moreover, O’Flaherty actually published another short story about the war, “The Alien Skull”, within his own short story collection *The Mountain Tavern and Other Stories* (1929), and thus this story, as opposed to the former, was subsequently collected in at least three other anthologies: Minchin and Blunden’s *Great Short Stories Of The War: England, France, Germany, America* (1930) —probably the first anthology of Great War short stories; Jon E. Lewis’s *Mammoth Book of Modern War Stories* (1993); and Jane Christopher’s *War Stories: Major Writers of the 19th and 20th Centuries* (1999), proving it was worth of critical attention, even though it did not have the same scope as his war novel. In fact, none of the short stories by O’Flaherty are included in Phillips’s study. There was also a novella, *The German Prisoner* (1930), written by James Hanley—who was of Irish descent but was working in a ship when he decided to enlist in a Canadian regiment—and printed in a private edition in 1930, since it was not approved by British censorship due to its anti-war message, its sympathetic portrayal of German soldiers, and the cruel violence and descent to madness that are depicted in the narrative; to this day, it has not yet received the attention it deserves as a narrative written by a combatant which was able to capture the psychological consequences of warfare for the soldiers and the extent to human beings’ brutality. In this vein, at the time of her publication, Einhaus asserted that “there exist at present no book-length critical studies of World War I short fiction” (2013: 6), while also acknowledging that First World War short stories gained critical recognition over the first decade of the twenty-first century, which could have been partly motivated by the approximation of the war’s centenary, but also by the publication of anthologies. In fact, she edited alongside Barbara Korte the *Penguin Book of First World War Stories* (2007), but no Irish authors appear in the volume.

Concerning drama, three playwrights are worth mentioning: Bernard Shaw, Lennox Robinson and Seán O’Casey. Bernard Shaw, who left Ireland when he was young but still felt a clear sense of Irish identity, wrote a play, *O’Flaherty V.C.*, particularly addressing an Irish audience. Notwithstanding, the play was not performed at the Abbey, as Shaw had expected, but rather on the Western Front in 1917: “The play is subtitled, ‘*A Recruiting Pamphlet*’, and its non-performance, at the request of the Castle authorities, reflected a concern that it might be understood as too much of a recruiting play in some quarters, and too cynical about war in others” (Phillips 2015: 139). The play was actually far from being propagandist; in fact, its “dismissal of patriotism as a realistic motive for joining up runs counter to the prevailing orthodoxy of the time” (Phillips 2015: 142). Lennox Robinson’s play, *The Big House: Four Scenes in Its Life* (1928), the same as other post-war writings, manifests the irony and futility that characterizes the “literature of disenchantment” about the war (Phillips 2015: 151), while situating the First World War within the larger context of the other ongoing conflicts in Ireland during the first half of the century. A special case of a drama play from that same period which became controversial was Seán O’Casey’s *The Silver Tassie*, which was rejected by the Abbey in 1928 and subsequently, it became O’Casey’s first play to be premiered outside Dublin, in London, in 1929.

The rejection of O’Casey’s play has been analyzed as part of the policy of intentional amnesia concerning the Great War, especially taking into account the relationship of the Abbey with the Cumann na nGaedhal government, since it received subsidy from the State; as Jeffery asserted in this respect, “there was an underlying political difficulty in putting sympathetically

portrayed British soldiers on the stage of the Abbey Theatre in the late 1920s” (2011a: 95). *The Silver Tassie* follows Harry Heegan’s participation in the war since the first act, when he is being cheered for winning the football cup before going off to war, to his return home as a “crippled” figure who can only observe from his wheelchair how everyone celebrates another victory of the local football’s team. The play not only denotes disillusionment for the war, but for humanity in general, since it portrays the lack of solidarity towards veterans and people’s disinterest about the war and the stories of those involved. Many reasons have been attributed to the Abbey’s rejection of the play, starting from Yeats’s “strong personal attitudes towards the European conflicts” (Ayling 1985: xix). Also in this respect, Phillips has asserted that Yeats’s dislike of the matter was made evident not only in his writings on the matter, but also when he decided to exclude “Owen and other war poets from the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* in 1936”, which “led many commentators on the *Tassie* controversy to see it as political” (2015: 154). Yeats was the figure who conducted the Irish Literary Revival, which also came to be known as the Celtic Twilight, since it was intended to reinforce national identity by exploring cultural roots, turning to myth and legend: “Yeats [...] came to maturity in an era, the 1880s, when Ireland became focused on regaining its political independence from Britain. They were turbulent times, politically and culturally, and Irish people began to link the demands of political nationalism with an emerging cultural nationalism” (Mahony 19998: 2). After the establishment of the Irish Free State, Irish literature, as was the case in other postcolonial nations, continued this tendency, legitimizing Irish political independence from Britain and creating a sense of Irish identity, which was sometimes criticized and deemed as artificial: “Ireland, as constructed or reconstructed in Yeats’ imagination, *became* a place untouched by the corruption of modernity, a country in touch with the magical and supernatural world, a place of heightened spirituality and harmony with nature. The ancient, the heroic, and the timeless were emphasized” (Mahony 1998: 2).⁶⁷ It was not only that the war was seen by Yeats as alien to Ireland’s issues, but also that he did not consider modern warfare and experience as subjects worthy of literature.

Another possible reason for the exclusion of the play had to do with its experimental techniques, particularly in the second act, which takes place just behind the front line, where most characters are undifferentiated and expressionist techniques are used to reflect the disturbed state of mind of the soldiers and the chaotic environment of the battlefield. In fact, the play was also rejected at the Royal Court before its premier in the Apollo, the reason for that was not so clear, whether it was because “the play would be unbearable as a reminder of suffering, or because of its anti-war position” (Phillips 2015: 153). Lady Gregory and Lennox Robinson, as opposed to Yeats, did not find any aesthetic or formal problems with the expressionist second act, but considered the last two low-quality; according to Gregory, “the characters, [...] vivid in the first act, become lay figures, lantern slides, showing the horrors of war” (1975: 30). The act, notwithstanding, achieves to portray war’s effect on traumatized subjects, challenging traditional linguistic forms and structures to represent the horror. In this regard, Thomas Kilroy has mentioned that the rejection could have been due to the theatre’s dislike of the last two acts’ subjection of speech to dance and other strategies that were not typical of Irish drama (1975: 15), but which related to the emergent Expressionism; according to Roger McHugh, “Expressionism sought, by the use of stylized characters, chant, chorus, mechanized movements, symbols and dance, to express the tragedy and comedy of psychologically fragmented and physically regimented man” (1975: 44). Together with the

⁶⁷ In this respect, Boehmer also asserts that, “though his involvement in active nationalist politics was always touched by ambivalence, Yeats like later postcolonial writers drew upon his reading of myth and legend to forge an image of traditional Ireland. Like them, he valued the artifice of nostalgia, and sought to shape the future by redescribing the past” (1995: 119).

issue of style, Yeats's critique was also based on the fact that O'Casey himself never went to the front, denying him the entitlement to write on the matter: "But you are not interested in the great war; you never stood on its battlefields or walked in its hospitals, and so write out of your opinions. You illustrate those opinions by a series of almost unrelated scenes [...]; there is no dominating character, no dominating action, neither psychological unity nor unity of action" (Yeats et al. 1975: 113). O'Casey then vindicated having met wounded soldiers in a Dublin hospital who told him about life in the trenches. Beyond the aesthetic question, there was, nevertheless, also an uncomfortable reception of the play due to the language and religious references employed; when played in Dublin years later, in 1935, "it provoked strident clerical criticism for blasphemy and bad language" (Jeffery 2011a: 95). The religious elements in the play seemed to cause offence in the Catholic Irish society, since they suggested, besides "the hypocrisy of clerical support for the war, an absence of God" (Phillips 2015: 159).

Many of these works written during the war years or in the decade that followed proved to be valuable accounts of the war period, varying from support and justification with religious and heroic imagery, to disillusionment and condemnation of violence. In addition, particularly when applied to the Irish case, they manifested not only a rich variety of attitudes with respect to senses of belonging, as well as to the reactions to the Rising at the time of war, but also expressed fluid notions of national identity. This was particularly made evident in the writings of civilians, "whose ethical and expressive dilemmas provide powerful examples of engagement from the sidelines" (Cole 2018: 100) and which prove to have, according to Cole, "rich and far-reaching consequences for the century that followed the war, with such imagining warranting a more expansive place in our conception of war's meaning and impact" (2018: 101). In Ireland's case specifically, where the amount of texts about the conflict was small in comparison to other countries due to the reasons exposed in the previous sections, fictional accounts of the war written by those with no experience in it were fundamental in the persistence and recovery of its memory. In this sense, Jason R. Myers has drawn attention to a novel by J. G. Farrell, *Troubles* (1970), because even though in this case the Great War is only "an underlying theme in the book the passages relating to the war and its commemoration reveal the ethos surrounding questions of Irish identity and politics as the Troubles raged in the north" (2013: 230). The story thus presents a variety of opinions and ideologies with respect to Irish allegiances: for instance, there is an Irish character that supports British role in the Great War and sees the Easter Rising leaders as traitors, whereas another one deems the war as an alien event in which Irish volunteers demonstrated no national commitment towards Ireland.

Most scholars have agreed, however, that the first author that seemed to properly revisit the issue of the Great War in Ireland in the second half of the twentieth century was Jennifer Johnston with her novel *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (1974), in which the friendship between the two main characters, a Protestant from the Anglo-Irish ascendancy and a poor Irish from Catholic background, prevails over their differences of class, religion and ideology while fighting together at the front. Thus, the novel seems to portray the scenario of the war as a common arena in which Irish of different backgrounds and convictions worked and died together, inviting both negotiation of identities and reconciliation in the Ireland of the Troubles, when it was published. Furthermore, its ending, in which both of the characters die out of a refusal to comply with orders, making the decision to follow their hearts driven by personal connections, serves also as a critique to notions of patriotism that challenges the motivation behind traditional heroic accounts of the war. It was a few years later, during the 1980s, when the topic was tackled again in Frank McGuinness's play *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985), which portrays how "the heroic memory of the Somme in Northern Ireland has the effect of silencing the expression of sorrow" (Phillips 2015: 231). There was

also, around that time, another play by Christina Reid, *My Name, Shall I Tell You My Name?* (1987), in which a young woman remembers her grandfather's tales of the war, but it did not receive the same critical and public attention.

The desire to unearth the topic of the war in Ireland around those years could have been motivated, first of all, by the cultural movements that were taking place, which invited reflection on hegemonic constructions of history, especially on the part of postcolonial and postmodernist studies: "The movement toward multiple and contested understandings of history and away from a privileged, dominant narrative catalyzed a broad reassessment of Ireland's history. It also led to explicit consideration of the consequences of large-scale social and cultural forces for Irish society as a whole" (Costello-Sullivan 2018: 2). Together with these tendencies, the Peace Process of the 1990s also "set off a dramatic reassessment not only of the political violence that had affected the Irish Republic, Northern Ireland, and England but also of its cost" (Costello-Sullivan 2018: 25). These are the reasons why "contemporary and recent literature has examined family memory as well as collective memory and its role in the construction of identity, at both an individual and national level, and this has inevitably involved some consideration of the First World War" (Phillips 2015: 13). Also in this respect, Gerry Smyth draws attention to the recent success of life-writing relating it to the social changes that were taking place in Ireland at the turn of the century: "Much emotional and intellectual energy was dedicated to reflecting upon the recent past [...]. In this sense, (semi-) autobiography represents a desire to relate a range of previously unspoken (or only whispered) stories from the margins, or more accurately the interstices, of official island culture" (2001: 134). In this sense, narratives from non-combatants who observed the conflict from the margin—especially women—which had been traditionally disregarded, could also find now a place to help complete perspectives and identities in such convulsive times. This went in line with postmodernist views on *otherness*, which in Giroux's words, included not only the "focus on the importance of history as a form of counter-memory", but also "an emphasis on the value of the everyday as a source of agency and empowerment; a renewed understanding of gender as an irreducible historical and social practice [...]; and an insertion of the contingent, the discontinuous, and the unrepresentable as coordinates for remapping and rethinking the borders that define one's existence and place in the world" (1993: 464). This re-examination of the past, which added new voices that had been previously silenced, fostered a new understanding of the construction of national culture and identity, which in Ireland's case allowed for an acknowledgment and reassessment of Irish trauma-based society:

The confluence of new directions in historiography, postcolonial theory, trauma studies, and cultural and literary theory contributed to that movement, as did the tendency (particularly of Nationalist historiography) to characterize Irish history as traumatic. This very act of opening up through representation has catalyzed the consequent shift that we are currently seeing in the twenty-first-century Irish novel. (Costello-Sullivan 2018: 19)

Thus, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, historical fiction about the period surrounding the Great War continued to be written in Ireland, and Sebastian Barry's novel *A Long Long Way* (2005) became the first best-seller on the topic. In this story, the protagonist enlists in the British Army, having his father an important position in the Dublin Metropolitan Police, and after the Rising he becomes sympathetic towards the Republican cause. The novel prioritizes the value of individual lives over nationality and political ideals and makes sure, according to Phillips, that the wartime experiences it portrays have elements that are "familiar to readers of both documentary and fictional accounts of life on the Western Front", but also

elements that correspond “with the individual memories which have now become family memories, passed on in families within Ireland and in the Irish diaspora, but which have not, at least until recently, formed part of the Irish collective memory” (2015: 249). In fact, apparently, Sebastian Barry decided to write the novel due to the important void that continued to exist in Ireland with respect to the First World War: “Barry told journalist Kevin Myers that the genesis of the book came at the suggestion of his editor who, in 2002, pointed out that almost nothing had been written on the Irish and the Great War since *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (with the notable exception of McGuinness’ play)” (Myers 2013: 272). This was not actually the case, because in 2004 Patricia Hickey published *Green Poppies*, but did not sell well. The title already puts the Great War, through the commemorative symbol of the poppy, within the Irish context by referencing the national color of the country. According to Myers, “what sets Hickey’s work apart from others is that it explicitly examines the experience of women and children during the war, and how they coped with the changes in Irish society and with a loved one at the front” (2013: 273). In the same year of *A Long Long Way*, another novel was published by Tom Phelan, *The Canal Bridge*, which was overshadowed by the former’s success. This novel follows the lives of two siblings, Kitty and Con, and their friend Matthias; whereas Con ends up dying at the front, Matthias survives the war just to end up being killed by a republican mob, which leaves Kitty mourning both her brother and her husband, in a way that seems to represent both the international war and the national struggle as futile sacrifices.

With the centenary of the First World War in 2014, new fictional narratives that revolved around the period of the war continued to be written in Ireland, especially by women writers. Such is the case of Lia Mill’s novel *Fallen* (2014), of Sheena Wilkinson’s short story “Each Slow Dusk” —published in the collection *The Great War: Stories Inspired by Objects from the First World War* (2014)— and novella *Name Upon Name* (2015), and also of Mary O’Donnell’s collection of short stories *Empire* (2018). The first three of these works share the common purpose to portray the marginal voices of women who had not received proper attention and representation on the part of history and literary studies on issues related to war and politics, which were traditionally considered to be of male dominance. The young female protagonists of these stories are observers of the political situation who do not actively participate in the violence of either the Great War or the Easter Rising, but who, in spite of the edge position to which they were frequently condemned, are able to represent the concern and confusion of the Irish people in those years by directly engaging with questions pertaining to their identities as Irish and to their own place in the history of their country. The collection of short stories *Empire* offers a wider plurality of perspectives in which both female and male voices of soldiers and non-combatants partake in the reconstruction of memory and, especially, of Irish national identities as marked by a colonial past and by the historical circumstances that led to the establishment of independence.

In Dublin, a fellow like Elston, a kind of human rat, would get short shrift. To O'Garra he was "the Hungry Englishman" par excellence. And he had little time for Englishmen, especially the suck-holing type. Still he remembered that he was his bed-mate, his one companion in this huge mass of desperate life.

James Hanley, *The German Prisoner* (1930)

3 IRELAND ON THE CENTENARY OF WAR AND REVOLUTION

3.1 WOMEN AUTHORS REVISIT THE PAST: REWRITING WAR AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The analysis of this dissertation focuses on literary fiction written by women who, from the retrospective of the centenary of both the Great War and the Easter Rising, have provided visibility for those who were traditionally unrepresented in narratives of war and revolution which revolve around politics and nationalism. The main characters of these novels and short stories are the civilians—the vast majority of them women—who lived through the turmoil of events with varying degrees of implication, offering thus an interesting panorama of the diversity of opinions and reactions that conflicted in Irish society at that time. In this respect, Ann-Marie Einhaus has already noted that “in recent decades, historiography of the First World War has taken a cultural and a material turn. This has meant an increasing emphasis on everyday experiences, placing them at the heart of understanding the conflict” (2021: 29). Moreover, Laura Lojo Rodríguez considers that war fiction in this period is also characterized by a need to “shift into focus previously unacknowledged participants in the conflict and peripheral war experiences”, and as such, it has come to redefine our conception of war “beyond the lens of Eurocentric perspectives” (2020: 23). The characters in these novels and short stories therefore become valuable witnesses of historical events and portray the zeitgeist of a specifically Irish generation, ensuring the perpetuation of a cultural memory that necessarily had to take now the place of living memory. Trauma fiction, in this sense, provides the perfect framework for discussing and preserving the past, since one of its common characteristics, as signalled by Susana Onega—and observed in the literary works that are here going to be analysed—is “the representation of the protagonist against an historical background of collective trauma” (2011: 102), so that there is space for both the personal growth and introspection of the individual and the interpretation and reconstruction of the reality of a common trauma. In fact, the renewed interest in the topic and the production of these narrative accounts, as Lojo Rodríguez pertinently considers, “articulate a contemporary urge to overcome taboos, silence and amnesia both in private and public history as a result of participation in the ‘Great War’ in order to exercise, once and for all, the transgenerational phantom which continues to haunt the present” (2020: 23). The Irish writings to be analysed partake in this intention to overcome past conflicts as well as to reconfigure Irish identities in a multiple and more inclusive manner regarding gender, religion and ancestry, previous to the homogeneous national identity endorsed by the Irish Free State.

In Ireland, during the period of economic growth known as the Celtic Tiger, which took place during the mid-1990s and the 2000s and involved, as aforementioned, a process of peace, internationalization and secularization, changes in Irish society were so rapidly introduced that there began to be an anxiety to preserve a sense of Irishness —“In the 1980s and 1990s, change in Irish society accelerated and looked to be irrevocable. Thus the imperative to capture and to define modes of Irishness before they disappeared entirely became compelling” (Mahony 1998: 270). Such process, as Ingman comments, involved the “breakdown of the family unit, the questioning of traditional forms of Irish nationalism and the declining influence of the Catholic church” (2009: 227), which already fostered a reconfiguration of Irish identities that particularly affected women, who had been traditionally relegated to the domestic sphere and very influenced by Catholic and patriarchal family models. Irish women writers, who for that very reason started to proliferate from those years onwards, have tried to find their own place in the cultural narrative of the country. As Barros del Río has observed, in the Irish novels from the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first, it is possible to discern a specifically female production focused on the search of an identity of their own —“es posible distinguir una producción femenina cuyos intereses se centran en la búsqueda y desarrollo de una identidad propia que primero deben imaginar, luego buscar y finalmente definir más allá de imposiciones culturales, históricas y políticas” (2007: 108).⁶⁸ In fact, through their fictional responses, women writers have detached themselves from the established national narrative, according to Caroline Magennis, “contesting some of the assumptions of the mechanisms of peace-building. In particular, these novels exhibit scepticism towards grand narratives of memorialization” (2018: 375-76).

In this vein, these women writers, by depicting the social changes that were emerging at the beginning of the twentieth century, mostly as a result of the suffragette movement, succeed in showing women’s will not only to actively engage in public life, for instance, attempting to access education and work encouraged by other women around them, but also to get to understand national identity by delving deeper into male experiences and views concerning war and revolution. In their desire to find a place within the Irish society of their time, these female characters are able to negotiate different senses of Irishness and to show a comprehensive understanding of nationality which encompasses divergences through the acknowledgement and embracement of alterity out of mutual respect and affection. In *Nations without Nationalism*, Julia Kristeva has precisely discussed that women have the predisposition to sympathise and establish meaningful connections with otherness, since they have always occupied a marginal position in a patriarchal society, being deprived of power and excluded from the national discourse: “Women have the luck and the responsibility of being boundary-subjects” (1993: 35).⁶⁹ In analysing twentieth-century fiction written by Irish women, Ingman brings to the fore Kristeva’s theories and reaffirms it can be effectively beneficial to see women “as particularly equipped to negotiate the passage between self and the other, between the known and the strange, since they are frequently positioned as strangers and exiles within the public life of the nation” (2007: 30-31).

The two novels that will be here examined —*Fallen* and *Name Upon Name*— are exclusively set in Ireland and focus on the daily life and concerns of the two young female

⁶⁸ In this regard, Ailbhe Symth has stated: “It must surely be obvious but seems necessary to repeat, women and men are not identically positioned in relation to culture, history, politics. And although there will be significant points of intersection, common desires and dreams, the hunger for selfhood, wholeness, identity, call it what you will, must be negotiated and articulated differently in each case” (1990: 12).

⁶⁹ In fact, according to Kristeva, given today’s situation with the emergence of “polynational societies”, women can now demonstrate a particular “ability to modify the nation in the face of foreigners, to orient foreigners confronting the nation toward a still unforeseeable conception of a polyvalent community” (1993: 35-36).

protagonists, which are interrupted in both cases by the active participation of their family members in the Great War as well as by the eruption of the Easter Rising. Both works depict both traumatic events in a realistic way that does not tend to mimic the techniques that have traditionally characterized Eurocentric trauma narratives. In relation to this, Ailbhe Smyth concluded, while analyzing the works of her anthology of women's writings *Wildish Things: An Anthology of New Irish Women's Writings* (1989), that these women writers found solace in realism, since it allowed them to speak up about the reality of their lives, which have been historically silenced: "realism is not a convention but an urgent need, not a constraint but a great and new freedom. Freedom to give a name and substance to the long unspoken, always unwritten, realities of their lives" (Smyth 1990: 12). Notwithstanding, the narratives also include the letters of the family members who are fighting at the front, which do display some of the resources commonly used to express alexithymia such as incomplete sentences with ellipsis, repetitions and corrections. Furthermore, in both cases of study the structure of the novel also plays a different role in the recreation of traumatic events. *Fallen's* chapters are divided according, first, to the different stages concerning the enlistment and death of Liam, the brother of the protagonist, and then, to the Easter Rising, presenting a reliable day-to-day account of the unfolding of events. The first part of the novel presents thus the chapters in a wide time frame as opposed to the second one, which creates an interesting effect of fragmentation of memories which provides glimpses of the socio-political environment previous to the rebellion and then a detailed analysis and realistic account of how the Dubliners lived the days of the rising. The story begins at the outbreak of war, in August 1914, with Liam's enlistment, which causes a discussion between Katie, the protagonist, and his brother. The next chapter is set in October 1914, when a life-changing encounter for Katie occurs: she meets Dorothy Colclough (Dote), for whom she starts working as a research assistant on a project about the public monuments of the city, which awakens both her desire to get to know Irish history better and to work and have a life of her own in the future. The following chapter moves on to April 1915, that is, to the moment in which the family receives the news of Liam's death, and the last one takes place a couple of months afterwards, in June 1915, when Katie deals with the process of mourning her brother and remembers his letters from the front. The second part of the novel begins on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, in which symbolically Liam's death anniversary and the first day of the Rising overlap, and each chapter onwards is devoted to every single day of that week until Friday, 28 April 1916.

Name Upon Name, however, presents a rather fragmentary structure: it is divided into five parts, each one of them corresponding to a specific month, from January to May 1916, leaving both the year and the plot of the story unfinished, and in addition to this, the narrative is also divided into quite short and irregular chapters, five of which present internal breaks. Three of those breaks clearly mark a moment of shock or revelation connected with a traumatic event: firstly, the death of a teacher's brother —"For the first time in one of Perry's classes, the lower fourth was silent and remained so for the whole lesson" (Wilkinson 2015: 40); secondly, Sandy's —the protagonist's cousin— letter from the front, after whose reading the protagonist, Helen, is lost for words to answer —"she sat on the bed with her writing pad until her hands cramped with cold, and couldn't find any words at all" (Wilkinson 2015: 77); and thirdly, the sudden news of the Easter Rising —"She [Helen] looked at the black-and-white grainy photo of a street in ruins, and then up at Papa's serious face" (Wilkinson 2015: 110). The other two breaks observed in the chapters represent a turning point for Helen: her decision to join the school magazine and work in the Roll of Honour —"Helen bit her lip with pleasure. She guessed that the Roll of Honour would involve painstaking work [...]. And yes, it might be depressing [...] because very often amending the list meant adding in the fact that someone had

been killed or injured, but even so, it felt important to be trusted with something like that” (Wilkinson 2015: 84)— and her suddenly achieved responsibility towards Michael —another cousin, from the other side of the family, who also ends up enlisting later in the story— and his memory: “If anything happened to Michael that letter would be all they had of him. The best thing she could do for now was keep it safe” (Wilkinson 2015: 122). On top of that, some of the chapters are quite short, coinciding in most cases with moments that cause a traumatic impression on Helen, such as Michael’s appearance completely drunk and with a black eye after he decides to enlist and has a fight with his father about it —“scared of this unrecognisable person who was Michael and yet not Michael” (Wilkinson 2015: 57)— or Helen’s confrontation with him once he finds out she has not handed the letter she was entrusted to give to Michael’s parents to make amends: “She had never been frightened of her cousin before but she was frightened now” (Wilkinson 2015: 136).

Regarding the short stories that are also taken into consideration for this thesis, most of them —with the exception of “*Empire*”, which moves between Ireland and the British colony of Burma— are also set exclusively in Ireland, so that the events concerning the war and the rising intrude and disturb the daily lives of the main characters, coinciding with the new focus Einhaus has observed in short fiction of the war. According to Einhaus, “as is the case with ephemera, this everydayness may centre around unusual or poignant moments in the midst of the mundane. Both ephemera and short fiction capture events or feelings which, in hindsight, turn out to be far more significant than first meets the eye” (2021: 31).⁷⁰ Thus the characters in the short stories frequently reach moments of resolution or sudden realization prompted by the socio-political circumstances themselves, which reflect the social changes of the whole community. Einhaus proposes, when analysing recent stories of the war, “a new way of reading short fiction as a medium for preserving and modelling the humble aspects of war experience that fall through the cracks of larger, weightier, more substantial or official narratives” (2021: 30). In Ireland’s case, these stories present the war as a backdrop so as to focus more on its impact on the development of the political events and the ideologies that were converging and which irrevocably affected Irish national identities. Precisely the short story has been characterized as the genre par excellence to reflect a proper sense of Irish identity, since it mimics its inherently fragmentary and changing nature as a result, according to Ingman, “of prolonged imposition of an alien identity” (2009: 13):

If our view of Irishness has changed and expanded in recent years, this poses challenges to our received understanding of a form regarded as the national genre to the extent that it was often used in the past, by Yeats and others, to propagate the notion of an essential Irish identity. If Ireland has always been a place where identity is made and unmade, arguably the Irish short story will reflect this. ‘The hour of change, of metamorphosis / of shape-shifting instabilities’ is the hour claimed by Eavan Boland for her art. This in-between place of shifting identities, of change and transformation, is the realm in which the Irish short story also operates. (Ingman 2009: 12)

This is particularly the case when it comes to Mary O’Donnell’s collection of short stories *Empire*, which could even be seen as a cycle of short stories, since not only are they based in the same period and explore the same events from a myriad of perspectives, but also intermingle characters in several stories from the collection. The different characters and encounters with



⁷⁰ Einhaus thinks of ephemera “as a category encompassing items as diverse as newspaper cuttings, postcards, playbills, concert programmes, medals, and printed memorabilia of all kinds” (2021: 30).

otherness allow to construct those shifting and fluid identities and help contextualize the current socio-political dynamics of Ireland, now that old confrontations have been once again exacerbated due to the process of Brexit. This proves that, given the socio-political circumstances at the time of constituting the Irish Free State, internal differences could not be properly overcome even in spite of the ending of the Troubles and the peace process, since their duration and magnitude ended up crystallizing in Irish collective memory and identity. In this vein, all the narratives that are going to be analysed, the short stories as well as the novels, can be considered, following Birgit Neumann's terminology, "fictions of memory". On the one hand, the term alludes to "non-referential narratives that depict the workings of memory" and which therefore show and help understand an important part of Irish history—one not properly explored in history books—in spite of being fictional; and on the other hand, it also refers "to the stories that individuals or cultures tell about their past to answer the question 'who am I?', or, collectively, 'who are we?'" (2008: 334), so that a deeper knowledge of national identity is also revealed in the stories. For Neumann, fictions of memory end up being "an imaginative (re)construction of the past in response to current needs", which in the Irish case evinces, as aforementioned, that the same different identities that coexisted in the transition towards independence remain present today and need to be acknowledged and properly integrated.

3.1.1 *Name Upon Name* by Sheena Wilkinson

Sheena Wilkinson's *Name Upon Name* (2015) can be considered a coming-of-age novel in which a fourteen-year-old, Helen, yearns for self-definition and acceptance within her family, which seems to stand as a reflection of the different identities coexisting in Irish society: Helen is frequently torn between her father's side of the family, the Reids, whose members are Protestants from the city of Belfast, and her mother's, the O'Hares, who are Catholics from Derryward, a farm in County Down and probably very close to Belfast, since the majority of the city belongs to County Antrim, but there is a part which is also located in County Down. The location of the novel in Belfast is quite significant for the author, since she grew up there in the seventies and eighties, that is, during the Troubles, which particularly affected the capital of Northern Ireland. In fact, the author has explained that her family did not fit in the city due to situation that is similar to the one in the novel: "my parents had a mixed marriage which meant Mummy was one of very few Catholics in our area. During the Troubles, this wasn't something to publicise, so we were told to keep it quiet, and if anyone asked me what I was, I was to say 'I'm nothing'" (Wilkinson 2023). In addition, the novel shows glimpses of the reality of the trenches and the experience of the soldiers through the letters home her cousin Sandy sends Helen from the front line, and also portrays the first-person account of another of her cousins, Michael, who shortly after enlisting for the war involuntarily becomes part of the British forces entrusted to repress the Easter Rising. Whereas Sandy's enlistment was not only accepted, but also a motif of pride in the Protestant side of the family, Michael's leads to discussions and confrontations in his Catholic home, where they welcome the Irish rebellion and despise any possible collaboration with the British.

The title *Name Upon Name* is itself a quotation from W.B. Yeats's famous poem "Easter 1916", in which the author specifically refers to the executed leaders of the Rising: "Too long a sacrifice / Can make a stone of the heart. / O when may it suffice? / That is Heaven's part, our part / To murmur name upon name, / As a mother names her child" (Yeats 1999: 38). Wilkinson, nevertheless, employs that same expression in the narrative while referring to the lists of the dead Irish soldiers who fought in the Great War, which equates all the victims of the two traditionally confronted groups and reinforces the idea that both must be remembered and commemorated. In addition, this novel, which could actually be considered as *in-between* a

novel and a novella due to its short extension —with just over 150 pages— has been published in Little Island, a publishing house focused on children and young adult literature, and it has managed to expose the complex reality of the events in simple terms by focusing on the perspective of a teenage Irish girl, resulting in an informative, though fictional, source to introduce young people to that silenced part in Irish history, which is all the more relevant if we take into consideration that the participation of Irish soldiers in the Great War has been left out from many schoolrooms in Ireland. There is even in this respect an explanatory note at the beginning of the book accounting for the different religious convictions and political ideologies that conflicted in the Irish society of the time, as well as for the influence of the Great War in the planning and execution of the Easter Rising.

3.1.2 *Fallen* by Lia Mills

Lia Mills's *Fallen* (2014) is set in Dublin and follows Katie Crilly's process of mourning the loss of her twin brother Liam, who dies fighting at the front in 1915. The novel reflects the siblings' initial disagreement with respect to Liam's enlistment, since she considers it an unnecessary collaboration with Britain, and Katie's effort to understand his choices to become at peace and accept that his death was for a good cause in which he truly believed and for which he was willing to sacrifice himself. Most of the story takes part in 1916 precisely during the outburst of the Easter Rising, whose violence and destruction of the city, together with its implications towards the fellow Irish who were fighting with the British at the front, leads Katie to reconsider and reflect on her political convictions. Memories of her brother's letters intermingle with her own experiences in the midst of the rebellion, allowing for the establishment of parallelisms between both conflicts, oftentimes questioned and seen as futile throughout the narrative. The different events of the rising unfold through the routes of Katie, who moves, from among different points in the city, to her own house, to the nursing home where her sister is interned, and to the home of Dote Colclough, with whom she worked in a book about the history of the public monuments of Dublin. It is at her place, where she lives with her partner May, and at such an unsettling moment, when she gets to know May's nephew, Hubie Wilson, who had been discharged from the army after fighting at the front alongside Katie's brother. Both of them establish a powerful connection while remembering Liam and interchanging insightful ideas concerning the Irish socio-political situation motivated by a mutual desire to understand and to be understood, and to start anew leaving violence and loss behind.

Mills's motivation to write the novel came from her overwhelming realization that there was much more to tell about those years of war and revolution than what the national discourse and agenda had shown —“I had a romantic notion of it that sat comfortably with the soft-focus nationalism that [...] was fed to us pretty relentlessly every step of the way through our formative years in the Ireland I grew up in” (Mills 2016: 150). Mills became aware that a historical silence had installed in her parents' generation and felt complicit in failing to acknowledge “the complexities of a real and multidimensional world” and “the erasures and silences between the lines” (2016: 152). Such realization was, moreover, two-fold, concerning both the Great War and the Easter Rising. It was during a residency at the *Centre Culturel Irlandais* in Paris that she was struck by all the war memorials that were part of the French urban landscape as opposed to that in Ireland, and started to delve into the Irish participation in the conflict:



Traces of Europe's wars were visible everywhere on the continent, but in the Ireland of 2009, instead of remembrance we had a willed and collective

amnesia. The irony was that in our rush to establish ourselves as a plucky, defiant and ultimately successfully *rebellious* nation, we had committed the most pro-establishment and conformist of crimes: we had accepted the official version of events without question or challenge. Without asking whose interests that version might serve. (Mills 2016: 152)

In this vein, by focusing on the narrative around the Easter Rising that was promoted by the Irish Free State and which consequently remained in the collective conscience of the Irish, Mills came to question both the representation of the Easter Rising leaders as national heroes and the almost exclusive attention paid to the executions conducted by the British; thus, she began to explore the reactions to the rebellion on the part of the Irish citizens who were, at that time, committed to the war effort or pending of the lives of their beloved ones fighting at the front, and how the rising was actually lived by the civilians who suffered the consequences of political violence. The extent of the violence perpetrated against civilians during the days of the Rising actually came as a surprise for her, being Mills born in Dublin and unaware of it until that moment:

I was shocked when I learned the extent of the violence of the Rising —the damage to the city, the number of casualties. At a recent count 485 people were killed, almost 1,500 were severely wounded and 100,000 people had to go on relief, having lost everything at the fires. [...] I did wonder why people — politicians in particular— persisted in referring to the 18 men who were executed as though theirs were the only lives lost, when in fact more citizens of Dublin were killed than rebels, soldiers and police put together. I wondered why I never heard a word about the number of citizens of Dublin city who risked their own lives to help total strangers who were stranded or injured. (Mills 2016: 154).

Thus, Mills's novel evinces her will to demystify the grand narratives of the political agenda and to change the focus from the national scale to the individuals who lived through the historical events without receiving due recognition, since their own sacrifice was overshadowed by the political circumstances of the nationalist cause.

3.1.3 “*Each Slow Dusk*” by Sheena Wilkinson

“*Each Slow Dusk*” was published in an anthology titled *The Great War: Stories Inspired by Objects from the First World War* (2014) inspired, in its case, by the school magazines that were written during the war. This evidences the current impulse, as commented above, to focus on the everyday of people considered non-participants but whose lives were notwithstanding changed by the conflict; in the words of Lojo Rodríguez, “the collection’s emphasis on little objects as synecdoques of a larger understanding of history undermines the relevance of grand narratives by emphasizing the *petit récit* of ordinary men and women and the various ways they choose to remember and to construct their particular versions of the Great War” (2020: 24). In addition to this, the collection includes writers from different parts of the world allowing for a plurality of perspectives which goes in line with recent studies of the war that have explored non-Eurocentric experiences and which, as Lojo Rodríguez also notes, “brings to the fore an interesting dialectics between sameness and difference, between the particular and the universal, inherent to any recollection of the past, invariably articulated as a tension between past and present and never neutral” (2020: 24).

The protagonist of the short story is therefore a sixteen-year-old girl named Edith who collaborates in her school preparing parcels for shipment to old students who are fighting at the front, in what they have come to call the Old Boys' Cake Fund (OBCF). Wilkinson sets the narrative once again in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where the community seems to unanimously support the war effort. In Edith's family, there is no evident cultural or political divisions as it happens in Wilkinson's and Mill's novels, but the consequences of war do provoke internal conflicts and unease between the members. After taking part in the war, Edith's brother, Gilbert, is officially discharged due to what was diagnosed as rheumatism, but in reality is a case of shell shock or PTSD that affects him both physically and mentally, with general weakness and fatigue, tremors, anxiety to leave the house, and nightmares at night. Consequently, Edith, a good student with aspirations to enter Queen's University with a scholarship, finds her illusions for independence and self-realization cut short, being trapped to fulfill the roles of caring traditionally assigned to women by having to assist her widowed father and her traumatized brother.

3.1.4 *Empire* by Mary O'Donnell

The short story cycle *Empire* brings together different perspectives and spaces during a key moment in the history of Ireland as was the period from 1915 to 1919, providing thoughtful insights into the socio-economic conditions, the participation in the war and the political discussions triggered by the Easter Rising. As aforementioned, *Empire* can be classified as a cycle not only because some characters intermingle or reappear in different stories, but also because together they offer a fair panoramic of those years which is representative of various classes, ideologies and genders. Mary O'Donnell herself comments in an interview with María Elena Jaime de Pablos why she consciously decided to portray characters who were ordinary and not normally included within main narratives: "most conversation around 1916 centred on elements of battle, of strategy, of how the city would be taken. [...] What I wanted was to create characters who were largely 'ordinary' and not heroic or in battle [...]. My purpose was to evoke their lives while the British Empire was undergoing its final period in Ireland, and to suggest some of their attitudes and views" (O'Donnell 2023: 207). The collection therefore engages with questions pertaining to Irish identity, as constructed in interaction with others, being those British and colonized, and conditioned by historical circumstances and family backgrounds, as was the case in the previous literary narratives. Being Mary O'Donnell from Monaghan, a town close to the Irish border, she demonstrates great awareness and sensitivity towards Irish multiple identities.

The first short story in the collection is the eponymous and longest one, and also the narrative that encompasses a longer time span, since the story begins in 1915 when a young Irish couple —William and Margaret Wheeler— leaves Dublin to go to the British colony of Burma in order to work for the Eastwood Construction Company. Upon their return, they are able to appreciate the different changes that had taken place in Irish society and find trouble readapting to Ireland, with a pro-national environment that praised the leaders of the Rising and deprecated Irish collaborations with the British Empire. The rest of the stories tend to follow a chronological order, so that the different historical events of the period unfold progressively throughout the collection. The second story, "Fortune on a Fair Day", focuses on a young man from Monaghan who decides to enlist to fight at the front just when the Easter Rising takes place, which makes him hesitant as to whether he has made the right choice. The third narrative in the collection, titled "The Black Church", is set in Dublin and follows a little girl who is accidentally caught in the middle of the revolt, and depicts therefore the sudden beginning of the Rising. The following short story, "The Unchosen", already situates itself immediately after

the suppression of the rebellion, focusing on a participant in the Rising that is consequently under arrest at Kilmainham Gaol in May 1916. The fifth short story, “Mrs Ward’s Diary”, reconnects with the first one, since the main characters are Margaret’s mother and brother and the story takes place in Dublin just after the Rising, while Margaret and her husband are still at Burma. The last two can already be considered post-war stories that, in addition, deal with religious institutions: “Tutty’s Mother” explores the discrimination that a boy in a Catholic boarding school at Clongowes Castle suffered by his peers during his staying there, whereas “The Moss-Picker” first shows the life of a pregnant young girl in a convent who ends up in the countryside, recommended by Mrs Ward—that is, Margaret’s mother—picking moss for bandages, which continued to be part of Ireland’s war effort.

3.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL IDENTITIES: TENSIONS AND DIVERGENCES

3.2.1 *Name Upon Name*

Wilkinson’s novel portrays the two senses of identity that have been traditionally present and confronted in Irish society, that is, the binary division between the city and the rural, between Protestant and Catholic households, respectively, within the protagonist’s family. In this sense, it seems to reflect the clichés attributed to both groups of population, since Protestants enjoy a higher social status in the city and consequently also a higher level of education and economic power, whereas Catholics are living off the land, on the fringes of urban areas, and thus in poorer conditions, as can be seen in the fact that, whereas Helen and her parents have electric light in Belfast, there are only oil lamps at Derryward (Wilkinson 2015: 59). Helen is consequently influenced by the prejudices affecting urban and rural lives and by extension, the social value attributed to the inhabitants of both spaces; an example of this would be when in the midst of an argument with Nora—Helen’s cousin and sister of Michael—Helen undermines Uncle Sean’s—Nora’s father—opinion on politics in order to reinforce her own father’s ideas: “he’s only a *farmer*—*my* father’s a teacher” (Wilkinson 2015: 26). By the same token, Helen can scarcely imagine her aunt Violet from her father’s side—thus also an inhabitant of Belfast—wearing her usual clothes in the farm of County Down. Helen herself was already marked by the witnessing of a dead lamb at Derryward when she was a child, as she was not exposed to that kind of violence in the city: “She had sickened instantly, running back to the yard with vomit on her dress, wailing, and Nora had laughed at the state of her” (Wilkinson 2015: 59). Nora is presented in the narrative as Helen’s nemesis, since she is older and also apparently more mature, whereas Helen feels very self-conscious; more politically aware than Helen, Nora defines herself as an Irish nationalist and judges Helen based on her lack of commitment towards the Irish cause and the Catholic morals. It is remarkable, in this respect, a point in the narrative where she reprehends Helen for reading schoolgirls’ stories and failing to understand the importance and solemnity of Good Friday:

Nora wrinkled her nose. “When *I* was at school,” she said, as if this was at least a decade ago, “the nuns banned all school stories. *Especially* Angela Brazil. And I don’t think you should be reading something so frivolous on Good Friday.” [...]

“It was a lot more fun than sitting in a stupid church all afternoon anyway.”

Nora stretched her eyes wide in exaggerated horror. “Good Friday isn’t meant to be *fun*. It’s the most solemn day of the year. But when you’ve been raised as a *heathen*—” (Wilkinson 2015: 105-106)

On top of the material conditions, there is therefore the evident cultural barrier, mostly based on faith and religious practices, but also on questions pertaining to their Irish identity and

political convictions. Thus, even if Helen could be able to picture her aunt in the farm, she considers it impossible for her to bear the Catholic and Celtic emblems that are part of the house's decoration: "Aunt Violet might —just— have coped with socks and livestock, but she would never have been able to sit in the same room as the Sacred Heart picture. Even Helen's cousin Michael's silver cups for Gaelic games [...] would have made her lips disappear inside her mouth with disapproval" (Wilkinson 2015: 22). Interestingly enough, Helen wonders what her other cousin, Sandy, son of Violet, would think of Michael in that case, and if both of them would be able to connect simply based on sportsmanship, even when Sandy practiced more traditionally English sports: "She wondered what Sandy would think —Sandy had won plenty of cups too, but his were for cricket and rugby" (Wilkinson 2015: 22).⁷¹ One of Helen's fears in the novel is whether her two beloved cousins, who are meeting for the first time, would be able to get on well: "It would be the first time her boy cousins had met. The two halves of the family, Reids and O'Hares, had never had much in common. [...] Helen had a sudden cold fear that Sandy and Michael, probably her two favourite people in the world, would hate each other" (Wilkinson 2015: 22). Another example that alludes to cultural symbols would be when, on one occasion, Helen's mother comes back home with a present from her sister Bridie, which is a brooch with the symbol of Ireland, that is, the shamrock: "It was a little shamrock in chips of Connemara marble, much prettier than the sapphire brooch Aunt Violet had kicked up such a fuss about" (Wilkinson 2015: 45). The green of the Connemara marble —colour of Ireland— symbolically stands in opposition to the blue of the sapphire, which relates to the United Kingdom, and especially to Scotland, from which most of the settlers of the Plantation of Ulster came; in this sense, it could have been used to provide that connection between the colonial past and the Protestant Ascendancy. Even though Helen's grandmother is able to appreciate the brooch, Violet seems uncomfortable and refuses to touch it: "Granny admired Mama's new brooch. Aunt Violet said it was pretty but kept her hands clasped in her lap when Granny offered it to her. As if the shamrock would somehow contaminate her with its Irishness" (Wilkinson 2015: 50).

Those internal divisions within the family end up affecting Helen's own home and their parents' relationship, since her mother needs to occasionally spend a few days in Derryward for health reasons with increasing frequency, an issue that concerns both Helen and her father, to the point that she avoids speaking about it with her cousin:

"It was funny, seeing Aunt Eileen there," he said. "She seemed more comfortable than she does at home. I suppose it's where she grew up."

Helen bit her lip.

"Sorry," Sandy said. "Was that the wrong thing to say? I just meant —well, it's good that she can go there. For her health."

"Hmmm." Helen didn't want to talk about Mama. (Wilkinson 2015: 35)

It seems to be obvious that her mother feels out of place in Belfast, especially with the growing conflict between the two Irish groups due to the different opinions regarding the war effort. Her feelings are not unfounded, since she does not seem to have been accepted in the Protestant family of her husband. As a matter of fact, Helen had overheard a conversation between Violet and a friend of hers in which her aunt condescendingly despised her mother for being a Catholic:

⁷¹ It was very common in war narratives to portray soldiers who used to practice sports, which not only could serve as a metaphor for the spirit of camaraderie that characterized the military units, but also emphasized the role that sports affiliations played in recruitment, as commented on section 1.3. In fact, in Mills's *Fallen*, Liam's only possible qualities for combat are reduced to his sporting achievements: "there was nothing warlike about Liam, never had been, but he was a crack-shot, a gun-club champion, and had a collection of pewter tankards and trophies to prove it" (Mills 2014: 7).

“a very nice woman in her way, but you know, they Aren’t Like Us” (Wilkinson 2015: 20). Moreover, in spite of her young age, Helen is aware that neither side of the family has blessed her parents’ marriage —“She knew both families had been against her parents’ marriage” (Wilkinson 2015: 46).

Helen, for her part, feels slightly uneasy in both places, unsure about how to behave properly and thus she seems to occupy a non-defined position, not seen as Catholic enough by her cousin Nora —who insults her not only calling her a “heathen” (Wilkinson 2015: 106), as already seen, or also a “Proddy British” (Wilkinson 2015: 109), which was a derogatory term used for Irish Catholics to refer to Protestants— neither as Protestant enough by her aunt Violet. At the beginning of the novel, Helen is aware of the political and cultural differences, yet she sometimes lacks the ability to cope with those issues, as is made evident when she suggests her aunt Violet, when she has lost her brooch, to say a prayer to Saint Anthony, “the patron saint of lost things” (Wilkinson 2015: 19); she immediately realizes that it was not appropriate, but it seems to be a pattern for her to make that kind of mistakes: “as soon as the words were out of Helen’s mouth, she knew she’d made one of her blunders” (Wilkinson 2015: 19). In effect, even though her aunt restricts herself to give her a sharp answer —“There’ll be no need for that, thanks”— Helen can hear the words “‘Catholic nonsense’ [...] hovering in the air around them” (Wilkinson 2015: 19). In spite of that, once Violet finds her brooch, Helen cannot hold back and insists on using the same saying, which sparks an argument between her aunt and her mother:

“It must have been that wee prayer I said to Saint Anthony.”
Aunt Violet looked at Mama. “I hope this isn’t the kind of thing you encourage, Eileen?”
“What sort of thing?”
“All that —well, mumbo-jumbo.”
“*Catholic* mumbo-jumbo, do you mean?” [...]
“It’s only a wee thing we say,” Helen explained, wishing now that she hadn’t taken the opportunity to tease Aunt Violet. She should have known it wouldn’t end well, and there was Mama looking tight and cross, with those red spots of anger burning in her pale cheeks.
“*We*? Helen —you’ve come to church with us since you were a baby,” Aunt Violet said. “You know perfectly well it’s nonsense to pray to *saints*.” She said it in the same contemptuous way Nora had said *British*. “Nobody can intercede for you with God.” [...]
“Please, don’t tell my daughter that her mother’s faith is nonsense,” Mama said in a calm voice that made Helen shiver. (Wilkinson 2015: 50-51)

Helen’s mother Eileen cannot help but feel frequently discredited and misunderstood, since her own daughter has been raised with different values and she always has to go alone to church, which is another issue that remains unspoken at their home. When Michael stays with them for a few days and goes with her to mass on Sunday, Helen notices her mother’s humour improves: “she had come home with a kid of glow Helen wasn’t used to. ‘It was lovely not being on my own for once,’ she had said [...]. Helen had said nothing. Mama worshipping alone was one of the things they didn’t mention” (Wilkinson 2015: 63).

Under the apparent stereotypes, the novel proves to be more complex when reflecting the socio-political situation. Even though it is made evident that the Catholic side of the family identifies much more with Irish roots and supports nationalism, Nora’s mother, Bridie, is actually concerned about her daughter’s political radicalization and distrusts the influence that Gerry, a worker at the farm and Nora’s love interest, exerts over her: “‘Bridie doesn’t know

what to do about Nora. She's far too great with that Gerry. And he seems a bit of a hothead. Has her head filled with romantic notions about Ireland” (Wilkinson 2015: 47). Later in the novel, the situation seems to have become worse when Nora confronts her brother Michael out of his decision to enlist; Helen ends up overhearing a conversation between her mother and her aunt Bridie in this respect: “‘Nora’s been difficult since —well...⁷² And I don’t really like Gerry’s influence.’ She lowered her voice but Helen strained to hear. ‘It’s not just that he’s only a farmhand. But he has her head turned about suffering Ireland. Since the Fianna started in the town he’s got very radical ideas. I don’t like it. I’m glad it wasn’t going when Michael was that age” (Wilkinson 2015: 108). Fianna was a sobriquet for the Irish Volunteers, which at that time had already become a separate organization that opposed Redmond’s support of the war; some of whose members were, in fact, behind the organization of the Easter Rising. It is therefore made evident that the historical events leading to the Rising, including Irish participation in the war, played a fundamental role in the political positioning of the Irish and oftentimes led to radicalization of political ideas, as well as to confrontations that affected social relations.

3.2.2 *Fallen*

Similarly as in *Name Upon Name*, the family depicted in *Fallen* also presents internal divisions based on religion and political convictions that serve to exemplify the wider context of the Irish society. It is made evident that they are Catholics, because Katie’s mother, Mildred, did not approve of the relationships of her daughter Eva with a Protestant. Katie’s sister decided to marry Bartley “despite everything Mother did to try to stop her” (Mills 2014: 28) and, since then, her mother and Bartley are not yet in friendly terms: “They were so polite to each other always, their excessive manners an indication of their mutual dislike” (Mills 2014: 22). Katie remembers that the day of Eva’s wedding, her mother actually forbid them from attending, so Liam ended up having to skip classes to be able to go and was consequently expelled from his boarding school: “Our mother wasn’t happy; she didn’t go herself. She didn’t want us to go. I think it was her who kept him home, after. She was mortified by all the fuss. The whole school had been out combing the grounds, looking for him” (Mills 2014: 181). Katie herself also disobeyed her mother that day out of her will to support her sister, which shows that both Katie and Liam belonged to a younger generation that was not so close-minded when it came to religious convictions:

I’d ducked school as well that day. I’d heard Mother tell Eva she was bound for hell and I didn’t want her to have to go there alone. I was sitting at the back of the church in a state of terror when Liam slunk into the pew beside me, grinning, smelling of straw and warm milk after the lift he’s taken on a milk-lorry. The bonus of it was that after all the fuss died down, Liam went to the day school around the corner. Eva left home that day, but Liam came back. (Mills 2014: 181)

In the same vein, Liam’s fiancée, Isabel, is also frequently distrusted and treated as an outsider during the novel; for instance, when Katie’s mother is reading a letter from Isabel, Katie relates her attitude to the one she shows with Eva and Bartley:

The look in her eyes [...] reminded me of how she went on when Eva married Bartley, filling the house with priests and sodality women and endless decades of the Rosary. We had to spend hours on our knees, praying for Eva to see sense

⁷² Bridie is probably referring here to Michael’s enlistment. The fact that she is unable to mention that fact proves that the situation has generated an uncomfortable silence within the family.

and for Bartley's conversion. Then she sneaked Alanna off to be baptized, all of us sworn to such secrecy, you'd swear we were still in Penal times.⁷³ (Mills 2014: 72)

Also, when their dad, Bill, gives Liam one of his mother's rings to propose to Isabel—which significantly has emerald chips, the same as the brooch Eileen receives in *Name Upon Name* and thus also stands as a symbol of Ireland—their mother is upset that Isabel is going to receive the ring: “Mother closed her eyes. The look of pain on her face gave me a lump in my throat” (Mills 2014: 20). This attitude, on the part of their mother, leads us to speculate that Isabel's faith or ascendancy might differ from theirs. In this sense, Katie even knows that the fact that Con, a friend of Liam, decided to study at Trinity College Dublin—an institution of Protestant tradition, since it was founded by Queen Elizabeth I in the style of Oxford and Cambridge—instead of going to University College Dublin—which had been founded, in contraposition, as the national Catholic University of Ireland—could have been reason enough for her mother to despise him: “Unusually for a Catholic, Con had gone to Trinity. Mother did not hold this against him. All through college he had a standing invitation to Sunday lunch at our house” (Mills 2014: 42).

The socio-political context concerning both Irish nationalism and its colonial past is revealed through the landscape of the city, progressively depicted in the descriptions of the streets and statues of Dublin that Katie encounters and studies. At the beginning of the story, she significantly arrives at Rutland Square, a meaningful place in Irish history, since its surrounding buildings were used by the Gaelic League, the Irish Republic Brotherhood (IRB), the Irish Volunteers and the newspaper *An Phoblacht*, all of them organizations related to the national cause. Today, it has been renamed to Parnell Square, in honour of the nationalist politician, and has a garden of remembrance which pays homage to the people who gave their lives for the independence of the country. Thus, the novel hints at the imminent outburst of the Easter Rising since the beginning, and there is even a moment in the narrative where Katie establishes a connection between the urban planning of the city and the unfulfilled aspirations of the Irish: “Well. Big dreams that come to nothing are something of a speciality in Dublin. It aspires to be a city, but has the habits of a village” (Mills 2014: 40). This idea seems to connect with the pattern of a trauma-based society in which national rebellions always ended in defeat. The novel alternates nationalist landmarks of the city with areas that belong to the colonial past of Ireland, for instance, later that day Katie walks in the nearby of Rutland Square through North Great George's Street, which is full of Georgian architecture that significantly seems to already be in a state of decay:

You could read the history of this area in these decaying terraces of large Georgian houses, whose rooms once offered comfortable homes to gentry families, now mostly run to offices, boarding houses and tenements. One or two were near-derelect, with gapped windows and missing doors. Our own terrace had been saved from dereliction by its position and the trams; it had boarding houses and a small hotel to keep it going. (Mills 2014: 12)

Katie had studied a degree in history, the same as her twin brother Liam, which allows her to delve into the history and identity of the Irish and to develop sensitivity towards memorial buildings, especially once she starts working as a research assistant for Dote in a project about

⁷³ This is a reference to the Penal Laws against Catholics that were imposed in the seventeenth century, which were mentioned in section 1.2, “Ireland in 1914: The Simmering Conflict of a Colony”.

Dublin's public monuments. Up to that time, even in spite of her education, she admits that she had not properly appreciated and gotten to know the history of Dublin and, by extension, of Ireland: "I had walked through the world blinkered, blind to its texture and deaf to its music; now I discovered cities within the city" (Mills 2014: 37). What Katie seems to get to know now for the first time now are both the stories of the people behind the monuments and those behind the process of construction, that is, whether this had been controversial, which oftentimes reveals socio-political intricacies—as has been seen in section 2.1 of this thesis, "Welcoming Irish Veterans: Commemorations and Amends", with respect to the delays in agreeing and building an Irish war memorial:

She [Dote] told us who had been paid for their work and who hadn't, who'd died before a monument could be completed, who'd made rival bids, what they all went on to do after. [...] She spoke about them as though they were living, breathing characters who should be as well known to me as members of my own family. "They're memory-aids," she said. "And if we lose our memory, how do we know who we are?" (Mills 2014: 35)

In this respect, for instance, there is a reference to the Wellington Monument located in Phoenix Park which commemorates the victories of Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington and born into the Protestant Ascendancy, during the Napoleonic Wars. The completion of the obelisk was delayed partly because of the general dislike towards his figure in Ireland: "'Of course, Wellington wasn't liked in Dublin, any more than he liked it, or its citizens,' she said. 'The memorial committee ran out of money in the end. The monument stayed unfinished for years'" (Mills 2014: 36). In addition, different opinions on Parnell's monument are shared which seem to metaphorically reveal the political and historical background, given Parnell's frustrated attempt to achieve Home Rule. Dote's partner, May, sees the figure as manifesting that failure, whereas Katie considers it fulfills its purpose of making itself known: "Dote despised it [...]. May said the figure of Parnell was just like a policeman directing traffic at a crossroads, making the congestion worse. I liked that about it. It got in our way. 'Isn't that the point?' I said. 'Like it or not, we can't ignore it'" (Mills 2014: 45). Katie, the same as her brother Liam, mainly liked the statue because both of them concurred with Parnell's vision of nationalism as obtained peacefully by parliament:

Liam was fond of quoting the speech the inscription was taken from. I closed my eyes to let the words run through my mind. *No man has the right to say to his country, 'Thus far shall thou go and no further'*. Liam and I were all for a free Ireland, but like Parnell we didn't believe it was worth shedding blood for. Liam preferred a gradual, planned, parliamentary route—and look, it took him to war just the same. (Mills 2014: 45-46)

Another Irish political figure mentioned in the novel that was respected by both siblings, and especially admired by Liam, was Tom Kettle. He had first caught Liam's attention during college when he taught him Economics, displaying "stirring theories about Ireland's brilliant future as an independent nation among other European nations. It was he who gave Liam his taste for politics, his ambition to go into parliament one day" (Mills 2014: 7-8). Thus, the novel intertwines Ireland's nationalist sentiments from the past—referring to a previous attempt to achieve Home Rule with Parnell—and the political environment around 1914 with the possibility of establishing Home Rule again, which renews the aspirations for a free Ireland and

prepares the atmosphere for the Easter Rising, while simultaneously establishing a contrast between democratic and revolutionary ways.

3.2.3 “Each Slow Dusk”

“Each Slow Dusk” does not delve deep into cultural and ideological divisions, which helps readers focus on the effects of the war in any family, no matter whether Protestant or Catholic, loyalist or nationalist. It instead prioritizes gender roles and dynamics common of the period, offering a more universal or at least non-exclusive Irish perspective. Notwithstanding, the story is set in Belfast, and it is suggested that the economic situation of the family has worsened in the last years due to the illness of her mother, who seems to have died not long time ago, as evinced by the fact that they do not longer have a housekeeper, which is still a relatively new situation for Edith’s brother: “Gilbert won’t think of opening it, even if he hears it from upstairs. He can’t get used to the fact that we have no proper servants now” (Wilkinson 2016: 248). This seems to be the main reason that prevents Edith from being able to afford a higher education. As explored in section 1.3, one of the reasons that led Irish to enlist was basically economic profit, since their families would receive an allowance for their service in the British army; even if not implied in the narrative, it is an acknowledged factor that the enlistment of Edith’s brother Gilbert would help the family in that situation of need. There is, in addition, a general support of the war effort, as seen in the school activities, as well as in the sense of duty and camaraderie that the story transmits; in this respect, Frank, the brother of Edith’s friend Maud, is frequently despised throughout the narrative for not having enlisted as other people of his age did, including Edith’s brother, whom he used to be his friends with. The relationship between them consequently becomes a little tense, as observed in the fact that several days pass before Frank pays Gilbert a visit, while the rest of their friends are still at the front: “‘I think he’s lonely. All of his friends are away at war.’ Or dead. Except Frank of course, but Frank hasn’t called” (Wilkinson 2016: 242). This evinces that beyond an apparent pro-war atmosphere, there were, in a similar fashion to the novels, underlying socio-political tensions that played a role in their decision to enlist and consequently affected personal relations.

3.2.4 *Empire*: “Empire” and “Mrs Ward’s Diary”

The collection *Empire* opens with its eponymous short story, which sets the framework of the period around the First World War and the Easter Rising—since the narrative unfolds from the beginning of the war to its end—while providing the socio-political context of Ireland during those years, as well as a portrayal of Irish identities as ambiguous and constructed in convergence with British and colonized senses of belonging. The story focuses on a newlywed couple of the Dublin upper-middle class, William and Margaret Wheeler, who embark on a journey to Mandalay, in the British colony of Burma—the current Myanmar, which became independent from the United Kingdom in 1948—so that William can work as an engineer for an imperial enterprise, the Eastwood Construction Company. Throughout the story, the events that take place in their homeland during their absence—the Easter Rising especially—in such a moment of transition in which the colony of Ireland initiates its path towards independence, together with their own experiences living at the border of the British Empire and interacting with otherness, foster a reflection on their identity as Irish: “being in the liminality of a historical and topographical threshold, these characters eventually acquire a new understanding of their identity as Irish through their interactions with both coloniser and colonised, being themselves betwixt and between perpetrators in the imperial enterprise and subalterns who identify with the Burmese” (Román-Sotelo 2022: 91).

The story presents, since the beginning, the socio-economic circumstances of Ireland previous to the outburst of the Rising when Margaret revises the last relevant historical events as if she would have to explain them to her father, who passed away only a few years ago — “Father’s death seemed so long ago. At ten years’ remove, it was a very different country to peer back into. How on earth would she —or any of them— manage to explain to him how the world had changed since 1905?” (O’Donnell 2018: 12). She takes into consideration the technological developments that she has been able to observe in those years, in both joyful and tragic circumstances. She, for instance, takes pleasure in reminiscing about the Irish International Exhibition of 1907 —“He had missed the Great Exhibition in Herbert Park, only two years after his death. The three of them —Mother, Francis and she— had passed the day so pleasurably and stylishly, it still thrilled Margaret to think about it. It was very modern. With many industrial advancements” (O’Donnell 2018: 13)— but also laments the sinking of the Titanic, “after which they knew that they were living in a modern, often terrifying world, in which hope could be completely destroyed. She thought of the deaths of people just like her, and of people in the steerage class, [...] the dismal terror of their drowning in the frozen North Atlantic on that Leviathan of a ship which was supposed to be unsinkable” (O’Donnell 2018: 13). In a sense, Margaret also acknowledges the destructive power of all the new machinery that is currently being employed at war: “Father was missing the war in Flanders and France, where many of their own —though not Francis— were valiantly fighting the German enemy. [...] It would have been like explaining a whole new country, with a whole new language, to a befuddled stranger” (O’Donnell 2018: 13).

The poor economic conditions of the Irish are made explicit when Margaret and William, on their journey towards Burma, see with their own eyes the amount of Irish who expect to find work in England, ready to travel by boat from Kingstown —currently renamed to its original Irish name Dún Laoghaire— with their worn-out clothes and scarce belongings, due to the lack of opportunities in their homeland, where their own lives are at risk:

Kingstown was humming with turmoil [...] given the number of other travellers, which included the casual labourers crossing over to find work in England. She watched as they too boarded, with shabby coats and worn caps, clutching small packages and simple valises. Nobody could blame the men and women who left the slums. She knew from Mother, who was a regular visitor to the women lying-in, how babies and even new mothers often died within months of a birth. And the men had no work, as Francis was always saying. (O’Donnell 2018: 12)

In this sense, it has to be acknowledged that the impact of the Great Famine that took place during the 1840s was still to be perceived in these waves of migration, which extended from the last half of the nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth century: “the Great Famine turned Ireland into an emigrant society: no European country in the nineteenth century would lose so high a percentage of its population to the emigrant ship as Ireland” (Bartlett 2010: 289). The story is also put against the backdrop of controversial labour conditions, since the Dublin Lock-out of 1913, which left many workers on the verge of starvation, is also mentioned in the narrative as a turning point in the minds of many Irish who were against trade unions, as was the case of Margaret’s mother: “Mother had initially frowned on the idea of organised labourers, but slightly over two years earlier, the debacle on Sackville Street had convinced her that the men had no choice but to fight, when they were locked out of their jobs because they refused to pledge never to join the union” (O’Donnell 2018: 12). The conflict between union activists and employers had escalated to the point that “in August 1913 some four hundred

Dublin employers headed by the redoubtable William Martin Murphy, former nationalist Member of Parliament and owner of the *Irish Catholic* and *Irish Independent* newspapers, embarked on a full-scale lock-out in Dublin in order to crush the ITGU” (Bartlett 2010: 369). The Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union (ITGU) had been founded by James Larkin in 1909 and was at the centre of the lock-out that took place from 26 August 1913 to 18 January 1914.⁷⁴ Thus, the story situates Ireland within the European context of technological advances and war, evidencing its integration in the British Empire, while also portraying the harsh conditions derived from their colonial past, as were hard labour and migration.

In this vein, the characters also partake in this ambiguity inherent to the Irish context, feeling themselves fortunate to be part of the modern metropolis and simultaneously out of place in the role of colonizers. Especially at the beginning of the story, both Margaret and William display the ideology of imperialist discourse, as reflected on how they prejudge the local people in Burma and also on their own sense of entitlement towards them. Margaret opposes the idea of going to Burma —“The prospect of going to Burma had bothered her for months now, so that every morning on awakening, she had experienced a fearful pain in her stomach” (O’Donnell 2018: 8)— partly because she fears that she will find no peers and thus no solace in the companionship of others: “Margaret very much doubted that she would meet another like-minded woman in Mandalay” (O’Donnell 2018: 11). Moreover, some concern towards the idea of raising children in a foreign land, especially in a colony of the Empire, is manifested on several occasions throughout the story, owing to imperial prejudice evident in the couple’s fears of their children becoming “native”, that is, that they would adopt some of the characteristics of the place and its people, which would make them unfit for the Western civilized society. Since the beginning, Margaret is glad that they still have no children to take with them to Burma: “It could all have been so much worse, she thought, had they had children” (O’Donnell 2018: 9). Once they have a child there, Henry, they start discussing his diet, just in case it could affect their future social integration:

“But the beef is poor when we can get it, and since we’re here, we may as well join in the local tendencies—”

“That’s exactly what we want to guard against, my darling!” William replied irritably. “We don’t want to inculcate everything —everything *native*— in our child, do we?” Immediately, he hated himself for having used that word, but he hadn’t intended it badly, so much as a way of comparing the traits of one culture with another and hoping that they —being Irish and from the edge of the European continent— would be able to rear children who would fit properly back into their homeland when that time came. (O’Donnell 2018: 34-35)

In addition to this, before their arrival in Burma, they fully believed in the idea of the civilizing mission promulgated to sustain the profitable business of colonization. Margaret describes their destination, Mandalay, as “the mysterious heart of that rich country, close to the tribesmen whom the British had been organising since the early nineteenth century. There were roads to be build and bridges to be constructed in snake-infested territory with few doctors and even fewer hospitals” (O’Donnell 2018: 10). William, furthermore, declares himself an admirer of the efficacy in which the British conduct their labour in the colonies, even if to achieve their

⁷⁴ According to Bartlett, “the lock-out was marked by attacks carried out on the workers by the police and by members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a Catholic fraternal organisation modelled on the Orange Order, and enlisted on the side of the bosses. Employer-sponsored violence elicited a response from the workers in November 1913, when Connolly set up a Citizen Army, about two hundred strong, which had as its objective the protection of those denied work” (2010: 369).

purpose they deliberately exploit an alien land, under the premise used in imperialist propaganda that the local inhabitants fail to realize the richness and profitability of their own resources:

The system worked perfectly, if one accepted that Burma was empire now, under Indian rule, and not merely Burma. Once the forest was stripped and flattened, the hundreds of hectares cleared of snakes, wildfowl, tigers and boars and endless greenery, once the valuable heart of it — the teak tree trunks were lumbered down country by vast teams of elephants, all was readied and improved for road and bridge-building. It was a matter of seeing the problem of the country as a whole. Of fitting pieces together so as to improve it and to improve product yields. At least, that had been his view when he and Margaret had left Ireland, a view founded on his logical admiration of groups of people who got things done, namely the British. Take rubber, those clumps of odd elastic material. There were fortunes to be made there and they could see it, and it had crossed his own mind on more than one occasion that he too might invest in some of the rubber companies springing up throughout Asia. Margaret did not encourage it, being determined to return to Ireland immediately after the three-year contract with the Eastwood Construction Company had expired. But there could be no doubt that everything the British had set their eyes on had been ingeniously exploited. (O'Donnell 2018: 27)

William therefore wanted to become a man of success by imitating British methods and to achieve something greater than anything that Ireland could provide him, which leads him to accept the job: “as an engineer William was now in great demand, which was the reason they were leaving for Burma. That, and his restlessness. Somehow, Dublin was too small for him” (O'Donnell 2018: 9-10). In addition to this, his peers' recommendation to join the imperial enterprise and the uncertainty provoked by the war played an important part in his decision to sign the contract: “Several old school friends from Clongowes had praised the tropics and the expatriate lifestyle. [...] With the war on in Europe, everything was unpredictable, they had advised late in 1914” (O'Donnell 2018: 32). Even later in the story, after becoming disillusioned with the functioning of the imperial enterprise, he tries to convince himself that he made the most sensible decision: “William occasionally felt trapped. And cowardly, mostly on account of some things he had witnessed when out on the job. [...] Was he a coward? He hoped not. Any man in his right mind, with qualifications such as his, any sound fellow seeking opportunities would not have spurned the lucrative offer of professional work in a bustling, expanding outpost of the empire” (O'Donnell 2018: 30). However, Margaret's brother, Francis, himself a member of the Irish Citizen Army, disapproves of their collaboration with the British, as well as of the fact that they are choosing to leave their country instead of trying to fight and work for it:

She did not want to be shot of Ireland, of course. Francis certainly disapproved of their going so far away, but that was because, as a good brother, he appreciated her desire to remain in Dublin. She knew, though, that his feeling was also connected to his involvement with the Irish Citizen Army. Francis believed that Irish people should live and work in and for Ireland. He could not, for the life of him, comprehend why William had felt it so critical to bring his engineering skills to Burma, to work under the British. It was not Burma Francis objected to, but the British.

“We still haven’t got rid of them ourselves. Can you imagine how those poor people in Burma must be feeling?” (O’Donnell 2018: 14)

It is pertinent here to mention Francis’s awareness of their position within the Empire as the oppressed and thus as opposed to the English oppressors, which binds them together with the Burmese. Cross-colonial ties were sometimes acknowledged and encouraged by Irish nationalists during that period, but constitutional nationalists of the nineteenth century were, notwithstanding, already careful not to present Ireland as a colony of the United Kingdom due to Ireland’s implication in the imperial expansion:

One of the reasons that may explain why the leaders of Irish moderate nationalism avoided defining Ireland as a colony is that Ireland had been deeply involved in the construction and expansion of the British Empire. Far from being denied, Ireland’s participation in British empire building was put forward as one further argument in favor of legislative autonomy. In other words, Irish parliamentary leaders took responsibility for what modern nationalism deemed as ‘unwelcome’ and ‘ambivalence heritage.’ (Collombier-Lakeman 2009: 60-61)

In this vein, Daniel O’Connell had already shown concern towards the imperial policies applied in India, categorizing them as “injudicious”, “tyrannical” and “oppressive” (Collombier-Lakeman 2009: 63-64).⁷⁵ Nevertheless, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the midst of Home Rule negotiations, according to Pauline Collombier-Lakeman, “Redmond even redefined Irish moderate nationalism as combining ‘imperial patriotism as well as . . . local patriotism’” (2009: 61), so as to conciliate the idea of becoming a separate nation with that of belonging to an empire. In this respect, Collombier-Lakeman negotiates the apparent contradictory Irish views on the empire —rejecting the concept, while simultaneously wanting to take part in the matter— by discerning two different notions of imperialism:

Their vision of empire may also have fluctuated because they had in reality two very different definitions of imperialism. If imperialism led to oppression and dispossession, a parallel with Ireland was easily established and imperialism condemned; yet if imperialism meant fairness and unity, which was what Irish nationalist MPs aspired to establish between Ireland and Britain, imperialism was claimed as a value shared by both the Irish and the English. (2009: 68)

In this regard, the short story establishes a contrast between, on the one hand, William’s expectations of a peaceful colonial environment and, on the other, the reality of a vast unknown territory and of the colonizers’ brutality: “what they longed to see and hear during those first, innocent days —but did not— were exotic things like bejewelled maharajas and triumphant bugles, signs of the harmony of land and empire” (O’Donnell 2018: 28). In this sense, Margaret for instance holds on to a gong from the home where she grew up which her mother have gifted to her before their departure —“*I have packed the gong most carefully in the new mahogany trunk! It will arrive in excellent condition, so have no concern about that. I shall have our servant use it to announce our meals*” (O’Donnell 2018: 9). Said gong seems to symbolize not only Margaret’s attachment to the homeland, but also the power that both she and William

⁷⁵ Daniel O’Connell (1775-1847) was an Irish nationalist leader who established the Catholic Association in order to campaign for Catholic emancipation, achieving the Catholic Relief Act in 1829, which gave O’Connell the pseudonym “the Liberator”.

believe to have but happens to be overthrown by the immensity and overpowering nature of the Burmese jungle:

It stood rather uselessly now in the large timbered hallway [...]. Kyi struggled to keep the brass gleaming and golden, so great was the humidity and heat, and on the one occasion Margaret had asked cook to strike the gong to announce dinner, they could scarcely hear more than a thin high quavering sound. So ineffective was it in the wide space of their home, with the dining room situated at the opposite end of the house, that it suddenly lost all meaning. And now sat insignificantly swamped by the intense energies, metals and temperatures that were gradually rearranging Margaret's life. (O'Donnell 2018: 22)

For the couple to adapt themselves to Burma, Margaret is assisted by a local maid, Kyi, whereas William is assigned a local man, Minh, to accompany him through the jungle. Both of them, especially in William's case, see them as their own possessions at first —Minh is described, in this sense, as “William's man” (O'Donnell 2018: 24). Progressively, they nonetheless become closer to them, much more than to other colonizers, and therefore establish a different relationship with the local people than was usually the norm there, which allows William to empathise with them and to feel pity for how they had been overpowered by the British forces: “Having got to know his man Minh rather better than his employers would approve of [...] William also realised that once the British had marched into Mandalay back in the 1880s, the locals —smaller, rice and fish-fed, the least pugilistic of people— knew themselves to be no match for these rhythmically-stepping, red-uniformed giants” (O'Donnell 2018: 29). Moreover, when at some point in the novel, William reprimands Margaret for relying too much on Kyi, she brings to the fore that they both would have been lost without their company and service: “I could not have survived without her, my dear, and that is the truth, no more than you could have survived this far without Minh” (O'Donnell 2018: 24).

The British colonizers' attitude towards the local people proves to be cruel and unfair in contraposition, as William especially manages to realize there, since the British take for “insolence” sometimes “an attitude or bearing on the part of a servant, rather than an actual action, but even it could be severely punished” (O'Donnell 2018: 29). At some point in Burma, he wonders whether he had already suspected something obscure in the imperial business, concluding that he should have thought of possible parallelisms with the misconduct of the Dublin administration: “Did he realise such things when he and Margaret had set out on their great adventure? Not really, although he would have had his suspicions about layers of corruption, being Irish and having witnessed how things sometimes worked sneakily and cunningly in the Dublin administration” (O'Donnell 2018: 29). Once in Burma, William becomes aware of other similarities which bring Ireland's colonial past to the fore, such as the renaming of places, which not only helped erase the language of the colonized, but also the history and culture associated to those spaces, whose names used to make part of them: “Though the pity was that they had a frightful habit of renaming things, just as they had done in Ireland, where placenames were subsumed into a new Britishness that simply did not fit with the place. He was thinking of Mandalay Palace, now called Fort Dufferin after the Viceroy of India. Somehow, the name did not sit quite right in William's mind” (O'Donnell 2018: 27). Regarding the Irish case, for instance, “the name of the Irish town Dún Laoghaire, which derived from the Irish king Lóegaire mac Néill, was at that time substituted by “Kingstown” in honour of George IV, which in the story is, significantly, the point of departure of Margaret and William's journey” (Román-Sotelo 2022: 95).

William becomes already disenchanted with how everything was conducted in Burma when he first visits the British Club, where he finds everyone inebriated: “On entering the club William held his breath for a moment, overwhelmed by the heavy fug of male bodies, and an impression of quiet drunkenness. [...] A hard stone of anxiety and regret suddenly dropped in William’s stomach. Was this what he had signed up for in the interests of personal advancement?” (O’Donnell 2018: 31-32). On top of that atmosphere, they also disrespect his wife for her Irish origins: “And of course we’re all dying to meet that little Gaelic wifey of yours, eh? Word has it she’s a modern girl. Quite the enchantress, eh?” (O’Donnell 2018: 32). He was invited to the club by Mark Palmer, who is the project supervisor and seems to be appreciated among the British expatriates and the local authorities, but William is hesitant about him and more reluctant to trust him:

Palmer was generally considered to be well in with the local bigwigs. Affable, it appeared to William, he was gregarious too, yet despite those qualities William could not quite warm to the man, although he couldn’t pinpoint the nature of the misgiving. [...] That was it, William concluded. It was the word “native” that bothered him, not that he was unprepared for this or unknowing. It was what the British called everybody who worked beneath them throughout the empire, and although the word was perfectly accurate it had become pejorative. (O’Donnell 2018: 31)

It is the word “native” therefore that triggers recollections of a traumatic national past in Ireland which interposes in the integration of William with the rest of the colonizers. Palmer also refers to the locals as “apes”, evincing their ideas on race superiority, and also displays a patronising attitude when it comes to their understanding of wealth and faith, once again personally attacking William’s own culture:

“You’ll learn that darkies can be obstinate, Wheeler,” he once remarked, before spitting off to his right as they rode along. “It’s not them to take orders. You have to watch them.” [...]
 “I suppose they believe it’s still their country,” William responded lamely. [...]
 “But it isn’t theirs. It bloody isn’t, and if there’s one thing we’re going to show these wogs—from the Lieutenant Governor right down the line—it’s that we call the tune because we know what to do, dammit.”
 “And they don’t?”
 “They absolutely don’t. You said it, Wheeler.” [...]
 “If you study their history, Wheeler, you’ll see they never did understand just what an immensely rich land they occupied, or, if they did, they ignored it [...]. Then there’s the religion of course—never forget the influence of religion, Wheeler—well, you couldn’t, could you, being Irish...” (O’Donnell 2018: 36)

Similarly, as Kurtz in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Palmer stands as a personification of the Empire: “Getting to know Palmer was how he came to know Burma” (O’Donnell 2018: 33). He spreads the ideology of the Empire, as seen in the way he talks about the Burmese, but also about the Irish, as barbarians of a different race who needed their technological advancements and are nonetheless ungrateful: “They wheedle and cower and smile and grovel, then they pretend to work, and behind it all they resent us, despite all the benefits we’ve brought to this stinking hellhole. Get that into your thick Irish head and you might do well enough for yourself out here. Otherwise, go back to your own godforsaken bog in BallyMacCeltic” (O’Donnell 2018: 43).

In O'Donnell's story, a clear breach between Palmer and William is shown, which reinforces the idea that Ireland is not part of the imperial power, but rather a former colony that was now pretending to be part of the metropolis as much as England: "He was empire, and he —William— a mere onlooker from another part of that empire, albeit an increasingly-restless part playing at being empire. He, William, was an educated Irishman with ambitions, who was ill-adjusted to the language of empire. For it was a language, he now realised, except that he did not speak it" (O'Donnell 2018: 37). There is a particular episode, which can be seen as the climax or turning point of the story for William, in which Palmer starts beating a man with a pan just because he served him the tea too hot. He might have just killed the local man, had it not been for William's interruption. When William sees the indifference of the colonizers, who do not care for attending the man or calling a doctor, he loses his nerves and attacks Palmer himself. William's reaction towards Palmer and the Empire at that moment can be regarded as "William's experience of the 'unhomely'" (Román-Sotelo 2022: 97) —"the shock of recognition of the world-in-the home, the home-in-the-world" (Bhabha 1992: 141)— that is to say, his own experience as Irish leads him to sympathise with the local people and to take a conjoint revenge on their name:

He felt also the sweetness of a revenge he had not known he needed to extract, against Palmer, against Burma, against India, and against an entire nation which had undermined every country it had ever entered, leaving each enfeebled, causing wars and in the case of his own land —famine— creating a chain metal weight of systematic dispossession around the globe. How could he ever have forgotten so much? (O'Donnell 2018: 42)

In spite of the incident and of Palmer's report, William's contract is not severed and he fulfils the three years as planned. Margaret and William's return to Ireland, after only those three years, allows to portray the sudden changes that had taken place in Irish society after the Easter Rising; both find difficulties in readapting themselves, since public opinion has been utterly transformed, evidencing clear pro-independence tendencies: "There were changes afoot, not alone in the manner of his work, but in people's attitudes. He noticed it in the office, where even the secretaries spoke about independence, and 'democracy', a word which everybody in Burma had loathed whenever it reached their eyes or ears" (O'Donnell 2018: 65). Still in Burma, after the Easter Rising takes place, William already recalls Francis's words while questioning the functioning of the imperial system, since, even though they shared different views concerning Irish politics —"Francis was up to his eyes in his commitment to the idea of a new form of nationhood, and in a style that he had not approved of" (O'Donnell 2018: 33)— upon their return to Ireland, both he and Margaret regret to have missed the rebellion while being far away from home working with the British: "How unlucky to have been out in the heart of the colonies just at the moment when the nation of Ireland, England's nearest colony, was attempting to be born in the maddest of ways. And now, that born thing was alive and squalling and it was so hard to know what to think about it or what to do with it" (O'Donnell 2018: 65-66). Margaret notices that her husband has never been the same since Burma and that Palmer has been the reason for that, although she sometimes blames the malaria instead: "since William's malaria, in certain ways Margaret felt he had never quite been restored to his old form, that his moods were sometimes a little testy [...]. Of course, he reasoned, Palmer was partly to blame for that" (O'Donnell 2018: 49). They try, nonetheless, to feel privileged again for living in the European metropolis —"They laughed with pleasure at the thought of modernity taking place in their lives. Surely, they lived in the very foremost perimeter of progress, gliding into the future every minute of every day of every year" (O'Donnell 2018:

56)—albeit their lives and views have been irreversibly changed, as can be seen in retrospection in the last short story of the collection, “The Moss-Picker”, which comments on both William’s moody behaviour —“All the Wheelers would attend, Peggy had written, so she would have an opportunity to meet Mrs Margaret Wheeler but must not pay too much attention to Charles Wheeler who was always ill-at-ease about something since his return from the Far East although his heart was in the right place and he truly loved his wife” (O’Donnell 2018: 196)—as well as on Margaret’s sentiment of unfulfillment with respect to her life as a woman as well as an Irish, which will be explored in section 3.6.4.

There is another short story in the collection, “Mrs Ward’s Diary”, which closely relates to “Empire”, having Margaret’s mother —Mrs Ward— and brother —Francis— as the two main characters, whereas Margaret is still far away in Mandalay; as abovementioned, this would be one of the characteristics that provide unity to the stories and make of *Empire* a short story cycle. Moreover, once again the story deals with encounters with otherness as well as with the construction of Irishness. The narrative portrays Irish distrust towards the Other and thus an inherent reluctance to accept foreignness, as reflected in people’s spiteful comments —“‘Foreigners,’ the friend, who was more sober, called out. ‘Ireland needs her own!’” (O’Donnell 2018: 111)—but also in Mrs Ward’s attitudes. She is not contempt with the fact that her daughter and now also her grandchild are abroad, fearing that they are being exposed to unknown illnesses: “At the very idea of little Henry catching malaria Mother began to excite herself again and worked herself into such a lather that Francis took a hard look at her. Mother was increasingly hysterical, he thought, and wondered why this might be” (O’Donnell 2018: 114). In addition, she is unable to accept that Francis has met a Russian woman, Anna Basheva, and she expresses her concerns in a diary entry from the 20th October 1916: “*Francis [...] has given me more cause for concern than I feel is fair, between his politics and the risks he has taken —no, his admirable bravery in April, [...] but now this latest episode— the alliance with that woman [...]. Pray God it is a passing fancy. We can do without any more foreign complications [...], for it is bad enough that Margaret is in Burma*” (O’Donnell 2018: 109). Mrs Ward does not trust the woman’s job, belonging to the artistic world, and suspects that she just indecently gets money of different men around the world: “That woman has lived on her wits, conniving her way across Europe from city to city. Madrid! Budapest! Vienna! Do you really believe she has *sung* in all these places or in any place that counts with the cultural classes? [...] She arrives in a city and works her way into the right company for a certain period” (O’Donnell 2018: 128).

Francis, albeit he believes himself to be more open-minded, shows similar prejudices to those of his mother; he becomes incensed after reading her diary, but immediately afterwards he refers to Anna as an “exotic visitor” and also questions her profession as a singer: “How dare she refer to the exotic visitor in such a manner. That the remarkable woman was simply passing through Ireland on a brief and possibly ill-conceived tour he had already accepted. But for Mother to refer to her so lightly, to dismiss her as of no consequence as if she were some vagrant gypsy —was another matter entirely” (O’Donnell 2018: 110). Furthermore, when speaking with her mother, while she is surprised by the fact that she is a “White Russian”, Francis considers that even if by her physical appearance she could be mistaken for a gypsy, her manners denote a superior social status: “She could have been a wandering gypsy, he thought, with the gold hoop earrings, her ornate floral brooch and many bangles. At the same time he knew that she was no such thing, that the aristocratic bearing, the straight shoulders and gently swaying hips indicated someone very sure of their position on the earth” (O’Donnell 2018: 113). It is thus made evident in the story that Anna, as a Jewish Russian, has experienced the systematic dispossession and oppression of the increasing anti-Semitism that spread in her country around

the revolutions of 1917 and the Russian Civil War. She attempts to describe the severity of the prosecution and the pogroms, but she seems to be still traumatized by the events and does not reveal any personal details, though it is suggested that she might have lost her child:

Clearly she considered him to be wealthy, a view of which he attempted to disabuse her. But it was all relative. Where she had come from, she announced sorrowfully, social conditions had declined to such an extent that most of the people in her town were impoverished.

“We have nothing! In Chisinău thirteen years ago, the crowds cry ‘Kill the Jews! Kill the Jews!’”

In her halting English she explained how families were gradually deprived of their businesses and how the rumour spread that Jews who wrote up their accounts in Yiddish were swindling the ordinary Russian customer. She went on to describe how the people were slaughtered like animals and that she saw one baby—a little baby barely three months old—torn to pieces in the frenzy. At this memory her eyes did not fill up with tears but glazed over as if she could see the whole atrocity right there before her as she spoke. (O’Donnell 2018: 116-17).

Francis, who shared with her his experience as a member of the Irish Citizen Army, has a feeling that she has gotten to know him much more than he has gotten to understand her life and the circumstances that led her there, since he is not able to fully grasp or understand her experience as a persecuted Jewish, especially when he comes from a privileged position in the Irish society. There is a discussion in this respect in which he attempts to establish parallelisms between their lives as oppressed members of society, but Anna refuses to accept them on the basis that, whereas the Irish had a sense of national identity within a bigger territory, the Jewish were condemned to a sense of dislocation and displacement:

“We ... we have had our own troubles here,” Francis stammered, feeling inexperienced and too young.

“Not like our troubles.” She cut the air with her hand and shook her head. “We hear about your troubles, I read newspaper in Paris in summer. I know what Lenin say too about Ireland. Sympathetic. But your troubles, not the same. You not a stranger in strange land like Russian Jews! You no see baby murders.”

She was right. At least he felt he was an Irishman and that even under the British his Irishness was complete in every way except that he could not vote for an Irish parliament. He could read what he wished, could see all the new films, could pray in whichever church he chose and could also speak freely and trade with whom he wished. But his form of Irishness, he knew, also had to do with his class. He might feel differently if he lived in one of the tenements. There he would witness parallels between Anna’s Jews—who had no social or economic freedoms—and some of his own countrymen. (O’Donnell 2018: 117)

Similarly to William and Margaret’s point of view, notwithstanding, Francis also considers that the Irish society has been intrinsically changed after the Easter Rising and, albeit a participant in the rebellion, he feels equally out of place, probably because of the subsequent treatment and control to which the Irish were submitted by the British authorities, which exacerbated social divisions and confrontations with the British—making the Irish feel strangers in their own country, as Francis opines—and eventually led to the Irish War of Independence:

He had never felt himself a stranger in a strange country until relatively recently. Everything had changed when the heroic Volunteers were executed in May. Before he had deluded himself that his country was as familiar—and welcoming—to him as any he could imagine. It was not entirely the case, as he and the others who fought and eventually the people of Ireland came to see. In their own country, which was not yet a nation, they were being treated as strangers. (O'Donnell 2018: 132)

Furthermore, even though Irish Catholics were not equally prosecuted in Ireland as Jewish were at that time in Europe and their circumstances had already improved by the twentieth century, the systematic oppression to which the Irish were subjected provoked substantial waves of migration in consequence, as was already aforementioned, which could, to a certain extent, bring the Irish and Jewish together in the experience of exile. In fact, Anna plans to move to America in order to find religious freedom and fairer conditions, influenced by the idea of the American Dream that defines the nation as a land of opportunities in which her faith is not a reason for discrimination, nor an impediment to climb the social ladder: “Main problem is money. Very difficult career, always, always. Other problem is I am Jew. But in America that not matter so much. No pogrom. No killing child[sic] before my eyes” (O'Donnell 2018: 131). Anna therefore longs for a sense of belonging —“Is new country and someday I no longer stranger in a strange country. Understand?” (O'Donnell 2018: 131)— which Francis already feels. The confrontation of Irishness with otherness allows, similarly as in “Empire”, for a reflection of Irish identity and experience as ambiguous, characterised by both lights and shadows, and leading to the establishment of bonds with oppressed and disposed groups, albeit from a more privileged position.

In addition to these two short stories, social and religious confrontations are the backdrop of other stories in *Empire*, similarly to the analysed novels. For instance, in “The Moss-Picker”, when Peggy sends her sister Clara an invitation to her wedding, she already tells her that her parents are not going to attend, because they disapprove her Catholic daughter's union with a Protestant: “*Mother and Father will not be attending the wedding, alas, as Father will not countenance by marrying someone from the other faith*” (O'Donnell 2018: 196). It is then made clear, the same as in Katie and Liam's case in *Fallen*, that the younger generation does not partake in the same prejudices and attitudes of their parents towards this traditional identity division: “It did not matter in the least that Oliver was a Protestant. Perhaps it was a good thing, she [Clara] thought, and might bring an easier life to Peggy. It seemed to her that many Protestants were upright and yet not overly concerned with some of the regulation of faith that the Catholics insisted on” (O'Donnell 2018: 196-97). All the different stories, circumstances and interactions surrounding the characters thus help set the atmosphere of political tension that characterized those years and also evince how much these were affecting social relationships in Ireland as well of their conception of national identity.

3.3 IRISH INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR: DUTY OR TREASON?

3.3.1 *Name Upon Name*

In *Name Upon Name*, the distinctive reactions, on the part of the two sides of the family, to the enlistment of Helen's cousins reflect the divided opinion of society concerning Irish participation in the war under the British flag: whereas Sandy's enlistment is supported and even a source of pride for the Protestants of the father's side —“Aunt Violet was proud of Sandy. He'd got his commission in the army as soon as he left school. She'd never have wanted him *not* to do his duty” (Wilkinson 2015: 21)— the Catholics of the mother's side, especially Helen's uncle Sean and cousin Nora, show profound disagreement with Michael's decision,

which makes him leave and cut off contact. The day that Michael announces he is considering enlistment, Sean and Michael have “a terrible row” (Wilkinson 2015: 45) and Helen’s mother, who was spending some days at the farm, feels compelled to leave when Bridie confronts her for the situation, as Michael had been previously talking about the war with Sandy, whom Eileen had brought to their home:

“Poor Bridie’s heart is broken. And it brought it all back to me—”
 “A row? About Michael joining up? Best thing he could do,” Papa said. “If I’d a son...”
 “Be thankful you haven’t.” Mama sighed. “Sean sees it as a betrayal of his culture. And I know how he feels.”
 Helen normally shut her ears to this kind of adult conversation, which she classified as *boring, with the potential to get worrying*. And that cryptic remark of Mama’s —“I know how he feels”— that was about Helen going to Presbyterian church; Mama never came out and said she hated it, but they all knew she did. (Wilkinson 2015: 45-46)

Helen’s mother not only refuses to take part in the romanticization promoted by war propaganda by rejecting the idea that she would be glad that a son of her would go to war, aware as she is of the risks it entails, given all the young men who are dying in Europe, but also shows understanding of Sean’s reaction, proving that she does not like the idea of an Irish fighting under the British flag. What seem to be a few days later, Michael suddenly appears at their place drunk and hurt —“a bruise purpled his left eye” (Wilkinson 2016: 55)— with the news that he is enlisting. He later confesses to Helen that his decision has caused a rupture in his relationship with his family: “‘I won’t go back. *Ever.*’ He sighed and touched his sore eye. ‘I didn’t get this in a street brawl. This was my da. He told me I was no son of his. If I join the British army I’m dead to him’” (Wilkinson 2016: 60). Helen’s mother thus feels guilty and ashamed about the situation, convinced that Michael’s parents blame her for everything and thus she realizes: “‘I might as well have lost my family when I married into your father’s.’ Helen hated it when Mama said things like that. ‘Goodness knows if we’ll ever be invited back home again.’ Mama sometimes called Derryward ‘home’.” (Wilkinson 2015: 72).

Contrary to Michael’s situation, Sandy’s enlistment was welcomed by the family and his old school, which has organized an Old Boys’ Parcels Committee and also keeps a register of their students at the front in the Roll of Honour: “She checked the list pinned to the wall —four sheets of foolscap paper; name upon name of former Belfast Collegians —some long left school, others, like Sandy, only recently. When one was killed, Miss Cassidy always put a neat black cross against his name. She never crossed the name out” (Wilkinson 2016: 41). In this sense, Helen wonders whether in Michael’s school “someone was doing something similar now: ‘Michael O’Hare is training with the Royal Irish Regiment.’ Or did the Christian Brothers who had taught him feel the same as Uncle Sean? Was his old school proud, or ashamed, like his family?” (Wilkinson 2015: 88). Helen herself is working in the committee preparing parcels because she also wanted to take part somehow and feel useful, even though the experience can be both rewarding and bittersweet at the same time: “something about the old boys’ parcels always made her feel sad— but it was her turn to help, and that was that” (Wilkinson 2016: 41). The parcels used to include, among other things, “khaki socks and mufflers, tins of sweets and cigarettes and a few cakes” (Wilkinson 2016: 41). It is remarkable, nonetheless, the disconnection from the reality of the war that Helen demonstrates, being too young and naïve to comprehend, when she criticizes the colour khaki used in many military uniforms for providing camouflage and shows preference for more brighter colours: “They were all shades

of khaki —the wool shops in Belfast must be doing a roaring trade in dull khaki wool. Perhaps a soldier at the Front would welcome red or yellow socks for a change” (Wilkinson 2016: 41).

Moreover, Sandy’s family seems to be thrilled with his progress in the army, since shortly after enlisting he was named an officer (Wilkinson 2015: 30) and a year afterwards he was already promoted to lieutenant (Wilkinson 2015: 51). This might reflect the fact that Irish Protestants, as well as the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, used to ascend more easily in the British army, in opposition to Catholics: “Many of the officers in Irish regiments, especially in the early part of the war, came from non-Irish, Anglo-Irish or Irish Protestant backgrounds” (Denman 1991: 359). Contrary to Sandy, after Michael enlists and joins Helen and her friend Mabel for a walk, one of their classmates, Florence, meanly jokes whether she should tell Mabel’s mother that she is with a “Tommy”: “*That’s her way of telling us she’s noticed that he’s only a private*, Helen thought. Most of the old Collegians were officers (Wilkinson 2016: 65). Aunt Violet sees the enlistment as a question of duty and consequently had even exerted some pressure on Eileen, asking whether her nephew Michael was going to take part. Helen’s mother, trying to be polite and to avoid entering in further details, she just answers that his father might not be able to “spare him from the farm” (Wilkinson 2015: 52), which prompts another discussion between them, regardless:

“I can’t spare my Sandy!” Aunt Violet said, her voice several tones higher than usual. “And me a widow. But we all make sacrifices. At least, some of us do. Those of us who know our duty. I suppose loyalty doesn’t mean the same down there.”

She said “down there” as if Derryward were hell —but there were people in Belfast, Helen knew, people a few streets away, who thought exactly as Uncle Sean did.

“And of course, Sandy is very brave —well, he’s been brought up to think of his country before himself. *Ulster*,” Aunt Violet added, as if there was any doubt about that.

Helen was about to say that Ulster wasn’t a country; it was one of four provinces of *Ireland*, but she didn’t feel brave enough for that conversation [...]. So, stammering in her eagerness to defend Michael and, somehow, Mama, she said, “But —but Michael *wants* to join up. *Lots* of Catholics have. He’s determined! He and Uncle Sean have had all sorts of fights about it.”

“Helen,” said Mama in a warning voice. “I’m sure Aunt Violet doesn’t want to know all about my family.”

“Well, she should! Michael’s *just* as brave as Sandy. Braver, maybe, because he’s having to go against his own family! Sandy just went with everyone’s blessing.” (Wilkinson 2015: 52-53)

Violet’s discourse evinces here the effects of war propaganda concerning issues of bravery and masculinity, which would later be used by the Ulster government in commemorations of the Battle of the Somme to enhance the unique sense of identity of the Protestant north as opposed to the Catholic Irish from the south.

People’s thoughts either in favour or against the war effort, as treated in the novel, but also as was the case in the past, are therefore directly connected to their sense of identity, which reveals the Irish ambiguous national conscience. The Protestant side of the family was against Home Rule and their support of the war was for them an expression of loyalty towards the British as well as of their desire to remain part of the United Kingdom. The Catholic side, however, were supporters of Home Rule, but did not agree, as did other nationalists, with Redmond’s discourse that it was necessary to collaborate in the war to ensure its

implementation once the conflict was over. Political discussions in this respect are frequently triggered in the novel by confrontations between Helen and Nora. As a paradigmatic case, when Sandy visits the farm, Nora sees him as an intruder and is suspicious that he is going to exert an influence on Michael, and sharing those thoughts with Helen leads both of them to a discussion on their identity as either Irish or British:

“They’re talking about the war,” Helen said. “Michael wants to know all about it.” [...]

“I wish they wouldn’t.” She frowned. “The last thing we need is a British soldier putting ideas in Michael’s stupid head. He and Daddy fight enough as it is.”

“Why?”

“Michael has this insane idea about joining up.” Nora sounded contemptuous. “And obviously Daddy’s raging.”

“Why?”

Nora sighed, as if Helen were very stupid. “It’s England’s quarrel, not ours.”

“But we’re *part* of—”

“Not for much longer.”

“You mean Home Rule?” Helen tried to sound knowledgeable. Everyone she knew —apart from her mother’s family— was against Irish Home Rule. Her father and Sandy’s father, who was dead now, had queued for hours in 1912 to sign the Ulster Covenant, pledging to keep Ulster British.⁷⁶

“Yes.” Nora sounded very confident. “Ireland won’t bear the yoke of tyranny for much longer.” She said these words as if she was reciting a poem.⁷⁷ “But Daddy, and Gerry, who works for us” —she blushed— “and any Irish person *worthy of the name*” —she looked at Helen as if she were a very nasty sort of insect— “say we should take advantage of England being at war to fight for it *now*.” Her dark eyes gleamed.

Helen shivered. She’d grown up closing her ears to adults prophesying war on the streets of Belfast over Home Rule. Now there *was* a war, and it was a hateful one, but at least it was far away in France and Flanders and the Dardanelles. It was all very well for Nora to sound so careless: there’d never be violence here, in these quiet green hills.⁷⁸

“I think,” Helen began —and realised that she wasn’t sure *what* she thought, except that inside her was still a small girl clapping her hands over her ears— that’s *mean*. Like taking advantage of someone when they’re down.’ She thought of all the talk at school about fair play and playing the game. “It’s —it’s unsporting,” she said. There was nothing worse you could ever be at Belfast Collegiate than unsporting. “Ungentlemanly.”

Nora laughed, but not merrily. “*Ungentlemanly*.” She imitated Helen’s accent. “You even *sound* British.” She made it into an insult.

“I *am*. So are you.” Dislike of Nora’s smugness made Helen more confident than usual. “Ireland is British, whether you want it to be or not. [...]”

“I’m *not* British. I’m Irish and I’d die before I’d be anything else. *You* don’t know what you’re talking about.” (Wilkinson 2015: 24-26)

⁷⁶ The Ulster Covenant was signed in 1912 by nearly 500,000 people —half of them men and the other half women— in protest against the Third Home Rule Bill, since they wanted to impede the establishment of a Home Rule parliament in Dublin.

⁷⁷ This comparison to the recitation of a poem goes in line with the rhetoric of Patrick Pearse’s nationalist discourse, as was discussed in section 1.4 of the thesis.

⁷⁸ In effect, during the Irish War of Independence that took place afterwards, even when conducted in the form of a guerrilla, the urban areas were the most affected, gathering the vast majority of victims —especially Dublin and Belfast, but also the area around Cork.

Ironically enough, Nora is the one who demonstrates to be unable to hold an open conversation on political questions: whereas Helen shows a genuine concern about the reality and magnitude of a war in their country, Nora limits herself to mock her in order to end the conversation, and firmly believes her ideas are the only acceptable ones, refusing to listen to others' point of view. In addition, she sees Michael as vulnerable to manipulation even though he seems to have made the decision to join the war effort on his own, even in spite of his family's opposition, whereas Nora seems to have radicalized her ideas since she started spending time with Gerry. Michael, notwithstanding, demonstrates to have a coherent and rational discourse when reflecting upon his decision to enlist. When Helen asks him if being a nationalist means that he hates England, he calmly responds: "Not *hate*. It shouldn't be ruling Ireland" (Wilkinson 2015: 27). Moreover, he keeps in mind his father and Gerry's opinion regarding the use of violence for the nationalist struggle —and does not entirely reject the idea— but rather prefers to ensure the implementation of Home Rule that was so hard for them to achieve by collaborating with the British in putting an end to the war, which goes in line with Redmond's discourse and was indeed one of the reasons why many Irish nationalists joined the cause:

"Da and Gerry say Ireland never got anything off England except by violence." Michael drew on his cigarette. "I want an Irish Ireland and I'll fight for it if I have to." [...] "But helping England win the war is the surest way to get it." "Sure that's what Redmond's been saying since the start," Sandy said. "That's why he's been encouraging Nationalists to join up. And plenty have." (Wilkinson 2015: 28)

Another reason that motivates Michael to enlist and which also reflects another common motivation shared by many young men at the time, whether Irish or not, was the impulse of camaraderie, since they felt uneasy or guilty about the fact that other young men were making the sacrifice for them to be safe at home:

"I *do* hate sitting round on the farm doing nothing when other lads are joining up." [...] "You're not *doing nothing*," Sandy said [...]. "And even if conscription comes in —farmers will be exempt." "There'll be no conscription in Ireland," Michael said, in the same confident way that Nora had said Home Rule would never come. "That's the surest way to start a rebellion." (Wilkinson 2015: 27-28)

It is interesting to mention in this excerpt the characters' awareness of the delicate political situation in which they found themselves since the passing of Home Rule in 1914 by imagining a possible rebellion in case the British exerted more pressure. In this respect, disenchantment with the war played a fundamental role stirring up the revolt; as it is acknowledged in the novel at the beginning of 1916, "this wasn't 1914, with the war just begun and everyone predicting a swift and glorious victory. [...] People knew better now: even she, a schoolgirl, had seen name upon name of the dead in school magazines and on the Roll of Honour in the school chapel" (Wilkinson 2015: 65-66). The contrast between the initial support and enthusiasm for the war and the frustration and weariness of its prolongation can be observed in the work of the school magazine; the war stole the limelight of the magazine's activities since its outburst, but whereas the first news tend to be quite positive and hopeful —"Enthusiastic at first —details of old boys who'd joined up, and some old girls who'd gone to be nurses. Breezy letters home from the Front [...]. An account of the setting up of the Old Boys' Parcel Fund, and the concerts held to

raise money. The whole school went war-crazy for a time –girls were even allowed to knit at recreation” (Wilkinson 2015: 82-83)— the first casualty only some months afterwards shocked everyone and started to get people discouraged, with frequent news of casualties monopolizing the magazine: “the casualties came too steadily for individual obituaries. In the last magazine, winter 1915, there had been five, two of them boys Helen remembered, class- and team-mates of Sandy’s. [...] There was a Roll of Honour, amended every edition, of all the boys serving. It was always out of date by the time it was printed” (Wilkinson 2016: 83). The effects of the war, mixed with the emergence of Irish nationalism, are reflected later in the novel through the metaphorical decline of the Big House, when Helen, on her way to Derryward, passes “down a tiny road with whin and hawthorn hedges all along one side and the high grey wall of a big estate on the other. The son of the big house in there had been killed at Gallipoli” (Wilkinson 2015: 144). Whereas Nora does not believe in the possibility of obtaining Home Rule anymore and aims for something more drastic, her father continues to aspire to achieve an Irish parliament for the whole of Ireland, while Sandy does not see that as feasible, knowing that Ulster would always oppose the measure:

Uncle Sean said, “Yous boys have had it all your own way for centuries. But yous can’t hold back the tide now. Home Rule’s coming one way or another.”
 “I hope not, sir,” Sandy said. “But if it does there’ll be special provision for Ulster. Ulstermen won’t stand for a Catholic state.”
 “And Irishmen won’t stand for a divided country.” (Wilkinson 2015: 34)

Both Sean and Sandy are right in their concerns and reflect the constitutional conundrum that continues to affect the Irish in the present. Since the passing of Home Rule, loyalists and unionists had organized themselves to form the Ulster Volunteer Force, already proving they would never accept to be governed by the Catholic south, which eventually resulted in the Partition of Ireland. The Partition, initially conceived as a provisional measure, was never accepted by many Irish nationalists, as the Troubles evinced, but the situation has remained the same due to lack of agreement in the matter, and in the last years, the Brexit process prompted a revival of the demands and desires for a reunified Ireland.

3.3.2 *Fallen*

The story begins in August 1914, shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, with Liam’s sudden enlistment in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, to which the members of the family, with the exception of Katie, do not seem to react badly; in fact, their mother seems to feel proud about it. Notwithstanding, later in the novel, it is revealed that their younger brother Matt is not comfortable with the situation either and Katie deeply knows that Eva, who is not in good health at that moment, would find it difficult to assimilate if she suddenly saw him wearing the uniform —“If Liam went dressed like that, he’d give her a stroke” (Mills 2014: 6). Katie finds out that he is leaving when she arrives home one day to encounter him in the army’s uniform, which disturbs her to the point of wanting to hit him:

The khaki sleeves fell below his wrists.
 “It doesn’t even fit you.” I’d the strangest urge to slap his hands back down to his sides and to carry right on beating him, as though that uniform was a dusty old rug hung out on a line to air.
 “Lockie will fix it.”⁷⁹



⁷⁹ Lockie is their housekeeper.

“Why, Liam? This came out harsher than I’d meant. “Why would you?”
 He flushed. “We can’t stand idly by while Germany—”
 “Oh, Liam, I’ve heard that said a million times! What are you, some sort of lackey? Don’t you have a mind of your own? All that guff about rights of small nations—what about us? Are we not a nation too?”
 His face shut tight. He straightened, tugged on the ends of the tunic. “And is that what passes for original thought, in your head?” (Mills 2014: 5)

Katie therefore sees the war as a conflict alien to the interests of Ireland —“here was Liam, ready to plunge headlong into the thick of a fight that had nothing to do with us” (Mills 2014: 5)— and establishes a separation between Irish and British: “What on earth had tipped him through the door of a recruiting office to sign an agreement that he would wear their uniform, go wherever they made him go, do whatever they made him do?” (Mills 2014: 5). For her, collaborating with the enemy implies being a “lackey” (Mills 2014: 5), whereas Liam considers that the Irish nationalist propaganda is as manipulative as the war one, and that she is not, in consequence, free from ideas that have been imposed by groups of pressure. Shortly after leaving to the front, Liam sends Katie a letter with a warning not to harbour any resentment towards Isabel, to whom Katie must have directed her rage, blaming her for his enlistment: “*You know full well I’ve my own good reasons for deciding to enlist, whether or not you agree with them. You belittle me if you think I’d put on a British uniform—any uniform— ‘just to keep her father happy’. Why would I make Isabel’s father happy at the risk of hurting her? She objects to this war just as much as you do, if on different grounds*” (Mills 2014: 79). Liam’s reasons to join, as already seen in the excerpt above, were based on a desire to do something that mattered, instead of expecting others to do the work: “Liam would say no good ever came of blame. The national curse, he called it. Always the pointing finger, the excuse. He’d rather find solutions” (Mills 2014: 67). On top of that, the fact that Tom Kettle, who had been Liam’s admired Professor, positioned himself in favour of the war effort with his own enlistment was decisive for Liam to believe in the cause and to follow his example by doing the same:

During our college days, [...] Liam would come in and distract me with the latest chip of economic or political brilliance from Professor Kettle. Liam and his friends canvassed for him in the election that sent him to Westminster. I posted a few bills myself, I have to admit. He dazzled us all with visions of a fair and prosperous future, a future the best of his followers wouldn’t live to see. People said John Redmond was to blame for sending so many off to fight, but it was Tom Kettle who turned Liam’s head. (Mills 2014: 67)

Part of Kettle’s compelling force had to do with his attractive rhetoric which turned the war into an honorable fight for justice: “I picked up the *Daily News* Liam had given me, folded around an article the professor had written from Belgium, where he happened to be when the war began. [...] Liam had underlined the last lines: *War is hell, but it is only a hell of suffering, not a hell of dishonour. And through it, over its flaming coals, Justice must walk, were it on bare feet*” (Mills 2014: 8).

Following this discourse, their mother, who is defined as a unionist in the narrative, endorses Redmond’s speech and becomes the main supporter of Liam’s enlistment. When later in the novel Isabel is concerned about Liam’s letters —“worried that Liam was suffering a kind of fear” (Mills 2014: 82)— and asks them to write to Liam’s CO —Commanding Officer— to request that he was sent home on leave, while also offering to ask her father, who is a judge, to arrange it for them, the mother impedes it, since she considers it a question of duty and honor

that Liam continues to fight along with other Irish: “‘I forbid it, absolutely!’ Mother said. ‘My Liam knows his duty; he’ll perform it to the utmost. Our duty may seem a lesser one, less clear to some,’ the flash of her eyes veered towards me [...]. ‘But it’s perfectly plain to me. *Our* duty is to honour his courage with our own. I can’t quite believe you think so little of him’” (Mills 2014: 82). Other family members or acquaintances also gather at their house to show support and her mother forces him to go downstairs wearing his uniform —“We’re waiting –we’re dying to see you in it” (Mills 2014: 8)— but Katie cannot stand the whole situation and leaves the house instead: “they’d likely gloat over him, tell him what a fine fellow he was in the uniform. I wouldn’t be able to bear it. It was galling” (Mills 2014: 8). Because of his decision to join the war without prior notice, Katie feels betrayed and also detached from her twin brother, with whom she used to share everything: “it was too late, and that was the answer to the other, childish, painful question: why didn’t you tell me before you did it?” (Mills 2014: 5). Katie is dreading the loss of their connection, already missing the days when they “barely needed words to know what was in the other’s mind” (Mills 2014: 14). On top of that, the following day Liam announces his engagement, so Katie feels completely left out of Liam’s life. By Liam’s insistence, she takes his room when he leaves to the training camp, but she does not feel comfortable in it since “it felt like treachery” (Mills 2014: 25): “When everything was laid out and neat in Liam’s room, I didn’t want to stay there, cuckoo that I was. I should have let Matt have it, after all” (Mills 2014: 26).

Besides the reactions to Liam’s enlistment, the novel depicts a tense environment in which the war is one of the main concerns, and the citizens of Dublin discuss and debate the stance that Irish should take on the matter, especially bearing in mind the internal tensions raised by the passing of Home Rule: “The war was all most people were talking about —the war, and whether Irishmen should take England’s side against the Germans, or fight off Carson’s Ulstermen if they came south, or not fight at all. We’d been on the brink of getting our own parliament, after a hundred-odd years without one. Now people said we’d likely have to wait. Again” (Mills 2014: 4-5). At the outburst of war, everyone seemed to believe that “it would be over soon” (Mills 2014: 7), but later in the novel, in 1915, the consequences of the conflict both regarding casualties and economic conditions, seem to be reflected throughout the city, as seen in images of “skinny dogs” (Mills 2014: 87), of a loose dog which highlights the absence of his owner —“What was a well-bred dog like that doing loose on the streets?” (Mills 2014: 88)— or of “a child with a grubby face, thin as famine” (Mills 2014: 40). Katie is aware of the economic hardship that the Irish people around her are enduring and of her own privileged position:

The war was real, men out there fighting and dying, while I lay on a comfortable bed moaning about a toothache. I’d missed a single meal, and there were children in tenements all around me who’d count themselves lucky if they saw a proper meal in a week. I’d little to complain about. I should pull myself together, get more involved with Eva’s charitable groups —she was forever raising money for good causes, with bazaars and raffles and cake sales. (Mills 2014: 19)

This sense of impotence Katie feels for not being able to take part in something, to collaborate for the sake of the Irish society, goes in line with Liam’s feelings, since he enlisted with the aim of making something useful. Precisely because of her brother’s involvement in the war, she sees herself forced to change her initial views on the matter, opening herself to reflection and acceptance of different perspectives. Moreover, after receiving the news of Liam’s death, she is even more prone to defend the cause; otherwise, she would feel as if betraying his memory,

which also makes her dubious as to how to react to the Rising. When explaining the character of Katie, the author herself comments: “Like her brother Liam (and like Tom Kettle [...]) she is a constitutional nationalist but unlike them she does not agree with the war, or that Liam should join the British army to fight in it. She is the kind of character who, in other circumstances, might well have found her way inside a garrison to stand with the rebels but Liam’s death entangles her loyalties and makes it impossible” (Mills 2016: 153). A clear example of how her brother’s death makes her feel ideologically at a loss and more sensitive towards nationalist propaganda is when in June 1915, that is, only two months after Liam’s death, she is given anti-war propaganda against the British in the street and immediately becomes enraged:

She pressed a sheet of green paper into my hands. Littered with emblems and exclamation marks, it urged me not to fraternize with my Nation’s enemies. Furious, I glared at her. [...] I tore the handbill in two and gave it back to her. A tall girl with a haughty tilt to her dimpled chin came over. “Miss Crilly,” she said, in a pleasant enough voice. I knew her. Muriel Cox. She was a friend of Matt’s.

“Does my brother know what you get up to, Muriel?”

She flushed scarlet. “Matthew agrees with us.”

“Does he, now? He doesn’t say so at home. You should mind out who you foist your rubbish on!”

[...] “Fay didn’t know who you are. She didn’t know—”

“How d’you ever know?” If hatred alone could kill, the pair of them would’ve been flat out on a slab. “You couldn’t throw a stone around here without hitting someone mourning a soldier. What gives you the right?” Self-conscious now, my words rang false in my ears, even as a couple of old ladies jeered their agreement. I pushed past Muriel and her ugly friend, sick to death of people telling other people what to think, what to believe, which side to take. How was a person supposed to make up her own mind with all that getting in the way? They were so convinced, that was it, as though they understood the world and their place in it. I didn’t understand a thing. (Mills 2014: 72-73)

There is another example in the novel when later in the story, during the days of the rising, Katie and Hubie, while walking through the streets, find nationalist propaganda against the war effort or any kind of collaboration with the British, and Katie confesses that Liam ended up changing her mind about not seeing such collaborations as treason, but rather as full of nuances and negotiations:

He paused to read an anti-fraternization handbill posted to a telegraph pole. [...] I was mortified, and angry on his behalf. “Every time you turn around, someone’s pushing a handbill at you, or dangling a leaflet, or haranguing you from a soap-box. There’s always someone telling you what to think, trying to make up your mind for you.”

“Do you agree with them?”

My face burned. “I might have, once. I’ve no time for them now.”

“Did Liam change your mind?”

“Not directly.” Not soon enough, was what I meant. “In some ways.”

“For instance?”

“Well —once he enlisted in the Dublins, I couldn’t refer to the Traitor’s Gate any more —how could I? Liam was no more a traitor than I am.”

“Traitor’s Gate?”

“The Fusiliers’ Arch. The main gate into the Green.”⁸⁰ (Mills 2014: 174-75)

Katie thus shows a hostile attitude towards social pressures, since she herself is ambiguous and feels incapable of deciding how she, as an Irish constitutional nationalist, should position herself politically. Her confusion is the reflection of troubling times which imply transition from one political system to another. This can be theoretically explained not only by the fact that the Irish themselves could be considered liminal personae and as such, ambiguous—having that double characterization of perpetrators and victims within the British Empire, as seen in section 1.2— but also because, according to Bjørn Thomassen, “liminal situations can be applied to whole societies going through a crisis or a ‘collapse of order’” (2009: 19), being in Ireland’s case a moment of transition from a colony to an independent state. Ireland was at that time on the verge of achieving national competences while also still dependent upon the United Kingdom to do so, so that the outburst of the war meant an impasse whose prolongation got on the nerves of many Irish. In Irish households, different ideologies converged which sometimes disturbed family relations and communication, being Matt an example of someone unable to talk about his true feelings at home. Matt does not want to become a lawyer, as his father expects of him, and with Liam’s absence he feels more pressure to fulfil his father’s wishes, but decides to join a theatre company instead and escapes with them in the midst of the Easter Rising, which can be analysed as an ironic interchange from the theatre of war and revolution to the theatre stage.

3.3.3 “Each Slow Dusk”

In “Each Slow Dusk”, contrary to the novels, readers do not have access to how Gilbert’s enlistment was treated within the family, whether it was easily accepted and even encouraged, or contested and disappointing, since, as is the case of most modern short stories, it begins *in medias res*, with Gilbert already back from the front after being discharged. Nevertheless, general support for the war effort seems to prevail in the story, which is mostly reflected in Edith’s school through the work of its magazine, where they publish different announcements of the war and the situation of old students there, as well as of the OBCF, where they arrange parcels consisting on food and clothes in order to send them to the front. The backdrop of war has therefore become part of the students’ routine, as deduced from the fact that announcements of deaths have become common for them—“The school flag is at half-mast. Again” (Wilkinson 2016: 233)— and that Edith sees her schoolmates as soon-to-be soldiers: “Most of the boys in the Upper Fifth are so *puerile*—though they could be leading soldiers into battle in two years if the war is still on” (Wilkinson 2016: 242). In such an environment, boys who have not enlisted seem to be judged quite hard, especially by the families of those who did it, but also, in the case of Frank, by his own family as well; when Edith and her friend Maud arrive at school, they speculate about whether they knew the new casualty, and Edith meanly jokes about the fact that they can leave Frank out of it:

“It may not be anyone we know.” I tuck my arm into Maud’s and we set out towards the chapel. “Last time it wasn’t even anything to do with the war—it was that old matron from a million years ago.”
 “And at least your Gilbert’s safe and sound now.”
 “*Safe*,” I say. “Not exactly *sound*. They don’t invalid you out of the army for nothing.”

⁸⁰ Monument dedicated to the men in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who fought and died in the Second Boer War (1899–1902).

“Yes, but *rheumatism*. It’s not as if he’s lost a limb or—”
 “It’s very debilitating. There are days —nights especially—” But I don’t want to talk about this. Instead I say, and I feel a beast as soon as the words are out, “And *obviously* it’s not Frank.” (Wilkinson 2016: 234)

Now that she is seeing the post-traumatic symptoms of her brother first-hand, Edith cannot help but feel resentful towards Frank, who has not even come to pay a visit to his brother since he got back from the front, despite having defended his decision to remain at home oftentimes before —“I wish I hadn’t twitted Maud about Frank. I’m usually the one to stick up for him when she complains about him not joining up” (Wilkinson 2016: 235). There is always a lot of expectation and tension when the headmaster finally announces the name to the school:

“It is my painful duty to have to tell you that we have lost yet another Old Boy,” he says. I grimace at Sally. *Please* let it be someone we don’t know; someone who left ten years ago, or twenty. “And a boy known to all of you in this room, except the new pupils, for he left school only last June to join the Royal Irish Rifles as a cadet. Piers McBride was killed in action three days ago near Messines. Piers was one of our finest young men...”
Piers McBride. Nobody makes a sound —gasping is frowned on— but I can *feel* everyone gasp inside. (Wilkinson 2016: 235)

Silence seems to be the only possible response to convey the magnitude of contained emotions. However, when Edith realizes that she and Maud “packed an OBCF parcel for him only last week” (Wilkinson 2016: 235), she cannot help but start crying, for which she reprimands herself: “Tears prick the backs of my eyes and I blink in annoyance at myself. After all, we are used to this kind of news by now. And Piers must have *wanted* to go —he could have waited until he was old enough for a commission, but he was worried the war might be over before he had his chance” (Wilkinson 2016: 236). It is interesting to mention, in this sense, that the same as in *Name Upon Name* and *Fallen*, the sports abilities of the young soldier are highlighted as a motif that helps include the victim within the community, and that enhances his team spirit and leadership, qualities that are also valuable for combat and could have consequently led him to the front: “He was a brilliant sportsman —we all remember the cup-winning XV of 1914” (Wilkinson 2016: 235).

In this short story, the exhaustion after the prolongation of the war is also easily perceived by the fact that the involvement in the school activities related to the war diminished over time, the same that happened in Helen’s school magazine in *Name Upon Name*: “When we first thought of making up parcels to send to Old Boys at the front, in time for Christmas 1914, all the girls and lots of the boys were mad about it, but now only a few stalwarts do the actual packing and sorting, though the stream of cakes and cigarettes and socks and sweets is steady enough” (Wilkinson 2016: 238). Edith continues to help in the OBCF even though she has reached the point of thinking that “it will ever be over” (Wilkinson 2016: 236). Her job in particular consists of “select[ing] extracts from the Old Boys’ letters” to “give them to the editor of the school magazine” (Wilkinson 2016: 238-39). She can read, for example, thank you notes from someone she has never met, which makes her feel good about her job: “I slit open the first envelope. It’s from someone I’ve never heard of, who left years ago —he’s a doctor with the RAMC and he says it was wonderful to be remembered by his old school. *What a splendid plum cake. I was quite the most popular chap in the place!*”⁸¹ (Wilkinson 2016: 239). Nevertheless,

⁸¹ Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC).

the work becomes harder when dealing with letters from people she used to know, especially when she finds a letter from Piers McBride after the news of his death: “*We’ve had a sticky time the last few days, so your parcel gave me and my pals quite a ‘lift’. And what splendid socks. We spend a lot of time on our feet here and cosy socks like these are just the ticket. Do remember me to the dear old school and tell the First XV not to be slacking!! Piers McBride*” (Wilkinson 2016: 239). Both Edith and Maud are affected by the letter, but react differently, since Maud cannot help but wonder whether Piers was wearing the socks that she made, which does not seem appropriate to Edith:

“*Piers’s socks. I knitted the loveliest socks you’ve ever seen and I made sure they went into his parcel because —well, because.*” She chews her lip. “*I wonder if he was wearing them when—*”
 “*Stop it, Maud. You’re being morbid.*” (Wilkinson 2016: 240)

Maud, who apparently has no relatives fighting at the front and wishes her brother to join, seems to represent those who failed to acknowledge the reality of the conflict and tended to romanticize it. Edith, however, is already disenchanted and demonstrates a bigger sense of responsibility when taking care of her brother. She also becomes the student entrusted to give the letter to Piers’s sister once she returns to school after a few days of mourning, but she finally decides to give it to her brother, who was friends with Piers, so that he can personally deliver it to the McBride family, since she has the impression that they would appreciate a visit from a fellow comrade of his son who could understand what he went through: “*It might mean more coming from a fellow soldier. You’ve been there; you know what it was like. And you were friends*” (Wilkinson 2016: 247). When Maud’s brother Frank finally pays Gilbert a visit, Edith notices he is nervous and suspects he might be afraid of Gilbert’s judgment for not taking part in the war as he and other schoolmates did —“*Something in the way he pushes back his dark hair —exactly like Maud’s— from his forehead tells me he is more nervous than his manner reveals. Does he think Gilbert will hand him a white feather, or give him a lecture about not joining up? Or is he simply nervous about meeting this new Gilbert?*” (Wilkinson 2016: 249)⁸²— but they seem to leave their differences behind and Frank even decides to accompany Gilbert to deliver the letter to the house of the McBrides, which turns into an uncomfortable situation for Frank, as Gilbert later explains:

“*They were happy to see me.*”
 “*Ah.*”
 “*They didn’t say anything —they were very polite. But it was so obvious they despised him. And when we left —he was a bit rattled. He didn’t want to get the tram —it was a rush hour and he knew people would be staring at him, not in uniform. So we walked.*” (Wilkinson 2016: 254)

Thus, the novel transmits the sense of community that was created among those who participated in the war or had family members fighting, as well as the resentment of said communities towards those who did not join and whose families did not have to endure the same feelings of anxiety and incertitude.

3.3.4 *Empire: “Fortune on a Fair Day” and “The Moss-Picker”*



⁸² The white feather was a symbol of cowardice used in war propaganda which was frequently delivered in the streets to men who were not wearing an army uniform, as a public form of humiliation.

“Fortune on a Fair Day” is set in Monaghan in late April 1916, during the days of the Easter Rising. The protagonist, Arthur Duffy, is a young man who makes the decision to enlist at the front, which, similarly to the situation in the previous cases, divides the members of his family: “Half the family agreed with his decision to enlist with the Royal Irish Fusiliers, while the other half grunted and pulled faces” (O’Donnell 2018: 69). His uncle is the one who more strongly disagrees, precisely because Ireland was on the verge of achieving independence and consequently of owing nothing to the British: “‘What in Jaysus’s name takes you over there?’ his Uncle Jack snorted at the news. ‘Just when your own country is close to getting what it wants’” (O’Donnell 2018: 69). Notwithstanding, his father recognizes with sorrow that there are not many other alternatives for him in Ireland, although he had expected for one of his sons to join him in the family butchering business: “His father, while not exactly overjoyed, nonetheless stuck his hands deeper into his trouser pockets, frowned into the fireside and nodded his assent. ‘There isn’t much for you around here, son,’ he remarked, ‘though, as I’ve said before, I could take you on myself.’” (O’Donnell 2018: 70). However, Arthur is moved by a spirit of adventure which, the same as William Wheeler, led him to aim at something greater than the opportunities provided by Ireland, which he considered to be rather restrictive and destined to failure: “But at eighteen fate had called him and he wanted to serve something greater than their own small Irish troubles, which had kept people uneasy like a whinging child in the background of their days that they did not know quite how to help stand on its own two feet” (O’Donnell 2018: 70). Moreover, he romanticizes the idea of war—partly because he has read about it in novels, and partly because he had no nearby examples in the family of a military career that could have given him a proper sense of how war was like, but only an uncle who after participating in the 1867 Rebellion had gone into exile and remained out of touch—and he even hopes to be promoted soon:

There was no history of going to war in the family, no point to which he could cast his mind back and proudly witness men in uniform who had defended something they valued against a common enemy. A few families in the town had had members killed by the Boers, almost sixteen years before, and his father had occasionally mentioned an uncle of his who was in the Irish Republican Brotherhood during the failed 1867 Rebellion. After that, the uncle had left Ireland for America and they had not heard from him since. But otherwise Arthur had no knowledge of military achievement or excellence beyond what he had read about in books and there was no one to whom he could speak. Yet the voices of the recruiters had excited him. They seemed like the honourable characters in novels he had borrowed from the town library. From what they said a fellow like him could rise through the ranks. He was strong and he was literate. (O’Donnell 2018: 71-72)

Throughout the short story, he prepares himself to break the news of his enlistment to his girlfriend Molly, wishing that she will be able to understand his sense of calling: “He would have to explain things and hoped he might convince her once and for all that he believed he had no choice, that there was something in his blood that danced to make the world a better place” (O’Donnell 2018: 73). Arthur is therefore convinced that he was fated to make that choice so as to actively participate in history—“It had been an impulsive decision, he knew, yet also the right one. It was fate, he was sure of it, something intended for him” (O’Donnell 2018: 79). The short story plays with the idea of fate in an ironic way, since the title, “Fortune on a Fair Day”, precisely refers to the day Arthur and Molly met, when they had their fortunes read by a fortune teller, who categorises him as a dreamer: “Of all the categories of humans to whom calamities

could fall, almost for no particular reason other than that the dreamer was in a certain place at a certain time, and usually not paying attention to what was practical and therefore important, this was the one category of person she tried to provide with honest advice. It was for their own protection” (O’Donnell 2018: 75). This classification already provides information about Arthur’s character and puts his judgment into question, not to mention that she predicts Arthur’s—and by extension the couple’s—tragic ending: “Can’t you both see what’s as clear as day to anyone but a *morán*? That the two of you have taken the fortune and are making it for yourselves before my eyes? Sure how can I work with her with the heat of your want at her shoulder like the demon lover?” (O’Donnell 2018: 76). The story thus offers an intertextual reference to Elizabeth Bowen’s “The Demon Lover”, which revolves around a soldier who dies in the First World War and returns to haunt his lover years later, during the Second World War: “This evident intertextuality not only allows for the persistence of post-modern literary techniques, but also, given that Bowen’s tale revolves around a Great War ex-soldier haunting his lover during the WWII, for the creation of connections between different war rewritings” (Román Sotelo 2024: 198). O’Donnell’s story thus already reveals Arthur’s death at the front, but then confirms it towards the end of the collection in another short story, in “The Moss-Picker”, when Clara mentions Arthur’s death to her sister Peggy, who apparently had been working for the Duffy family: “*How I wish you were at home and not in Dublin with young Mrs Wheeler and how I wish you had stayed here and not grown so upset by young Arthur Duffy’s death in Flanders*” (O’Donnell 2018: 158). Arthur is, nonetheless, very naïve when it comes to his expectations of returning safe and sound, simply because he knows he is not going to be sent to Gallipoli, which was a disastrous campaign for the British, but to France instead, precisely where the cruelest battle of the Great War, as was the Somme, was fought:

“I will return, you know.”

“You might not. What about Gallipoli? Or don’t they read the papers in your house?”

“I’m not going to Gallipoli. I’m headed for France and we’ll sort out those Germans very quickly.”

“Well then...”

“You trust me, don’t you, Molly? I wouldn’t spin you a yarn.” (O’Donnell 2018: 82)

The news of the execution of the Easter Rising leaders, however, alter Arthur’s plans and foster further discussion between him and Molly. The short story clearly portrays the indignation raised by the British reprisals among the Irish population, indicating thus the turning point they marked in the consideration of the rebels, as well as in the support of the war effort. Suddenly, what they had previously branded as “a crowd of trouble makers” (O’Donnell 2018: 80), as Molly herself recognizes, are described as brave heroes in the words of John Dillon, which are published in the newspaper:

Men were gabbling furiously and not about the price of cattle. [...] Molly and Arthur advanced to the edge of a small crowd intent on listening to a newspaper account of some kind. The reader’s invoice quivered with indignation as he read how, one day before, fifteen Irishmen were executed by firing squad in Dublin. As he continued, the crowd grew silent, their faces sombre. [...] Oh God, he thought, now this. The man with the newspaper was reading what one member of the Irish Parliamentary Party had said in the House of Commons and how his impassioned words had shocked the House. He had spoken of the executed men not as murderers, but as insurgents who had fought a clean fight, a brave fight

and only three thousand of them, ill-equipped against twenty thousand with machine guns and artillery. (O'Donnell 2018: 79)

Immediately afterwards, Arthur runs into his uncle, who finds the establishment of martial law completely unfair and out of proportion: "It's a poor lookout when some of our own, who wanted nothing but freedom, who were prepared to do anything for it, are treated like criminals. Worse even. No trial nor nothing" (O'Donnell 2018: 80). Arthur, the same as many other Irish at that time, found himself in an uncomfortable position, not knowing what was best for the history of his country: "For the first time, he began to question his own decision. And yet — surely it was an honourable thing for him to wish to fight against the Germans?" (O'Donnell 2018: 80). As a result of the executions, Molly is intransigent at first about accepting Arthur's enlistment; her discourse emphasizes the idea that they were precisely their executions what turned them into martyrs and arose public sympathy towards their cause:

"I'm annoyed that you would even think of joining up, Arthur. Have you no desire for Ireland's own freedom? Have you not just heard your man reading the paper? We want to be free now. We can't stand by and let the English shoot our men like that!"

"Nobody gave a damn about them until this week."

"[...] But now the men are dead and we understand what their intentions were. That they were true-hearted and brave. How many of us can say that about ourselves?"

He did not know what to reply. What she said was true, but surely what he wanted might also be worth a hearing, only she could not see it that way.

"I had hoped — I had hoped you might wait for me, Molly. And I had hoped that I might be true-hearted and brave."

"That is another matter, Arthur. You are going to war with the *English*."

"But it's one of the ways to freedom! That Dillon man who spoke in the House of Commons has assured us that joining the British cause is the best way towards Home Rule. Surely you want Home Rule too? We can't all be like the insurgents, giving our blood, with the foolish people not fully behind us until it is too late!" (O'Donnell 2018: 81)

Arthur therefore holds on to Irish parliamentary discourses on the war effort, since he also believed it was a way to ensure the implementation of Home Rule: "It's Ireland I'm thinking of too, you know. Every Irishman who enlists is making his mark on our chance of Home Rule. I believe that. You should too" (O'Donnell 2018: 82). Molly's final conclusion about Arthur's involvement in the war effort closes the short story with a kind of morale that prioritizes personal affection, which can be solid and durable, over political convictions that seem to be more voluble and changing, dependent upon the development of historical events: "Even with the awful things we heard today, I'm coming to believe that your cause is a just cause too, because otherwise it wouldn't interest the likes of you" (O'Donnell 2018: 83). This goes in line with the recent tendency in literature to overcome difference and confrontation through the reestablishment of lines of communication and social connections.

It is also worth mentioning, in this section, the short story "The Moss-Picker", which shows how the war effort continued in Ireland even once it was over, since Clara, the protagonist of the account and a single mother with no place to live and no way to feed her baby, is given a job opportunity consisting of picking sphagnum moss that will help produce bandages for wounded veterans, since such material was still in high demand in 1919 all over Europe:

“Would you believe it, Clara, that out Irish moss was being collected and sent to Dublin and then made into antiseptic bandages for the poor fellows on the Front? It’s better than cotton and the army hospitals were running out of cotton bandages anyway, but they say it’s being put to great use as a surgical dressing.” “Irish moss? Imagine...” Clara replied slowly, still absorbing what Peggy was saying. It was hard to imagine anything Irish being very much use any place outside of Ireland. (O’Donnell 2018: 179)

The work therefore provides the protagonist of the story with the economic sustenance that she needs in a deeply rigid Catholic society that does not accept having children out of wedlock. In addition, this kind of war collaboration, contrary to enlistment, is not treated as a controversial matter, since it did not imply the possibility of losing Irish lives in favour of a British cause, but rather offered post-war relief in general, with no distinction of sides: “Although her back ached by evening time, as the weeks passed she began to think that he was right. They were playing their part” (O’Donnell 2018: 190). In this respect, Clara, while acknowledging the effects of the Rising and the importance of honouring the rebels, realizes that the victims of the First World War should not be obliterated in consequence: “Even if there had been chaos in Dublin when the rebels had fought three years earlier, even if they had been scandalously executed by the British, there were the tail ends of this other greater war. They must still remember the thousands of Irishmen who went to Flanders and to France for the sake of defending what was right” (O’Donnell 2018: 190). Thus, the short story provides some reflection on the fact that the Rising displaced the focus of attention that was previously put on the war and managed to overshadow the posterior memory of Irish participation in the conflict.

3.4 REPRESENTATIONS OF WAR: TRAUMA AND MOURNING

3.4.1 *Name Upon Name*

This novel cannot be considered a traditional war narrative per se, since images of the trenches are scarce, but it depicts the contrast between the everyday life of the Irish who stayed at home and the very different reality encountered by those fighting at the front, which helps understand soldiers’ alienation upon their return. Being the action set in Ireland, the war is mostly presented in the background; there is a moment in which Sandy himself comments that people will continue with their own lives and daily concerns as if nothing was happening in Europe: “I don’t think people stop minding things just because of the war” (Wilkinson 2015: 20). Sometimes the issue of war is even treated frivolously by some characters who have no personal connections with the soldiers fighting at the front and who therefore feel detached enough not to take the matter seriously, as can be seen in the fact that the students mock the physical defect of a teacher who was wounded in action and consequently discharged, denoting a lack of sympathy towards his situation and the reasons behind his harsh character: “Peg Leg—Mr Perry to his face—had lost a leg at Neuve Chapelle, and been invalided home. [...] Perry had been a lieutenant, same as Sandy, but while Helen could easily imagine Sandy leading men into battle, she couldn’t think of Perry as anything other than shrill and ineffectual”⁸³ (Wilkinson 2015: 39). Also, similarly to Edith’s friend Maud in “Each Slow Dusk”, Helen’s classmate Florence and her friend Mabel tend to romanticize stories concerning the war, for instance, by using references that might add an epic tone; a paradigmatic case can be when Mabel compares Michael, who might go back home again after the fight with his parents, to the Biblical figure of the prodigal son:

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⁸³ The Battle of Neuve Chapelle took place in March 1915, in France, and was the first major British offensive in the First World War.

Mabel put her hand on her chest in a dramatic gesture. “Imagine! The prodigal son!”

“Mabs? I hope you’re not getting a bit Florence Bell-ish over this?”

“What do you mean?”

“Turning it into a romantic story. Because it really isn’t.” For the first time in ages she thought of the night Michael had crashed into their home, drunk and bleeding. “It isn’t romantic at all.” (Wilkinson 2015: 102)

Helen herself was more prone to a childish behaviour at the beginning of the novel, for instance, when Mabel shows jealousy seeing Michael dressed in his army’s uniform waiting for Helen at the school exit, and Helen cannot help but enjoy the situation —“Don’t be silly; he’s my cousin,” Helen said, though she glowed at hearing Michael described as handsome (Wilkinson 2015: 63). Nevertheless, she progressively becomes more mature out of the circumstances, both because she gets an idea of the war through Sandy’s accounts and because she has to constantly confront the number of casualties while working in the Roll of Honour —“Looking at these lists, name upon name of young men facing death every day” (Wilkinson 2015: 88)— which she finds difficult to manage sometimes: “she had to copy the details, and when she had finished, taking particular care in inking a neat black cross by each name, she felt quite miserable” (Wilkinson 2015: 88). This change of attitude in Helen makes her feel estranged from her friend Mabel, who at an advanced point in the story manifests that she also wants to have cousins in the army, much to Helen’s concern, who decides to abruptly end the conversation:

“Oh, I *wish* I had handsome cousins in the army. My cousins are all still at the toddling stage — all drool and sticky hands.”

“Well, at least the war’ll be over before they’re grown up,” Helen said. “Come on —let’s cut through the park.” (Wilkinson 2015: 122)

The distance between those who did not actively participate in the war effort and those who did it became therefore one of the reasons that prevented veterans from sharing their experiences. Silences and unfinished thoughts characterize the discourse of Sandy who, since the beginning of the novel, is back home on sick leave after hurting his arm with barbed wire while trying to save a comrade —““Out there —well...’ He stubbed out his cigarette under his boot” (Wilkinson 2015: 28). There are some hints in the novel that reveal the poor mental state in which he was at his return from the front, as opposed to his current improvement: “When Sandy had first come from the war in France he would never have winked like that. He was obviously better, but that meant he would be leaving soon” (Wilkinson 2015: 19). In addition, symbolically in line with his mental health, his physical state has also improved: “The scar that puckered his skin from elbow to wrist was faded to a purplish line” (Wilkinson 2015: 21). Sandy’s traumatization is made evident in his reaction to Nora’s question about barbed wire, which proves he is unable to verbalize his traumatic experience:

Nora [...], probably trying to sound grown-up in front of Sandy, said in a put-on, showy-off voice, “I suppose you must see a lot of barbed wire at the Front? I’ve heard it can do terrible damage?”

The air seemed to shudder. Sandy shook his head, his cheeks suddenly white under his freckles, his blue eyes darkened with something Helen couldn’t read —a memory? She knew the injury to his arm had been caused by ripping it on barbed wire while he’d been trying to get one of his injured men back to safety.

The man had died of his wounds. Sandy had never told her this, but she had overheard her parents talking.

I hate you, Nora, Helen thought. She might only be fourteen today and she didn't have much of a bosom yet, and childish plaits and short skirts, but for goodness sake! *She* knew better than to talk about wire, or trenches, or people being killed. Especially when Sandy was going back in two days' time.

"Isn't it time for my candles?" she said loudly, and Nora tossed her head and rolled her eyes, but Sandy gave Helen a tight, grateful smile. (Wilkinson 2015: 32)

Helen progressively becomes more sensitive towards the trauma of war, as proven in the way that she respects Sandy's reluctance to talk about it, even when that is, in this fragment, confused by Nora with an immature urge to be in the limelight. She debates herself between the desire to know about the reality of the trenches and to avoid the topic, since she feels both repelled and attracted to an unknown subject that arouses fear, similarly to the experience of the sublime. When her cousins start talking about war, her impulse is to leave: "a mixture of boredom [...] and fear—that Sandy would reveal something horrible— had driven her off" (Wilkinson 2015: 23). Moreover, women seem to be encouraged not to talk about what was considered a man's affair, and to hide their feelings and keep silent, so as to facilitate the soldiers' separation from the home; Helen herself is aware of that: "*She* didn't want Sandy to go back to the Front either, but you couldn't say that. It was hard enough for the boys out in France without their womenfolk going mushy on them" (Wilkinson 2015: 21). Notwithstanding, she also acknowledges that Sandy's letters are usually uninformative and trivial, as opposed to Sandy's conversation with Michael. Sandy seems to be more comfortable talking to him because he sees him as a fellow soldier who is going to endure the experience as well, contrary to his family, whom he feels the need to protect from the cruelty of the battle. Helen decides to confront the truth in an attempt to do something for him in exchange of his sacrifice, and thus she offers herself to read any accounts and feelings he might want to share:

He grinned, but then lapsed into one of his old silences. [...]

"You didn't mind talking to Michael about the war," Helen said, when the train got going again.

"Not really, no."

"Because he's a boy?"

"I suppose so. He reminded me of the boys in my platoon." He looked out of the window, and said, in a casual tone, "I wonder how many of those boys are still alive." [...]

"I may not be a boy but I'm not a *child*."

"What do you mean?"

"You could tell me things."

He sighed. "Better not. It's a different world. People can't understand."

"Not if you don't tell them the truth."

"Do you really think my mother wants to know the *truth*?"

"She reads us your letters." Sandy's letters—longed for, celebrated, but always, secretly, for Helen, rather empty. He had said more in the letter he'd sent to the school to thank them for his old boys' parcel. "You always say everything's fine."

"That's what she wants to hear. It's like—well, like you not wanting to talk about Aunt Eileen."

For a moment Helen felt bruised, and then it was a sudden relief to say, "I know she isn't happy. We all say it's her chest, but it's more than that."

“You’re not ‘wee Helen’ any more, are you?” he said, looking at her closely. She met his blue eyes with confidence. “No”, she said, “I’m not. And I don’t mind hearing nasty things. If anything ever happens that you want to tell someone—you can write to me. I won’t tell anyone.”

“Promise?”

Helen nodded and squeezed his hand. “Promise,” she said. And wasn’t sure whether she should hope for such a letter, or pray that Sandy would never need to write one. (Wilkinson 2015: 35-37)

For the first time, Helen verbalizes her concern about her mother’s unhappiness and detachment from them and feels relief. Thus, in the story, Wilkinson chooses to emphasize the verbalization of trauma as an important step in the recognition and subsequent assimilation of that which is troubling the person who suffers it. From that moment onwards, Helen becomes a secondary witness of Sandy’s experiences. His letters are the only glimpses of war depicted in the narrative. At first, she cannot help feeling anxious about his letters, not knowing exactly what to expect: “she had been nervous that his letters would be full of unwelcome horrors—and annoyed with herself, for hadn’t she begged him to be honest?—but the most gruesome detail so far had only been about a rat” (Wilkinson 2015: 73). Only through this simple image of the rat, Wilkinson already conveys the dirty environment of the trenches as it has been frequently depicted in war novels. She also employs specific vocabulary when describing the men’s behaviours at the front, as well as the connection between military camaraderie and sportsmanship:

His platoon were a good lot, mostly Belfast lads like himself, though mainly experienced. One of them, who Sandy would only call Private C, was a bit windy—it took Helen a while to realise that meant *cowardly*—and needed a goof bit of jolly along. [...] But his second lieutenant, Robbie McGivern—now he was a great lad; the sort of lad he’d been on rugby teams with; they were old pals already. “You get to know a man pretty quickly out here,” he had written. (Wilkinson 2015: 73-74)

Later in the novel, however, there comes a turning point in which Sandy is going through a moment of crisis after realizing that he had had the fate of a soldier in his hands and did not profit that to save him. As soon as Helen receives Sandy’s letter with the corresponding account, she already notices this one is going to be different because of his handwriting, which is less legible and neat than usual, to the point that “at times she had to peer and squint to decipher the writing” (Wilkinson 2015: 76): “She knew before she read a single word, that it was going to be the horrible truth she had begged for and dreaded” (Wilkinson 2015: 74). The more he delved into the facts, the more rough and careless the letter became, which Helen guesses is a clear sign of drunkenness—“the writing started to grow bigger and messier. Sometimes he was digging in so hard that the paper was nearly torn. It looked almost as though he were—well, not quite sober” (Wilkinson 2016: 75). Sandy’s account is full of short sentences and clarifications, which mimic his hurriedness to tell in a state of anxiety:

I told you there was a big push coming? Usual thing; waiting all night to attack at dawn. And C’s whimpering and saying he’s sick—and that’s bad for the other lads. Panic in a trench—last thing you need. He’d got the wind up everybody. I told him to report sick—it was all I could think of, I just wanted him out of there. Anyway the MO sent him back with a flea in his ear and told him to be a man. Or so I hear. Because he never came back. And in all that

confusion —we attacked next morning— I think we thought he was dead anyway. And I don't mind telling you, I thought, well good riddance to him. We'd lost Robbie in the attack—in the worst way, hit in the stomach, died in agony. I didn't see it—but I heard it from the sergeant afterwards. And I couldn't stop thinking about that. (Wilkinson 2015: 75-76)

The narrative intersperses Sandy's letters with Helen's reactions to remark the difficulties Helen is having to process the information, since she cannot help but think of the dead lieutenant as Sandy: "Helen gulped. She had a horrible image of Robbie—in her imagination he looked just like Sandy—with his guts spilling everywhere. Like that long-ago lamb at Derryward, bleeding into the grass. She swallowed and forced herself to read on" (Wilkinson 2015: 76). Interestingly enough, she is able to process the account by associating it with a previous memory that was also traumatic for her, as was the witnessing of a dying lamb. The letter's climax comes when Sandy is asked to give his opinion on private C's character and decides to ruthlessly tell the truth out of resentment towards the fact that the private abandoned them at a critical juncture, even in spite of knowing that it would bring terrible consequences for the private:

But late that day C was found and arrested for desertion. He was court-martialled. They asked me to report on his character because I knew him better than the Captain, who'd only arrived. I said he wasn't a brave soldier and his influence on the other men was poor. So they passed the extreme sentence. Do you know what that is, Helen? He was shot. By men of his own platoon. And maybe I could have stopped it. Maybe I could have pleaded for him. But I didn't. I was angry with him. I wanted him to die. Because Robbie was dead and that little piece of NOTHING was alive. And didn't deserve to be. It happened this morning. I didn't shoot him myself, but I had to give the order. The men are all upset. I— (Wilkinson 2015: 76)

Sandy consequently blames himself for the execution and is unable to continue writing about the event, which leaves the last sentence unfinished, and thus his own feelings about it unsaid. Helen finds a note written at the back by a sober Sandy who apologizes for sharing with her an incident about which she would probably have preferred not to know:

The letter tailed off there. Helen turned the page but all that was written on the back—more neatly now—was
Sorry, you don't want to know all this. To be honest I've had more than a tot of rum tonight. Filthy stuff. Don't worry. Like I said I am AI. DON'T TELL ANYONE. And write back if you can spare the time. (Wilkinson 2015: 76-77)

Helen is then unable to answer the letter because she finds herself out of words: "she sat on her bed with her writing pad until her hands cramped with cold, and couldn't find any words at all" (Wilkinson 2015: 77). When she eventually replies, a few days afterwards, she tries to be empathic, but knows it is not enough, nor can she provide any solace: "She had eventually replied to that shocking letter, but had found nothing better to say than, 'That sounds horrid. Poor you.' Which she knew wasn't what he had hoped for" (Wilkinson 2015: 87).

Contrasting with Sandy's revelations, Michael, who is still at training camp, portrays the innocent young men who were eager to prove their worth at the front. In his first letter to Helen, he does not say much besides from the fact they are impatient to fight—"He was enjoying camp life. The other lads were good sport. [...] The sergeant was a demon, the food not as good as at home. They were all impatient to get to France and do some proper fighting" (Wilkinson

2015: 73); in his next letter, his desperation is even more palpable due to the use repetitions that stress the routine and boredom he feels at the camp: “*I don’t mind telling you we are all fed up with being stuck in camp, still in Ireland, training training training; drilling drilling drilling. [...] Can’t wait for some real action*” (Wilkinson 2015: 101). Liam, the character in *Fallen*, shares the same feelings of excitement and impatience when also writing from his training camp: “We liked knowing he was safe, but he was keen to get to France, or Flanders, somewhere that mattered. I want to do my part, he wrote in his letters home. To me, he wrote about the boredom and exhaustions of drill. [...] The waiting, he said, was what kept him awake at night” (Mills 2014: 27). Wilkinson’s novel marks therefore a clear separation between those at home and those at the front, and between those who share old notions of the war and tend to romanticize it, and those who have already experienced or read about the reality of modern warfare.

3.4.2 *Fallen*

This novel evinces a more overt representation of trauma, since there are not only more descriptions of the life at the trenches, as provided by two different characters, but also gets deep into the question of mourning, putting the focus on the families that lost their loved ones in the First World War. Similarly to *Name Upon Name*, images of the trenches are provided in the novel through letters from the front. Katie not only reads Liam’s letters but sometimes even memorizes them, becoming, the same as Helen, a secondary witness of the events. In Katie’s particular case, being also affected by the death of her brother, she starts suffering from vicarious trauma, as seen in different digressions, intrusive thoughts and nightmares throughout the novel. In this respect, it has been exposed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* that some people might develop post-traumatic or acute stress disorder not necessarily after experiencing or witnessing the traumatic event, but also after “learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental” (DSM 2013: 271; 280). Already since Liam’s departure, Katie cannot help but anxiously wonder about Liam’s state: “Was I happy? I missed Liam. I worried about him. I read the war news in the papers every day, following the disasters and reversals of the stalled campaign as best I could. [...] He was never far from my mind” (Mills 2014: 38). Katie’s fear of losing his brother at any moment makes her fall into a state of dissociation in which she disconnects from her surroundings while walking through the street: “I paid scant attention to the flower-sellers at the base of the Pillar, people waiting on trams, newsboys calling headlines, the smell of horses’ dung” (Mills 2014: 39). Instead, she plays out imaginary scenarios which she recreates drawing from Liam’s letters, where he describes the landscape of the trenches as a desolate extension of mud:

And as I passed those streets, the traffic, those women —was Liam, in that every minute, crawling through muck trying to keep his precious rifle out of the wet? Playing cards in a dug-out? Taking aim? Lines from his letters scrolled through my mind, evoking their strange images: a grey-coated figure falling like a tree in a clearing, causing birds to clack and flap into a wheeling sky and vanish; the ghosts of leaves tumbling among echoes of snapping branches; mud underfoot and everywhere you looked. Rock-solid mud. (Mills 2014: 39)

U She also establishes sensorial connections when she relates sounds of her environment to those of the bullets that Liam might be confronting: “A massive clap of thunder rolled over his words. My mind flew to the guns on the Continent. It was said that people in some parts of England

could hear them across the water” (Mills 2014: 41). It is not only that her reality intermingles with her imaginary reconstructions through intrusive images and sensorial associations, but also that she traces invisible connections between her space and that of Liam, for instance, in this case, connecting the river Liffey, which crosses the city of Dublin, to the rivers in Europe: “To think that all the rivers in the world poured out into one great bowl of ocean —this, the Liffey, making its way to meet all the rivers and tributaries of France and Germany and Flanders, where Liam was. If he happened to be looking at a river now, any river...” (Mills 2014: 40). Intrusive or recurrent images have proven to be essential to understand the workings of trauma, since theory has always sustained that these symptoms were produced precisely “because linguistic and memorial machineries completely fail to integrate or process the traumatic image” (Luckhurst 2008: 147), as was discussed in section 2.3. Thus, images have been explained in terms of an “unbidden flashback that abolishes time and reimmerses you in the visual field of the inaugurating traumatic instant” (Luckhurst 2008: 147). Notwithstanding, in Katie’s case there are no flashbacks, nor was there a particular traumatic event that could not be properly assimilated, but her fear of losing her brother seems to be already provoking her an acute stress disorder prior to his actual death, which worsens afterwards with the bereavement. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, “in the case of bereavement following a death that occurred in traumatic circumstances, the symptoms of acute stress disorder can involve acute grief reactions. In such cases, reexperiencing, dissociative, and arousal symptoms may involve reactions to the loss” (DSM 2013: 284).

The novel actually devotes part of its narrative to the process of grief, which serves to pay homage not only to the victims of the Great War, but also and especially to their families. When Liam dies of wounds on 14th April 1915, readers get to know the family’s reaction to the news a couple of days later, and especially how Katie lives through her loss both some months afterwards and a year later. When finding out about his death, Katie first experiences denial — “A single idea echoed through the hollow chambers of my head, *No. It’s not true. No*” (Mills 2014: 47)— and is unable to process the information: “They passed around the official telegram. No matter how often I looked at the words, I couldn’t retain them. DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT 10557 2ND LT CRILLY ROYAL DUBLIN FUSILIERS DIED OF WOUNDS LETTER FOLLOWS RECORDS OFFICE” (Mills 2014: 47). It is interesting to mention, in this respect, how Katie sees her mother as if she had suddenly abandoned the person she used to be, implying that loss, as trauma, causes irreversible damage: “When Mother went up to bed that night, she had the look of someone setting out on a long journey, someone we wouldn’t see again for a good long while” (Mills 2014: 47). Katie feels a sense of depersonalization herself, which is categorized as a type of dissociative disorder in the *DSM*: “I was stiff and strange myself, as though I found myself suddenly in charge of a large doll made of wood, with no notion of how to direct it” (Mills 2014: 50). Depersonalization disorder might develop after the “unexpected death of a loved one” and “involves a persistent or recurring feeling of being detached from one’s body or mental processes, like an outside observer of one’s life” (Spiegel 2023). Katie’s case, feeling her body as a doll and disconnected from her mind, presents symptoms of the disorder, since, according to David Spiegel, those who suffer it may “feel unreal or like an automaton, with no control over what they do or say. They may feel emotionally or physically numb” (2023). She also finds it difficult, at first, to confront and assimilate the fact that Liam is dead, which leads her to evade reality occasionally: “Sometimes I pretended to myself that Liam was still out there, cursing the mud, being kind to new boys, cleaning his rifle. My mind couldn’t fit itself around the shape of his absence. I couldn’t accept that either of us could outlive the other” (Mills 2014: 55-56). Even later in the narrative, one year after Liam’s death, when her father wants to move to Kingston, Katie is

afraid of leaving their memories behind and closing all connections with Liam, and she even considers the possibility he might return alive and not find them: “My reluctance wasn’t only sentiment. Suppose there’d been a mistake and Liam came back —how would he find us, if we’d moved? It could happen. Or suppose a final letter had gone astray. Suppose it turned up in a French farmhouse or a Belgian church, months or even years from now. It would be delivered to this address” (Mills 2014: 88).

After knowing about Liam’s death, the room that belonged to her brother becomes such an alien space for her —“I sat on, downstairs, unable to face Liam’s room with my things in it” (Mills 2014: 47)— that she decides to leave the house and wander through the city in the rain until she ends up in the street where Con, a friend of Liam, lives. While she is in Con’s room waiting for her soaked clothes to dry, she immediately remembers Liam’s harsh conditions at the front, with the feet wet in his military boots:

All the while, Liam’s voice spoke into my mind, retelling a scene from a letter he wrote after his first return from the line: *I feel human again, after a bath. The water was ice-cold. It shocked the breath out of me, but when I got out I felt as though I’d been set alight. When we go up to the trenches again it’ll be days before we change out clothes or even get our boots off, although our feet are sodden. Can you imagine that, Miss Hog-the-bath? If there wasn’t so much loose metal and other noisome articles lying about, things I couldn’t bring myself to mention, not even to you, we might be better off with no boots at all.* (Mills 2014: 49)

Katie’s reaction to her brother’s death could be discussed in terms of the syndrome known as the survivor’s guilt. Even though Katie did not personally share the experience of war so as to say that she has survived as such, as opposed to Liam, she definitely feels guilty for being alive, denoted by the fact that she thinks that she will never suffer enough —“No matter how cold or how dark, I would never, ever, be dark or cold enough” (Mills 2014: 51)— and also that it would have been better for her family if she had died instead of him, which she even verbalizes to her housekeeper: “It should have been me who died. She’d have preferred it” (Mills 2014: 64). It could be said that Katie runs the risk of falling into melancholia —a term discussed, together with mourning, in section 2.3 of the dissertation— since the loss of Liam has not only affected the world around her but also her own ego; among the commented symptoms of melancholia according to Freud, there was precisely “a reduction in the sense of self, expressed in self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment” (2005: 204). In this vein, she recurrently imagines the moment when he was killed but changing the outcome so that she can save him, either by making sure they both survive —“Since he died, I’d run out many times, in my imagination, to save him. To save the both of us. From his bed, in this very room, I’d woken to a dark so terribly fractured by noise that I sprang from the table of sheets, his name ringing in my ears” (Mills 2014: 57)— or by sacrificing herself instead: “Sometimes, in a waking dream, I caught the fatal bullet myself, or stumbled from the battlefield, his arm heavy on my neck, his breath hoarse at my ear, begging for water. The ground we crossed in my fantasy changed from the cratered muck he described in his letters to harvest-gold, to green” (Mills 2014: 57). Reenacting trauma and revisiting scenarios while attempting to change the ending is a common behavior exhibited by many patients; as was already commented in section 2.3, “sometimes people reenact the traumatic moment with a fantasy of changing the outcome of the dangerous encounter. In their attempts to undo the traumatic moment, survivors may even put themselves at risk of further harm” (Herman 2014: 39). One year after Liam’s death, she continues to feel responsible, because it was she who

helped him get to the front sooner thanks to Hubie’s recommendation —“it was Hubie Wilson who’d recommended Liam’s early transfer. Dad said we couldn’t hold that against him. [...] But, if not for me, May wouldn’t have intervened. Liam might still be in a training camp in England—or even here. I couldn’t bear to think about it” (Mills 2014: 97).

Throughout the novel, Katie also experiences different flashbacks in which she remembers some moments with Liam after his enlistment, as well as fragments of his letters —“I knew them off by heart” (Mills 2014: 52)— which provide the information about his psychological state and therefore, a fair fictional account of the effects of the war. She remembers, for instance, that when he was back home on leave for a few days, she could see that the war had already changed him, since he was distant and restrained himself from sharing his feelings, and also showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress:

Liam was tense. He was leaving the next day, and soon he’d be going to the Front. He’d been different, the three days of his leave; there had been something unreachable in him. He even sounded different, using a new vocabulary of rank and equipment, sappers, the chaps. He’d a way of biting off the ends of his sentences, as if to control what might escape them. He smoked one cigarette after another, laughed too often and a little too loud. [...]

Time was when there were no barriers between our two minds, but now I couldn’t reach him unless he chose to allow it. At last he began to talk. He’d walked past Trinity on his way home from Isabel’s that evening, he said, when two girls came up to him, giggling and nudging each other, their hands hidden in fur muffs. He stood off the pavement to let them pass, raised his hat to them. “I was grinning like any old eejit,” he said, mocking himself. “They were pretty girls. I thought they liked the look of me.”

“And?”

“They gave me this.” He reached into his pocket and drew out a fat white feather, broken in two. “They called me coward. They wanted to know, am I not man enough to fight?”⁸⁴ [...]

“If you paid attention to them all, you’d be wearing ten different uniforms at once.”

“Or none.”

“Or none.” I risked another look at him. “I know you’re only doing this because you think it’s right. I admire you for it. But I’m afraid for you too.”

“Don’t be,” he said. “I’m not. I’m more afraid of what the world would be if we don’t put up a fight, what it will be if we don’t win. And there are so many Irishmen in the thick of it, we’ll have a place at the peace conference, for sure, when it ends. They’ll all see it differently then.” (Mills 2014: 120-21)

The excerpt shows the social pressures to which the population was subjected, while also emphasizing that the reason that kept a soldier such as Liam fighting was his own conviction that they were doing it for a good cause; especially after experiencing life in the trenches, Liam believes that it is urgent to put an end to the war, and he clings to the hope that there will be some compensation for the Irish who are voluntarily playing their part. Shortly after arriving to the front, he had written to his mother reaffirming his decision to follow Kettle’s call by enhancing the camaraderie and team spirit shared by soldiers from different nations who had come together for the same purpose:



⁸⁴ Known as the “White Feather Girls”, these women, supporters of the war, shamed young men wearing civilian clothes into enlisting by giving them a white feather that symbolized cowardice, as also commented in footnote 82.

Everywhere I look, I see men from all over the world —there’s an Indian regiment, their hair bound up in a thick white cloth that makes their skin seem darker than it is. Canadians who don’t seem to feel the cold. It’s no mean thing, to have such men on our side. No matter where we come from, we’re together in this. When I see hundreds upon hundreds of men in khaki, from every corner of the Empire, all massed together and bent on the same task, it makes me proud. Every single man of us faces the chance of death, any hour, any minute. This is the adventure of our time, of our generation. Professor Kettle is right when he says that the absentee Irishman today is the man who stays at home. (Mills 2014: 232-33)

The visibility given to colonial and non-Eurocentric countries here correlates with the general spirit of twenty-first century narratives readdressing Great War stories, as remarked in the first section of this chapter, which decided to focus on peripheral and unrepresented stories and participants. Notwithstanding, contrasting with Liam’s admiration of bravery and sense of pride to have become part of the experience, Katie later in the novel listens to a rather different account by Hubie, one of terrified soldiers trying to get a leave: “There were sly fellows out there. Cleaning their guns, they’d lose a finger, a couple of toes. One company was known for a trick of holding their hands up above the ramparts during a barrage, like beggars, for credible wounds” (Mills 2014: 232); as Katie herself realizes, “it was so different from what Liam wrote to Mother, soon after he arrived in France” (Mills 2014: 232).

Two months after Liam’s death, that is, in June 1915, on the day of their birthday, Katie starts rereading his letters. It is interesting to mention here the contrast between the letters sent to his parents and those sent exclusively to Katie: “The letters he wrote to me were darker, meant for my eyes only. A shadow fell on them and deepened as the wet, bitter winter dragged on” (Mills 2014: 52). Moreover, since he is promoted to second lieutenant, his letters do not need to undergo the same censorship of those written by soldiers, because he was allowed to use the green envelopes for officers: “The envelopes had had a green cross on them, and a statement to sign, stating *On my honour* that the contents were personal only and had no bearing on the war” (Mills 2014: 228). After Liam’s death, Katie shows some of them to her family, but there were others which she still could not share: “There were things he’d asked me to be sure to keep to myself” (Mills 2014: 58). His attitude is therefore similar to that of Sandy in *Name Upon Name*: whereas he is able to get deeper with Helen and makes her share his sense of guilt, he is more vague and selective when writing to his mother to appease her. Shortly after getting to the front, Liam sent a letter to his mother in high spirits telling her not to worry about him because he seems to be in luck:

In January, not long after he went to the Front, he’d sent a letter to Mother, full of certainty that he would come through the war unscathed.
*Half an hour ago, Jerry sent a storm of shells over.⁸⁵ I thought I was a goner. [...] You’ll think I was afraid, but no. I was up to my knees in mud, gripped as tight as though someone poured a ton of cement on me. I stood there, braced for the worst —and the sound roared right on by. After all that, it was only a field ambulance I heard, straining along a track in high gear. The whole thing over in flash, longer in the telling than in the happening.
 So, you see, my life is charmed. There’s no call to worry about me. Our last billet was blown to smithereens not long after we’d left it. That building was*

⁸⁵ Jerry was a depreciative short form for a German soldier, modelled on the English proper name, used by the British troops in both the First and the Second World War.

hundreds of years old. It's nothing but a mess of old rubble now, yet here I am, still in one ugly piece.

I should have known better than to believe him. He was cheerful for our parent's benefit, knowing his letters to them would be read out loud as soon as they arrived and many times over. (Mills 2014: 52)

In spite of Liam's apparent initial enthusiasm, the novel also reflects the conflict with religious faith that the First World War entailed, and which pervaded post-war literature on the topic, since in retrospective, many people found it impossible to conciliate the atrocities of modern warfare—given the amount of casualties that the new machinery and guns provoked—with the existence of God:⁸⁶

Grief made fools of us all. There was shock in it, but there could hardly be surprise. [...] For me, belief in a personal, all-knowing, all-seeing God had already become impossible in the face of what was happening on the Continent. There had been shocking casualties in the Dublin regiments alone. Thousands dead. We'd heard that, in the Dardanelles, many of the Dublins were put off their boats into water that was too deep for them. Pulled under by the weight of their packs, they drowned, while Turkish bullets and mortar-fire tore into their comrades and churned the sea red. The gas unleashed at Ypres, around the time that Liam died, was still claiming lives two months later. Every second person on Sackville Street wore a black armband, or a cuff. (Mills 2014: 53)

At the beginning of the century, some ideas had already spread that put dogmas into question, such as the findings of Darwin, which are mentioned in the story, but it is remarked that it was Liam's death what ended Katie's faith: "Liam had had his own doubts. We'd both read Mr Darwin's book. Now I knew my doubt had been a game I played on the surface of my mind. Liam's death destroyed a deeper faith. It cracked the bedrock of my existence" (Mills 2014: 53). Notwithstanding, at the outbreak of the conflict, religious metaphors were frequently employed in war propaganda and well received by the vast majority of the population: "wartime societies were swept by waves of a religious-style faith. Belief in God and the *patrie* was often the same thing, and God was on the side of all the belligerent peoples" (Becker 2010: 236). It was, moreover, very common at the front, especially regarding Irish Catholics, to have the consolation and presence of priests: "Early in the war reports that Catholic Irish soldiers were dying without the attendance of priests caused an outcry in Ireland. The provision of a suitable number of Catholic chaplains for the 16th Division in particular had been urged by John Redmond from its formation" (Denman 1991: 362). The Irish were considered one of the most religious people in the army—"One outstanding characteristic of the Catholic Irish soldier was the depth of his religious feeling. [...] Men would flock to religious services even when exhausted after long duty in the line, or when services were held within range of the German guns" (Denman 1991: 361). Liam seemed to be quite fond of one particular father and used to write about him knowing that his mother would be content about it: "Liam had often mentioned Father Fogarty in his own letters. Mother took comfort in their friendship. She imagined that

⁸⁶ According to Annette Becker, religious faith and ideologies continued in the post-war period in the form of rituals of commemoration, but the fervent metaphors of religious crusade were rejected in favor of pacifist vindications: "In the years that followed the war, the nature and fervor of wartime faith were denied and opposed by an upsurge of militant pacifism. [...] there was a good deal of continuity of wartime faith in how the war dead were commemorated, with memorials in stone and bronze in military cemeteries and in stained glass in church windows, where soldiers continued to imitate Christ on the cross. These were places of commemorative mysticism, of mourning, but henceforth without any crusade. The violent intensity of the crusade seemed to belong to a past that was now hard to comprehend, and even rejected" (2010: 243).

Liam's faith had continued strong. 'It would have helped him,' she said. 'Even in the darkest hours.' That could have been the reason why Liam referred to the priest so often, to console her" (Mills 2014: 54). However, in a letter to Katie, he shows genuine admiration towards the priest and his desire to hold on to faith:

Father Fogarty is as brave as any soldier, he wrote to me. [...] They retreat as fast as they decently can, in their clean uniforms, but Froggy—he's called that not only for his name, but because of his big eyes—will crawl out in the worst fire-storm to pray with a dying man. He has time for everyone, no matter what their persuasion. He's patient with me, with my doubt. Mother would say I've lost my Faith. I think I've discovered Reason. Belief in a benevolent God seems a screen, a shield, for children. Whatever you do, don't let her know, it would only hurt her. Time enough for those conversations when I come home. Froggy says, pray anyway. He says faith might be restored to me. I wish for it every night, going to sleep, wondering if I'll see another morning. Then morning comes and I wish for faith again, wondering will I have safe passage through the light of another day. I wonder, is this wanting a kind of faith in itself? But the gulf between wanting and wishing on the one hand, and belief on the other, is wider than the whole world. To think of it gives me an urge to lay me down, deep in its blackest, most silent depths and sleep, longer than time. (Mills 2014: 54-55)

Thus Liam, in his search for hope, struggled with the wish to embrace religious faith, but found it challenging to become a believer in such a context. Father Fogarty demonstrated to be as brave as other soldiers and therefore worth of trust, and he fulfilled his role of spiritual supporter and guide. In this sense, the character could be a fictional portrayal of Father William Doyle: "In the 16th Division the close links between soldier and chaplain were personified in the charismatic figure of Father William Doyle. Doyle died fighting with the 16th Division at the third battle of Ypres, where he was recommended for the Victoria Cross [...]. As well as being a fervent Irish patriot he was outstandingly courageous" (Denman 1991: 362). In addition, Father Fogarty paid his respects to the family in a letter:

His chaplain, Father Fogarty, had written to us to say Liam was a decent, warm-hearted soul. There's not a man in this company who has not felt the better for a steadying word from him in a dark moment others didn't notice. He'll be missed.
When I last saw him, earlier that day, he was calm.
We laid him to rest in a small cemetery in N—, with others who fell the same day. A cross marks the spot. (Mills 2014: 53)

Although Father Fogarty's letter is intended to provide solace, Katie cannot help but hate the use of the word "fell", since, in her view, obscures the truth and consequently fails to condemn the war: "I'd come to loathe that word; the newspapers were full of it. It masked the raw truth, that men were shot to pieces every day, for no good reason that I could see" (Mills 2014: 54). The word had, in addition, religious connotations of sacrifice that her mother embraced as a motif to be proud of, proving that the rhetoric of the war propaganda that turned the matter into a Christian crusade found a sympathetic audience in Irish Catholics: "Mother said Liam was one of 'The Fallen', as though it was an honour. She talked about sacrifice. No one had the heart, or the nerve, to challenge her" (Mills 2014: 54).

Knowing how important Father Fogarty had been for Liam, she decides to write him back, but her letter is returned because he has already passed away, killed in action. They receive, instead, a letter by Captain Hubie Wilson —May’s nephew and Liam’s fellow at the front— which also, the same as the one by Father Fogarty, aimed to eulogize Liam:

He told a story about a patrol that went out one night shortly before Liam was killed. *There was a boy with them, Acheson. He’d not been out long. He got separated from the rest, and when they found him he mistook them for Germans and started firing. The rest were furious, as you’d imagine. Liam made a joke of it, saying they should all be grateful the boy was such a rotten shot. He spent some time with him after, giving him sighing and shooting tips. That Acheson is still with us is nothing short of a miracle. He has Liam to thank for it.* (Mills 2014: 55)

In addition to these two letters, Liam’s personal effects —the uniform and clothes, the watch and badges, a couple of photographs and some letters— are returned to them in a trunk; as soon as they opened it, “a mucky, sickening stench seeped through the room. It coated my tongue, stuck in my throat” (Mills 2014: 60). The mother’s reaction is to destroy everything, since she cannot stand the sight of things that seem alien to the person they used to know: “‘It’s none of it Liam. It’s a travesty!’ Tears stood in Mother’s eyes. [...] ‘I want rid of it. All of it.’ [...] ‘You may as well burn it’” (Mills 2014: 62). Katie understands her mother, because she does not feel anything about them: “It told me nothing. Mother was right, none of it felt like Liam. The army could have sent any man’s things, one khaki uniform was the same as another” (Mills 2014: 64). Nevertheless, she believes that the letters and photographs were worth keeping and Lockie, the housekeeper, helps her put those aside and also gathers and puts away some mementoes herself: “Lockie brought over a scissors and cut away the badges, the single star from the shoulder and the buttons, the shiny and the tarnished. ‘Ye might want mementoes,’ she said” (Mills 2014: 63). Katie then takes some of the clothes to a convent to burn, but hesitates when she is about to throw the clothes —“my hands stuck to the cloth, the way Dad had held on to Liam’s letters earlier” (Mills 2014: 66)— and has intrusive thoughts about the possibility of putting an end to their lives: “If we all went up in flames right there and then, that’d put an end to this sham of a birthday for good and all. I fought an urge to howl, loud enough so Liam would hear, all the way across the sea and under foreign fields as he was, his ears full of mud” (Mills 2014: 66). These moments in the narrative —the gathering of mementos and the burning of his clothes from the army— serve as rites in the process of mourning.

However, once that everything related to Liam seems to have been handled, Katie feels haunted by the death of her brother to the point of feeling his presence in what used to be his room —“A draught chilled my neck. Something stirred in the corner of the room. [...] Nothing. But when I turned back to the letters, I sensed it, not so much a shadow as a density” (Mills 2014: 71)— and of even having a vision of his feet, which serves as a metonymy that reveals his deteriorated state at the front: “My vision blurred, conjured a pair of big, callused soldier’s feet crammed into my rabbit-fur slippers. They’d be ruined. The feet withdrew. Several toes had poked holes through the ends of a nasty-looking sock, worse even than the ones I’d burned earlier. [...] I blinked and they were gone” (Mills 2014: 71). It is interesting to mention that Katie thinks of other deaths in the family in phantasmagoric terms, because even though they are not completely secret, they remain unspoken, and fears that Liam is going to become one more of those haunting stories to avoid: “We had ghosts in the family who were never mentioned: Mother’s sister, Abigail, who had died in circumstances we weren’t allowed to know, and two infant brothers, born after Florrie. Neither lived longer than six months. Eva had

had more than her share of miscarriages too, each leaving her more drained and sad” (Mills 2014: 91). In fact, when one year later Eva’s daughter, Alanna, does not know who Liam is, Katie feels deeply upset: “Did Eva never talk about him? I didn’t often say his name out loud myself. It felt too dangerous, a bladed hook that could split my chest and drag my heart from its hiding place. If you love someone, and that person dies, all that love becomes a burden, a weight accumulating, pooling inside you, with nowhere to go” (Mills 2014: 101). Thus, Katie debates herself between the desire to talk about Liam so that he does not become a ghost within the family, and the state of paralysis that prevents her from talking about him, as well as from changing any aspect that might leave him behind and allow her to move on: “After that came the paralysis of not wanting to do anything that might remind us that he wouldn’t, ever, be coming back” (Mills 2014: 92).

Close to the anniversary of his death, in April 1916, Katie once again feels emotionally uneasy: “For weeks I’d been agitated and restless. I felt as though a stone were caught in my throat. Something hot and sticky, like a child’s thumbs, pressed against the backs of my eyes” (Mills 2014: 91). On top of that, the Easter Rising starts taking place and the violence of the revolt makes her evoke the scenes of war that Liam described in his letters. Consequently, she once again starts having nightmares with his death, and feeling guilty and helpless for not having been able to save him: “Liam stepped into a column of mud that exploded into fragments of brick and glass. All around him, men and pieces of men writhed, maggots at work in their mouths. [...] Guilt around my stomach to powder, something left undone, a thing that might have saved him” (Mills 2014: 187). It is noteworthy how sometimes the noises in her dreams and the ones of the revolt outside intermingle —“I woke to the sound of gunfire” (Mills 2014: 187)— which allows for the establishment of parallelisms between both practices of violence and terror. When trying to sleep at Dote and May’s place while feeling cold, for instance, she again has reminiscences of a letter in which Liam described the cold at the front:

It’s bitter cold. My fingers cramp on the pen. I’m hunched over the brazier, neatly IN the yoke. The pages might scorch. If they did, they’d warm my hands, thaw my frozen (despite two pairs of Mother’s best socks) feet. Death could be like this: blood freezing the veins, heart turned to ice. There’s frost on our clothes and hair. Men’s feet rot in it. The cold spawns icy visions. At night, the flares breed shadows that swarm through the trenches with the rats. The angel of war moves among the sleepers, touching the ones who’ll die with chill fingers, men so cold already they don’t sense the warning, or care. (Mills 2014: 185-86)

Katie cannot help but have recurrent thoughts of war and death that keep her in a state of anxiety: “I woke in blind panic under unfamiliar weight. It might be like this to lie in a wartime grave, trapped and suffocating, your ears ringing. Not knowing if the noise you heard came from inside your head or out. I fought free of the blankets and came up struggling for air, full of dread” (Mills 2014: 186). These fictional reenactments could be partly due, as it is very often the case when dealing with trauma, to unanswered questions, that is to say, to the impossibility of getting to know the whole truth of the experience, not only because in her case she did not have access to the real events, but also because she was aware of the silences and gaps in Liam’s stories. Not having been physically at the front, she constantly positions herself there in her imagination; and not having heard the full accounts, she goes over his letters in her mind in search for meaning. Thus Katie, as significantly expressed by Hubie in the novel, becomes the haunter, instead of Liam: “Has it occurred to you that Liam might not be haunting you, that it’s the other way around?” (Mills 2014: 270). The book insists on the issue of silence as a

characteristic that pervades both the reality of war and its derived accounts. Katie symbolically demands to know what actually happens during those moments of silence: “After he died, I went on writing to him in my mind, asking questions that fell like stones into black water and sank out of sight. *What is that silence like, Liam? Is it like knives, or a dark net? What happens there?*” (Mills 2014: 53). One of the difficulties for Katie is to imagine her brother, as she has always known him, in the context of war that she can picture in her mind, on the fringes of human values and morality: “I tried to see him, along with thousands of other men, ‘in action’. Every one of them someone’s brother, son, father; loving and loved; trying to kill men just like themselves. Trying even harder not to be killed. I hated to think about what soldiers had to do, the business of bayonets and bombs. I couldn’t see Liam in any of it” (Mills 2014: 57-58). In order to achieve it, she needs to rely on words, but she simultaneously distrusts them: “I tried to call up the smells —cordite, lyddite, dynamite, the lethal gas that entered the war as Liam left it. I knew the words people used to describe them: acrid, bitter, burnt—but how far could words be trusted, when there was so much cant about?” (Mills 2014: 58). The novel, as any trauma story, deals with the power of language to reveal the truth and plays with the tensions between knowing and not knowing, between the ability to express and grasp meaning in words and the impossibility to have full access and get a reliable idea of the experience. While reading the Roll of Honour, she acknowledges all the new vocabulary related to the war that they have learned and which has now become so familiar that sounds empty, devoid of significance: “The Roll droned on, repetitive and numbing: ‘Killed in action . . . from wounds received in action . . . from gas poisoning in action . . .’ It named regiments and foreign places, words we’d never heard before last year, as familiar to us now as the street names of our own city” (Mills 2014: 54).

Liam’s own impossibility to put some things into words is made evident by the fact that on some occasions he stopped writing for long periods of time. Close to his death, they had received no letters from him, but were unsure as to whether to be genuinely concerned, since it was not the first time that happened: “We hadn’t heard from him, not so much as a field postcard, for five days. I was uneasy, but it wasn’t the first time he’d gone quiet” (Mills 2014: 39). His fiancée, Isabel, also noticed something was wrong with Liam by the way he communicated; in March, she already wrote him a letter expressing her concern —“*Your letters worry me,*’ [...] *They hardly seem to come from you at all.*’ [...] *We’ve a lot to talk about when you come home.*” (Mills 2014: 61)— and in another letter from the 15th April, she directly asked him why he had not written: “*Why have you not written [...] since your leave was cancelled? I feel so cheated. It must be a million times worse for you. Don’t let the war change you . . .*” (Mills 2014: 61). Katie is the only one in the novel who knows the reasons behind Liam’s silence before he wrote a last letter for her with only the words “no more”, which sounded like a farewell, but decides that she has no right to speak in his place —“It was all in a letter, the last one before the terse, two-word message: *No more*. The one that told me he didn’t want to come back. The one that explained his long silence to Isabel, a silence I didn’t break for him, because it would have felt like a betrayal” (Mills 2014: 267). The turning point for Liam, the same as for Sandy in *Name Upon Name*, was marked by a death experience and the guilt of having one’s life at your mercy:

All leave postponed, we went up the line again. Something was up. Transports rolled night and day, moving artillery, the horses struggling through muck. Then a bombardment. Hell on earth. Three days, it lasted. I was in a hole with three others, all dead. I’d lost my bearings. The earth out here’s been wrenched inside out—hills become pits, heaps of muck where there used to be trench. Bits of men strewn around and all landmarks blasted. There’s no knowing which

direction to take for your own line, which would bring you to theirs. You could jump into a trench, thinking yourself safe, and land bang in the middle of a nest of Germans. I was parched, tongue rasping with thirst. Sporadic fire in the distance, the fight burning itself out. There were trees nearby. I crept in, for shelter and to take my bearings.

I leaned against a trunk for breath. When it steadied, I saw a field-grey uniform, not thirty yards away, and over it a ruddy farmboy's face, staring at me. My pulse throbbed so hard in my ears, I thought they'd burst. Neither of us moved. His eyes wary and alert, as mine must've been. Blood on his chin. He held out his two hands. His rifle in one of them, held by the barrel, harmless as anything. No blade. He took a backward step. Away. Then another. We could let each other be, go our separate ways. All this was in his eyes. He turned his broad grey back to me. It came to me then that if I let him go he could use that rifle against anyone, any of the men, Doyle or Wilson, or the priest. That's when I raised mine.

I thought I'd missed. He lurched, stopped still. I thought he'd spin around and shoot me in return. I wished he would. I'd have ripped my heart out and held it towards him for a target, if he had. I prayed for the shot that would end it all. Instead, he crumpled. Six feet of Imperial uniform. Folded up and fell.

I sat beside his body. Night crept in. Some men from my company found me, brought me back. I began this day a soldier and finished a murderer. I could be dead myself, for all I know. If so, I'm not writing this at all, but dreaming it. I can say what I like. Nothing will change.

The brother you thought you knew is gone. All the love in the world won't bring him back. This is life, now. Hardly worth fighting for. (Mills 2014: 267-68)

Liam manages to write a coherent and detailed narration of the event, which goes in line with McNally's ideas commented in section 2.4 that sensorial memories are actually enhanced when experiencing trauma. However, he himself concludes that he feels as in a dream-like condition in which he believes himself dead. Even though he clearly expresses the reasons that led him to kill the boy—those are, mostly, the fact that he was wearing field-grey, which was the colour of the uniforms from the German armies, and the impossibility of trusting someone in a context of war in which you see everyone as a potential enemy that can turn against you or your fellows—he is actually unable to justify or conciliate the fact of killing someone vulnerable. It is at that moment that he realizes the exposure to war has irrevocably changed him, which makes him lose contact with his own self. Thus, whereas he used to think that letters could provide him with a connection to his former self and life—“*Keep writing to me, Katie. Letters are the lit windows between our two worlds. They remind me of all I used to be. Hold a place for me—the Liam you know, not the filthy, weary, war-stained wretch I've become—in your mind*” (Mills 2014: 70)—from that moment onwards, he no longer saw it possible.

In addition to Liam's limited written accounts of the front, the novel introduces the stories of another character with experience at the front, Hubie Wilson, who, at the time of the Rising, had been discharged with wounds and was staying at May and Dote's house in Percy Place for a few days, being on his way back home to Mullingar after spending some months at an English military hospital. Among other injuries, he had lost the most part of a hand, which disturbed him to the core, being a man who could live by the work of his own hands: “He was a practical man, good with his hands. Clever when it came to fixing things that were broken. She'd written to him in the hospital, but only stilted letters came back, polite phrases written in a stranger's script. Nothing at all like her Hubie” (Mills 2014: 108). On top of that, his elder brother had married his fiancée during his absence with the approval of his parents, due to practical reasons

concerning the inheritance of the land: “His parents supported the march, for one of those country reasons to do with land, the eldest son and shared boundaries” (Mills 2014: 109). After everything he has lost in the fight, and taking into account the military past of his family, Katie is worried that Isabel, now an anti-war militant, might not show the appropriate sensitivity: “I hoped she’s be tactful and not antagonize Captain Wilson, who knew more of war than we ever would, or May, whose father had been a hero in the Crimea, and in the raising of the Siege of Cawnpore” (Mills 2014: 110). Hubie’s case was that of an Irish who did not volunteer for the war effort, but was already part of the army —according to Fitzpatrick, as stated in section 1.1, only less than 60,000 Irish were servicemen at the outburst of the war (1995: 1018). He explains that, being a second son, he could not expect much, and consequently, being also influenced by the family tradition, he took his commission in 1912:

“I got my commission four years ago.” He pushed his plate away. “It’s in the family, soldiering. I thought it would suit me for a while. I’d see a bit of the world. Save my pay,” he laughed, “for later. An uncle was in the Dublins. I’ve two cousins in the Irish Rifles, and Great Uncle Richard...” His eyes went to the display of May’s father’s medals in their frame on the wall behind me. “Why not? But then the war started... It was a shock. Wouldn’t you think a soldier would know better? I was young. I’d imagined the odd skirmish, life in a fort in a range of snowy mountains —or a desert. I thought it’d be glamorous. And interesting. Policing people with different notions of the world.”

“Like us,” I said.

“I’m as Irish as you are!” (Mills 2014: 115)

Hubie therefore portrays an Irish who enlisted due to the lack of prospects in the countryside, encouraged by family tradition, and who, in spite of taking part in the British imperial enterprise, defends his right to define himself as Irish. He is thus the epitome of the ambiguous character as uncomfortably posed as both perpetrator and victim of colonization. Contrary to those who believed in the cause or showed an idealization of the battle, he got immersed in the war out of the circumstances, and his accounts are devoid of romanticism. He establishes a stark contrast between their first steps through sunny days, fields “green and gold, harvest-ready” (Mills 2014: 161), hearing the “guns popping and booming in the distance” (Mills 2014: 161) and the singing of his fellow soldiers as they walked, to the place where they finally reached the battlefield: “No meadows now, only a new and terrible Dead Sea” (Mills 2014: 161). He provides, in this respect, detailed descriptions of the landscape and the environment —“The ground hard as bone. There was a stillness, as though time itself had stopped. He wished it would” (Mills 2014: 162)— as well as of the situation of the troops, increasingly more depleted: “What was left of their battalion passed through that place again, weeks later, after they’d been well and truly blooded. It was a waste land. Where there had been columns of marching men, now there were lines of dead” (Mills 2014: 162). The reasons that kept him fighting were not, therefore, based on issues of patriotism and politics, especially in retrospection:

“I’ve had enough of fighting to other people’s purpose.” He crossed to the armchair and sat. “A cause is one thing. Men enlisted to fight this war for their own reasons, but by the time they’d put on a uniform, khaki or grey or blue, they’d surrendered their right to pursue them. Their will bent to the purposes of idiot generals. Incompetent colonels. And whose purpose did those commanders serve? The King? The Kaiser? Parliament? I will never again raise a gun against another man at the whim of some MP from Yorkshire or Leeds or London —or Dublin, come to that. Never.” He brought his voice under control.

“Did I kill men because the bloody Kaiser wanted it? Whose will directed me?”
(Mills 2014: 222)

After being forced to carry out orders blindly, he is determined to regain some sense of agency and to be able to make his own choices so as to take full responsibility for his actions in case of ever having to exert violence again —“I may well kill a man, again. But, if I do, my reasons will be my own. I’ll know what they are” (Mills 2014: 223). For Hubie, the most important motivation was the feeling of camaraderie, that is, the idea of belonging to a group and devoting oneself to its members: “I’d go back if I could. I’d stand with those same men and rally them. They deserve that. At least that. What they really deserve, every last man of them, is to be brought home” (Mills 2014: 183-84).

Hubie manages to explain how the war turns you progressively more insensitive and detached from society. For instance, whereas at the beginning, shortly after they arrived, he used to take pity on civilians who were forced to leave their houses and lives behind, wondering “how long it would be before those people came back, what they’d find when they did” (Mills 2014: 162), after having lost so many comrades fighting, when he sees people abandon their homes again, he does not pity them anymore, but rather envies them: “Why squander pity on people who were on their way to safety, while soldiers marched up the line to face death on their behalf?” (Mills 2014: 162). There is, notwithstanding, also a special mention to the friendly encounters and interchanges that sometimes were produced between the different armies, some of which reached newspapers of the time: “Another thing people asked was if the two armies had really played a game of football, that first Christmas. Hubie was on leave, but he’d heard the story. He could well believe it. In some places the lines were so close that at night they could hear each other singing. Sometimes, if they knew the songs, they joined in” (Mills 2014: 163). In line with the great contradiction present in trauma literature, and especially in war narratives, he engages with the idea of the impossibility to tell, to be able to put into words the magnitude of the experience, while simultaneously providing an accurate account of his life at the front full of vivid sensations and short sentences that transmit the sense of urgency and chaos that he is describing:

People sometimes asked what it was like, to be in a show. It was impossible to tell. Confusion was the main thing. Confusion and noise. Hard to say what happened first, or next, or when; whether what he saw was real or phantom, smoke or demon. He couldn’t always be sure if it was thunder and lightning come to earth he was dealing with, or war. Only the screams were real —metal, men, beasts— everything jumbled. The earth turned inside out, clumps of it thrown around in a hot sour wind, and he just trying to make a way through it. When it was over, first thing he’d do was breathe. He’d take in one single breath. And, if he got away with that, he’d risk another. Then, when he was sure he was alive, he’d find out who else had come through. When the rolls were finished, he’d take himself off somewhere quiet, first chance he got. He’d go over it all in his mind, try to sort it into something like sense. He’d say goodbye to the lost, and let them go. (Mills 2014: 162-63)

This sense of unreality, on the part of Hubie, is common to trauma and stressor-related disorders such as PTSD; it can be understood as a dissociative symptom known as derealization, which is characterized by “persistent or recurrent experiences of unreality of surroundings (e.g., the world around the individual is experienced as unreal, dreamlike, distant, or distorted)” (*DSM* 2013: 274). Simultaneously, he is in a constant state of hyperarousal, as manifested in his sleep

disturbance and hypervigilance: “At night he was dog-tired by couldn’t sleep, his nerves strung taut as wire. He was on the brink of something huge” (Mills 2014: 162). Contrary to the previous emphasis on silence, Hubie highlights the relentless noise of the battle as a constant reminder of the never-ending conflict that undermined morale: “Months of stalemate and no ground gained in a barren landscape like a nightmare with no ending. The war would drag on ’til there was no one left to fire the rusted empty guns on the last survivor, who would have long forgotten what silence was, what it sounded like” (Mills 2014: 165). Hubie was actually the one who helped Liam “get over his nerves” (Mills 2014: 182), since he taught him that the key to hold on was not a matter of alcohol or camaraderie, but rather of impersonation, that is to say, of pretending to be brave even though you were scared: “Your legs are like jelly, but you pretend they’re steady. You impersonate a braver man; speak, as though you’re on a stage, as though you believe them, the lines you learned in training” (Mills 2014: 183). This resonates both with the concept of the “theatre of war” —coined precisely in 1914, as collected in the OED— which has come to signify “a particular region or one of the separate regions of the world in which a war is being fought” (“Theatre”), and with the defense mechanism of dissociation. Liam and Hubie therefore fought alongside each other in the front and shared some traumatic moments; in this sense, Katie is able to recognize the same story in their narrations, realizing that they both end it abruptly and never finish it:

“They came at us, and we let loose —I don’t know how to describe it, we were possessed. When we got up there and had them surrounded, they dropped their guns. *Mercy, mercy.*” He put on the accent, his face grim. [...] He shook his head, the way a dog clears water from its coat. “Not bloody likely. Not after that.”

“Liam wrote to me about that,” I said, thinking that, like Hubie, he’d never finished the story. He never said what had happened next.

Yesterday they came at us, the biggest show yet. We started out, but they poured over from their line and we fell back. You should have seen how we fired to hold them off, more than the fifteen shots a minute, but they kept coming. They came with bayonets ready. Any of ours they found wounded, they finished them. They ripped young Michael Slattery open. His screams were terrible. Rage kept us firing. Our guns overheated. Fat oozed out of them. A captain ran up and down the line pouring oil on the stocks. We overcame them. When they were surrounded, they threw their weapons down and begged for their lives. Kamerad!

I’d nothing but murder in my heart. The silence fell on me as through I were dreaming. All you at home can’t begin to imagine the extent of the destruction, the laying waste. The human spirit itself is being slaughtered, here. (Mills 2014: 225-26)

The story must have evidently ended with the killing of those who had also killed their comrades, but both are unable to explicitly mention it. Hubie seems to be afraid to be judged as merciless by those who were not there to understand the context of war, in which moral laws no longer apply. The distance between soldiers and civilians is evidently marked in this novel by Hubie’s resentment towards those who could stay on the sidelines of war, which makes it harder for him to go back home: “being here, walking about —it disgusted me. People going about their business. Shawlies and their incessant wheedling and whining. Clerks, bankers, shopkeepers —all the men who don’t know the hell they’ve saved themselves from. Hardly anyone even wondering about what’s happening in Verdun, right now. Today” (Mills 2014: 234). Likewise, his own sense of guilt for the acts he committed at the front makes him act

defensively, and he takes pleasure in sharing some morbid details concerning both sanitation and the psychological state of some comrades, so as to make Katie and Isabel feel bad and uncomfortable:

“You’ve no notion.” He glared, as though we were to blame. “You think old rules still apply. I’ve heard it said out there” —she swung his cup towards the window, then to his mouth, swallowed— “No war’s ever been fought in the streets of a European city.” He put on a false accent to say it. His face was flushed. “Those men out there think they’re safe, surrounded by people like you, and buildings. I’ve seen whole villages wiped off the face of the earth, pulverized. Churches and farms destroyed. Why should you be immune, here?” [...]

“This’ll give you an idea . . . There was a private, not a young man, lost his head one morning. He keened like a woman, for no reason. Slack mouth, drooling, tears streaming down his face. I’d never seen it before.”

He was talking fast, running through the words. “I tried to shut his mouth for him with a slap to the cheek. Told the colour sergeant to put him in the funk hole, keep an eye on him. He crammed himself into it, face first. Like a child trying to hide in its mother’s skirts. As if he wanted the earth to open up and take him.” He glared at us, defiant. Daring us to judge him. [...]

“What no one ever says is that one man’s decision sets off a whole train of events that ends in the ruination of another. Someone fires the first shot. Someone decides where troops will go. Every little thing you do out there has consequences. One man’s whim can be the end of another; a step this way or that can save or kill you. That was one of my own men, and I’m the one who did for him.”

Dote cleared her throat. “He was a liability. You weren’t to blame.”

“Poor soul.” Isabel was pale. “It’s barbaric.”

Hubie’s contempt appeared to settle on her. I was glad it wasn’t me. “Don’t ask, if you don’t want to know. It’s easy to have an opinion from a distance. I’d have liked that luxury, myself.” [...]

“You’d want to have seen the rats.” There was a gleam in his eye —he was enjoying making us uncomfortable. He said he told his men not to kill them because they’d stink up the trench and squelch underfoot, in a way that’d sicken the strongest of stomachs. After he was injured, while he was lying on the ground outside the medical post, waiting for his turn, a rat ran past his head, near enough that he felt its feet disturb his hair. The rat had a human finger in its mouth. “I wondered was it mine.” (Mills 2014: 167-68)

This excerpt also portrays mental breakdown as the break of traditional notions of masculinity, when Hubie compares the lament of a fellow soldier to that of a woman for bursting into tears, which reveals the pressures of the highly patriarchal system to which the men in the army were subjected. On top of that, the fragment makes emphasis on the weight of every decision, in the sense that one man’s choice could trigger a specific concatenation of events, which correlates with and provides further explanation to Liam’s account of the reasons that led him pull the trigger. Hubie not only can provide Katie and Isabel with insightful views on the context of war, but also becomes the only person who can tell them how Liam died, since he witnessed the moment:

their orders. A corporal came round with the chronometer. Everything was set for the morning. At midnight Liam went around talking to the men and then went towards the latrine. Hubie was at the fire-step. The moon was just off full, the balloons were silver. Flares went up, trailing green and yellow lights. He heard the shots that got Liam. Jonesy saw it happen. [...]

Hubie and Jonesy ran to him. He was still alive, asked had he a ticket home. Hubie said not to get ahead of himself. He held Liam's hand 'til the stretcher boys came, and that was the last he saw of him, when they carried him away. (Mills 2014: 163)

Isabel asks him if he kept track of Liam, but he could not possibly do it because, as he himself explains, on the very same day thousands of soldiers were surprised by a German attack with gas, which suddenly turned them into the first line of defense: “Everything that had stood between us and Fritz was gone. Wiped out. And they came at us. I lost track of everything. So many died” (Mills 2014: 164).⁸⁷ They found themselves completely outnumbered and then they also experienced the gas for the first time, so Hubie tells them how some of them could save themselves thanks to a Canadian in their group who already knew what to do, and also the helplessness of seeing a fellow suffering and dying at your side and not being able to do anything for him:

When the gas came, they were blazing away, the guns roasting hot. Then yellow smoke billowed up around them. Someone, one of the Canadians who'd materialized by some miracle to fight beside them, roared at everyone to piss on whatever cloth came to hand —handkerchiefs or caps— to cover their mouths and noses and breathe through the saturated cloth. It worked, for some. And the gas rolled on and left him behind. Hubie and a handful of others. Jonesy wasn't so lucky. They listened to him froth and hiss and choke. He drowned, right there beside them on dry land, and there wasn't a dammed thing they could do about it. It took twenty minutes. Jonesy tried to speak but retched instead, spilling clots of matter on his chin. Coughing up his own lung. He clawed at his breast pocket and Hubie remembered he'd a locket in there, his wife's picture on one side, three gap-toothed boys grinning on the other. He took it out and wrapped the chain around Jonesy's fingers. His hands stopped flailing then. He clutched that oval of silver 'til he was dead. (Mills 2014: 164)

After watching his peer Jonesy die in agony, he sends the locket to his wife to offer some comfort while deliberately avoiding the details, as was the common practice —“he sent it back to Jonesy's wife with a letter telling her it had been a comfort to him, when he died. Sparing her the real details. The twenty frantic minutes and the sounds” (Mills 2014: 165). From that moment onwards, Hubie recounts, there was not a moment to breathe and only a month later the death of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Loveband put a definite end to the second battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, so they had to be put together with inexperienced recruits from Kitchener's New Armies: “There was no respite. They were straight into another show, and then another. They were gassed again a month later, and Colonel Loveband died and that was effectively the end of the Second Dublins. A proud battalion was diluted when the dregs of one unit were combined with the survivors of another, and then new drafts added, Kitchener's Mob, half trained” (Mills 2014: 165).

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⁸⁷ Fritz was a short form of Friedrich used derogatorily by the British to refer to German soldiers and aircraft during the First World War.

Towards the end of the novel, when Katie is alone with Hubie, she dares to ask him for Liam's tomb. As she herself implies in the conversation, not being able to see the corpse and bury him and simply receiving the news from afar, adds a sense of unreality that prevents proper closure:

I was in control of my voice again. "I thought I'd always have him. You know, that we'd die at the same time. It was reasonable, wasn't it, to think that?" Even to myself, I sounded like a child. "He put on a uniform, got on a ship and went away. For ages, after he was killed, I was able to pretend he was just that. Away. That he might, still, come back. If I saw him walk in through that door, right this minute, I'd believe it. It's at least as likely as that he won't. Seeing his grave might help. Will you show me where it is, on a map? I want to go there after the war."

"I can't."

"Why? Is it not true, that you buried him?"

"We did, yes. But —"

"But?"

"Then the cemetery was bombed."

It was this that made me cover my face and cry. I could not think about a bombed graveyard. Why should I have minded about the dead, who couldn't be hurt any more? But I did. I minded a great deal. (Mills 2014: 228-29)

This dialogue thus reflects the importance of having specific places of mourning, as was discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the thesis, which accounted for the relevance of shared social rituals to overcome loss as well as of the process of mourning as an essential stage of recovery from traumatic disorders. *Fallen* therefore provides not only descriptions of the life at the front and of the extreme psychological challenges and aftereffects endured by the soldiers, as provided by both Liam's letters and Hubie's oral accounts, but also of the process of loss and mourning faced by their loved ones who stayed at home. Thus, the novel achieves to portray the perspective of civilians who lived the conflict from afar and were consequently not the focus of attention in war narratives, but who were not, notwithstanding, emotionally detached from the events, since they oftentimes became secondary witnesses in possession of very valuable testimonies and mementos of war, as well as observers of the psychological changes that soldiers underwent during and after the war years.

3.4.3 "Each Slow Dusk"

This short story portrays the psychological state of Gilbert, a veteran who is dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Contrary to the novels, there are no letters from the front that offer glimpses of the life at the front, but only a mention that letters have stopped arriving at school, since the soldiers have remained silent after the trauma of the Somme: "At the start of the war, Old Boys used to send articles about life at the front, but there hasn't been one of those since the Somme" (Wilkinson 2016: 238-39). There is only, with respect to Gilbert's experience, a very succinct explanation of the situation that marked a turning point for Edith's brother: "He was trapped in a shell hole all night after an attack with two others, up to his waist in freezing water. He knew he was supposed to leave them, but he wouldn't, and after a few hours his limbs were so seized up that he couldn't, even though his companions were now dead" (Wilkinson 2016: 237). Since then, Gilbert has been discharged with "rheumatism", as officially described by the doctors, even by their own family doctor, who visits him at home when his nightmares get worse: "'Nasty thing, rheumatism like this,' he says. 'We don't usually see it in such young men, but...'" He shakes his head" (Wilkinson 2016: 248). As a matter of

fact, Gilbert is suffering from shell shock, which was the term that came to define war neurosis during the First World War, though, as discussed in sections 2.1 and 2.3, the term and its implication were initially controversial: “In the British military, patients presenting with various mental disorders resulting from combat stress were originally diagnosed as cases of shell shock, before this diagnosis was discouraged in an attempt to limit the number of cases” (Crocq and Crocq 2000: 51).⁸⁸

According to Marc-Antoine Crocq and Louis Crocq, it was not until 1945 that posttraumatic symptoms were reported —“Posttraumatic psychiatric symptoms in military personnel fighting in WWII were reported as early as 1945 by the American psychiatrists Grinker and Spiegel” (2000: 52)— allowing for a more systematic recognition of indicators: “chronic consequences of combat included passive-dependent states, psychosomatic states, guilt and depression, aggressive and hostile reactions, and psychotic-like states” (2000: 52). After further research was conducted during the Vietnam War, the more encompassing term “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” was adopted —again, as commented on sections 2.1 and 2.3. Gilbert deals with common symptoms of PTSD, as collected in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*: “recurrent distressing dreams in which the content and/or affect of the dream are related to the traumatic event(s)” (DSM 2013: 271); “persistent negative emotional state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame)” and “markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities” (DSM 2013: 272). He also presents, though, a symptomatology that was much more typical during the Great War, particularly characterized by fatigue and tremor; in this vein, it was “probably because motor symptoms, such as tremor, paralysis, contractions, limping, or fixed postures, were common during WWI, and rare in WWII” that a very employed treatment during the First World War, and not during the Second, was “the application of electrical current, also called faradization” (Crocq and Crocq 2000: 50).

In this vein, Gilbert is having trouble leaving his room —“He hasn’t been outside yet. Some days he hasn’t even been downstairs” (Wilkinson 2016: 243)— which reveals both signs of fatigue and of social detachment. He is suffering from tremors and, on top of that, he is also having nightmares that prevent him from resting. The characters in the story tend to elude the painful truth of his psychological state and opt, instead, for a naïve optimism —“Father says he will be his old self in no time” (Wilkinson 2016: 237)— or for a deliberate avoidance both of uncomfortable conversations —“Neither of us mentions that the last time I spoke to him it was three in the morning and he was screaming the house down” (Wilkinson 2016: 244)— and of evident signs of illness: “Gilbert pours the tea and I try not to notice the tremor in his hand” (Wilkinson 2016: 246). Notwithstanding, Edith knows she has to tell his brother about the death of Piers McBride, one of Gilbert’s old schoolmates, because he will eventually find out: “If I don’t tell him about Piers now, Father will come in from the bank with today’s newspaper, and Father always reads all the Irish regiments in the casualty lists, often aloud” (Wilkinson 2016: 245). When she tells him the news, he cannot help but react with bitter irony:

I want to offer him an arm, but I don’t know if this is the right thing to do. In the end he uses the wall as support and uncurls his back slowly, with tightened lips.
“That’s five,” he says.
“Five?”

⁸⁸ During the Second World War recognition of mental disorders continued to be problematic, as evidenced by the fact that in 1943, “for the first time the term ‘exhaustion’ was prescribed as initial diagnosis for all combat psychiatric cases. This word was chosen because it was thought to convey the least implication of neuropsychiatric disturbance” (Crocq and Crocq 2000: 52).

“From the team. Out of fifteen.” He says it very casually. “A nice round third. I think that’s slightly higher than average.” (Wilkinson 2016: 245)

All that Gilbert wants to know then is how he was killed, and is glad that the words that the schoolmaster pronounced were “killed in action”, since that usually means that he had a rapid death. In spite of employing different euphemistic expressions in official records, soldiers and also some civilians have come to learn their different implications, which are disclosed in the story:

I know what he means. *Killed in action* means it was likely to have been quick. And there will be a grave. Hugh was *Died of wounds*: the letter from the Padre at the field hospital said he was operated on to amputate both legs, but died of a haemorrhage. [...]
His voice is quite steady but he frowns at the teapot. “You’re *sure* it wasn’t *Missing*?”
“Positive.” When our cousin Edward was *Missing in action* at Loos, I was so young and stupid that I thought it just meant *lost*. I imagined him wandering about, or hiding, turning up when the battle was over. Hugh, on leave after his first spell at the Front, had given a harsh laugh. “*Missing* means they can’t find enough bits to put together to identify you.” (Wilkinson 2016: 246-47)

Towards the end of the short story, Gilbert’s physical state is put to the test when he finally leaves the house to personally deliver Piers’s letter to the McBride family. Edith is actually concerned with his sudden decision to go with Frank, but she tries to reassure herself: “I know he doesn’t want to seem like an invalid in front of Frank. And I suppose if you’ve come home from the Western Front, getting a tram cross Belfast isn’t such an expedition” (Wilkinson 2016: 251). When Gilbert comes back after having to walk their way back, it seems that “only willpower is holding him upright” (Wilkinson 2016: 253) and he is on the verge of collapse:

“I think — it was a bit far,” he says, shambling into the hall.
I take his arm and half-drag him into the parlour, where I lit the fire before dinner. He is shivering violently, his lips bluish and his breath ragged. “Sorry, Sis,” he manages to say. “You were — right.”
“Don’t try to talk.”
Gilbert collapses onto the settee and I start to pull his soaking coat off. His limbs are shaking so badly that I catch my finger in the little silver lapel badge which shows that he has served and been honourably discharged. I lick the drop of blood from my fingertip. Father watches. (Wilkinson 2016: 253)

It is Edith who has to take the lead by asking her father to bring some brandy for Gilbert and to prepare him a hot bath while she attends him. As soon as Gilbert “manages to choke down some of the brandy” (Wilkinson 2016: 254), the symptoms subside — “Very soon a tiny spot of colour warms his face, and the shaking subsides slightly, so that he is able to hold the glass himself and take further sips” (Wilkinson 2016: 254)— which proves that his illness is not merely physical and that he is turning to alcohol to deal with the post-traumatic process. People suffering from trauma “may refuse to discuss the traumatic experience or may engage in avoidance strategies to minimize awareness of emotional reactions (e.g., excessive alcohol use when reminded of the experience)” (DSM 2013: 283). Even though the story does not show the scene at the house of the McBrides because it focuses exclusively on Edith’s perspective, it could be plausible to believe that knowing about Piers’s death and paying respects to his parents

forces him to revisit the war and revive the derived emotions, which definitely helps trigger the post-traumatic symptoms, together with the physical effort he did in such a weak condition. That very night, he develops a fever and his nightmares and tremors prove to be more severe than other days, so they instantly wake Edith up: “I jerk away. It’s the usual shout, only louder tonight” (Wilkinson 2016: 256). When she goes to his room to check on him, she confirms that this time is worse and tries to comfort him by reassuring him that he is only dreaming:

As soon as I put my hand on him I realize this is more than the usual nightly terror. He is burning and shivering at the same time, his lips moving in a ceaseless mutter.

“Gil.” I smooth back his drenched hair from his burning forehead. “It’s all right. You’re just dreaming.”

His eyes stare beyond me, unfocused. “They’re coming,” he says hoarsely. “It can’t be much longer now. They must be on their way.” He sounds as if he is trying to reassure someone else.

“They’re here *now*.” I say. “It’s all right.” I pull him towards me and his head rests briefly against my chest before he jerks it up again and shouts, “Don’t go to sleep! You’ll drown.”

“I won’t let anyone drown,” I promise. (Wilkinson 2016: 256)

Gilbert is reminiscing his experience at the hole, which reveals he is now burdened with his comrades’ death and the helplessness of being unable to save them. Edith then comes to the realization that her brother is not simply suffering from shivers, but rather from mental distress: “It’s not just a chill. He’s in agony” (Wilkinson 2016: 257). Thus, she suddenly becomes aware of Gilbert’s twisted position, which she notices may be emulating “the shape it must have been in his long vigil in the shell hole” (Wilkinson 2016: 257). He has been sweating so much while reenacting the traumatic moment that Edith needs to change his pajamas, but continues having convulsions: “I fetch clean pyjamas, and then begins the long, painful process of trying to bend Gilbert’s spasming limbs without hurting him too much. Pretty soon, I’m the one sweating with the effort, and he is groaning with pain, his jaw set. He can’t straighten his back, and even when he is in pyjamas, he lies hunched like a question mark” (Wilkinson 2016: 257). The perspective therefore once again belongs to the relatives of the soldiers, whose lives were also altered as a consequence of the war. Even if Edith has not lost her brother as Katie in *Fallen* did, she realizes that a part of him has indeed been lost in Europe, that her brother has been utterly changed and thus their roles have inversed: being Edith the younger sibling, she now bears the responsibility to take care of her older brother, which cuts short her dreams to make a life of her own.

3.4.4 *Empire*: “Tutty’s Mother” and “The Moss-Picker”

These two stories form the collection already take place after the First World War and the Easter Rising and, albeit not focused on the trauma of war, the conditions of veterans from the front are acknowledged and become part of the environment of decay, poverty and violence depicted in the narratives, as is especially the case in “The Moss-Picker”. In “Tutty’s Mother”, there is only a reference to one of the workers in Clongowes Wood College, “the recently-retired Captain Condrón—who now oversaw the school archives” (O’Donnell 2018: 1370), whose mental state upon his return from the front is well-known by his peers, even though they do not seem to delve into the matter: “Condrón had been discharged from the Front two years before with a metal plate planted where part of his skull used to be. He was prone to episodic agitations” (O’Donnell 2018: 137). Thus, in a similar manner as in “Each Slow Dusk”, it is

made evident that he is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, even if there was still — at the time the stories are set— no proper word to define it.

In “The Moss-Picker”, the protagonist, Clara, starts working in the countryside picking up moss used in the fabrication of bandages, where she meets both a veteran from the front, and a widow whose husband had died in the battle of the Somme. Both of them prefer not to speak, as is usually the case of traumatised subjects, and whereas the woman oftentimes cries in silence sometimes —“Some days she wept silently and her tears were like a steady leakage from her eyes and down the sides of her nose” (O’Donnell 2018: 187)— the man progressively gave accounts of his experience at war in a fragmentary and stammering manner:

The driver, whose name was Dillon, never spoke. She did not know his first name. It seemed nobody else did either. All that was known about him was that he had seen action in Europe in early 1916 and that while crossing the Mediterranean on a troopship his vessel was torpedoed and sunk. More than a year later he occasionally offered scraps of his story as he muttered erratically to people about being adrift on a lifeboat. When he was rescued he was taken to Alexandria where he spent two months recuperating from head wounds. Now a metal plate covered part of his brain, Mrs Conroy explained, and he never removed his hat because his skin had never been properly replaced. He was still in shock and would probably remain that way. (O’Donnell 2018: 187)

Affected by her own circumstances as a single mother and condemned to social ostracism, Clara is able to connect with the suffering of these people who have also become outcasts and find more solace in silence: “Dillon’s silence suited Clara who needed time to settle and consider her own position” (O’Donnell 2018: 187). In addition, she listens to their stories of war, which provides her with a new kind of sensitivity towards that matter. One day during dinner, the widow suddenly highlights Irish people’s disconnection from the war experience and what the volunteers had to endure there:

“Nobody in Ireland has the slightest idea of what it was like for the men abroad,” she said in an expressionless voice.
Clara did not speak. She waited.
“Their wounds were so terrible that ordinary bandages were not adequate,” the widow explained. “Their flesh, rotting and running, their burns terrible. Men squealing like stuck pigs with the unmerciful pain. I know that from my —my dead husband’s letters. It makes me proud to work here. I imagine that some man who will be healed by our bandages is some woman’s sweetheart... even if the war is past.” (O’Donnell 2018: 190)

The widow then proceeds to read them a letter written by his husband in his first days at the front, which according to her, contrasts quite considerably with the type of stories and mood that characterized his following letters, after a few days fighting in Europe. Thus, the story provides some insight into the life of the recently arrived soldiers and their own illusions and hopes, which were then thwarted:

It is horrid to be in trenches in cold weather not mind wet —however pot luck the most of the lads here have seen Indian action and other places. [...] we are having a glorious time here even if we miss our beloveds, much as I hate to tell you such things but it is the truth. The finest place I have seen, yes, splendid people, no barracks here, all billeted in houses —both public and private. I am

in a large confectioners, [...] so plenty jam tarts and ice cream. [...] My darling I am sending my old army papers to you for safety, until —that is if— I return. But do not fret, I intend to return and the Hun will not best me. [...] I am thinking of the family we will have, dearest, and the children that will make us even happier than we are. (O'Donnell 2018: 191)

The story of the widow makes Clara reflect upon the soldiers who had fought at the front for the first time, and behind her train of thought there underlies some discussion on the accessibility of trauma; in her view, and in line with trauma theories, only those who experience it, either directly or vicariously, are able to comprehend its nature: “It was true. None of them could understand because they were not there. All pain was particular to the sufferer no matter where he lived and although people knew that great suffering occurred they could not feel for it unless they were affected by it personally. The widow was affected by it, Clara thought, so her understanding was deeper” (O'Donnell 2018: 192). The short story further engages with the issue of the unspeakability, or the difficulty of translating the traumatic experience into words, as Clara realizes that she will never be able to account for everything that she has felt, concerning the betrayal and abandonment of her lover, the rejection of her father and the social isolation she is still enduring: “And even though she could speak there were things she would never be able to utter for the rest of her life, or if so, only to a limited few. It was far, far too hard to discover the right words. If only they had the right words, she would think. Then everybody could explain their own sadness and perhaps it could be understood. They were all, in a way, silent people” (O'Donnell 2018: 188). The story then provides connections between different traumatic experiences of war, loss and social exclusion, integrating the Great War into the wider context of the Irish community.

3.5 NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE EASTER RISING: BEYOND MARTYRS AND PERPETRATORS

3.5.1 *Name Upon Name*

In *Name Upon Name*, the Easter Rising is both commented from the distance by the different members of the family, who are spending time together at Derryward for the Easter holiday, and experienced in situ by Michael. The news of the revolt prompt opposing reactions on the Catholic and the Protestant side of the family and entail thus discussion and quarrel. Helen's father is the first one to find out about the rebellion when reading the newspaper on Easter Tuesday. When Helen sees the front page —“DUBLIN RIOTS! CITY UNDER SIEGE” (Wilkinson 2015: 110)— she initially panics thinking that the news are about Belfast: “For a terrible moment Helen saw the word CITY and thought —Belfast! And her stomach squeezed tight, until she saw it was only Dublin. A hundred miles away. Nothing to do with her.” (Wilkinson 2015: 110). She is thus naïve enough to think that such a distant uproar does not concern her, even though an apparently alien conflict as the First World War is already affecting her school and family life. Notwithstanding, she very soon becomes aware of the seriousness of the situation and starts asking questions to understand the reasons behind the rebels' acts and the possible consequences to which these will lead:

She looked at the black-and-white grainy photo of a street in ruins, and then up at Papa's serious face.

“Who are they?” she asked. “What do they want? Is it Home Rule?”

“A bit more than that.” Papa jabbed his finger on the page. “They declared a republic yesterday. Madness! As if they've got a hope. Connolly and Pearse and — oh, a whole crowd of rebels. Taken over the city!” (Wilkinson 2015: 110)

Helen then realizes that her friend Mabel is spending Easter in Dublin and gets worried about her, but her father reassures her, telling her that she is probably not aware of anything that is happening, as he believes that the riots will be similar those which took place in Belfast: “Remember when there was rioting in Belfast? You and Mama had no idea there was anything happening until I got home and told you? I’ll be like that. Storm in a teacup. And,’ he added, folding the paper and starting to walk towards the house, ‘the army will soon put them down, that’s for sure’” (Wilkinson 2015: 110-111).⁸⁹ In effect, later in novel Mabel affirms that she was not so aware of the situation: “‘Sometimes you could hear the fighting in the distance,’ she said, her eyes going big and round, ‘but mostly it was just boring.’ [...] But it was horrible — on the way to the station, seeing the streets all wrecked and smouldering” (Wilkinson 2015: 120). However, once Helen sees the photographs of the Rising, she cannot help but establish comparisons with the letters from the front she has read: “Helen looked at the paper. She didn’t really want to — the news was all of barricaded streets and looting and snipers — the city seemed to have gone mad. Some of the photos looked exactly like photos she had seen of ruined cities on the Front. In Sandy’s last letter he had said they were billeted in a town where there wasn’t a single roof left” (Wilkinson 2015: 112). Thus, she begins to worry that she might find Belfast changed upon their return if the riots spread — “Helen worried that somehow, when they got home, Belfast would have changed, the rioting would have spread, the streets would be burning as they were in Dublin” (Wilkinson 2015: 114). Contrary to Helen’s concern and her father’s indignation and scorn, Uncle Sean is thrilled with the news and wishes the rebellion to succeed:

Uncle Sean didn’t share Papa’s view that it was a storm in a teacup. He paced the kitchen as if he wanted to walk to Dublin and join in, his big face getting redder and redder.

“This is what we’ve been waiting for!” he said. “An Irish republic.” And he said something in Irish which Helen didn’t understand, and which made Papa twitch. “It’s a great day,” he said. “Nora. Bridie. Remember this day. This is the birth of your nation.”

He didn’t say anything about it being Helen’s nation. [...]

“It’s not really a republic, is it?” Papa cut in. “Just because some rebels say it is, and raise a home-made flag? I wouldn’t call it more than just another riot. Goodness knows, we’ve had plenty of those. North *and* South.” [...]

Mama shook her head. “As if there’s not enough fighting in France.”

“Their poor mothers,” Aunt Bridie said. [...]

“Their mothers should be proud of them!” Nora said.

Uncle Sean nodded. “We’ve waited long enough for this, daughter. I wish” — he hesitated. He hadn’t spoken Michael’s name in the house for weeks — “I could think of *my* son down there in Dublin, there, fighting for his nation.”

“Michael *is* fighting for his nation,” Papa said quietly. “Much more effectively than these eejits occupying post offices and — and biscuit factories.” He made it sound ridiculous. “I’d be proud of him if he were my son.” (Wilkinson 2015: 111-12)

A clear separation between Catholic and Protestant members of the family is established in Sean’s discourse through the use of the Irish language and the hope of re-appropriating the Irish nation. Conversely, Helen’s father insists on the fact that their nation is the United Kingdom and deprecates their strategy of occupying different buildings around the city that were not specifically from the British forces or the public administration. The main actors in the Rising

⁸⁹ Helen’s father is probably referring here to the riots that took place during the Home Rule Crisis, between 1912 and 1914.

were six units of the Irish Volunteers, together with the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) and Cumann na mBan —an Irish Republican women’s paramilitary group, auxiliary of the Irish Volunteers— which covered different places of Dublin, among them the General Post Office (GPO) and Jacob’s Biscuit Factory, hence the references of Helen’s father in the excerpt — “The headquarters at the General Post Office (GPO) was held by both Irish Volunteers and the ICA [...]. The 2nd battalion, commanded by Thomas MacDonagh, was centred on Jacob’s Biscuit Factory” (Grayson 2018: 124). The women of the story, that is, Helen’s mother and Aunt Bridie, do not condone the use of violence, especially in times of war, and there begins also a debate whether the rebels’ sacrifice should be a source of conviction or of pride. Many people at the time considered the rebellion inappropriate when there were so many Irish mourning the death or fearing the loss of their loved ones at the front. Aunt Violet, for instance, accuses the rebels of being “unpatriotic” (Wilkinson 2015: 116), and many Irish who were fighting alongside the British in Europe also felt betrayed. In the novel, Sandy mentions in a letter that he found out about the rebellion through the German placards that were commented on section 1.4 and which were supposed to generate hate among the British ranks: “*The Germans have got wind of it and they’ve been taunting us —saying the British army is killing out wives and children on the streets of Dublin. [...] I wouldn’t have liked to be sent to Dublin. I never thought I’d be glad to be over here in a trench but at least we know what we’re up against*” (Wilkinson 2015: 120). Helen’s father condemns the manner in which they took advantage of the situation —being Britain concentrated on the war— which for Uncle Sean is legitimate and part of Ireland’s traditional pattern of subversive nationalism —as seen in sections 1.2 and 1.4— which provokes an argument between them:

“The army will soon sort them out,” Papa said. “It’s a scandal, of course, to distract them from fighting the Hun —but it can’t last long.”

“That’s the whole idea!” Uncle Sean said. [...] “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity. A nation once again!”

“There’ll be no republic,” Papa said. “And whatever madness happens in Dublin — this is Ulster. Loyal to the crown.”

Uncle Sean huffed. “And this is *my house*.” He raised himself up and rocked back on his heels. He was much bigger than Papa.

“James,” Aunt Bridie said very quietly, “I think maybe you’d all be happier in your own home.” (Wilkinson 2015: 113)

Whereas Nora thinks that history is “being made” and wishes to be there in Dublin to witness it first-hand (Wilkinson 2015: 113), Helen is more dubious when it comes to judging the leaders of the Rising: “Helen felt, once again, as ignorant as a kitten. *Was* history being made? Or were a few hotheads and eejits just causing trouble? Was it brave of the rebels to stand up for what they believed in —or wrong to take the law into their own hands? Were they patriots or traitors? The paper had said they were being helped by Germany. Surely that was treason?” (Wilkinson 2015: 113). By focusing on a teenager in process of learning about Irish history and her own identity as Irish, the novella actually reflects the internal debates of the Irish at that time, who, the same as adolescents, being in a liminal moment of transition, were hesitant when it came to making decisions and to define themselves in the midst of change. In the words of Turner, “liminal entities, such as neophytes in initiation or puberty rites, may be represented as possessing nothing. [...] It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be refashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life” (2008: 95). Turner understood neophytes as submitted to the authority of the community and thus in terms of a “*tabula rasa*” that had to inscribe “the

culture's values, norms, attitudes, [...] in those respects that pertain to the new status. The ordeals and humiliations [...] to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities" (2008: 103). Different Irish newspapers and citizens took their own stand on the matter, but some changed their minds after the executions and especially in the aftermath of the events, when they submitted to a generalized shift in public opinion and to the imposition of the dominant narratives of the Irish Free State. Once the rebellion is contained, Helen worries about the British reprisals and takes pity on its leaders:

Papa's *News Letter* said that the uprising was contained, crushed by the might of the British army. The leaders had surrendered and would be "dealt with". Helen couldn't help shivering at that. It sounded sinister. She thought of Sandy's young Private C and how he had been *dealt with*. But that had been for cowardice. Surely the leaders in Dublin had been the opposite of cowards? Misguided, maybe even treacherous, as Papa believed—but surely, in their own way—*brave*? (Wilkinson 2015: 119)

This idea that the rebels had been misguided but brave seems to emulate Dillon's speech in Parliament, as quoted in section 1.4, in defence of the Irish nationalists in an attempt to cease the executions. Helen does not even know what terms to use anymore, which ones are more politically correct or could offend less, aware as she is that her father talks about riots and her uncle about a rising: "'The riots — I mean, the rebellion — the rising' —gosh" (Wilkinson 2015: 150). Knowing both her father's and school's views on the matter, she is unable to share her own doubts with those in her social circle —"She didn't say this to anyone at home or school" (Wilkinson 2015: 119). In fact, after the Rising, the school's headmaster "preached about patriotism" and Helen is aware that some school graduates, who were now in the University Officers' Training Corps (UOTC) at Trinity College, "had been involved in defending Trinity against the rebels" (Wilkinson 2015: 120). The university's association with unionism was precisely reinforced by these training units operated by the British Army, which were active at Trinity from 1910 to 1922, and were for this matter targeted by the rebels, but successfully defended by the students. Even though Helen does not know exactly what to think of the whole matter, she is distressed when reading about the executions: "All week the authorities in Dublin had been executing the leaders of the rising, the eighth one that morning. It was grim reading: name upon name of men —some Helen had heard of; most she hadn't—shot dead" (Wilkinson 2015: 123). The expression "name upon name", previously employed throughout the novel to refer to casualties from the front, is here used for the first time to refer to the executed leaders, which equates both groups as victims.

The only character in the novel who actually lives the Easter Rising first hand is Michael, since he was sent from the training camp to repress the insurrection; some Irish soldiers who were at that time on leave in Ireland were also sent to Dublin among the British forces. When Helen sees Michael for the first time after the rising and compares him with Sandy when she is unable to recognize him from a distance, a similitude between both traumatic experiences is stressed: "He must be coming home on leave, because he carried a bag over his shoulder. He was stooped and tired-looking, like Sandy when he had first come home on sick leave [...]. It was Michael" (Wilkinson 2015: 124). Helen had not heard from him in a while and was consequently worried, so she starts accusing him of not keeping in touch, but promptly notices that something has changed in him:

"You stopped writing."

It was hard not to sound accusatory. For ages she had worried, thought he might have been sent to France without her knowing, could even be in danger, and here he was, not a bother on him, turned up —again— on the doorstep. Only this time, at least he was sober. *More* than sober: his voice had a flatness she had never heard. [...] *Maybe*, she thought, *he's only tired from travelling*, but a worm of unease started to twist in her stomach.

"I *couldn't* write," he said, when they had turned off the street and into the park.

"I was busy." [...] "I — last week..." Michael shook his head. "I was..." He looked up at the trees, at the quiet terraced street on the other side of the railings.

"It's all so normal," he said. "I can't believe it."

"It's the same as always," Helen said. "Why wouldn't it be?"

"Last week," Michael said, still in that flat tone. "I couldn't write because I was on — on active service."

Helen jerked up her chin in surprise. "You haven't been to the Front already?" But no, of course not; he wouldn't have been given leave so soon. Besides, he didn't have the look of someone who had been in France. And yet — she looked more closely. His face was thin, his eyes strained. In the three months since she had seen him he seemed to have aged three years or more.

"Not exactly." He pulled a handful of leaves from a tree and started to shred them, systematically.

"Where then?"

"Dublin."

Uncle Sean's voice boomed into her head. The day they had first heard of what Papa called the riots and he called the rising. "I wish I could think of my son down there fighting for Ireland." And all the time Michael had been —

"Michael?" she said stupidly. "What were you — you weren't one of the rebels, were you?"

Michael gave a harsh laugh and indicated his uniform. "Dressed like this?" he said. "Hardly. But I — maybe I should have been."

"You mean you were—"

"We were sent to restore order," Michael said. "There we were, trained and ready to go, and only thirty miles away. God! To think I couldn't wait for action. I didn't expect to get it on the streets of Dublin. I didn't think I'd be asked to kill my fellow Irishmen."

He looked up, and his face was fierce.

"I'm never going back, Helen," he said. "I'm never going to follow orders like that again."

"What do you mean?" The worm of unease buried itself deeper.

"I've deserted." (Wilkinson 2015: 125-126)

Michael has trouble in finding the words to render a reality that has been very difficult for him to confront, denoting clear signs of trauma. He is at that moment on leave, since he and his comrades have been given a few days off before going to France, but he is planning not to turn up for the draft. Helen cannot help but compare the situation to the incident described by Sandy, which has been haunting her to the point of intermingling with the events of the Rising: "They'll shoot you. *Your own comrades* will shoot you. That's what happens. You must *know* that." [...] Her knowledge of what happened to deserters came entirely from that terrible letter from Sandy. The fate of Private C had haunted her, and lately had been mixed up with the news of the executions in Dublin. Wasn't desertion a kind of treason?" (Wilkinson 2015: 127). Helen acknowledges more parallels between Michael and Sandy, especially in the way they kept the conversation short — "Michael looked down at his uniform as if it disgusted him. [...] Helen

tried various conversation openings [...] but Michael just said yes or no. [...] It was, in fact, very like when Sandy had first come home from hospital” (Wilkinson 2015: 130)— but still judges Michael quite harshly for thinking of not fulfilling his duty when Sandy has apparently never doubted to do so: “Sandy knew how bad war could be [...] and yet he had never—not for a moment— contemplated not turning up. Not turning up was for cowards. And Michael had had such a tiny waste of war—squashing a few rebels on the streets of Dublin! It hardly compared with what her brave Sandy had done! How awful, to be feeling so—ashamed of him!” (Wilkinson 2015: 128). Helen fails to understand Michael’s sense of guilt and shame for having to confront his own compatriots until she suddenly remembers Sandy’s letter about the Easter Rising, in which he took comfort in knowing who the real enemy was, so as to have a clear purpose to fight:

“We spent weeks digging trenches and practising with bayonets and — it was all useless. All that teaching us to hate the Hun.” He pulled at a frond of bracken. “I’d rather have been in the muckiest shell-hole on the Western Front than fighting in the streets of my own homeland,” he said quietly. *Easy to say*, thought Helen, when you’ve never been near a mucky shell-hole. And then she remembered Sandy’s last letter: “I never thought I’d be glad to be over here in a trench but at least we know what we’re up against.” “It was hell,” he said. [...] “Tell me,” she said. He shook his head and bit down hard on his bottom lip. “It’s too terrible. You’ll hate me. I hate myself.” [...] “You did what you had to do.” She thought of Sandy, giving the evidence which led to C’s death. “That’s what people have to do in wars.” Why had she not been able to think of those words back when Sandy might have needed to hear them? (Wilkinson 2015: 131)

Helen then, by listening to Michael, is able to find the answer that Sandy would have needed to hear, which represents the belief in the myth that sustains the soldiers’ morale by legitimizing blind obedience to military orders in the name of a superior moral cause. In Michael’s case, notwithstanding, he finds no solace in that, because the cause he ultimately wanted to defend was the achievement of Home Rule for Ireland. He finds himself unable to tell anyone else about his involvement in the matter —“But Papa will be so proud of you!” Helen said without thinking” (Wilkinson 2015: 129)— and refuses to glorify anything about his contribution to stop the rebellion, as well as the Rising itself and the destruction it brought to the city: “I always wanted to see it [Dublin]. Da was there once and he always talked about it being the glorious capital of a free Ireland one day. Christ! It doesn’t look too glorious now” (Wilkinson 2015: 131). Michael thus represents an Irish nationalist who believed in Redmond’s arguments and consequently saw his previous idea thwarted by the Easter Rising, finding himself suddenly in what he considered to be the wrong side of history:

“But that wasn’t the war I signed up for!” he cried. “I signed up to help fight Germany! To make the war end faster so that Ireland could claim her birthright — to help hold the line —” “‘Wherever it extends’,” Helen finished for him. Even she knew that speech of Redmond’s, the Nationalist leader. “Well, last week the line extended to Dublin,” she went on. “After all, you couldn’t just sit back and let the rebels *attack* you.” Remembering something she had heard Aunt Violet say, she added, “With their Hun guns!”

Michael gave a hoarse laugh. “There’s plenty of Hun guns up here in loyal Ulster,” he said. “And yes — they *were* attacking us, Helen, because we were the *enemy*. I was suddenly the enemy of men I was brought up to revere! My family’s heroes.” (Wilkinson 2015: 132)

Helen’s observation in this excerpt is quite remarkable, in the sense that it acknowledges the fact that the Irish were at that moment considered a threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom, the same as the Germans. It is also interesting, in this respect, the comment on the use of German guns in the Easter Rising, since attempting to achieve Germany’s involvement and help in the rebellion was considered outrageous by many Irish such as Aunt Violet, but the Ulster Volunteers had already smuggled German rifles in 1914, in the operation known as the Larne gun-running, albeit previously to the war. Michael not only provides, therefore, an insightful acknowledgement of the situation, but also a very interesting fictional testimony on how the Rising was lived not simply on the part of the British, portraying the confusion and lack of preparation that they had to face, but also on the part of an Irish who found the situation the most shocking and distressing, which he tries to convey to Helen:

He groaned. “It was chaos. Lewis —our officer— he hadn’t a clue. This wasn’t what he’d been trained for either. You didn’t know where they were going to be shooting from —from roofs, out of windows, behind you, in front of you. Sometimes we were shooting blind, just vaguely in the right direction. We weren’t in control. Not the way we’d been trained.” He rubbed his hand over his mouth. “And you didn’t know who was a rebel and who was just —just a person out on the streets.”

Helen remained quiet, her hand still on his arm.

“We were on this street,” he said. “It was barricaded with all sorts of rubbish — bicycles— there was one the same as Da’s; I kept thinking, what’s my da’s bicycle doing there? — and bedsteads, old fireplaces —I don’t know how they got fireplaces into the streets, maybe I dreamt that?— and this kid started running at us. He was carrying something. Lewis said, ‘Get him; he’s armed.’ And I yelled back, ‘He’s only a kid, sir.’ And Lewis said, ‘Shoot him, damn you, or I’ll shoot you.’” He broke off, swallowed.

“So I shot him,” he said. His hand shook.

“You had to,” Helen reassured him. [...] “You were obeying orders. He’d have shot you quick enough.”

“No. He wouldn’t. He couldn’t.” Michael’s voice was so thick that Helen had to strain to hear him. “When we got to him and rolled him over, it wasn’t a gun he had at all. It was a bottle of ginger-beer. That’s what he was ‘armed’ with, Helen. And I *killed* him. He was lying in a pool of blood and ginger-beer and broken glass. He was only about ten.” [...]

“I didn’t sign up to kill Irishmen,” he said, “and I certainly didn’t sign up to kill children.”

His eyes were screwed shut. “Every time I close my eyes I see his face.” He shuddered. “I can’t sleep for seeing him. I can’t eat. I feel sick all the time.” [...] And to Helen’s horror, he started to cry, proper tearing sobs, like a girl. Not like a soldier at all. She wanted to run from his pain as she had run from the lamb —it was too raw, and too frightening. But she didn’t. (Wilkinson 2015: 132-134)

Michael’s descriptions of the environment and his sensations help understand the state of confusion that led him to act more drastically, obeying orders in spite of his own reservations.

The verbalization of the incident serves him as a confession of guilt in which he also accounts for the post-traumatic symptoms he is having, being intrusive images the most salient in this regard, but presenting also some manifestations of conscription, following Herman's terminology—as was developed in section 2.3—such as the deliberate reluctance to remember the events: “I still can't bear to think about Dublin,” he said” (Wilkinson 2015: 156). On top of that, Michael thinks his family has not forgiven him for joining the British army, since he has received no answer from them after entrusting Helen with a letter that asked them to contact him in case they still considered him his son. He consequently does not even contemplate sharing his involvement in the Rising with his parents and sister. Helen, who has not been able to deliver said letter, goes to Derryward to make amends, and when she first encounters her cousin Nora, she begins telling her of Michael's situation:

“He came home—I mean to Belfast—last night. On embarkation leave. He's meant to go to France on Tuesday. But he says he isn't going. He says he's going to desert.”

Nora gasped. “*My* brother wouldn't do that!” she said, and then she added, “But he shouldn't be in the British army in the first place.” [...]

“But Nora—he *mustn't* desert. They'll track him down and shoot him. That's what happens.”

“Ha!” Nora said. “Well, the Brits have proved they can do plenty of shooting.” She shook her head. “But they'd hardly bother with Michael, surely.”

“They *would*,” Helen insisted. “Look,” she said, remembering the newspaper stories she had forced herself to read, “at how many rebels—um, patriots, they've taken prisoner. *A thousand*. And maybe Michael's only one soldier, but they make examples of deserters. Because of morale, and not encouraging others. [...] I don't think he *wants* to desert, really,” Helen added in a sudden burst of insight. “I think he needs you—all of you—to tell him he's still welcome here. That he has somewhere to come home to. [...] I don't suppose he trusts me any more. *You* have to tell him you understand that he did what he had to do.”

“But I don't!” Nora cried. She was shaking her head slowly. Even her lips were white, as if she was in shock. “Michael's my brother, but—but I don't understand how he could have fought against patriots. *Against Ireland*.” Her voice shook. “So no,” she said. “I—I can't help.”

She went to turn away, but Helen grabbed her elbow, and said, in horror, “Nora! Surely all that—about patriots and Ireland—isn't as important as *family*?”

But though the tears stood in Nora's eyes, her lips were set in a firm line. “It is to me,” she said. “The leaders who were shot this week—they have families too. It didn't stop them doing what they believed in.” (Wilkinson 2015: 150-152)

Nora resents the outcome of the Rising and the executions conducted by the British forces to the point that she can only respond to the events with a stronger commitment to the national cause. Her attitude is actually a reflection of the effect that the British reprisals had in the Irish, provoking that many citizens rejected the idea of Home Rule and joined the struggle for independence instead. Nora then demonstrates to put her political convictions before family attachments. Contrary to her, and to Helen's surprise, her uncle Sean proves to be much more sympathetic when Helen tries to approach him. He is open to have a deeper conversation, which invites Helen to share her own uncertainty when it comes to defining herself and her position in the midst of the ongoing historical events:

“And now he plans to desert,” she finished, “because he feels so bad about being involved. He’s ashamed,”

Uncle Sean shook his head. “I’m ashamed of him too,” he admitted. [...] Helen heard the rasp of his breath. Then he said, “But — proud too. That he went through with what he thought was right. Even though I think it was wrong. Och, that doesn’t make sense, does it? Feeling two things at the same time?”

“I spend half my life feeling two different things,” Helen admitted. “Never knowing what I’m meant to believe in. What side I’m meant to be on. Maybe that’s why I could understand what it was like for Michael — that feeling of being torn.”

How strange that she could tell this to Uncle Sean of all people. When it didn’t make sense inside her own head, and she couldn’t explain it properly to people like Miss Cassidy and George, people who were clever and broad-minded. She had never thought of Uncle Sean as being either. And yet he nodded with understanding.

“I wouldn’t want my son to be a quitter,” he said. “He wasn’t raised to give up things. And I couldn’t bear to think of him going on the run, being hunted down like a fox and shot by the army. I’d rather — well, I’d rather he died fighting. Even for the British.”

“*That’s* what he needs to hear,” Helen said [...] “I didn’t know how much he cared about all of you,” she said, “until then.”

[...] “Your principles are important, but not as important as your family.”

It was the opposite of what Nora had said, and Uncle Sean said it with an air of surprise, as if he had just realised it himself. For a long time there was silence. (Wilkinson 2015: 154-155)

The conversation between the two proves to be liberating for both Helen and Sean, and their mutual understanding, in spite of their differences regarding politics, upbringing, education and social status, is key in reaching a conciliatory tone in the novel, which aims to prioritize social relations and a sense of place over ideological confrontations and particular senses of identity. The ending of the story, with Michael arriving at Derryward just after Sean and Helen finish their conversation, reinforces the previous idea. The ultimate reconciliation among Helen’s family members can be seen in Uncle Sean’s acceptance of Michael’s decision by welcoming him home again, as well as in the fact that, even after Nora had been determined in her refusal to provide solace to Michael, at the end of the novel, she shows an “uncertain smile” (Wilkinson 2015: 158), while symbolically waiting for Michael and Helen to re-enter the house. The story is nonetheless left in suspense and does not delve further into the repercussions of the Easter Rising for the future of Ireland, nor does it follow the development of the war, leaving the fates of Sandy and Michael unresolved. The narrative of the Easter Rising is therefore in this case not glorified or focused on the perspective of the leaders of the revolt, but rather on how ordinary people in other parts of the country followed the events, and on the consequences and discussions it entailed for many families with diverse political leanings. It portrays thus not the development of the revolt itself in Dublin, but explores the reconsideration of opinions and of the notion of Irishness that it fostered.

3.5.2 *Fallen*

Fallen, in opposition to *Name Upon Name*, does depict the course of the Easter Rising in Dublin, but from the perspective of the inhabitants of the city who witnessed the events and fell prey to political violence. As Morales-Ladrón has remarked, “attempting to individualise and feminise the experience of the uprising, Mills shift the attention to a side of the battle that has

been absent in history books, the city and its people, and focalises her narrative not on the political struggle but on how the ordinary citizens managed to come to terms with it” (2016: 48). The days of the Rising coincide in the novel with the anniversary of Liam’s death, which help bring together the feelings of insecurity and anxiety provoked by both the war and the rising, since Katie reminisces about his brother’s accounts while living the events of the revolt. The story emphasizes the unexpected and disruptive nature of the rebellion by portraying the outburst of violence in the midst of the peaceful atmosphere and daily life in the park of St. Stephen’s Green during the springtime: “The park smelled of cut grass and spun sugar. In the distance, a barrel organ played its tinny song. People strolled among the formal flowerbeds, where pansies grew in vivid blocks of red, purple, yellow. Others lounged on deckchairs around the bandstand. Lovers, groups of friends, students out with their books” (Mills 2014: 102). Katie is right there having a walk with her nephew Alanna, that is, Eva and Bartleby’s daughter, when they suddenly hear a disturbance and start seeing people running: “A nursemaid hurried past, dragging a sulky-looking boy in a sailor suit. [...] A young man came up behind her. Little more than a boy, really. Short and skinny, he wore the dark green coat of the Citizen’s Army [...]. I looked again. That really was a gun in his hands, muzzle half raised in our direction” (Mills 2014: 102). When the man approaches, he asks them to leave the park under the pretext that they are now taking the place over —“We’re taking the park. In the name of the Republic. Yiz have to leave”” (Mills 2014: 102). On Easter Monday, there was a party of the Irish Citizen Army commanded by Michael Mallin —who had only some years before served in the British Army— and in charge of taking control of the area of St Stephen’s Green: “the ICA immediately ordered people out. Trenches were then dug on the Green” (Grayson 2018: 137). This was mostly due to the fact that one of the strategic buildings garrisoned by the rebels was the College of Surgeons, which was on the edge of the park. Katie, at that moment, remembers the disturbance caused by what came to be known as the “Castle Document”, as well as the fear of the establishment of conscription in Ireland that started spreading and disquieting Irish people:

A week or so earlier there’d been uproar over a document that came out of the Castle, a plan to suppress so many organizations that the whole city would have been affected, directly or not. One story had it that thousands were to be arrested and soldiers were to be billeted on ordinary homes. It was rumoured that conscription would begin at any minute. All the while men in makeshift uniforms marched and drilled in public places, getting in people’s way, holding up the traffic, as they’d done for months. There were squads of little boys who mocked them, and squads of little boys who copied them.

Dad said it was all a cod, except the conscription. That could happen, right enough. He said the marching and drilling was only posturing and false alarms. They wouldn’t dare try anything more. Nor with so many Irishmen fighting and dying in the war. (Mills 2014: 103)

The novel reflects the tensions that were present at that time, with active paramilitary groups exerting pressure and influence on the citizens, including children. Furthermore, the story is referring here to a specific episode in the planning of the Rising in which the Irish Republican Brotherhood tried to convince Eoin MacNeill to join them, since, as President of the Irish Volunteers, he could mobilize its members. As exposed in section 1.4, MacNeill did not agree with the rebellion that was being planned by the IRB military committee on Easter Sunday: “He all along maintained that the Volunteers’ purpose was to defend the 1914 home rule settlement, and that defiance of the government could only be sanctioned in defence of Volunteer arms”

(Ranelagh 2012: 201). Thus, the committee attempted to persuade him through the Castle Document:

In the days before Easter Sunday, the committee attempted to persuade MacNeill to rebellion. On the Tuesday before Easter he was shown a document proclaiming the confiscation of Volunteer arms and the arrest of Volunteer leaders. This “Castle Document”, which purported to have been drawn up by the authorities in Dublin Castle, the seat of government in Ireland, was probably forged by Joseph Plunkett and Sean MacDermott [...]. The important points were that it accurately reflected Castle plans and that MacNeill believed it and so adopted a more belligerent stand himself. The following day —Wednesday 19 April— he ordered the Volunteers to prepare to defend their arms. (Ranelagh 2012: 201)

MacNeill very soon realized that he had been deceived, together with the fact that the *Aud* — the boat that carried the German guns— had been intercepted, and gave orders to cancel the manoeuvres, as it is also commented upon in the novel: “Only yesterday, a notice had appeared in the *Sunday Independent*, saying that all manoeuvres had been cancelled. We admired the bare-faced cheek of it, then forgot all about it” (Mills 2014: 103). The committee decided to carry on, nonetheless, even though it was delayed one day. The novel successfully achieves to depict the rapidity in which everything was conducted so as to achieve the surprise effect that allowed them to occupy the areas: “Windows had been broken in the buildings around the Green. Furniture was being carried out of them and heaped in a pile that blocked the street. Groups of people stood around watching, in the road and on the steps of the hotel, but no one tried to interfere” (Mills 2014: 103-04). Katie first brings Alanna safe back home and then leaves to reunite with Isabel, as they had planned, to go to Percy Place, but encounters more trouble on her way while she starts finding out what is happening. She overhears people in the street criticizing the way the nationalists are conducting everything —“Aren’t they a right shower of eejits, all the same” (Mills 2014: 105); “They got it arseways. They’re like rats in a trap, in there” (Mills 2014: 105)— since in a different corner of the park, the rebels had also tried to occupy the Shelbourne Hotel, but were unsuccessful: “due to the shortage of numbers, the Shelbourne Hotel, which also overlooked the Green, was not garrisoned and was taken by the British later in the day. That made the Green itself impossible to defend as the ICA soon discovered” (Grayson 2018: 137). Isabel then describes the scene there in the Shelbourne very similarly to the one that Katie saw, with the sudden outburst of violence interrupting celebrations and the people around astonished and unable to react:

People up from the country for the Spring Show. A wedding party. A couple of soldiers on leave. And then the sound of windows breaking outside, people rushing in from the street to say there was trouble, and everyone going to the windows to look out at the unbelievable sight of carts and furniture making a wall in the street, men passing more items out through gaping windows to add to it. A boy who walked past was fired on, from no one knew where. He vaulted the railings and took shelter in the area before someone had the sense to open a basement window and let him in. (Mills 2014: 111)

On her way to Percy Place, Katie gets warned by some citizens to take the situation seriously as they are using arms: “Don’t be a fool, girl. They mean business. They shot a man, a while back, trying to get his cart out of there” (Mills 2014: 106). She herself then witnesses how a driver is suddenly “pushed over to the pavement by one of the gunmen, while the other got into

the car and drove it, hard, into a gap in the barricade” (Mills 2014: 106). As soon as she gets with Isabel in Dote and May’s house, she realizes that they are already in a state of alert when they drag the bolt across the door: “In eighteen months of coming to this house, I’d never seen that bolt in use” (Mills 2014: 110). It was precisely Hubie, recently returned from the front, who told them to do it while he went out to investigate and evaluate the situation, proving how prepared he already was after experiencing war first-hand.

Once Hubie comes back, he tries to explain the situation, evincing the lack of information and the confusion to which the population was subjected: “It’s hard to know exactly what’s happening [...]: public buildings had been overrun by men with guns; a policeman killed, and the rest of them vanished into thin air. The trams appeared to have stopped running” (Mills 2014: 113). The interruption of daily life and lines of communication is made apparent, as well as the fact that they were also taking over some private houses, which generated hostility towards the rebels on the part of local residents who had been expelled from their own homes (Grayson 2018: 131; 133). As Hubie himself comments, “the neighbours at the back said *their* neighbours had been turned out of their own home. [...] Gunmen have installed themselves at the windows. They said they’d do their best to see nothing gets damaged, and shooed the owners away. The owners went to a house with a telephone and tried to ring the police, but the line is down” (Mills 2014: 113-14). It is possible that the novel is specifically referring here to the buildings alongside Northumberland Road, probably to the numbers 1-5 which corresponded to St Stephen’s Schoolhouse and the Parochial Hall: “Patrick Doyle, Joe Clarke, William Christian and James McGrath held off the soldiers of the Sherwood Foresters from here as long as they could, then fled to Percy Place, where they were captured. [...] Denis O’Donoghue, Robert Cooper, James H Doyle and James (Séamus) Kavanaugh occupied the school building until their position became untenable” (Connell 2015). The area adjacent to Percy Place was occupied by the 3rd battalion of the Irish Volunteers, commanded by Éamon de Valera: “Éamon de Valera’s 3rd battalion was in the Grand Canal Street area, centred on Boland’s Bakery and Boland’s Mills” (Grayson 2018: 124). When they ask Hubie who are the people involved, he proves to know nothing about the Irish Republican Brotherhood, since it was a secret fraternal organization: “Some sort of Brotherhood, they say. They’ve barricaded themselves in. They won’t be persuaded out, they mean business. Their colleagues have occupied the GPO” (Mills 2014: 114). De Valera actually belonged to said organization, having taken an oath to join, and became thus one of the leaders of the revolt.

At that moment, they hope that the situation might be over soon, still unaware of all the different buildings around the city that the rebels managed to occupy and of the fact that more British troops were going to be sent to confront them: “Today has been a jittery day. Fresh start tomorrow” (Mills 2014: 117). In addition to this, many Dubliners started to profit from the chaos to loot different shops, given their poor economic conditions, so that the disorder in the streets escalated, as is described in the novel when Katie and Isabel leave Percy Place:

People thronged in all directions, pushing carts, wheelbarrows, prams piled high with goods. Children staggered past, their mouths stained with confectioners’ sugar. A boy had become a jewelry tree, hats stacked on his head like upside-down nests, watches on the branches of his arms. Girls whose shins were mottled and bruised crammed their grubby feet into high heels and jeweled sandals. Feather boas were wound around their bony shoulders. They swaggered and laughed *Lookit me! Giveit here!* My steps quickened. (Mills 2014: 122)

The excerpt reflects the motives behind the inhabitants' behavior by insinuating the poor state of the children, malnourished and with bruises, now playing with the different objects they manage to take and eating candy. When Isabel asks a man in the street for the police, he tells them they ran away as soon as the situation got complicated: "Vanished, at the first sign of trouble. Useless bowsies" (Mills 2014: 123). They are told how they entered into a shoe shop, Saxone's, where Katie had just bought boots a fortnight ago, which makes her feel even more disenchanted by the revolt: "The manager was a thin, kindly man we'd known since childhood" (Mills 2014: 122). In the midst of the tumult, Katie encounters the six-year old little sister of her friend Frieda Leamy, who is a nurse and is working in the hospital at that moment, so she takes care of the child, Tishy, and of her monkey Paschal, leading them both safe to her place. The introduction of Paschal in the narrative, whose name even makes reference to the Easter period, functions as a theatrical element or "mimetic re-enactment" of a theatrical uprising, according to Morales-Ladrón, emphasizing "the dramatic staging of a mock revolution carried out by intellectuals, writers and playwrights" (2016: 48). This idea is also reinforced by Matt's connection to theatre and possible clues throughout the novel that he might have joined the revolt himself, having disappeared those days presumably, as suspected by Lockie, with Liam's arms —"Matt? Lockie, you don't think he's in with that crowd inside the GPO?" (Mills 2014: 139). Notwithstanding, towards the end of the novel, Katie finds out that Matt had not actively participated in the Rising itself, since he left the city on Monday morning with his theatre company, but sold Liam's arms to the rebels in order to get money to run away (Mills 2014: 247).

Once they reach the house of the Crilly's family, Katie's mother is relieved to see them and starts showing Liam's memory book to Isabel, as she had planned to do that day, but soon the sounds of distant gunshots significantly interrupt their mourning ritual —the same as the nationalist narrative overshadowed the commemorations and memory of the war throughout the century— and prompts a discussion on the people involved in the revolt and their legitimation of the use of violence:

Lockie had come up to clear the dishes. "I heard your man John Connolly from the Abbey was one of them, and he shot dead," Lockie said.

"Not Sean Connolly?" Isabel said.⁹⁰

"Sean, John, what matter?" That was Mother.

"Matt's friend?" I was as stunned as Isabel looked. [...]

"They're after a republic," Lockie said. "So they say."

"Pity they had to use bloodshed to get it," Isabel said.

"And stab our own soldiers in the back while they're at it." The mourning brooch on Mother's chest rose to catch the light, like some strange fish. "It's a scandal, a handful of layabouts, taking advantage of the holiday. Do they think they can throw on any old outfit and call it a uniform, make themselves an army, start off their own war in the middle of town?"

Lockie gathered up plates and chattered them on to the sideboard, but that didn't distract Isabel. "No uniform justifies killing," she said.

I sucked in a breath. How did she have the nerve to say such things, and to us?

She put down her cup. Her hands were unsteady. "No cause is worth it."

"How disloyal you are." Mother's lips were white.

Colour flushed through Isabel's neck. "I'm as loyal as anyone," she said, with dignity. "But principles need our loyalty too."



⁹⁰ Sean Connolly was an Abbey Theatre actor, and captain in the Irish Citizen Army, who took part in the Easter Rising and became the first rebel to be killed during the revolt itself.

“I meant to Liam. To his memory.” (Mills 2014: 131-32)

Isabel’s attitude with respect to the use of violence actually resembles Helen’s mother in *Name Upon Name*, who positioned herself against its general use, but also that of many Irish who were still in mourning for their loved ones who had perished at the front, whereas Katie’s mother is inclined to condemn the Rising based on political principles and also on loyalty towards his own son, similarly to Aunt Violet. The use of violence is therefore generally condemned in the narrative, which, as Morales-Ladrón pertinently points out, “corrects the image of the signatories of the proclamation as martyrs of the revolution, and depicts them as a group of young idealistic men, responsible for the mayhem and destruction of the town” (2016: 49). When Katie and Lockie try to accompany Isabel home, they are unable to walk some streets and need to come back: “We’d only gone a short distance when we knew it would be impossible to go further. The street was lit by bonfires. It boiled with people, a seething cauldron of firelight and oily shadows. If the city were to drink itself insensible, this is how it might dream, like a sleeping dog, twitching and moaning” (Mills 2014: 132). In correlation with this, Katie’s father does not come home that night, and Isabel, Tishy and the monkey have to stay.

That first night of the Rising, Katie starts having nightmares already —“I dreamed a child at a burning window, yelling for a ladder. [...] The dull *crump* of an explosion was followed by a scare of birds, then a throbbing silence, into which crept a braided sound of breathing, deep and regular” (Mills 2014: 135)— in which she seems to mix feelings of responsibility towards the protection of the vulnerable with her own fear of being exposed to violence, which resembles her attitude while dealing with the loss of her brother: “My shoes bit down on broken glass. Pity the barefoot children now” (Mills 2014: 136). Throughout the day, however, she finds herself distrusting the people around, after the scenes of looting she witnessed on the previous day:

There was something in the air I couldn’t put my finger on. Some of these people could have been among the mob that stormed the shop, for all I knew. “That was a bad business, here, last night,” I said, testing. “Shocking.” This man’s voice had a smarmy lilt to it I didn’t trust. I’d had it in mind to bring Tishy back and leave her here, where her parents would find her, among people she knew. Now I wasn’t so sure. [...] “Do you have a gun in the house?” the smarmy man asked, as I moved away. “Pardon?” “Only, ye might need one. If things get any more hectic.” Liam’s voice slid into my mind. *Say nothing.* “I hope ye’ve a few strong men about the place, anyways,” Mrs Clancy said. “My father,” I lied. “My brothers.” (Mills 2014: 136-37)

In the absence of her father, they decide to take refuge elsewhere, urged by Florrie —Katie’s younger sister— and her husband Eugene, who arrives at the house with a side-car to pick them up, but Katie refuses to go. She decides to accompany Isabel back to her place instead —where they are also going to leave Tishy and Paschal— and to then let Frieda know that her sister is safe, as well as to pay a visit to her sister Eva at the nursing home where she is resting afterwards. On their way to Isabel’s place, they find out that the Germans might be behind the uprising from a man who is running away from Sackville Street:

There was no sign of the army, but word of German submarines off the coast. “You ladies’d be better off staying indoors, ’til it’s over.” [...] “What would I mean,” I asked Isabel, “if the Germans were here?”

“One army’s as bad as another,” Isabel said.
 I looked at her with dislike. Mother could have been right about her, after all.
 “But if both sides are here...” It was too obvious a thought to finish. (Mills
 2014: 142)

Similarly as in *Name Upon Name*, German help in the matter is made explicit, as well as the derived fear of the First World War extending to their homeland—even though later in the novel, it is already clarified that the Irish nationalists are the ultimate responsible ones: “Nonsense, the Germans have nothing to do with it, it’s the Sinn Féiners. Daftest thing ever” (Mills 2014: 148). In this sense, scenes of the rising are compared to those of war; for instance, when they find out that people are watching the bridges, Katie cannot help but think: “It was like speaking lines from a book—or one of Liam’s letters” (Mills 2014: 143). Katie experiences frustration and inability to process the events in a similar manner to Liam—“I didn’t understand what had happened. How had the seams of the world come undone so fast? What was this hellish place we’d stumbled into?” (Mills 2014: 125)—and feels “an air of unreality to it all” (Mills 2014: 107); in fact, when she first sees the man in St Stephen’s Green dressed in the coat of the Citizen’s Army who asks them to leave the park, she asks him if he is from the theatre (Mills 2014: 102), which reinforces the idea that theatrics characterized the revolution. Furthermore, the landscape of the city is utterly transformed, with destroyed streets and buildings that resemble the photographs from the Great War in the newspapers. For instance, when they get close to Sackville Street, which can be considered the epicenter of the conflict, the place is described as “a scene of wreckage” (Mills 2014: 142). This was the street occupied by both the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, where they had established their headquarters in the building of the General Post Office and proclaimed the Irish Republic: “Pearse stood on the step of the GPO, proclaiming ‘the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State’ and establishing a Provisional Government. Aligning his cause with that of Britain’s enemies in the First World War, he claimed support from ‘gallant allies in Europe’” (Grayson 2018: 129).

In addition, there is the state of unrest that comes from experiencing violence closely and from the unpredictability of the streets, feeling anxious about the moments of silence and quietness—“It’s eerie, isn’t it?” I said. ‘So still’” (Mills 2014: 144)—but also when crossing paths with strangers and not knowing who to trust—“Doors, where there were doors, were open to the street. Shadowy figures moved around inside [...] talking in low voices” (Mills 2014: 142). This anxiety gives way to impatience in a way that was also well-known for Liam, as Katie can remember: “The tension and uncertainty of waiting was giving way to a kind of impatience in me. I’d sensed it on the street as well. If something was going to happen, let it happen, and let it happen soon. Liam had written something similar, about wanting to get out to the Front so that he would know what he was facing and how he’d face it” (Mills 2014: 160). It is also interesting to mention that one thing that really affects Katie—as also affected Helen in *Name Upon Name*—and that was remarked by Hubie when telling his accounts of the war, was male vulnerability: “The drill of shots had us flinching, even as we moved away from them. The shocking sound of men weeping” (Mills 2014: 205). By the third day of the uprising, Katie is already feeling disturbed by the introduction of the unknown into her ordinary reality, which makes her feel alienated: “I’d a sense of being lost, familiar streets made strange by a fear that clogged my ears and beat in my throat” (Mills 2014: 195-96). She consequently wishes the comfort of her own home, to know that it is still there for her to come back: “I wanted to go home, to see my own house safe and solid” (Mills 2014: 189). Holding on to the past and to that which is still familiar is a common impulse for those who suffer from trauma, as commented on section 2.1. She presents symptoms of trauma such as tremors—“My hands

trembled, but I wasn't cold. It must have been a reaction to the day" (Mills 2014: 220)—especially after the impression of seeing people terribly wounded, which leaves her with an indelible sensorial memory: “so much disorder and mess and dear God the smells, and sounds, things I'd never forget no matter how long I lived” (Mills 2014: 213). She thus feels that those days bring her closer than ever to Liam's experience at war —“a day that plunged us into war and brought me closer to Liam and all he'd come to know” (Mills 2014: 224).

Katie already becomes more aware of the seriousness of the situation when she finally gets to the Royal City of Dublin Hospital, where Frieda works as a nurse, to let her know that her sister is safe, and sees with her own eyes how busy she is that day, which allows her to acknowledge that there are real victims and casualties:

“we're full to bursting with casualties and expecting more.”

“Casualties?”

“People have been shot and killed.” She said it calm and flat; we could have been talking about weather. It wasn't the first time I'd felt the gap between my experience and hers. [...]

I watched Frieda's brisk accent of the stairs. Everyone here was so purposeful. They all had urgent things to do, places to be, people who depended on them. But: casualties? How many and how bad, I wondered. Would the army come in and annihilate the men in the park and in the GPO and in the house? Surely they'd put their weapons down and come out, as Captain Wilson said they would. Surely to God Matt wasn't one of them. (Mills 2014: 147-48)

Immediately afterwards, Katie visits the nursing home where her sister Eva is interned and Bartley asks her to find shelter for Alanna, since he is worried that the conflict is going to become worse when the army confronts the rebels: “I shouldn't really tell you this but — we were briefed, by an army officer, not long ago. [...] They think there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of rebels in positions around the Green. They're marshalling a massive force to counter them. They're on the move” (Mills 2014: 153). Katie had already heard that “chances were the authorities would close the streets” (Mills 2014: 145), but hesitates about what to say, since there were already different rumors and accounts circulating: “We'd heard so many different things on our way across town this morning, there was no knowing which version of events was true” (Mills 2014: 150). Outside in the streets again, she already confronts a different environment —“soldiers lined the side of the road [...] and the atmosphere was horribly tense” (Mills 2014: 153)— which already anticipates the regaining of control on the part of the British authorities, since they are asked to open their bags in order to continue their way to Dote and May's house, where Katie has thought of bringing Alanna, and where they are very much welcomed: “We're glad of the company, to tell the truth. Safety in numbers” (Mills 2014: 154).

In their house, they have an edition of *The Irish Times* —the only newspaper that Hubie could find in order to get some piece of information— in which the Rising has already overshadowed the news about the war, much to Hubie's disgust: “There's not much in it. Nothing about Verdun” (Mills 2014: 158). Besides describing what they characterized as “an attempt to overthrow the government”, the paper asked “to ‘trust firmly in the speedy triumph of the forces of law and order. Those loyal citizens of Dublin who cannot actively help their country's cause at this moment may help it indirectly by refusing to give way to panic, and by maintaining in their households a healthy spirit of hope” (Mills 2014: 159). Civilians were, nevertheless, usually too close to cross fire, appealed by the spectacularity of the whole situation; when Katie talks about the “watching crowd” that saw them cross the bridge, Hubie cannot help but remark the morbid curiosity of the public: “They'd have liked it better if you

were shot to ribbons” (Mills 2014: 160). In this vein, it is mentioned that in Dame Street “soldiers and insurgents alike had needed to shout at bystanders to get out of the way” (Mills 2014: 173). Moreover, there was also the question of looting, to which Mr. Sheehy-Skeffington wants to put an end and consequently convenes a meeting for that matter. Hubie wants to attend said meeting and Katie joins him, since she honestly admires him: “He was a familiar figure around town, often to be seen taking notes at lectures for his newspaper [...] —he’d talk to anyone. [...] People mocked him, but they smiled when they caught sight of him. He was known as the Peace Man. Some wags called him the Ladies’ Man, because of the Votes for Women button he wore on his lapel” (Mills 2014: 173). However, by the time they get to the place of the meeting it is too late; he is no longer there because almost nobody had attended. Later in the novel, they find out that Sheehy-Skeffington was arrested on his way back home from the meeting and executed the following day by order of John Bowen-Colthurst, an incident that was exposed in section 1.4:

“There’s a lot of bluster, but I heard your man who did it is off his head.”
 “He should be shot himself.”
 “It’s just the one story. There’s fault on both sides.”
 “You don’t know this man. Everyone loves him. This is a bad, a rotten thing to happen.” [...]
 “Not just him, There were others. Journalists. The twist of it is, they wrote for government-friendly papers. Which only goes to show, your man wasn’t thinking straight. They’re trying to smooth it over, but another officer reported it.” (Mills 2014: 264-65)

The novel portrays victims on both sides equally, as evinced in a specific episode that takes place in May and Dote’s house in which two British soldiers come asking for help, since one of them is severely hurt, and so they assist them and then take him to the hospital. As abovementioned, the Sherwood Foresters —line infantry regiment of the British army— confronted the rebels who had taken the buildings close to Percy Place, alongside Northumberland Road and close to Mount Street Bridge. The novel references the battle that takes place there on the third day of the Rising:

We didn’t know it then, but a column of Sherwood Foresters was marching straight into a bloodbath. They would be trapped on an exposed stretch of Northumberland Road, just around the corner from Percy Place, with no shelter other than household steps, kerbstones and a few young trees, while bullets tore into them from well-chosen positions in ordinary-looking houses. More than two hundred of them would crawl over their comrades to be killed or severely wounded in the course of one lethal afternoon. (Mills 2014: 198-99).

In effect, on Wednesday, two battalions of the Sherwood Foresters “approached the junction of Haddington Road and Northumberland Road. They were unaware that since Monday rebels had held several positions around Mount Street Bridge and that they were walking into an ambush” (Grayson 2018: 147). Throughout the day, the rebels lost their positions, being outnumbered by the British soldiers: “However, the comparative death tolls were striking and the ‘Battle of Mount Street Bridge’ would be remembered as the rebels’ major ‘success’ of the Rising. Volunteers numbering 17 had fought around 1,750 British soldiers, suffering 4 deaths and inflicting 160 casualties (26 of them dead)” (Grayson 2018: 148). Hubie is disappointed about the outcome and sees no point in using violence against soldiers who are just following orders, as he himself did: “Those men out there, the rebels —who authorized any one of them to bring

about a single death today? What had any of those boys who were slaughtered on the bridge to do with this benighted country? Nothing. Did they ask to come here? No” (Mills 2014: 222-23).

The novel includes mixed opinions with respect to the revolt, since, on the one hand, the destruction of the city and the casualties make citizens adopt a position against the rebels. While seeing people leaving their burning houses carrying their children —“They emerged from a dense, reddish fog carrying bundles and bags and babies” (Mills 2014: 256)— a woman in the street considers that the rebels have to be held responsible for that: “Them boys in the Post Office have a lot to answer for” (Mills 2014: 256). According to the novel, they even start burying the dead in people’s gardens because they run out of coffins (Mills 2014: 242), and Hubie complains about it, since he knows that those coffins were originally made for the soldiers in Europe, whose sacrifice, as he remarks, is also worth of acknowledgement: ““Those coffins were for us. That crowd out there’ [...] ‘the things I’ve heard people say —you’d think they invented sacrifice. You’d think they’d never heard that a million or more young men have sacrificed themselves already”” (Mills 2014: 265). In this vein, there is a particular excerpt in which Katie imagines that the flames are provoked by the dead soldiers from the front who come back to haunt them all: “In front of us, on the far side of the river [...] the city was ablaze. [...] A horde of fiery ghosts, thousands of slaughtered soldiers from the Front, come home to vent their fury. They thrashed their limbs about, [...] strained to break free, fell back and shoved fiery fists across the streets to rattle the roofs with flaming fingers, their breath black with rage” (Mills 2014: 254). Resentment is especially prominent within those families whose members lost their lives fighting in the war so that Ireland could achieve Home Rule. In this sense, Katie and Hubie discuss about the possible consequences that the revolt might have for the Irish. Hubie insightfully considers that these events are going to negatively affect the way that the Irish soldiers are treated at the front —“They could expect no mercy now. There’d be rage in high command. ‘They’ll see us all, every man, woman and child, as potential traitors” (Mills 2014: 220)— whereas Katie fears that having betrayed the trust of the British means that they will not be granted Home Rule, which means that Liam would have sacrificed himself for a failed cause: “So, after today, all those other deaths will mean nothing. Liam died for nothing” (Mills 2014: 221).

On the other hand, the rebels are also humanized and pitied by Katie, who thinks about how much their families might be also suffering: “I couldn’t imagine what all those men must be feeling in the various buildings that concealed them, or the ones coming to roust them out. [...] But, whoever they were, they had sisters too, and mothers, who would be sick about them now” (Mills 2014: 189). Hubie himself even partakes in the discourse that the rebels were foolish but brave —“They’re brave. Foolish, but brave” (Mills 2014: 177)— which was popularized by John Dillon’s speech in parliament, as seen in section 1.4. On top of that, the fear of British reprisals is made quite explicit throughout the novel. There is a moment in which Katie remembers the functioning of martial law at the front and is concerned that similar punishments are going to be applied in Ireland: “Stories of atrocities on the Continent brought a sour panic to my throat. I pushed it away. This was Ireland. There were Irishmen in the British Army. Ireland was part of the Empire. There’d be discipline. There would” (Mills 2014: 194-95). In effect, martial law is then suddenly declared and not well-received by the Irish population, which already hints at the change of public opinion that took place after the strict control established by the British:

A notice was pasted to the door of the Pepper Canister Church. The word “Proclamation” in large letters drew me closer. It was a declaration of martial law. [...]

“It says there’s a curfew. Half seven in the evening ’til half five in the morning.”
“Bit bloody much. Where do they think they are?” He wandered off.” (Mills 2014: 195)

By Thursday, that is, one day after the imposition of martial law, British soldiers have already taken control of the streets and show aggressive behavior towards the Irish, as it was difficult for them to discern rebels from civilians. Katie meets a woman who has decided to go to France with the ambulance corps, and they both are trying to attend wounded people in the streets of Dublin and take them to the hospital when a soldier suddenly impedes them from walking through, which angers Katie:

This was my city. They’d no business here, telling me where I could or couldn’t go.

Fatty bumped himself against me. “Give me a fucken reason.” His voice slimed into my ear. “Just one.”

Liam’s voice bid me go easy, but words flooded out of me in a low torrent. “My brother fought and died in your army. If he was here now, he’d soon sort you out. Have you nothing better to do than harass women on the streets?” The strangest thing happened then. I felt Liam leap to surround me, like a cloak, his hand at my mouth. *Say no more.*

The fat soldier bounced his bulk against me again, almost gently. “And have your lot nothing better to do than stab us in the back?” He stood back and lifted his rifle to my breast. “If this was a bayonet,” he growled, “I’d rip you traitorous, bitching guts out and spread them for the dogs.”

I couldn’t speak through Liam’s restraining fingers, or the hammer of my heart. (Mills 2014: 258-59)

The fragment proves that tensions between both nationalities, between Irish and British, escalated from the events of the Easter Rising onwards. The prolongation of martial law after the revolt, until November of that year, with thousands of citizens arrested and placed in either internment camps or prisons, together with the increase of casualties from the front, undermined morale among the Irish, who felt once again strongly subjected to British rule and interests. The Easter Rising leaders are not glorified in the narrative, which focuses instead on the edges of violence, on how civilians and neighbors lived through those days, as well as on their own mixed feelings about the proclamation of the Republic. In this sense, Camila Franco Batista has classified this novel as a “fiction of memory”, in her words, “due to its literary construction of the Irish cultural memory of the War and the Easter Rising in the present which draws on current interpretations of past events” (2017: 59). The legitimation of the rebels’ cause is therefore questioned and debated, which helps portray the complexity of both the socio-historical circumstances and of the heterogeneous and ambiguous identities of the Irish.

3.5.3 “Each Slow Dusk”

In this short story, even though there is no mention to the Easter Rising, it has already taken place according to the time frame, since there is a reference to the Battle of the Somme, which lasted from the first of July to the eighteenth of November of 1916. Notwithstanding, it does not seem to have affected Belfast’s majoritarian support of the war effort; instead, it is suggested that the amount of casualties from the front is the main factor in the diminishment of the

enthusiasm and involvement in the matter, which also definitely played a historical role in the Irish discontent towards Britain and the circumstances surrounding the passing of Home Rule.

3.5.4 *Empire*: “The Black Church” and “The Unchosen”

“The Black Church” is set in Dublin the day before the Easter Rising and follows a ten-year old girl from the tenements of the city who is suddenly caught up in the middle of the revolution. At the beginning of the story, Anne Jane is left alone in the house with her siblings, that is, with her three older brothers and the baby of the house: “Her mother had gone down to Moore Street for a few herrings, leaving Ann Jane in charge of the Ba” (O’Donnell 2018: 85). While taking care of the baby, she plays with Belinda, a doll that she rescued from a fire in a toyshop: “She sighed and addressed the doll’s head. ‘If it wasn’t for me you wouldn’t be here, Belinda. You should be grateful I saved you from *Hell!*’” (O’Donnell 2018: 86). Their situation at home is quite difficult, having five children to feed and an alcoholic father that spends their money on drinks, and Anne Jane, in spite of her age, is aware of it, as shown in the fact that she thinks that Fr Cullen’s “recommendations for avoiding drink and depravity [...] would help even someone like Da to give up his ways and stop spending money they didn’t have on porter and whiskey” (O’Donnell 2018: 86). Their economic hardship is evidenced not only by the fact that the only doll Anne Jane seems to have was partly destroyed in a fire, but also because the children are hungry and Anne Jane in particular is always craving for sweets to the point that she purposely passes through a sweet shop oftentimes:

All their bellies were aching. Ann Jane’s belly bubbled, churned and twisted within her almost every day. She had reached a point where at times all she ever thought about was eating. [...] she rarely missed an opportunity to stare at the contents of the sweet shop windows. Her favourite was Kennedy’s Bakery [...]. Sometimes she fancied that even the smell of these delicious things was nourishment. (O’Donnell 2018: 89)

In this sense, it is interesting to mention how her Catholic school promotes the learning of the Irish language by giving more food to the best students, which definitely encourages Anne Jane to improve her linguistic skills: “The nuns gave out batch loaf and jam at break to anyone who wanted it, with girls who spoke the best Irish getting slightly thicker slices, sometimes with country butter from the father of one of the young novices. For that reason Ann Jane was learning Irish very quickly” (O’Donnell 2018: 89).

Anne Jane, who is thinking of Easter as an uneventful and boring festivity, decides to try something different this year and visit the Black Church, where one can summon de Devil. She knows that nothing is going to happen not only because she is aware that it is a made-up story, but also because one is supposed to call it at midnight, and she is going to do it during daylight:

She had decided to make the trip having heard Mrs Anderson in the room above theirs talking to Ma the previous week about that church and how if you walked three times anti-clockwise around it at midnight you could summon the Devil. Why anyone would want to summon the Devil at midnight or any other time was beyond her, but Ann Jane did not fear this entity because Ma had laughed softly at the notion and, later that day when Ann Jane had enquired, Da had told her the only devils were the ones with flesh and blood who’d take the last crumb from a person’s mouth if they could. Vicious scroungers like Mr Murphy and the like who opposed working men joining the union. (O’Donnell 2018: 93)

Once again, there appear in the background the social tensions derived from the situation of the Irish workers with respect to other nations such as England, and the disturbance between the employers and those joining unions, with a particular mention to William Martin Murphy. Notwithstanding, similarly as in the other narratives, the environment of Dublin previous to the beginning of hostilities is described as peaceful and lively so as to mark the disruption of daily life that the Rising provoked: “In the distance Ann Jane could hear the sounds of horses pulling carts. Then the rumbling cartwheels themselves describing the passage of the afternoon. She also heard the shouts and cries of children. [...] But the sky was like a jewel and the day sunny. The Devil could never appear to anyone at such times” (O’Donnell 2018: 93-94). In addition to this, when Anne Jane is walking through the streets on the next day, that is, on Easter Monday, she hears a strange noise, described as if not belonging to the reality that she knows: “The sound did not emanate from any of the usual sources. She looked around her. [...] It was a sound from outside their world, one that she could not quite define, because it was not properly within her hearing so much as in her sense of something about to happen. It was a warning, she decided” (O’Donnell 2018: 95-96). Following the noise, she reaches Sackville Street, where she witnesses the beginning of the Easter Rising, with the Irish revolutionaries gathering in the General Post Office and the British cavalry on their way to confront them:

From where she stood there was a new busyness and tension in the air which made her stop in her tracks. [...] Around the GPO people were clustered in groups, heads moving intently as they turned to one another. Crowds milled further out on the street, fazing at the portico of the building as if something unusual was occurring. People were running. She whirled her head around. From behind. A group of lancers on horses proceeded steadily down the street in the direction of the post office. She pressed her body against the wooden frame of a shop doorway and shrank back as the men then charged until they drew level with the GPO. Ann Jane’s hands flew to her ears at the guns fired and split the air. Belinda fell to the ground. [...] Almost as quickly the horsemen galloped back up the street, the people shouting after them. A woman screamed. Not so far from where she stood someone cursed. Her entire body trembled, her heart like a struck anvil, relentless in her chest as she peeked around the doorway again. (O’Donnell 2018: 96)

Anne Jane then starts feeling terribly guilty thinking that the city was now receiving a divine punishment for performing that ritual at the Black Church: “Something terrible was happening. It was the Devil’s revenge, for not being called at midnight, for having been fooled with in the middle of an Easter Sunday, God’s holiest day” (O’Donnell 2018: 96-97). She then remembers the fire at the toyshop which had so deeply impress her and relates that to the fire of hell, which advances the destruction of the city: “There would be fire, she knew, and brimstone, which was apparently worse and instead of doll’s heads propping there would be devilish attempts to take the humans away from their innocent days with their hungry bellies” (O’Donnell 2018: 97). In the midst of that confusion, Anne Jane sees the familiar face of Mrs Anderson, who seems to be already aware of the fact that there has been an uprising and has taken a baby carriage to take profit of the situation by gathering some goods in it:

There was Mrs Anderson pushing a pram towards the conflagration, face flushed and happy. How peculiar, Ann Jane thought, to be pushing an empty pram so happily down the street, when Mrs Anderson’s children were all grown and surely the shops were closed and there would be broken glass every place.

But Mrs Anderson had spotted her and paused, holding the pram with one hand and placing the other one on her hip. [...]

“Child! *What* are you doing here?”

Ann Jane shook her head, as if warning Mrs Anderson to stay away. There was too much danger.

“Child, do you hear me? What are you doing, Ann Jane Gleeson, when the city is in uproar?” (O’Donnell 2018: 97-98)

Anne Jane fails to comprehend Mrs Anderson’s intentions at first, but soon afterwards both of them find a group of people looting a shop which could be a bakery, much to Helen’s temptation, and she is astonished at the broken windows and the glass everywhere in the street: “People crowded in, stepping over one another, jostling and pushing such was the rush. There was bread, criss-crossed and plaited, [...] and there were cakes and sweets, and more chocolate than Ann Jane could ever have imagined [...]. There was no fire or brimstone, merely glass to be avoided, and at last, fresh, sweet offerings on an altar of plenty” (O’Donnell 2018: 98). That image at the end of the story seems to suggest that Anne Jane then engages in the looting, which would be understandable and legitimate, given her circumstances. Thus, by following the perspective of a girl from the tenements, the short story arises sympathy towards the Irish people who committed acts of looting and robbery during the Easter Rising forced by their economic hardship, and shows therefore a different perspective of the revolt, aside from that of the participants.

The following short story in the collection, titled “The Unchosen”, precisely deals with the immediate aftermath of the Easter Rising while the executions of its leaders are taking place in Kilmainham Gaol, where the plot is set. Nevertheless, even if some well-known figures are mentioned, the story focuses on a fictional participant in the rebellion who is actually not so politically convinced of blood sacrifice and is unsure of the reasons that led him there. This perspective in the narrative allows for an interesting reflection on the influence of one’s surroundings in movements of political struggle, as well as on the heterogeneity of the ideological beliefs of the participants in the national cause. The protagonist, Dermot, serves thus as a witness to the prisoners’ conditions and state of anxiety as well as a paradigmatic case of the ambiguous character of the Irish and the doubts that many of them shared at the time concerning the participation in both the Great War and the national struggle. This is made possible by his imprisonment, which functions as an intermediate or transitional moment — “Death awaits some of the others and fate has taken a baffling hand as he is condemned to wait and listen to the passing of their final hours” (O’Donnell 2018: 106). The protagonist of the story is unaware of his fate, still unsure whether he is going to be executed or released, but he speculates that if they are going to cure his lacerated shoulder, he is not going to be among the executed: “One of the guards has promised a doctor, which is how he guesses he is not to be executed” (O’Donnell 2018: 101). The space of the prison is therefore significant and related to the liminal experience; according to Monika Fludernik, it can be seen as an antechamber of death that prompts self-reflection. In her words, “prison scenes in literary texts [...] thematize the crucial position of the prison subject as victim of penal practices and they centrally engage with the experience, and management of, the subject’s identity crisis. This identity crisis may be cast in religious terms or in terms of (moral) truth, duty (vs. betrayal), personal conviction or political/ideological commitment” (1999: 46). It is precisely through his reflections that we obtain a much wider vision of the predicament of the Irish at such a determining time, when their social affiliations casted serious doubts on their national identity.

Dermot’s cell in Kilmainham is described as cold, and dark — “No matter which way Dermot arranges his body, the biting teeth of the night chill gnaw his feet, numbing his toes and

causing the muscles to cramp every so often” (O’Donnell 2018: 99)— but even in spite of that, he acknowledges that his major problems is the incertitude while waiting for the British response:

Sleep is the least of his worries. Oblivion would be wonderful but it will never be his unless they decide to shoot him. A different oblivion. Not for the first time he grinds his fist against his teeth to stifle despair and the need to cry out in some manner. But tonight all is fairly silent in the gaol. There is a sense of anticipation, of dread, but also —he imagines— a sense of the inevitable. It pulls like a taut, thick rope drawn through the minds of all the separated men in their solitary cells, through the minds of their gaolers too, and with each passing minute that rope tightens and the anchor of the ship of death is already being raised. (O’Donnell 2018: 99-100)

Dermot then starts thinking of the idea of blood sacrifice and whether he truly belongs to those people who would risk their own lives in the name of the nation. On the one hand, he feels fortunate and proud to have participated in the Easter Rising and have lived the experience from so close, fighting with people that were so politically committed —“He feels privileged to have lived so close to extremes. The molten glass of the huge, burning ship windows, the bombs rising like fireworks from the top of the General Post Office, the stifling, almost suffocating heat that eventually the men had to flee as the place collapsed around them” (O’Donnell 2018: 100). On the other hand, he is aware of the fact that there were other Irish who either were against the independence of Ireland or who opposed the use of violence to achieve it, and tries to understand both sides and realities: “There were other extremes too, he reminds himself, to do with sides and decisions and whether one was cool and contingent regarding the rebellion or whether one cut one’s own veins to let blood —drenched in love of nation and the chance of a future— flow into the dust of the streets if necessary” (O’Donnell 2018: 100).

Dermot himself is therefore more hesitant as to his political stance and thus he finds it more difficult to come to terms with his choices and subsequent acts in the Rising; in contraposition, he realizes that the leaders of the revolt who are awaiting for their execution do not seem to be enraged or desperate, but rather quietly accepting their end, because they were truly convinced of their cause: “They were always reconciled to their fate; they cared nothing for their lives so long as they succeed in achieving their end. Unlike him who does not believe in blood sacrifice. Not all the men do.” (O’Donnell 2018: 105). In addition, the fact that he is not going to be among the executed leaders, does not comfort him, but rather deprives him of a heroic meaning to his implication in the revolt, which might relate to the title of the short story: “That he is not to be one of the executed is almost a disappointment. After all he too had fought on the day; he was with them, heart, mind, body, blood” (O’Donnell 2018: 105-06). Dermot’s commitment to the nationalist cause stands as a paradigmatic case of Irish ambiguous attitudes at politically convulsive times, since he let himself be swept away by the public opinion of his environment, but could have likewise ended up fighting in the First World War, as he could see the point and sense of Redmond’s argumentation:

If it hadn’t been for a chance conversation with a big-eared fellow in the bakery of Great Britain Street, who spoke with such conviction about the necessity of joining the Volunteers, he might never have been there on Easter Monday. He is the sort of man who can see both sides of an argument and find goodness in each. That is the problem. The others have always been quite clear-cut about their goals —rational, to be sure, but hot-blooded with poetry and ideals— but he could have been convinced either way. The politician Redmond’s vision had

seemed more than adequate, and armed force had never worked before. Defeat followed defeat, betrayal followed betrayal on down the centuries. They were a humiliated people, embodying what happens when people resist, and resist only to be flattened to the ground again and humiliated some more for good measure. So it was not unreasonable for him to think that Redmond's ideas might work. Reason. Working with the British rather than against them. But once he joined the Volunteers that also seemed the correct thing to do, its appeal quickly overtaking the quieter rationale of his previous views. Suddenly Ireland's need seemed so great that it was blindingly obvious even to him that something dramatic and untoward would have to occur if anything were to change. (O'Donnell 2018: 105)

In the story, the executions of Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh and Thomas Clarke had already taken place, as Dermot gets to hear Joseph Plunkett's last goodbye to his newly married wife, Grace Plunkett: "Somewhere farther along the corridor a door squeals open and he hears voices, followed by a female one. It is Grace, he thinks, surely that is she, now with Plunkett for their pathetic allotted time as husband and wife" (O'Donnell 2018: 103).⁹¹ Joseph and Grace married in jail shortly before Joseph's execution by firing squad, and Dermot remarks the lack of sensitivity of the guards towards the couple's privacy in such a delicate and difficult moment for them: "He hears the bastard outside Plunkett's cell counting down the minutes, literally, as the couple make the most of their time together. How passionate they must be, to withstand such callousness incised with the precision of a silversmith's tool—except this is no craftsman, but a demon of the administration" (O'Donnell 2018: 103-04). At least, the prison's administration had provided them with the solace of priests, as was the Catholic custom, much to Dermot's relief, who is dealing with feelings of guilt: "He is grateful to the priests who have come and heard confessions and carried notes and letters. [...] His presence made Dermot briefly peaceful and he was able to forgive himself for a while" (O'Donnell 2018: 104). Dermot also finds some refuge and hope in praying for their executed comrades, which emphasizes the importance of faith in moments of crisis for many Irish at that time: "*God help them*, he prays every so often. *And God help poor Plunkett*" (O'Donnell 2018: 106).

In this vein, Dermot wonders whether Joseph Plunkett, who was a journalist and a poet, was now finding solace in writing—"He wonders if Plunkett's poetry is helping him now, the way his pencil has occasionally tamped down the worst of his terrors" (O'Donnell 2018: 103)—which accounts for the role of verbalizing the experience in the process of recovery from extreme emotional experiences. Dermot himself attempts to put his chaotic thoughts in order through writing, but incapable of bringing himself to put them into words, he finds another way of cathartic expression in drawing: "At his request they allowed him several sheets of paper and a pencil. For the fourth night he realises that, of all things, he wants to draw. On the other occasions he has sketched from memory images of his home in Kildare" (O'Donnell 2018: 100). Even if he would like to be drawing the historical events that are taking place right next to him and which reflect the birth of a new nation—"Perhaps he can create a reflection of that breaking through of wall on wall, [...] something to bring him back in contact with the wonderful sense of something changing, the fragmented birth of the new, driven by the smallest of groupings, and now half-aborted as far as he could see by forces so much greater and more powerfully equipped than they had ever been" (O'Donnell 2018: 102)—he finds himself unable to identify with the nationalist struggle, as it seems that he has been excluded from such narrative, not being one of the martyrs, which reconnects with the idea of blood sacrifice used

⁹¹ Grace Plunkett (1888-1955) was an Irish artist involved in the Republican movement who was elected Sinn Féin executive in 1917. She was also the sister-in-law of Thomas MacDonagh.

in religious imagery: “His own life is not worth recording since he has failed to be passionate and selfless enough to want to spill his own blood” (O’Donnell 2018: 106). In this sense, Dermot already reflects on the change in public opinion he could observe in a very short time span, considering how the people reacted to the rebels in the first day of the Rising and how they were reacting now to the establishment of martial law and the executions:

He thinks back to the recent days in the GPO, which were not at all what he had anticipated after the one hundred and fifty or so men charged in that morning. But if he were to portray a truthful image? He could hardly capture that which mirrored the brazen disrespect of some of the customers as he and others vaulted across the public counters and shouted ‘hands up!’ No, not being taken seriously was not how they should be remembered in times to come. One woman even smirked at him, her eyebrows raised superciliously as he waved a gun in her face, advising her to get out. *For heaven’s sake, what are you playing at?* she enquired archly. It took Connolly firing in the air to show her and her like that the men were deadly earnest and that this was full military action. [...] Yet even after the evacuation some of the fools continued to peer in through the windows as if the Volunteers were actors on a stage and they outside the gawking audience. (O’Donnell 2018: 101-02)

Contrary to people’s initial discontent and scepticism, Dermot can now hear from his cell the cries of the citizens outside who are protesting for the executions —“above the birdsong his ears catch the sound of the outraged and weeping who have adhered beyond the gaol” (O’Donnell 2018: 107)— which mark a turning point in the history of the country.

Other stories in the collection, though not taking place specifically in Dublin during the Easter Rising and its reprisals, comment on the events from either a spatial or temporary perspective. In “Empire”, the accounts of the Rising in the news are compared to the experience of the Irish —such as Mrs Ward— who outlived the events from their homes, vindicating the value of real testimonies over official records and propaganda. Margaret and William, still in Burma, read about the Easter Rising in the newspapers, but in William’s view, Mrs Ward’s letters addressing the rebellion are much more authentic and valuable: “Her accounts of the Dublin rebellion were infinitely racier and more riveting than the anaemic, unremarkable reports that had reached them from damp, out-of-date newspapers” (O’Donnell 2018: 30). Even though they have lived the events from abroad, William realizes that people in Ireland also did not know exactly what to think at first instance, but the violence exerted by the British had already been judged as excessive:

Nobody seemed to have a clue about what had happened or even why. He did not know quite what to think either, but it looked as if the British had delved a little too deeply into the affair, reacting with unnecessary force in Dublin. The whole thing might have blown over had it not been for the severity of their response. It was not a crime, after all, for any member of any nation to wish for autonomy and to rise up in the interests of a people’s self-determination. But these men had been treated as criminals. (O’Donnell 2018: 30)

Once they return to Ireland, they notice the change in people’s minds concerning the participation of Irish soldiers in the war, which had been previously deemed as necessary by many Irish to ensure the implementation of Home Rule, but was now judged as unpatriotic in contraposition to those who gave their lives in the Rising, to the detriment of the veterans who did not receive proper treatment and understanding upon their return to Ireland: “Now too, in

Ireland, the families who had lost sons in the Great War were seen as different from those who mourned for the Volunteers in the Rising. It was as if people did not know what to do with soldiers who returned, often limbless, blind or with parts of their skulls replaced with sheets of curved metal” (O’Donnell 2018: 65). The story thus partakes of the portrayal of the shift in public opinion that took place after the British reprisals and the growing nationalism that installed in most parts of the country.

In the last short stories of the collection, the Easter Rising is commented already in retrospection, which provides further acknowledgement of its consequences. In “Tutty’s Mother”, Father Hubbard, who is suddenly transferred from his work in the Jesuit Clongowes college educating young men to the city, so as to take care of the people, according to him, “throng of mothers with drunken men and too many children they had had carelessly [...]”. Then there were the gamblers, the wife-beaters, the beggars who would come calling to the parish house” (O’Donnell 2018: 144). Father Hubbard, in spite of his religious formation, has a very poor conception of the working classes and is deeply disgusted by the idea of leaving the castle to deal with the problems which have permeated the Irish society after years of economic problems and forced migration. In this regard, Father Hubbard mentions the Easter Rising condemning the acts of looting, while simultaneously recognizing that it is licit to take care of oneself if the nation fails to provide for its citizens: “He recalled how the people had behaved in the wake of the business at the GPO two years before. There was nothing but raiding and pillaging of shops by the lower orders. Admittedly the people had nothing so in a way it was understandable. If a nation could not feed and care for its own then perhaps its own had to look out for themselves” (O’Donnell 2018: 145). However, he is quite critical with the emergence of the new nation of Ireland, with the chaos and violence that its upsurge is entailing: “It was all very well to bring boys to Clongowes there the school could work with them, turning them into men of substance, but it was quite another for him to be fired into the searing ovens of new Ireland with its turbulent, agitating women and its divided loyalties. The new nation was not yet properly born” (O’Donnell 2018: 146). Contrasting to Fr Hubbard’s more critical stance, in the mother and baby home depicted in the “The-Moss Picker”, which is run by Catholic nuns, they show more support towards the rebels, as was the case with many Irish Catholic figures, to the point of suggesting the protagonist to offer her baby to the families of those who died in the Rising: “Try to offer it all up for our own poor Irish heroes who were shot in Dublin eighteen months ago on account of their activities. Think of their families, Clara! Offer it all up for them.” (O’Donnell 2018: 160).⁹² In this regard, the short story collection therefore offers a wider perspective of Irish views on the Rising than the other narratives which end, in the case of *Name Upon Name*, shortly after the rebellion, and in the case of *Fallen*, even before its ending. *Empire* shows a myriad of perspectives from different social backgrounds and places in Ireland, so as to offer a more inclusive panorama, voicing both those who supported the Rising and those who were critical with it or still had doubts and concerns about the consequences and changes that the revolution brought about.

3.6 WOMEN’S LIVES IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE: OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES

3.6.1 *Name Upon Name*

⁹² The introduction of mother and baby homes in “The Moss-Picker” is actually a poetic license of the author, as she herself advises in an interview: “in the final story ‘The Moss Picker’ [...] a woman [...] ends up in a convent to which single pregnant girls could go. In fact, these places were not actually in existence in 1919 so I took a poetic liberty with time by a few years by setting it here. However, my character isn’t abused by the nuns, and it’s not that kind of environment. One thing I did seriously wish to achieve was to draw attention to the fact that not every single nun, or every single religious organisation inflicted violence and maltreatment on its occupants. I’m not religious, by the way, but I am interested in fairness of report, and [...] there were institutions in which some people were actually safe” (O’Donnell 2023: 207-08).

In Wilkinson's novel, issues of genre and national identity intermingle, as Helen struggles to understand her position in the Irish socio-political panorama while becoming aware of the fact that women are frequently less legitimized to partake in political debates —“*Men, Helen thought, always men. Irishmen. Ulstermen*” (Wilkinson 2015: 34). In addition to this, she is willing to become an assertive adult, thinking that ageing would put her thoughts in order with respect to her sense of belonging and affiliation, and that is her only wish in her birthday: “*I wish I could be more grown-up.*” (Wilkinson 2015: 32). In this regard, she feels intimidated by her cousin Nora, who, in spite of being just one year older, has already developed strong ideological convictions, whereas Helen feels at a loss in the midst of these convulsive times of conflicting loyalties, mostly due to her own hybrid identity. In fact, there is a moment in the narrative in which she wonders which type of regiment she would chose if she were to participate in the war: “even *she* knew that Catholics and Protestants tended to join different regiments. *If I were a boy*, she thought, *which one would I join? Because I'm neither one thing nor the other. Maybe neither would want me*” (Wilkinson 2015: 36). Contrary to Helen, Nora is not ideologically divided, but rather portrays a solid sense of Irish identity as a Catholic Irish nationalist: “*I'm not British. I'm Irish and I'd die before I'd be anything else*” (Wilkinson 2015: 26). Moreover, Nora has already left school to help her mother in the farm, since the conditions in the countryside were not comparable to those that Helen's parents enjoy in the city, having the daily help of Mrs Magee —“*Nora was fifteen and had left school. She helped Aunt Bridie with the poultry and the garden, and she could already cook a dinner for the whole family. Helen immediately felt that her own two plaits were little-girlish*” (Wilkinson 2015: 24). In opposition to Nora, Helen is considering entering university and pursuing a career, feeling especially interested in journalism when she joins the Roll of Honour of her school, which motivates her much more than collaborating in the Old Boys' Parcels Committee, which seemed to imply the kind of work to which women were exclusively relegated: “*Unlike the Old Boys' Parcels Committee, which was mostly girls, there was a good mixture of boys and girls*” (Wilkinson 2015: 83). The tasks in the Roll of Honour, nevertheless, were more related to the discipline of journalism, including, among others, “*transcribing details of the old boys' regiments, rank and such information as their families had sent back to the school, sometimes through younger brothers and sisters*” and amending the lists according to casualties (Wilkinson 2015: 84), and make Helen feel more challenged and gratified.

The question concerning female education is therefore highlighted in this narrative, since Helen is encouraged to pursue an academic career by her teacher Miss Cassidy, the same as Edith is, also by Miss Cassidy, in “*Each Slow Dusk*”, or Katie is by Professor Hayden in *Fallen*. Miss Cassidy acknowledges women's progressive access to education and wants Helen to profit from the opportunities and changes that the war might bring, but Helen does not feel good enough because she is unable to have a firm opinion of the ongoing events affecting Ireland. For Miss Cassidy, notwithstanding, that is precisely a good sign that she is attempting to understand the complexities of their history and identity, instead of just following the overexposed discourse of groups of power:

“If you're going to go to college,” Miss Cassidy said, “it's never too early to start reading properly.”

“College?”

“Why not? It's 1916. Lots of girls go to college now. You know that. And you're one of our brightest girls.”

“It can't be!” Helen burst out. [...] “I mean, I know I get good marks but how can I be bright when I don't *understand* anything?”



Very much to her own surprise, she found herself telling Miss Cassidy some of the thoughts that had been buzzing round her head since yesterday. She couldn't discuss them with Papa; he was too certain about everything. And Mabel would only say it was daft to worry about things like politics and beliefs. But Miss Cassidy listened as closely as if Helen had been explaining her thoughts about Lady Macbeth or the poetry of Keats.

"And I don't know *what* I think, or *who's* right," Helen said. "I suppose I've always just agreed with Papa. Or" —because it somehow mattered to be very truthful— "I suppose I haven't really bothered thinking about it much at all. I don't know if I feel British, or Irish —I think I'm *both*, but I don't suppose that's even allowed."

"Well... [...] At least you get to think things out for yourself, don't you?" [...]

"But everyone seems to have a *side*. I don't have a side. I'm just..." [...]

"Just what?"

"Scared," she admitted.

"That's all right," Miss Cassidy said.

"It's not, though, is it? Not in wartime. *Sandy's* not scared. At least —maybe he is, but he's still doing his duty."

Miss Cassidy smiled. "I think Sandy feels very clear about what his duty is. That's bound to make it easier. And from what I remember" —she had taught Sandy for three years— "he's more of a doer than a thinker. You're obviously a thinker."

[...]

"This war won't last for ever," Miss Cassidy said. "But it *will* change the world —and for the better, I hope. Especially for women. You need to be ready to take your place." (Wilkinson 2015: 42-43)

Contrasting with Miss Cassidy's mentality, Helen's mother does not approve of her daughter going to college and evidences distrust towards single and intellectual women such as Miss Cassidy, who does not comply with patriarchal restrictions: "I hope *she's* not the kind of woman you admire? You'll be saying you want the vote next!" (Wilkinson 2015: 47). In spite of the advances regarding the admission of women to colleges, women with studies are seen as undesirable partners and thus their education or career as incompatible with married life; thus, when Miss Cassidy wants Helen to join her special class, her mother strongly disagrees with the idea that she might go to college and become a teacher like her father: "'Papa will want you to come home after school and make yourself useful. You've no idea how long the days are for me here, alone.' [...] And what's the point in teaching? You'd only do it for a few years until you married. Unless you want to be an old maid like your precious Miss Cassidy?" (Wilkinson 2015: 71). In this sense, Helen, the same as Miss Cassidy, evinces acknowledgement of how the war is altering women's situation and therefore opening a new range of possibilities for them: "I may not have a choice [...] All the boys are getting killed in France" (Wilkinson 2015: 71). The idea of joining the special class refers to the fact that in Helen's school female students have support lessons due to their situation of disadvantage in view of college admissions, which initiates a discussion between Helen and one of her male schoolmates in the Roll of Honour:

"Is it not unfair for girls to have special coaching and not boys?" George asked [...].

"I don't think so," Helen said. "It's *much* harder for girls to get to college than it is for boys."

“Both my sisters are at Queen’s,” George said. “And *my* family was delighted for them. But then we’re Quakers —that’s how we think. Men and women should be treated equally.”

“I didn’t know that,” Helen admitted. “I wouldn’t mind being a Quaker; I like the sound of that.” (Wilkinson 2015: 90-91)

Through their conversation, George offers Helen a different perspective and attitude when it comes to the education and social place of women, which seems to indicate that Catholics are oftentimes the most conservative when it comes to gender roles. Helen is then able to open up with him, accounting for the “mixed marriage” of her parents and how she was educated according to her father’s religion, which had become a taboo topic in her household:

George shrugged. “You just are what you are. Like you’re a Protestant.”

“I’m not really, though,” Helen said. “I mean, not a proper one. I go to the Presbyterian church with my father and his family. But my mother’s a Catholic.”

She didn’t tend to talk about this in school. Belfast Collegiate was officially non-denominational but there weren’t any Catholics there, because they had their own schools.

“A mixed marriage?” George said as if it were something interesting instead of, as Helen had always thought, a bit embarrassing. [...]

“So —why do you go to your father’s church?” George asked. “I thought children were normally brought up in their mother’s religion?”

Helen was vague. This wasn’t much spoken about in 22 Cyclamen Terrace.

“I think Papa’s family just took over. Mama was ill when I was born. She’s not very strong. By the time she was able to look after me, they’d had me baptised and everything. My grandfather said it would break his heart if his only granddaughter were brought up in the Catholic church. He said I’d be born into darkness.” She always imagined those words in capitals, haloed in infernal flames.

George shook his head.

“And Mama just gave in. I don’t suppose she had much choice. But if I’d been brought up Catholic my life would have been completely different, wouldn’t it?” She thought of her jealousy over Nora’s First Communion dress. “I’d have gone to a different school, *believed* something different.” She wasn’t exactly sure *what* she would have believed except that it was something to do with praying to the Virgin Mary and the saints, and believing the priest *actually* changed the bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood, which always sounded improbable. But exciting too; sort of romantic. “Played different sports; maybe even learned *Irish*...” Though she wasn’t sure if that was something you learned at school. (Wilkinson 2015: 91-93)

Helen romanticizes the part of her identity that she has not fully explored and experienced, bringing together the Catholic faith and the sense of Irishness that she lacks, but her understanding of the different national identities coexisting in Ireland remains too superficial and simplistic. The exchange of opinions between the two allows Helen to broaden her perspective when George mentions events in Irish history that are not studied in their history lessons, which mostly deal with British history, specifically those referring to the Irish Rebellion of 1798, which was put in context in section 1.2:

“Actually, lots of Presbyterians helped revive the Irish language, at least in Belfast,” George said. “*And* wanted an independent Ireland. Haven’t you heard of the United Irishmen? The 1798 rebellion? [...] Don’t you know *any* history? Apart from what we do with Perry, which is all British and Empire history anyway.”

Helen was silent, readjusting to this strange information. [...] talking to George was —*interesting*, but rather disturbing. Challenging, like Miss Cassidy telling her she must think things out for herself.

“I can lend you some books if you like,” George said. “My father’s a professor of Irish history. Things aren’t as simple as you might think.”

[...] “no, things *don’t* feel simple to me. I just thought they were for everyone else.”

“No,” said George after a short pause. “Not for everyone.” (Wilkinson 2015: 94)

George ends up lending her *The Men of '98*, which refers to the United Irishmen that led the insurrection of 1798 who were, for the most part, as George acknowledges, Presbyterians belonging to new middle classes. Influenced by the ideals of the American Independence and the French Revolution, they established the Society of United Irishmen in 1791 in both Dublin and Belfast: “The 400 Dublin members were professionals, merchants or textile manufacturers. At first it was a Protestant body, but Catholics soon joined in greater numbers. The Belfast Society was made up of linen drapers, tanners and merchants. It was Presbyterian in composition but of the tolerant, non-Calvinist, ‘new light’ variety” (Murphy 2003: 15). In its origins, the organization came to embrace different religions in favour of republican ideals: “During this first ‘moral force’ phase of their development, the United Irishmen were essentially a constitutional force, arguing for parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation” (Murphy 2003: 15). Notwithstanding, Helen finds the book difficult to read when compared to the novels to which she is used, mentioning, in this sense, novels by Angela Brazil, who was considered one of the first writers of the so-named “modern schoolgirls’ stories”: “*The New Girl at St. Chad’s* was more readable than the book about that rebellion that George had lent her” (Wilkinson 2015: 103). It is interesting to notice, in this regard, that when Helen has to the train by herself to go to Derryward and considers reading a book in her journey to prevent people from talking to her—as she feels rather exposed for travelling alone—she doubts about which one would be the appropriate book to be related to: “She dithered about *The Men of '98*—but it was tough going and besides, was it the sort of book she should be reading in public? It was terribly respectable of course—nothing so dull could be anything else—but someone could see it and get the wrong idea. [...] She grabbed *The Fortunes of Philippa* but then set it down again. No. This was a grown-up mission” (Wilkinson 2015: 139). Thus, she finally opts for something in-between and carries Jane Austen’s *Emma* with her, a novel generally renowned.

That personal journey from the city to the countryside seems to symbolize a moment of transition for Helen from adolescence to maturity, and even resembles a pilgrimage, as she passes through different proves or penances to obtain Michael’s forgiveness. In an attempt to try to amend Michael’s relationship with his parents, she had sent him a letter suggesting him to write what he needed to say to his parents, and had promised to deliver said letter herself; Michael heeded Helen’s advice and gave her instructions to deliver the letter directly to Nora: “*I’ve asked them to write back if they forgive me—if they still think of me as their son; and if not just to ignore the letter. I’d rather have silence than another row, even on the page*” (Wilkinson 2015: 97). Helen acknowledged the importance of the letter, but was also aware of

the fact that she had never gone to Derryward on her own and that it would imply a direct confrontation with Nora after they both had a big discussion: “If only she could have gone alone one Saturday—but the very idea was ridiculous. She would never be allowed” (Wilkinson 2015: 97). In order not to admit that she was unable to do it on her own, she decided to say nothing and let the days pass hoping they would go there for Easter, which led Michael to believe that his family had not forgiven him, and he consequently ends up getting angry with Helen when he finds out. Helen then decides to confront her own fears by defying the traditional social norms that prevented a woman of her age from traveling alone, and endures feeling self-conscious and judged in the train: “She was sure the old couple across the aisle were staring in disapproval—a young girl out on her own! They would know from her clothes she was a schoolgirl. Factory and mill girls her age could go out alone because, of course, they were sort of grown-ups, but even so, you didn’t really see them alone, they were always with their pals” (Wilkinson 2015: 143). Once she gets off the train, she decides to take a shortcut through the countryside which is actually harder than passing through the town, and remembers that her uncle had once said that the road was very rough, even for the mare’s shoes: “After not very long Helen felt like she had stones in *her* shoes. [...] Why had she never noticed before how steep it was? Her shinbones screamed. Sweat ran down between her shoulder blades” (Wilkinson 2015: 144). This image of walking on rocky ground directly connects with ideas of Christian penance and sacrifice. Immediately afterwards, she, as the hero of the story, has no choice but to confront her antagonist, Nora, who is the only person at the house at that moment, and ends up symbolically confessing her sins to her: “‘I was angry with you. We had that big fight at Easter and I—well, I just kept it.’ And at least she admits to herself, ‘*Because I was jealous [...]. Because it was the one little bit of power I had over you*’” (Wilkinson 2015: 149).

The completion of her mission entails a realization of herself, of her own weakness and sense of inferiority, which, once acknowledged, transforms itself into determination: “Somehow she felt like working hard now. And she was going to join the scholarship class no matter what Mama said. However uncertain she felt about—well, about so many things, surely learning how to think properly could only help her know who she was and what she believed in” (Wilkinson 2015: 157). Thus, the novel follows Helen’s spiritual journey or quest; in fact, Helen herself uses vocabulary that relates to religion or to old notions of chivalry in order to account for her experience: “She felt quite noble and self-sacrificing” (Wilkinson 2015: 100). For the first time, she is proud of herself and looks back to her birthday, at the beginning of the novel, when she wished to become more mature, feeling now a sense of accomplishment—“For the first time in ages she remembered blowing out her birthday candles in this very house, and wishing to be more grown-up. *Well, I am now*, she thought” (Wilkinson 2015: 147)—which gives a sense of closure to the story, even when some incertitude remains with respect to the fates of Michael and Sandy, as well as with respect to the course of events in Ireland. Following once again the religious allegory, it is only after redeeming herself that she is enlightened and can reach a final resolution: to continue her studies with the purpose to understand both the socio-historical complexity of Ireland and the complexity within her own self.

3.6.2 *Fallen*

In addition to the context of the Great War and the Easter Rising, this novel also portrays a specifically female sociological context in which women’s access to university had been already achieved, but was not yet properly accepted in every household. The protagonist of the novel has just finished her university degree in History at University College Dublin, but feels herself impeded to continue her education due to the refusal of her mother, who expects Katie to comply with traditional female roles: “Kate [...] cannot fulfil her aspirations of completing

a Master because women's access to third level education was a recent privilege seen with suspicion. [...] The distrust towards liberal thinking women was taken for granted by society of which her mother makes Katie aware" (Morales-Ladrón 2016: 45). Thus, as Lia Mills herself comments, Katie "is something of a hybrid. She has an undergraduate education but is still limited by the expectations of her family's class and politics" (Mills 2016: 153). Mills therefore is interested in situating her narrative at a moment of transition in which there exist tensions and negotiations that lead to a range of possibilities and new configurations. Questions pertaining to women's education and participation in the public life come into play throughout the novel, reflecting the inclusion of women in the definition of a new Ireland with a distinctive Irish identity:

It was an exciting time in Ireland —on the brink of change, opening to a future that was full of possibility. Women were winning the right to a university education and would soon win the right to vote; pride in a specifically Irish culture was manifest in a thriving arts scene and in small, home-grown industries; public and private arguments about nationhood and our future relations with Britain were lively, fraught, often ugly— but Ireland was at least a place where ideas of citizenship and the ideals of a genuine republic were being formed and discussed, and the concept of equality was at the heart of it. (Mills 2016: 151)

The struggle of Irish women to enter university had been progressive and only recently gained at the time of the novel. Being denied access to university, women activists constituted the so-called "women's colleges" in the 1850s in order to provide higher education for women and foster their active participation in society: "women's colleges, both Protestant and Catholic, endeavored to provide women with an experience which mirrored university learning for men [...]. They also promoted participation in student societies, advancing women's capacity to fulfil a more public and active role in nineteenth-century Irish society" (Harford 2008: 5-6). Precisely the two important historical women figures mentioned in the novel, Mary Hayden and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, were students and then also teachers at these colleges (Harford 2008: 6).⁹³ Progressively, women started gaining access to different universities in Ireland: "Women gained access to the Royal University of Ireland in 1879, to the Queen's Colleges from the 1880s and to Trinity College Dublin in 1904" (Harford 2008: 1). After their admission to Trinity, the Irish Association of Women Graduates (IAWG) —founded, among others, by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington— attempted to enter University College as well: "They found a number of allies within the university itself, not least Francis Sheehy Skeffington, Registrar (1901-4), who was active in the suffrage and nationalist movements" (Harford 2008: 143). Finally, with the passing of the Universities Act in 1908, which "left the University of Dublin and Trinity College intact, raised Queen's College Belfast to the status of a university and created a national university with constituent colleges in Cork, Galway and Dublin" (Harford 2008: 150), women were admitted as students and staff to the National University of Ireland.⁹⁴

⁹³ Mary Teresa Hayden (1862-1942) was an advocate for women's causes who campaigned for women's access to higher education and suffrage. She was educated at Alexandra College and the Royal University of Ireland. Hayden was also a member of the Gaelic League and friend of Padraig Pearse.

Johanna Mary "Hannah" S. Skeffington (1877-1946) was an Irish nationalist and suffragette, and the wife of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington. She co-founded the Irish Women's Franchise League, a militant suffrage group, in 1908, and was also a founding member of the Irish Women's Workers Union.

⁹⁴ University College Dublin received its current name in 1908, but was originally known as the Catholic University of Ireland and later also as the Royal University, and through the Universities Act became a constituent college of the National University of Ireland (NUI).

Mary Hayden became one of the first women academics appointed at UCD and is, in the novel, Katie's History Professor. In fact, at the beginning of the story, Katie goes to Earlsfort Terrace, where women attended the university lectures of the UCD, to meet with Professor Mary Hayden in order to reject the position in the History Department that she was offered to continue her superior studies, which Hayden finds disappointing:

"I don't understand, Miss Crilly. Do you not want the opportunity?"

"Of course I do." I fidgeted, like a schoolgirl, in my seat. "It's my parents, they won't allow it. I thought I could persuade them. But —"

"How old are you?"

Her tone drew blood to my face. "Twenty-two."

"Can you not reason with them? Are they not proud of you?"

I'd come third in my year, and won a medal for an essay on Wolfe Tone, but this was the absolute last thing likely to make my mother proud, she was as staunch a unionist as you could hope to find.⁹⁵ "My mother says one degree is bad enough, it's an utter waste of money."

"Then why did they send you here at all?"

I looked at her cropped hair and plain clothes. "My twin brother wouldn't come unless they let me come too." In fact, she and Liam had won me the right to study here, between them. As recently as seven years earlier, being a woman, I wouldn't have admitted to college in the first place. Professor Hayden and her clever friends had fought the larger battles that changed all that. (Mills 2014: 9)

It is thus recognized in the novel the role that Mary Hayden played in the admission of women to university, and Katie cannot help but establish a comparison between her and her own mother, who share the same age but have a totally different mindset: "She and my mother were of an age, but they might as well have lived in different centuries, on different continents. I could hardly tell the professor that my mother despised women like her, who campaigned for the franchise" (Mills 2014: 10). This references the fact that Mary Hayden was also one of the founders of the Irish Catholic Women's Suffrage Association (ICWSA) in 1915, which became Ireland's closer attempt to establish a "nationalist suffrage society", according to Pašeta (2013: 89). Katie's mother had already been against the idea that Katie went to college in the first place: "I knew perfectly well that she was the one who'd objected to my return to college. She'd have stopped me going in the very first place, if she'd had her way, just as she'd prevented Eva from going to the School of Art" (Mills 2014: 28). Similarly to Helen's mother in *Name Upon Name*, she seems to despise those women devoted to work, especially in positions which have been usually related to the male sphere:

My schoolfriend Frieda Leamy had trained as a nurse after school, and Mother hadn't spoken well of her since. Mind you, she'd never been entirely happy about Frieda, whose father was a draper. Frieda's face was spoiled by a purple birthmark that reached from one eyebrow to her collar-bone, as though she'd been scalded. It would put off the paying customers, Mother said, no wonder she needed to do something else with herself. But the truth was that Frieda had no interest in the shop, and now she was doing something she loved. (Mills 2014: 13-14)



⁹⁵ Wolfe Tone was a revolutionary figure of Irish independence and republicanism, and one of the founding members of the United Irishmen, which was behind the 1798 Irish Rebellion.

Her mother's attitude comes not only from her own social background and prejudices, but also from a genuine concern about the welfare of their daughters, since women who pursued academic careers were usually the object of ridicule and condemned to social ostracism: "she told me she'd seen Mary Corballis loitering in the porch of the National Library, a dozen laughing men grouped around her" (Mills 2014: 28). In this vein, as Judith Harford acknowledges, "while co-education was regarded as a victory in feminist circles, women students and academics would experience marginalization and disempowerment within the male-dominated university power structure" (2008: 161).

In this regard, Katie feels socially pressured by the members in her family to consider the idea of marriage, especially since her younger sister Florrie married: "She had it all her own way now. Eugene had saved her from the fate of the unpromising spinster daughter —which role now fell to me" (Mills 2014: 67). Also when Liam announces his engagement, he believes that he is providing solace when he suddenly tells her that she will also find someone, which angers Katie: "Who says I want to?" (Mills 2014: 21). Katie is actually quite indecisive about her future, and whether or not she could be suited to marital life: "I wasn't sure I wanted to marry anyone. But, if I didn't, what would I do with my life? The truth of it was that I didn't know what a person like me was *for*" (Mills 2014: 45). On the one hand, she feels attracted to the idea of living freely and carelessly, the same as many male students, and being able to make their own decisions: "the Trinity medical students, were wild. I envied their adventures. Liam, who went along on some of them, said they were nothing to write home about —money on horses and dogs, late-night drinking in smoky shebeens —they wouldn't suit me at all. I'd have liked the chance to decide for myself, but it never came" (Mills 2014: 42). On the other hand, she would like to have a clear designed path about what to do with her life, the same as her brother Liam, who studied Law and Economics and was supposed to occupy one day the place of their father in WM. Crilly & Son, Solicitors: "I envied Liam his easy entry to work in Dad's firm. He had a purpose and a pattern for something to occupy his days. I'd none for mine. I was left casting around for something to occupy my mind while I endured Mother's many schemes for my improvement" (Mills 2014: 13). Due to the fact that women were usually deprived of agency, Katie struggles to make her own choices and to manifest what she wants: "I was spellbound. When I'd wanted to go to college, it was at least in part because Liam was going and, if I was completely honest, in part because my mother didn't want me to. Even working for Dote had been a lucky accident. [...] I'd never consciously chosen a single thing" (Mills 2014: 223). Katie meets Dote Colclough through her father, who introduces them both during a lecture about Georgian Dublin, when she was just started writing a book about Dublin's monuments and needed a research assistant. Katie's mother is not content with the matter, since she distrusts Dote because of her socio-political ideas:

Mother was livid when we went home and told her. "Is that the Dorothy Colclough who used to be a radical?" she asked Dad.

"What kind of radical?" I asked. Thus was what she used to say about Professor Hayden, the most dignified and conservative of all out lecturers.

"Votes for women," Dad said, smiling, teasing me. "About as likely as the man in the moon."

So Professor Hayden and Miss Colclough must know each other. There were several suffrage groups, each with different methods and affiliations, but their paths would surely have crossed at some stage. [...]

"Miss Colclough is perfectly respectable, Mildred," Dad said. "I won't hear a word against her. It'll be an interest for Katie. It'll take her out of herself. This book of hers is for the Academy. It's a serious business."


She didn't look convinced. "Mind you, don't go bringing any of that suffrage nonsense home with you, Katie. I won't have you turning out like those Sheehy girls." (Mills 2014: 31-32)

While working in Dote's project, Katie realizes that what appeals to her the most is the idea of being able to do something by herself that matters, that has a relevance which can be acknowledged by others: "Dote's enthusiasm for the statues and the men who had made them intrigued me. The notion of conceiving an idea and bringing something tangible into the world intrigued me too. There was something here I wanted, even if I couldn't put my finger on what it was" (Mills 2014: 35). Said research work, during the time her brother Liam is fighting at the front, provides her with a sense of purpose, since she was feeling emotionally at a loss, which provoked confrontations at home, since her mother could not tolerate that she found no interest in joining activities, in her view, more suited to a woman of her social class and age:

The atmosphere in the house was horrible. Mother and I grated on each other's nerves. She said she wanted to stop me brooding, but I had my own ideas as to what she was at when she devised things to keep me busy. I had got into the habit, whenever I could escape the house, of going on long, aimless walks, and Mother objected. Tramping, she called it. No way for a solicitor's daughter to behave. (Mills 2014: 27-28)

Her mother had urged her to join a knitting club in which they made clothes to send the soldiers fighting at war, but Katie does not feel fulfilled enough with the kind of work to which most women were usually relegated —"I did mind having to join Mother's knitting circle every Friday after Mass, making socks and mufflers for soldiers at the Front" (Mills 2014: 28). In contraposition, in the house that Miss Colclough shares with May Wilson, social conventions affecting women do not always apply —"May declared that we should all be on a first-name footing. 'Otherwise, we'd 'Miss' each other always'" (Mills 2014: 32)— and Katie can feel relieved and at ease in such an alternative microsphere: "It never felt like work, to go to Percy Place. From the outset, I felt at home with Dote and May. Their house was a cosier, more cluttered version of our own" (Mills 2014: 36). Contrary to the support of the war effort that Katie's mother demonstrates as a unionist, Isabel decides to join an anti-war organization led by Louie Bennett, which only worsens the relationship between the two women: "A letter denouncing the war was printed in several newspapers in February, the *Freeman* as well as the *Independent*. It deplored conditions in the trenches for men on all sides, and the hardships of families left fatherless. There were a dozen signatories and Isabel was one of them" (Mills 2014: 93).⁹⁶ Katie also finds solace in work after Liam's death, since it was the task that has kept her mind busy and had helped her develop her own interests and prospects aside from the political situation and social pressures. Thus, when Miss Colclough's book is finished, she finds herself once again feeling quite empty and indecisive:

This was a sore point. For a year I'd moved through each day to the next with no sense of purpose, time dragging me along behind it. Working for Dote made it almost bearable. She pulled me out of myself and towards the house in Percy Place, the libraries, the National Gallery, gave me something to think about that wasn't war, or Liam. And, despite myself, I'd begun to catch my mind stretching and waking, against my will, humming sometimes with something


⁹⁶ Louie Bennett (1870-1956) was a peace activist, and also an Irish suffragette and trade unionist who co-founded with Helen Chenevix the Irish Women's Suffrage Federation (IWSF) in 1911.

like pleasure. But now that was over. The book was finished. I was lonelier than ever. (Mills 2014: 97-98)

After finishing the book, Katie is offered a job as a typewriter by Mr. Briscoe which consists of “a catalogue for their next auction. I spent a couple of days there. It was interesting. I liked him. There’s a lot to learn” (Mills 2014: 98). She is actually quite interested in all the objects of the showrooms, in getting to know more about them. The only problem, for her, resides in the fact that the acceptance of that work involves going to London for training, so she is unsure whether to accept the offer, as it would imply leaving the past behind and starting a new life aside from Liam and everything that kept her connected to her brother: “I didn’t know if I wanted to live somewhere Liam had never been” (Mills 2014: 192). Knowing that her parents will not agree, especially her mother, she has not been able to discuss the matter at home, but tries to share her will to earn her own living with Hubie, hoping that he would show some comprehension, but he suggests her the possibility of teaching, the same as her sister Eva has sometimes done, which perpetuates the traditional positions assigned to women as caregivers and educators:

“I’ve been thinking about a job. A real one. To earn my living. My parents want to move out of town. I don’t.”

“What sort of work could you do?”

“History was my subject. In school, and in college. I learned to do research, working for Dote. I was thinking about going for a higher degree, but —” There was too much to explain. Sick of the sound of my own voice, I stopped talking.

“You could probably teach.”

“In a school, yes. Maybe. It’s not what I want.” I sat back. The notion of wanting something had crept out unbidden. I looked at it, alarmed.

“What do you want?”

I realized how tense I was, every muscle clenched as though to hold myself in check. As though I might spill out of my skin any second. “I actually can’t think, much, about the future.” (Mills 2014: 184)

It could be considered that Katie is still learning about herself and her place in the world without her brother in it, which makes her paralyzed and unable to make a proper decision, as she had never considered that she could have the power to choose for herself. Katie, furthermore, experiences her sexual awakening with Hubie at a moment of impasse provided by the disruption of the revolution, which seems to put a halt to social codes, but towards the end of the novel, both of them are about to become separated and reality superimposes. Hubie tells Katie his wish to leave everything behind and then asks her to move to Canada with him, so that they can start anew and have a life that could be shaped their own way, which can be considered as a desperate attempt to escape from the social pressures that were already affecting their lives, but which were undoubtedly about to increase after the revolt, as collaborators of the British:

“Say you’ll come away with me, when this is over. If you stay, you’ll wander your life on what other people want from you.”

“And if I go? Wouldn’t I be giving it to you?”

“I’d hope not.” He gathered my hair and rolled it around his hand, like a bandage, held it at the back of my head so I had to face him. “We could have a life of our very own making. Think of it, Katie.” (Mills 2014: 274)

Katie doubts about what to do and consequently does not promise him anything. It is interesting, in this respect, the observation of Camila Franco Batista: “The union between Katie and Hubie could also be read as a union between colonizer and colonized: he, a former British soldier, represents the presence of the colonizer in Ireland; she, an Irish nationalist girl, is the colonized, and their relationship demonstrates the complexity of the relations between Britain and Ireland” (2017: 65). Katie’s choice is not clarified at the end of the novel, which leaves the ending uncertain and open to interpretation, the same as with the consequences of the Rising: “Imagine all the proofs of your existence gone—who you were, everything you’d ever done, or planned to do. Everything lost, everything starting again” (Mills 2014: 276). Nonetheless, what Katie ends up acknowledging in the days of the Easter Rising is that the past cannot be unmade, but necessarily has to be eventually accepted: “I was crying because there could be no more pretence. The people who had died were dead. Every morning that I woke, I could get up or not, eat or not, admire the day or not, and it would still be true. Liam would never come home. There are things that can never be undone, thresholds to be crossed in one direction only” (Mills 2014: 272). Thus, the novel offers an insight into both the war and the nationalist revolution on the part of a woman whose doubts and anxieties would have remained in the shadows in traditional narratives of this nature, as Morales-Ladrón pertinently points out: “War and revolution, as all the other traditional male duties, kept women not only relegated to the domestic sphere but basically uninformed about what was regarded as more serious concerns, including the ultimate motives for the fight” (2016: 49). Katie’s reflections and shifts of opinion regarding politics, identities and gender roles, account for a changing Irish society that provides the ordinary perspective of the people who lived through that period, as Morales-Ladrón also highlights: “rewriting the past from a gender perspective, challenging mainstream accounts, with a view to reveal that history belongs to the people who were part of it and not to the construction of extraordinary events” (2016: 48). This definitely allows contemporary readers for a deeper understanding of the functioning of political ideologies in Ireland previously to the constitution of the independent state.

3.6.3 “Each Slow Dusk”

The protagonist of this short story, Edith—contrary to Helen and Katie in *Name Upon Name* and *Fallen*, respectively—is deprived of the opportunity to go to Queen’s College Belfast in spite of her desire to obtain a university’s degree. After the death of her mother and because of the current condition of her brother, who returned from the front suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Edith sees herself forced to fulfil the role that would have corresponded to her mother, taking care of the house and her family. In this sense, Edith is not the only Wilkinson’s character whose life stops because of the consequences of war, having to put her responsibilities as a daughter first, since there is also a moment in *Name Upon Name* in which Helen’s classroom receives the news of their teacher’s absence for a few days, while mourning the death of her brother with her parents: “I’m afraid Miss Linden will not be with us for some days. Her brother has been killed. Naturally Miss Linden is comforting her parents” (Wilkinson 2015: 40). Edith had been encouraged by her teacher, Miss Cassidy, to study harder so as to achieve a scholarship, since she considered Edith capable of academic achievement: “Miss Cassidy says I should start reading seriously now: if I want a university entrance scholarship I can’t rely on just studying the matriculation curriculum” (Wilkinson 2016: 236). Notwithstanding, with the arrival of her brother, she starts neglecting her studies more than ever, as she is frequently woken up at night due to her brother’s nightmares and progressively losing track of time, being burdened by the situation and consequently unable to focus on her homework: “time seems to have slowed down since Gilbert came home”

(Wilkinson 2016: 233). Miss Cassidy is worried about her situation and tactfully asks her whether it would be possible for her to attend university classes without a scholarship, but Edith is aware of the economic hardships her family is now enduring and which are preventing her from going to college: “There might have been, once, but Mother’s illness cost a good deal” (Wilkinson 2016: 236). Edith is, nonetheless, embarrassed about both the economic question and the delicate state of her brother, and thus refuses to give proper explanations to her teacher:

I shake my head. Not even to Miss Cassidy can I admit that Father says we can’t afford a nurse. “And what do we need one for, when we have you?” is what he’d said when I broached the subject before Gilbert came home. “It’s not as if Gilbert has any wounds to be dressed. He’s just got —” he recited the diagnosis we both knew by heart —“general debility caused by exposure. Rheumatism. Heart and lungs not quite the thing.” He managed to make it sound very trifling. (Wilkinson 2016: 242)

In this vein, the narrative mentions that women have gained more opportunities in the last years precisely because of the conditions provided by the war. It has been widely acknowledged that during both world wars, because of labour shortage, women could access the men’s posts, but also that once the situation went back to normal substantial regression was produced, as was especially palpable during the 1950s with so many advertisements inviting women to return to the domestic sphere. Many women were also collaborating with the war effort in some way or another at the time. Edith’s friend Maud, for instance, hates the task of knitting clothes for the soldiers, because in her view, it is not as relevant as serving as a VAD. However, even though she claims that becoming a nurse would allow her to do something important, she is simply romanticizing the idea of assisting young soldiers, and does not show any real vocation or preoccupation for the cause:

“I want to go out there. Lots of girls do. I could be a VAD nurse, or drive an ambulance, or...”
 “Not at sixteen. Anyway, you can still be a nurse after the war.”
 “Oh no. I hate sick people. I’d only want to nurse *soldiers*. Not old men and mewling brats.”
 When Maud goes on like this I often wonder if her ambition to do something in the war is because Frank won’t.
 “Well, women can be almost anything they want nowadays. That’s one thing the war has changed for the better.”
 “You sound like Miss Cassidy. Anyway, I’m not brainy like you. Wanting to go to college. No fear.” Maud wrinkles her nose. “My cousin went to Somerville and my aunt says she’s *ruined* her marriage prospects. And Jessie said it was stricter than school.” (Wilkinson 2016: 241)

Moreover, what in theory could be seen as a critique of traditional women’s roles, in reality fails to fully overcome them, according to Lojo-Rodríguez, since “despite the apparently transgressive nature of Maud’s desire to volunteer, nursing perpetuates women’s traditionally assigned role as caregivers which, in this case, extends outside the home” (2020: 25). On top of that, the same as in *Fallen*, prejudices against women with higher studies are clearly made evident in this excerpt, in the idea that Maud’s cousin might never be able to marry after studying at Somerville, one of the first women’s colleges in Oxford University. In Edith’s case, the lack of value her father attributes to education for women leaves Edith without support in

that respect, since he easily condones the fact that she skips classes to spend time with her brother:

I tell him about leaving school early. “Gilbert was in such a state last night. I wanted to be sure he was all right. The days must be so long for him.” [...] Father isn’t at all cross about my unauthorized half-day. “It’s not as if it matters at this stage,” he says.
“What do you mean?”
“Well, you’re sixteen. There’s no law keeping you at school.”
“No law, but...” The college gates in my head creak and half close. (Wilkinson 2016: 252)

Throughout the story, Edith feels, metaphorically, how the doors of university start closing, meaning that her range of future possibilities is getting more limited every time, since she is being condemned to remain secluded at the house and deprived of a life of her own. In her case, and contrary to Katie’s case in *Fallen*, her mother was supportive and wanted Edith to go to college and be able to forge a life that differed from her own, but now her father urges Edith to assume her mother’s tasks in the domestic sphere, for instance, by replacing her in the kitchen:

“When you leave school you’ll be able to take over all the cooking.”
“Father—you know I want to stay on, and go to college.” Think of the gates, I will myself. Keep them open. They shudder on their hinges.
“I know there was some notion about it. But that was before.”
I set my spoon down. It rings against the table mat. “Mother wanted me to go.” (Wilkinson 2016: 253)

Moreover, after being able to take care of her brother in one of his worst episodes, her father is already assigning her the role of a nurse as well, so that they can save that money at home—an idea that is, furthermore, reinforced by their family doctor, who, after examining Gilbert, already writes down the instructions specifically for her (Wilkinson 2016: 248):

“You were wonderful, Edith: you knew just what to do.”
“Common sense.”
“No. You’ve a grand way with you. You’re a great wee nurse.”
“I haven’t finished my prep.” Every unfinished Latin exercise, every unread poem forces the gates just a little more shut.
“Och, that’s not important. I’ll write you a note.” (Wilkinson 2016: 255)

Towards the end of the story, Edith already comes to the realization that her life has already been changed for good, that she will not continue attending classes and spending time with her friend Maud, because of the responsibility she now feels towards her older brother, which is manifested in the novel through short, repetitive and disconnected sentences that reflect Edith’s state of shock and disappointment while trying to assimilate her new reality:

I won’t see her tomorrow. I have to stay at home and look after Gilbert.
And the next day; and the next.
He will get better. He will get better. He will get better than he is tonight. But he will never be the boy who left here in 1915; and he will never be the person he would have been without the war.
And neither will I. (Wilkinson 2016: 258)

Thus, the war does seem to have inversed roles, insofar as the older brother, now unable to contribute to the house economy, deprives her little sister of education and sustenance, but consequently perpetuates and even increases, in this respect, traditional gender roles. The story symbolically finishes with Edith's descent from her room in the attic to occupy her mother's old room in the same floor as her brother and father, something which Lojo-Rodríguez has pertinently identified with the dispossession of "a room of one's own", in Virginia Woolf's terms: "Metaphorically, the room works in the narrative as Edith's 'room of her own', signalling the freedom and independence which would be achieved through her education. Significantly, Edith's father insists on her abandoning her attic to move into her mother's old room, thus metaphorically replacing his wife's vacant place in the household" (2020: 25). "Each Slow Dusk" therefore shares the difficulties endured by young women at the time who were also directly affected by the socio-historical circumstances —though never properly acknowledged as such— being expected to adapt themselves to family's needs even if that entailed renouncing to their individual wishes and the possibilities that had been opened for them thanks to the suffragette movement.

3.6.4 *Empire*: "Empire" and "The Moss-Picker"

The short story "Empire" portrays Margaret's own journey from a newlywed passive wife to a resolute mother who learns to defend her own interests and wishes for a life of her own aside from her family and the traditional roles assigned to women. At the beginning of the story, William exerts much more control over Margaret, forcing her to move to Burma after signing the contract without taking her opinion into account: "He never observed her doubts, or, if he did, he ignored them. In the end, all was agreed before she could register serious objections, and, before she knew it, the passage was booked" (O'Donnell 2018: 10). Margaret seems to be deprived of a voice of her own, as she remains obedient to her husband in order to avoid discussion and discomfort at home: "Margaret wanted to dash off one last letter to Mother before they departed, but William said there would not be time. [...] William threw her a look, his normally cheerful eyes losing their colour as his mood frayed. In the end, she adjusted her new blue hat and said nothing" (O'Donnell 2018: 7). When they are in the train station, William hustles Margaret as soon as the train arrives at Kingstown Pier in spite of Margaret's complaints to slow down: "Once again he had her by the elbow, ushering her as if she were a piece of stolen goods, or some object he could not wait to get out of Dublin —no, out of the country, she thought with irritation" (O'Donnell 2018: 11). The journey in which they embark provokes, however, a turning point in their relationship, since Margaret, feeling already homesick and vulnerable when she finds out that she is pregnant, decides to confront her husband when he makes a spiteful comment about Margaret's mother: "Before she could stop herself, Margaret pushed him so roughly, he fell back on the bed. It was all she could do not to jump on her husband and pummel him with her fists" (O'Donnell 2018: 17). William is completely shocked by Margaret's rage and determination, since for the first time she verbalizes that she has never wanted to leave Ireland:

"How dare you!" She saw that he too was trembling. "How dare you push me!" Then, evenly, "I am your husband and you shall honour me. This is what wives do." [...]

"You promised to honour me. Instead you are dragging me to a place I never wanted to go to, a life that frightens me. Honour?" Her eyes blazed. "Perhaps honour is merely a word." (O'Donnell 2018: 17)

It is thus here suggested that the experience of motherhood seems to be empowering and liberating for Margaret, as not only does she start asserting herself, but also her husband begins treating her different as the mother of his child —“He meant well. She knew that. He had decided —or rather, his nature had decided— to treat her kindly now that she was carrying his child” (O’Donnell 2018: 19)— which also implied a change in their sexual activity: “William would have to be decent to her at all times, because thoughtlessly, he viewed her as a vessel on which he could set sail, as if she were the steamship that was carrying them now towards Rangoon, nautical mile by nautical mile” (O’Donnell 2018: 20). Similarly as Katie in *Fallen*, who acknowledges the pleasure of sex and laments the taboos around the issue that prevent women from taking about the it and sharing their experiences —“All my life I’d walked around inside my skin not knowing what it was, what it opened to. I didn’t know what my body could do or want. How easily it could break. ‘Why does no one ever say?’” (Mills 2014: 264)— Margaret, who had been warned by her mother that some things will not live up to her expectations, overtly remarks the important role that sex can play in a marriage, contradicting Catholic’s beliefs: “Sexual congress —a stupid phrase she had once heard a Redemptorist priest utter at a packed women’s evening in Rathmines Church— was all very well, and the priest said it might bring grace to some marriages, but it was not everything. He was greatly incorrect, she knew. Sexual congress meant a great deal when the man and woman admired one another” (O’Donnell 2018: 20). During her time in a foreign land and through the process of becoming a mother, Margaret becomes more self-confident and resolute and satisfies her craving for knowledge by devoting time to learning the language of the Burmese:

Sometimes, Margaret felt quite satisfied with her own progress. In Burma, despite its difficulties, she had become a real wife and mother. [...] She had learned how to speak back to William when he became fussy and peremptory; indeed, if anything —she smiled at the thought, she herself had become a little high-handed with *him* when called for. There was no doubt about it, the Margaret Ward whom William had courted only a few years before, had evolved into a Mrs Margaret Wheeler who had, in the course of that time, acquired a great deal of self-knowledge. The only pity was, she had so little access to literature and good reading material. [...] Knowledge outside of herself remained a problem, and not so many of the women she knew were very interested in knowing things. Unlike them, she had made some attempt to learn the rudiments of the local language, despite the heat, which everybody complained about in the way Irish people had complex conversations about the weather. (O’Donnell 2018: 26)

After experiencing life at Burma, Margaret therefore finds herself unfulfilled when returning to Dublin, partly because of the historical events that took place in Ireland during their absence, which affected people’s political affiliations and confound her —“Despite months and months of homesickness after they reached their house in Mandalay, despite the huge sense of strangeness and the uncomfortable feeling that she would never again feel quite herself, she found it equally unsettling to be back in Dublin” (O’Donnell 2018: 47)— but also because of the fact that her life there seemed to be freer and more self-sufficient, away from the social constraints that affected Irish women. She feels the need to feel useful and to accomplish tasks beyond her role as a mother: “She wanted to be strong and vital again, to do things —not only to be a good mother to her children— but to change something, although she was not sure what” (O’Donnell 2018: 48). She searches for assistance with the house as soon as they are back in Dublin and employs Peggy, who becomes a substitute of Kyi, her maid in Mandalay. Margaret

has the idea of remaking one of the rooms at the house together, but William suggests that they should hire a craftsman, since that kind of job is not suitable for her:

“William, I want something to *do!*”
 “But darling, you have our children. Don’t they keep you busy?”
 “Yes, but —”
 “But nothing. You mustn’t tire yourself out with such physical labours, Margaret. This is not the kind of work a wife should undertake” (O’Donnell 2018: 50)

In spite of William’s objections, Margaret decides to start remaking the room with Peggy in the spare moments, when she does not have to serve as a mother, and even decides to break gender stereotypes by putting on some trousers: “In the early afternoon, both children were put down for a sleep, and Margaret and Peggy set to work, the former in the new trouser skirts which, she said, gave her far more freedom of movement” (O’Donnell 2018: 51).

Concerning her readaptation to Ireland, and taking into consideration the emergence of Irish nationalism, Margaret feels the impulse to get informed, that is to say, to gain knowledge that allows her to understand the world in which she lives and in which she wants to actively take part. While in Burma, she had seen the parallelisms between the colonized and the Irish with it comes to the cultivation and consideration of their culture, experiencing the British colonizers’ disdain when attempting to learn the local language, which brings to her mind how the Irish language had become a taboo in some social circles:

Burma had changed her life, even if she had done little else but keep house in an indolent style and be a mother. But those activities were not the point. It was the place, and the system which fully despised the culture, which had affected her. How could it be otherwise, she thought. Out there she grew up and learned some things. Before, in Ireland, despite her mother’s activities and political commitments, there had not been enough time for learning. This was her true hunger. While in Burma she attempted to absorb the rudiments of the language —without much success— yet by so doing made herself slightly less welcome in the expatriate circles. Language basics were superfluous and few of the ladies of her acquaintance saw any point in learning Burmese. [...] So Margaret learned not to discuss her interest in the language, just as at home in Ireland there had been certain social cabals in which it was most unfashionable to declare a concern for their own language, Irish. How far apart their countries were, she had often mused, and yet how close in this one respect at least. (O’Donnell 2018: 56)

Margaret thus feels the impulse, the same as the other characters in the narratives, to study at university now that women have access to higher education. William’s reaction, however, denotes that the issue was still not properly integrated into society, nor was a common practice among many women to decide to pursue an academic career:

“I’ve always wanted to learn more —you know that, William. There’s still time for me to—”
 “To what? To make a fool of yourself at University College? It’s all *men*, you know, male students.”
 “Not exclusively, dear.” (O’Donnell 2018: 57)

Margaret considers it to be a logical step to follow after the achievement of female suffrage, though she is also aware of the fact that men and women are not yet in equal terms when it comes to the right to vote; hence the importance of education for women, according to Margaret, to prove themselves worthy of making political decisions: “women has been recently granted the right to vote. That was progress, but it had come with qualifications, since the women had to be thirty years or more and the legislators wanted to be certain their brains were mature enough to take the momentous decision of voting correctly” (O’Donnell 2018: 58). William, nevertheless, fails to comprehend Margaret’s wishes, as he still thinks that taking care of the house and the children should be enough and the ultimate purpose of a woman’s life: “Are you unhappy, Margaret? Is there something that makes you so discontented you wish to leave the home every day to attend classes? Am I —are we, for I think of the children too— not *enough* for you?” (O’Donnell 2018: 58). Margaret then realizes the power she actually has over her husband, who is afraid that Margaret actually abandons him, as, once again, academic education and family are seen as incompatible for women, while the two have never conflicted in the case of men: “*The terror was that she might leave.* To think a woman had so much power and not know it. [...] Oh, if the world could only change and men and women be progressive enough in their relations to allow one another whatever freedoms they desired!” (O’Donnell 2018: 63). In fact, Margaret cannot enter university without William’s permission, as women, usually dispossessed, depended on their husbands for economic support: “Without William’s blessing, without his money to pay the fees, she might as well forget the idea. She would retreat like a flower folding its petals in the evening [...]. She felt weak and resentful at the lack of force she possessed” (O’Donnell 2018: 62). In addition to the lack of understanding of Margaret’s position as a woman in a patriarchal system, her sexuality also prevents the couple from having a fulfilling marriage. Margaret has felt a strong affection towards Kyi in Burma and attempts to recover that kind of intimate connection with Peggy, whom she kisses at the end of the story: “‘There,’ she said, blinking slowly, ‘Perhaps I am breaking a rule of affection. I hope you do not object. It means nothing bad’” (O’Donnell 2018: 68). In an interview with Jaime de Pablos, O’Donnell takes into consideration both Margaret’s sexuality and how it can affect her marriage, while also analysing the fact that, even though in that period new possibilities and hopes were emerging for women, the struggle for independence and the establishment of the Irish Free State actually truncated many of those apparent advancements:

The fact is that, under English rule, Margaret Wheeler still has more chance of independent achievement than she will ever have in Post-Treaty Ireland and for many decades! Ireland’s struggle for independence resulted in the oppression of women for many decades ahead, so perhaps there is a kind of grotesque mirroring in the piece. As a character, William is not per se a bad person. Nor is he unusually patriarchal for his time. If anything, he is quite the liberal who attempts, through his bafflement, to understand his wife. He loves her, but his failure to understand the deeper aspects of her nature becomes problematic towards the end of the story. And remember, she may be lesbian, as is intimated in the final pages, so there is a part of her that he may never have access to. (O’Donnell 2023: 208)

The representation of the feminist struggle and the exploration of female sexuality are, undoubtedly, a product of the contemporary perspective of this fictional collection, which achieves a revision of Ireland’s past while portraying women’s concerns and their simultaneous integration and exclusion into the national project. The short story collection especially focuses on the figure of Mrs Ward, Margaret’s mother, to account for the feminist activities that were

being conducted at the time, since she herself was politically involved in the struggle for women's emancipation. In "Mrs Ward's Diary", she prepares to attend a Ladies' Committee meeting focused on "improving conditions in the lying-in hospital" (O'Donnell 2018: 114) and to visit the Women's Social and Political Union, even in spite of her doctor's advice to take a rest, because she considers that they are now in a critical point and need to be more active than ever:

"Dr Armstrong?" For a moment she seemed again unsettled. "Oh, he says I must use hot and cold compresses and if possible visit a spa and take seaweed baths. I said to him, I said 'Dr Armstrong, how in heaven's name do you think I can manage a spa when my days are committed between hospital visits, between the question of the vote and our rights as women?' I looked at him quite directly as I said this but he only smiled and replied that our rights as women would be as intact after a visit to a spa as they were before it. In other words, Francis, he doesn't take the question of votes for women seriously. I could see that, but I said nothing. I held my peace." (O'Donnell 2018: 114)

The last short story in the collection, "The Moss-Picker", precisely deals with the social ostracism to which a single mother was condemned in such a religious society as is the case of Ireland. The story focuses on Clara, Peggy's sister, and thus connects back to the characters in "Empire" and "Mrs Ward's Diary"; there is, in this respect, a reference at the beginning of the story to the fact that Peggy left Monaghan to work for the Wheelers in Dublin — "She was the second eldest, her sister Peggy having departed for Dublin the previous year" (O'Donnell 2018: 152). Clara, a servant, has an affair with her employer, but she is deserted by her lover as soon as she becomes pregnant. This enrages Clara, who goes to his front door to shout at him, publicly embarrassing herself. However, the short story focuses instead on depicting the sympathy of a neighbour who observes the scene from her window: "The sense of shock deepened and some sympathy too, especially from Florence Duffy whose eldest son had been born two months prematurely after a hurried wedding, and who had been subjected to all kinds of speculation both during her pregnancy [...] and afterwards when knowing smiles accompanied the many gifts for her first born" (O'Donnell 2018: 150).

The news of Clara's pregnancy are not well-received by her family. As is the case in *Fallen* and "Empire", female sexual desire is made explicit and, in this case, it becomes a reason for discussion between mother and daughter, remarking that contrast between both generations when it comes to rigid religious morals:

Why, she berated Clara, did she have to behave in that way? [...] her mother went on, inconsolable and ranging. Hadn't she told her about the need for modesty at all times? Hadn't she told her to say three Hail Marys for purity? But she had had this feeling in her body, between her legs, that had come the moment Mr Nixon had kissed her and although she had struggled for a while it was beyond her to help herself or resist for long. (O'Donnell 2018: 155)

Clara's mother proves to be, nonetheless, more understanding than her father, who expels her from the house: "*Daddy was so angry that he himself gathered my clothes [...] into a sac and tossed it onto the street. Mammy did not wish this, of course, but he forced her back into the house despite her begging for mercy. She actually begged him, dear Peggy, to have mercy on me.*" (O'Donnell 2018: 155). Clara realizes that she had no other choice but to go to a convent in the middle of nowhere, close to Edenmore, where she would have to work for the nuns until

she gave birth —“Her life was destroyed, she knew that for certain. For who would have her now and who would employ her except perhaps the nuns? They took in many kinds of girls, from fallen ones like her, to the poor scraps who were bewildered and not right in the head” (O’Donnell 2018: 153). During her time at the convent, she is constantly busy doing the different tasks that would ironically correspond to a wife, as Clara poignantly observes: “we’re doing all the things a wife would be doing. Look at us. Like women in any kitchen with babies in our two bellies. Except we’re not in our own kitchens and we have no men” (O’Donnell 2018: 165). There is very little time to rest, Clara realizes, “except on Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons, because the girls were kept busy cleaning, mending, doing the laundry, ironing, cooking and, where possible, some gardening. The hours of rest were intended for reading uplifting literature” (O’Donnell 2018: 173).

It is therefore through that experience of reading that Clara reflects upon the level of education of her parents, who seem to belong to the lower classes of society —“Clara’s mother read books and she was a poor woman with little education but the works of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens had taught her many things and ideas. She often wished her father had had a tendency to read books as well but he was barely literate so she could hardly blame him because it was difficult to master the words” (O’Donnell 2018: 164)— and consequently realizes her own shortcomings. In this sense, a friend at the convent laments her lack of opportunities to pursue higher studies, and when she shares those feelings with Clara, the latter is unable to see the utility of learning if one is simply expected to become a wife and a mother, which evinces the fact that, even though women had achieved access to university, the social structures of the patriarchal system had not changed yet:

“Isn’t it well for the ones who got to finish school?” Helen said one day as her fingers broke down the butter, sugar and flour into a crumbly mix for pastry.
[...]
“But then what’ll they do with the learnin’ when they get married? All those ones get married and have childer [*sic*].”
“I suppose they can teach them a bit. And they can talk as if they know something when they go out into society,” Helen replied. (O’Donnell 2018: 162-63)

Clara is expected to give her child away to a family that can take proper care of him and to leave the convent shortly afterwards in order to return to her previous life: “the truth was that after the birth she would remain for three months only before giving up her child to some respectable couple” (O’Donnell 2018: 161). Nevertheless, Clara is aware of the fact that, as much as she goes back home and pretends that nothing has happened, “there would always be a dark stain on her, like an invisible, watery but unpleasant ink, which everyone would see and never forget. No matter how respectable she became she would have this part of her life hanging over her and nobody to share the sadness of her loss” (O’Donnell 2018: 179). She consequently refuses to do that and is determined to keep the baby, even to her own detriment, knowing that she cannot rely on her family, nor on the fact that somebody will offer her a job in that state. Clara then tells Peggy of the situation, hoping to get the sympathy of open-minded women such as Margaret Wheeler or Mrs Ward:

Peggy, I am imploring you. Do you think that Mrs Wheeler might have need of a girl like me, a willing, hard-working girl? [...] I could be happy and caring with this small baby, you know that, even though nobody would want to know me I think, not being respectable any more. But I am good with my hands and

could take in work, mending and fixing. I could work very hard to provide for my child. [...] Please ask your Mrs Wheeler for advise. You also told me that Mrs Wheeler's mother is a modern woman who helps other women. (O'Donnell 2018: 158)

Clara first receives a negative answer from Peggy on February 5th 1919, as she frankly exposes to her the difficulties of obtaining a job in Dublin while raising a baby on her own, which would expose her to overt ostracism. In addition, Peggy provides an insightful perspective as a secondary witness to the Wheelers' marriage, explicitly mentioning William's fear that her wife might become an Irish nationalist when attending university, as most of the leaders of the revolution came from intellectual circles:

It will be impossible for you to find work in the city with a baby. A girl with a child will get no respect or only if she is fortunate enough to meet decent people like the Wheelers perhaps. Well, I mean Mrs Wheeler and her mother Mrs Ward, if I'm to speak the truth! [...]. The Mrs has persuaded Himself to allow her to attend the university —no less!— to study for a degree so there is a mood of great nervousness as she makes arrangements to ensure that the children are looked after at all times. He is afraid she will become infected by the Gaelic League and such people as go to the university. Himself is such a traditional man he does not understand that they can breathe and eat and play without their mother being there every moment of the day. (O'Donnell 2018: 172-73)

At the end of the letter, Peggy wishes for Clara's baby to be a boy, so that life and society would not be so tough on him, but also, probably, because of the fact that it was unusual for women to be economically independent: "*I hope for the child's sake that it is born a boy. You will understand why*" (O'Donnell 2018: 173); in this respect, Peggy recognises that "even women like Mrs Wheeler in Dublin couldn't do much without money, at least a husband's money, behind them" (O'Donnell 2018: 177). When Peggy visits Clara at the convent, however, she already has a temporary solution for her sister, provided precisely by the context of the First World War, which reveals that Ireland's involvement not only consisted in the participation of Irish soldiers and volunteers. Mrs Ward, who, in Peggy's words, "believes in a woman's right to shape her own destiny and she says that only comes when women earn a fair wage for fair labour" (O'Donnell 2018: 178), had written letters to get informed about the chances that Clara could have in Ireland, finds the work of picking sphagnum moss. It is therefore through female solidarity against patriarchal oppression that the women in this story manage to help a woman make her own choices and achieve the economic support that she needs to provide for her son.

Thus, it is exactly by means of the short story cycle structure that O'Donnell allows for intergenerational bonds of cooperation among women to be forged. All these women — Margaret and her mother, Peggy and her sister Clara— from different social backgrounds and generations and with diverse concerns and situations, are brought together in *Empire* to underscore both the difficulties they all shared in the Irish society of that time, as well as the new opportunities that they were taking for their own future in the nation of Ireland. In this vein, when commenting on Mary O'Donnell's non-fictional essays, Manuela Palacios highlights O'Donnell's "admiration for other women artists from Ireland and abroad", which in her view, evinces "not just a gender bond but a genuine attentiveness to how these women negotiated the hardships of life and history alongside their artistic quest" (2018: 31-32). O'Donnell precisely portrays these women in her stories as torn between the domestic and public spheres, attempting to conciliate their motherhood either with a higher education, in

Margaret's case, with an active role in the feminist struggle, as Mrs Ward does, or with a job that provides sustenance, as is the situation of Clara. The idea of negotiating traditional gender roles assigned to women with the pursuit of their own interests outside the house is one of the common threads in the narratives analyzed in this thesis, proving to be an issue that continues to arise interest among Irish women writers.

As long as wars are waged, we shall be vexed by woe [...]. But we, who have come through the fire unharmed, must go on living.

Seán O'Casey, *The Silver Tassie* (1929)

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has shown the relevance of the First World War for Irish history, first of all, by statistically taking into consideration the extent of Ireland's involvement in the conflict by providing, on the one hand, the figures of soldiers who were serving the British Army at the outbreak of war and, on the other, of volunteers that enlisted in the ongoing years of the conflict—including the Irish women who joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment—while also acknowledging the contribution of work force concerning, for instance, shipbuilding, engineering and textile industries. In addition to this, the Great War has been here examined as an episode integral to the series of concatenated events that took place in early twentieth-century Ireland, starting from the Home Rule Crisis that triggered the formation of two opposing paramilitary groups and ending with the Troubles. In this sense, this dissertation has thus proved that the war interrupted internal hostilities in Ireland by fostering instead the propitious context for revolution and independence, especially due to disenchantment with the war because of its prolongation and casualties. The reasons that led many Irish to join the British army have been here explained as the outcome of a general spirit of patriotism and camaraderie. However, Irish participation in the Great War must also be seen as integral to the heroic vision of defending civilization that characterized war propaganda across Europe and to the Irish context of militarisation and the display of loyalties on the part of the traditionally confronted ethno-national identities present in Ireland. These internal tensions are ultimately to be also regarded as the result of a colonial past that eventually fractured Irish society by causing divisions between Irish and Anglo-Irish, Catholics and Protestants, and nationalists and unionists. Therefore, in order to understand the Irish social system and its dynamics, the condition of Ireland as the oldest colony of the British Empire has been here critically examined, attending to the development of behavioural patterns which have come to define British and Irish relationships and which consequently had an impact in decision-making during the revolution for independence—among them, the traditional motto of Irish nationalism, “England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity”, which was applied in the organization of the Easter Rising.

In this vein, and departing from the consideration of Ireland's colonial past, the historical association of Irish Catholics with narratives of traumatic resistance as opposed to those of triumphalism on the part of Protestants and unionists has also been explored. The critical examination of such oppositions helps understand the different ways in which the two groups have constructed their own sense of identity and foundational narratives, and how these have consequently affected their respective memories of the war. Both Britain and Ulster could easily see some redemption and triumph in the war's victory: on the one hand, by the end of the conflict the British Empire reached its largest size by incorporating some German colonies through the Treaty of Versailles; on the other hand, Ulster proved loyalty to the crown by glorifying their sacrifice in the Somme. However, the Irish from the South did not find any

sense of victory in the end of the war, as they underwent another conflict in their struggle for independence from the Empire: “while some Anglo-Irish approved of the God, king, and country narrative, many Catholic Irish failed to see the victory as one for the protection of Ireland. Rather, many Catholic Irish viewed the war as one fought for the maintenance of the British Empire, an empire they longed to leave” (Link 2019: 7-8). The constitution of the Irish Free State also entailed the establishment of a homogeneous Irish identity and national history that were expected to differ as much as possible from those of the British. Unsurprisingly, this fact consequently overshadowed the narratives of collaboration with the Empire, including Irish participation in the Great War, thus causing a historical amnesia regarding the conflict. The Easter Rising was chosen as the foundational myth of the new nation of Ireland, as it fitted the pattern of traumatic resistance that characterized Catholic nationalism, and thus its leaders were commemorated as martyrs and its participants were later benefited by the Republic. However, war veterans were seen as traitors and treated unfairly during their recovery at hospitals and their reintegration into Irish society and working life. In this respect, this thesis has examined the development of war commemorations and reparations in Ireland until recent years, accounting for the controversies and hostilities which such celebrations and monument erections entailed. More significantly, this dissertation has tackled the institutional neglect which has characterized discussions on the Irish participation in World War I, often deliberately glossed over. As it has been shown, such an effort to avoid inconvenient truths on the part of the Irish state and other official institutions has to be explained in terms of a compulsion of erasing Ireland’s traumatic colonial past.

This thesis, critically informed by memory studies and postmodern conceptions of history, has demonstrated the extent to which the writing of history and the different ways of performing official memory come to define national identity, but also how those practices can be contested by other types of memory which, though partly influenced by the “social frames” (Halbwachs), the “thought style” (Fleck) or “figures of memory” (Assmann) of a community, are not totally controlled by the institutions of power. In Ireland’s case, special emphasis has been made on the pressure exerted by the cultural and vernacular memory of the First World War from the 1970s onwards, which eventually fostered political attention to the matter. This fact, together with the climate of peace and reconciliation provided by the ending of the Troubles and the entrance of Ireland in the international sphere of the European Union, made possible, on the one hand, that both the commemorations of the Easter Rising and the Great War deserved to be regarded as interdependent events, and on the other, that World War I, previously seen as alien to the interests of Ireland, could actually be considered as a possible symbol of cohabitation and comradeship, since both Catholics and Protestants fought there alongside each other in a common arena. In this sense, it has to be acknowledged that the Irish post-colonial context conditioned the politics of regret that applied in the country, first by hindering them, and finally by encouraging them so as to come to terms with the ghosts from the past. The fact that war memory in Ireland was transformed into a narrative of collaboration with the enemy first and then redirected into one of reconciliation precisely proves that the power of conferring meaning to historical events ultimately resides in human constructs and practices, and, therefore, that national histories and memories may function like living organisms susceptible of transformation according to current needs. Thus, as Hutcheon assesses, following the dismantlement of the discipline of history conducted by postmodernism, both history and fiction must now be equally regarded as human constructs: “what the postmodern writing of both history and literature has taught us is that both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past [...]. In other words, the meaning and shape are not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past ‘events’ into

present historical ‘facts’” (1995: 89). Literature therefore produces new systems of signification which may preserve both the individual and collective memories of a community. In addition, literature may be regarded as one of the best means of expression to articulate the repressed memories of traumatized subjects, as it may provide meaning and signification to those experiences that are difficult to explore and comprehend.

Taking Ireland’s context into consideration, Irish identity was largely constructed on the basis of colonial trauma —founded on resilience against an oppressor— which is precisely one of the reasons why this thesis is also critically informed by trauma studies. In fact, the attempt of early twentieth-century Irish nationalism to recover a lost sense of unity through an idealization of Ireland’s Celtic roots and rural past can be interpreted as a drive to escape from trauma, rather than acknowledging the effects of the colonial experience and coming to terms with their consequent multi-layered identities. Trauma has been defined as a wound inflicted upon the mind that eludes common knowledge and ordinary ways of signification, so that it is consequently repressed and unassimilated, resulting in a series of post-traumatic symptoms that continue to manifest themselves while the experience is being processed. At a collective level, in what pertains to national trauma, such effects are more prolonged, passing from one generation to the next apparently unnoticed. Nevertheless, as trauma deeply affects the social connections, identity and reality of a community, it begs for a restoration by revisiting and interrogating the past. Literature may therefore perform the role of the “talking cure”, thus allowing for reconstruction by offering some coherence, detailed emotions and sensations. In this sense, literature may move beyond history, since the portrayal of feelings manages to engage the reader not only critically, but also emotionally, thus triggering sympathy and understanding. Therefore, literature works through trauma by publicly exposing it, which both bears witness to and democratizes experience by offering justice and reparation for vulnerable subjects, as well as by fostering dialogue and negotiation, which may lead to future reconciliation. In this sense, historical fiction in Ireland has been fundamental in the recovery of war memory, as well as in the cultural integration of the war within the country’s history and identity, which ensures the long transmission of its memory.

Significantly, the narrative corpus here studied is largely conformed by the works of Irish women writers, whose narratives aimed to give a voice and a place to those subjects —mostly women— who have been traditionally excluded from the body politics and the making of “archival memory.” In fact, and as Julia Kristeva has suggested, women, having occupied marginal spaces in society, are in a better position to understand those who have been also disposed and silenced and to offer them solace: “Women today are called upon to share in the creation of new social groupings where [...] we shall try to assure our children living spaces that, within ever tenacious national and identity-forging traditions, will respect the strangeness of each person within a lay community” (1993: 35). The literary fictions analysed in this thesis have thus signalled the significance of the First World War for Ireland, accounting not only for the volunteers who enlisted in the British army and their different motivations behind their choice —Sandy and Michael in *Name Upon Name*, Liam and Hubie in *Fallen*, Gilbert in “Each Slow Dusk”, and Arthur Duffy in *Empire*— but also for the women who became nurses and attended soldiers both at the homeland and at the front —as can be seen in *Fallen*. Some of the narratives here examined have also brought to the fore the efforts of those who contributed to industries or activities destined to the war effort, including those picking up moss for bandages in *Empire*, but also the works made by Helen in the Old Boys’ Parcels Committee first and then in Roll of Honour in *Name Upon Name*, and by Edith in the Old Boys’ Cake Fund in “Each Slow Dusk”. In doing so, these narratives have provided agency to those subjects who had been previously confined to the periphery of national discourses and commemorations.

In addition, these novels and short stories have also depicted in various ways the relevance of the Great War against the socio-political backdrop of the Home Rule and the Easter Rising, thus allowing for an integration of the conflict within the national narrative of Ireland. The consideration of the First World War as integral to Irish history is still necessary at the time of the war's centennial celebrations, not only because of the historically sustained repression of the Great War memory in Ireland, but also because of Ireland's position as a postcolonial nation, a fact which has historically conditioned Ireland's social and political relationship with the United Kingdom. The outbreak of the Great War precisely coincided with the beginning of Ireland's separation from the Empire, which represents a key foundational moment in its history as an independent nation: the interconnectedness of these two events is in need, therefore, of proper critical examination and historical reassessment. Furthermore, transitional processes must be seen as both moments of crisis and of transformation, since the end of an old system gives space to new configurations concerning politics and national identities. In relation to this, Ireland's liminal position within the British Empire has been here examined as part of the metropolis from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, together with the subsequent ambiguous attitudes of the Irish towards their inclusion in the Empire and towards the Irish cause, which translated into changing loyalties and decisions at uncertain moments of political convulsion. The narratives here addressed convey such positions through their characters' differing points of view and attitudes.

In this regard, the narratives here under examination critically engage in intergenerational conflicts, first of all, in what pertains to male characters' decision of whether or not to enlist, which oftentimes goes against family political convictions and tradition. Other conflicts are also signalled: such is the case of religious segregation, as some mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants are not approved by the parents. In addition, these narratives also address tensions arising from the incipient transformation of traditional female roles, as young women characters feel pressured by their families to become wives and mothers against their will. The fact that the female protagonists seek to understand political affairs and are willing to continue their education and pursue a career that might grant them an active role in the new Ireland produces family tensions, particularly with their own mothers, thus provoking a deep generational gap that forces the young protagonists to turn to other women as role models, as are their teachers and professors. Thus, these narratives portray not only the social changes that were affecting men at the time of war and revolution, but also those specifically affecting women, who become aware of the fact that the absence of men—while they were fighting and dying at war—could provide them with new opportunities and spaces in Irish society. In addition, these young women are also depicted as politically committed, as willing to find their own sense of belonging in the panorama of political confrontation. Rather than alien to social and political convulsion, these women characters are often depicted as eager to become acquainted with the realities of the war, which they manage to do both by reading letters from the front and by interacting with soldiers who are either on leave or already discharged. The stories here addressed thus portray the trauma of war through detailed accounts of life at the battlefield, as well as through the depiction of post-traumatic symptoms and psychological instability which soldiers and veterans display. Such exchanges eventually turn these women into privileged witnesses to the soldiers' experiences, to the point of even suffering from vicarious trauma, which surfaces amidst the violence of the Easter Rising, as is especially the case with Katie in *Fallen* when she witnesses the Rising from up close while enduring the psychological effects of mourning and melancholia following the death of her brother.

In this sense, even though the works here examined are not war narratives *per se* owing to their location at the homeland, and, consequently to their distance from the battlefield, they

offer those glimpses of the life at the trenches which relate to traditional war narratives written by combatants. However, these works of fiction have all successfully addressed inconvenient truths in moving beyond the traditional way of representing trauma, which was based on its impossibility of representation if not through silences and gaps that reflected its unspeakable nature. These narratives contribute thus to more recent studies on trauma theory which explore various literary strategies and possibilities of conveying trauma. It is true that some of the narratives here under examination formally suggest the difficulties of verbalizing trauma, most notably in their use of fragmentary narrative structures and in the insertion of letters from the front, which often result in the use of ellipsis and repetitions in order to convey the magnitude of the events. However, these same narratives simultaneously question the idea of trauma as unspeakable by providing realistic and detailed accounts—which correspond with Richard J. McNally's thesis that trauma actually strengthens sensorial memory—and by developing a coherent plot. In addition, these narratives delve into personal connections by using ordinary, non-heroic characters, some of which represent monolithic Irish identities, whereas others are ambivalent and reflect on the socio-political circumstances questioning ideologies and loyalties, which prompts discussions with the former characters. Thus, by playing with multiple perspectives from the margins, and by giving agency to more relatable characters, women writers manage to symbolically contest established discourses from a current viewpoint, arousing sympathy for those who doubted propaganda of both war and revolution and who prioritized social bonds over blind commitment to a cause, which simultaneously rejects the glorification of the Easter Rising and its leaders.

In this respect, the works clearly portray the violence of the Rising and its impact on the civilian population from a critical perspective which, in turn, eventually questions the reasons behind the revolt and its coincidence with the ongoing war. Moreover, these narratives also acknowledge the shift in public opinion that took place afterwards and how it affected the consideration of those who were collaborating with the British, shedding light on the matter in the name of those who were later condemned to ostracism. Such an urge to re-examine the past precisely evidences that Ireland continues to be a postcolonial nation haunted by unassimilated traumas of separation from an ideal and unified origin, which has prevented some Irish from accepting the partition of Ireland. The resurgence of old tensions during Brexit only confirms that the Irish have not come to terms with their past conflicts. In such a contemporary context—with the revival of nationalisms that have once again reinforced the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland—more historical fiction is being produced to account for Irish multi-layered identities and convulsive past. In this sense, the analysis of these works proves to be not only useful for a revision of Ireland's past that helps understand ongoing tensions in Ireland with respect to the reestablishment of a hard border, but also to foster points in common in the current cultural panorama of Ireland that provide a redefinition of national identity.

The narrative corpus here examined could be therefore expanded and enriched through the study of other fictional works; in this respect, it could be interesting to see whether more literary confluences emerge and whether the themes developed continue to fit into the patterns here established. In addition, the thesis has only focused on narratives written in the Republic of Ireland, as it was precisely the nation where war memory was more strongly repressed. However, some critical work needs to be done on the differences between the historical fiction written in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, respectively, so as to critically analyse whether the war continues to be also very present in the cultural memory of the north. Furthermore, it should also be explored the extent to which current literary representations of the war differ from the significations and symbols of the past, whether World War I continues to be seen in triumphal terms in the Ulster community, or whether the memory of the conflict

has also evolved, as happened in the South, into narratives of conciliation. Recent works of fiction in Ireland prove to be more inclusive and concerned with the representation of the margins with the intention of offering new national narratives able to contest official discourses, which precisely goes in line with the revisions of history conducted by memory studies and postmodernism. Thus, this thesis contributes to the assessment of these new claims in Irish contemporary literature, thus establishing continuities between the past and the present of Ireland, between its history as a colonial community and its current state as a postcolonial nation, while simultaneously incorporating forgotten characters and stories that break away from imposed identities and discourses. In sum, the Irish women writers here under examination both reclaim through their narratives a silenced past that was denied them and create spaces for new voices in Ireland to be heard.

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The participation of Irish soldiers and volunteers in the First World War under the British flag at the height of Irish nationalism has been considered as a shameful and traumatic event, and thus it has been politically, socially and culturally repressed, resulting in a historical amnesia that diametrically affected the identity of the Irish. This fact accounts for a sustained lack of an Irish canon of war literature, as well as of in-depth studies on the topic. This thesis aims to contribute to the reassessment of Ireland's involvement in the war by analyzing historical fiction written by women and published during the war's centennial, while simultaneously exploring the strategies that literature employs to represent what remains repressed for being an inconvenient truth that conflicts with the official discourse.