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The Poetics of the Irish Feminine Narratives

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Introduction

The article underlines the importance of the Irish feminized narratives as they offer Irish female authors a place to engage with the discourses of the past and present and to chart the processes of social, cultural and national transformation. Within this literary tradition, the feminine narrative is usually an authentic narration involving feminine norms of social and political conformity, as well as, expressing her potential of the self. The prominence of the romantic narrative is a key constituent in national narratives and constructs a gendered nationalist narrative. In this article, sexual identity and national identity are mutually dependent. The stereotyped roles of Irish women as wives and mothers and their private functions which had no public dimension are portrayed by the state and the media. The article asserts that even when Irish females are restricted to their traditional role as homemakers; they had crucial contribution in building the Irish nation, including the revival of Irish language and education of Irish history and literature to their children. The election of Mary Robinson as 7th President of Ireland serving from 1990-1997 has been welcomed by many as an indication of the breakdown of traditional image of Mother Ireland as a submissive wife. The celebration of Robinson's triumph is an evidence of a new feminine confidence and self-assertion. Such potential of self-consciousness and self-confidence supports women to affect change. The Irish feminized writing is a narrative mode in which the female protagonist is present yet not apparently central as the female author resists being identified as the heroine of her own work.

This paper will also consider other ways in which Irish women's lives were brought into public arena, including newspapers and popular biographies in their coverage of the life stories of Irish women. Sally Alexander argues that life stories tell us "something of what has been forgotten in cultural memory" because they always "describe or rehearse a history full of affective subjectivity." (Sally Alexander. Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in the 19 th and 20 th Century Feminist History. London: Virago press, 1994: 234) In the Irish context, Roy Foster argues that the memory frame of the national liberation narrative is replaced by "the presentism of memoir, heritage and commemoration culture, practices of remembering which involve new modes of memory regulation, including the celebration of only certain forms of memoir and a selective approach to the past." (Ray F. Foster. The Irish Story. Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland. London: Allen Lane, 2001)

The importance of such subjective stories is that it celebrates what Foucault calls 'subjectification'in which individuals turn themselves into subjects who actively initiate their self-formation and 'meaning-giving selves.' This attempt to make the private public contributed to the transformation of women's lives in 1960s. The proliferation of memories based on personal testimony is identified with feminine modes of telling and with new forms of feminine politics. Both colonial and patriarchal powers identify their female subjects as passive, incapable of self-government, romantic, passionate and barbarous. Irish nationalism was hostile to women but post-colonialist criticism is essentially concerned with giving a voice

to the marginalized and the other in an attempt to develop readings of otherness. As 'the other', woman cannot speak for herself; rather she is defined by and given a voice and a form by the outsider and the masculine.

Feminized narratives tell women's stories, offering a critical engagement with the emerging concept of Irish nationalism. What is noticeable about such narratives is that they do not limit themselves to the participation of their revolutionary struggle but they are narrated occasionally in a literary realm dominated by men, a fact that empowers the common patriarchal ideology that excludes its female counterpart. The female-centered narrative is playing a substantial role in the national revision of Ireland. The Irish feminized narrative is being the site in which the Irish feminine identity is being deconstructed, renegotiated and rewritten. Therefore, the Irish feminized narratives enrich our understanding of the diversity of literary stories and narratives and underline the significance of the feminized resistance of colonization and shed light on the feminized political agenda. Feminized narratives seek to disrupt and challenge the formation of dominant narratives. They introduce new and different stories which accommodate some of challenges and open up the possibilities for women to tell their own diverse and different stories. Such narratives challenge the notion of the 'new Ireland' that emerged during the Celtic Tiger by charting the individual struggles of Irish women to renegotiate their identity through a re-writing of their stories. The Celtic Tiger has sparked re-evaluations of Ireland's relationship to its past, present and future, as well as, its relationship with the rest of the world. There is a notable fixation on recovering the past. Anne Fogarty asserts that it is through "the production of feminocentric fictions that rewrite and confront the personal, psychic conflicts of the past [that] fresh insights into the politics and ethics of identity in contemporary Irish society might emerge. "(Fogarty," Deliberately Personal? The Politics of Identity in Contemporary Irish Women's Writing. Nordic Irish Studies. Vol. 1 :(2002. 1-17, 16) Nuala O'Faolian's Are You Somebody celebrates feminist individualism and admits that personal stories should not be confined to a partner or a priest but such autobiographical narratives are more committed to printed pages. Commentators bemoan such autobiographical narratives that destruct the perception of Ireland in the international imagination and literary map. Michael Kenneally points at "the tendency to explore and define oneself in terms of patriotic values and national goals, to equate one's development with national destiny provides the central structural metaphor of twentieth century Irish literary autobiographies." (Michael Kenneally 1988: 123) The personal narratives equal the project of nation building. David LIoyds observes that "the biography of the national hero is a repetition of the history of the nation. Through conscious identification with the nation, the individual transcends in himself/herself the actual disintegration of the nation by coming to prefigure the nation's destiny: the total identification of the individual with the spirit of the nation is a figuration of the total unity of the political nation that is the goal of the nationalist's labor." (1987: 160)

The Irish feminized narratives provide clues to the nature of remembering and how it connects individuals into subjective and collective memories. The major trope of Ireland as woman has been fitting narratives and the fusion of woman and nation has been recognized as powerful force. In such narratives, the image of nation as woman and the use of woman as a symbol of sovereignty and motherland has become prevalent in Irish culture. The Mother Ireland figure persisted through drastic changes in Ireland's social and political structure. Jacqueline Fulmer asserts that The Mother Ireland trope is "utilized repeatedly in song, poetry, drama, and later propaganda, in the service of Irish Independence [and] the enchanting maiden/death-dealing hag dichotomy finally engulfed the idea of the feminine in Irish culture. Woman was the nation, and the Nation was woman." (Innes, C.L. Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society,1880-1935. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993)

There are parallels between post colonialist and feminist literary criticism as both are set to provide a voice and space for the marginalized and the silenced. Eavan Boland objectively represents a female allegory of Ireland and establishes a close connection between real women and Ireland by presenting her poetic voice as a female poet, as well as giving voice to everyday Irish woman. She expressed that "Irish women … became part of a corrupt transaction between nationalism and literature which feminized the national and nationalized the feminine… their place in the poem was prescribed; it was both silent and passive." (Boland, 1995: 7) Boland tries "to strengthen by subversion how Ireland and Irishness is written, and to open a window on those silences, those false pastorals, those ornamental reductions that have confined us." (Boland, 1995: 9) Boland's work challenges and dislocates the accepted dichotomy by focusing on Irish women's lived experiences. She states that "our history is filled with the stories of patriots that needed to be told" and that "these are women we loved/ Record-keepers with a different task" and their task is to stop memory becoming history. To stop words healing what should not be healed." Boland strongly believes that home can be painted or written about. (Boland .)

Mary Condren claims that "Irish women … were doubly colonized by virtue of their gender."(Condren, 1995: 176) Condren's The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland shows how the powers of the feminine in Celtic mythology is destroyed by a male intellectual system and colonization. Elizabeth Butler MacCana argues that "it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of this idea of land and sovereignty conceived in the form of a woman." (MacCana, 1993: 57) Ireland's colonization by England in the 12th century lasted until the early 1920s and like any other colonized countries; Ireland was conceived by its imperial master as feminine and the other. The English Protestant colonizers regarded the Catholic Ireland as a land of primitive and superstitious idolaters. Aside from religious and cultural differences, Ireland's feminine nature was enmeshed in English discourse on Ireland. It was visualized as a weak and infected woman that needed to be controlled by a resolute man. Karlin J. Lillington states that "Woman is nature, the earth goddess, to be brought to heel by art and culture. She is a facilitator, a muse, to be shaped and formed by men's creative actions. In both colonial and postcolonial terms, she remains a territory to be possessed." (Lillington, 1995: 43) The femininity of the Irish race was well documented in the Celtic race, notably by Earnest Renan and Mathew Arnold in the 19th century. Arnold observes that "the Celt is peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret." (qtd in Cairns and Richards, 1988: 144) Similarly, Renan writes that "the Celts were an essentially feminine race." He argues that "no longer other race had conceived with more delicacy the ideal of woman, or been more fully dominated by it. It is a sort of intoxication, madness, vertigo." (qtd in Cairns and Richards, 1988: 145) Interestingly, as Ireland was struggling against British colonization, Irish nationalism continued to identify their country as female and that was the only thing they had in common with their oppressors. The traditional Romantic perception of Ireland as a woman was evident in the cultural narratives of Irish nationalism and this identification was problematic for the makers of free Ireland. Celticism was viewed in affirmative terms as a powerful entity of asserting differences from its English colonizer and Irish nationalist tradition represented Ireland as a woman in distress. The negative connotations attached to the feminine were deemed inappropriate for an oppositional narrative that was suggesting masculine power and domination. Just as British imperialist narrative described Ireland as feminine, inferior, weak and dependent, Irish nationalists surprisingly embraced an exaggerated masculinity and thus were unsure whether to oppose or welcome women who took up the cause of Irish nationalism. Declan Kiberd states that "the colonial projection of despised feminine qualities on a race led to a diminishment of womanhood at home. This proved to be the case, as is evidenced by the misfortunes of women

political activists during that time. Indeed, despite the political fervor of a number of radical Irish women's groups, including, among others, the Inghinidhe na hEireann." (Kiberd, 1996: 398) Eamon de Valera's phrase that 'women are once the boldest and most unmanageable revolutionaries' vividly demonstrates this attitude and de Valera soon declares that women's place should be the private domain of hearth and home." (quoted in Valiulis, 1995:126) It is surprisingly that those female figures who resonated with the Irish nationalists at the end of the 19th century were women who had sacrificed themselves to the greater good of Irish nationalism. Again, this reinforced the argument that the realization of the self could only be achieved by the female dedication to Irish nationalism. When the political party Fianna Fail came to power in the later 1920s, their traditionalist values ensured that women were no longer relevant to the project of shaping the new nation and consequently the feminine political contribution to the Irish struggle was erased.

Irish womanhood was "consigned to the other, site of contest rather than agent of her own desire." (Kiberd, 1996" 123) Kiberd argues that culture in general and literature in particular have played an important role in the creation of new forms of national identity in post colonial Ireland. Central to the project of rereading and rewriting Ireland have been issues of nationhood and gender and they have played out an important role in the cultural representations of Ireland and Irishness. Many cultural representations of Ireland have portrayed the nation in romantic feminine terms. W. B. Yeats, the leader of the Celtic revival in Ireland regarded Ireland as a gendered place and that gender was feminine; although his earliest Celtic writings challenged the negative connotations advocated by the English commentators. Drawing on Irish myths, legends and folklore, Yeats reinvented the feminine Celtic Irishness in opposition to the masculine Anglo-Saxon in a positive way. For him, the Celtic nation represented "sensitivity, brilliance and turbulence, springing from an excess of culture and civilization, not lack of it." (quoted in Howes, 1996:78) Ireland/ woman was repositioned as symbol of culture rather than nature. Yeats's assertion of Irishness and Irish tradition manifested itself as rewriting of Ireland in romantic, mystical terms with the spirit of Ireland embodied in symbolic female figures such as Cathleen ni Houlihan and Dark Rosaleen. Similarly, the work of Seamus Heany illustrated how gender and nationality are inextricably entwined in Irish cultural representations, "The act of poetic composition is a kind of somnambulist encounter between masculine will and intelligence and feminine clusters of images and emotion in which the feminine element… involves the matter of Ireland." (quoted in Cairns and Richards, 1988: 167)

The feminine narratives of Irish writers are successful in retrieving elided history, the recovery of autobiographical material, and changing the traditional roles prescribed to women. From the outset, Irish women enjoyed a prominent position in the revival movement and many occupied notable positions of responsibility in the Gaelic League hierarchy. Such figures include Countess Markievicz and her sister Eva Gore-Booth, Maud Gonne, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, Alice Milligan and Agnes O'Farrelly to name but a few. The central role of Irish women within household was emphasized in Irish Independent which also published a regular women's page. The power of Irish women to influence both the language and the wider cultural revival was encouraged by the Independent's publication of extract material from an aeridheacht report, "Countess Plunkett appealed to the women to refuse to feed their men unless they asked for food in Irish." (Irish Independent, May 19, 1919) This reflects the active engagement of women with the revival movement at large. The conflicting representations of women's role in society is best presented by Kathleen M.O'Brennan and her published papers on the role of Irish women in the revival cause. She praises the efforts of women workers in the cultural movement, "Our higher schools from an academical point of view welcomed the

Irish revival, and it is those schools that have sent forth the best women workers we have in the Irish Ireland movement. They are earnest Gaelic Leaguers, and indefatigable workers in promoting our industries." (Irish Independent, February15, 1905) Such Irish women were actively engaged in the nationalist movement through learning the Irish language, buying Irish-made clothes and refusing British imported goods.

Irish women are presented in their narratives as the main characters whose stories are connected with the autobiographies of their authors. Feminized narratives are fictions constructed of selective memories, choices and interactions between the listener and teller. They incorporate biography, memory, imagery and relatedness. In all these narratives, the lives of individual females are linked to social, political and national processes. The personal life stories mean a parallel concern with the real lives of Irish women in diaspora. The experience of migration is a powerful lens through which female writers remember and re-imagine the homeland from abroad. Irish diaspora tends to link an Irish Catholic population to a green island homeland. Delaney et al. warn that in the Irish context, "diaspora implicitly suggests a unitary phenomenon" (Delaney, E, Kenny, K and MacRaild, D, " Symposium : Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora," Irish Economic and Social History , 33: 35-58) Irish women have emigrated on a large scale since the middle of the nineteenth century. Before the Great Famine of 1845, women migrated mainly as part of family units. After the Famine, a major shift took place and young single women came to dominate the flow. This means empowering women to narrate and interpret their experiences rather than allowing 'others' to do so on their behalf. The strength of using life stories to explore the experiences of Irish women in diaspora offers insights into migration and diaspora and their meanings for women. Moreover, their presentation in a rich variety of forms and narratives that include biographies, indirect narratives by family and others, or written works of fiction make them accessible to a wide audience. It was in the late 1980s that the Irish feminized narratives narrated by immigrant women became the lens through which women experiences were viewed. In 1984, Irish women asked for recognition and spoke publicly about their lives as migrants and they presented such personal accounts to global audiences for the first time. The lives of Irish exile women are brought into the public sphere and made available to general readers. The narration of neglected feminine writing is a rewarding literary activity in Irish feminist literary studies. The papers presented at the conference of 'Celebrating Irish women's Writing' held at University Collage Dublin, 1999 attest to the significance and diversity of reviving this literary genre. Elizabeth Sharp's anthology Women's Voices delineates women writing from 1685 to 1887. In her preface to the anthology, Sharp outlines her methodology and underlines dilemmas and challenges related to many women writers. She states that the idea of producing this anthology emerged "primarily from the conviction that our women –poets had never been collectively represented with anything like adequate justice; that the works of many are not so widely known as they deserve to be; and that at least some fine fugitive poetry could thus be rescued from oblivion." (Elizabeth Sharp, Women's Voices: An Anthology of the Most Characteristic Poems by English, Scotch and Irish Women Poets. Scott edition, 890) In her anthology, every poet is represented by a brief selection of characteristic poems and such choice means that each writer is not represented by her achievement. She writes that:

I have been fortunately placed for an acquaintance with much fugitive poetry, and can assert with emphasis that there is a greater wealth of really fine poetic writing at present appearing in more or less obscure quarters than has ever appeared at any other period of our literary history. It is perhaps beside the mark- and I may be accused of bias and prejudice-but I am glad to be able to express at least one opinion when I say, that among the minor poets of this generation, women have written more that is worthy to endure than men have done. It is,

however, not a question of assertion or denial: the settlement of the question is within the power of everyone who cares to go into the matter intelligently, sympathetically, and without prejudice." (Elizabeth Sharp, Women's Voices: An Anthology of the Most Characteristic Poems by English, Scotch and Irish Women Poets. Scott edition,viii)

As the above quotation indicates women's writing may be elevated to the status of 'pure poetry' that is distinguished from poetry composed by men.

Connection with Home is a key element in the lives of the diasporic Irish women and it lies at the heart of their diasporic experience. Furthermore, remembering and memory emerge as collective and individual feminine practices that promote critical attention. Breda Gray underlines the misery of Irish young middle-class women in London who wanted to establish their Irish family, a dream that was impossible. Gray underlines 'the anxiety about cultural continuity' as their young children will be denied an Irish childhood. In other words, it is the lack of connectedness that mothers fear that there would be a disjuncture between the two cultures, " If my kids grew up here they would see me as being Irish, and having a bit of a funny accent, but they would grew up English and their kids would be English." (quoted in Smart, 2007: 45) Even once these connections with Home are neglected, they continue to resonate and re-emerge through the female narratives as it is commonly perceived that women are the glue of social life and such connections mean that personal lives are of national and local significance.

Blake Morrison notes how the absence of Irish family photographs obscures the past, "The remoteness was increased by the lack of photographs. There were none dating from my mother's childhood. What did her parents look like? I'd no idea, and wasn't encouraged to ask." (Morrison, 2003: 12) Individual memories emerge as a key element in the autobiographical narrations and are of social significance as personal memories are both collective and individual. Irish women are influenced strongly by the culture and values of the previous generation. Their feminized narratives are telling the stories of Irish women interacting with other people as the concept of autobiography is loaded with more than individual timeline. Autobiography narratives allow the smooth movement through time and thus present women's changing relationships to social, cultural and political contexts. Personal memories are identified as feminine modes of narrating and feminine political tool Nancy K. Miller claims that "the ambiguous back and forth between lives and stories, between experience and history has been central to the development of feminism." (Nancy K. Miller. But Enough About Me. Why We need Other People's Lives. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002: xiv) Miller argues that the back and fourth oscillation between stories and lives is central to the development of feminism. She argues that autobiography, memoir, confession and life telling are all genres in contemporary Irish culture.

Irish women rely on autobiographies as a source of detailed and reflective information about Irish women in diaspora. Liam Harte states:

Hopes of uncovering a hidden body of work by, say… working-class women writers in post-war London evaporated as the gapped nature of this literary steam became war. As it is, male autobiographies significantly outnumber their female counterparts, leaving one to regret the fact that so few Irish nurses left accounts of their migrant experiences and bemoan the paucity of memoirs by domestic servants, despite their ubiquity in Victorian London.(Harte, 2009: xvi)

Traditionally, Irish women appear as subordinate mothers and housewives but a substantial reconstruction of such stereotypes appear in Julie Walter' That's Another Story: the Autobiography. The publication includes a wealth of family snapshots which provide portraits of different generations of the family, as well as, stages of Walters's literary career. Apparently, Walters's autobiography demonstrates a sense of embeddedness across generations and it is memory that provides a coherent narrative. In her autobiography, Walter recounts the influence of her Irish-born mother on her childhood in the English-Midlands. Her autobiography intertwines narratives of an Irish migrant and her second generation Irish daughter:

'Five years ago today…'
It's my mother's voice. She is at the foot of the stairs, calling out the story of my birth, as she did on so many birthdays.
'Ten years ago today…'
It is Irish, a Mayo voice worn at the edges, which, she told me once, some men had found alluring.
'Fifteen years ago today…'
Now it is soft with memory and buoyant with the telling. (Walters, 2008)

Hilary Mantel's Giving Up the Ghost: A Memoir documents the childhood centrality of her Irish heritage over her early years. She states, "I used to be Irish but I'm not sure now," and "And as my great-uncles and great-aunts died one by one, I lost my consciousness of being Irish." (Mantel, 2004:152) This quotation can best illustrate the sense of fading embeddedness.

The Irish feminized personal narratives, stories, memories and autobiographies invoke cultural, national and many other collectively shared memories that offer insight in the production of the feminized self and the emerging Irish nation. Memory and remembering emerge as feminized narrative techniques that take new significance in the Irish context. Female novelists record the cultural memory of their protagonists. They are capturing the ways in which cultural memory mediates between individual biography and the wider social concerns. Bhabha states that "Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present…It is such a memory of the history of race and racism, colonialism and the question of cultural identity, that Fanon reveals with greater profundity and poetry than any other writers." (Bhabha, 'The Managed Identity' – Forward: Remembering Fanon." In Black Skin, White Masks, London: Pluto Press, 1986, pp.vii-xxv)

At the end of the nineteenth-century, women in Ireland were beginning to take a larger part in public life. Forms enacted in 1890's allowed women to participate in local government but women were denied franchise in parliamentary elections and this implies that women's opportunities to enter national politics remained limited. By contrast, the Gaelic League founded in 1893 that promoted the revival of the Irish language accepted women membership on an equal basis. Although its goals were not feminist, the League's openness to the participation of women enlarged the role of women in public life. Mary Butler perceives in many of her articles published in the Irish newspapers that any national movement had to operate within the confines of domestic sphere. She argues that respectable Irish women could still make a significant contribution to building the independent Irish nation through domestic activities undertaken within their own homes, not to mention women's prominent role in teaching their children pride in their national history and Irish culture. Butler claims that the rural cottage symbolizes "The Irish social organization in opposition to English culture." (Quoted in Catherine Nash, "Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland" Feminist Review, 44: Summer, 39-57) 1993: 39) With the

emergence of the Irish-Ireland movement, enormous social, political and national changes affected the situations and aspirations of Irish women. Butler stated in her article entitled "Irish Women's Work" that mothers and maidens of Ireland in their working for the national cause "do not need to clamour for our rights not to thrust ourselves into the position of men." Instead, women "can be womanly and pure as our blessed Ida and yet help to keep first what Erin has not yet lost – her nationality." (United Irishman, 25 March, 1899) Butler focused on the importance of domestic sphere in the creation of a strong national identity. She maintains in another article published in United Irishman that in the home "atmosphere being that which we breathe the earliest and longest [,] whatever constitutes this atmosphere is the most important factor in building up the national structure." (United Irishman, January 1901)

Gerardine Meaney observes the close relationship between the postcolonial theories and women's literary past that ultimately "produce a complex re-imaginings of history's relation to the narrative and of the multiple factors that go to make up those fictions we understand as our identity." (Meaney, Gerardine. "Territory and Transgression: History, Nationality and Sexuality in Kate O'Brien's Fiction." Irish Journal of Feminist Studies 2.2 (1997): 77-92.) Her conclusion is that the authentic voices of women are rarely heard. Meaney asserts in 'Sex and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics' that 'gender identity' and 'national identity' are mutually dependent because it is difficult to disassociate the images of the suffering Mother Ireland from the sacrificial mother. The images of suffering Mother Ireland and the self-sacrificing Irish mother are difficult to separate. She also relates the combination of the Irish female stereotype with an authentic concept of nationality. Meaney asserts that with the independence of Ireland, the emphasis on the domestic realm made a distinct shift towards women who are associated with the building of the nation. The sacrificial mother's image derived from the nationalistic narrative appeared in the national context.

The feminized narratives with their infusion of memory, history and storytelling promote critics to postulate that the profusion of autobiography is "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"(Smyth, 2001: 134), a desire that is accompanied by socio-economic changes. Feminized narratives impact the way in which story-tellers understand, respond to, negotiate and resist stories about their lives. Storytelling becomes a personal process particularly when we talk about women's lives. Critics linked female writing in the Irish literary culture to a wider "memoir boom," the key to which lay in:

"the crisis of historical confidence that the last century wreaked on us. We no longer believe in objectivity; we do not trust the history books to tell the story of our selves whether because it is too disturbing or merely too mundane. But we are desperate for that story to be told, so we look for lives that intersect with the bits of history that affect us. The great power of the memoir is that, when it works, it […] touches a common humanity we sometimes fear no longer exists." (Armitstead, 2001: 10)

Social controversies have lead Irish female writers to put new emphasis on the feminized narratives of individual and national maturity. The stereotyped Irish nationalist movement usually presents a male martyr who sacrificed his blood for the symbolically female Ireland, the poor old woman, the ailing figure and Éire. The image of Ireland as a woman is related to the protagonist's strive for self-govern. There is an emphasis on both the Virgin May and Mother Ireland and this focus has resulted in Irish women occupying a unique position not as symbols of the emerging nation.

It is important to locate personal memories within a meaningful narrative sequence. The feminized narrative is central to memory, subjectivity and community. The flux of memories is brought into a narrative framework which makes "events memorable over time" and produces " a sharable world." (R. Kearney. On Stories. London: Routledge: 2002,p. 3) Besides, women's life narratives help to address the absence of women's experiences and stories from the national agenda , political life and literature. Ireland has long been represented through a female figure: Cathleen ni Houlihan, Hibernia, Dark Rosaleen and Erin and such female images incarnate a weakened, powerless, victimized and powerless female figure and thus women were invisible amidst the male dominated narratives. Moynagh Sullivan observes that women's writing "functions as a body of loss in Irish studies and this loss is a necessary functioning of Irish heterosexual masculine culture's self –representation in its building of a national cultural body." (Sullivan, "Raising the Veil: Mystery, Myth, Melancholia in Irish Studies:" Irish Literature : Feminist Perspectives. Eds. Patricia Coughlan and Tine O'Toole. Dublin: Caryfort Press, 2008 , 245-277): 249)

There have been some changes in many aspects of Irish women's role and life in general since "the other voice' emerged in Irish society in the post- Eamon De Valera period from the 1960s. Similarly, the publication of The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing that provided some attention to women's writing that has been ignored or misrepresented. The feminine narrative involves subversion of social norms, rebellion against a socially prescribed role and reclamation of a lost place within Irish nationalism. Irish women's stories serve as a vibrant narrative genre within Irish literary tradition and as a strategic device by which Irish women writers seek feminist recognition. Such stories usually present women who passively start by accepting socially imposed role as wife or mother and undergo transformative literary journey of self- discovery which leads to independence and individuality. Autobiographies have achieved public literary status before engaging in life writing. The Irish feminine narratives engage in a subversion of social and political norms as part of an attempt to reconcile with victimization or with inner conflicts which left most Irish females feeling alienated from accepted literary conventions and expectations.

To conclude, the erasure of feminist accounts has resulted in the feminine exclusion from Irish literary circle and Irish nationalism. Irish feminized narratives show that the Irish social, cultural and political conditions provoke urgent reworking of literary conventions and impell female authors to develop new strategies for representing their repressed narratives. Feminized narratives give voice to the individual experiences of women, unveiling aspects of Irish culture that have been long hidden. More and more of female Irish authors decided to pursue a new bath and to break the silence about female experiences. The recovery of women writing testifies the significance and diversity of this work for literary material and Irishness. Within the male dominated Irish literary tradition and canon, women's writing has tended to be marginalized. In this article, I have suggested that Irish female writers may find in their own narrations both an effective and an instinctive way of expressing issues related to the emerging nation and a vehicle for expressing a political agenda. Feminized narratives bring women authors close to the world of literary fiction as they draw on real life experiences directly or indirectly. In addition, female narratives express love for the place despite its traumatic history and such narratives begin to show patterns that could define the Irish culture and could subvert some popularly held assumptions.

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