A Generational Perspective on Irish Identity: From a Traumatized Generation to Several Irish Models in John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1990)

رؤية جيلية حول الهوية الأيرلندية: من جيل مصاب بصدمة إلى عدة نماذج إيرلندية في رواية «بين النساء» (1990) لجون ماكجاهرن

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Received: 07/09/2021 **Accepted:** 15/10/2021 **Published:** 28/12/2021

Abstract

When speaking of Irishness as a traumatized identity, John McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1990) powerfully portrays this viewpoint with emphasis on Irish family and nationalism. Therefore, this article attempts to wrestle with a challenging aspect in the recent Irish debate on identity and nationalism, which is that Irish collective and individual experiences have undergone a shift in terms of social incentives that all dwell on scarcely addressed psychological variables. That is to say, the article's primary objective is to explore Irish identity, which has historically been imagined to be one continuum, by delving into the concepts of generations, social shift, and trauma. Finally, by uncovering the representations of social shift after the Irish War of Independence in this novel, the article's finding brings to light a previously overlooked aspect in Irish literature, namely Irishness: a concept infused with a multitude of symptoms curtailing a deeply psychologically traumatized culture.

Keywords: Irishness; Irish Identity; Trauma; John McGahern; Generations.

ملخص:

عند الحديث عن الأيرلندية كهوية مصابة بالصدمة، يقدم لنا جون ماكجاهرن في روايته «بين النساء» وجهة النظر هذه بشكل واضح من خلال تركيزه على الأسرة الأيرلندية والقومية الوطنية. لذلك تحاول هذه المقالة دراسة مسألة متشابكة النقاش في الأدب الأيرلندي حول الهوية والقومية، وهي أن التجارب الأيرلندية، الجماعية والفردية، خضعت لتحول من حيث التيارات الاجتماعية والتي تنصب على متغيرات نفسية نادرًا ما يتم ذكرها. ولهذا الهدف الأساسي للمقال هو استكشاف الهوية الأيرلندية، التي كان يُتصور تاريخيًا أنها سلسلة واحدة متصلة، من خلال الخوض في مفاهيم الأجيال والتحول الاجتماعي والصدمات. وأخيرًا من خلال الكشف عن تمثيلات التحول الاجتماعي بعد حرب الاستقلال الأيرلندية في هذه الرواية، فإن نتائج المقالة هي إلقاء الضوء على جانب تم تجاهله سابقًا في الأدب الأيرلندي، ألا وهو الأيرلندية: مفهوم مشبع بالعديد من الأعراض التي تحد من ثقافة مصابة بصدمات نفسية عميقة.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأيرلندية، الهوية الأيرلندية، الصدمة، جون ماكجاهرن، الأجيال.

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1. Introduction

The concept of generation is one of the most important defining factors in the understanding of history. As each generation finds its own way in the world, it conceives of its society's past in different ways than the previous generations used to do. Closely linked to generation, then, is historical memory. Each generation remembers history uniquely, and, thus, builds its own generational identity and response to events around them. In twentieth century Ireland, these ideas of generation and historical memory loomed large on the national psyche. In 1916, the Easter Rising[1] dragged Ireland into a new era: the first one of war and turmoil, then the one of greater peace and stability, though still rife with problems and suffering from the aftershocks of war. Throughout the Irish experience, history is recognized as a grim memory, which is indicative of the Irish identity given that their history is connected to national construction, and, yet, it is there where Irish trauma is felt. As Irish fiction goes, Irish contemporary novelists exceptionally have captured such tragedies of war, famine, and colonial oppression in their own literary and artistic works. The heeded exception emanates from a shift, in the last decades, towards a revisionist perspective: from national history to personal history. In this approach, these writers re-enact history by critiquing how the same event might be perceived from several perspectives. John McGahern is one of those in recent memory, who writes on how different generations in one Irish family react to the same national event from their history. His work, *Amongst Women (1990)*, takes issue with how two generations of Irish people identify differently with historical events, revealing how shared identification shifts as the Irish collective memory seeks to suppress trauma of the past, which has become the suffering of today.

In *Amongst Women*, the question is raised whether the identity of the father and his children, Irishiness, is a site of the same identification with Ireland. This is represented by Michael Moran, the main focus of the story, and his five children, two sons and three daughters. Taking this into account, as Moran seeks to create an analogy of a republic at home, he plays an instrumental role in determining the kind of narrative that is generally available in his household. Moran's children, Sheila, Mona, Maggie, Luke and Michael, are, thus, confronted to a hegemonic narrative that only confirms similarity between their roles within the private sphere. The novel's setting, Great Meadow, becomes a symbol of the gradual shift of authority from the father's traditional Irishness into his children's modern identities. As the story progresses, Moran's dominant sense of identity shifts toward a variety of viewpoints exemplified by his children subverting his fatherly role. This not only reflects Moran's losing his dominant fatherly role over his children, but it also symbolizes the Irish transition in critical times, which is the result of peace embraced by a generation that did not

[1] The Easter Rising, also called the Easter Rebellion, was an armed uprising in Ireland that took place over Easter Week in 1916. Irish nationalists launched the Rising in response to British rule in Ireland, with the purpose of achieving an independent Irish Republic.

witness warfare. That is to say, we are presented with the story of these individuals, Moran and his children, and how they relate to a new country, whereby their self-identification moves away from the traditional defined frameworks of Irish identity toward a modern national identification.

Despite the efforts of numerous scholars to approach the novel from different perspectives, McGahern's book still; nevertheless, offers a plethora of themes related to Irish identity that somehow still urge further academic inquiry. As a result, the present article's objective is fundamentally to explore Irish identity, which has traditionally been imagined to be a single continuum, by delving into the notions of generations, social shift, and trauma. While most prior academic studies have undeniably broadened our understanding of the multifaceted nature of Irish identity, the current point focuses on the various approaches which two generations endorsed in adapting to modern Ireland. More specifically, in identifying the changes in Irish culture, bracketed by war of independence to the 1990s, one uncharted territory in the recent Irish debate on identity and nationalismm is that Irish collective and individual experiences have witnessed a shift in terms of economic, political, and social incentives that all rest upon psychological factors.

Following a close reading of McGahern's novel, such rationalizations become artistically envisioned, if not explicitly perceptible in the narrative. Therefore, in this three-parts article, we will correlate the themes of generations, social shifts, and trauma to the characters of Moran and his children by aggrandizing their relevance in Irish history. First, we will explore Moran's character as a means that represents his generation of the Easter Rebellion, Irish Civil War, and, to some extent, the distant consequence of Irish famine, which compel him to be closed in on himself. Then, we will delve into his children's inclinations, as a generation who did not witness the atrocities of that period. While we argue that the frames that define a character like Moran as a symbol of Irish traditional paradigms have long been described by national incentives such as the Irish Literary Revivals[2], each one of his children subverts these long-held views. Therefore, the children's paradigms of identity emphasize a shift from the traditional one-sided view of the father to different viewpoints in the new Irish context.

In the second part, then, we will investigate whether unspeakable trauma, as evidenced by Moran's experience as a war veteran, is one of the driving factors of the shift in Irish culture. Hence, we contend that the Irish transformation has a traumatic dimension that is largely overlooked, because Moran symbolizes a significant voice of his generation. That is to say, this old archetypal representation of the Irish father remains trapped in the past, as a consequence of unspeakable trauma, while his

[2]Irish Literary Revivals, or Renaissance, follows the surge of Irish literary talent at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. This period was intimately linked to a strong political nationalism and a renewed interest in Ireland's Gaelic literary legacy.

children are able to challenge Moran's fear of the outside world. Such initiative indicates a shift in Irish collective perception and memory.

Finally, in the third part, we will select instances from the novel to better comprehend the fundamental factors that have contributed to this shift from the Irish traditional identity paradigms into modern ones. These are observed by the differences between two generations of one nation, as well as the transformation from one formation, national hegemonic views, into individuals: Moran's and his children's accounts. With a motivation to explore identity that makes references to contemporary debates and theory, our intention, in this discussion, is to bring to light a hitherto overlooked part of Irish literary criticism, namely Irishness: a concept that vehicles the symptoms of a deeply psychologically traumatized civilization. Provided that our argument necessitates a rather deep involvement in the dynamics of two generations, our treatment of the narrative will rely on our interpretations of the social and psychological representations in the novel.

2. Review of Literature

In a chapter titled "The Irish Paradigm," a reading from Pascale Casanova's book, *The World Republic of Letters*, the concept of Irishness embraced by the Irish founding fathers, is addressed. Casanova mentions three literary axes functioning inside Irish literary tradition: Dublin, London, and Paris. She claims that Irish identity promulgated by Irish founding fathers could be mapped in three intertwined attributes. Firstly in Dublin, William Butler Yeats founded the first national literary position; secondly in London, George Bernard Shaw established the traditional status of the Irishman assimilated English specifications; and finally in Paris, James Joyce succeeded in reconciling the Irish anomalies by allocating Paris as a new refuge for the Irish expression (Casanova, 2007, p. 318). London was revered as the center of violent colonialist history, yet, it signifies modernity, while the Dublin was idolized as the source of Irish national identity, amid its prevalent agrarian tradition.

In Dublin, the vision and practice of being Irish were homogenized largely around clearly understood and commonly accepted notions termed as traditional paradigms of Irishness. Mike Cronin writes of how cultural nationalist organizations, developed in the late Nineteenth-century, promoting a "cohesiveness of cultural experience" that offered people "a clear sense of an Irish identity" (2000, p.166). The Irish Literary Revivals had laid the foundation to a particular set of formation of identity about Ireland-mainly attached to aforementioned paradigms after the Irish Civil War towards the Irish Independence, during the first half of the twentieth century. Irish nationalists identified with the ideals championed by Irish Literary Revivals in a trend that has wielded immense control over the country for many decades. As Declan Kiberd writes, "the value of nationalism was strategic" in a way "it helped to break up the self-hatred within an occupied people" (2005, p. 146-147).

As the state sought to establish itself as an independent country, any incident or aspect that could impede the idealized image of Ireland was suppressed in order to retain the leverage of the homogenized concept regarding the Irish image. Nevertheless, rethinking the postwar tragedy has resurfaced a handful of suppressed traumatic accounts that persisted from the late 1930s to the 1990s, during which memories of these often traumatic events were withheld from the Republic's official narrative. The reasoning behind this was that recognizing them publically would have introduced the newly formed nation to domestic and abroad concerns regarding the merits of their sovereignty. As Irish nationalism began to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Irish conflicts highlighted what nationalism implies for the Irish, with the bearing of violence and trauma being critical in this context. For many authors, representing unspeakable trauma in the Irish context means exposing the blurred events of Irish history, namely, the aftermath of the war of independence. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Cathy Caruth suggests that we can read the narrative of trauma "not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another" (2010, p. 8). Trauma may have a bearing on cultural levels, as traumatic experiences can shift existing narratives from the past if recollection of certain events is tainted. As a result, such patterns, exhibited in traumatic societies, are more likely to be apparent since trauma, often, spins narratives to overcome or echo the unspeakable.

Nonetheless, throughout the 1990s, several events took place, which resulted in major shifts in how Irish thought about themselves in public discourse. The signing of the Good Friday Agreement[3] in the late 90s brought about the end of partisan violence in Northern Ireland. The economic boom, referred to as the Celtic Tiger[4], contributed to the growing trend towards modern driven culture than had ever been experienced before (McCann, 2013, p. 109). However, following the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War, there had been a concentration on identifying the intrinsic foundations for this shift in culture between the war generation and the generation that followed of which John McGahern (1934 -2006) was a member. Since it is generational, we should look into the lingering Irish cultural trauma that installs Irish hegemonic practices, which can be supported by observing the collective memory. Violence of war is a key aspect, here, in determining how different groups of participants in the same culture correspond to the perpetuated unspeakable trauma. McGahern comments that: "Ireland was always a very violent society, and, like most things there, it was very hidden there as well" (qtd.in Collinge & Vernadakis, 2020, p.9).

[3] The Good Friday Agreement is a set of agreements signed on April 10, 1998, that put an end to the majority of the violence of the Troubles, a political conflict in Northern Ireland.

[4] The term "Celtic Tiger" refers to the Republic of Ireland's economy from the mid-1990 s to the late 2000s, a period of rapid growth of economic development driven by foreign direct investment.

3. Two Generations and The Paradigm of Irish Identity

3.1 Moran as the Representation of the War Generation

Like the stereotypical Irish man in the mid-twentieth century, Moran quickly escalates to use domination and power, verbally or physically, as the patriarch of his household to control his second wife, Rose, his three daughters and his two sons. This depiction of oppressive fatherhood, as symptoms of the time's political and social situations, cement the incentive to keep control of the nation by making it inaccessible to external cultural influences, pertinently the English. Therefore, *Amongst Women* becomes an allegory for a new Irish impression in post-colonial Ireland. This is pointing to Moran's initiative to lock his family off from the outside, which is tantamount to Ireland's attempt to isolate itself from the world to preserve Irish culture and social conservatism. When compared to his children, Moran's growing frustration provides a perspective on the dissolution of Irish identification paradigms between two generations, which, in turn, illustrates the difficulty encountered in rebuilding the nation's collective image.

The most visible characteristic of Moran's personality is his reluctance to change. This patriotic veteran, who served in the Irish War of Independence, has very precise views about religion, family, and Ireland. He refuses to amuse any change that would dispute his long-held indictments. However, as life in Ireland progresses toward a more stable nation, he finds it difficult to adjust to new civilian life and feels shunned to be associated with people, who have gained leadership in the New Free State. This is exemplified in one scene, when his former comrade-in-arms McQuaid visits him, for the last time, to celebrate a day they call the Monaghan Day. As both reminisce about their days during the war, McQuaid grows impatient with Moran's manners as Moran insists on making the discussion about him. Consequently, the annoyed McQuaid leaves Moran, muttering aloud: "some people just cannot bear to come in second" (McGahern, 1990, p. 22). McQuaid's financial situation has grown since the war, providing him with overwhelming leverage accentuated by his socioeconomic standing that Moran would not overlook. Despite the fact that Moran was McQuaid's superior during the war, McQuaid symbolizes a new Free State that has emerged as a result of their struggle, which finally, leads both men into the unpleasant altercation.

In order to wrestle with the subject of the narrative, Moran, we explore how his ideals are disseminated across his generation. Moran is an old Irish patriarch whose function as a dominant father affecting the self-perception of those around him was a role upheld by Irish society at the time. Social roles, as historically assigned by the Catholic interpretations, aimed to create hegemonic, yet coherent, positions with the family at the center. Moran is often referred to as "Daddy" even by his wife. This reveals the importance of his fatherly image. However, this position seems challenging to the other two sons, Luke and Michael, who leave him alone with his daughters and wife. Luke makes the remark that: "only women could live with Daddy" (McGahern, 1990, p. 110), and he is, in fact, as the title of the novel suggests "amongst women".

The prevalence of one dominating narrative projected into home, that of the father, causes the children a tremendous deal of psychological stress as they mature. His children eventually resolve to cope in various methods, each finding a new outlet that is not available in the private sphere, indicating a shift from their father. As his two sons depart Great Meadow, and his daughters eventually turn around the maintained power as Moran gets older, the assumed role that is historically viewed as a natural position gradually comes to crumble.

Moran's characterization is his profound feeling of insecurity toward the outside. This is owing to shrouded reluctance to change, which is often imbued in his view of the past as one with the present, as one single unification. He fails to see his past in lenses of a changing continuation and thinks that it is unwise: "dredging up of the past," that could replace the foundations of "the continuing present he felt his life to be" (McGahern, 1990, p. 3). As much as Moran represents an individual whose narrative is riddled with tyranny, he also comprises a great deal of hegemonic discursive national ideologies as his place in Irish history has been politicized. Therefore, as Liam Harte clarifies, in an article titled *House Arrest: John McGahern's* (1990):"remembrance has become his enemy, a disruptive force that unsettles his current sense of self" since he is consistently reminded "of his ambivalence about the war and his failure to prosper as an officer in the Free State Army". His disappointment engenders a feeling of: "an acute disaffection for those who rose to the top in the post-revolutionary state that he helped bring into being" (2014, p. 58). Therefore, his unspeakable characterization is an intrinsic symptom of a larger situation than himself: that is Ireland's. By subverting the external pressure with the outside, he wants to maintain his position.

Moran's discontent with the new government is tied to his increasing frustrations and difficulties accepting the new directions. He deems the current Irish situation as a plague that has crippled his family since his children, especially his two sons, who found a new path in life by emigrating to England. This speaks to several problems that Moran was unable to overcome; not only does England represent an enemy he fought against, but it also suggests that this generation does not demand the same circuiting concepts as Moran to prosper in their careers. Since, traditionally, Irish identity confines itself to militant rationalizations ingrained in the culture, his sons subvert the long-held belief that Irish identity is harsh and hyper-masculine. They grew up in a different socio-political context than what Moran did experience, resulting in variances in national identifications. He says: "more than half of my own family work in England. What was it all for? The whole thing was a cod" (McGahern 1990, p. 5). That is to say: "what was it all for?" refers to the war of independence, which the old ageing nationalist feels an unfulfilling aspect of his past, considering the belief that the aftermaths of the war should have been brighter for the likes of Moran.

3.2 The Second Generation: Moran's Children

The intense disappointment is felt by Moran's generation and the generation that followed them, but it echoes into different realizations about the Irish identity. Moran represents those who could do nothing but to observe the transformation of Irish society, in which their authority and place that once were well-identified shifted into new national values of openness to the other. They had no one to blame but the current generation and England. As for his children, they symbolize different sentiment with their nation, where they thought it was inhabited by outdated ideas of their fathers. The idea behind this thinking was that Ireland's old generation had a traditional vision of the nation, a decaying paradigm, that would have a detrimental impact on the economy and prosperity in the new world. For example, Michael, the younger son, who did not fight in any war, still resented the older generation. Michael's sentiment reflects many of his generation as he thinks:

> [war of independence] meant little to the people in the crowded boat trains, the men who worked on the roads or had a few acres and followed de Valera's dream, to the men and women who waited till they were too old to marry. (McGahern, 1990, p. 125)

The socioeconomic based critique of Michael, in fact, represents a profound reality that was hardly acknowledged by the national reports. Mass emigration to England, a few decades after the War, was an escape from Ireland's fragile economy: an embarrassment to the premise of a free republic as if England had never withdrawn and now snatches the Irish young. Moran particularly thinks that: "a lot of our people go wrong in England," but although England is depicted as a cultural counterpart that mirrors Irish national identity, his family on the other hand recognizes that "there was always England" (1990, p. 73). This directly subverts the traditional paradigm of Irish identity that posits England as a direct enemy to their sovereignty.

In the case of his oldest son, Luke, his presence in the story creates a disrupting narrative that threatens Moran's core identity while also undermining Moran's authority. This passage exemplifies this role: "Once [Moran] made Luke take off all his clothes in the room. We heard the sound of the beating" (McGahern 1990, p. 113). The example of the Irish father's imprudent use of violence towards his child as a norm of conduct is stressed in this scene. As the father's role is to set the example for his sons to follow, the lack of affection for his elder son and escalating into violence serve only to aggravate trauma and increase the gap between their views on family reunion. Luke, eventually, leaves Great Meadow, but his narratives linger in the home since we only learn about him through the family. Therefore, his presence in the story is derived only from their accounts. Luke's narrative, or the lack thereof, is to subvert the Irish family traditional appearance, which is heightened by his decision to settle in England. Even though the nuances of Moran's and Luke's dispute are never described, and the reader is almost never certain of all explicit reasons for Luke's absence from Great Meadow, the silence overshadows Moran's narrative. Luke's role provides a

narrative disconnection, a gap that deepens the shift between the two, that persists in memory of the father and other family members. This is specifically triggered when they recall the painful incident between the son and the father.

As far as the daughters' roles are concerned, we notably address the preparation of the Monaghan Day with his daughters since it is thematically and narratively significant. However, there are other several instances all throughout the novel in which the girls, more than the sons, prevail in subverting Moran's dominance and eventually developing their own identity. The story begins with the preparations to revive the Monaghan Day by Moran's daughters. Monaghan Day is a fair day in late February when Moran receives, yearly, a visit from McQuaid and the two reminisce over their youthful heroics. Monaghan Day is Moran's equivalent of Remembrance Day[5] in Ireland. This day for Moran is not just a mere celebration but: "Monaghan Day had always been for the whole house; with distance it had become large, heroic, blood-mystical, something from which the impossible could be snatched" (McGahern 1990, p. 2). The symbolic meaning of the day extends beyond the realm of spiritual practices to bind with his own identity. Moran's drive to extract meaning from this day extends beyond satisfying his own longing for that heroic young Irish man. His objective is to recreate a power structure for himself that he feels has been lost in the new Ireland.

However, the daughters in his house had different aims from reviving this day, as Harte explains: "their aim is to restage Monaghan Day, an annual domestic ritual that they recall as having sustained their father when they were young" (2014, p. 58). Moran celebration his nationalistic identity, as he thinks being lost beyond the frontiers of his private sphere, is one of the mediums to communicate his values to the daughters. As for his daughters, Harte asserts, this day is not just for them to deliberately "sentimentalize" their family tradition but also to "sanitize" it (2014, p. 58). The daughters' reason for taking part in this celebration is to cleanse their father's memories by re-enacting an event that would be also linked with them. Despite the fact that their father does not speak about his traumatic war years, they strive to integrate his history with theirs, but in their own terms. Robert Garratt, whose article *John McGahern's 'Amongst Women': Representation, Memory, and Trauma* provides us with a thorough reading of this story, writes:

> the decision to open and close the novel with the same event means that, above all else, *Amongst Women* is a novel about memory.…And the subject of the novel involves a return to history, a history of the self that is private. (2005, p. 130)

Harte, on the other hand, argues that the notions of "blood-mystical" do not just signify "the redemptive romantic nationalism of Patrick Pearse, leader of the 1916 Rising", but it renders Monaghan Day as a domestic rite since the direct attachment to the Irish war is absent from the children memories. In this sense, it suggests that

[5] Remembrance Day is a national day of commemoration for Irish men and women, who died in the war.

McGahern uses a rite zeal:"to reconfigure history as an enabling, regenerative fiction" (2014, p. 58).

4. Generation of Unspeakable Trauma

As a former guerrilla commander, Moran's frustration has a significant correlation to the notion of disillusionment with post-independence Ireland, as has been noted in a number of instances. "What did we get for it?" We can see that his speech is heavily influenced by disappointment in the new state especially when he adds: "A nation, if you believe them" (McGahern,1990, p.5). Since: "it was the priest and the doctor, not the guerrilla fighters, who had emerged as the bigwigs in the country Moran had fought for", he did not allow his daughter "to lay claim to such position" (1990, p. 5). His repression of the outside world, that he holds, represents traumatic unspeakability. It is a matter that Moran and those who connect with his sense of identity have been reasoning with since the foundation of the new Irish state. This speaks about a generation that struggled in developing a positive normative framework to work through the repression that has ensued, other than to reinstallit in their familial sphere. Moran's past is a violent one that is imbued from his exciting and tragic experience of killing his enemies in the war. Moran was: "a guerrilla fighter from the time he was little more than a boy" (McGahern,1990, p. 163), and was recruited into a national mission of divine propositions, which made him a commander of a lethal weapon and a soldier at a young age.

Accordingly, as Stanley Van Der Ziel argues, in *Fionn and Oisín in the Land of Wink and Nod: Heroes, History, and the Creative Imagination*, that Moran has absorbed the romantic nationalism ideologies of his generation to a large extent that his perceptions were muddled, finding it challenging for him to identify the war's true reality, its emotional myths or the deceptions of heroism (2005, p. 14).Whilst Van Der Ziel relates Moran's trauma to the idealism Moran installed in his mind by nationalist faculties, Garrat elucidates that Moran's recollections are the culmination of a struggle between the public and private worlds, as demonstrated by: "his disappointment with both his family and his nation", which contributes to "his own trauma and suffering as a guerrilla" (Garratt, 2005, p. 131). Additionally, another critique by Harte provides a very thorough reading of Moran's traumatic experience as an individual, who represents a broader traumatized society, a carrier of intergenerational trauma and guilt, and who often switches between victimhood and perpetuator (Harte, 2014, p. 61). These interpretations carefully map out Moran's character as a traumatized father. However, the fact that Moran's children, who do not represent a generation that lived through the war, do not share his views may provide a subtle perspective on Irish identity as a traumatized cultural memory.

We may recount how Moran's children collectively authorize his dominance over them by revisiting his history in numerous ways and recalling his trauma. One notable example is when his daughter, Sheila, attempts to reassure her ill father by recalling

his historical reminiscences. She asks in hopes that her father would open up to her: "They say you should have gone to the very top in the army after the war but you were stopped" (McGahern, 1990, p. 5). Moran does not respond, implying that he is unwilling to speak openly about his time in war due to unspeakable trauma. However, moments later, as the family's women are gathered eating together without him, he dramatically draws their attention by shooting a jackdaw from his bedroom window. Moran is agitated that women would enjoy spending time together in his house, where he is not involved. This could be interpreted as a compensatory claim to phallic authority performed, dramatically, with the sole purpose of reestablishing hegemony of the father rather than discursive voices of the daughters. Garratt characterizes it as evidence of Moran's lingering post-war trauma (2005, p. 132). When it comes to traumatic memories, such as when Moran takes the shotgun to kill the bird, the past painful experiences always request to be repeated, or carried out again, in order to be resolved. Moran for the first time, openly, admits to his wife and daughters that he killed men in the war, shortly after this incident. This may reflect what Joe Cleary meant that Irish history is traumatic in nature, and that it can only be addressed after the fact because of its sheer immediate force (Clearly, 2004, p. 108). The force closely represents the manner of Moran's opening up to his family, which occurred only after a violent event, the shotgun incident, that reactivated his war memories.

Hence, the use of memory, in *Amongst Women*, speaks, explicitly, to how we know information about the past and how we formulate historical reality. Through this process, the war plays a significant part in determining the Irish collective identity and how they connect to Ireland's past. In the novel, the children's identification comes from their access onto a memory of memory and not directly to the traumatic experience the father endured. His unspeakable trauma is a condition that does not assist the children in fully understanding their father's perspective or explaining why he has such an extreme position about things, but its effects are visible, such as occurrences of violence. Caruth comments that the process of: "taking this literal return of the past as a model or repetitive behavior in general, Freud ultimately argues, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, that it is traumatic repetition, rather than the meaningful distortions of neurosis, that defines the shape of individual lives" (2010:59). That is, when it comes to describing cultural trauma, Irish general consensus dismisses it as a valid experience at the time, which, as Caruth points out: "[surfaces] the example of the accident neurosis as a means of explaining individual histories", and this necessitates thinking of history through the lens of traumatic narratives. (2010, p. 59)

5. The Shift to a New Irish Perspective

Gradually, Moran is becoming more fearful of his daughters as he grows older; despite the fact that they speak back to his past, and despite the fact that he has policed their voice during their time at Great Meadow, their willingness to speak together and

defy his authority can be used against him. The daughters also imitate Moran, and at the end of his life, they speak up for themselves in a sequence of vocal pleas that are depicted in first stage and last stage of the novel as being voiced by all three daughters: "You'll have to shape up, Daddy. You can't go on like this" (McGahern,1990, p. 3). Their authority, as understood, resembles a feminine force: "since they had the power of birth there was no reason why they couldn't will this life free of death" (1990, p. 3). This also signifies women's place in the Irish culture following the war as many women accepted the shift of societal roles that were carried by economic indicators (Biletz, 2002, p. 64). Moran is, once again, overwhelmed with fear as a result of the strong likelihood of being dethroned.

Moran's perspective has been molded by trauma, and as a result of Irish history, he, inadvertently, conforms to identity notions that he is unable to consciously oversee. This fits the portrait in the description of trauma as "a symptom of history" by Caruth. She argues that those: "traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history with them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (2010, p. 5). Such glimpses of his repressed agony morph him into a seemingly effective tyrant in the domestic sphere. Correspondingly, yet, Moran is a product of transgenerational trauma and guilt, resulting from a whole culture and generation. That is to say, Moran's inability, or unworked through memories, to talk about his wartime memories, becomes a central component for investigating the nature of nationhood and national identity, which started as a latent Irishness peculiarity manifesting itself in social dynamics and developed into a homogenizing climate. This is the point at which the traumatizing effects of Moran's identity would become apparent with his family. This psychological condition, according to Garratt, governs Moran's willingness to live in the perpetual present in Great Meadow, where he wields supreme control over house and home. (2005, p. 133)

Luke is perceived as different throughout the novel. He is the English; he belongs to the "other" side: "Luke is different. You'd never know what he is thinking. He is turning himself into a sort of Englishman" (McGahern,1990, p. 148). At this point, Luke is also aware of his position, as he makes a remark about the two countries: "I am well here and I hope you are well there" (1990, p. 5). Michael goes to London, too, with the difference that he does not deny and reject his father as Luke, but he admits that he is a tyrant and that they left because of him: "We all left Ireland. I'm afraid we might all die in Ireland if we don't get out fast" (1990, p. 155). Despite the fact that Maggie goes to London while Sheila and Mona move to Dublin, their individual identities fuse into one unit as the narration voice indicates that: "their individual selves gathered into something very close to a single presence" (1990, p. 2). Their leaving stands for the shift into being independent individuals, and announces a change in the Irish perspective that the father's ideas, rooted in the old ways, could not stay for too long.

In *Identity Change in the Republic of Ireland*, John Murphy indicates that the

essence of Irish nationalism, that is ritual and religious nature, is evolving, substantially and differently, two decades after the War of Independence. The causes of the shift can be traced back to a number of events in the early 1960s. (1976, p. 146) About the fact that the reality of trauma continues to haunt multiple victims, Irish perceptions are slowly shifting to embrace more nationalist symbols being tarnished, rather than the stance that was once taken, such as the controversies involving religious and political leaders in the from 1960s to 1990s. Changes in Irish culture take longer to manifest as: "the nation's sexual repressions, in-turned emotional culture, and misogynist containment of sexuality were strongly affected by a remarkable series of painful events emerging from the 1980s onwards" (Coughlan, 2004, p. 176). The progressive shift in perception comes to Great Meadow in the form of Nell Monahan, a character, who returns from America and has a passionate affair with Moran's Michael before returning to the United States. In comparison to the deeply conservative and silent Moran and Rose union, Nell's and Michael's liberal ideals are apparent in their intimate relationship.

When Ireland had to carry the burden of the conflict with Britain, there was no question over the Irish traditional paradigm of identity; nevertheless, under the modern paradigm, there has been possibility for conceptualizing a plurality of "Irelands" in one Ireland. Moran's traumatic memory, violent outbursts, and traditional means had shifted into his children after his death, yet, they conduct and view themselves differently in terms of singularity. This, undoubtedly, indicates that the characteristics of post-nationalist Ireland may be shown in modern Ireland. Cronin describes how the position of the nationalist ideology in Irish society has been drastically reduced because, very simply: "it has fulfilled its function and is needed no more" (2000, p.221). Ireland has attained political autonomy, and the Gaelicisation of Irish society has, thoroughly, been repudiated culturally. Cronin comments further: "little [cultural] differences [exist] between England and Ireland today" (2000, p. 221). In modern Ireland, Moran's life represents a narrative to explore the unspeakable vacuum left by traumatic experience, which is obscured to some extent by old paradigms of identification. Eventually, the unspoken frustrations of post-independence Ireland, crystallized as unresolved trauma, could trace the reasons for a shift in world views from one generation to the next.

6. Conclusion

Throughout the story, Moran's austere features are unpleasant, if not downright loathsome. His unyielding endorsement for some aspects of Anglo-Irish military culture is, thus, a foreshadowing of the long-awaited transformation that would, subsequently, be embraced by Irish progressive outlooks on their identity. That is to say, reading this story leaves an indelible impression of how feasibly it comments on predefined cultural and historical truths that are rarely unblemished. This is why much of McGahern's artistic energy is geared toward unearthing the invisible disparities

between two generations. Therefore, this article attempted to explore the once assumed unvarying frameworks of national identity in McGahern's fiction. That is achieved by showing how heavily riddled Moran's generation had been with myths, assumptions, and generalizations upon which popular ideas of nationhood were inscribed and later juxtaposed with projectors of modern identity paradigms.

By exploring Moran's character, as a representation of the hegemonic perspective of Irish identity, i.e., the paradigm of Irish Identity, the article draws several conclusions. In a broader sense, the story narrative is a concealed call for urgency to go beyond the crumbling concepts that have historically established constraints in optimizing a modern social structure. By taking this concern into account, it is evident that traditional aspects of Irish culture, which have long dictated how the Irish view themselves, are no longer relevant—at least not as deeply absorbed as they once have been. Such rationale is visible in *Amongst Women*, particularly with the nation always designing new horizons for progress. In terms of identity, continuance does not always entail that one generation's vision of identity is passed down to the next, seeing how collective memory conceals what is considered harmful to the centralization of that identity structure. In retrospect, this appears in Moran's story as the center of Great Meadow, whose efforts to pass on his worldview to his children are deemed pointless.

A final discussion this paper addressed is related to Moran's somewhat traumatizing realization that some aspects of Ireland's social transformation are practically beyond his grasp. Thus, by associating Moran's life to the perpetuation of traumatic experience, unspeakable trauma, we established that Moran, whether as a father, a soldier and a civilian, provides a critical reading in Irish traumatic history. His children, on the other hand, draw attention to the significant aspect: the shift was proclaimed rather than, spontaneously, occurred. Similarly, we observed how Moran's personality is shaped by the temporal and spatial constraints imposed on his perceptions, which render him unable to fully integrate the war memories to his children, as a consequence of unspeakable trauma. Since our discussion of his representation drew parallels to bigger aspects of Irish society, *Amongst Women* provides a prospect for a broader vision of Irishness rather than a monolithic union. This is, somehow, true at least in the case of Moran, whose children do not attain his sense of time and are collectively unlinked to his hegemonic tendencies. As we read, carefully, their individualities, we arrive at the impression that their vision of the world is less irritating than Moran's, and they exist with other people in hopeful pursuit of comfort rather than closing their walls in.

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