"A Question of Adapting": Mediating Return Migrant Identity in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Ireland

Brittany Walsh

The Great Famine is a central part of how Irishness is communicated between persons of Irish heritage, whether they are citizens of the Republic of Ireland or descendants of the Irish diaspora. This event had a profound impact on Irish life, catalyzing the movement of more than 3 million Irish from their homeland between 1845 and 1900.[1] This emigration crisis split the Irish into two categories, those who left and those who stayed behind, groups whose understandings of Irish identity then came into conflict when emigrants returned to their homeland. Often, the differences between an emigrant's memory and the reality they returned to created a dissonance between the returnees and those who stayed. However, by the second half of the 20th century, a shifting understanding of national identity amongst emigrants, facilitated by increased technology and social interaction, enabled them to minimize this dissonance. The changing interactions between emigrants and non-emigrants on the former's return to Ireland, growing from hostile to hospitable, reveals the significance of returnees' new means of mediating identity within communities in the Irish diaspora while abroad and the role these means played in the emigrant's ability to adapt to life after returning to Ireland.

Emigration crises were a constant in Irish history in the century and a half after the Famine. As a result, Irish emigration became a fixture in Irish historical narratives. Those who emigrated and never returned were given the most attention in such studies while little attention has been given to the smaller groups of Irish emigrants who chose to return. One of the earliest studies of Irish returnees was an economic one by Marjolein 'T Hart,[2] published in 1985 during a resurgence in emigration from Ireland. The 21st century brought renewed attention to the returnees. One such study was David Ralph's exploration of "sameness and difference" amongst returnees in Celtic Tiger Ireland.[3] Narratives of return grew during this time period, including the study of returnees as "home-comers or newcomers" published by Caitríona Ní Laoire in 2008.[4] Diane Dunnigan focused on narratives of return that emphasized individual experiences in emigration and return in the decades that followed the Famine.[5] These studies focused on one of the most interesting aspects of Irish return narratives – how returnees interacted with their home community and how those who had not emigrated received them. The dichotomy of belonging and the lack of congruence of identity between migrants and non-migrants revealed how emigration affected these communities during periods of suffering and change, but the change in these interactions also revealed a change in how identity was mediated over the course of more than a century of emigration crises. This work strives to expand the discussion of return migration through an exploration of the changing relationship between migrants and their communities from the mid-twentieth century and into the twenty-first. In doing so, it seeks to reveal how differences in identity, whether maintained

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by memory or through close connection with the homeland, changed the way an emigrant was received upon their return, and thus affected his or her returnee experience.

The interests of early Irish return migration scholars led to the formation of databases to compile and outline the narratives upon which the field thrives. By focusing on individual narratives of return and the social and emotional impact of emigration on the returnee, the studies written by these scholars encouraged the creation of resources that shared a similar exploration of return migrant experience in Ireland. The Voices of Migration and Return (VMR) Collection — created by the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies, in Omagh, Co. Tyrone and available through Documenting Ireland: Parliament, People, and Migration — is one of these resources. Compiled beginning in 2004, the archive currently contains interviews with 93 migrants and returnees, who are identified by first name only. All interviews were conducted in the early 2000s by Dr. Johanne Devlin Trew of the University of Ulster and are available as audio files which are organized by age, gender, religion, and decades of both departure and return.[6] The interviews cover all aspects of the emigrant's life from their birth to the time of the interview, detailing life before, during, and after emigration. Interviewees were selected on a voluntary basis and consisted of emigrants who responded to advertisements and were willing to participate. The archive itself is heavily weighted towards narratives from the Ulster province regarding emigration in the 1970s, due primarily to the scale of emigration at the time of the early Troubles in Northern Ireland.[7] As a result, the interviews discussed in this work represent Northern Irish narratives in proportion to the archive's demographics, focusing on individual experience before national and religious affiliation. Most interviewees settled in Northern Ireland, and the VMR database is "an all-Ireland study,"[8] revealing the ties between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, suggesting that the emigrant experience revealed in the archive is shared amongst inhabitants of the island and extends beyond national identity.

The decades that followed the Great Famine moved Ireland into a century of social and political change. After the Famine ended, migration to the United States alone continued at a pace of approximately a half million Irish per decade. The rise in emigration in subsequent decades, and the population decline that followed, created a deficit unique to Ireland. It took more than a century for the population to fully recover from the Famine. It was not until this recovery began in the 1950s and 1960s that attitudes toward returnees became more accepting.

Despite growing markets, industry, and economic expansion after World War II in much of Western and Northern Europe, Ireland remained a relatively poor nation into the 1950s and 1960s. The 1950s witnessed a large emigration from Ireland, followed by a slowly recovering population that began to move finally back toward pre-famine numbers. While it is uncertain where the cycle begins and ends, the relationship between migration and the economy in Ireland suggests that over 100 years of consistent emigration created cycles of economic underdevelopment, from which Ireland could not easily escape. Emigration served as a tool to compare or rate a government's effectiveness, since "economic success or failure was measured more often than not by the number of people departing for other countries annually."[9] By this standard, the first several decades of Irish republican government failed to effectively address the poverty that had historically plagued Ireland under British rule before independence. The natural solution was for the people to seek opportunities abroad.

Over time, the romanticization of the homeland among the diaspora created a vision of Ireland which manipulated emigrant memories and created an idealized version of Ireland, one which could never have matched the Ireland that actually existed. This memory aided the maintenance of Irish culture abroad and perpetuated a desire to return. This desire, which Caitríona Ní Laoire refers to as the

"dream of return,"[10] was a critical aspect of diaspora life. As a driving force, this allowed groups of emigrants to maintain a connection with their heritage, aided in the formation of community identity, and contextualized their experiences. This dream of return became part of a larger "nostalgic and idealized imaginings of a homeland, around which identities in the diaspora [could] be mobilized."[11]

Many who left Ireland found themselves particularly driven to return. They were disenchanted with their new life or found themselves missing their homeland more profoundly than expected. Some of these families, "unable to save money in the States, and desiring to return home to Ireland, would have collections made for them by other immigrant Irish. It seemed this was the only way they were able to return to Ireland even though they arrived penniless to lead a sad and lonely existence."[12] To these families, the desire to be home drove them to extreme lengths to return, with their homeland becoming a comfort in difficulty and preferable to the opportunities available elsewhere. Some who returned with a substantial amount of money saved found themselves at risk or unhappy with their decision to come home. Michael Walsh, who returned to Galway, expressed unhappiness, stating, "some came home and regretted it. I am one of those. All the money I brought with me was soon spent. It was impossible to live on your savings alone, unless you did something to add to them…[even] [t]he most successful could not live on their savings alone."[13] Although these groups might have found some success abroad, enough to achieve their dream of return, they also faced disillusionment akin to those who had little success in their host country. Disillusionment and discontent exacerbated tensions as "some returnees verbalized faults with everything in Ireland, 'thereby creating an unnecessary mental barrier between themselves and the home setting.'"[14] The criticisms of Ireland voiced by a few of those who returned home brought emigrants to the attention of groups who were already critical of their decision to leave. Critical comments of this nature increased tensions between non-emigrants and returnees, "otherizing" the latter.

Some returnees, however, did well, adjusting to their new situation in ways that "gave the impression they had never spent a day away from home. These individuals spoke rarely of America and many retained their native Irish language perfectly… Many permanent returnees were admired because their dress was simple, unassuming and more in keeping with the Irish at home."[15] Those who sought to return fully to Irish life could fit back into the community they had left. Acclimation to new changes, alongside a dedication to Irish language and lifestyle, created smaller groups of returnees who gained the respect of their neighbors. Those who stayed away longer or who over-mythologized their memories of Ireland found this transition more difficult, adding to the tension between themselves and their communities. One complication among these groups were those returnees who "lacked the energy to actually make the return trip [to their host country]…though they maintained a psychological desire to return. Their unhappiness took the form of 'talking' about leaving."[16] Some of those who regretted their return might have had the means to re-emigrate, but instead were just vocal about their discontent. Talking about leaving created a coping mechanism to negotiate an experience that had changed their appreciation of their own home country. Return migrants also had to alter habits adopted abroad, as Dunnigan reported that "American slang caused amusement and was even mimicked sometimes and in the case of individuals who were too fond of using American expressions and idioms… it would be regarded as a form of 'showing off'."[17] This "showing off" language emphasized their foreign experiences and lack of assimilation and was a source of resentment for non-emigrants. As a result of their initial decision to leave, "returnees in general seem to have been regarded as 'outsiders, those who had cut themselves off from their birthplace … regarded as semi-alienated oddities, never [totally] accepted back into the community they had left.'"[18] Hostility on the part of non-emigrants extended from expectations of assimilation, a behavior which became necessary

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due to the shift in Irish ideals and culture which had moved on with the changing needs of the nation. Yet many of these changes, including the rise of urban populations and industry, came as a result of the emigration crisis itself.

What is most noticeable about previous scholarship on Irish return migration is the consistency of the internal dichotomy of belonging and non-belonging within the emigrant. In congruence with the reactions of non-emigrants toward returnees, this sense of dual belonging serves as an enforcement of external difference, augmenting the returnees' sense of dissonance between their identity and their new understandings of home. This is consistent amongst communities of Irish emigrants over a wide range of time, and is a key part of the international emigrant experience, a way by which emigrants negotiate their experiences into their understanding of themselves and their roots. What changed over time, however, were the means emigrants utilized in order to connect with their home after their departure. For emigrants of the early post-Famine era, this was limited to slow-traveling letters and the high-cost privilege of return trips. In later decades, the rise of industrialization and new technology brought new tools for communication and easier access to the homeland, whether physical or emotional. Less expensive travel, radios, televisions, and the Internet, have brought Irish emigrants improved ways to strengthen their communication and connection with the Irish public, assisting in the gradual modification of return migrants' identities to be more closely related to the identity of an Irish person who had never migrated than ever before.

Eamonn, a man from Muff, Co. Donegal, grew up in Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s, and, like many others before him, sought opportunities in North America — in his case an education and a job in Canada. He remembered the poverty and suffering of the era, claiming "there were many things wrong with that age, I suppose. In the material sense, people were deprived."[19] Eamonn largely blamed the economic condition for the decisions of the 426,000 people who emigrated between 1950 and 1960 alone. As emigration rates continued to climb, the population of the Republic of Ireland fell to 2.8 million inhabitants. Eamonn, who had moved from Donegal to Dublin as a teenager[20], recalled that the "state of living… was appalling, you see, it was dreadful…it had to have had a dreadful impact on the countryside."[21] In Dublin, many lower-middle class homes were unlivable and the cause of major health and safety concerns. Rural Ireland was much worse.

Living conditions and poverty took a toll on the entire country, both financially and socially, as "whole communities were bled, you see, and that went on right up until relatively recent times."[22] As is the case with each period of high emigration Ireland has experienced, the mass departures, especially of young people, took its toll on the communities they left. Eamonn explained his understanding of the quiet suffering of those who were left behind in Ireland during this period.
"[It was] very much like the Famine, that people talked about it, but it was kind of private and secret talk. And that it was very hurtful, in the same way that poverty is not something anyone is proud of, and you prefer to forget about it. And that tends to - to color, shall we say, people's perceptions of the past. And the same with emigration. There was a lot of hurt there, and people don't give voice to it 'cause they don't know how, very often."[23]
The feeling of hurt among those who were left behind was a result of the suffering caused by emigrants' departures and the economic difficulty from which their decisions developed and to which their departures contributed.

Eamonn's decision to leave Ireland was a result of his desire for new experiences beyond his visits to family abroad,[24] and led to his choice to teach in British Columbia in the 1960s.[25] Delayed after starting a family with a woman he met abroad, Eamonn repatriated to Dublin in 1968, fulfilling his desire to

return while simultaneously continuing his education and exposing his children to the land of his upbringing. Additionally, by this time "one felt that there was going to be work forever" in Ireland.[26] With the rise in economic opportunities — coincidentally growing alongside worsening conflict in Northern Ireland, the source of the next major Irish emigration crisis — jobs became an additional reason to return home, especially to cities like Dublin, Cork, and Belfast. Unlike others emigrating permanently in the 1960s,[27] Eamonn "never intended staying around [in Canada]"[28] and returned after finding a job hosting a radio station in Dublin.

Like most other returnees, his return was only temporary. After four years, Eamonn moved with his family to Newfoundland to study and work at a Canadian radio station there, before he returned finally to Ireland in 1978.[29] Like many others, Eamonn experienced his share of frustrations with Irish life after living abroad for an extended period of time, such as the obstacles he faced setting up a telephone upon his return, the conservative nature of Irish society, and his difficulty finding supplementary employment. However, he found little difficulty adapting back into Irish life, commenting, "there was a feeling of alien - not alienation. It was a question of adapting."[30] Although the feeling of being alien, an outsider in one's own country, is something Eamonn shared with returnees of different eras and backgrounds, his adaptation was aided by his maintenance of contacts, both in Canada and Ireland, which provided a stronger connection to his homeland. His children, all of whom were either born or raised in Canada, were resilient in their adaptation, too; His eldest daughter became best in her Irish class after only a year or two, despite having never learned the language growing up.[31]

Throughout Eamonn's emigration, and both of his returns, it was always his intention to return, and the connections he maintained with his home aided him in making a smooth transition back. These connections, and his self-perceived identity as an Irishman and love of what Ireland and his upbringing meant to him, were key factors is his interaction with the country upon his return. In exhibiting his Irishness rather than his foreignness, Eamonn returned with relative ease facing only a few adjustments to changes in Irish life.

Although Ireland remained neutral during the Second World War, some Irish, feeling bound to aid the Allied Powers, moved abroad to help in whatever capacity they could. Rose served as a nurse in England beginning in 1939 at the start of World War II[32] and only returned to Ireland in the 1970s, after spending over three decades working in hospitals throughout England. Rose's first lengthy return to Ireland took place from 1972 to 1974, during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the region from which she came. Despite her insistence that the people were friendly,[33] Troubles-era Northern Ireland was not a good place for an emigrant to return, let alone settle. Rose explained that, although she did not regret returning and adjusted well, the situation in Northern Ireland "was very off-putting" and "Derry was in a bad spot at the time."[34] Rose had many friends in England and enjoyed a reasonable social life there. When she returned to Ireland, however, she remembered that, "with the Troubles, you know, it cut down social life, too. You didn't want to go out at night."[35] The conflict in Northern Ireland made life dangerous. Major cities like Derry and Belfast were particularly unsafe, especially for those traveling alone at night. Consequently, Rose decided to go back to England,[36] where she lived until she retired. Because of her attachment to her family still in Ireland and the feeling that "my roots [were] always back here,"[37] she returned to Derry a second time in 1980.

Rose experienced a rather easy second return. She found that people, including her neighbors and old acquaintances, were "pleased to see [her] back," and she was happy to be back.[38] Her adjustment was not a problem for her because "people were friendly" and most people she encountered were already

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familiar with her, or her family, and were pleased with her decision to return.[39] Emotionally, Rose was secure in her decision, having only left Ireland the second time due to the aggravated social and political conditions of the 1970s. She returned again, not because of a disenchantment with England or an over-mythologized perspective on Ireland, but rather because she wanted to be closer to her family.[40] Her family functioned as her motivation for return and as an advantage that facilitated her easy adjustment back into life in Northern Ireland.

In the conversation with her interviewer, when discussing the process of adjustment, Rose talked about missing very little about England, beyond the friends she had made there.[41] Little held her inseparably bound to it. Rose explained that she made herself busy from the day she came home. She agreed with her interviewer that "maybe that's the secret" to proper adjustment - the complete immersion into life as one knew it and acceptance of the situation they are experiencing.[42] Alongside this complete immersion, she also noted that having connections was important, not simply for adjusting, but also as a source of comfort. The ease of Rose's return reveals that emotional connections emigrants have with their home and with communities of people who share their experience are imperative to successful return emigration.

Another Northern Irish woman, Eilis, left her home in Derry in 1958, moving to the United States at age 25 to live with relatives and work as a nurse in New Jersey.[43] During her 38 years away, Eilis maintained close contact with her family, who encouraged her to take her opportunity to explore the world and who were likely the cause of her easy return.

When Eilis left Northern Ireland to travel to America, she did so by boat, on the Britannic, which took seven and a half days to reach the United States.[44] Over the course of her nearly four decades as an expatriate, she travelled home repeatedly, witnessing the many changes in travel options that made it easier and cheaper to return. She travelled between the United States and Northern Ireland frequently and claimed, "I was home practically every year."[45] In discussing her time away, Eilis could think of only two or three years over the course of thirty-eight years when she did not come home to visit her family for a few weeks.[46] Her numerous visits home helped her maintain contacts, which allowed her to stay close to her family and fight off homesickness with frequent returns. Eilis and her sister, who died shortly before her final return, never said goodbye at the end of any of her trips, because of the certainty they felt that they would see each other soon and be back in contact the moment Eilis arrived back in America.[47]

In addition to frequent return, Eilis maintained her social connections through extensive letter writing. Even before her emigration, she wrote to her relatives in the United States and had an American pen pal.[48] After she emigrated, she continued her letters. She communicated often with her family and friends, usually writing once or twice a week.[49] During her visits home, she also maintained contact with American friends, co-workers, and acquaintances by writing to them a few times each trip.[50]

Her consistent communication was key to her ability to maintain good spirits abroad, as she said "I never was homesick because I was in constant touch."[51] Staying in touch made her happy and helped her feel connected to those people she really cared about in her brief periods away. While her mother had asked her to send things home — particularly money — because people were better off in America,[52] her family also sent her gifts while she was away, a circumstance that surprised her American friends and neighbors. Her neighbors on Maple Street were "flabbergasted" when she received Christmas gifts, telling each other "this is the first one that ever came out of Ireland and is getting things sent to her."[53]

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Like most returnees, Eilis exhibited a desire to come home, one that was facilitated by her frequent visits and her attempts to maintain close contact, even in years when both communication and travel were slowed by the technology of the era. Her desire for return was enhanced by her mental and emotional closeness to her loved ones and her country, but it was also aided by the inevitable homesickness she experienced. Unfamiliar with how homesickness felt and having already spent several years abroad, Eilis found herself bursting into tears for no obvious reason.[54] While confiding to a friend she realized she was homesick, a feeling she was able to identify and avoid through her temporary return visits. Each of these visits, however, was emotionally taxing, as "it got harder every time you left. It doesn't get any easier."[55] Having to leave her family every year at the end of her visit provided her additional incentive to return sooner, providing her emotional fulfillment in her visits and perpetuating her dream of return.

Her ultimate decision to return, as was the case for many others similarly situated, resulted from the unexpected illness of a close family member. Her uncle, the man who had raised her, growing ill gave her ample reason to make a more permanent return. After her uncle suffered a stroke, Eilis agreed to return for a brief visit to discuss his care.[56] As she was a nurse in America, and already planning on taking her retirement at age 62 in a few months, Eilis agreed to return home six months later, in 1995, to care for her uncle. She promised to stay in Northern Ireland for two years, at which point she would decide whether or not to stay permanently. Being the next of kin for her uncle and choosing to care for him when he became ill, Eilis demonstrated her constant willingness to return home. Her readiness was evidenced through her agreement to visit home upon receiving the news, promising to return to Derry within a week.[57]

Aided by the frequency and consistency of her visits, Eilis did not experience much of a culture shock on her final return because she experienced Ireland's changes throughout her forty years of temporary return. She did express how communication advancements affected her transition. Communication, by that time, was aided by telephones, which had replaced what she referred to as the "culture of calling in."[58] During her interview, she mentioned that she received at least four phone calls from neighbors checking on her or wanting to say hello. The culture of "calling in," which she described as people stopping by for tea or just coming to visit and talk with each other, was made obsolete by telephones.[59] This was the most jarring change for her, as an experience she felt was a constant in Irish life, especially at the time she emigrated, had been replaced by technology. This technology, however, provided her with the opportunities to keep contact with friends and loved ones in a way that surpassed even that of the many letters she wrote.

Her family and the relations she had remained close to despite her distance and time away facilitated her return. This was aided by increased leisure travel and telephones, which offered more instantaneous communication with those who were important to her. Eilis never married, although she had had the opportunity, and described her loneliness as a result — being only surrounded by her siblings and their families, and envious of women for their children — was a part of her decision to emigrate.[60] Despite the romances she maintained, both in Derry prior to her emigration and in New Jersey while she was an expatriate,[61] she chose to never marry, citing selfishness as her reason for doing so.[62] She combated this loneliness, much like she managed her homesickness, through increased socialization. Despite no one coming to her home to visit for months on end, she went out frequently to meet with different organizations and friends, in order to maintain a healthy social life to provide her with the best ability to adapt back into Northern Irish life.[63]

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Stephen, who grew up in Belfast during the Troubles, left in 1988 to study in Vancouver and Toronto. Although his family did not leave during the Troubles, Stephen thought "it [was] crazy that my parents stayed."[64] Looking back at the many neighbors who left, and the freedoms he gained living outside Northern Ireland during the last decade of the Troubles,[65] Stephen found that the Troubles played a key role in his decision to leave. By extension, the Troubles also played a large role in his decision to return. Although he had relocated to England to take a job in 1995, Stephen considered returning to Ireland, somewhat homesick and tired of spending all his spare time traveling between his and his wife's families. When offered a choice between two jobs, one in the United States and the other in Belfast, he decided to return home in 2000, as he "would at least be close to one side of family."[66] Stephen admitted, however, that he would have preferred to live in the Republic of Ireland. His preference revealed his inhibitions with returning to the sectarian Northern Ireland and the lack of real connection he had with his homeland. Even his discovery of the news that the Troubles had ended exposed this lack of connection, as he found out about the Good Friday Agreement while visiting Canada in 1998 for a conference and recalled "actually seeing the news coverage of the announcement and the aftermath from a Canadian perspective."[67] His description of seeing this news through a non-Irish perspective juxtaposes his experience against that of someone who might have actively pursued the information to maintain an understanding of the conflict and seek updates as a consequence of their concern for the state of the country. Stephen was influenced by this news, and chose to work in Northern Ireland, crediting both family and political change with the decision to return, although the choice was more out of convenience than a strong desire to return, despite the fact that he "went [to Canada] with the feeling that [he was] gonna go for a couple of years and then … come back."[68] The change in his initial experience suggests that he was less influenced by the dream of return, perhaps in part because of the state of Northern Ireland while he was away and his memories of the Troubles, and partially because he did not maintain as strong connections to home as many returnees had.

When Stephen returned to Belfast two years later, he found that "it's hard to fit back in here."[69] Although he had family in Northern Ireland, he talked of them very little, and seemed to have had little contact with them while he was away. By contrast, his family — who had stayed in Northern Ireland throughout the Troubles — was more conservative and he explain that, "they had very strong friendship connections and strong commitment to the family that was here."[70] It is likely because of their connections that they did not desire to leave Belfast, although the opportunity existed and many of their neighbors had already fled. Just as his family did not leave as a result of strife, Stephen did not return for the same reasons most returnees did, instead choosing the Belfast job simply because it was preferable over one in Indiana, which was nowhere near his wife's family in Buffalo, New York.

Because of his lack of connections, Stephen had difficulty making his return. In terms of his own adjustment he clarified that "if you've been away, or you're not from here, it's a difficult place to fit into, a very difficult place to feel connected to."[71] Stephen compared himself to a foreigner in saying that the two both experienced a difficulty connecting to Northern Irish life, although he did not speak of any problems with his community. He believed that his disconnection was "partly because of the sectarianism and the way that affects social life [in Northern Ireland]."[72] The fragility of social conditions in the years following the Good Friday Agreement left an uncertainty of whether or not the Troubles had actually ended, a question that persists into the present day. The sectarianism of which Stephen spoke never truly ended, diminishing over the course of the next two decades, but still playing a role in the community identity and Northern Irish identity as a whole.

Northern Irish life after the Troubles remained relatively similar to life before the Troubles; individuals continued with their daily lives as if nothing had changed, beyond the elimination of the danger and

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violence of the previous decades. Stephen claim the "sense of community is so strong… people are so caught up in routine everyday life, I suppose it takes effort from the stranger rather than effort from the people who've been here to plug into those networks."[73] Like with previous generations, the expectation was that returnees and new communities of foreign immigrants would assimilate to Irish life, although the communities they entered made no attempt to accommodate their changes. Rose, who had returned in 1980 — still during the Troubles — found she could adapt by jumping back into Northern Irish life,[74] and many before her doing the same were deemed unassuming and accepted by their neighbors. Stephen's difficulty adapting might have stemmed less from the conditions of Northern Ireland at the time, and more from his inability or refusal to return to his life as he had lived it prior to his initial departure. Stephen problematized the dynamic between returnees and their neighbors by suggesting that it was, in part, the responsibility of non-emigrants to aide repatriates in their return.

Stephen explained the story of one of his friends, who returned around the same time and had an easier adjustment. His friend had moved to England to work as a marketing executive, but prior to his departure had been a part of a group that would meet up on Monday nights at 6pm to play soccer.[75] Eight years later, when he finally returned, he showed up at the same place on a Monday night, played with them, and was accepted back into the group. This friend told Stephen "nobody asked him where he had been. He said it was really bizarre - as if he had never been away."[76] Although Stephen's friend had not maintained noticeable connections with this group in his many years away, his willingness and ability to return to his social habits enabled him to experience an easier return to Ireland. His return to everyday life, of which the soccer games played a small part, emphasized Rose's observation that being busy and jumping back into Irish life played a critical role in the returnee's ability to adjust.

Part of the problem with Stephen's return was his lack of connection, which did not bind him to his homeland while he was abroad or even when he returned. Although he expressed that he wanted to return in part to be closer to his family, and help them whenever he could, he realized he was limited in this capacity,[77] making it less important to his decision to return and stay. Stephen admitted he could see himself re-emigrating, should the opportunity present itself elsewhere.[78] This is particularly interesting, considering he was fascinated with ethnic identity, and used his understanding of Northern Irish identity in the Troubles to write term papers throughout college,[79] but was not able to maintain his own identity in a way that gave him the desire to return at any cost, and a resolve to stay when good opportunities presented themselves. From seeing the Troubles from a Canadian perspective to analyzing Northern Irish life and identity from the view of a Canadian scholar, Stephen saw Northern Ireland in terms of how his host country saw it, a process which "otherized" his home and prevented him from organically connecting with his country and his people in a time of dramatic social, political, and cultural change. His separation from his home — manifesting itself physically, emotionally, and ideologically — prevented him from making and maintaining a strong connection with Northern Ireland and his own Irish identity while abroad. This classed him among other emigrants whose dream of return and mythologized Irish identity were insufficient to facilitate a comfortable immersion back into Irish life. On a general level, Stephen identified social instability, caused by the Troubles, as the source of his disconnection. While sectarianism did play a role in social life, making returning to life in Ireland more difficult, in Stephen's narrative it served only as an object upon which he could transfer blame. He deferred partial responsibility for his adaptation on the community he returned to, revealing that he was unwilling to immerse himself and wanted to distance himself from being seen as the cause of his own discontent. Stephen's representation of his disconnection, both in absence and in comparison to the story of his friend, provides insight into the quality of his return, as he is unable to identify his inability to

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fully immerse and looks externally to negotiate the differences between his return and that of those around him.

Sharon, a resident of County Tyrone both before and after her emigration, was a part of a continually migratory family. Her parents travelled and moved frequently, due primarily to their separate decisions to serve in the military in the 1950s in order to leave home and see the world.[80] Although they were no longer in the military by the time Sharon was born, their inability to settle in one place continued. When Sharon was only six years old, her parents immigrated to New York City, moving around that city frequently and spending less than a year in any given place.[81] Beyond moving within New York, her entire family of four re-emigrated to Northern Ireland, settling in an area near Omagh for a brief, temporary return. Because her family constantly moved, Sharon could not isolate memories of her experiences in each place they lived or remember feeling any sense of true community growing up. Although this had very little effect on her as a child, she remembered, "it wasn't until I got older and was trying to establish friends that it became an issue."[82] At each move within New York, some only a mile or two from the previous home, Sharon's parents enrolled her in new schools and exposed her to different regions of the city, subjecting her to a shifting community dynamic every few months. This countered the more consistent Irish culture she encountered with local family acquaintances.[83]

The constant change that coincided with moving frequently had a profound impact on Sharon growing up, as she had difficulty maintaining a centralized idea of "home" in New York. As a result, she considered County Tyrone, where her maternal grandparents lived, to be her home.[84] Her family made constant trips back and forth between Northern Ireland and New York, which Sharon believed "was because they wanted to be closer, because we were making a trip twice, three times a year sometimes because my grandparents were ill."[85] Her sense of community stemmed from these frequent interactions with family as she explained that, "this remained constant."[86] Regardless of where her family lived, she knew that her extended family, and the town in which they lived, would be a stable base that she could rely on to remain the same. Her parents showed the same dedication to their "home" in Northern Ireland, as they set aside spare income to pay for these trips, where other families might have dedicated their excess income to pay off a mortgage or elevate their material status. Sharon was aware that in her family, "the money primarily went to them doing the traveling back and forth. Because the ties were here."[87] While in New York, she was also aware of her family's connections to the Irish diaspora communities, "because they would've ended up in our house quite frequently."[88] With a social father, who maintained friendships with others and who encouraged and indirectly enforced their self-identification as Irish, Sharon claimed Irish identity was all she knew. Therefore, Irishness became increasingly important to her as she grew up in New York.

Sharon's first visit to Ireland came at an age that allowed her to recognize differences between Irish and American life that helped inform her return later, lessening the dissonance of repatriation that many Irish returnees felt upon coming home. In describing the transition, she said, "I remember moving back, there was a bit of upheaval because it was a big change. I think I felt the change more then than I would as an adult."[89] Without demonstrating contempt or even difficulty accepting the changes she experienced, she described how her grandparents' farm had no running water or an indoor toilet. For Sharon, these changes were just "a different way of life compared to city life, we were living out in the country."[90] Although she was used to more advanced technology and more comforts in her life in America, life on her family's farm became something to which she desired to return. Although she enjoyed her experience in Northern Ireland, it coincided with the early Troubles, which became a major concern for her family. Though she knew of no direct interaction between her family and the danger of the Troubles, it worried her father, "being from down south and being a former soldier. And where we

were living was an area of an awful lot of activity. He was very nervous. They decided to move back to America."[91]

Her attachment to her family in Cookstown continued throughout her adult life in New York. Her primary reason for missing Cookstown was "because of family here. At least they remained constant. I think that was the big draw here."[92] Like most other returnees, her family was a key factor perpetuating her desire to return. Because her childhood lacked the stability of a singular concept of home, her "home" manifested itself in the form of the people she left behind. Beyond family, the town they lived in took on an additional significance. In part, her love of Cookstown was aided by her memory, mythologizing the place as representative of her belief in what a home should be. This was, however, helped by the fact that she knew, and repeatedly experienced the town in the way she mythologized that "you could come back and walk down Cooktown Street and it was the exact same. You'd see the same people and they knew you. Cause of course we'd be sticking out a mile away and the accents would stick out. Everybody'd make a fuss and it was just a very endearing sort of thing. It was positive - yes, it was."[93]

What is particularly interesting about Sharon's view of life in Cookstown is that it was informed by repetitive visits home, which maintained her desire to settle there permanently. Whereas many emigrants desired to return home in a broader national sense, she centered her desires on the town itself. Additionally, her experiences in the town reveal part of why she wanted to return. Her interactions with the inhabitants of Cookstown demonstrate that, while she was identifiably an outsider, having lived abroad for most of her life, this was not exhibited in a toxic way. Instead, her "otherness" was representative of her both belonging and not belonging to the community, but did not interfere with her ability to connect with those around her. The fussing of her neighbors was not rooted in criticism or threatening to her understanding of her own identity, but rather was marked as a positive experience that reinforced her appreciation of the place.

Her connection to Cookstown, believing it was her true home, was not something she felt for New York. Although she worked for the NYPD until her final return in 1996, she maintained a desire to settle in Cookstown. The sensation of living in a big city was one that inhibited her from feeling a desire to stay as strongly, preventing her from feeling conflicted about her return, as "[Cookstown] was still home. This was where I knew about people getting married. Life was moving on and I was part of it. Whereas over there, just by nature of it being New York, there wouldn't have been that connection."[94] Sharon's exhibition of this feeling reveals that she maintains her emotional connection to Cookstown through constant connection to the people living in it. Whether it was her cousins passing along town gossip or neighbors sending correspondence, Sharon was able to maintain personal connections that reinforced the way she already felt about Cookstown. Her love of the country life she experienced while living with her grandparents became even more important in her adult life, as she remembered "I always, always if anybody had asked me, was I American or Irish, I would've said I was Irish. I would've always wondered about here. This is where my family was… I cried sore flying back to New York. I never cried leaving New York."[95] Her sentiments toward Northern Ireland, and Cookstown specifically, emphasized the importance of the place to her identity. Sharon actively pursued Irish diaspora culture in New York, from music and literature to the atmosphere of the Irish pubs she visited with her friends once she was of age.[96] By clinging to any semblance of Irish culture and what it meant to be Irish, Sharon was defining herself as Irish and exploring her own emigrant identity in order to solidify her understanding of home while in an existence that lacked a stable community. This enhanced her connection to home and established her dream of return, moving her from the transience of remigration and the ensuing identity

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to a greater understanding of emigrant identity that could be enhanced by her return to Northern Ireland. Although she lived most of her life in New York, her detachment from the culture of the city — and, by contrast, her appreciation for Irish culture and her family roots — triggered less grief to leave New York and eventually to make her return home, than a place where she had spent brief periods of time visiting.

In 1996, after her marriage ended and both her brother and her mother had returned to Ireland, Sharon decided to move to Cookstown with her two children. Taking advantage of the opportunity to return, she remembered feeling that "the place I've wanted to be all my life [was] just calling me. Because at least I knew that here everything that I remembered of it was gonna be there for my children."[97] Although this mentality — feeling certain that everything would be the same upon returning home — was ordinarily a factor contributing to a returnee's dissatisfaction with their return and desire to re-emigrate, Sharon informed her certainty that home would be as she remembered it with her continual visits.

Since the scale of connection and disconnection between a returnee and their community are critical parts of how well they are able to adapt upon their return, it is necessary to note Sharon's disconnection with New York. While discussing her decision to return, and subsequently leave New York, Sharon claimed, "[she] didn't have the network. [She] really did miss the idea of having family around. And not primarily [her] immediate family. It was the all-encompassing knowing that [she] could make a phone call and somebody would be there."[98] Sharon's major ties to New York were made through her job as a police officer for the NYPD and through Irish diaspora, but these connections were not as significant as those she had to friends and family in Cookstown. Living with two children in a large city, she needed to know that she could rely on others to help her and her children if something happened, and she felt certain rural Northern Ireland offered that. After years of being forced to migrate at the demands of her family, she controlled her own movement by returning, an act which helped construct her individual identity, strengthened her connections, and grew out of her own desires as well as her concerns for the well-being of her children.[99] Sharon was determined to live in Cookstown because she felt that "there was no other choice for me,"[100] because her vision of the town provided her with an idealized sense of home. She described the place years after settling by saying, "it was lovely. To me it was everything I wanted for my kids. And for me… It felt like coming home."[101] Cookstown provided the emotional security of a sense of belonging that Sharon needed and fulfilled all the expectations she had for the town in which she hoped to raise her children. Sharon had the added comfort of social connections, because she "knew everybody. I knew this town, I knew the stores,"[102] and her familiarity with life in Cookstown made it easier for her to truly become a part of it. The same could not be said of her experience living in New York.

While Sharon was desperate to leave New York to come to Cookstown, her closest family members felt envious of her ability to live abroad. Since emigration was common in the 1990s, it was natural for the average Irish or Northern Irish citizen to entertain thoughts of emigration. Her neighbors and relatives were not immune to such thoughts, and Sharon felt "it seemed to mean more to me because everybody else really wanted it."[103] Sharon spent most of her adult life living abroad and building on her desire to return, to the point that her remigration home was more like an original emigration than a return. Because she wanted to move to Northern Ireland so badly, it seemed strange to her that "All my cousins over here wished they were me, and I wished I was them."[104] The desire to leave New York gave her a feeling she shared with her cousins, but her love for life in Northern Ireland set her apart from those around her. Her dissatisfaction with New York City mirrored that of most emigrants leaving Ireland for the first time, most of whom left to seek better opportunities for themselves and their families.

In many ways, Sharon reflected the experiences of new emigrants, the primary difference being her familiarity with her chosen destination. Her inability to stay happily settled in New York also presented her as being much like a dissatisfied returnee. One could consider New York her homeland in such a perspective, as she travelled back and forth repeatedly as a child and had few memories of her childhood home. Sharon was aware of her view of New York as her home but still felt only minimal homesickness for the city, because "it took an awful long time for me to really so totally put down my roots that I don't feel the need to go back to New York."[105] As much as she missed New York at times, she knew that if she tried to return, she would have missed County Tyrone more.

Like all returnees, Sharon had to face some obstacles to her return, despite being so familiar with the town. After living so long in the highly technological and busy place that was New York City, she missed "all the creature comforts I did not have."[106] She had to go for months without a car, left to rely on those around her for any travel beyond a short walk. Her television, which used older technology than those in New York, only had four channels, one of the many things she had to adjust to and found "incredibly frustrating. Everything I had to learn new."[107] She was also frustrated with some culture shock she had not expected, including a grocery store that closed for a holiday, which she called "the world's worst experience."[108] Her few complaints, however, were ones informed by the privileges of her American lifestyle, and not to do with the people she interacted with. The only concern she had to offer regarding her neighbors was the isolation she felt on occasion, because "for all of my expectations of it being great, it was great. Nobody was going to see me on my own, but you still were aware that they had their own families and you weren't going to impose yourself in on them."[109] Her only distance was self-inflicted because she did not want intrude in their already busy lives. However, this attitude did not prevent her from being social. She observed that she never had a problem making friends, so she "didn't find that to be an issue" and, had she had any problems or needed company or assistance, she "would've had no problem reaching out to people."[110] Her only trouble in moving to Cookstown came in her own fear of being an imposition, especially to those who only knew of her because of her family, which she argued was "the nature of here, more than them not being friendly."[111] Overall, Sharon's willingness and earnest desire to be a part of the Cookstown community aided her in her transition from isolated city life into the wider rural community she hoped for.

Marie was born in 1934, and from a young age was raised by a family friend, Molly, in Blackrock, Dublin.[112] After Marie's mother died, her father found himself unable to take care of Marie or her 8-month-old brother. Relatives and friends assumed unofficial responsibility for the children. As a result, Marie had very little contact with her brother or her father after her mother's funeral.[113] Marie's upbringing prevented her from making sufficient roots as a consequence of growing up in a family which was not her own. Marie's mother came from Northern Ireland and was a Protestant, a fact that influenced her social interactions both before her emigration and after her return. As a part of Molly's home, Marie found a surrogate mother, but was unable to create a sense of family identity. If she did something wrong, her guardians blamed it on her mother being a Protestant, claiming such behavior was to be expected. She noted that she "didn't fit in either place" and "wasn't one of them."[114] One of the few times Marie's father played a role in her adult life came when she wanted to move to London to train as a nurse in 1952.[115] Since she was not legally an adult and her adoption by Molly's family was unofficial, her father remained her legal guardian - and he did not want to let her go. Despite his resistance, Marie trained in London for four years, where she had a minimal social life.[116] She spent most of her time in hospitals, with the exceptions of trips to see theatricals on the West End with a

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friend who worked there. After she completed her training, Marie returned to Dublin, choosing not to work as a nurse, but rather to try something different.[117]

In Dublin, Marie enjoyed being social and going out dancing, an act which introduced her to her first husband.[118] Marie and her husband moved to Wicklow, where she gave birth to nine children, eight of whom survived infancy.[119] While her children grew up, she was heavily involved in their lives. Each child attended a different school, and Marie "was on the committees of every school they were in," organized school events, led fundraising efforts, and never missed a parent-teacher meeting.[120] Her husband, however, was not so attentive, and ultimately began an extramarital affair. Her husband's affair ruined both their marriage and her relationship with the Catholic Church. Although "the whole town knew, everybody knew," when she sought advice from a priest, he told her she was "imagining all of it" and that she would have to continue to deal with her husband's behavior.[121] She felt she could not to seek out further support because, unlike women at her local women's shelter, she was only facing infidelity.

Escaping her town and her husband's reputation, Marie moved to Galway, a decision which upset her children.[122] Her second husband, Bill, was a man she knew growing up, who lived in Australia during most of her adult life.[123] When the two married, they moved to England living briefly in London before settling in Somerset.[124] The two were migratory by nature, spending the first decades of their marriage bouncing between England, Spain, and Ireland. After three years, the couple moved to Spain, where they lived "up in the mountains. There was no electricity. There was no water."[125] The two lived in relative isolation in Spain, with only a radio and the tight knit community around them, in which everyone knew each other's business. They created pottery and spent time with other Irish artists in the area.[126] Here, even without much access to the rest of the world, Marie thrived, using her social skills to expand her business and make friends.

After complications with their business license drove Marie and Bill out of Spain, the two moved back to Ireland and continued growing their business. There, they worked every day from 1991 to 1998 making pottery,[127] until they could no longer manage the Value Added Tax (VAT) on their work.[128] Marie and Bill sold their business and decided to emigrate once more, seeking change and missing the other countries they had called home. They ran a bed and breakfast for a year and a half in England before they moved to Spain once more.[129] In Spain, they joined numerous clubs and went to all social events they could, but found themselves bored.[130] Marie wrote for a Spanish newspaper and organized events to maintain her local connections and to satisfy her need to socialize. Bill was not as interested in such events as his wife was. Marie described him by saying that "Bill [was] not a social person."[131] While Marie enjoyed being in public and interacting with large groups of people, claiming "I haven't got a nervous bone in my body about that,"[132] Bill was uncomfortable in such situations and did not like public events and socialization. This attitude informed the difference between Marie's and Bill's satisfaction upon each emigration, with Bill having greater difficulty making connections and feeling secure in a new community.

While still living in Spain, Marie and Bill took a trip to Ireland to visit with friends. While there, Marie went to Northern Ireland for the first time and saw Fermanagh, where her mother came from.[133] While visiting a town called Enniskillen, she felt at home and enjoyed the place. In recalling the visit, she remembered thinking "holy cow. What have I been missing my whole life? My mother left this? We walked down… and I heard 'How are you doing?' and I turned around to see who they were talking to and they were talking to me. People talked to you."[134] The trip left her with a good feeling about the place, and she immediately wanted to move there. Marie discussed her wish with Bill and they moved three months later in 2003.

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Marie was unconcerned by the political and social tensions of the Troubles, which had ended just five years before. Although, there was still a sense of conflict, Northern Ireland did not scare her off.[135] However, Marie spoke about the differences between Protestants and Catholics during this time. She had friends of both denominations and was seen to belong to both groups. Since they knew her mother's family was Protestant, her Protestant acquaintances believed her to belong to their community. Catholics, meanwhile, saw her as belonging with them because her "name is Connor, which is a southern Catholic name. Now, they'd think then she comes from Dublin. Her name is Connor. She's a Catholic. So [she knew] people who [were] Catholic who make that assumption."[136] In reality, Marie felt a sense of both belonging and not belonging. While she was raised as a Catholic, her fragmented relationship with the church left her feeling as if she did not truly belong.[137] Meanwhile, her family history linked her to Protestantism, but her few years with her mother and lack of connection with her family in Northern Ireland prevented her from feeling that she was Protestant. She felt uncertain of where she belonged, and even those around her did not know, although they made their own assumptions. Marie claimed that, even after a couple years "they [didn't] really know which way I jump or if I jump at all."[138] This uncertainty was not aided by the names of her children and husband. Where certain names would imply a particular religion in Northern Ireland, her children's biblical names reinforced her family's position as being in between the two major communities, Protestant and Catholic. Bill, although he was a Catholic, took the Protestant variation of the name William, which traditionally would have been Liam in Catholic Ireland. His non-traditional nickname advanced perceptions of their family as Protestants to those who were unfamiliar with them.

Perceptions of her family affected the way she interacted with her community, internalizing her conflicting identity and behaving in a way that kept her away from complete categorization.[139] Since she "[fell] between two stools,"[140] she remained in ambiguity to preserve her place in her community. Marie claimed, "I didn't actually say what I was thinking on several occasions. I held back. And it's not like me to hold back but in the climate that's here, I think maybe for Bill's sake as well as my own I might be better to do it. I wouldn't like any unpleasantness around my house or with my neighbors."[141] Marie enjoyed peace in her community and did not want to allow her conversations and beliefs to skew the opinions of those around her. Her previous experience with her first marriage and the community's reaction to this probably influenced this decision. Additionally, her desire to maintain large acquaintances drove her to withhold this information.

In spite of this underlying concern, Marie adapted well in Enniskillen. Since her mother's family came from Fermanagh, even strangers were somewhat familiar with her. She met with many of her cousins for the first time after she moved. After reuniting with extended family, she was identified by her familial relationships. The people of Fermanagh would ask her if she was "Florence's husband's cousin" or "David's cousin."[142] Because others knew her family, they were better able to know her. However, her connections did not save her from some of the long standing views of returnees held by non-emigrants. When neighbors talked about her return, "they usually say 'you mean you left Spain to come here'," rather than "'you left Dublin to come here'."[143] For returnees this distinction was significant because it presented them as foreigners, not as return migrants. By identifying Marie as coming from Spain, her neighbors fell into the tradition of distinguishing the returnee as "Other," impacting both external and internal perceptions of emigrant identity.

Marie was aided in her adaptation by her social nature, quickly tapping into her community and involving herself in whatever she could. She expressed that there was "a great feeling of camaraderie

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with women in Enniskillen," and believed it to be unlike anything she had experienced elsewhere.[144] Marie also transitioned into her new home well because she understood her experiences and how they were affecting her return. Her understanding of home and community changed with her emigration, evident in her explanation that "when you do all the traveling we've done, you don't belong anywhere."[145] Bill's experiences, however, demonstrated an inability to properly adapt. His perceptions, in juxtaposition to those of his wife, reveal the necessity of socialization and connections to a smooth return. While the two shared their emigrant experiences from the 1980s through the 2000s, Marie was inherently more social than Bill. Bill would have been willing and happy to leave Northern Ireland if Marie would have permitted it. She credited this to that fact that "wherever he is, he wants to be somewhere else. [Marie] tried to explain to him the places are fine. It's within himself that this thing is. It's always been there."[146] The thing to which Marie refers is the duality of belonging — of being "home-comer and newcomer".[147] This sense of belonging, punctuated by sentiments of not belonging is a core aspect of being a return migrant — unlimited by time, gender, faith, or nationality. Marie understood her sense of belonging and how it affected her views of home. Her desire to stay came from her appreciation of her roots and the connections she made, neither of which Bill experienced to the same extent. Her ties to the town made her feel that, in regard to re-emigrating, "if it wasn't for Enniskillen and Banagh [she'd] say fine."[148] Although she spoke dramatically in saying "If [she] had to leave it …[she]'d shrivel up and die,"[149] Marie's attachment to the town of Enniskillen reveals the significance of finding a place to call home after a life of rootlessness. Sharon and Marie experienced the same need for a home and discovered it through a place where their extended families had settled. Marie recognized that part of her attachment was influenced by her desire to connect with her family and her ability to have something of her mother's to hold onto — choosing an ancestral home to help her reconnect with her identity and develop a new appreciation of the family she barely knew.

Although she felt County Fermanagh was her home, it was the sense of community that motivated her to settle there, an experience which Bill did not share. She called many other places home, but her awareness that she felt less alone in Enniskillen made the place more important to her than the Republic of Ireland, England, or Spain.[150] Marie was willing to travel around for visits to old friends and reminisce, but Bill was not willing to even visit his family home in Killarney. Marie, who had difficulty sympathizing with him on this point, said that "he won't go back into Killarney… He doesn't want to go back. He hardly even wants to go back to Dún Laoghaire or Blackrock because it's not what he remembers."[151] Bill exhibits many of the problems return emigrants of earlier periods faced, from a sense of non-belonging to a dissatisfaction with return. Informed by his earlier experiences coming home, Bill understood that his memory of home and reality created two separate, incomparable visions of Ireland. Rather than force himself to negotiate these changes into his understanding of home, Bill decided to stay away because "he want[ed] to keep his memories as they are."[152] His justification for this did not fit Marie's understanding of memory, as "he said 'now that's what I'm trying to tell you. Never go back because it's gone now. All the memories are gone.'"[153] To Bill, any difference between his memory of a place and its reality would mean the end of his ability to appreciate the memory. However, Marie understood that she could separate her memory from the present reality and preserve it despite the changes. In her perception, she was able to go back to places like Dublin or Killarney, close her eyes and remember how it used to be.[154] Bill's opposition to change was focused specifically on change he had not witnessed. His willingness to move demonstrated his appreciation of new experiences, but his interactions with places from his past revealed his discomfort with finding that these places had changed while he was away as much as he had changed while he was away. Marie demonstrated that she understood, but did not share, his concerns about the sacred nature of memory. She observed to Bill that if he had visited those places decades before he lived there, he would have felt the same way about the changes that created the places he remembered and wanted to preserve.[155]   The key

difference between Marie and Bill was their ability to negotiate their emigration and return, through varying degrees of social interaction, memory preservation, and willingness to embrace change — all of which contributed to a returnee's ability to adapt to life after emigration.

The twenty-first century brought with it another emigration crisis, referred to primarily as a "brain drain," in which well-educated, and often young, individuals left Ireland in search of jobs and opportunities elsewhere. Much of this crisis was brought about by the economic crash following the prosperity of Celtic Tiger Ireland, when high paying jobs, particularly in construction and real estate, were diminishing in pay and frequency. The brain drain had a drastic impact upon Ireland, as the most qualified people to facilitate national change and progress looked abroad for new opportunities, to the point where emigration was normalized and almost expected among young persons. In 2013, "almost half of the people leaving were not unemployed, but were stuck in dead-end and poorly-paid jobs with limited prospects".[156] Whether this brain drain was led by the unemployed or the unsatisfactorily employed, the fact remains the same: A generation of hopeful youths with optimistic intentions for their careers and lifestyles no longer saw their home as an option for their futures.

Modern Irish newspapers and magazines dubbed the emigrants of this brain drain as "generation emigration", and use this phrase to consolidate their discussion of emigration and its effects. Major Irish media outlets online dedicate entire forums to emigrant guest writers, who use the space to share their experiences and advice, creating an online community where emigrant voices are given the room to explore and adapt their senses of identity and experience together, and seek out a means to negotiate both their experiences abroad and their desire to return.[157] Government departments support many of these forums through initiatives such as the Department of Foreign Affairs Emigrant Support Programme, which provides funding and foundational support to the Crosscare Migrant Project.[158] Such programs provide emigrants with valuable resources to aide in every aspect of their time abroad and transition home, and encourage emigrants to reach out to their homelands and consider return as a part of their plan for the future.

What is most remarkable about the last few years, particularly the time from 2010 to 2015, is the way the government, employers, and media outlets speak about emigrants. The resounding call has been to beg emigrants to return. With the government attempting to recover from the crash, seeing employment as the best way to boost the economy, "with as many as 1,000 jobs being created each week and with skills shortages emerging in many key industry sectors, the Government and employers realize encouraging foreign nationals to plug gaps by relocating here isn't enough".[159] Ireland has faced the first decades of true foreign immigration, after consistently having the lowest immigration rates in Europe. The general desire, however, has been to bring back the emigrants lost to the brain drain - the young Irish who took highly skilled jobs outside of the country in reaction to the lack of opportunity and advancements at home. Major corporations and government officials have sought whatever means possible to engage with emigrants tempted to return by improving job opportunities and offering incentives to those who come home. The Taoiseach claimed in 2015 that the Irish diaspora plays a critical role in the recovery of Ireland.[160] Of course, like in each era before, dissenters have voiced objections on the return of emigrants and their possessions of jobs. Tim Buckley, an unemployed Irish citizen, argued in a letter to the Irish Times that "there is now a cosy consensus among politicians, the media and business representative groups that 'everything is rosy in the garden', with regard to the economy and the numbers 'at work'. That is far from the truth."[161] Unemployment is a major determinant in how non-emigrants view returnees, with discontent focusing now on government and employers for not providing sufficient opportunities. When contrasted against previous complaints —

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placed primarily upon returnees on account of their foreignness and intrusion into daily social and economic life — this reveals that the focus of economic discontent has moved away from condemning return emigrants for acquiring jobs and toward holding figures of authority accountable for the improvement of the state. Although unemployment still plagues Ireland and the country has not yet come out of its latest crisis, the fact that Irish leaders have changed their perspectives and have embraced returnees as a necessary part of Irish life reveals the role these communities play in Irish identity as well as the economic growth of the nation.

As technology and the Internet Age brought an ever-shrinking world, the boundaries between the Irish at home and the Irish abroad dwindled. Lowered transportation costs and the accessibility of leisure travel to ordinary people have provided emigrants opportunities to return for holidays and other temporary visits with greater frequency. With increased capacity to travel, the Irish "dream of return"[162] became more accessible than in previous decades. Irish emigrants have also remained more closely connected to their country than in the past, as the internet has provided Irish newspapers and television networks to access global communities of the diaspora. Using mediums ranging from radio broadcast and television in the mid to late 20th century to online publications and forums in the 21st century, modern Irish emigrants have utilized popular technologies to retain close connection with their home country. As a result, the modern Irish emigrant and, by extension, the returnee has more in common with non-emigrants than in any previous period. Increased connections to home also explain why non-emigrants have reacted less hostilely to returnees. The greater the dissonance between a returnee's memory of Ireland and the reality of life at home, the more problematic relations between returnees and non-emigrants would be. The opposite, however has been true in more recent times, as decreased differences between the emigrant memory and non-emigrant experience have minimized the gap between these two groups. As emigrants became more readily able to access their home country, non-emigrant perceptions of the communities of emigrants shifted from hostile to accepting, going as far as encouraging and embracing emigrant returns.

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[21] Eamonn, VMR-002, 13.

[22] Eamonn, VMR-002, 13.

[23] Eamonn, VMR-002, 13.

[24] Eamonn, VMR-002, 32.

[25] Eamonn, VMR-002, 22.

[26] Eamonn, VMR-002, 29.

[27] Eamonn, VMR-002, 13.

[28] Eamonn, VMR-002, 34.

[29] Eamonn, VMR-002, 30-31.

[30] Eamonn, VMR-002, 34.

[31] Eamonn, VMR-002, 37.

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[34] Rose, VMR-013, 29.

[35] Rose, VMR-013, 32.

[36] Rose, VMR-013, 37.

[37] Rose, VMR-013, 38.

[38] Rose, VMR-013, 39.

[39] Rose, VMR-013, 41

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[46] Eilis, VMR-005, 36.

[47] Eilis, VMR-005, 37.

[48] Eilis, VMR-005, 9-10.

[49] Eilis, VMR-005, 36.

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[50] Eilis, VMR-005, 36.
[51] Eilis, VMR-005, 37.
[52] Eilis, VMR-005, 19.
[53] Eilis, VMR-005, 37.
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[57] Eilis, VMR-005, 35.
[58] Eilis, VMR-005, 44.
[59] Eilis, VMR-005, 44.
[60] Eilis, VMR-005, 43.
[61] Eilis, VMR-005, 21.
[62] Eilis, VMR-005, 43.
[63] Eilis, VMR-005, 44.
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[66] Stephen, VMR-015, 34.
[67] Stephen, VMR-015, 34.
[68] Stephen, VMR-015, 23.
[69] Stephen, VMR-015, 35.
[70] Stephen, VMR-015, 7.
[71] Stephen, VMR-015, 35.
[72] Stephen, VMR-015, 35.
[73] Stephen, VMR-015, 35.
[74] Rose, VMR-013, 41.
[75] Stephen, VMR-015, 35.
[76] Stephen, VMR-015, 35.
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[82] Sharon, VMR-010, 3.
[83] Sharon, VMR-010, 10.
[84] Sharon, VMR-010, 1.
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[86] Sharon, VMR-010, 6.
[87] Sharon, VMR-010, 8.
[88] Sharon, VMR-010, 7.
[89] Sharon, VMR-010, 9.
[90] Sharon, VMR-010, 9.
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[92] Sharon, VMR-010, 13.
[93] Sharon, VMR-010, 13.
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[117] Marie, VMR-030, 22.

[118] Marie, VMR-030, 22-23.

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[133] Marie, VMR-030, 38.

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[137] Marie, VMR-030, 25.

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[140] Marie, VMR-030, 43.

[141] Marie, VMR-030, 43.

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