

Most countries send out oil or iron, steel or gold, or some other crop, but Ireland has had only one export and that is its people.

-JOHN F. KENNEDY,
1963



2019-2021

BROOKLYN: A BRIDGE TO OPPORTUNITY

PSEUDONYM: ROSE LACEY



IRELAND

“They lived and laughed and loved and left.”

-James Joyce



UNITED STATES

“Don’t be afraid. There are exquisite things in store for you.

This is merely the beginning.”

- Oscar Wilde

RECOMMENDATIONS



“What she would need to do in the days before she left and on the morning of her departure was smile, so that they would remember her smiling.”

-Colm Tóibín, Brooklyn

“What she loved most about America, Eilis thought on these mornings, was how the heating was kept on all night.”

-Colm Tóibín, Brooklyn

“With this elating and humane novel about an Irish girl's emigration to America, Colm Tóibín has produced a masterwork.”

-SUNDAY TIMES



EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

At EPIC you'll discover the far reaching influence of Irish history, and the impact the 10 million Irish men and women who left Ireland had on the world.



“The museum tells a wonderful, poignant, melancholy story of the emigration process that took place in Ireland. The design of the museum is fabulous, and modern.”

-Visitor

A woman with dark hair, wearing a light-colored blouse, a green cardigan, and a colorful floral skirt, stands in front of a large, dark brown brick wall. To her left is a brown suitcase. In the background, a large stone archway is visible, and a brick building with a fire escape is on the left. The scene is set in a city, likely Brooklyn, with lush greenery on the right.

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JANUARY 2021

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I would not have been able to complete this project without the collaboration and support of many people, therefore I would like to dedicate a few words to them.

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I thank Michael Dempsey, a historian from the Wexford Town Library who introduced me to great articles, books and online exhibitions about Irish history.

I am very grateful to my father and brother for their love, understanding and continuing support.

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ABSTRACT

Ireland is a country that has faced the departure of millions of its nationals ever since the 17th century. This project focuses on the migration that took place in the 1950s and how it affected Ireland and the new countries of destination. It takes a particular interest in the borough of Brooklyn, New York (USA), which is well-known for its history with the Irish community. This interest comes from the historical novel *Brooklyn*, by Colm Tóibín, which also inspired the project's topic.

To carry out the research, it was used the story of the fictional character Eilis Lacey (from Tóibín's work) along with the author's experience and the testimony of five migrants. Data collected from the Wexford Town Library and the Irish Central Statistics Office was another of the main sources that helped to achieve historical accuracy.

All things considered, led to the understanding of the cultural impact that the Irish migratory waves had and their repercussion on the state's current situation.

RESUM

Irlanda és un país que ha patit l'emigració de milions dels seus habitants des del segle disset. Aquest treball es centra en el moviment migratori que va tenir lloc als anys 50, i com va afectar a Irlanda i als països receptors. Pren un interès concret en el districte de Brooklyn, Nova York (E.E.U.U), que és conegut per la seva història amb la comunitat irlandesa. Aquest interès prové de la novel·la històrica *Brooklyn*, de Colm Tóibín, que també ha estat la que ha inspirat el tema del projecte.

Per a realitzar la recerca, s'ha fet servir la història del personatge fictici Eilis Lacey (de l'obra de Tóibín), juntament amb l'experiència de l'autora i el testimoni de cinc migrants. La informació proporcionada per la *Wexford Town Library* i la *Irish Central Statistics Office* ha estat una altra de les fonts principals, que ha permès accentuar la precisió històrica.

Tots aquests recursos han conduït a l'enteniment de l'impacte cultural provocat per les onades migratòries i la seva repercussió a la situació actual de l'estat.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Justification of the chosen topic

Introducing a project that has taken you months to complete, can be quite complex. You have to find the right words to briefly describe what you are going to talk about, and keep the reader interested, yet not reveal unnecessary information nor overshare too much. Personally, I find that quite complicated, as this is a subject that has certainly caught my interest, and that I feel genuinely connected to.

Perhaps the best way to start, and to understand why I chose this topic is to explain my personal story.

In 2018, I was offered the possibility to go live with a family in Kilmore, a small village in the south of Ireland. I had always liked the country, and I already had some very nice memories there, so I took the chance without hesitating. I lived there for six months, from August 2018 to February 2019, and fell in love with the area. One day, my mother sent me a picture of the book she was reading in the book club she attends and, to my surprise, it was partially based on Enniscorthy, an Irish village close to Kilmore. I had been to almost all the places the book mentioned, so I was very intrigued about it. However, I didn't read it until many months later, when I finally returned home. It was the recommended reading for the C2 Cambridge exam that I was preparing to sit, so I had to read it. Once again, life had brought this book to me and while reading it, I couldn't help but seeing myself in some of the situations that the main character was experiencing. The book is called *Brooklyn*, by Colm Tóibín, and it narrates the story of a young Irishwoman that moves to the United States in the 1950s.

As if there hadn't been enough coincidences, I later found out that Colm Tóibín, the author, is quite keen on Catalonia and has a second residence in Farrera, a town in the Pyrenees not far away from where I live. In small rural areas everybody knows everybody, and luckily, I happened to know someone that was linked to him.

When the time of choosing the topic for my research project arrived, I knew that I had to be very involved with the subject, and I also knew that I wanted to do it

about something related to an English speaking country. After thinking a lot and receiving some help, it all finally came together. I could use my experience and Tóibín's book to learn more about the Irish emigration in the 1950s, and also compare the experiences of migrating as a woman then, and migrating today.

1.2. Hypothesis and objectives

One of the main objectives of my research is to understand the situation that caused the departure of thousands of people leaving the country looking for a better life. Based on the hypothesis that it was due to economic reasons, I believe that more men than women left, as it was more common for women to eventually become housewives at the time. However, I also have the impression that a considerable number of women also took part in the migratory movement, a very large one in comparison to other male dominated exodus.

Moreover, I also want to research the demographic impact that migration had in the different Irish areas.

Another objective that I want to cover, is to learn about the impact that this migratory movement had in the long term in the countries to which the people migrated. Nowadays, there still are reminders and indications of the Irish communities that settled during the 1950s and other migrating periods, and lots of Irish descendants also live there.

I also want to take a look at today's migratory movements, as it is still quite common for Irish people to emigrate. On the other hand, from what I have seen and experienced, Ireland is a multicultural country that has hosted thousands of immigrants over the last decades. My objective here is to investigate the reasons that have led these people to depart, and what they can find in their new country that is different from the one they live in.

My last and final objective is to compare the journey that *Brooklyn's* main character went through when she migrated to a different country being a woman in the 1950s, to my own when I moved to Ireland, her home country, almost seventy years later.

1.3. Description of the used methodology

To carry out my project, I used Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* as my main source of inspiration and information. Starting from the book I selected all the points that I wanted to talk about, and then I also used alternative sources to deepen my knowledge and completely dive into the subjects that I wanted to focus on.

I reached out to the author, and I explained my research project to him. He recommended a film to me and some books that helped me get a better perspective and understanding on Irish emigration.

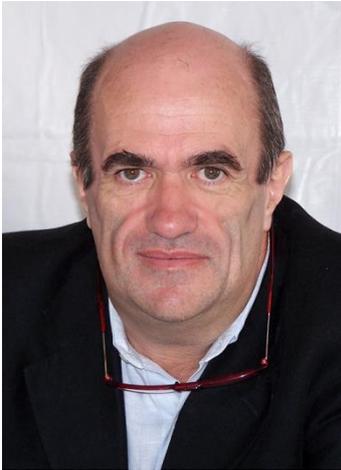
To follow some of my other objectives I got in touch with the Wexford Town Library, the library of the county's capital where the book takes place. I was assigned a historian that delivered as much material to me as he could on Irish emigration and Colm Tóibín. It was a little challenging to receive the information as it was in a different country, in the middle of a pandemic, and Ireland was in a very restricted situation at the time. Michael, the historian, still did everything in his hands to send me as many online books, articles and recommendations as possible.

In order to completely understand today's migration, I interviewed five people to learn about their experiences. Three of them were immigrants living in Ireland from Spain, the United States, and Mauritius. The other two were Irish emigrants that live (or have lived) in Belgium and Finland.

Finally, I also used my own experience and previous knowledge of the country as a source of information.

2. BROOKLYN

2.1. Colm Tóibín



Colm Tóibín
By: Larry D. Moore

Colm Tóibín is an acclaimed Irish author, mostly known for his novels and journalism pieces.

He was born the 30th of May in 1955 in Enniscorthy, County Wexford. Growing up, Tóibín had a troubled childhood marked by his father's death, Michael Tóibín. He is the second youngest of five siblings, all raised by his mother, Bríd Tóibín. The lack of a paternal figure in the house had a big impact on him, and we can appreciate that in some of his work, when he mixes personal experiences of his life with the storyline.

He received his education at St Peter's college in Wexford, where his father used to be a teacher, and later at the University College Dublin. After getting his degree in 1975, he left for Barcelona inspired by Hemingway. He stayed there for two years, but he didn't find many job opportunities and returned to Ireland. Once in Dublin, he went back to study, this time for a master's degree. He didn't submit his thesis, and chose to start a career in journalism instead. Tóibín had also published his first two books by that time, "Homage to Barcelona", and "The South".

As a journalist, he has worked especially in magazines such as "Magill", "The New Yorker" and the "London Review of books", focusing his articles in a wide range of matters.

Nowadays, he dedicates most of his time to his writing. He has had a large amount of work published, as novels, story collections or plays, and has also received lots of prizes and awards for them. Some of the most remarkable ones are the Los Angeles Times Novel of the Year for his novel "*The Master*" in 2004, the Irish PEN Award in 2011, the International Dublin Literary Award also in 2011, and the Hawthornden Prize for "*Nora Webster*" in 2015, amongst others.

When writing, Tóibín mostly does non-fiction novels, or fictional novels interwoven with real experiences. Lots of the themes he uses are very close to him. Absences in the house, death, strong female figures, homosexuality, and the story being based in County Wexford are common in his books. His inspiration comes from past experiences, repression and pain, and we can see that reflected in the melancholic touch that his pieces have. Tóibín is homosexual himself, and he often mentions how his sexuality holding him back in the past led him to develop a sense of introspection that has been really useful for his writing.

His work is described as “astonishing to read” by the Sunday Times and “funny, exciting, illuminating, wonderful, and engaging” by the Irish Times. One of his most popular books, *Brooklyn* has been turned into a film that was a blockbuster in 2015 and brought lots of recognition to him.

Besides writing, he currently teaches at Columbia University and is the Chancellor of the University of Liverpool. He has also lectured and visited other important universities as Stanford, Princeton, the Boston College and the University of Manchester.

He lives in the Southside of Dublin, and spends most of his summers in Farrera, a small town in Pallars Sobirà (Catalonia).

WORK FILE

- Walking along the border, 1987
- Martyrs and Metaphors, Letters from the New Island, vol. 1, no. 2, 1987
- The Trial of the Generals: Selected Journalism:1980–1990, 1990
- Homage to Barcelona, 1990
- Dubliner, 1990
- The South, 1990
- The Heather Blazing, 1992
- Bad Blood: A Walk Along the Irish Border, 1994
- The Sign of the Cross: Travels in Catholic Europe, 1994
- The Guinness Book of Ireland, 1995
- The Kilfenora Teaboy: A Study of Paul Durcan, 1996

- The Story of the Night, Picador, 1996
- The Modern Library: The Two Hundred Best Novels in English Since 1950, 1999
- The Blackwater Lightship, 1999
- The Penguin Book of Irish Fiction, 1999
- The Irish Famine. A Documentary, 2001
- Love in a Dark Time: Gay Lives From Wilde to Almodovar, 2002
- Lady Gregory's Toothbrush, 2002
- Emmet and the historians, Dublin Review Number 12, 2003
- The Master, 2004
- In Lovely Blueness: Adventures in Troubled Light, exhibition in the Chester Beatty Library, 2004
- Famous blue raincoat, essay for The Guardian, 2005
- Mothers and sons, 2006
- The Use of Reason, 2006
- Andy Warhol, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Anish Kapoor, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Baselitz, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Beuys, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Bridget Riley, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
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- Louise Bourgeois, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Martin Creed, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Richard Long, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Matthew Barney, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Robin Rhode, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Ron Arad, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Tracey Emin, piece for Esquire Art, 2007 - 2010
- Cezanne, talk given at the Courtauld Institute, 2008
- Brooklyn, 2009
- The empty family stories, 2010
- All a novelist needs, 2010
- Among the Flutterers, for the London Review of Book Vol. 32, 2010
- A Guest at the Feast, 2011
- The Testament of Mary, 2012
- New ways to kill your mother, 2012
- Nora Webster, 2014
- House of Names, 2017
- Mad, Bad, Dangerous to Know, 2018

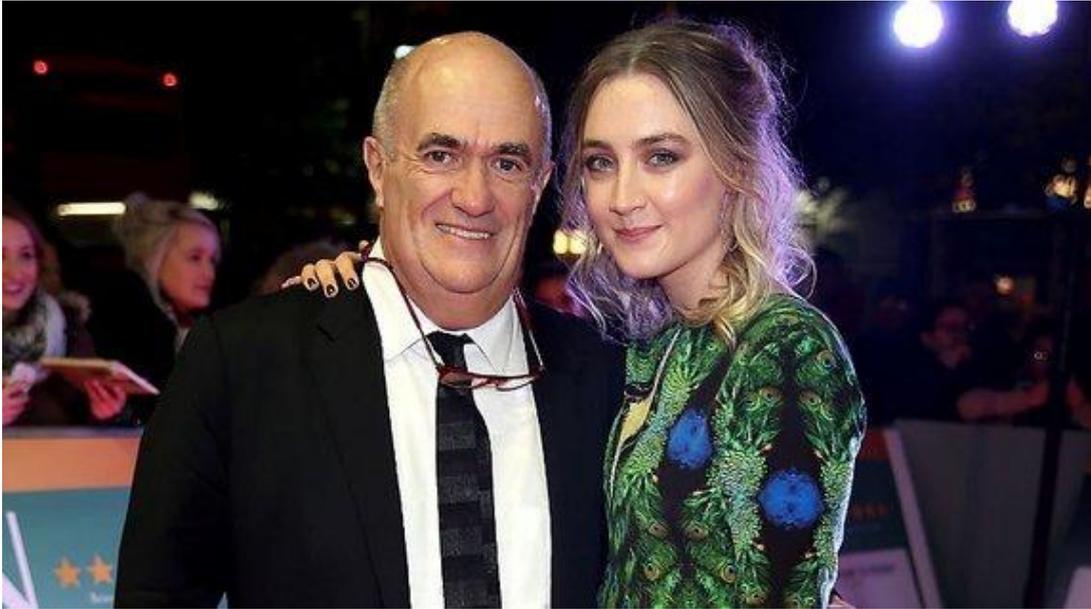
2.2. Brooklyn

Brooklyn is a captivating historical novel. It was published in 2009, and it has become one of the author's most popular works. The book has been translated into twenty-two languages and it has sold over 225,000 copies. *Brooklyn* has also won the 2009 Costa Novel Award, and was nominated for the 2009 Booker Prize and the 2011 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

In order to write *Brooklyn*, Colm Tóibín was inspired by a wide range of different factors and coincidences that ended up becoming the book as we know it today. It all started after his fourteen-week stay in Texas, USA, where he began to experience homesickness. Eventually, he returned to Ireland, where he came up with the idea to connect how he felt with the story of a young woman of his town that had left for Brooklyn when he was a child. While growing up, Tóibín was always hearing anecdotes about this woman in his household, and developed quite an interest in her. As he had ultimately lost track of her life, he decided to write his own version of her story under the fictional character of Eilis Lacey.

Tóibín decided to set this novel between his hometown, Enniscorthy, and Brooklyn in the 1950s, a time when Irish emigration was at its peak. In his book, he chose to focus on the perspective of a young emigrant woman, as a way to empower them and talk about their situation at the time. *Brooklyn* is the perfect description of the Irish society and mentality in the mid 1900s. It narrates the economic issues that lots of families had to face, the forced departures and the loss of cultural identity after having moved abroad.

In 2015, *Brooklyn* was adapted by Nick Hornby and turned into a film. It was directed by John Crowley and starred the Oscar nominee Saoirse Ronan. The film was nominated for three Academy Awards, six British Academy Film Awards, three Oscars and a Golden Globe.



Colm Tóibín with Saoirse Ronan at the Dublin premiere of Brooklyn | Via RTE

2.3. Synopsis

Brooklyn is a coming of age story. Eilis Lacey is a young woman that lives in Enniscorthy, where there are not many opportunities for her, neither in the field of work nor in that of love. There, she works for Miss Kelly at her grocery store, a job that her family doesn't approve of, as she is an educated woman and they expect more from her. Reputation and social status are important in such a small town as Enniscorthy, and if Eilis is not married yet, at least she should have a respectable job.

When Father Flood, a priest that lives in America, comes for a visit, Eilis' entire life changes. She is offered the chance to move to Brooklyn, where she will have a place to live, and a good job. At first, Eilis isn't sure about what to do, but her sister Rose and Father Flood plan everything for her without asking her opinion.

When she leaves for America, Eilis is nervous and excited at the same time. She is promised great opportunities, but when she gets there, she realises that her job is very similar to the one that she had at home. She lives in a house with other Irish women, but she feels very lonely. The first months in New York are difficult and disappointing for Eilis, she has a hard time adapting to the new environment, but it truly isn't as different as the one back at home. The borough of Brooklyn is full of Irish immigrants, and there is a big Irish community there. Father Flood organises similar events to the ones Eilis had at home, and she always attends them. The Catholic Church had a lot of power at the time and controlled everything. When Father Flood realises how Eilis feels, he enrolls her in the University of Brooklyn to study accounting.

That is when Eilis' life begins to change. She is not as sad as she used to be, and she is more passionate about everything she does. At one of the dances organised by the parish, she meets Tony, an Italian guy that becomes her boyfriend. Eilis starts to be happy for the first time in months, and feels as if she is finally creating a life of her own. She becomes more confident and independent.

Everything seems to be perfect in her life, until Father Flood receives a call saying that Rose is dead. That is when Eilis decides to go back home to arrange everything and look after her mom for a while. Before leaving, Tony insists on getting married, as he is afraid that she is never going to come back, and she accepts.

Once she gets home she realises that people see her differently now. She is seen as glamorous and classy, and she becomes interesting to the community. She is offered a job, and everyone acts as if she is not going to return to America. During her stay, she starts to ignore Tony's letters, and begins to forget about her other life. She starts seeing Jim Farrell, a man that she had fancied in the past, and things get serious quickly. It is not until Miss Kelly tells her that she knows she is married and threatens to expose her, that Eilis is honest with herself and her mother. She feels as if returning to the United States is the right thing to do, and leaves, going back to her other life. She also writes a letter to Jim, telling him the truth.

2.4. Interview with Colm Tóibín

Colm Tóibín is a man who has seen a great deal of the world and has a very interesting life, but at the same time he remains faithful to his roots. This can easily be seen in his characteristic way of writing, and the small town Irish background that he often attributes to his characters. I have interviewed him to learn more about himself and *Brooklyn*. Talking to him is the perfect opportunity to delve deeper into Eilis' persona and really understand his perspective and way of thinking.

- How did you begin your narrative writing career?
- I wrote poems as a teenager and then stopped when I was about twenty. For a few years I wrote nothing at all. Then I wrote some short stories that were no good and I also started to work as a journalist. Gradually, an idea for a novel came to me. And over a few years, in fits and starts, I wrote "The South". It was hard because I did not have a definite schedule for work each day. So I wrote each chapter as though it were an emergency. There is nothing stable in the tone.
- It is very common for the main characters of your books to be uncomplicated people from rural environments. Why is this?
- I come from a small town in Ireland. That is my world. In fiction, no one is really uncomplicated. They might start like that, but the more a book goes on, the more complexity they can acquire.
- At first, Eilis is practically forced to move, but later when she has the chance to stay, does she leave to escape from the emotional and social constructions that surround her? Women in the past most likely had two options to get out of their family nucleus, to get married or to gain their independence. Was the second choice achieved through education at the time?
- Eilis is not a person who makes deliberate choices. She drifts or other people make decisions for her. It is hard, then, I think, to think about her as

a person who responds to social conditions. Of course, they affect her. But is she often too dreamy for social conditions to matter.

- The Catholic Church plays an important role in Eilis' life, and furthers her future on multiple occasions. At the same time, it influences her thoughts and actions, and it also binds her to some fidelity and morality obligations. Once Eilis moves to the United States and experiences freedom, independence and modernity, how does that affect her relationship with and perspective on the Church?
- Again, she doesn't think about the Church as an institution or question it. She accepts it, and it becomes very useful for her when she needs it – especially in the person of Fr. Flood. She 'experiences freedom, independence and modernity', as you say, but almost as if they were natural rather than cultural or political. In other words, she is so involved in each moment, each day, that she does not think about larger questions.
- Even though Eilis has a mother, does she feel as if she is an orphan somehow when she moves to the United States? What about when she returns home for Rose's funeral, does she feel different then? Do you think that there are some similarities in this case between Eilis and your personal life?
- I wrote the book when I had been in Texas for 14 weeks and in the same year in San Francisco for 12 weeks. So, I had just spent a year going back and forth between the United States and Ireland. Eilis has a way of making people want to look after her. She doesn't do this deliberately, it just happens. And it happens throughout the novel, everywhere she goes. So, yes, in the United States, she behaves like an orphan.
- On several occasions you have admitted that some of the main characters in your books are inspired by your own life. Eilis returns to the United States and goes back to her husband once she is discovered and feels exposed. You have lived in different cities and countries: are you running away or looking for a place that feels like home without it being Enniscorthy?

- I am interested in moving around, seeing things. Not running away, which sounds a bit too dramatic. I have a way of making myself at home no matter where I am.
- The first part of the book talks about the feelings: fears, doubts, efforts to fit in, and the loneliness that every person that migrates experiences. Regardless of the time difference between the period in which the novel is set in and our current reality, those feelings continue to be the same (whatever the reasons, the religion, the beliefs...are of the person who has to migrate). Do you think that the shock that Eilis experiences when she returns home would be the same for an immigrant who returns home nowadays?
- I think there are scenes and emotions in Brooklyn that belong to anyone who leaves home, even if it is to a nearby town, the feeling that time has passed and certain things are over, the feeling that you are no longer a child, but now must become an adult. Often, this comes as a profound sadness. That can happen now as much as then.
- Are you happy with the film adaptation of your novel? Would you add, remove or change something?
- It was a problem-free experience. The ending was new, but I liked it and found it moving. I liked the film.
- Do you think that more people have read the book first and then watched the film, or if it has been the other way around?
- Most people have seen the film first! That is the way.

3. IRISH EMIGRATION IN THE 1950s

In this section I want to portray the situation in which Ireland found itself in the 1950s.

As it can be seen in Tóibín's *Brooklyn*, a big exodus was caused as a consequence of the lack of economic opportunities. Therefore, I intend to delve into the economic reality of this decade and later observe how it demographically affected the several provinces and counties. I also aim to compare the difference in numbers between the two genders.

Finally, there is a part of this section dedicated to understanding the Irish community in Brooklyn and its roots, as it was a familiar destination for the newcomers and where a significant part of the book is set in.

3.1. Economic situation in the 1950s

The Irish are known throughout history for their common migratory movements. Even since before Irish independence, large groups of Irish citizens have spread all over the world looking for a better future for themselves.

In the migration movements that took place in the 1950s, the situation was not any different from the other waves of immigration. The people who left were looking for the opportunities that Ireland couldn't offer them in the meantime.

In the 1950s, also known as "the decade of the doom and gloom" or "the worst decade since the famine", Ireland was in an economic depression and decline. The performance of the economy was very poor, and the country was falling behind Western European standards, in both productivity and social matters. While the rest of Europe was achieving strong and sustained growth, Ireland was falling behind.

Agriculture was still the traditional mainstay of the economy, and it accounted two-fifths of the working population at the time. In 1950, 50% of the men and 25% of the women worked in the sector. But the agricultural production was abnormally low, and because of the crisis, the farmers didn't have enough money to invest in modernisation.

Another of the main problems was the lack of effort in developing new industries. The industrial output was faltering, the Irish industry was in a period of stagnation. Its companies weren't able to compete with others, and they were inefficient and non-profitable. The whole sector was failing.

When it came to education, not many people had access to it. Most of the schools were run by the church, and while quite a large number of children were enrolled in primary school, few made it to the end of their Leaving Certificate Exam.

Most of the population didn't finish their studies, and that also had a bad impact on their economy. Ireland lacked educated workers. At the same time, the people that did have an education also struggled to find a job.

For the young people coming of age that only meant one thing: they had to leave. Ireland couldn't offer them steady employment, the lifestyle they wanted, or a steady income. They knew that the only way to ensure all of those things was across the seas. Three of every five children who grew up in Ireland in the 1950s left the country. The Commission on emigration noted in 1955 that emigration had become a part of the generally accepted pattern of life. It is estimated that between 1946 and 1961 531,255 people left Ireland, almost 17% of the population.

3.2. By provinces, counties and gender

Ireland is divided in four provinces: Leinster, Ulster, Munster and Connacht. At the same time, these were divided into smaller counties by the British Crown. There are 32 counties, 26 in the Republic of Ireland and 6 in Northern Ireland.



Irish political map | By Andrew Koch

Leinster or *Cúige Laighean* in Irish is located in the east of the island. This province is home to Dublin, Ireland's capital, founded by the Vikings. It was a heavily colonized area over the centuries, and there can still be found remains of medieval, Norman, and Georgian architecture. It is the province with the largest population in Ireland.

Munster, also known as *Mhumhain* is in the south. It has two of Ireland's largest counties: County Kerry and County Cork. The main centre of population is Cork City. Some of

Munster's most popular sights are the Cliffs of Moher and the lunar Burren.

Connacht or *Cúige Chonnacht* is on the western coast. It is known for retaining very strong Gaelic traditions, and it also has one of the largest numbers of Gaeltacht districts (where the Irish language is predominant). Some of Connacht's best known places of interest are Connemara and Sligo.

Ulster or *Cúige Uladh* is in the north of the island. This province is divided between the Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland. It is a place that has been influenced and moulded by several cultures such as the Ulster Scots, the Normans, the Anglo-Normans and the Gaels. Nowadays it holds an important number of Gaeltacht districts, and it also did during the 1950s. Ulster is usually known for being home to the Giant's Causeway and the Mourne Mountains.

3.2.1. Intercensal period between 1951 and 1956:

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PERIOD 1951-'56 FOR EACH COUNTY AND PROVINCE AND ANNUAL AVERAGE RATES PER 1,000 AVERAGE POPUL.

Decrease in population in the intercensal period 1951-'56 (+ = Increase)		Estimated net emigration in the intercensal period 1951-'56		Annual average rates per 1,000 of average population in the intercensal period 1951-'56				Area
Males	Females	Males	Females	Births	Deaths	Natural increase	Net emigration	
43,069	18,650	106,282	88,481	21.3	12.2	9.2	13.4	TOTAL
5,507	+7,968	44,482	31,507	22.8	11.1	11.7	11.4	LEINSTER
13,631	8,096	30,085	26,683	20.7	12.9	7.9	12.8	MUNSTER
14,397	11,277	20,689	19,342	19.4	13.2	6.3	17.4	CONNACHT
10,134	7,255	13,016	10,949	18.9	13.5	5.4	19.6	ULSTER (Part of)
								Leinster
182	92	1,142	1,059	23.5	12.1	11.3	12.9	Carlow
+3,501	+9,268	20,826	13,236	23.3	10.0	13.3	9.7	Dublin*
1,295	+ 773	3,487	1,643	24.9	10.9	13.9	15.5	Kildare
712	339	1,872	1,724	21.0	13.1	7.9	11.1	Kilkenny
921	422	1,689	1,573	21.3	13.3	8.0	13.6	Laois
911	673	1,487	1,333	21.0	13.8	7.2	16.6	Longford
98	+521	2,109	1,400	23.0	11.6	11.4	16.2	Louth
150	+575	1,559	1,188	21.4	11.9	9.5	9.2	Meath
715	+141	1,902	1,322	21.9	11.8	10.1	12.3	Offaly
635	+294	2,112	1,494	24.4	12.4	12.0	13.3	Westmeath
1,736	1,038	3,482	2,945	21.3	13.1	8.0	14.3	Wexford
1,654	1,030	3,063	2,090	22.1	12.1	10.0	18.8	Wicklow
								Munster
2,005	1,548	3,438	2,862	18.8	13.4	5.4	15.9	Clare
2,913	1,708	8,737	8,256	20.2	12.9	7.3	16.0	Cork*
2,542	2,030	4,536	4,146	19.6	13.0	6.6	14.0	Kerry
2,069	1,289	5,869	5,196	23.0	11.9	11.0	15.8	Limerick*
761	551	1,958	1,866	22.8	13.4	9.3	14.0	Tipperary, N.E.
1,797	879	3,191	2,641	21.8	13.1	8.7	15.5	Tipperary, S.E.
1,034	91	2,357	1,906	20.4	12.8	7.6	16.6	Waterford*
								Connacht
2,918	1,723	6,420	5,613	21.0	11.6	9.4	15.2	Galway
2,388	1,765	2,421	2,099	16.8	14.9	1.9	23.1	Letchin
4,486	4,349	6,357	6,790	19.4	13.1	6.3	19.1	Mayo
2,543	1,844	2,850	2,462	17.5	14.7	2.8	16.1	Roscommon
2,977	1,586	2,641	2,383	19.1	14.5	4.7	17.1	Sligo
								Ulster (Part of)
3,016	1,627	3,376	2,474	18.5	14.7	3.8	18.2	Cavan
5,900	4,171	6,898	5,935	18.6	13.3	5.3	20.2	Donegal
1,824	1,487	2,750	2,540	19.9	12.4	7.5	19.7	Monaghan

In the emigration period between 1951 and 1956, we can see that Leinster is the province with the highest estimated net emigration: 44,492 men and 31,507 women left. It was also the most inhabited province. County Dublin was the county with more departures, with 20,626 men and 13,236 women that left, but at the same time, it was also the county with the most increase in its population: 3,501 men, and 9,258 women. County Carlow was the county with the fewest departures in Leinster, 1,142 men left, and 1,059 women left, but unlike County Dublin its population decreased.

In County Wexford, where Colm Tóibín's book is set, 3,482 men and 2,845 women departed. It was the county with the second highest number of female departures in Leinster.

Munster is the province with the second highest estimated net emigration: 30,085 men and 26,683 women left between 1951 and 1956. It was also the province with the second highest population. County Cork is the county with the most departures inside of Munster, 8,737 men and 8,256 women. County Tipperary N.R. had the lowest number of men emigrants with 1,958 departures, and it was also the only county in Munster that had a larger number of women emigrants than men. County Waterford had the lowest number of women emigrants, with only 1,606 departures.

The province of Connacht had the third highest estimated net emigration: 20,689 men and 19,342 women left. It also ranked third in the population ranking. County Galway had the most departures, 6,420 men and 5,613 women. County Leitrim is the county with the lowest numbers, 2,421 men, and 2,099 women. County Mayo was the only county in Connacht with a higher number of women leaving than men, while 6,790 women left, only 6,357 men did.

Ulster (the part in the Republic of Ireland) was the province with the lowest estimated net emigration: 13,016 men and 10,949 women left. Ulster was the province with the least population. County Donegal had the most departures, 6,896 men and 5,935 women. County Monaghan had the lower number of men emigrants with 2,750 departures, and County Cavan had the lower number of women emigrants with 2,474 departures.

3.2.2. Intercensal period between 1956 and 1961:

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1956-1961 FOR EACH PROVINCE AND COUNTY AND AVERAGE ANNUAL RATES PER 1,000 AVERAGE POPULATION.

Decrease in population, 1956-1961 (+ = increase)		Estimated net emigration		Average annual rates per 1,000 of average population				Area
Males	Females	Males	Females	Births	Deaths	Natural increase	Net emigration	
46,379	33,564	309,572	102,431	21.2	11.9	9.2	14.8	TOTAL
6,545	248	46,758	40,888	23.0	10.9	12.1	13.1	LEINSTER
15,490	12,545	30,974	30,426	20.5	12.8	7.7	14.2	MUNSTER
14,575	12,181	20,105	19,410	18.7	12.8	5.9	18.3	CONNACHT
9,769	8,570	11,735	11,707	17.8	13.3	4.5	20.7	ULSTER (part of)
								Leinster
306	240	1,310	1,390	24.6	11.7	12.8	16.1	Carlow
1,749	257	19,788	17,151	23.3	10.3	13.0	13.7	Dublin Co. Borough
+ 208	+ 31	1,032	973	20.9	11.5	9.4	8.4	Dun Laoghaire Borough
+7,283	+7,809	+1,151	+1,868	27.1	7.9	19.2	+4.8	Dublin*
1,001	494	3,168	2,022	24.1	10.3	13.8	18.4	Kildare
1,675	746	2,719	2,177	20.3	12.4	7.9	15.6	Kilkenny
1,244	774	2,077	1,884	21.2	12.8	8.4	17.2	Louth
1,344	982	1,683	1,620	20.0	13.8	6.1	20.8	Longford
1,161	655	3,125	2,704	23.6	11.3	11.8	17.1	Louth
1,094	636	2,518	2,324	21.2	11.5	9.7	14.7	Meath
403	34	1,808	1,620	23.0	11.5	11.6	13.2	Offaly
919	342	2,363	1,883	23.2	12.0	11.2	15.9	Westmeath
2,082	1,869	3,722	3,679	20.9	12.8	8.1	17.4	Wexford
1,148	1,059	2,596	2,529	21.6	11.8	9.8	17.2	Wicklow
								Munster
1,964	1,510	2,809	2,827	19.0	13.2	5.7	14.9	Clew
1,064	987	3,205	2,804	23.0	13.0	10.1	15.2	Cork Co. Borough
2,200	1,989	6,099	6,605	19.7	13.0	6.7	10.0	Cork*
3,127	2,487	4,570	4,496	18.6	12.9	5.8	15.2	Kerry
+ 87	187	2,021	2,098	25.7	9.9	15.8	16.2	Limerick Co. Borough
2,536	1,906	3,879	3,518	19.9	12.9	7.0	17.5	Limerick*
1,140	861	2,182	2,219	22.0	13.2	8.8	16.1	Tipperary, N.R.
2,117	1,475	3,482	3,198	21.7	13.1	8.6	18.6	Tipperary, S.R.
297	365	1,091	1,189	23.0	11.7	11.3	16.0	Waterford Co. Borough
1,152	778	1,634	1,472	18.7	13.4	5.3	14.1	Waterford*
								Connacht
3,230	2,436	6,316	6,077	20.3	11.8	8.8	16.2	Galway
1,965	1,631	2,077	1,934	17.2	14.8	2.4	22.7	Lettin
5,035	4,487	6,547	6,471	18.2	13.1	5.1	20.3	Mayo
2,401	1,892	2,845	2,663	17.0	13.7	3.3	17.9	Roscommon
1,754	1,535	2,320	2,345	18.7	14.0	4.7	16.4	Sligo
								Ulster (part of)
2,900	2,246	3,232	3,066	18.1	14.2	3.9	21.3	Cavan
4,163	4,054	5,177	5,406	16.9	12.9	4.0	17.9	Donegal
2,706	2,270	3,326	3,235	19.4	13.0	6.4	24.5	Monaghan

Leinster continued to be the province with the highest estimated net emigration: 44,492 men and 31,507 women left. Dublin County Borough had the most departures, 19,788 men and 17,151 women left. Dun Laoghaire Borough had the fewest women departures, only 973 women became emigrants. Both Dun Laoghaire Borough and Dublin experienced growth in their population.

County Wexford's numbers grew a bit, 3,722 men and 3,679 women left. The female departures continued to be the second highest ones in the province, and the male ones also achieved the position during this intercensal period.

The province of Munster found itself again in the second place of estimated net emigration. County Cork had the most departures, 6,099 men and 6,605 women left. County Cork amongst County Clare, Cork County Borough, County Limerick, Limerick County Borough and Waterford County Borough had a higher number of women emigrants than men. Munster was the province with the most counties that had a higher female migration. Waterford County Borough had the least departures, 1,091 men and 1,189 women left.

The province of Connacht still held the third place in estimated net emigration with 20,105 men, and 19,410 women that left. County Mayo had the most departures, 6,547 men and 6,471 women. County Leitrim had the least departures, 2,077 men and 1,934 women.

The province of Ulster (the part in the Republic of Ireland) continued to have the lowest estimated net emigration, 11,735 men and 11,707 women. County Donegal had the most departures, 5,177 men and 5,406 women. County Cavan had the least departures, 3,232 men and 3,066 women.

During this decade, 408,766 Irish citizens became emigrants and left hoping for a better life. There was an obvious gender gap, 217,854 men migrated, and 190,912 women also did. The male predominance was clear, 26,942 more men left than women, but in comparison to the other migratory movements that other countries have experienced, the Irish had a pretty even gender balance.

In the second part of the decade, while the number of male departures remained quite stable with small changes, the female departures quickly grew.

This period experienced a rise in the female departures even overcoming the male ones in several counties, especially in the province of Munster. 13,950 more women left during the last five years of the decade than in the beginnings of it, but only 1,290 men did.

3.3. The Irish community of Brooklyn

The Irish presence has been very strong in New York since the first emigration waves, caused by the Great Potato Famine (1845-1849). The years that followed this catastrophe were full of hunger, poverty, and death, so a big part of the Irish population had no choice but to leave. The United States and Canada were two of the most common destinations, and New York quickly became the new home of thousands of Irish immigrants that were looking for a better future.

By 1860, 200,000 Irish people lived in New York, making up 25% of the city's population. More Irish lived in New York than did in Dublin, the city had the largest Irish population in the world at the time. They quickly settled across Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx, and as they did, the crime rate rose through those neighbourhoods. The first years of adaptation weren't easy, as most of the people that migrated didn't have an education. The men usually filled the lowest jobs in dockyards, factories, and slaughterhouses, and the women worked as domestic servants to the city's rising middle class.

As the decades progressed, so did their social status and class. Generations of Irish rose through the ranks of society and became civic workers or got involved in politics. An Irish descendant, John F. Kennedy achieved the presidency in 1961.

Between 1845 and 1921, the most important influx of Irish immigrants came to the USA. It is estimated that nearly 4 million Irish flooded American shores. As a result, New York had one of the biggest Irish communities in the United States and the whole world, and Brooklyn quickly became its hotspot. All the people that moved there had a very big political, social and cultural impact in it. Being in Brooklyn could feel as if you were in Ireland.

When the Irish that migrated in the 1950s arrived in America, Brooklyn quickly became their new home as well. There, they found thousands of other Irish and Irish descendants that had the same traditions and beliefs as they did, and a new community that had their backs and helped them in every possible way.

It was a very religious community, specifically a catholic one. The church had lots of power and connections, and it was usually through a priest that the people in Ireland found a job, a residence and a permit to live in the United States. It was also the parishes who organised most of the cultural and leisure events.

One of the most popular and well-attended events organised by the parishes were the balls. Traditional Irish music was played at them, and people would go there to dance and meet other Irish. Besides their entertaining objective, balls were also held in order that people could find a partner that matched their parish's expectations. For the Irish girls, the balls meant a non-alcoholic safe space where they could meet catholic guys under their priest's eye and protection.



Ladies attending a ball | By Brian Fitzpatrick

Most of the people who attended the balls were Irish Catholics, but the entrance wasn't restricted. As we can see in Tóibín's book, it was common that other people would attend the balls, most commonly Italians. That is how Eilis meets her husband, and lots of other Irish girls did as there was also an important Italian presence in the borough of Brooklyn. The two communities weren't always on good terms, but when people talked about interracial marriages at the time, they were usually referring to Irish-Italian ones.

Besides the catholic events, there were other kinds of organisations and places where the Irish culture would be celebrated and taught to the children and the

descendants of those who had left. There were institutions that taught the Irish language, the traditional Irish dances, and traditional music. Some of them are still open to this day, as the Irish American Cultural Institute, founded in 1962, or the Irish Art Centre, founded in 1972. Even though there were lots of resources to maintain the Irish roots and traditions, there were immigrants who didn't want their children to be familiar with them, they wanted them to be "American" and leave the Irish environment that Brooklyn had. While some celebrated their origins, others wanted to forget about them. It was common for some immigrants to change their names and adopt a new identity.

4. GLOBAL MIGRATION NOWADAYS

Irish communities around the world have existed for a long time, and in consequence we can now find thousands of people with Irish roots. Some of these communities are still rather relevant or have at least left an important legacy in the area they were placed. They continue to be places of attraction for the upcoming generations of Irish emigrants, and in this section I am going to talk about the main countries in which they were set in and how we can take into account the Irish influence to this day.

I am also going to address the current migratory flows in Ireland, and what causes the arrivals and departures of thousands of migrants.

4.1. The Irish diaspora

We refer to Irish emigrants and their descendants as the Irish diaspora. The term diaspora comes from the Greek word “scatter”, and it defines a group’s migration, or dispersion from its traditional homeland.

Nowadays, over 70 million people living outside of Ireland claim to have Irish blood. In 2019 the population of the Republic of Ireland was 4.904 million people, making the number of Irish-blooded people living abroad almost fifteen times greater than Ireland’s population. This is possible because of the migrating tendencies that the Irish have had since the 17th century, which have led to more than ten million departures from the Emerald Isle.¹

The country in which the Irish have had the biggest impact is the United Kingdom. More than 10% of the population claims to have a grandparent born in Ireland, and 20 million people have got Irish ancestry.² In 2019, the Irish population in the United Kingdom was 322,000 people.³

¹ A. (2020b, September 20). The Irish Diaspora: How Famine and Political Crisis Fueled a Mass Emigration. Owlcation - Education. <https://owlcation.com/humanities/byrne> .
<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2020/>

² 2011 Census - Office for National Statistics. (2011). <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

³ Statista. (2020, November 3). Irish population of the United Kingdom (UK) 2008-2019. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1061817/irish-population-in-united-kingdom/>

The largest Irish communities are mostly located in big cities such as London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Bristol and Portsmouth. London particularly has the area of Kilburn, which holds one of the largest communities outside of Ireland. Other big industrial cities such as Manchester, Salford, Coventry, Birmingham or Cardiff (among others) also have large diaspora populations because of the Industrial Revolution and the immigrants it brought.

Scotland has also had a large amount of Irish immigration, mostly in the cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Coatbridge. It is believed that over 1.5 million people in Scotland have Irish blood.

The United Kingdom still preserves lots of the traditions that came with the past immigrants, and the new ones to arrive in the country celebrate them alongside the English people. Saint Patrick's Day is the most popular celebration, and London holds an official parade where people from all over the world, Irish or not, participate.



London St. Patrick's Day Festival 2018 | By london.gov.uk

Canada is another country that through the centuries has also become the home to thousands of Irish immigrants and their descendants. In 2016 the census taken by Statistics Canada showed that the Irish are the fourth largest ethnic group there, with 4.627 million Canadians with full or partial Irish

ancestry. It also showed that at that moment, a total of 28,325 Irish immigrants lived in the country.⁴

Quebec has a very large Irish community, especially in Montreal. Big cities such as Ontario also have an important presence. The most Irish city though, is Saint John. Irish immigrants first settled in the area during the 18th century, and the city has memorials in their honour. Canada appreciates and celebrates Irish culture in all of its forms.



Irish Famine Memorials |
By Emily MFG

The United States has an important history with Irish immigrants and their descendants. Irish Americans are the second largest reported ethnic group. There are over 35 million Irish Americans, and over 41 million people with Irish ancestry, one in every five white Americans.⁵

Some African Americans are also part of the diaspora, their roots descend from Irish slave owners who lived in the United States during the Colonial era.

Irish communities were settled all over the country, in cities as Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco...

The United States is a common destination for the new generation of immigrants. Traditions and festivities as Saint Patrick's Day are celebrated in a lot of cities around the country, and New York has the biggest parade in the world. There are organisations and places that foment Irish culture like the language, the traditional music, or the traditional dances.

⁴ Immigrant population by selected places of birth, admission category, and period of immigration, 2016 Census. (2017). <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/>
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dv-vd/imm/index-eng.cfm>

⁵ Scottish and Scotch-Irish Americans - History, The scotch-irish, Immigration, Settlement patterns, Acculturation and Assimilation. (n.d.). <https://www.everyculture.com/>
<https://www.everyculture.com/multi/Pa-Sp/Scottish-and-Scotch-Irish-Americans.html>



Saint Patrick's Day in New York, 2018 | By Getty Images

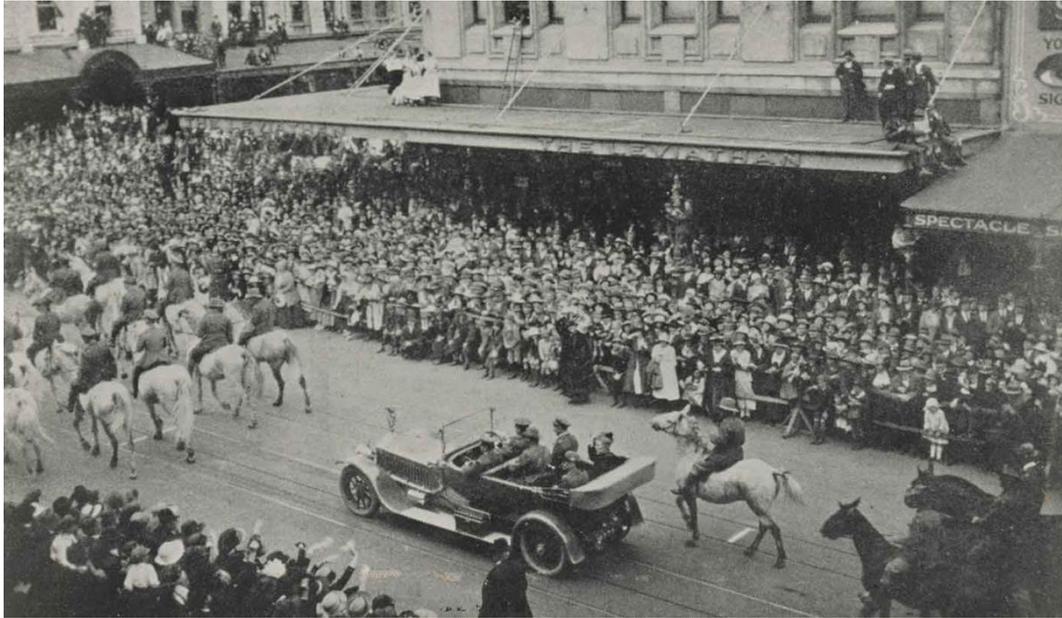
Australia has crossed paths with the Irish on lots of occasions, and it has been one of the main destinations for Irish immigrants through the years. Irish settlers first arrived in Australia, mostly as convicts, because of the **First Fleet**⁶, and it quickly became a place of interest when Ireland faced other crises such as the Famine. There was a pre-existing Irish community, and that brought comfort to the soon to be immigrants, Up until 1914, the Irish formed a third of the Australian population. In the 2011 census, 2.087 million Australians, 10.4% of the population reported having Irish ancestry.

Australia has a very large Irish diaspora, and those of Irish descent pay homage to their roots in various ways. Traditional Irish music has become part of the Australian Folk music scene, and Irish pubs can be found in all of the big cities. Some Irish festivities are celebrated too, Saint Patrick's day is also the most popular one.

For the new generation of Irish immigrants Australia is one of the most common destinations. The 2016 census reported that 74,888 Australian residents were born in Ireland.⁷

⁶ Fleet that in 1787 sailed from the United Kingdom to Australia mainly transporting convicts, but also civil officers, marines and free people.

⁷ Census. (n.d.). Wwww.Abs.Gov.Au. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census>



Saint Patrick's Day, Melbourne, 1920 | Via National Museum Australia

4.2. Ireland: immigration and emigration in the 21st century

There has always been in the Irish DNA this tendency of theirs to emigrate, ever since the 17th century when the first Irish departed looking for a new life. Now, we are in the 21st century, but has the situation changed?

The answer is a little complicated... Nowadays, it continues to be common for Irish people to move to different countries. During the one-year period from April 2019 and April 2020 it is estimated that 28,300 Irish nationals emigrated. On the other hand, the country's economy finds itself in a moment of prosperity and opportunity. Over the last decades the unemployment rate has dropped dramatically, and now it is within the reach of the majority of the population to get the life that a few years ago many went in search of. This has caused the return of many Irish people attracted by the opportunity to go back home and reunite with their families, while being able to maintain the lifestyle that they had departed for. It is estimated that between April 2019 and April 2020 28,900 Irish nationals living abroad have returned and settled in Ireland. Currently, more people return than leave.

Moreover, this economic well-being has also attracted many others looking for a better future over the years, and now Ireland is a culturally diverse country. In 2020, approximately 644,400 non-Irish nationals were residing in Ireland, accounting for 12.9% of the total population.

However, are people only driven by economic purposes? Perhaps in the past, but at this time emigration is more complicated than that. People leave for all sorts of reasons like learning a language, being with a loved one, discovering and experiencing a new country's culture and lifestyle... There are thousands of reasons, and no two circumstances are the same. Each experience is different and unique, therefore I have interviewed Irish nationals living abroad, and immigrants living in Ireland to be conscious of the two sides of migration in Ireland.

To understand the Irish needs and motivations to emigrate and how their life is abroad I interviewed Mark Finnegan, a 49-year-old software engineer who is

currently living in Belgium, and Gráinne Bates, an eighteen-year-old student who lived in Finland for five years and is currently living in Ireland.

They both left the country when the economic situation was good. Gráinne left to experience a different scenery and be with her grandparents, and Mark left looking for adventures and a job, and Belgium is the 14th country where he has worked.

When I asked them what they missed about Ireland, Gráinne explained to me that she missed how friendly and chatty the people in Ireland are in comparison to the Finnish people, who are rather shy. Interestingly, Mark talked about how Belgian people are chatty just like the Irish, but instead he missed the food. He also pointed out that he misses how places are less populated in Ireland, whereas ironically Gráinne liked how in Finland towns weren't as spaced out as back at home.

They both agreed that they have been treated nicely by their new communities, and that it wasn't difficult for them to adapt to the new environment. Also neither of them experienced any type of issue in order to move because of their nationality, and they had to make no arrangements to live in the country.

As many Irish emigrants, the thought of returning home has crossed their minds. Gráinne has already moved back to Ireland, and Mark doesn't rule it out.

To understand the needs and motivations that lead people to emigrate to Ireland and how their life is there, I interviewed Noémi Savanian, an eighteen-year-old student from Mauritius, Anna Claverol, a 49-year-old Catalan business analyst, and John Driscoll, a sixty-year-old American field-engineer. They all moved to Ireland for different reasons: to learn the language, to reunite with their family and to start a new job along with a new life.

They arrived at different times, with Anna being the first one to move there twenty-five years ago. At the time, not many immigrants were arriving in Ireland and she did not face many struggles to move there because of her European nationality. John was next seventeen years later, moving to the country with a work permit and not noticing many other immigrants like him. Noémi was the last to move in 2017, and the situation was completely different. She entered

the country as a tourist, and she is still fighting to get her visa. Nowadays many immigrants find themselves in the same position as Noémi, and illegal immigration has been increasing in line with the country's prosperity.

The three of them agreed that what they like most about the Irish culture is their music, and John and Anna also like the sense of community and the social life. All of them also miss the weather from where they come from, and John and Noémi miss the food too. From their experience, as the country becomes more culturally diverse, it is easier to feel closer to home. Typical food from other countries can be found, and their communities organize traditional activities and events.

They all faced difficulties to get adapted to Ireland, and the weather is the most brought up one. The language was complicated for Anna and Noémi too.

5. PARALLELISMS BETWEEN IRISH MIGRATION IN THE 50S AND MY OWN EXPERIENCE (2018-2019)

When I first read *Brooklyn* I found several similarities between Eilis and myself. I thought that even though we don't live in the same time periods and our lives are very different, we went through some of the same trials. In this section, I intend to compare and contrast our journeys. In order to do so, I am going to talk about what led us to migrate, how we adapted to our new surroundings and the ways we communicated with the ones back at home.

5.1. Motives and needs

Eilis' departure was mainly caused by the lack of economic mobility in Enniscorthy at the time, and what it entailed. She was raised and lived in a conservative catholic Irish environment where reputation played a big role in everyone's lives. Eilis belonged to the lower-middle class, and was an educated woman who was looking for a job. What her community expected from women, was to get married to a wealthy or respectable man and have a family. In the case that women did not get married straight away, they ought to have a good job.

*"She knew that Rose had tried to find her work in an office, and Rose was paying for her books now that she was studying book-keeping and rudimentary accountancy, but she knew also that there was, at least for the moment, no work for anyone in Enniscorthy, no matter what their qualifications."*⁸

As Eilis couldn't find either a husband or a job that her mother would consider good enough, together her mother and sister arranged an opportunity for her to work abroad. They had grand plans for her, but before going to the United States, Eilis had never thought that she would attain much upward mobility. She was not very ambitious back at home.

⁸ Tóibín, C. (2015b). *Brooklyn*. In *Brooklyn* (Media Tie-In ed., p. 11). Penguin Random House UK.

“In the United States there would be plenty of work for someone like you and with good pay.”⁹

In this case, my experience was quite different. As Eilis, I have also been brought up in a small town where everyone knows each other and reputation is everything, but it is a different society. Well, it’s another age, religion and traditions don’t play as much of a big role, and our perspectives and expectations are different. I have been raised to be independent, and to put my career and dreams before everything else. My goal in life is not to get married, but like Eilis, I am also planning on getting a good job. I left for Ireland for different reasons, but improving my fluency in English and developing linguistic skills that are going to be useful for my future job were the main ones.

In some ways, I feel as if Eilis and I have lived in different Irelands. The community where I lived was relatively open-minded, and I didn’t see or experience judgement and classism on any occasion. But once again, Eilis left Ireland in a moment of economic instability, low attendance rates in school and a rural based economy and society, and I arrived in Ireland in a moment of modernisation and reinvention.

On the other hand, I found myself in the very same rural area with the same language, traditions, food... I lived in an Irish household with similar values to the ones that Eilis’ had. While reading Tóibín’s book I could see myself between those pages living some of the same experiences as going to the balls or the beach with my friends, having tea with my host family...



Author in Co. Wexford | Via Author



Eilis (S. Ronan) in Co. Wexford | By John Crowley

⁹ Tóibín, C. (2015b). Brooklyn. In Brooklyn (Media Tie-In ed., p. 22). Penguin Random House UK

Even though Ireland is different now, emigration is still very common and every family has someone that works or lives abroad. The reasons are still the same ones, most people move to look for a job. Before moving herself, Eilis' brothers had already moved to England and she described the house as if it were empty without them, she always had the feeling that something was missing.

“She did not know if the other two also realized that this was the first time they had laughed at this table since Jack had followed the others to Birmingham.”¹⁰

Nowadays, this feeling still hasn't gone away, and every Irish family knows it very well. I could see it in my host family as well. I lived in a very big house with my host parents, and my host siblings who were exchange students like me. My host parents have a very big traditional Irish family, they have six children (who are now grown-ups), and were always used to having kids and teenagers around keeping them company. Now, three of their children live abroad, two in England, and one in Africa. They always talked about how the house felt empty without them, and how it was something difficult to cope with at first. That is also one of the reasons why they began to host students, to get rid of that void and fill their house with laughs and youth.

However, the number of emigrants is decreasing, and it is becoming more common for those who had left to return home. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic situation in Ireland had improved a lot since the 2008 crisis, and the unemployment rate was below 6%.¹¹ That motivated lots of Irish living abroad to come back, and also motivated those at home to stay. Nowadays with the pandemic it is also common for emigrants to return to be with their families, and fewer people want to take a risk and move away.

¹⁰ Tóibín, C. (2015b). Brooklyn. In Brooklyn (Media Tie-In ed., p. 15). Penguin Random House UK.

¹¹ Monthly Unemployment November 2020 - CSO - Central Statistics Office. (2020, December 2). Wwww.Cso.ie.
<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentnovember2020/>

5.2. Adaptation to the new environment

Departing for another country forces you to leave lots of things and people behind: your friends, your family, your old life... But what people don't always realize, is that you also abandon a part of your identity. Your culture, your traditions, your normalcy... it is all gone and you have to face the challenge of adapting to a completely different environment by yourself.

Once Eilis arrived in America, she struggled to fit in her new surroundings. Her first days in Brooklyn went well, as she was very busy making arrangements for her new life. When she finally settled into a routine, that is when she had the time to truly become aware of all the big changes happening around her. She was no longer living in Enniscorthy with her mother and sister. Instead, she was living in Brooklyn with Mrs Kehoe and her new roommates. Her new reality was difficult to assimilate at first, especially because she couldn't stop picturing her life back in Ireland and comparing it to her new one in Brooklyn.

*"She was nobody here. It was not just that she had no friends and family; it was rather that she was a ghost in this room, in the streets on the way to work, on the shop floor. Nothing meant anything."*¹²

When I first arrived in Ireland, something very similar happened to me. I moved in with my host family only two days before school started, so I had very little time to settle in. During my first weeks there, I was always in a rush as there were still lots of arrangements to be made. Everything was new and exciting, and I didn't have enough time to overthink. That quickly changed after I finally got used to my routine. Like Eilis, it wasn't until then when I completely realized that my life had turned into a very different one. That is when reality finally kicked in, and I started to see things from a different perspective. When you move to a new country, it's inevitable to constantly compare people and things to the ones back at home, and it's also normal to miss them and be lonely from time to time. On the other hand, if you often revert to those memories, and can't stop thinking about your old life, you are at risk of falling into a stage of sadness and depression. Memory bridges our past identities with our current selves, and

¹² Tóibín, C. (2015b). Brooklyn. In Brooklyn (Media Tie-In ed., p. 67). Penguin Random House UK.

you have to find a balance between them in order to be able to move on with your life.

Eilis struggled with that when she first arrived, and her first months in the city were very hard for her. Eventually, she discovered that the best thing she could do, was to keep herself busy and create a new life there in Brooklyn. That's when she started to attend accounting lessons at university, and also began to develop a personal life of her own. She started to mix in with her new community and its culture, and participate in all the balls and activities they arranged.

“ (...) sometimes she actually believed that she was looking forward to thinking about home, letting images of home roam freely in her mind, but it came to her now with a jolt that, no, the feeling she had was only about Friday night and being collected from the house by a man she had met and going to the dance with him in the hall, knowing that he would be walking her back to Mrs. Kehoe's afterwards.”¹³

While trying all these new things, she discovered a new side of her that she had never acknowledged before. She was on her own, and that gave her the chance to redefine herself. It also made her more mature, independent, confident and ambitious. Far away from the gaze of those at home, she slightly began to rebuild her personality.

When you are on your own abroad, you see parts of yourself that you didn't know existed. You have to adapt to unfamiliar situations, and you don't react to things the same way that you would usually do. People around you act and think differently, and that leads you to question lots of things and work on your perspective. Moving to Ireland was a very enriching experience for me, and it offered me the possibility to meet lots of interesting people and learn a lot about the Irish culture. It helped me to grow as a person, and to see that I am much stronger and capable than I thought I was. Like Eilis, things weren't always easy and I felt lonely and sad on multiple occasions. She was sad at work and it

¹³ Tóibín, C. (2015b). Brooklyn. In Brooklyn (Media Tie-In ed., p. 131). Penguin Random House UK.

interfered with her performance, so eventually her employer Miss Fortini had to intervene.

*“But you cannot work here if you’re sad. And of course you’re sad if you’re not with your mother for the first time in your life. But the sadness won’t last, so we will do what we can for you”*¹⁴

I wasn’t working at the time, so instead of being sad there, I was sad at school. Ironically, my accounting teacher whose name is Miss Fortune, was the first person who noticed it. She had a very similar chat with me to the one Eilis had with Miss Fortini, and she encouraged me to try out new things and make the best out of my experience in Ireland.

After talking to her, I decided to get very involved with my community in all sorts of ways in order to scare the loneliness away. I joined the zumba lessons with all the ladies from the village where I lived, I went on lots of excursions with my host-sister, I went to the balls with my friends from school, and I took the bus to Dublin every time I could. I even tried a few lessons of Irish traditional dances. I met and befriended lots of people of all ages and nationalities, and learnt about their amazing stories and life experiences. Some people I would have never met or approached at home, like Fiona, one of the zumba ladies that was always ready to dance and laugh, or Noreen, the owner of an Italian restaurant that took me under her wing from the day we first met. Them and many others made me understand that even when you aren’t home, you can find the feeling of home amongst new people that come across your path.

Wisdom comes from lots of different ways, and while abroad, both Eilis and I had the opportunity to reintroduce ourselves to the world, and create the best version of ourselves with the help of those surrounding us. Even if it wasn’t easy at first, we learned how to gradually embrace new circumstances, and I think it was one of the most important lessons I have ever been taught.

¹⁴ Tóibín, C. (2015b). Brooklyn. In Brooklyn (Media Tie-In ed., p. 73). Penguin Random House UK.

5.3. Contacting family, difference between communication channels

Communication has evolved a lot in the past few years, and now we have all sorts of devices and applications that keep us in touch with our friends and family, no matter where they are.

In the 1950s, things were quite different. People used to communicate by correspondence, and phones were a luxury that not many could afford. When Eilis was in Enniscorthy, she wrote letters to communicate with her brothers who lived in the United Kingdom from the comfort of her home. Once she moved to New York, her perspective on correspondence completely changed. She found herself on the other side, the side away from her family who had to face loneliness on her own. Receiving letters got a completely different meaning, as they were the only link she had with her family then. And letters took a while to arrive in America, as they had a long journey ahead of them all the way from Ireland.

Nevertheless, every time a letter arrived, Eilis could not help but to have mixed feelings about it. Her memories were all she had to remember her loved ones, but they were also the main cause of her homesickness and they made it very difficult for her to be happy and content with her new reality. Reading the letters that her mother and sister had sent her, usually left her heartbroken and deeply sad for many days.

“All of this came to her like a terrible weight and she felt for a second that she was going to cry.”¹⁵

Packages weren't very common those days as they were more expensive to send. Eilis did send one home for Christmas, with presents that she had bought for all of her family. It was a special occasion, and she had to save up for several weeks to be able to afford it. However, it was worth it as her family was very happy with them.

When I was in Ireland, I also received letters from home. My little brother sent them to me occasionally, so every time I received one it was a big surprise. He

¹⁵ Tóibín, C. (2015b). Brooklyn. In Brooklyn (Media Tie-In ed., p. 66). Penguin Random House UK.

sent me letters in an ironic way, as he doesn't like talking on the phone, and he would tell me funny stories that had happened to him that week. Like Eilis, when I received them, they made me very emotional. It was a reminder that I wasn't with my loved ones, but at the same time, it reminded me how much they loved me too.

During my stay in Ireland, I also received a couple of packages on special occasions. It continues to be expensive to send them, so it was uncommon to get them. Every time my family would send me one, I would feel very cheerful and lucky.

However, these are the only similarities between our experiences in this case. While I had access to all sorts of technology to be in touch with my family, Eilis could only use letters. There were phones at the time, but very few had them, and the only time she used one was to contact her mother when her sister died. On the contrary, I owned a phone and a laptop. I could reach out to my family and friends at any time of the day, and social media kept me posted on everything that was taking place in my town.

Technology has changed the concept of distance, and has helped to bring emigrants closer with their loved ones through a screen. Having all these devices and applications that allow us to be connected at all times with anyone, anywhere, have increased the number of emigrants and made their lives easier. They provide a feeling of security and proximity that could be crucial when making the decision of moving to a different country, and it also helps the ones who already live abroad to stay in touch with their roots and their culture. Moreover, social media is often used by immigrants to meet people from their country when living away, and create events and associations to celebrate their culture.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Brooklyn is a book that paints a picture of the migratory movements that took place in Ireland during the 1950s, and in which the reader can appreciate the traditions, the social norms and organization of the Irish society at the time.

The novel shows both sides of a story; what it was like to live in a country with little opportunity, and the journey that an emigrant underwent when moving abroad. In addition, it tells this story through a woman's eyes which is rarer especially when it comes to a historical perspective. We can certainly see how Eilis' experience was more limited by the gender norms, the rules and expectations that women were meant to follow back in the day.

It was a predominantly male migration: 217,854 men left during that decade. At the same time 190,912 women, a nevertheless significant number also did.¹⁶ The United States were a common destination, among others, and the borough of Brooklyn quickly became home of thousands of Irish newcomers. Other immigrants had already settled there during previous migrating periods, and Brooklyn had a large Irish community.

Besides Brooklyn, there were many communities across the United States and other countries such as Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom where the same had happened as a consequence of the Irish diaspora.

Nowadays, these countries continue to be referents and places of attraction for the upcoming immigrants, but the situation is different. Ireland is a prosperous country now, and the dynamics have changed. This has become a matter of attraction over the past years, and many Irish nationals are returning home. From April 2019 to April 2020 28,900 Irish nationals went back to Ireland whereas 28,300 left the country.¹⁷ Even though migrating is still common in Ireland, the reasons are not as economically based as they were in the past. Today thousands of immigrants move to Ireland looking for what had once

¹⁶ Census 1951 Reports - CSO - Central Statistics Office. CSO.ie.

<https://www.cso.ie/en/census/censusvolumes1926to1991/historicalreports/census1951reports/>

¹⁷ Population and Migration Estimates April 2019 - CSO - Central Statistics Office. Cso.ie.

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2019/>

caused the departure of a big part of its population. In April 2020 12.9% of Ireland's population were immigrants.¹⁸

From comparing the interviews that I have done, Tóibín's narration, and my life in Ireland, I have come to the conclusion that every migrant's journey is different. What motivates us to leave, the situation that we find ourselves in, our race, our gender, the different time periods in which we live... It makes it impossible for there to be two equal stories, two equal experiences. But no matter what those circumstances are, there are some things that never change, and some scenarios that are repeated over and over each time someone leaves their country behind. Homesickness, missing our culture, adapting to new traditions, a new society, new food, meeting new people, getting a new perspective, and taking part in a new adventure, are trials that every migrant goes through.

¹⁸ Population and Migration Estimates April 2019 - CSO - Central Statistics Office. Cso.ie. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2019/>

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8. ANNEX: INTERVIEWS WITH 21st CENTURY MIGRANTS

8.1. Interview with Noémi Savanian

Noémi Savanian is an eighteen-year-old student from Curepipe, Mauritius. She lives in Bridgetown, County Wexford where she also goes to school.



Noémi
Savanian |
Via Instagram

- Where are you from?
- *I was born and raised in a town called Curepipe.*
- Why are you living in Ireland?
- *My dad raised me and my sister because my mom had to leave Mauritius to work abroad to be able to support us financially. She got a job offer in Ireland so she left us when I was seven years old. Afterwards, when she was finally ready to welcome us here in Ireland, she planned everything: the school, the place to live... So that's why I'm living in Ireland, because my mom decided to take us and start a new life here.*
- How long have you been living in Ireland?
- *I moved to Ireland in December of 2017, so it's my third year living here.*
- Are you living there with your family?
- *I'm actually living with my sister Alycia, my mom Brenda, and my stepdad, Jason. He is Irish.*
- What were the main difficulties that you had to face in order to move to Ireland?
- *I would say that the main challenge was to leave my dad. I can still remember the day I was saying goodbye to my cousins, my aunties and uncles, my dad, and stepmom. It was a sad time, a really emotional*

moment for me, and my sister as well. But, to be honest, I had always wanted to live with my mom and I had been waiting for that moment for so long, so I was ready in my mind. I knew that Ireland was really different, but I was ready to face all the challenges. Surprisingly, it wasn't a shock. It was the first time that I had ever taken a plane, and it was like a big adventure.

I'm telling you this, because back at home, everything changed when my dad remarried, and my stepmom was quite bad. She was treating us really badly, and life was a big nightmare. I didn't want to go to school at some stage, and went through some depression as well, to be honest. I was really waiting for that moment to happen, for our mom to tell us that we could finally move and start a new life in Ireland.

So yes, my biggest difficulty would be that I had to leave my dad and the rest of the family. I was really close with one of my cousins, but we are still in touch. We talk to each other very often, so all these things help a lot.

- Why did you choose to live in Bridgetown, Co. Wexford?
- *My mom used to live in Dublin and work there, but before we arrived in Ireland and live with her, she decided to move to Bridgetown. She had been looking at houses in different places, but she finally found one in a good environment with a school close to it, so she chose Bridgetown.*
- What aspects of Mauritian culture do you miss the most?
- *I would say the food. Street food in Mauritius is the best. Well, we can always cook some of the Mauritian food here, so I don't miss it that much. There are some Asian shops in Wexford and they import Mauritian products, so I always buy them when I have the chance. I also miss the beach and the weather, I know it's not supposed to be part of a culture, but it is one of the things that I miss the most.*
- Was it difficult to adapt?

- *Yes, it was. We arrived here in winter, so the weather was a big shock, and one of the hardest things to get adapted for me. It was also hard to get adapted in school in different ways. I knew no one in Bridgetown Vocational College, and my first group of friends were also foreigners. They were exchange students, so it was hard for me when they returned back to their home country. I also had to repeat a year because when I arrived I missed half of the fifth year, so I had to get adapted to new people again. It was difficult, but at the same time, I wasn't the only one who didn't know anybody, so I made new friends. That's actually when we met. I have to say that everybody was genuinely nice to me, and there was a very nice environment in school.*

- How do people in Ireland treat you?
- *Thanks to how times have changed and Ireland has evolved, and there's more diversity, I don't feel like I'm the only Mauritian. Well, in school me and Alycia are the only Mauritians, but there are also people from Nigeria, England, China, Poland... What I'm trying to say is that I don't feel different. In that way, I can say that the Irish people are open minded and welcoming. They treat us like everyone else, so that's great.*

- What aspects of the Irish culture do you like or admire? Why?
- *I really admire the way that traditional music it's funny and at the same time it tells a story. I like how they use the Irish instruments like the accordeon, and it reminds me a little of Mauritius, because we also use it a lot.*

- What are the main differences between the Irish culture and Mauritian culture?
- *The food is quite different. The food in Mauritius is very diverse, Mauritius is a multicultural society, so we have a large variety that Ireland does not. The music is also quite different, and also the history.*

Another big difference is that in Mauritius we have lots of different religions that coexist together, there are lots of different temples and ways of worshipping, and in Ireland catholicism has a very important paper.

There's a big difference when it comes to languages as well. Mauritian culture involves lots of languages, like Creole, Bhojpuri, Hindi, Marathi, Telugu... And people in Ireland only speak Irish and English.

- What would you like to be different?
- *If there was one thing that I could change, that would be some aspects of their education. I have noticed that people start learning Irish and a second language, usually French, in secondary school, but I think that their skills would be so much better if they started to learn them in primary school.*
- How was the situation back in Mauritius by the time you left?
- *I wasn't really into politics back then, because I hated how they kept replacing a bad prime minister with another bad one, but I have to say that the situation wasn't good.*

And if I have to talk about the economy, I would say that it has always depended a lot on the tourist sector. The problem in Mauritius, is that there is a big struggle with the lack of opportunities in the other sectors, the system is quite saturated. There is high unemployment, so the economy is quite bad. The minimum wage is about two hundred euros a month, so you can imagine how that is. On the other hand, Mauritius is a developing country, and there are some promising projects to improve the economy, but most of the results are yet to be seen.

- When was the first time that you considered moving away?
- *The first time that I considered moving away was when I was ten, and my mom had returned to Mauritius to visit us after living in Ireland for a while.*

I didn't want to leave my dad because they had just divorced and I couldn't understand the situation, so I decided to stay.

- What or who inspired you to leave?
- *My mom, because I could see all of the opportunities she had there. I also wanted to leave, because it was a way out of the situation that I was in. It was my way of escaping from it.*
- How did you choose to move to Bridgetown? Did you have any contacts there?
- *My mother found a house near the school there and she liked the area. My mom's boyfriend is from Enniscorthy which is quite close to Bridgetown, so that was also an important factor when she made her choice.*
- How did you feel the days before your departure?
- *I was excited and impatient. I wanted to stop everything like going to school, or taking my exams... I was telling everybody that I was going soon, and I couldn't wait to see my mom.*
- Is there anything that you feared?
- *As I said, it was a big adventure for me, so I was excited and a little scared at the same time, but I was ready for it.*
- Did you enter the country as a tourist, and illegal immigrant, or did you have a residency permit?
- *I had to enter the country as a tourist. My mom already had her visa because she has been living here for about twelve years, but we had to apply to get ours, and it has been a difficult process.*

- Was there lots of illegal immigration at the time?
- *Yes, I think that lots of people faced the same issues that I did. Well, lots of people still do.*
- During your first days and months in Ireland how did you feel? What was your first impression on the country, the people...
- *From the airplane as it was landing, all I could see was green patches of grass, and I could really understand why they call Ireland the green island. When I saw my step dad at the airport, I thought that he was a detective, because of how he was dressed.*

When I first arrived in Dublin, and later went to Bridgetown, I was surprised. I thought I understood English until people actually spoke to me. The accents are very different in each area and quite difficult to understand at first, it took me a while to get used to them. Other than that, the people seemed very humble and talkative, very nice.

- What were your parents' jobs before moving, and what are their jobs now?
- *My mom worked as many things. She used to work as security at night, and she also was a part time hairdresser. In Ireland she took a course, and she owns a salon now.*
- Have you ever considered moving back to Mauritius?
- *I did consider going back, but only to visit my family, not to settle there.*
- Have you ever considered moving to a different country?
- *I would like to visit other countries as well, but moving to another one... Not really.*

8.2. Interview with Anna Claverol

Anna is a 49-year-old business analyst from Tremp, Catalonia. She left for Ireland to study English for six months, and this year is going to be her 25th living there.



Anna Claverol |
Via Instagram

- Where are you from?
- *I'm from Tremp, Catalonia.*
- Why are you living in Ireland?
- *It is where my home and work is at the moment.*
- How long have you been living in Ireland?
- *I have spent nearly 25 years in Ireland. The initial plan was to stay just for 6 months to learn some English.*
- Are you living there with your family?
- *I live in Dublin with my husband and dog. My parents and rest of my family live in Catalonia.*
- What were the main difficulties that you had to face in order to move to Ireland?
- *I didn't speak much English, I didn't know anybody, I didn't have an accommodation or job lined up...The plan was to try my luck in Dublin for a month, see if I could find somewhere to live and a job to support myself... if so, I would stay for 6 months. If that hadn't worked out, I would have gone back home. Things were very different back then as you can imagine...There were no mobile phones or internet everywhere yet!*
- Why did you choose to live in Dublin?

- *I just wanted to go to Ireland and Dublin seemed the natural choice being a small city with plenty of culture, Irish pubs... My friend that had been au-pairing had told me about her experience and had loved Dublin. I thought I would love it too.*

- *What aspects of the Catalan culture do you miss the most?*

- *I don't miss much; these days we are so connected all the time! There is a "Casal Català" in Ireland, they organise a "Sant Jordi" event, a "calçotada", meet up in a pub to watch Barça matches... What I miss is sharing all these cultural events LIVE with friends, the atmosphere and the weather.*

- *Was it difficult to adapt?*

- *It was quite difficult to survive at the beginning, but everything was exciting and new. I talked to my parents once a week on the landline (I couldn't make phone calls, only receive them in my shared house) and had to swallow my tears many times when things were tough. But after those 6 months in Dublin, I went back home to tell my parents I was going to stay for longer... Nowadays that experience would be completely different: everything has changed! I wouldn't say it would be easier now, but people are connected 24/7.*

- *How do people in Ireland treat you?*

- *I can only speak from my experience and I consider myself very lucky I met great people from Ireland and abroad that I can call my friends. Ireland has changed a lot in the last 25 years. There are less Irish people living in Ireland and lots of immigrants like myself. The globalisation is everywhere...I'm not sure I would fall in love with Ireland if I arrived now.*

- *What aspects of the Irish culture do you like or admire? Why?*

- *I love how musical they are and the amount of live music available. This is changing for the worse, but still much more live music than here for sure. Another thing I admire and this is going to sound weird is the way they deal with death: their wakes, their funerals, the sense of community, their graveyards... It is a more human and comforting approach.*
- What are the main differences between the Irish culture and the Catalan culture?
- *Many Irish people don't care about the Irish language; they consider it useless and a pain to learn...This is so different from us. I'll never understand how they can be so proud to be Irish without caring about their language.*
- What would you like to be different?
- *Ireland has a big social problem with alcoholism/drugs, homelessness...It is a country full of economic inequality that impacts families through generations perpetuating crime and violence. I guess this happens everywhere, but in Dublin, being such a small place, all the anti-social behaviour is on your face all the time.*
- How was the situation back in Catalonia by the time you left?
- *That was almost 25 years ago...I had just finished college and I was just going to Dublin to learn some English. I didn't leave because I couldn't find a job in Catalonia.*
- When was the first time that you considered moving away?
- *At that time it was supposed to be a temporary move, just for 6 months.*
- What or who inspired you to leave?
- *I had spent 10 months in Beijing learning Chinese with a grant and I couldn't speak English with the many international students I met. I*

decided I would learn English and I knew Ireland was the country I wanted to go to.

- How did you choose to move to Dublin? Did you have any contacts there?
- *As I said, Dublin seemed the perfect size and my friend had been there and had a good experience (I had the phone number of the family where she had been au-pairing in the event of an emergency).*
- How did you feel the days before your departure?
- *To be honest, I don't remember...I guess I was nervous, but I was flying with a friend to London first -we went to visit a friend there and then we split, as she was going to au-pair in Edinburgh for a few months and I was starting my adventure in Dublin. I guess starting the trip with them made it a bit easier...*
- Is there anything that you feared?
- *Many things: not speaking English, not knowing the place, being on my own without knowing anyone...*
- Did you enter the country as a tourist, and illegal immigrant, or did you have a residency permit?
- *I entered as a tourist I guess, but didn't need any visa or anything with a Spanish passport.*
- Was there lots of illegal immigration at the time?
- *I don't think so, Ireland wasn't that popular in those days. There were not many foreign people living in Ireland in those days. People had been emigrating from Ireland, not coming to it.*

- During your first days and months in Ireland how did you feel? What was your first impression on the country, the people...?
- *As I said, there were no foreign people in Dublin...After a few days in the multi-racial London, Dublin seemed very dull and grey.*
- Have you always worked as the same thing?
- *No. I did lots of different jobs especially at the beginning: my 1st job was running a B&B on my own. Then I worked as a waitress in Bewley's Cafe, made sandwiches for a catering business, worked in a Citizens Information Centre, random freelance translations...Then I started my career for an IT company: software localisation, QA engineer, data developer, business analyst...I have been working there for over 20 years in different projects involving languages, linguistics and the medical domain.*
- Have you ever considered going back to Catalonia?
- *Yes. My husband reminds me about it all the time. Now with the coronavirus pandemic is more in my mind...*
- Have you ever considered moving to a different country?
- *The place of my dreams is somewhere where I can wear flip-flops all year around...Maybe.*

8.3. Interview to John Driscoll

John Driscoll is a sixty-year-old field engineer from San Francisco. A job opportunity drastically changed his life, and offered him a second home: Ireland.



John Driscoll |
By Author

- Where are you from?
- *I'm from San Francisco, California.*

- Why are you living in Ireland?
- *I'm living in Ireland now because I met my wife, and got married, but originally because my work offered me a job in Ireland for two years, so I took that opportunity.*

- How long have you been living in Ireland?
- *I have lived in Ireland since 2003, for seventeen years.*

- Are you living there with your family?
- *I'm living there with my wife Anna and my dog, Coco.*

- What were the main difficulties that you had to face in order to move to Ireland?
- *I didn't have any difficulties; my company paid me, paid for my flight and to bring some of my things with me. The only problem is that they gave me 10 days to get everything together to move, and that was a bit of pressure, but in the end I did it.*

- What was your job at the time?
- *I was a field engineer. They needed me in Ireland to fix old equipment and put new equipment too.*

- Why did you choose to live in Dublin?
- *That's where the job was.*
- What aspects of the American culture do you miss the most?
- *The food, in San Francisco we have a wide variety of food and it's all very well done. I also miss some of the music culture, and the weather. Where I come from, the weather is very nice, and if you want to go hiking or spend time outdoors it's very easy to do so, and in Ireland the weather is not so good.*
- Was it difficult to adapt?
- *The hardest thing to get adapted for me was the poor weather.*
- How do people in Ireland treat you?
- *For the most part I get treated okay, but there's a side to the Irish that, I don't know... Some people can be a bit avaricious.*
- What aspects of the Irish culture do you like or admire? Why?
- *The music culture is very good, and so is the social culture. I like to drink beer and talk, and in Ireland the pub culture is very good in that, there's a very friendly atmosphere.*
- What are the main differences between the Irish culture and the American culture?
- *The culture in Ireland is based on being indoors, and in America it's quite the opposite. Also America is multiracial, and especially in San Francisco every one usually gets along there, but in Ireland you can still see lots of racism.*

- What would you like to be different?
- *As I was saying, I would like for people to get along better. In the last ten or twelve years the situation has changed dramatically, and now there's lots of cultural diversity, but when I first got here most of the foreigners were European. Or at least, the ones that you would see around.*
- How was the situation back in the United States by the time you left?
- *Everything was okay then; I didn't leave because there was any problem in the States. I mean there are always problems but it was fine.*
- When was the first time that you considered moving away?
- *I used to travel a lot because of my job, but for short periods of time like two or three weeks. Unfortunately by that time, I was married and I had a divorce. I was living in the house by myself, and there were too many memories there. So one day, a man said to me at work " Do you want to go to Ireland for two years?", and I thought that that would be good for me, so I said yes. I said yes because I love to travel, and also to get some geographical difference from all the memories.*
- What or who inspired you to leave?
- *I got offered a job and it sounded nice.*
- How did you choose to move to Dublin? Did you have any contacts there?
- *The job was in Dublin. Yes, my co-workers.*
- How did you feel the days before your departure?
- *It was crazy, I was trying to get my house ready to rent, and I had been doing a lot of work on it, with the windows getting replaced, and the guy who was supposed to do it wasn't showing up. My mom had to finally get*

him, after I got tired of him. But yes, I was going crazy because I had so short notice. I gave everything away, all my records, my books... I had nowhere to put them. I have some boxes at my relatives' houses, but I had my friends over to take what they wanted, and the rest I gave them away to a charity shop. Sometimes it's nice to don't have so many things, but I miss some of my stuff.

- Is there anything that you feared?
- *Not really.*
- Did you enter the country as a tourist, and illegal immigrant, or did you have a residency permit?
- *I had a work permit.*
- Was there lots of illegal immigration at the time?
- *I don't think there was, but I wouldn't know. There weren't lots of immigrants at the time, but I didn't pay attention. I was working too hard.*
- During your first days and months in Ireland how did you feel? What was your first impression on the country, the people...?
- *I was busy. I was working four days a week, ten to twelve hours a day. With my co-workers we went out at night and I started to meet people, and it was okay. I missed my home a bit, but since we have the Internet, Email, and now Skype, it makes it easier to stay in touch with people.*
- Have you always worked as the same thing?
- *When I was a kid I used to shovel and dig ditches. I have done everything, I have worked on people's houses, I have worked on people's gardens... I also worked in electronics for about five or six years. Then I quit and started doing sound for music bands, working on the music system, for two or three years. Then, I went back to college,*

and I loaded trucks during that time to earn money. But mainly my profession is electronic engineer or technician, and that's what I have worked most as. I have also worked for the Natural History museum.

- Have you ever considered going back to the U.S?
- *No, once in a while, but not seriously.*

- Have you ever considered moving to a different country?
- *"Is Tremp a different country?" Yes, I want to move somewhere else, I don't want to stay in Ireland. I don't like the weather, I think it's depressing, and especially now that I'm kind of retired, do I want to sit around in a rainy country? No, not really. So, I am very interested in coming to Tremp, I think that I would function better here.*

8.4. Interview with Gráinne Bates

Gráinne Bates is an eighteen-year-old student from Rosslare, Ireland. At the age of twelve she moved to Finland in order to live a new adventure and be with her loved ones.



Gráinne Bates |
Via Instagram

- Where are you from?
- *I'm from a small town called Rosslare near Wexford.*
- Why are you living in Finland?
- *At the moment, I'm living in Ireland. I moved to Finland because I wanted to experience a different culture, and my mom is from there. First I lived with my grandparents for a while, and she later moved over with me and got a job over there.*
- For how long did you live in Finland?
- *I lived in Finland for five years before coming back to Ireland.*
- Did you live there with your family?
- *Yes, mostly with my mom. As I said, when i first moved there I lived with my grandparents for a couple of months.*
- What were the main difficulties that you had to face in order to move to Finland?
- *I didn't have to face any difficulties as I have a dual nationality, but some arrangements like getting enrolled in school had to be done.*
- Where in Finland do you live and why did you choose to live there?
- *I lived in Urjala, a small town where my Finnish family is from.*

- What aspects of the Irish culture do you miss the most?
- *I missed how friendly and chatty Irish people are, even strangers greet you when you walk past. Finnish people are quite shy.*
- Was it difficult to adapt?
- *I found it quite easy, but also felt homesick from time to time. Having part of my family there with me really helped me when I was feeling sad.*
- How do people in Finland treat you?
- *People in Finland are very nice and friendly, but at the same time they can also be a little reserved when it comes to meeting new people. Needless to say, no one has ever treated me badly or in a rude way.*
- What aspects of the Finnish culture do you like or admire? Why?
- *I liked how close smaller communities were, everything (shops, school, library, gym) was within a small distance, and friends lived within walking distance.*
- What are the main differences between the Irish culture and the Finnish culture?
- *Finnish people are a lot quieter than Irish people. In Ireland everything is a lot more spaced out, you have to travel a slightly longer distance to go to town, supermarkets, school, friends, etc.*
- What would you like to be different?
- *Perhaps the weather. Winters are especially long in Finland. Even though it rains a lot in Ireland, the temperature here is rather high compared to Finland. When I first moved there, it was difficult to get adapted to the cold.*

- How was the situation back in Ireland by the time you left?
- *I personally think that the situation wasn't bad at the time, but I was twelve when I left so I didn't know much about politics or the economy.*
- When was the first time that you considered moving away?
- *Before moving to Finland I had always said that I wanted to live with my grandparents for a while, so I guess I had been considering it for a long time. 2013 was the year when I finally built up some courage to do it*
- What or who inspired you to leave?
- *My grandparents. I really missed them when I was in Ireland, and was always looking forward to visiting them. So when I was finally ready to do it, I took the opportunity to go and live with them without hesitating.*
- How did you choose to move to Finland? Did you have any contacts there?
- *I used to go to visit my family there for Christmas and other holidays, so I already loved the country. It was only a matter of time that I would eventually end up moving there.*
- How did you feel the days before your departure?
- *I felt lots of things those days, mostly excitement as I was at the beginning of a new adventure. I couldn't help it to be sad as well, as I was leaving my dad, my friends and family, and my home behind.*
- Is there anything that you feared?
- *Yes, I was very nervous and stressed about my first day of school. I was worried that my Finnish would not be good enough for me to keep up with the lessons, or to make new friends.*

- Did you enter the country as a tourist, and illegal immigrant, or did you have a residency permit?
- *I have a dual nationality, so I was lucky enough to skip these arrangements.*
- Was there lots of illegal immigration at the time?
- *As I said before, I was only twelve when I moved to Finland, so I wasn't really aware of these things.*
- During your first days and months in Finland how did you feel? What was your first impression on the country, the people...
- *I was very happy, everything felt really exciting. I was glad to be there, as it was different from the other times that I had been to the country. That time I wasn't in Finland visiting, I lived there. I couldn't believe it at first.*
- *Why did you move back to Ireland?*
- *I moved back because of different reasons. I missed the rest of my family and my old friends, and I also had some problems in school, as the language was a difficulty for me in some subjects and was affecting my grades. At the time I was also participating in "Idols Suomi", a reality-television singing competition that delayed my departure for a couple of months. Once I got disqualified I felt that it was time for me to come home.*
- Have you ever considered moving to a different country?
- *Yes, I think I'd like to move somewhere that I've not lived before to experience new cultures and lifestyles.*

8.5. Interview with Mark Finnegan

Mark Finnegan is a 49-year-old software engineer from Dublin. He left Ireland a few years ago, and he hasn't stopped travelling ever since. He currently lives in Belgium.



Mark Finnegan |
By Judith Finnegan

- Where are you from?
- *I'm from Dublin, Ireland.*

- Why are you living in Belgium?
- *I'm living in Belgium because my wife got a job here.*

- For how long have you been living in Belgium?
- *I have lived in Belgium for 3 years.*

- Are you living there with your family?
- *I'm living with my wife Judith.*

- What were the main difficulties that you had to face in order to move to Belgium?
- *To be honest, I didn't face any difficulties. It's quite easy to move here.*

- What was your job at the time?
- *I was a software engineer, well I still am.*

- Why did you choose to live in Leuven?
- *It is where my wife got the job.*

- What aspects of the Irish culture do you miss the most?

- *I mostly miss the food: rashers, bread, my mum's roast chicken... I also miss how in Ireland places are less populated.*
- Was it difficult to get adapted?
- *It was fine. Belgians are quite laid back and they like to talk all day like Irish people do.*
- How do people in Belgium treat you?
- *Like I was saying, I get along with Belgians. Our cultures have some similarities and I have always been treated alright.*
- What aspects of the Belgian culture do you like or admire? Why?
- *It's very nice around where we live. People sell things like vegetables and honey and apple juice outside their houses. Unattended, just sitting there on a table with a price list and a little honesty box to put the cash in. It's great - we've been eating for free for months! (I am joking of course).*
- What are the main differences between the Irish culture and the Belgian culture?
- *There is much more in common than different. They have great beer, and the pub culture is similar to home. One thing I do notice though, here they will happily go out in shorts and eat ice cream in the middle of winter.*
- What would you like to be different?
- *Wages are a bit lower than in Ireland, and the prices are usually higher. For example, eating out can be quite expensive.*
- How was the situation back in Ireland by the time you left?

- *I left Ireland in 2005, and it was going great there and everywhere else. Well, for a while.*
- When was the first time that you considered moving away?
I would say perhaps it was around the 1990s, or even before. I think that I have always thought about it, I guess...
- What or who inspired you to leave?
- *The desire to see other places.*
- How did you choose to move to Belgium? Did you have any contacts there?
- *Judith got a job here, and we thought it was a good opportunity for her. We had no contacts and knew nobody.*
- How did you feel the days before your departure?
- *We moved here from the US and we were delighted, as it was closer to home for both of us.*
- Is there anything that you feared?
- *Not really.*
- Did you enter the country as a tourist, and illegal immigrant, or did you have a residency permit?
- *As me and my wife are both European we didn't have to worry about that.*
- Was there lots of illegal immigration at the time?
- *Not that I am aware of.*

- During your first days and months in Belgium how did you feel? What was your first impression on the country, the people...?
- *I liked the country and the people were very nice and friendly. The students in Leuven really drink and sing a lot in the streets, all night and into the morning. We were living on the main square of the old town at the time, so it was an interesting experience.*
- Have you ever considered going back to Ireland?
- *Occasionally we think about moving either to Ireland or to Austria, where Judith is from.*
- Have you ever considered moving to a different country?
- *I think I've worked in 14 different countries at this point. I think that you don't really know a place unless you've commuted to work on a Monday morning in the rain with everyone else.*